

be associated with the millennial reign of the Savior, and the earth will eventually become a “new heaven and a new earth” (D&C 29:23). The earth will ultimately be “like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon” (D&C 130:9). When this occurs, both the Father and the Son will rule over this planet and those who dwell upon it. This earth will be a heaven to its celestial inhabitants. Speaking of conditions of the future life, the Prophet Joseph SMITH explained, “That same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (D&C 130:2).

The doctrinal emphasis on the eternal nature of the family and the implementation of gospel principles into home and family relationships have frequently led leaders of the Church to characterize the faithful family as a foretaste of “heaven here on earth” (Monson, p. 69).

[See also Afterlife; Kingdom of God: In Heaven.]

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HEAVENLY FATHER

See: God the Father

HEAVENLY MOTHER

See: Mother in Heaven

HEBREWS, EPISTLE TO THE

Many passages in this New Testament letter have particular significance for Latter-day Saints. In general conferences of the Church, the most frequently cited scriptures from the book of Hebrews are those concerning the GODHEAD (Heb. 1:1–3; 12:9; 13:8); the obedient suffering of Jesus (Heb. 2:14–18; 4:15–16; 5:8–9; see also ATONEMENT); the eternal PRIESTHOOD of Jesus Christ (Heb. 7–8);

how one must be called by God in order to hold the priesthood (Heb. 5:1–4); the nature of true faith, which motivates people to righteous action (Heb. 11); going on “unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1); and enduring to the end (Heb. 12:4–11). These themes are essential pillars of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The main point at the center of the epistle is that Jesus Christ is the eternal “high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle” of God (Heb. 8:1–2). This theme is developed throughout the epistle, showing how eternal salvation comes through the greatness, sufficiency, and supremacy of Jesus Christ. The letter was written to devoted converts from Judaism to the early Christian church, who already understood the first principles of the gospel and had received its basic ordinances (Heb. 6:1–4). Step by step, it systematically strives to persuade them “to hold fast to their faith” (Buchanan, p. 266), to keep the covenant, and to realize the incomparable hope and irrevocable promises given to them by God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. With its explication of the Atonement in terms of priesthood, oaths, covenants, and temple imagery, this entire epistle resonates and harmonizes with LDS concepts and practices.

Chapter 1 begins by boldly declaring that Jesus is the sole mediator between God and all human beings; he is superior to, and supersedes, both prophets and angels. As a separate and distinct personage in the Godhead, he is the God of creation and the perfect revelation of GODHOOD for all time. He is the express image of his Father, both spiritually and physically; he alone purged the sins of mankind and sits on the right hand of God the Father (Heb. 1:1–3). The Father brought the Savior (who was his “firstbegotten” in the pre-mortal existence) “into the world” (Heb. 1:6; cf. D&C 93:21; 1 Ne. 11:18). As the firstborn, Jesus is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2), and those who are faithful become joint-heirs with him (see HEIRS).

Chapter 2 holds a strong warning to heed the word of God given through Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:1–4). The next world is in subjugation to Christ alone (Heb. 2:5–10). God made him a little lower than “the gods” (taking the marginal reading of Ps. 8:4–6). Because God is the Father of all, even Christ is subject to him. Christ is second only to the Father, yet he is the spirit brother of mankind (Heb. 2:17). Like his brothers and sisters in mortality, he suf-

ferred temptation, but unlike them, he never sinned (Heb. 2:18; 4:15–16). Through this suffering, he learned obedience and gained compassion for all God’s children.

The admonition of chapter 3 counsels people to contemplate the greatness of the Lord and to commit themselves to him. The total obedience shown by the Savior to his Father marks the way. The time for commitment is “today.” The gospel is not always available to mankind, and so it is necessary to respond covenantally “this day,” lest individuals be left like the rebellious Israelites to die in the deserts of their own lives (Heb. 3:7–17; cf. Josh. 24:14–25; Jacob 6:5–7; D&C 64:23–25).

Chapter 4, drawing in part upon Israelite temple symbolism, admonishes the Saints to enter into the rest of the Lord (Heb. 4:1, 11). This comes by believing, softening the heart, laboring, standing openly before God, relying on the compassion of Jesus the High Priest, and coming boldly to the mercy seat of God to find grace in time of need (Heb. 4:7, 11, 13, 15, 16).

Chapter 5 explains how Jesus obtained his authority to act as Israel’s great High Priest. He did not presume to take this honor upon himself. As with Aaron, God chose him and bestowed authority upon him as “a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:6; Ps. 110:4).

Chapter 6 calls upon all members of the church to “lay hold upon the hope” of PERFECTION and ETERNAL LIFE, which has been extended to them by an immutable oath and covenant (Heb. 6:1, 13–20; see also OATH AND COVENANT OF THE PRIESTHOOD). Diligence in serving Christ will bring a full assurance of extraordinary promises, as God covenanted with ABRAHAM and promised him eternal increase (Heb. 6:13–14; cf. D&C 132:30). This hope, made possible in Christ, is an anchor for the soul, since God cannot lie. However, those who once have tasted the good word of God and have partaken of the Holy Ghost and then fall away and “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh,” the sin is so grievous that they cannot be renewed again unto repentance (Heb. 6:6–10).

God’s promises to Abraham are extended to all who come unto Christ: Jesus was a priest after the order of MELCHIZEDEK, who was the priest who blessed Abraham, in whose loins was Levi. The superiority of Christ’s Melchizedek priesthood over the Levitical priesthood and the LAW OF MOSES is developed in chapter 7. Melchizedek was a type of Christ. His priesthood was more endur-

ing than the Levitical priesthood, which was limited to blood lines and was not given with an oath and whose priests did not continue because of death and needed daily renewal (Heb. 7:3, 21, 23, 27). The Melchizedek order of priesthood, however, was directed by Jesus Christ, who, unlike the high priest under the law of Moses on the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:4), did not need to “offer sacrifice for his own sins, for he knew no sins” (JST Heb. 7:26). His priesthood was *aparabatos*, meaning “permanent, unchangeable, and incomparable” (Heb. 7:24). No other priesthood will succeed it. It will be the permanent power of salvation and ETERNAL LIVES within Christ’s church forever more (TPJS, pp. 166, 322).

As the great High Priest, Jesus offered himself as the eternal atoning sacrifice and became the mediator of this new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6), putting the law of God into the hearts of his people (Heb. 8:10; 10:16). The old law (of Moses), with its performances and sacrifices, had been fulfilled. Through the new covenant, God promised to remember the sins of the repentant no more (Heb. 10:17), and each Saint was challenged to enter into “a new and living way” through the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:15–20). Those who were willing to do so in patience and faith would be justified and receive the promise (Heb. 10:35–38).

Chapter 11 then concentrates on faith and its outward effects in the lives of Israel’s spiritual heroes. Faith is the actual substance or substantiation or assurance (*hypostasis*) and the evidence or evincing (*elenchos*) of things not seen that are true (Heb. 11:1; Alma 32:21). True faith necessarily manifests itself in works of righteousness. Chapter 12 thus exhorts the faithful to endure the CHASTENING and correction of God, who is the Father of their spirits. By inheriting the blessings of eternity as sons of the living God, his Saints are able to come to the new Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, being made perfect, an assembly of “firstborns” (*prototokōn*), having inherited all with the Firstborn.

Chapter 13 concludes by noting that “marriage is honourable in all,” and by counseling all to “let brotherly love continue,” to “be without covetousness,” and to be loyal to Jesus alone, “bearing his reproach, for here [on earth] have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:1, 4–5, 13–14). Those who enter into this holy order and keep its covenants prepare themselves for eternal life, and fulfillment of the invocation that

“the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will” (Heb. 13:20–21).

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RICHARD D. DRAPER

HEIRS

[*This entry consists of two parts: Heirs of God and Joint-Heirs with Christ. The first part explains that by obedience to the commandments of God a person can become an heir of God. The second part emphasizes that the gospel of Jesus Christ also provides the way for one to become a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, and obtain the special inheritance of the Church of the Firstborn.*]

HEIRS OF GOD

The doctrine of becoming an heir of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ was noted by Paul (Rom. 8:14–17; Gal. 3:26–29; 4:1–7; *see also* CALLING AND ELECTION; CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN). In this connection, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all humans are spirit sons and daughters of God, with the potential of inheriting all that the Father has (D&C 84:33–38). Every member of the human family is a child of God. However, through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ, including having faith, love, charity, and participating in TEMPLE ORDINANCES and SEALINGS, men and women can become heirs of God in a special way. Such persons are called the “children of Christ, his sons and his daughters,” being “spiritually begotten” by him (Mosiah 5:7). They will be exalted in the CELESTIAL KINGDOM. Members of the Church make several COVENANTS with God, beginning with baptism and continuing through the temple ENDOWMENT and MARRIAGE, by which they promise to obey God’s commandments and to consecrate to him all that they possess in order to become heirs through Christ in the Father’s kingdom. Such may eventually be exalted

by God and be given many divine powers, including ETERNAL INCREASE.

Promises of inheritance are extended also to those who die without a knowledge of the gospel, for they shall have opportunity in the SPIRIT WORLD to hear the message of redemption, and have the essential ordinances of the gospel performed in their behalf in the temples of the Church.

[*See also* Salvation of the Dead.]

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JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

Joint-heirs with Christ identifies those persons who attain the highest degree of the CELESTIAL KINGDOM. Latter-day Saints regard Jesus Christ as the firstborn spirit child of God the Father and the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. Because of this priority, he is the natural heir of the Father. Through strict obedience to the Father’s will, progressing from grace to grace by obeying the gospel and its ORDINANCES and making the infinite ATONEMENT, Jesus became the Savior of all mankind and also heir to all that the Father has. Those who accept Jesus Christ as their redeemer, repent of their sins, obey the ordinances of the gospel, and live in willing obedience with the Holy Spirit as their guide, can also become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. In the eternities, they can inherit the same truth, power, wisdom, glory, and EXALTATION possessed by God the Father and by the Son (*see* D&C 84:38).

The scriptures set forth the Father’s plan of salvation for becoming joint-heirs with Christ. This includes taking the name of Christ upon oneself and living a Christlike life. Obeying the gospel means keeping the ordinances and ceremonies as well as living the moral law. Having started on the course of salvation, each individual is expected to continue to serve the Lord with a pure heart to the end of the mortal life. Through the GRACE of Jesus Christ and the blood that he shed, the willing and obedient are redeemed and sanctified.

All people are spirit children of God and recipients of his love, but only through accepting and living the gospel of Jesus Christ are individuals born again, spiritually begotten, and adopted into the family of God in a special relationship as the “sons and daughters” of Christ (Mosiah 5:7; Gal. 4:5–7; Rom. 8:14–17; *see also* BORN OF GOD; LAW