



The Trinity

Discussion 1: THE TRINITY

Who Is God?

What one believes about God is probably the single most important decision one will make. Since ancient times, man has sought to find and know God. Man can find answers to this quest by reading the Bible. God has chosen, through His loving kindness, to reveal Himself through what is written in the Bible. Therefore, the Bible is the final and infallible Word regarding who He is.

Because the purpose of the Bible is to reveal God more fully to us, let's see what it has to say about the following questions: What does the Bible say about God? And on a more personal note, what do you believe about God?

In the Old Testament, God identifies Himself as Jehovah. In Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD (Jehovah) our God (Elohim) is one LORD (Jehovah)." It is important to note the differences in the titles that God applies to Himself here.

Who Do You Think Jehovah Was In The New Testament?

According to the LDS Bible Dictionary, attached to the King James Version of the LDS Bible, one reads under the definition of God: "When one speaks of God, it is generally the Father who is referred to; that is Elohim... The personage known as Jehovah in Old Testament times, and who is usually identified in the Old Testament as LORD (in capital letters), is the Son, known as Jesus Christ, and who is also a God." Unfortunately, this position is problematic because of what Jehovah has already said about Himself. Jehovah defines Himself as being the same exact thing as Elohim.

The book of Isaiah demonstrates that there is only one God. In Isaiah 44:6-8, it says, "Thus saith the LORD (Jehovah) the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD (Jehovah) of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God (Elohim). And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God (Elohim) beside me? yea, there is no God (Elohim); I know not any." The problem presented here is that Jesus (Jehovah) is speaking and says that He doesn't know of any other God (Elohim), including the Heavenly Father (Elohim) or the Holy Ghost.

What Does The Bible Teach About The Trinity?

The Bible teaches that there is one God, eternally existent, in three Persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. As we have already seen, the Bible tells us that there is only one God in Deuteronomy 6:4 and Isaiah 44:6-8. Additionally, Isaiah 43:10 states, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD (Jehovah), and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God (Elohim) formed, neither shall there be after me." The Bible is clear. There is no other God beside Jehovah.

There are several Bible passages that tell us that the Heavenly Father is God. I Corinthians 8:6 states, "But to us, there is one God the Father, of whom are all things and we in Him..." Other verses such as John 1:1-3 ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."), John 10:30 ("I and my Father are one"), John 20:28 ("And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God"), and Col. 2:9 ("For in him [Jesus] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"), clearly teach that Jesus is God. Furthermore, passages like Acts 5:3-4 ("But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost ... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God"), I Corinthians 3:16 and Matthew 12:31, all point to the Holy Spirit being God.

The Bible also teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are distinct from one another. For example, in Matthew 3:16-17 we read, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here we can observe that God's voice came from heaven, the Holy Ghost descended and Jesus is in the act of being baptized.

What About The Jesus Praying In The Garden?

Some people might say that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are simply one in purpose. They would point to John 17, where Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, to support this position. In this passage, Jesus prays that His apostles might be one as He and the Father are one. If this were the only passage that demonstrated the relationship between Christ and God, we could assume that they are only one in purpose. The Heavenly Father and Jesus are indeed one in purpose, but they are also much more. They share the same nature and are the same being. If they did not share the same nature and eternally exist as God, then there would be more than one God, and as we have seen in previous passages, the Bible teaches that there is only one God. The clear teaching of scripture makes the possibility of the existence of three separate Gods impossible.

Does The Trinity Make Sense?

It is possible to draw analogies in order to somewhat understand the relationships and concepts involved regarding the Trinity. Many Christians fail to explain the Trinity effectively and therefore the majority of LDS believe that Christians are modalistic (or that only one person of God appears to people in different modes at different times). To understand what Christians really believe about the Trinity, it is important to define some terms.

* **NATURE:** The character of a thing as defined by its primary qualities and the concrete substance of a thing.

* **PERSON:** A personal instance of a given nature.

Now let us apply these terms to discussion of God. The nature: God is deity and has the following attributes: personal, creative, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, entirely just, holy, perfect, genuine, spirit, and triune. These are the essential attributes of deity--anything that possesses these attributes is God. Anything that does not possess these attributes is not God. The persons: God the Father is a person, God the Son is a person and God the Holy Ghost is a person. The Bible teaches that there is only one Divine Being, but three persons partake of it. Remember, God does not know of any other Divine Being besides Himself.

A good analogy relating to the Trinity is called the triple point of water. Under normal atmospheric conditions (generally 1 atm), at a temperature of 273.16 K (0.01 C), water has its triple point. That is, it exists simultaneously as all three states of matter--solid, liquid, and gas. All of the states of water possess the same nature, meaning two hydrogen and one oxygen chemically bonded. More simply put, they are all the same basic stuff. In their "persons", however, all three are distinct. A gas behaves differently than a liquid, and a liquid behaves differently than a solid. To complete the analogy, suppose we imagine an infinite amount of H₂O at its triple point. The amount of space occupied by each of the different states is equal to the sum of the whole (infinity divided by three = infinity). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that something infinite like God can eternally exist in three persons at the same time.

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