

Series: *Christianity vs. Mormonism*

Title: "Mormonism vs. The Trinity" (1 John 5:7)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 12/16/2012

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This broadcast is part six of our series titled *Christianity vs. Mormonism*. We have indeed been seeing that this is the true position of the Bible-believing church – it is "Christianity *versus* Mormonism." We are dealing with the glorious light of Biblical truth on one side, and the awful darkness of Mormon paganism on the other side – and there are no shades of gray.

Mormon missionaries try to lull people into believing that Mormonism is Christianity. In fact, they will try to convince you that Mormonism is an improved and exalted version of Christianity. But the true Christian understands that this is a lie.

Dear friend, remember this: No Christian – no individual who is truly indwelt and enlightened by the Spirit of God, no person who is living and thinking in conformance to Holy Scripture – no such person can compare Mormonism with the authentic Word of God and come to any conclusion except to understand that Mormonism is a dark falsehood, and an evil threat to the Evangelical church in our time.

Now, in this series we have been asking essential questions about Mormonism. We have been discovering what their true position is on each of these essential questions.

### **The Issue of Authority**

Thus far our focus has been, as it should be, on issues of authority. In order to understand whether someone is a genuine Christian teacher or not – in order to understand whether some church or group that claims to be Christian is really Christian or not – you need to begin by asking questions about their source of authority.

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First of all, do they hold to Scripture alone as their authority in matters of doctrine and practice? And secondly, what do they believe and teach about God? These two essential questions go hand in hand. You cannot have an orthodox doctrine of God unless you hold to Scripture alone. You will not hold to Scripture alone if you do not maintain an orthodox position concerning the God who reveals Himself in the pages of Scripture. These two things are inseparable.

Let me put this as plainly as I can: If you do not have the right Person and the right Book as your authority, God's Word declares that you are doomed to Hell. We are not talking about theological technicalities. We are not talking about peripheral matters in which Christians may sincerely differ. We are talking about the most essential things in all of heaven and earth.

Our theme verse for this series is First John chapter four, verse one: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." And so, we are putting Mormonism to the test of Scripture, and we are finding that it fails miserably. And that failure has its roots in the issue of authority.

Mormonism denies the sole authority of Scripture. Mormonism teaches the commandments and doctrines of men, of its so-called apostles and prophets, in place of Scripture and in authority over Scripture. The result is a very twisted and paganized doctrine of God. Like the ancient pagans of Egypt and Assyria and Babylon and Greece and Rome, the Mormons have put man-gods in the place of the

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one true and living God.

### **What Does Mormonism Teach About the Trinity?**

Today we are going to ask one final essential question about Mormonism and the issue of authority, and the question is this: What does Mormonism teach about the Trinity? Now let me say once again that you do not need to delve into all the complex and contradictory details of Mormon theology to understand that it is wrong.

We have already seen that the being that Mormons falsely call "God the Father" was, according to their teaching, once a man and has multiple wives. The being they falsely call "Jesus Christ" was not born of a virgin and is not the eternal God of the Bible. And as for the Holy Spirit, Mormon leaders seem to be unable to make up their minds as to whether the entity they call the "Holy Spirit" is a person or merely an impersonal force. But in any event, the being they call the "Holy Spirit" is not the God of the Bible, but is yet another of their pagan monstrosities.

And so it should be no surprise that Mormonism teaches a pagan, perverted doctrine of the "Trinity." In a book called *Articles of Faith* by the Mormon theologian James Talmadge, we read that Mormonism's so-called "Trinity" consists of three separate gods [small "g"] – the pagan monstrosities they call the "Father God," the "Son [s-o-n] God," and the "Spirit God."

Now dear friends, yet again, this is something that the Mormons have brought

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forward from ancient paganism. You will find various forms of so-called "trinities" made up of three false gods in many of the ancient pagan religions. You find it in ancient Egypt. You find it in ancient Hindusm. You find it in the Greek triad of Zeus, Athena, and Apollo.

These pagan "trinities" are Satan's counterfeits. The Devil has a counterfeit for every genuine article revealed by God, and that includes the person of God Himself. Indeed, Satan has multiple counterfeits. And the Mormons' so-called "Trinity" is just one of the latest of Satan's counterfeit perversions of the one true and living God of the Bible.

### **The Vital Importance of the Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity**

Dear friends, the Trinity is a foundational Christian doctrine, and even small errors, small deviations from Biblical truth on the Trinity, can have devastating consequences. We find a very dangerous situation in large segments of the nominally Evangelical church today. The teaching of the Trinity is severely neglected.

Let me remind you of something I said earlier in this series. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, Second Corinthians chapter eleven, beginning at verse three, and he said, "I fear" for you. I fear that if someone comes along with another doctrine of "God", a doctrine of "God" that is not according to Holy Scripture, that "you may well put up with it."

Dear friends, this is exactly what is happening in the Evangelical church today.

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Mormonism comes along, preaching another Jesus, preaching other gods, denying the Trinity – and growing numbers of self-described Evangelicals are putting up with it, and even welcoming it. And here is the reason: In the last several generations, the Evangelical church has lost its grasp of the fullness of the Biblical doctrine of God, and especially the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

We find a weak doctrine of the Trinity in the church today – if the doctrine of the Trinity is taught at all. And we even find some men, some radio and television preachers who call themselves Evangelical, openly denying the doctrine of the Trinity.

Dear friends, under such conditions, it is no wonder that an essentially pagan religion like Mormonism, a religion that denies the Biblical Trinity, can gain a hearing and a foothold in the nominally Evangelical church. When you don't have a firm grasp of the truth about the God of the Bible, a firm grasp of the fact that the one true and living God declares that He alone is God, one God revealed in three Persons, and that there is no other god, you can easily put up with Mormonism.

And so today I want to make sure that you, dear friend, understand the importance of this great doctrine. Perhaps I am about to remind many of you of things you already know very well. But we all need to be reminded. We need that to maintain a firm hold on the truth. But perhaps there are others listening to this message who have been in churches where the great doctrine of the Trinity has not really been taught. I hope that if you have been in that situation you will especially listen to these next few minutes.

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Now before I begin, let me say that I find myself in the same position I was in during our last message. There is a great deal to say on this subject. There are many Scripture passages that bear upon it. But because of the limits of our broadcast time I cannot possibly present all of them to you today. But if you would like to learn more about the doctrine of the Trinity, I encourage you to visit the Bible Knowledgebase on our website, [teachingtheword.org](http://teachingtheword.org). Just go to our search page and enter the word "Trinity" and you will see a long list of resources that deal with this subject. We'll repeat this information at the end of the broadcast.

### **A Propositional Truth**

And so, what does the Bible teach about the Trinity? Well first of all, you will not find the word "Trinity" anywhere in the Bible. But that fact gives us no reason to deny the doctrine of the Trinity. You will not find the phrase "Second Coming of Christ" anywhere in Scripture either. But it would be utterly foolish to deny the doctrine of the Lord's Second Coming just because those words as such do not appear in the Bible. Scripture is full of the teaching of the fact of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ from beginning to end. And it is just as full of the teaching of the fact of the Trinity from beginning to end.

But we need to understand how the Bible teaches the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible does not set out to prove the existence of God. The Bible states the existence of God as propositional truth. It states it as revelation. "In the beginning God created..." (Genesis 1:1).

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And again in the opening verses of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word [Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

And it is the same in the opening verses of Hebrews: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers through the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..." The fact of God is propositional truth. Revealed truth.

The same is true for the doctrine of the Trinity. It is propositional truth. It is revealed truth. Man does not come to this knowledge on his own. God by His Word and by His Spirit reveals it to us. The Trinity is a doctrine that human wisdom cannot fully comprehend or explain. It can only be accepted on the basis of God's propositional revelation in His Word.

### **Not Three Gods, But One**

According to Scripture, the one true, living, and eternal God, is composed of three united persons of one substance and power, without separate existence. The triune God is revealed in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We don't have time to read all of these passages but let me mention some of them: Deuteronomy 6:4; John 10:30; John 5:19; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14. All of these declare the triune God.

Contrary to the teachings of Mormonism, the one true God presented in Scripture

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is not three gods, but one. God is one in essence, but three in persons, the three persons forming a single unity. All three persons of the Godhead are God from all eternity. The Son is declared to be eternally begotten of the Father in passages such as Psalm 2:7, John 1:14-18, and 1 John 4:9. The Holy Spirit is declared to eternally proceed from both the Father and the Son in passages such as John 15:26 and Galatians 4:6.

The most direct statement of the doctrine of the Trinity is found First John chapter five, verse seven. We read this:

For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word [that is, Jesus Christ], and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.

Now, the sad fact is that you won't find this verse in most modern Bible translations. That is because most postmodern Bible translations contain inferior and corrupt translations of the New Testament that are based on corrupted Greek source texts known as the Critical Text or the Westcott-Hort text.

But First John chapter five, verse seven – this great statement of the doctrine of the Trinity – is found in the Received Text of the Greek New Testament, which is the authentic Greek text of the Bible. That is the Greek text used in reliable English Bible translations like the King James and the New King James.

The authentic Greek text includes I John 5:7. Furthermore, the earliest theological writings of the church quote this verse. It is legitimately in the Bible. I honestly

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believe that many people who want to leave First John 5:7 out of the Bible, want to leave it out simply because they do not firmly believe the doctrine of the Trinity, or they do not think it is a vital doctrine. I think the fact that this verse is not in most present-day Bible translations is an indicator of how far the Evangelical church has fallen in its regard for the authority of the Word of God.

### **Not Only a New Testament Doctrine**

It is also important to understand that the Trinity is not only a doctrine found in the New Testament. It is very much an Old Testament teaching as well. At various places in the Old Testament, God is referred to as a unity (which in English is translated the first-person singular pronoun "I"), but at the same time God is spoken of as a plurality (which in English is translated as the first-person plural pronoun "we"). You will find this kind of language, for example, in Genesis 3:22, Genesis 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8.

Among the Hebrew names for God in the Old Testament, the plural name Elohim is used over 2,000 times. This is the Old Testament name for the Triune God – a unity who is a plurality. It is Elohim – the triune God – who created the heavens and the earth and everything in them in Genesis chapter one. It is Elohim – the triune God – who gave the Ten Commandments to Moses in Exodus chapter twenty. It is Elohim, the triune God, who says, "I am God, there is no one else" in Isaiah 46:9.

God is identified as the Father in passages such as Deuteronomy 32:6, Isaiah 63:16, and Malachi 2:10. God is identified as the Son in Psalm 2. God is identified as

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the Spirit in many passages including Genesis 1:2, 1 Samuel 10:10, 1 Samuel 19:20-23, 2 Samuel 23:2, Job 33:4, Psalm 51:11, Micah 2:7, and Zechariah 7:12.

Isaiah 48:16 is a very clear Trinitarian statement. There Scripture declares that Jehovah, the Father, sent Messiah, Jesus Christ, into the world, with His Holy Spirit.

### **It Is The Trinity Who Saves Sinners**

Let me make one final and very vital point about the doctrine of the Trinity: Without the Trinity, there is no salvation. During the 20th century, it became very common for the church to use the phrase "Jesus saves." In fact, that is the title of a hymn that was familiar in past generations, although you don't hear it as much today. And Jesus is indeed our Lord and Savior. Scripture calls Him by that title often. But as we look at Scripture we find that Jesus does not act alone in our salvation. Let me explain what I mean. In Ephesians chapter one, beginning at verse three, we read this:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He [God the Father] chose us in Him [God the Son] before the foundation of the world...

And then verse seven:

In Him [in Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...

And then verse thirteen:

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In Him [Jesus] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were [notice] sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Here is what we find in these verses in Ephesians chapter one, and in the rest of Scripture: We find that all three persons of the Trinity are directly involved in our salvation, each in a different way. God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, sent God the Son, Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, into the world to be the propitiation for sin on the cross. Jesus was able to make this atonement because of His incarnation through the virgin birth. He is both holy God and perfect man.

And so God the Father planned our salvation. God the Son accomplished our salvation. And then, God the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, applies that salvation to individual sinners. The Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner. Furthermore, Ephesians chapter one verse fourteen tells us that the indwelling Holy Spirit is, literally, the down-payment on our final redemption from this sinful world and our deliverance into the glories of the world to come.

So you see, the doctrine of the Trinity is not merely a technicality. Truly, the Bible teaches that "the Trinity saves." This is essential Christian truth. There is no salvation apart from the work of each person of the Triune God. Paul said to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). But to believe on the Christ of the Bible – to believe in the God of the Bible – is to believe

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in the Trinity. To not believe in the Trinity is to not believe in the Christ of the Bible.

### **Summary: Biblical Truth vs. Pagan Polytheism**

Dear friends, once you start playing down or abandoning the doctrine of the Trinity, you open the door to all kinds of false gods and false doctrines. When any church denies or diminishes the Trinity, or when any church teaches a doctrine of the Trinity that adds to, takes away from, or in any other way changes this doctrine as it is taught in the pages of Scripture – when that happens, that church teaches a false god and a false salvation. That church is a false church that puts souls in danger.

Likewise, any church that neglects the doctrine of the Trinity, or does not teach this doctrine in its fullness – that church robs its people of the essential understanding of the God who saves, the God they are to worship and serve. Once you embark on that path, you are in immediate danger of falling into deeper error, and you are in immediate danger of altogether departing from the true faith.

That is why Mormonism is such a clear and present danger to the Evangelical church today. At the beginning of this series, I quoted to you a statement from the president of one of the world's most well-known theological seminaries. He said that Evangelicals need to have a give-and-take dialogue with Mormons.

Dear friends, God's judgment rests upon any person or any church that would give up anything of the true doctrine of God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit, or the true doctrine of the Trinity. This is serious business.

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And dear friend, this is a matter of your own soul. If you are a Christian, if you are truly trusting in Jesus Christ for your salvation, I pray that God will burn the truth of the Trinity more deeply into your heart through this message. If you are not a Christian, I pray that this message will help you to understand the infinite effort to which the triune God of the universe has gone, to reconcile sinners to Himself.

And in our next message, we are going to examine what the Bible says about the true way of salvation, the true way to eternal life, and how Mormonism teaches a false salvation. This is yet another vital message, so I hope that you will join us.

#### **About the Broadcast**

*The Scripture-Driven Church* airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is that of the Great Commission: to preach the Gospel to the world, and to equip believers to stand upon and live by the sole authority of God's Word, to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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