

First Vision

~ Part 2 of 2

(March 6, 2007)

Last week we examined the LDS Church's claims that when their founder was a 14 year old boy he had a remarkable vision of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

I read a statement from Gordon B. Hinckley, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of the LDS church today, which said:

"The whole strength (of the Church) rests on the validity of that (first) vision . . . it either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most wonderful and important work under the heavens."

We spent last weeks show examining the proofs of Joseph Smith's First Vision as it is taught by Mormonism today.

I made the statement that the First Vision is vital to Mormonism in at least two important ways:

First, the reality or fiction of it speaks to whether Joseph Smith was a really a prophet of God or if he was a religious manipulator.

The evidence we examined last week provided us with a very clear answer to this.

The second reason I said the First Vision is vital to Mormonism is because as a

<p>result of it, Mormonism ultimately and distinctively embraces a totally different idea about the nature or make-up of God.</p> <p>Mormonism today maintains, teaches, and testifies that Joseph Smith saw both God the Father and Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Mormonism says God the Father and Jesus Christ have individual body's of flesh and bone, as tangible as Man's.</p> <p>It says God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son are separate and distinct individuals, that the idea of the Trinity is stupid and is a corrupt lie from misguided men.</p> <p>As a result of the first vision and other teachings, Mormonism says that God the Father was once a Man himself.</p> <p>And Mormonism teaches that there are a multiplicity of God's.</p> <p>Tonight we are going to examine the distinct LDS doctrines that are a result of the First Vision and see if they either support whether the First Vision actually happened or if they further prove that it was simply a fabrication of Joseph Smith's from the start.</p>	
<p>I think there are a few facts that need to be understood before we launch into the second part of our examination.</p>	<p>First, let's look at the historical setting of the times relative to visions</p>

of the times relative to visions.

Last week you remember that the earliest account of the first vision – which has been authenticated as having been hand-written by Joseph Smith himself – was composed 18 years after the event was said to take place and that it only mentioned one personage – the Son – as appearing in the grove.

I think it is important to remember that the early 1820's were times rife with spiritual excitement and that many people were claiming to have had visions of Jesus Christ in all the excitement.

In 1816, when Joseph Smith was only 10 years old, a minister by the name of Elias Smith out of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, wrote a book titled, *The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels, and Sufferings of Elias Smith*.

In it he wrote:

"I went into the woods . . . a light appeared from heaven My mind seemed to rise in the light to the throne of God and the Lamb. The Lamb once slain appeared to my understanding, and while viewing Him I felt such love to Him as I never felt toward anything earthly . . . It is not possible to tell how long I remained in that situation."

Alexander Campell, writing of the 1824 revival in the State of New York said that . . .

"Enthusiasm fourishes . . . This man was regenerated in his sleep by a vision of the night. That man heard a voice in the woods saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." A third (man) saw his Savior descending to the tops of the trees at noon day."

Asa Wild had a revelation published in the Wayne Sentinel in 1823 - a newspaper to which the Smith's apparently subscribed - which said:

"It seemed as if my mind . . . was struck motionless, as well as into nothing, before the awful and glorious majesty of the Great Jehovah. He then spake."

(The articles goes on).

"He also told me that every denomination of professing Christians had become extremely corrupt . . ."

Sound familiar?

All of these accounts, and others, predate any mention verbally or in writing of Joseph Smith's first vision by at least ten years!

Joseph Smith handwritten account of his "supposed first vision," was not unlike any of the other reported revelations that were described as having occurred throughout his teen years.

Had Joseph consistently reported a "vision" of just the Savior - as he did in his initial account - he may have gotten away with his story (for a number of reasons which we'll examine in a minute.)

But in typical Joseph Smith fashion -

and a typical LDS fashion which continues even today - Joseph decided to interpolate his accounts over and over again as the years went on, adding and subtracting new and even more outlandish information in order to present a more integrated history and theology, obviously unaware of the coming advent of tenacious historians a world-wide internet.

The most aggressive addition to what has come to be known as his authorized first vision was when he added that he saw "God the Father in a body of flesh and bones" standing in the air with the Son."

The remainder of my presentation tonight will be evidences which I believe prove Joseph Smith a fraud.

First, let's see what the Bible says about the nature of God and about "Man seeing Him."

Jesus said in **John 4:24** "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*"

Then when Jesus appeared to his disciples after His resurrection he said:

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Jesus Himself, speaking of the Father, said "*God is Spirit.*"

And then speaking of Himself says, "*A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye*

see me have."

To believe Joseph's rewritten account of the First Vision that "God has a body of flesh and bone" is to categorically deny what Jesus Himself taught!

Think about this, my brothers and sisters!

Choose which is more trustworthy - a story that has been revised over and over again OR the Word of the Lord.

Secondly, both the Old and New Testament in describing God (the Father) call Him "a consuming fire!"

OLD TESTAMENT

Deuteronomy 4:24 *"For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."*

NEW TESTAMENT

Hebrews 12:28 *"for our God is a consuming fire."*

The Word also says that God is not - IS NOT - a man!

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." Numbers 23:19

What else does the Word say that is in complete conflict with Joseph's revised accounts?

The Word says that man cannot even

see God (the Father) and live!

Exodus 33:20 says "*no man can see me, and live.*"

1st John 4:12 "*No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us."*

John 1:18 *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

Colossians 1:15 says Jesus is in the image of *the invisible God!*

and

1st Timothy 1:17 also calls God the Father *eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God . . .*

Speaking of Jesus dwelling with the Father. . .

1st Timothy 6:16 says

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

So, according the Word, God is

a spirit

a consuming fire

he is not a man, but is invisible

and no man can see Him and live!

When Joseph Smith finished writing and publishing the Book of Mormon in 1830, he presented a book that described a very different concept of God than what the authorized version of the First Vision presents to the world today.

Remember, the LDS Church today presents a First Vision account that was constructed well after the Book of Mormon was published in 1829-1830.

But listen to what Joseph has the Book of Mormon saying!

Mosiah 15: 1-2, 5

“And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God Himself shall come down among the Children of men, and shall redeem His people. And because He dwelleth in the flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son, and thus the flesh becoming subject to the spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth

Joseph’s revised account that says he saw God and that God is a man in a body of flesh and bone is just an outright fabrication.

But Latter-day Saints will cry “the Bible is not reliable! It hasn’t been translated correctly!”

Well, let’s turn to the Book of Mormon and see what it says about the nature of God?

temptation . . ."

In other words, the Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi is teaching that God the Father comes down and becomes the Son!

At the end of the Book of Mormon, in Ether 3:14, there is a theological whopper as it speaks of God being two separate beings but only one personage.

Listen.

"Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light . . . they shall become my sons and my daughters."

Now the ***theology*** found here in these passages was a form of a second century heresy called modalistic monotheism or Sabellianism which said that God the Father became the Son who then became the Holy Spirit.

I'm not going to address this theological heresy tonight. Let me just say it is false.

But in the context of our discussion about God, the important thing to remember here is that the Book of Mormon taught a very different doctrine about God and His nature because at the time, this is what Joseph believed!

And this is why earliest version of the First Vision mentions only the Son!

Later, as Joseph's thinking changed relative to God and His nature, his accounts of the First Vision changed – again and again and again.

But it was too late to revise the Book of Mormon!

So in an ironic twist of fate dealt only to those who dabble in deception, the Book of Mormon actually refutes the revised First Vision account!

Let's take a little "journey through the facts" together.

In 1830 –

The Book of Mormon teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God (2nd Nephi 31:21; Mormon 7:7; Mosiah 15:1-5; 3rd Nephi 11:27)

That the Father and the Son are modalistically the same person (Ether 3:14)

Even the Title page of the BOM reads: *"to the convincing of the Jews and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting Himself to all nations."*

Alma, Chapters 18 and 22 teaches that *"God is a spirit."*

And Joseph Smith went to great lengths to even revise the parts of the Bible to stress modalistic monarcheanism. (See Luke 10:22)
" . . . no man knoweth that the Son is

*the Father, and the Father is the Son,
but Him to whom the Son will reveal
it."*

In 1832 . . .

Smith's handwritten account only lists Jesus - one personage - in his vision.

He also dictated what is now Doctrine and Covenants Section 84 which states that "No man can see the face of God without the priesthood."

Guess what? He didn't have what he called "the priesthood" when in his later accounts of the First Vision he claimed to have seen God?

In 1835, Joseph started thinking differently.

His "Lectures on Faith" do not describe God as having a physical body but say "The Father, being a personage of spirit . . . the Son . . . a personage of Tabernacle."

In 1835 . . .

Joseph began to embrace a Binitarian view of God - with two in the Godhead, and the Holy Spirit being "the mind of God."

His first vision accounts did not have God the Father in a physical body and he himself called it "a visitation of angels."

Critics of Joseph Smith, like Alexander Campbell, prior to 1835, attacked him for his claims to authority, modern

revelation, and miracles but never said a word about his claims of seeing God in a body of flesh and bones – why? Because the doctrine or claims to such a vision just weren't there.

BUT ... in 1835 ...

Joseph started studying the Hebrew language. And in it, he learned about the Hebrew word, "Elohim."

Remember, Joseph possessed an uncanny knack for taking even the smallest bit of information and turning it into an entirely new slant on doctrine.

But the Book of Mormon had been published and distributed for at least five years! It said things that were now out of fashion relative to Joseph's new imaginative doctrines!

What could be done?

In 1837 ...

changes relating to the Godhead were made in the second edition of the Book of Mormon:

Read, for example (1st Nephi 11:18, 21, 32 and 1st Nephi 13:40)

In 1842 ...

Joseph Smith then published the first First Vision account that tells of two personages appearing and one saying, "this is my beloved Son, here Him."

Also in 1842, The Book of Abraham is printed which teaches about a “council of Gods.”

In 1843 - *remember now, this is after Joseph started studying some Hebrew -*

He dictated Doctrine and Covenants 130 which teaches that God and the Son have bodies of flesh and bone. (If he had been teaching this since his first vision in 1820, why was a revelation needed 23 years later to explain it.

Remember, all of this is to show that the First Vision, which GBH says is the lynch-pin of the Church, is a fraud.

In 1844 . . .

Joseph gave sermons on the plurality of God’s. (History of the Church Volume 6).

He was killed shortly thereafter.

Who knows, maybe if he was permitted to live he would have somehow come to the conclusion that he was God Himself?

And while I say this with just a tad of sarcasm, it brings me to what I believe is, amidst everything we have already discussed over these two weeks, the most damning evidence against the LDS claims of a First Vision – Joseph Smith’s attitude and reaction.

Let me explain.

What was Isaiah's response when he saw God? What was his attitude?

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

This is decimation of Spirit. This is being poor in spirit.

When Daniel saw the Lord in vision he said that his "beauty became corruption."

Daniel 10:7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength

One of the tell-tale signs of a person who has had genuine interaction with God is that they have been "decimated" by His presence.

In other words, they see themselves for what they are in His presence.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The "poor in Spirit" is another way to say decimated by His presence.

in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

When Peter recognized the Lord by virtue of His filling their nets with fish after a night of empty returns, he fell down at Jesus feet and said

(Luke 5:8) Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

This is the attitude and response of a person who has had an genuine encounter with God.

This is poor in spirit.

Do we read of anything from Joseph Smith that even smacks of broken decimation for having been in the presence of God Almighty?

Do we sense any thing from him that he is poor in spirit?

Does Joseph's attitude, as a man who claims to have actually seen the invisible God, grow in humble admiration of the sovereign Lord or does he, like other self-made religious manipulators, grow in pride and arrogance?

I close tonight with a quote from the man Mormons say saw God - a man they hold in higher esteem than Isaiah, then Daniel, then Peter, or Paul.

His words come from History of the Church, Volume 6 page 408-409.

"Come on! Ye prosecutors! Ye false swearers! All hell, boil over! Ye

<p>burning mountains. roll down your lava! For I will come out on top at last. I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet . . . when they can get rid of me, the devil will also go.”</p> <p>Latter-day Saints . . . it’s time to get rid of him, because when you do, the devil will go also.</p>	
	<p>Some common questions / accusations we constantly get.</p> <p>First: <i>Why don’t you let all callers through to your show instead of just the easy ones?</i></p> <p>“We do not edit callers . . .” “All are welcome . . .” “The tougher the better . . .”</p> <p>Second: <i>How much are they paying you for your priestcrafts? So much you can’t let it go, right?</i></p> <p>“Look . . .”</p> <p>Third: <i>Why don’t you have any LDS on the show?</i></p> <p>“Welcome – so long as they are official representatives of the Church.”</p>