

# Mormonism from a Biblical Perspective

## Examining LDS doctrine and beliefs by searching the Bible

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*All verses quoted from the New King James Bible, unless otherwise noted. Where the full Bible text is not represented, omissions are represented by ellipses (...). Summaries of sections of scripture as well as author additions to the text will be enclosed in brackets [ ].*

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### Genesis, Chapter 18

**1-8 And the LORD appeared unto him... [as] he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day... three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground... And I will fetch a morsel of bread... a calf tender and good... and they did eat.**

Here we have a bizarre occurrence indeed. LORD, of course, is Yahweh or Jehovah, the name of the one great God who is Elohim. This introduces us to something referred to as a Christophany. Whether looking at this from an LDS perspective or a traditional Biblical Christian perspective, we must both agree that we have here Jesus Christ eating and drinking with Abraham. From the LDS viewpoint, LORD would have to be Jesus because the name would be Jehovah. From the Christian viewpoint, LORD would also have to be Jesus because God the Father does not have a body of flesh and bone, but is in fact invisible to us. The problem arises with the fact that Jesus has not yet come to the earth and taken on a physical body capable of eating and drinking. This dilemma may be solved in the Christian understanding that Elohim, the three-person singular God of whom Jesus is a part, is a timeless God. Jesus Christ, having taken on flesh, died, rose again with a glorified body, and returned to a timeless Heaven, would then be able to appear in that glorified body at any point in time that He desired. If you are like me, that idea is a little mind-blowing whether or not you can believe it. This seems to be an appearance of the glorified Jesus Christ at a time prior to his earthly life. Many have speculated that the mysterious Melchizedek could have been the same thing, for reasons we will examine later.

This is one of those issues that I believe is dealt with best by following the example of those who have come up against similarly hard to understand elements of God. Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes 8:17; *Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.* The apostle Paul, after finishing one of the most insightful and powerful expositions of the workings of God in the book of Romans, finishes his sermon with this, in 11:33; *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* The God who created the universe and all things in it must undoubtedly be able to work on a level beyond our comprehension. It is in realization of this that we find much of the humility that we are called to possess.

**9-11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.**

God prefers to work in the impossible, and we see here a beautiful example of that. He could have given Sarah a child in her youth, but he waited until she physically could not have a child. It is impossible for the Red Sea to part. It is impossible for a child to be conceived to a virgin. It is impossible for Lazarus to rise from the dead after four days. If God worked in the possible, we could explain away His workings as luck, chance, the workings of nature, or our own works. By working in the impossible, He clearly reveals who He is, and that He is worthy to have faith in.

There are some impossibilities that the Latter-day Saint seems to put out of reach of even the ability of God. Could it be possible that God could really preserve his word intact over thousands of years? Could it be possible that Jesus could have atoned for sins as awful as murder? Could it be possible that somehow God could be of a single substance and yet be three distinct persons? Could it be possible that God would save us apart from the works we do? Those questions are very clearly answered for us in the rhetorical question asked by God himself:

**12-21 Is any thing too hard for the LORD?...**

The obvious answer is no. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Everything is within his reach of possibility. As soon as we begin to limit what God can or would do, it may do us good to picture the Lord posing this question to us as he did to Abraham and Sarah. It should cause us to feel the same way as the prophet Isaiah did when he compared us to clay in the potter's hands in 29:16; *Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?*

**22 [Abraham appeals to the Lord to spare the destruction of Sodom and Gommorah if He can find as few as five righteous people in the city]**

## **Genesis, Chapter 19**

**1-24 [The Lord rescues Lot's family from Sodom prior to its destruction]**

**26-38 But his [Lot's] wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.**

Whenever there is a bizarre occurrence in the Bible, it is a call for us to examine it more closely for what the Lord is trying to teach us. Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt upon looking back during their escape is quite bizarre. Some insight can be gained by the understanding that it is probably speaking of the condition of her heart more than the positioning of her head in relation to the city of Sodom. She was at a point of decision. Was she to believe these servants of God who were taking her from her old life of wealth and comfort? Or was she going to continue to trust in the things of the world she was leaving behind? She looked back, showing that her decision – her heart – was still on the things of the world. We can even find the mercy of God here for Lot's wife. Rather than allow her to return to certain destruction in Sodom among the fire and brimstone raining down from the skies, she was immediately changed into death.

This gives us an important picture of *walking with God*. We will almost certainly be required to give up our worldly comforts and passions to follow Him. The fishermen on the Sea of Galilee did this to follow Jesus. The rich young ruler Mark of 10:21 is told he must sell all that he has to follow Christ. Peter is told

to expect homelessness, persecution, and eventually death for following Jesus. When God saves, it is to accomplish something very different in our lives than we think it should be. He desires to make us more like Him and less like the world.

Too often, we make the same error concerning Jesus that the Jews did. They expected Him to do something very different than He actually did. They thought the Messiah was coming to improve their worldly condition. They were expecting a great military leader who would rally the Jewish nation to revolt against the Romans and regain their sovereignty. Instead, the Messiah came telling them to turn the other cheek when someone strikes them, and to take the lowliest places and be the servant of all. The man they expected to deliver their nation instead died a shameful death on the cross. His coming had only served to make their oppression by the Romans more intense.

We do the same. We expect that when we follow Jesus, he will improve our physical lives. We think He should come into our lives to help us get along better with our families, help us get better jobs and make more money, and living happier and more peaceful lives. Instead we find a Jesus, as taught in the Bible and as experienced by saved Christians, who comes to purify us as in a refiner's fire. He comes into our lives to break us down, convict us of sin, remove from us those worldly things we've relied on, and bring us to a place of utter helplessness without Him. It is only once we reach that point of helplessness that we truly allow Him to do what He has promised to do. Change us into something like He is. The only way that can be accomplished is by purging from us everything that is of us, and replacing it with what is of Him.

Lot's wife wasn't ready for that. She was still committed to the emptiness of what her world had to offer her. She had made her choice. Her life was more important to her than her God.

**[End]**