and women can continue their progression and further learn principles of perfection before they are brought to the final judgment (Alma 40:6–21). Jesus Christ went to the postmortem spirit world while his body lay in the tomb to preach the gospel to them (1 Pet. 3:19–20; 4:6; D&C 138:11–37) so that those spirits in the postmortem spirit world could hear and accept or reject the gospel. Since baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, temple endowment, and sealing are earthly ordinances, Latter-day Saints perform the ordinances vicariously for the dead in their temples (see salvation for the dead). Because individuals differ so widely in their obedience to God’s commandments, LDS theology rejects the traditional Christian concepts of the single option of heaven or hell in explaining the final destiny of souls (see soul). Through a vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 76), the Lord has shown, as he also revealed to Paul, that there are several degrees of glory in mankind’s eternal reward (D&C 76; cf. 1 Cor. 15:42).

The plan of salvation was created by the Father, brought into reality by the atoning sacrifice of his Beloved Son, and facilitated by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It embraces the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement, including the Resurrection, and sweeps across all time from the preterminal existence to the final state of immortality and eternal life.

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PLATES, METAL

[The Book of Mormon mentions several records, most of which were inscribed on metal plates. The text of the Book of Mormon was inscribed on metal plates; see Book of Mormon Plates and Records; Book of Mormon: The Words of Mormon; and Gold Plates. In addition, the scriptural record possessed by the Book of Mormon colony that fled Jerusalem and came to the Americas under the leadership of the prophet Lehi was engraved on plates of brass; see Book of Mormon: An Overview. This colony continued to prepare metal plates, which were then used to inscribe records both sacred and secular; see Book of Mormon Economy and Technology. It is also known that a prophet named Ether inscribed on metal leaves the record of his people, the earliest Book of Mormon group to migrate to the Western Hemisphere; see Book of Mormon: Book of Ether and Jaredites. The final set of plates abridged by Mormon were seen by the Book of Mormon Witnesses. For information about the major writers or abridgers of these plates, see Mormon; Moroni; Mosiah; and Nephi.]

PLURAL MARRIAGE

Plural marriage was the nineteenth-century LDS practice of a man marrying more than one wife. Popularly known as polygamy, it was actually polygyny. Although polygamy had been practiced for much of history in many parts of the world, to do so in “enlightened” America in the nineteenth century was viewed by most as incomprehensible and unacceptable, making it the Church’s most controversial and least understood practice. Though the principle was lived for a relatively brief period, it had profound impact on LDS self-definition, helping to establish the Latter-day Saints as a “people apart.” The practice also caused many nonmembers to distance themselves from the Church and see Latter-day Saints more negatively than would otherwise have been the case.

Rumors of plural marriage among the members of the Church in the 1830s and 1840s led to persecution, and the public announcement of the practice after August 29, 1852, in Utah gave enemies a potent weapon to fan public hostility against the Church. Although Latter-day Saints believed that their religiously-based practice of plural marriage was protected by the U.S. Constitution, opponents used it to delay Utah statehood until 1896. Ever harsher antipolygamy legislation stripped Latter-day Saints of their rights as citizens, disincorporated the Church, and permitted the seizure of Church property before the Manifesto of 1890 announced the discontinuance of the practice.

Plural marriage challenged those within the Church, too. Spiritual descendants of the Puritans and sexually conservative, early participants in plural marriage first wrestled with the prospect and then embraced the principle only after receiving personal spiritual confirmation that they should do so.