

THE PRE-EXISTENCE: Is it Biblical?

Early Mormonism taught that every person who has ever been born on earth is our spirit brother or sister from a pre-mortal existence in heaven.

We read from early Mormon doctrine:

“Man was begotten and born of heavenly parents, reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal physical body.” (Joseph F. Smith, “The Origin of Man,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1909, pp 78,80)

The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ. (See D&C 93:21).

He (Jesus) is thus our elder brother. (See Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 26).

Those of us who were born and bred on the doctrines of Joseph Smith, were taught from childhood that we pre-existed in heaven in a “pre-mortal” state. Accordingly, in the pre-existence, we made some choices that influenced our mortal birth and our eternal well or not-so-well being. Choices we made in the pre-existence determined what color of skin we would have here, it determined whether or not we would be born and raised in the perfect religion that would be restored by Joseph Smith. In fact, those choices determined if we would even be worthy enough to be allowed to have a mortal body.

The story of our pre-existence goes like this: we were all born spirit children of Father and Mother God. Jesus Christ was the firstborn spirit child, and Lucifer is also a spirit child of these heavenly parents. It teaches that every person who was ever born on the earth are spirit brothers and sisters from the pre-mortal state. So we are then, younger brothers and sisters of Jesus as well as of Lucifer.

This story goes on to teach that Lucifer came up with a plan of salvation for sinful humans and Jesus also had a plan. God, who is the “literal” Father of all our spirits, accepted Jesus’ plan and rejected Lucifer’s. This made Lucifer so upset that he started an angelic rebellion resulting in a war in heaven. This war included all the spirit children, or angels—and Michael the archangel, who according to their teachings is Adam. The angels that followed Lucifer were condemned and were denied the right to receive mortal bodies. They were subsequently forced out of heaven, and are now demons roaming the earth bent on destroying anyone they can. Some of the angels who received earthly bodies had proven they were more valiant in the pre-mortal state, because they fought against these “bad” angels. As a result, they were given the blessing of being born with white skin. Therefore, humans who are born with dark skin were supposedly the angels who decided not to choose sides with either Lucifer or Jesus, but rather had decided to wait it out and then join ranks with the winner. Because of their lack of valor, they were cursed to be born with black skin

“Every man had his agency there, and men receive rewards here based upon their actions there, just as they will receive rewards hereafter for deeds done in the body. The Negro, evidently, is receiving the reward he merits.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:61, 65-66.).

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie also taught:

Those who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed on them during mortality are known to us as the negroes. Such spirits are sent to earth through the lineage of Cain, the mark put upon him for his rebellion against God, and his murder of Abel being a black skin...the negro are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned..." (Mormon Doctrine, 527-28; 1966 orig. ed., changed in the current ed.).

This story is taught and repeated countless times in Mormon and Mormon Fundamental Sunday Schools and meetings. To the children who hear it from childhood, it is a story as normal as the story of Adam and Eve, or the Flood of Noah. They grow up believing that they had a pre-mortal existence. It is as natural to think about and identify with that existence, as it is to believe that the sky will be blue tomorrow morning when they wake up. In fact to even consider the possibility that there is no pre-existence, is mind-boggling, an extremely difficult concept to grasp.

In obedience to God's command in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," we are going to either prove or disprove the doctrine of pre-existence as taught in early Mormon writings.

God does not want us to be deceived. He constantly warns us that there are many deceivers out there, many who wander around in sheep's clothing but are inwardly ferocious wolves. In order for us to know what is true and what is false, we need to be able to test everything that people tell us. The "plumb line," or guideline for truth is the Bible. It is God's infallible word, given to us from His loving heart to teach, watch over and guide us into His way and His truths, so that we won't be deceived by that liar, the devil. (John 8:44)

Does the Bible teach or even hint at a pre-mortal existence? Early and present-day Mormon and fundamentalist teachers use the Bible to try and prove that pre-mortal existence is indeed a fact. Therefore, the Bible will be used in this study to discover whether or not we pre-existed.

A proof Scripture that is often used in their claims that we pre-existed is Jeremiah 1:5 where God says that He knew Jeremiah before he was created in his mother's womb. The assumption is that Jeremiah was in existence up in heaven in his spiritual body before he came to earth in his physical body.

Jeremiah 1:5: Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

This verse is teaching that God is omniscient which means that He knows everything there is to know, past, present and future. It does not teach that we pre-existed before our natural birth. This verse is saying that God knew He was going to create Jeremiah before He actually created Jeremiah and that He had a special work planned for Jeremiah to do while he lived. The same idea is taught in the following verse:

Psalms 139:16: Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.

The verse above, from Psalms, declares God's omniscience, proclaiming His foreknowledge of all things: that which has not yet happened and those who are not yet born.

Isaiah 46:10: Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

Isaiah also confirms that God knows everything, from the beginning to the end and everything in-between:

Before a Biblical doctrine can be accurately established, we need to be sure that the entire Bible agrees on the topic. If a few verses appear to be saying something different than what the rest of the Bible teaches, it is imperative that the passage be studied very carefully. Taking verses out of their context is one way to mis-read and mis-understand a Biblical teaching.

With this in mind, we go now to a passage from 1 Corinthians 15:44-49 speaking of the human body and whether we first pre-existed as a spiritual being:

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

A clear demarcation line is evidenced in the subject of physical and spiritual bodies. There is a physical body and there is a spiritual body. Observe that Verse 46 tells us plainly which of the two came first: the spiritual was NOT first; **the natural was first**, and after that the spiritual!

This then begs the question: how could we have pre-existed in a pre-mortal, spiritual state if the spiritual did not come first?

Jesus addresses this idea in John 1:18 where He said:

John 1:18: No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

Jesus tells us in the above verse, that no one, except Himself, has ever seen God at any time. Isn't that kind of strange? If we pre-existed with our father God in heaven, why didn't we ever see our Father in Heaven?

Jesus also said:

He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. (John 3:31-32)

Jesus teaches that He is the One who came from Heaven. He says we are made of the earth, therefore we know only the things of the earth. We do not and cannot know heavenly things because we've never been there. Jesus has been there, so He could tell the people of heavenly things, however they did not believe Him then just as people do not believe Him now.

Jesus continues to tell His hearers that they did not pre-exist:

John 6:46: Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Only Jesus had seen the Father before He came to earth. No human except Jesus had seen the Father because no one else pre-existed. How many times does God have to repeat the same thing before we will believe Him?

John 5:37-38: And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

Not only have we never seen Him, we haven't even seen what His shape is like or heard His voice. It seems rather odd that we could have been born in heaven by God the Father and a wife, living for uncountable years in His presence there yet at no time saw Him or heard His voice?

John 8:23: And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

Very clearly here Jesus has confirmed that ALL humans are from beneath (here on earth) and that He is the only one who came down from above.

He had pre-existed as God eternally, continues to exist in heaven as God and will continue as God forever for eternity. We came from the earth, not from heaven. Our pre-existence was only in the form of a lump of clay before God breathed his life into us, creating a spirit within us.

Zechariah 12:1: Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him...

This verse explains that God created, or formed each person's spirit within him. This was accomplished at conception. Our spirits were formed (created) within "man" (our mortal bodies) by God at that certain point in time. Zechariah agrees with the rest of the Biblical record: we did not pre-exist in a spiritual state BEFORE we were created in the physical state.

John 6:41-42: The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

The many statements Jesus made about having come down from heaven shocked the Jews. They did NOT believe nor had God ever taught, nor did anyone have such a notion of the pre-existence of mankind. It was so shocking to the Jews that in verse 42 they are beginning to question with each other how Jesus could assume such elevated ideas about Himself. He seemed to them to be a mere human, how could He possibly have come down from heaven?

Summarizing this portion of the study, we've learned that 1 Corinthians 15 does *not* support a pre-existence; but rather, the opposite is true. The spiritual did not come first, as is necessary in the pre-mortal teaching, but the physical came first. Then we discovered that Jesus Himself continually taught that He alone came down from heaven; that the people had never, **at any time**, seen God, seen His form nor heard His voice.

Now we are going to take a look at the phrase: God's Only Begotten Son. If Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son, then surely God didn't have other sons. The pre-mortal idea however, teaches that all the billions of people born on this planet, including Jesus, are brothers and sisters in the pre-mortal life, all were born in heaven to the same parents, our heavenly Father and heavenly mother.

If Jesus is God's **Only** Begotten Son, how could we be His brothers and sisters? Is Jesus really just our elder brother as Mormon doctrine teaches? Are we truly brothers and sisters of Lucifer and all the rest of the demonic host? No! The belief that we have a literal spiritual relationship to demons and the devil is repulsive and false.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God's Only Begotten Son, in fact God verbally testified to that from heaven during the ministry of Jesus. (Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, Luke 3:1 etc.) But what does the phrase mean? Does it mean, as some say, that Jesus and Lucifer were spirit brothers, but because Jesus' plan was accepted, He was the only one of the two worthy to get a physical body?

Or, as others teach, is He referred to as the Only Begotten Son because He was the only person ever born who had an immortal Father, God, and a mortal mother, Mary? (Hidden within that explanation is their belief that God came upon Mary and had physical sex with her to create Jesus. See *The Seer*, By Orson Pratt, Page 158)

The New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. To know what the original word, words or phrases in the text actually mean, we can go to a Greek bible dictionary. This helps insure that we do not misunderstand the teaching of the Bible and mis-apply its meaning.

Only Begotten - (the Greek word is: *monogenes*). Monogenes means: One and ONLY. Unique. Only. One of a kind. **The only one of a family.** The only one as a class or kind.

This word is applied only to Jesus Christ in His relationship to the Father. It is never used to refer to anyone else's relationship to the Father. The original language definition absolutely prohibits the teaching that we are all spirit children of God and that Jesus and Lucifer are spirit brothers. That simply cannot be true according to the original language definition of the word.

The ONLY begotten Son, means there is only ONE. By no stretch of the definition can it possibly mean one of many sons. It is also impossible for this Greek word to mean a child born of a spiritual father and a mortal mother.

John 1:34: And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

If Jesus is merely our elder brother, why is He ALONE identified as THE Son of God?

John 1:49: Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

If Jesus is our elder brother, why did Nathanael not identify Him as his brother instead of as THE Son of God? After all, based on pre-existence, Nathanael was equally a son of God as Jesus was!

Jesus is constantly referred to as "the" Son of God. If we are all spiritual brothers and sisters from a pre-mortal existence and heavenly family, why did Jesus not teach that? He certainly had many great opportunities to do so. Why didn't He correct the Jews thinking? Why wasn't He referred to as "a" son of God instead of THE Son of God?

Did God have more than one Son? No! The Bible tells us that God is the Creator of all things and of all creatures. He is Creator by idea, by design and He created it all out of nothing. There was no creation, no angels, no humans, no matter, no galaxies, no nothing until God said "Let there be.....!" (Genesis Chapter 1)

The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ is God, that all things were made by Him and through Him. That everything that has been made was made by Him. (John 1:1-4, Hebrews 1:2, Colossians 1:16,17)

Ezekiel 28:15 teaches us that Lucifer is a created being, therefore he was created by Jesus, since Jesus is the Creator! How could he then be the spirit brother of Jesus? It is impossible to be so.

None of us existed in any life form whatsoever until God breathed life into us when He created our mortal bodies:

Genesis 2:7: And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Job 10:8-9: Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?

Job 33:4: The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

Just as God breathed His breath into Adam to give him life, He breathes into each of us the breath of life when we are born. From these verses, we see that we did not live in any form or sphere before the natural mortal birth. We were only dust.

Job 33:6: Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay.

Psalms 103:14: For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

God remembers we are dust; it seems strange that He doesn't remember that we are His spiritual children from a heavenly family.

Another thought to consider is that when Jesus claimed to be God's Son, it upset the Jews so much that they tried to kill Him. They knew that God's Son would by necessity be God Himself (Isaiah 9:6; also compare Isaiah 7:14 with Matthew 1:22,23).

This idea is evident from the following verses:

John 5:18: Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

John 10:33: The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

John 10:36: Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

When Jesus claimed God was His Father, He was claiming equality with God. Jesus is God so He could do that. We are not, nor will ever be gods, so we cannot legitimately claim God is our Father from a pre-existence. When humans are referred to as "children of God" the Bible teaches that we can only be His children through adoption. When we receive Jesus (John 1:12) we are adopted into God's family (Romans 8:23, Ephesians 1:5). No one automatically belongs to His family.

A portion of the pre-existence story is hinged on the passage in Revelation 12:7-9 where it describes a war taking place in heaven. Unfortunately for the sake of the truth, those who first propagated the story of a pre-mortal existence didn't realize that the Revelation account is describing a future war that will take place in heaven. It is not referring to one that has already been fought. In Revelation, Satan is described as "that ancient serpent, called the devil". How could he have been the ancient serpent at that point in time if the war had just begun and he hadn't become a serpent yet? According to the Bible, when Satan sinned, he was evicted from his position in heaven along with all the rebellious demons and it was after that event that Satan took on the nature of the

serpent. Actually, the war described in Revelation has not, as yet, taken place. The devil and his demons continue to have access to heavenly places. (See: Job 1:6, Job 2:1, Ephesians 6:12)

We have established that there is indeed no pre-existence, absolutely no pre-mortal state of being before our physical birth here on earth. Once we understand this fact, we become aware of the many doctrines spawned from this belief and that they are necessarily doomed because of the collapse of pre-existence.

One of these collapsed doctrines is eternal progression. Eternal progression requires that God was once a man who learned to become a god and is eternally progressing from one glory to another as all the gods before him have done, and all the gods after him will do.

But, according to the bible, there are no other gods, there never was and never will be other gods here or anywhere, and our Mighty God is not a mere man. See the following verses:

Isaiah 44:6: I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

Isaiah 43:10: Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, 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 formed, neither shall there be after me.

The demons know and believe that there is only one God,

James 2:19: Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble .

It is spiritually healthy to remember that it was Satan who first suggested the lie that man could become a god. (See Genesis 3:5.)

Finally, we read the verses in the Bible which inform us that God is not a man who progressed his way to godhood:

Hosea 11:9: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee:

Numbers 23:19: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Psalms 50:21: ... thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee.

God knows who He is and who He is not. He has revealed Himself to us in His Word, we would do well to believe His testimony of Himself, rather than who others say He is. In Psalm 50:21, He rebukes those who thought He was a man just like themselves.

Malachi 3:6: For I am the LORD, I change not -

There is no truth in the eternal progression of God.

As we have seen, the Bible clearly teaches that we did not pre-exist in a spiritual state before our mortal life began here on earth. That we were not born of heavenly parents then born again by physical parents can be a most difficult truth for many to accept. The Bible simply does not support the possibility of a pre-existence. Not surprisingly, when we have been taught all our lives that we pre-existed, that notion becomes part of our identity. As some grapple with the information that we did not pre-exist, it can be shocking or traumatic, or at the least, difficult to comprehend and accept.

Our identity is challenged. We are not who we thought we were. Its comparable to discovering that black really isn't black after all, that it is yellow. At first, it can affect the way we see and react to events around us. We have to adjust and re-adjust, even re-identify ourselves almost daily, It takes time for our minds to wrap completely around this new concept as the mental and emotional shock is being worked through.

However, the beauty of the Bible is this: Once you believe the truth and accept it, you will experience a sense of freedom that you have never before known. Believe it or not, the story of a pre-existence effectively places people in bondage, a bondage that requires those who believe it to live, believe and act according to the requirements on their mortal life that the pre-existence story demands. When the undocumented story of a pre-mortal life is rejected, and life is lived according to the Biblical guidelines instead, freedom in Christ is truly discovered and experienced.

God's true salvation plan is so simple and so lovely in its simplicity.

1. **We are sinners.** (Romans 3:23)
2. **The wages of sin is death.** (Romans 6:23)
3. **Jesus Christ suffered death for our sins.** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
4. **The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.** (Romans 6:23)
5. **To those who receive Him, He gives the right to be called children of God.** (John 1:12)
6. **Salvation is a free gift to all who call upon His name.** (Romans 10:13)
7. **Salvation is by grace through faith; no works will avail in God's FREE salvation plan!** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

May you call upon His name and, by faith, accept His FREE gift of salvation today!