

Men's Discipleship

False Religions: Mormonism Part 2

Doctrinal Contrasts: LDS Teachings vs. Protestant Theology

Nature of God (Godhead and Attributes)

1. **LDS Doctrine:** Latter-day Saint theology departs from classical monotheism by teaching that God the Father is an **embodied being** of flesh and bone. Joseph Smith declared, *"God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man"* churchofjesuschrist.org. In LDS scripture, we read that *"The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also"* churchofjesuschrist.org. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are regarded as **three distinct divine personages**, often described as "one Godhead" in purpose but **literally three Gods** churchofjesuschrist.org. Joseph Smith taught that *"these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods"* churchofjesuschrist.org. God is not a singular immaterial spirit; LDS teaching states: *"That which is without body or parts is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones."* churchofjesuschrist.org Furthermore, LDS doctrine embraces a **plurality of Gods** in the cosmos (e.g. the Book of Abraham speaks of "the Gods" organizing creation churchofjesuschrist.org) and asserts that God the Father has a wife ("Heavenly Mother"), as *"each [person] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents"* in the premortal realm churchofjesuschrist.org. In summary, Mormonism's God is an exalted man with a physical body, one of potentially many divine beings, and Father of our spirits. Such views diverge sharply from historic Christianity, which considers these teachings anthropomorphic and polytheistic (thus **heretical** by Protestant standards).
2. **Protestant Position:** In Protestant theology, God's nature is defined by **strict monotheism** and classical theism. The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and London Baptist Confession (LBCF) affirm that *"The Lord our God is but one only living and true God... a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal"* the1689confession.com. There is **only one God** in essence, not a council of multiple gods. The confessions explicitly reject any corporeality of God, insisting He is not like created beings. God is uncreated, infinite, and has **always been God** – in Protestant eyes, it is blasphemous to suggest, as Mormonism does, that God was once a man who progressed to godhood. churchofjesuschrist.org. Furthermore, the confessions teach the **Holy Trinity**: *"In this divine and infinite Being there are three, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence undivided"* the1689confession.com. In other words, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-equal **persons** of the one God – **not** three separate gods. Any system like LDS theology, which asserts three distinct Gods and an embodied, mutable Deity, is deemed **heretical** by these standards. The confessional doctrine of God's unity and spirituality directly contradicts the LDS view, identifying it as a form of tri-theism or anthropomorphism outside the bounds of historic Christian belief.

Jesus Christ and the Trinity

1. **LDS Doctrine (Christology):** In LDS teaching, Jesus Christ is a divine being but **not of the same ontological singularity as the Father**.
 - The phrase “*Jesus Christ is a divine being but not of the same ontological singularity as the Father*” means **Jesus is God, but not the exact same singular being or substance as God the Father**.

1) Christ's Divinity

- **LDS Perspective:** Latter-day Saints believe Jesus Christ is fully divine – **literally God** – but as a distinct person in the Godhead. He is *Jehovah*, the God of the Old Testament, and the Son of God. LDS scripture declares that Jesus was with God in the beginning and that “**by Him, and through Him, and of Him, the worlds are and were created,**” underscoring His godly power as Creator churchofjesuschrist.org. The Book of Mormon and other LDS works refer to Jesus as the *Eternal God* and *Only Begotten Son*. For example, a modern LDS revelation testifies: “*We saw him, even on the right hand of God... that he is the Only Begotten of the Father*” churchofjesuschrist.org. Thus, in LDS belief, Jesus possesses *divine attributes and power given by the Father*, yet remains a separate divine Being in the Father's presence.
- **Protestant Perspective:** Protestants profess that Jesus Christ is **fully God in the same way the Father is God** – In the Bible, Jesus is explicitly called God (for instance, “*the Word was God*” (John 1:1) and Thomas calls Him “My Lord and **my God**” in (John 20:28). “*In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God*” (John 1:1) testifies that Christ shares God's eternal divine nature. Protestants emphasize that **there is only one true God**, so the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not separate gods but the *one* God in a Trinity of three co-equal Persons. Jesus possesses “*the fullness of the Godhead*” (Colossians 2:9) and is worshiped as **God incarnate**, equal to the Father. Any distinctions between Father and Son do not divide God's being – hence Jesus' divinity is precisely the same **one divine being** of the Father, not a second god.

2) Relationship to God the Father

*Joseph Smith's First Vision (1820), in which Heavenly Father (right) and Jesus Christ (left) appeared as **two separate glorified personages**. This vision underpins the LDS teaching that the Father and Son are distinct individuals, not one metaphysical being.*

- **LDS Perspective:** In Latter-day Saint belief, **God the Father (“Elohim”) and Jesus Christ are literally father and son** – two separate divine individuals who are perfectly “one” in will and purpose churchofjesuschrist.org. They do not constitute a single *being*; rather, they form a *united council* called the Godhead. LDS scriptures recount God the Father introducing Jesus as His Son (e.g. at Jesus' baptism, a voice from heaven says “This is my Beloved Son” – showing Father and Son as distinct persons). Joseph Smith's

First Vision is often cited, where the Father and Son appeared side by side, confirming for Latter-day Saints that the Father and Son are **two distinct beings** [rsc.byu.edu](http://rsc.byu.edu/rsc.byu.edu). Moreover, LDS doctrine teaches that “*The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also*” churchofjesuschrist.org, meaning God the Father and Christ each have a glorified physical body in His exalted state, making them fully separate individuals (the Holy Ghost alone is a spirit personage churchofjesuschrist.org). The Father and Son are “**one**” **only in the sense of total unity of mind, love, and purpose** – Jesus prayed that His disciples might be one “*as we (Father and Son) are one*” churchofjesuschrist.org, which LDS interpret as **oneness in heart, not literally merging identities**. Importantly, Latter-day Saints take Jesus’ sonship quite literally: **God the Father is the literal father of Jesus’ spirit and (through the Virgin Mary) also the father of His physical body** churchofjesuschrist.org. In LDS teaching, Jesus is the **Only Begotten Son** of the Father in the flesh, meaning no other person has God as their earthly father – a unique father–son relationship in a real, not just metaphorical, sense churchofjesuschrist.org. Jesus in LDS belief reveres the Father as a distinct higher authority (“*My Father is greater than I*” – John 14:28)

- Protestant Perspective:** Jesus Christ’s relationship to the Father is defined by the Trinity: they are **Father and Son as two Persons, yet one God**. This means that, unlike the LDS view, **Jesus and the Father are not two separate gods** – they are *distinct persons who share the one divine Being*. Protestants hold that **Father and Son are eternally united in one essence**, often quoting Jesus’ statement “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30) as indicating a unity of *being*. When Jesus said this, His Jewish listeners understood Him to be claiming deity (they accused Him of “*blasphemy... that thou, being a man, makest thyself God*” (John 10:33). In classical Christian doctrine (the Nicene Creed), the Son is “*of one substance with the Father,*” meaning that whatever **God the Father is in His divine nature, the Son is as well**. The Father–Son language is understood relationally, not in a literal physical sense – **the Son was “begotten, not made”**. This phrase “begotten” in Protestant/orthodox theology signifies an eternal relationship: the Son comes from the Father, yet was never created or born in a literal timeframe. In simple terms, **the Father and Son have always been together as one God** – there was never a time when the Father existed without the Son. Jesus is the Son of God by nature; believers become children of God only by adoption (John 1:12). So, Protestants do **not** believe God the Father has a body or physically fathered Jesus; rather, the Holy Spirit miraculously caused Mary to conceive Jesus (Luke 1:35), and Jesus as God the Son took on humanity. In sum, Protestants view Jesus as **eternally one with the Father in Godhood** – a distinct person who prays to and loves the Father, yet *fully sharing the Father’s divine being*. There is **no division of divinity**: *one God* exists as Father, Son, and Spirit, in a partially inscrutable but fundamental unity.

3) Eternal Nature of Christ

- LDS Perspective:** Latter-day Saints teach that Jesus Christ existed **long before His birth on earth – as a premortal spirit alongside Heavenly Father**. In LDS doctrine, all humans lived as spirit children of God prior to earthly life, and Jesus was **the firstborn**

spirit Son of God. That is, **Heavenly Father's first act of parenthood in eternity was to bring forth (beget) Jesus as His eldest spirit child**rsc.byu.edu. This is why one LDS scripture records Jesus saying, *"I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn"*rsc.byu.edu. Being the Firstborn of God's children, Jesus holds a special preeminent status – often called our *Elder Brother* in the heavenly family. LDS leaders explain that **there was a time in eternity when God the Father had no offspring, until Jesus (Jehovah) was begotten as the first spirit child**rsc.byu.edu. After Christ's spirit birth, Heavenly Father then created (or organized) many other spirits – including all of us – hence Jesus is literally senior to us all in the cosmic family orderrsc.byu.edu. Not only is Jesus the oldest of God's children, LDS teaching also holds that **He was divine and chosen from the beginning**. In the premortal existence, Jesus (as Jehovah) worked under the Father's direction in the creation of the worldchurchofjesuschrist.org, and He was selected as the Savior who would come to earth (see Moses 4:2 in the Pearl of Great Price). Thus, Christ's **eternal nature** for Latter-day Saints is that of a *glorified, progressing being*: He has always been linked to God the Father (and was like God even before mortality), but He is **distinct in identity and subordinate to the Father** in authority. Importantly, while LDS believe matter and intelligence are eternal, they **do not view Jesus as co-equal and co-eternal in identity** with the Father from absolute infinity – rather, His identity had a beginning as the Firstborn of the Father. (However, because *"Intelligence" or the core essence of spirits is eternal*churchofjesuschrist.org, they might say the *elements* of Christ's intelligence always existed, yet He became God's Firstborn Son at a specific pointrsc.byu.edu.) After His mortal ministry, death, and resurrection, Jesus attained a fully glorified, **eternal immortal status** "on the right hand of God"churchofjesuschrist.org – and in LDS belief He continues to progress and reign under the Father forever. In summary, the LDS view sees Christ's eternal journey as **literal offspring of God who was with God in the beginning**, obtained divine glory, and will always be divine, though always **a separate personage from the Father**.

- Protestant Perspective:** Protestants assert that **Jesus Christ is eternally existent and uncreated** – there was never a "start" to His divine nature. In other words, **Jesus has always been God**. According to John 1:1, *"In the beginning... the Word was with God, and the Word was God"*quod.lib.umich.edu, indicating that from all eternity past, the Son (the Word) co-existed with the Father. Mainstream Christian doctrine teaches *the eternal generation of the Son*: the Father "begets" the Son **outside of time**, an eternal relationship rather than a literal event. This means unlike the LDS view of a literal spirit birth, Protestants believe *the Son's sonship is an eternal, divine reality* – **there was never a time when the Son did not exist**. Scripture calls Jesus *"the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"* (Revelation 22:13), underscoring that He is eternal God. Jesus Himself said, *"Before Abraham was, I AM"* (John 8:58), taking upon Himself the divine name "I AM" and implying **eternal existence**. Therefore, in Protestant understanding, Christ's *eternal nature* is that He is **co-eternal with the Father**, with no beginning of days. When He was born to Mary, it was not the start of His existence, but rather **God the Son taking on a human nature** at a point in time (the Incarnation). Protestants reject any notion that the Father preceded the Son in existence or that Jesus is somehow a later entity; rather, *the Son was "with God in the beginning"* in absolute termsquod.lib.umich.edu. The mystery of the Trinity holds that the Son is begotten of the

Father “before all worlds,” which is a way to describe an eternal relationship beyond mortal comprehension. Practically speaking, both Father and Son (and Spirit) are equally the one eternal God – hence Jesus shares the Father’s eternal divine nature. After His resurrection and forevermore, Jesus continues as the **Eternal Son** in glory. Unlike LDS theology which envisions a sort of chronological lineage of divine beings, Protestant theology maintains a strict **monotheism across eternity**: Jesus’s divinity is *eternally innate* and not derived from a start point. He *is* (always) “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), **co-equal in eternity with the Father**.

4) Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

- **LDS Perspective:** Latter-day Saints hold Jesus in supreme esteem as **utterly unique in His identity and roles**, even though they believe other beings (like the Father, and potentially exalted humans) are also divine. Jesus Christ’s uniqueness in LDS belief includes being **the only person who is both fully mortal and fully divine by parentage** – “*the only person on earth to be born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father*” churchofjesuschrist.org. This makes Him literally the *Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh*. No other being shares that combined heritage of Godhood and manhood. He was also **foreordained** from before the world’s creation to be the Savior (see 1 Peter 1:20, and Moses 4:2 in LDS scripture). LDS doctrine emphasizes that **only Jesus had the sinless perfection and chosen role to atone for humanity’s sins**. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Samuel declares, “*the Son of God cometh to redeem all those who shall believe on his name*” (Helaman 14:2) – a role solely filled by Christ. Similarly, the Doctrine and Covenants teaches that “*there is no salvation apart from Jesus’ atonement*” (see D&C 18:47). While Latter-day Saints believe all of us are spirit children of God and can eventually become *like* God (through Christ’s grace) in terms of immortality and inheriting divine qualities, **no one else will ever replace or replicate Jesus Christ’s status**. He is **the Firstborn of the Father**, and even if humans can become “joint-heirs” with Christ (Romans 8:17), He remains *our elder Brother and Lord*. In LDS belief, Christ is the **only one through whom salvation is possible** – ordinances like baptism are done in His name, and prayer is offered in His name to the Father. Thus, Jesus is completely unique as *the Savior, the Only Begotten, and the divine Son who made eternal life possible*. Even in the eternities, Latter-day Saints see Jesus as uniquely worthy of our worship alongside the Father – His distinctive Sonship and triumph in the atonement set Him apart from all other beings.
- **Protestant Perspective:** In Protestant Christianity, the **utter uniqueness of Jesus Christ** is a fundamental truth. Jesus is **singular in His identity**: He alone is God incarnate – *the only* incarnation of the one true God. No one else shares that position. According to the Bible, **Jesus is the one and only Son of God in a way no other being is** (John 3:16). While believers are called “children of God,” Jesus is *the* Son by nature and from eternity. He is also **the only Savior of mankind**. The New Testament proclaims, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12) In other words, only Jesus’s name (authority and person) can save – **no other religious figure, prophet, or being can provide salvation**. Protestants strongly reject the idea that any human or angel could

become a god; **Jesus is utterly unique as the only one who is both fully God and fully man.** This uniqueness extends to His work: only Jesus lived a perfect life, only Jesus died as an atoning sacrifice for sin, and only Jesus rose from the dead to conquer death for everyone. “*One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5) explains that Christ alone bridges the gap between God and humanity. Additionally, in Protestant thought, **Christ’s supremacy is absolute** – He is worshiped as God Himself. Any future or past – no creature will ever share equality with Christ. Unlike LDS doctrine, there is no concept of other divine siblings or anyone else becoming a god; **monotheistic faith allows only one God, and Jesus is integral to that one Godhead.** Therefore, Jesus stands **in a class of His own.** He is the *unique Word made flesh* (John 1:14), and His relationship with the Father (the eternal Sonship) is unique, His birth is unique (born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit), and His role as Savior and Lord is uniquely His. In summary, Protestants view Jesus as **utterly matchless** – the **only** divine Son and Savior. All honor and worship due to God are given to Jesus, yet He remains one with the Father, highlighting both His uniqueness and His unity with God.