

# LDS Interpretation of God: Quick Reference Guide

Understanding the Godhead, Elohim & Jehovah, and Biblical Monotheism

## I. THE GODHEAD: THREE SEPARATE BEINGS

**LDS Core Belief: The Godhead consists of three distinct, separate, glorified individuals who are perfectly one in purpose, mind, and glory—but NOT one being in substance (as the Trinity teaches).**

### The Three Members:

Member	LDS Identity/Title	Physical Form
God the Father	Elohim	Glorified body of flesh and bone
The Son	Jehovah (OT), Jesus Christ (NT)	Glorified body of flesh and bone
Holy Ghost	Holy Spirit, Comforter	Personage of spirit (no body)

**Unity: "One" in purpose, doctrine, testimony—not in person or substance. Authority: Father is supreme; Son and Holy Ghost defer to Him.**

### Key LDS Scripture:

**D&C 130:22:** "The Father has a **body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's**; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit."

**Joseph Smith—History 1:17 (First Vision):** "I saw **two personages**, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—**This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!**"

## II. ELOHIM - GOD THE FATHER

### Who is Elohim?

- **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) = Formal, exalted name for God the Father
- Supreme Being and ultimate source of all authority
- Literal Father of our spirits (we are His offspring)
- Organizer of the earth through His Son

### Why "Elohim"?

- Elohim is a **plural noun** in Hebrew (ending -im = masculine plural)
- Used **~2,500+ times** in Hebrew Bible
- LDS interpretation: Plural form hints at divine council/multiple divine beings
- In LDS theology: Specifically refers to God the Father

### Key Elohim Appearances:

- **Genesis 1:1:** "Elohim [plural] created [singular verb]" - grammatical anomaly
- **Genesis 1:26:** "Elohim said, Let us make man in our image"
- **Psalms 82:1:** "Elohim stands among the elohim [gods]"

### Role of the Father:

- We worship the Father (not Jesus primarily)
- All prayers directed to the Father
- Source of all priesthood authority
- Jesus defers to and honors the Father

## III. JEHOVAH - JESUS CHRIST

**Critical LDS Distinction: Most Christians believe "Jehovah" = God the Father. LDS theology teaches Jehovah = Jesus Christ (the Son).**

### Who is Jehovah?

- **YHWH** (יהוה) = The Tetragrammaton, used **~6,800+ times** in Hebrew Bible
- **Jehovah/Yahweh** = Jesus Christ in His premortal, mortal, and resurrected state
- The God of the Old Testament who spoke to Moses, Abraham, and the prophets
- The Creator of the earth under the Father's direction

### Where Did "Jehovah" Come From?

- YHWH → Yahweh → Jehovah:**
- Ancient Hebrew had no vowels (only YHWH consonants)
  - Masoretes (6th-10th century) added vowels from "Adonai" (Lord) as a reading reminder
  - Medieval Christians transliterated YHWH + Adonai vowels = "Jehovah" (1530s)
  - Scholars believe original was **"Yahweh"** (based on Greek transcriptions)
  - LDS use "Jehovah" traditionally but acknowledge "Yahweh" likely more accurate

### Biblical Evidence: Jehovah = Jesus Christ

#### 1. Jehovah Appears Physically (But No One Has Seen the Father)

**Exodus 33:11:** "The LORD [Jehovah] spoke unto Moses **face to face**, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

**Genesis 18:1:** "The LORD [Jehovah] appeared unto Abraham... and, lo, **three men stood by him.**" (Jehovah ate food with Abraham)

#### Problem for Trinitarians:

**John 1:18:** "No man hath seen God [the Father] at any time."

**1 Timothy 6:16:** The Father "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

**LDS Resolution:** They saw Jehovah (Jesus Christ), not Elohim (the Father).

#### 2. Jesus Claims to be "I AM" (Jehovah)

**Exodus 3:14:** God tells Moses, "I AM THAT I AM" (Jehovah reveals Himself)

**John 8:58:** Jesus declares, "Before Abraham was, I am." (Jews try to stone Him for blasphemy)

**Direct Claim:** Jesus identifies Himself as Jehovah.

#### 3. Isaiah Saw Jesus' Glory

**Isaiah 6:1-5:** Isaiah sees "the Lord [Jehovah] sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up."

**John 12:41:** "These things said Esaias, when he saw his [Jesus'] glory, and spake of him."

**Conclusion:** Isaiah saw the premortal Christ (Jehovah), not the Father.

#### 4. The Rock of Israel = Christ

**Deuteronomy 32:4:** "He is the **Rock**" (referring to Jehovah)

**1 Corinthians 10:4:** "That **Rock was Christ.**"

**Paul confirms:** The God of the Old Testament (the Rock) = Jesus Christ.

## IV. RECONCILING "ONLY ONE GOD" PASSAGES

### The Problem:

#### Old Testament:

- **Deuteronomy 6:4:** "The LORD our God is **one LORD**"
- **Isaiah 43:10:** "Before me there was **no God formed**"
- **Isaiah 44:6:** "Beside me there is **no God**"

#### New Testament:

- **1 Corinthians 8:4:** "There is none other God but one"
- **1 Timothy 2:5:** "There is **one God**, and one mediator"

### LDS Resolution:

#### 1. "One" = Unity of Purpose, Not Substance

**John 17:21-22 (Jesus' Prayer):** "That they all may be **one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be **one in us...** that they may be **one, even as we are one.**"

### LDS Argument:

- Jesus prays that disciples will be "one" as He and Father are "one"
- Does this mean disciples become one substance? **No.**
- It means unity of purpose, mind, testimony
- **Therefore:** "We are one" = perfect unity, not Trinitarian fusion

#### 2. The Father is Supreme; All Others Defer to Him

##### Jesus defers to the Father:

- **John 5:30:** "I seek not mine own will, but the **will of the Father**"
- **John 14:28:** "My Father is **greater than I**"
- **1 Corinthians 11:3:** "The head of Christ is **God [the Father]**"
- **1 Corinthians 15:28:** "The Son... shall be **subject unto him [the Father]**"

**LDS Interpretation: There is only one supreme God to whom we worship: the Father (Elohim). Jesus and Holy Ghost are divine but subordinate. This is monotheism of authority, not monotheism of substance.**

#### 3. Context: Condemning Idols, Not Denying Divine Beings

**Isaiah 44:9-20:** Describes people carving idols from wood, bowing to blocks of wood.

### LDS Argument:

- "No God beside me" = no other god worthy of worship, no worthless idols
- Does NOT deny existence of other divine beings (Son, Holy Ghost)
- Similar to a king saying "There is no king but me" in his kingdom

## V. BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR THREE SEPARATE BEINGS

#### 1. The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:16-17)

"Jesus... went up out of the water: and... he saw the **Spirit of God descending** like a dove... And lo a **voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son.**"

### All three present simultaneously:

- Jesus: In the water (physical body)
- Holy Ghost: Descending as dove (spirit)
- Father: Speaking from heaven (separate being)

**LDS Point:** Cannot be one being in three modes. Why would God speak to Himself?

#### 2. Stephen's Vision (Acts 7:55-56)

"He... looked up stedfastly into heaven, and **saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God...** I see... **the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.**"

**LDS Point:** Stephen sees **two separate beings**. Spatial separation = distinct persons.

#### 3. Jesus Prays to the Father (John 17:5)

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me **with thine own self** with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

**LDS Point:** Jesus had glory with the Father before creation = two beings existing together. If one being, why pray to Himself?

## VI. WHAT OTHER CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

Issue	Protestant/Evangelical	Jehovah's Witnesses	LDS
Godhead	One God, three persons (Trinity, Nicene Creed 325 AD)	Only Father is God; Jesus is created being (Michael); Holy Spirit is a force	Three separate beings, one Godhead
Elohim	Generic title "God" (not personal name)	Generic title "God"	Personal name of the Father
YHWH/Jehovah	Personal name of Father or Trinity (not Jesus specifically)	Personal name of Father ONLY (Jesus is "a god," not Jehovah)	Personal name of Jesus Christ
John 1:18 Issue	"No one has seen God" = seeing full glory (not veiled appearances)	No one has seen Jehovah (Father) fully	No one has seen Elohim (Father); they saw Jehovah (Christ)
"One God" Passages	One being/substance (three persons in one essence)	Only Father is true God (Jesus subordinate)	One in purpose/unity (three separate beings)

## Protestant Objections to LDS View:

**1. Polytheism:** "Three separate beings = three gods (violates monotheism)"

**LDS Response:** Monotheism of authority (one supreme God: Father). Unity of purpose, not substance.

**2. Isaiah 44:6:** "Beside me there is no God" (denies other divine beings)

**LDS Response:** Context = condemning idols, not denying Son/Holy Ghost. "No God beside me" = no other worthy of worship.

**3. Jesus' Subordination:** "If Jesus prays to Father, He can't be equal"

**LDS Response:** Correct! Jesus IS subordinate (1 Cor 11:3, 15:28). LDS affirm this.

## VII. SUMMARY COMPARISON

Doctrine	Traditional Christianity	LDS Position
Godhead	One God, three persons (Trinity)	Three separate beings, one Godhead
God the Father	First person of Trinity, no body	Elohim, glorified body of flesh/bone
Jesus Christ	Second person of Trinity	Jehovah (OT), separate from Father

Doctrine	Traditional Christianity	LDS Position
Holy Ghost	Third person of Trinity	Personage of spirit
"One God"	One being, one substance	One in purpose and unity
Who Appeared in OT?	The Father or Trinity	Jehovah (Jesus Christ)
Physical Form	God is spirit (no body)	Father and Son have bodies
Source of Doctrine	Nicene Creed (325 AD)	First Vision (1820), revelation

## THE BOTTOM LINE

### Why LDS Theology is Biblical:

- ✓ Explains how Jesus prays to the Father (two persons)
- ✓ Explains Stephen's vision (two separate beings)
- ✓ Explains baptism of Jesus (all three present)
- ✓ Explains "My Father is greater than I" (Father supreme)
- ✓ Explains "right hand of God" (spatial relationship)
- ✓ Takes Bible literally (not spiritualizing away)
- ✓ Matches early Christian teaching (pre-Nicene)
- ✓ Confirmed by modern revelation (First Vision)