

What is the Mormon Church . . . really?

Study on the Trinity: the Mormon view in contrast to the Biblical Christian view—



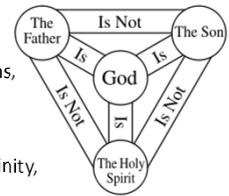
Teacher, Yvon Prehn
Check out the website:

www.livelifebymthebook.com



Review and background

- The Trinity is one of the KEY differences between Christianity, cults, and other religions: Mormons, Jehovah Witness, Islam and many others
- A real problem here is that most Christians don't understand the Trinity, so it makes it very hard to spot problems—with all other religions
- Quick review of Mormon position
- Brief review of the meaning of **Progressive Revelation**
- **Implicit and Explicit truth in the Bible**
 - <http://www.equip.org/articles/the-trinity-a-case-study-in-implicit-truth>



Mormon position

- I will preach on the **plurality of Gods**. . . . I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute **three distinct personages and three Gods**. If this is in accordance with the New Testament, lo and behold! we have three Gods anyhow, and they are plural; and who can contradict it?



- Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 1843-44, p. 370-371.
- "The Father is a glorified, perfected, resurrected, **exalted man** who worked out his salvation by obedience to the same laws he has given to us so that we may do the same"
 - LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie taught:
- **"As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be"**
 - LDS Apostle James E. Talmage

Progressive revelation review

- Key to understanding many BIBLICAL doctrines
- The New Testament is not new teaching
 - "The progressive character of divine revelation is recognized in relation to all the great doctrines of the Bible. . . What at first is only obscurely intimated is gradually unfolded in subsequent parts of the sacred volume, until the truth is revealed in its fulness."
 - Charles Hodge
- God expects us to know and read the ENTIRE Bible



Overview of Progressive Revelation

- Later revelations not contradictory, but complementary
- Later books do not make mistakes, but reveal more truth
- Later revelations do not negate the former; they expand, clarify and in some instances, replace
- **HOWEVER**, to correctly understand the process, you absolutely must reading the whole BIBLE, repeatedly and regularly.



Example: The doctrine of redemption

- The initial promise of the Gospel is Gen 3:15- the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.
- The blood sacrificial system was to teach of the necessity of the redeemer to sacrifice his life for the salvation of his people.
- "The patriarchal, sacrificial system and later the entire levitical ritual, point forward to Christ and His redeeming work. The plan of salvation develops with ever increasing clarity and fullness as the messages of the prophets and the Psalms are historically unfolded." Buswell, *Systematic Theology*
- God progressively expands man's comprehension of the Savior that when He came in the fullness of time—man was ready to recognize Him and understand His coming—and we see that in the NT how it continuously refers back to OT
- Along with the plan of salvation progressively taught, so too was the understanding of the triune God who would accomplish it.



How Progressive Revelation relates to the Trinity & an early mention



- Probably the best example of progressive revelation in the Bible is the doctrine of the trinity. The Old Testament only alluded to this truth, but the New Testament explains it more fully.
- In Genesis when God said "Let us make man in our image", He doesn't go on to explain why He would speak as if to Himself in this way, but it is evident that He is speaking with Himself as if there were more than one person there.
- We know that He wasn't speaking with angels or any pre-existent beings, as some would say, because Genesis goes on to say in 1:27 "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." He went out of His way to tell the reader that man was created specifically in the image of God, and not God and someone else.

<http://www.endtimes.org/progressive.html>

Back to the first verse of the Bible

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

We see both God the Father and the Spirit of God involved in creation. It gets even more interesting when we look at how ancient Jewish rabbis understood this passage as they did their interpretative translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic, the common language of the people.

They did a word study of "beginning" (re'shit in Hebrew) and found that it is used in synonymous parallelism with the Hebrew word for "firstborn" (bekor in Hebrew) four times in the Old Testament.

This would mean that the two words, "beginning" and "firstborn," can have the same meaning. Thus, their translation of the opening words of the Bible includes both words: *"In the beginning, by the firstborn, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."*

Paul reflects this pre-Christian Trinitarian understanding when he describes the Son as *"the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."* Col. 1:15-16

Driscoll, Mark; Breshears, Gerry (2010-03-19). Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe

A summary of various OT statements

- From the beginning of the Bible we see the Trinity, as well as other key doctrines, appearing in bud form. As the Scriptures continue to reveal God, what is called progressive revelation, the bud opens bit by bit. The Old Testament people of God looked forward to the coming of the Spirit-anointed Son who would reveal the Father more completely. Then they would understand more of this mysterious promise of the one who is God but differs from the Father, who will be anointed by the divine Spirit who is neither Father nor Son, who would fulfill the ancient promise of God to crush the head of the serpent and redeem God's people.

Driscoll, Mark; Breshears, Gerry Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe



Foundational Problem: is the word "Trinity" in the Bible?



- NO the word "Trinity" is not in the Bible
- The word "bible" is not found in the Bible, but we use it anyway to describe the Bible. Likewise, "omniscience" which means "all-knowing," "omnipotence" which means "all-powerful," and "omnipresence" which means "present everywhere," are words not found in the Bible either, but we use them to describe the attributes of God. We don't have to see a specific word in the Bible in order for the concept it describes to be true.
- This is what we refer to as an "implicit" rather than an "explicit" teaching

<http://carm.org/christianity/christian-doctrine/word-trinity-not-bible>

Let's first define our terms.

- **Explicit** refers to that which is **"fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied"**
- Example of explicit: *God created the heavens and the earth* (as explicitly stated in [Genesis 1:1](#))
- **Implicit**, by contrast, refers to that which is **"implied or understood though not directly expressed."**
- Example of Implicit: is the truth that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are a Trinity—three persons in one Godhead.
- What follows: Five Hermeneutical Principles that guide us in deriving legitimate implicit truths from the Bible.
 - <http://www.equip.org/articles/the-trinity-a-case-study-in-implicit-truth>

#1 Implicit truth must be built on the foundation of explicit truth

- For doctrinal studies, serious students of the Bible collect scriptural evidence from throughout the entire Bible.
- They *compare, classify, and correlate these bits of evidence, and then draw theological inferences from them.*
- The "explicit" facts must support the "implicit" conclusions
- The doctrine of the Trinity emerges from following such a procedure.



Explicit truths about God

- **There is only one God.** This is the consistent emphasis of Scripture
- Deut. 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
- Isa. 44:6 "This is what the LORD says— Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."
- John 5:44 How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?
- 1 Cor. 8:4 We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one."
- 1 Tim. 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus
- James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. .



The Father is God

- **The Father is explicitly called "God" throughout Scripture**
- John 6:27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.
- Rom. 1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Gal. 1:1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—
- 1 Pet. 1:2 To God's elect, exiles . . . , who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ.



God, the Son, Jesus is God

- **Jesus is explicitly called "God"**
 - Titus 2:13: looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ
 - Heb. 1:8 But to the Son He says: Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
- **Jesus applied the name of God to himself:**
 - Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."
 - John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."
- **He performed works only God can do, such as creating the universe**
 - Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.
 - In addition, he forgave sins, healed, raised from the dead, accepted worship as God



The Holy Spirit is God

- **Called the Spirit of God:**
 - Genesis 1:2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.
- **Possesses attributes of Deity**
- **Omnipresence**
 - Psalms 139:7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?
- **Omniscience**
 - 1 Cor 2:10-11 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.
- **Eternity**
 - How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Hebrews 9:14 (NKJV)



The Holy Spirit does things only God can do

- **Participated in the creation of the universe**
 - Genesis 1:2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters
- **Resurrecting Christ**
 - Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.
- **Inspiring Scripture**
 - 2 Pet. 1:21 For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.



From ONE God, then how 3

- From these explicit truths we can infer the implicit truth that **within the unity of the one God are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**
- But how are we to understand this?
- **Are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit modes of manifestation of the one God, or are they distinct persons within the Godhead?**
- These questions point to the importance of the next principle****how are the 3 described? Modes, influences, or as PERSONS?
- That's what we will study next

