

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 [].

Genesis, Chapter 2

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

We are introduced here to the idea of plural heavens. In LDS doctrine, there are indeed multiple heavens – the Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telesial – the three levels of heaven of the plan of salvation. However, the plural heavens spoken of here, as in many other Biblical passages, are speaking of the obvious plural heavens that we see around us everyday in God’s creation – the heaven of the atmosphere where the birds fly and the airplanes soar, and the heaven above that contains the stars and galaxies. We will eventually come across a passage in 2 Corinthians 12:2 that refers to the “third heaven” which, in context, speaks of the heaven where God dwells, as opposed to the two other heavens of atmosphere and space.

2 And on the seventh day God[s] ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

This seventh day – the Sabbath day - is actually our Saturday, not a Sunday as is commonly thought by most Christians today. Sunday eventually became known as the Lord’s Day as Christians began gathering on the day that Jesus Christ was raised from death. For the early Christians, the Sabbath day was very clearly different than the Lord’s day. On the Sabbath, when the Jews were meeting in synagogue, they were out preaching to them. Sunday, the Lord’s Day, was their day for rest, repose, and gathering for worship. That is how Sunday became the Christian day of worship rather than the true Sabbath, Saturday.

3 And God[s] blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God[s] created and made.

4 ¶ These *are* the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God[s] made the earth and the heavens,

Here we are introduced to the second name of God, shown here as LORD, in all capital letters. The history of this name takes a fair amount of explanation, but it is absolutely necessary to understand so much of the Bible.

This name, LORD, is referred to as the Tetragrammaton, which simply means “four letters” in Greek. It is the representation of a name – the actual name of God himself -- that has been lost to history. This name actually appears in Hebrew texts as the letters YHWH which, because it has no vowels, cannot be pronounced.

Ancient Hebrew written language had no vowels, no spaces, and no punctuation. This seems bizarre to us today, who depend so much on these elements of the written language. But let’s look at how this system actually worked in ancient times. Take for example the following text:

MRYHDLTLLMBWHSFLCWSWHTSSNWNDVRYWHRTHTMRYWNTHLMBWSSRTG

It's possible that, given enough time and concentration, you would be able to figure out what this text says. But, as soon as I tell you what it says, you'll easily be able to read it. This is how the Hebrew language worked. Things were not only written down, but were also passed by oral tradition. Stories, poetry, and histories were told and re-told so many times, that they became familiar to those who passed them along. The writing served basically as a sort of shorthand to help recall the oral traditions and keep them intact over time. Here is the full version of the above text. Read it, then look back over the text above.

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB WHOSE FLEECE WAS WHITE AS SNOW, AND EVERYWHERE THAT MARY WENT THE LAMB WAS SURE TO GO.

It becomes apparent that such writing, although hard for us to comprehend, did serve as a reliable way to pass down information accurately over many generations. Even if you never read this rhyme again for the rest of your life, it has become such an oral tradition that, using the version above without vowels and spaces, you would still be able to recite it perfectly at the end of your life. This is the way the Bible was handed down, through an extremely strong oral tradition tied into the fully written text in the language used by the ancient Hebrews.

This is how we ended up with the name of God as YHWH. There were certainly vowel sounds that were spoken by an ancient Hebrew who read this name from the scroll of Moses, but these vowels were not part of the written language. Over time, the Jews began to feel that the name of God was too holy and too sacred to pronounce out loud. So, instead of pronouncing the actual name represented by the letters YHWH, they would just say "The Name". Over time, all those who actually knew the correct pronunciation died and the proper pronunciation of YHWH was lost.

There has been great debate amongst scholars who have tried to recover the proper pronunciation of YHWH. Two options have risen to prominence.

The first possibility, which is unfamiliar to most Latter-day Saints, is Yahweh – pronounced Yah-way. This is the name that the majority of modern scholars have come to agree upon as the most likely pronunciation based largely upon internal evidence found in the Bible. The first thing to understand is that the letter J was not pronounced as it is today. This would have instead been the sound we know as Y. We see this still today in the word Hallelujah, pronounced Halleluyah. Old Testament names with a J would be pronounced as if it were a Y. Therefore, Joseph would actually have been pronounced Yoseph, Jeremiah would have been pronounced Yeremiah, and Jezebel would have been pronounced Yezebel. With this thought in mind, countless Biblical names contain the partial name of God as Yah. Just a few of these names are:

- Elijah (Eli-Yah), meaning God is Yah
- Jeremiah (Yerimi-Yah), meaning Yah will raise
- Isaiah (Isa-Yah), meaning Salvation is of Yah
- Abijah (Abi-Yah), meaning My father is Yah
- Hezekiah (Hezeki-Yah), meaning Yah has strengthened

Modern biblical translations still contain part of this divine name in Psalm 68:4 *Sing unto God, sing*

praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

For these reasons, the first syllable of the name of God is thought to be Yah by many. There is more debate over the second syllable, but the most popular opinion is that it is “weh”, which makes the pronunciation of YHWH to be YaHWeH or Yahway.

The second opinion of the pronunciation of the divine name is JEHOVAH. This was certainly the opinion held by translators of the King James Version of the Bible who, in some instances, rendered YHWH as JEHOVAH rather than LORD¹. How does YHWH become Jehovah? As the Hebrew language evolved, the use of vowels, spaces, and punctuation eventually worked its way into the written language. When they got to adding the vowels for YHWH they were stuck. No one knew how to pronounce it so no one knew what vowels to add into the name. They simply decided to use the vowel sounds for another word often associated with God. That word was *Adonai*, the Hebrew word for *lord*. They very literally just added the vowel sounds for Adonai into the consonants YHWH. The name was pronounced something like YaHoWaiH. As language changed over time, the pronunciation of Y and W eventually became J and V. Again, we see this clearly in the word Hallelujah, which is still pronounced Halleluyah. The change from W to V is seen most clearly in the German language. A good example is the flower Edelweiss which is pronounced Edelveiss. English, being a Germanic language, underwent the same change. Thus, the word pronounced YaHoWaiH became JaHoVaiH. Over yet more time, the spelling became Jehovah.

From YHWH to Jehovah

1. **YHWH** became...
2. **YaHoWaiH** with the additions of the vowels from *Adonai*, which became...
3. **JaHoVaiH** as language changed over time, and eventually became...
4. **JeHoVaH**

LDS doctrine claims the actual name of Jesus Christ is Jehovah. The actual history and etymology of the name show it to be merely a creation of man while trying to recover a lost name. But this is not the only problem that understanding the history of the name Jehovah causes the LDS church. Consider the following phrase which is found over and over again in the Bible: *the LORD is God*. Anytime the word Lord is represented in all capital letters – LORD – then it is in representation of the tetragrammation YHWH. So here in the phrase “the LORD is God” we actually have the phrase “YHWH is Elohim”. In applying the LDS belief that Jehovah is the name of Jesus Christ and Elohim is the name of God the Father, every time this phrase appears it is proclaiming that Jehovah *is* Elohim – Jesus *is* God the Father. However, read in its proper context, it simply means YHWH is God. Whether you prefer the pronunciation

¹ Exodus 6:3, Psalm 83:18, Isaiah 12:2, Isaiah 26:4

as Yahweh or Jehovah, it proclaims this name as the name of the plural yet singular God, Elohim.

Since modern scholarship seems to point to YHWH being more likely pronounced as Yahweh, I will note that name in brackets in the text where it is important to remember the differentiation between the somewhat vague term LORD and the more specific personal name of the God of Israel, Yahweh.

5-7 ...And the LORD [Yahweh] God[s] formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Another very vital LDS doctrine is that we, as creations of God, are eternal creatures. We have always existed as spirits in the pre-existence and will always exist after our assignment to a degree of heavenly glory. Yet here in verse seven we see the creation of man explained more fully than it was earlier. The body of man is formed from the dust and then God breathes a spirit into the body. When body and spirit are united, a soul comes into being. If the spirit was pre-existing, it would not be breathed out of God into a body. It would already exist apart from God. The apostle John clearly understood that we had not always existed when he proclaimed in John 1:15, *This was he [Jesus] of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.* In what way was Jesus *before* John? John was clearly born before Jesus was, so he couldn't have been speaking of that. John also began his ministry before Jesus began His, so that could not be the context either. The only way that Jesus was *before* John was in creation. Jesus, being a part of the Elohim, had always existed. John had not. John had a definite beginning, so Jesus was very much *before* John.

8-24 ...And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs... And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man... Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Here we get a glimpse of God's original purpose for man. He is creating a paradise for them where He can fellowship with them. He gives them rewarding work to do. He gives them rewarding relationships to enjoy. Life in the Garden of Eden is likely the best insight we have into what heaven might actually be like. It was Adam's sin that caused him to be thrown out of this paradise. The entire Old Testament from that original sin on is the story of God reconciling fallen man back to Himself so that He can again bless them with this life in paradise. The Apostle Paul tells us as much in his second letter to the Corinthians 5:19: *...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

It is important to note, considering the LDS doctrines concerning polygamy, that God's intended paradise for man consisted of one man for one woman. Much more light will be shed on this subject in future passages.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

It is important to note that man had no need to be *covered* at this time, as will be explained in Chapter 3:21.

[End]