

Does the LDS Church Still Teach That Heavenly Father Was Once a Man?

by Sandra Tanner

One of the problems encountered by those wishing to discuss and compare LDS theology with standard Christian theology is determining what constitutes “official” LDS doctrine.

While most churches are eager to set forth their beliefs, the LDS Church seems to avoid an official presentation of their complicated doctrines. When consulting the official LDS web site for guidance on doctrinal matters I encountered this statement issued in 2007:

Not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. A single statement made by a single leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, but is not meant to be officially binding for the whole Church. With divine inspiration, the First Presidency (the prophet and his two counselors) and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (the second-highest governing body of the Church) counsel together to establish doctrine that is consistently proclaimed in official Church publications. (<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/approaching-mormon-doctrine>)

One of the problems in the LDS Church is that a prophet in one generation may teach a different set of doctrines from the next one, which is why the church emphasizes listening to the “living” prophets. At the April conference of the LDS Church, Elder José A. Teixeira, of the Seventy, proclaimed: “We can always trust the living prophets; their teachings reflect the word and will of the Lord.” (“Gifts to Help Us Navigate Our Life,” *Ensign*, May 2009, p. 106)

The 2009 edition of *Gospel Principles*, page 48, states “In addition to these four books of scripture [KJV Bible, Book of Mormon, *Doctrine and Covenants*, *Pearl of Great Price*], the inspired words of our living prophets become scripture to us. Their words come to us through conferences, the *Liahona* or *Ensign* magazine, and instructions to local priesthood leaders.”

But Mormonism has always taught that they are led by “living prophets,” thus leaving one to wonder why the “living prophets” of past generations are of lesser value than those today? In twenty years will today’s prophets be relegated to questionable authority?

For a number of years the LDS Church has been editing its books and church manuals to de-emphasize the more radical parts of its theology. Some observers had

hoped that this signaled a move toward standard Christian theology. However, even after editing, the aberrant doctrines are still sprinkled throughout their instruction manuals.

Traditionally Christians have maintained there is only one God, who has eternally existed as God, following the teachings of the Bible (see Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 44:8; Isaiah 48:11-12; Malachi 3:6). On the other hand, since the days of Joseph Smith, the LDS Church has taught that God, the father, was once a mortal who advanced to godhood. This, of course, would necessitate another god who oversaw our Heavenly Father’s progress to godhood.

QUOTES FROM THE OFFICIAL LDS WEBSITES:

lds.org and institute.lds.org

The LDS Church has issued the following guidelines for determining their doctrines:

In addition, information on official Church Web sites is reliable and consistent with the doctrines and policies of the Church. All materials on Newsroom and other Church Web sites are carefully reviewed and approved before they are posted. . . . In a complementary way, Newsroom, LDS.org and other Church Web sites provide an official voice from the Church. (<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/the-church-and-new-media:-clarity,-context-and-an-official-voice-newsroom-lds.org-full-story>)

Heeding this counsel, the following quotes, gathered from current LDS scriptures, teaching manuals, magazines, and hymns, are taken from www.lds.org.

They clearly establish that the LDS Church is currently teaching that Heavenly Father was once a mortal on another earth, that he and his wife are resurrected beings who progressed to godhood, and that mortals on this earth are their literal spirit children, with the same capacity to progress to godhood.

1. LDS SCRIPTURES

Doctrine & Covenants 132:19-22

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . Ye shall come forth in

the first resurrection; . . . and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

Pearl of Great Price, Moses 1:33

And worlds without number have I created: and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.

Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 4:1-5:20

1 And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

2 . . . and the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters. . . .

2. LDS MANUALS

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, 2007.

“God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret.” (p. 40)

“Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, . . .” (p. 221)

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young, 1997.

God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost constitute the Godhead. President Brigham

Young taught the Latter-day Saints to worship God the Father and address prayers to Him in the name of Jesus Christ. He taught further that God the Father was once a man on another planet who “passed the ordeals we are now passing through; he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, life and death of this mortality.” (p. 29)

The great architect, manager and superintendent, controller and dictator [absolute ruler] who guides this work is out of sight to our natural eyes. He [God] lives on another world; he is in another state of existence; he has passed the ordeals we are now passing through; he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, life and death of this mortality, for he has passed through the whole of it, and has received his crown and exaltation and holds the keys and the power of this Kingdom; . . . (p. 30)

God is the source, the fountain of all intelligence, no matter who possesses it, whether man upon the earth, the spirits in the spirit-world, the angels that dwell in the eternities of the Gods, or the most inferior intelligence among the devils in hell. All have derived what intelligence, light, power, and existence they have from God—from the same source from which we have received ours. (p. 31)

The doctrine that God was once a man and has progressed to become a God is unique to this Church. How do you feel, knowing that God, through His own experience, “knows all that we know regarding the toils [and] sufferings” of mortality? (p. 34)

We receive these truths, and go on from glory to glory, . . . gaining a knowledge of all things, and becoming Gods, even Sons of God. (p. 55)

Now those men, or those women, who know no more about the power of God, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, than to be led entirely by another person, suspending their own understanding, and pinning their faith upon another's sleeve, . . . will never be capable of becoming Gods. They cannot rule themselves, to say nothing of ruling others, . . . They never can become Gods, nor be crowned as rulers with glory, immortality, and eternal lives. They never can hold scepters of glory, majesty, and power in the celestial kingdom. Who will? Those who are valiant and inspired with the true independence of heaven, who will go forth boldly in the service of their God, . . . (p. 288)

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor, 2001.

In one point of view, man appears very poor, weak, . . . In another point of view, we look at him as emanating from the Gods—as a God in embryo—as an eternal being who had an existence before he came here, . . . He [man] is a God in embryo, and possesses within him a spark of that eternal flame which was struck from the blaze of God's eternal fire in the eternal world, and is placed here upon the earth . . .

If we take man, he is said to have been made in the image of God, for the simple reason that he is a son of God, . . . He did not originate from a chaotic mass of matter, moving or inert, but came forth possessing in an embryonic state, all the faculties and powers of a God. And when he shall be perfected, and have progressed to maturity, he will be like his Father—a God, being indeed His offspring. As the horse, the ox, the sheep, and every living creature, including man, propagates its own species and perpetuates its own kind, so does God perpetuate his. (pp. 2-3)

It is for the exaltation of man to this state of superior intelligence and Godhead that the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ is instituted; and that noble being, man, made in the image of God, is rendered capable not only of being a son of man, but also a son of God, . . . and is rendered capable of becoming a God, possessing the power, the majesty, the exaltation and the position of a God. (p. 5)

[see also pp. 13, 28, 82, 185, 187, 225]

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant, 2002.

. . . if we examine the commandments that are given to us as members of the Church of God, we will find that each and every one of those commandments has been given for the express purpose that we may be benefitted, that we may be educated, that we may be qualified and prepared to go back and dwell in the presence of our Heavenly Father. These duties and obligations are calculated to make us godlike in our dispositions. They are calculated to make Gods of us, and to fit and qualify us that we may become, as it is promised that we can become, joint heirs with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and dwell with Him in the presence of God the Eternal Father throughout all the countless ages of eternity. (p. 30)

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball, 2006.

[Spencer W. Kimball] taught that the gospel is “a way of life, the plan of personal salvation, and is based upon personal responsibility. It is developed for man, the offspring of God. Man is a god in embryo and has in him the seeds of godhood, and he can, if he will, rise to great heights.” (p. 1)

“Now,” said the Lord, “. . . If you will agree to exercise control over your desires and continue to grow toward perfection and godhood by the plan which I shall provide, . . . I will make it possible for you to eventually return to me . . .” (p. 2)

[After death] . . . our spirits would go to the spirit world, where we would further train for our eternal destiny. After a period, there would be a resurrection or a reunion of the body and the spirit, which would render us immortal and make possible our further climb toward perfection and godhood. (p. 3)

In order to reach the goal of eternal life and exaltation and godhood, one must be initiated into the kingdom by baptism, . . . endowed and sealed in the house of God by the prophet . . . and one must live a life of righteousness . . .

Jesus perfected his life and became our Christ. Priceless blood of a god was shed, and he became our Savior; his perfected life was given . . . (p. 5)

There are two basic requirements every soul must fulfill or he cannot attain to the great blessings offered. He must receive the ordinances and he must be faithful [to be exalted], . . .

“Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting . . . then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.” (*D&C 132:20*)

When one realized the vastness, the richness, the glory of that “all” . . . it is worth all it costs in patience, faith, sacrifice, sweat and tears. The blessings of eternity contemplated in this “all” bring men immortality and everlasting life, eternal growth, divine leadership, eternal increase, perfection, and with it all, godhood. (p. 9)

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay, 2003.

He [David O. McKay] called the home the “cell-unit of society” and declared that “parenthood is next to Godhood.” (p. xxvii)

“The divinity of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is shown in its organization as well as in its teachings. Godhood, brotherhood, service—these three guiding principles . . . permeate all our Church activity.” (p. 21)

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith, 2011.

Eternal life is to us the sum of pre-existence, present existence, and the continuation of life in immortality, holding out to us the power of endless progression and increase. With that feeling and that assurance, we believe that “As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become.” [See Lorenzo Snow, “The Grand Destiny of Man,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 20, 1901, 22.] Being created in the image of God, we believe that it is not improper, that it is not unrighteous, for us to hope that we may be permitted to partake of the attributes of deity and, if we are faithful, to become like unto God; for as we receive of and obey the natural laws of our Father that govern this life, we become more like Him; and as we take advantage of the opportunities placed within our reach, we prepare to receive greater opportunities in this life and in the life that is to come. . . . (p. 71)

Gospel Principles, 2009.

All men and women are literally the sons and daughters of God. “Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal [physical] body” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 335).

. . . Because we are the spiritual children of God, we have inherited the potential to develop His divine qualities. (p. 9)

We were not all alike in heaven. We know, for example, that we were sons and daughters of heavenly parents—males and females . . . (p. 10)

We learned that if we followed His plan, we would become like Him. We would be resurrected;

we would have all power in heaven and on earth; we would become heavenly parents and have spirit children just as He does (see *D&C* 132:19-20). (p. 11)

The Lord has said that if we are true and faithful, we will enter into our exaltation. We will become like our Heavenly Father. (See *D&C* 132:19-20.) (p. 223)

Exaltation is eternal life, the kind of life God lives. . . . If we prove faithful to the Lord, we will live in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom of heaven. We will become exalted, to live with Heavenly Father in eternal families. (p. 275)

Our Heavenly Father is perfect, and He glories in the fact that it is possible for His children to become like Him . . . These are some of the blessings given to exalted people: . . . They [exalted couples] will become gods (see *D&C* 132:20-23). They will be united eternally with their righteous family members and will be able to have eternal increase . . . They will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have—all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge (see *D&C* 132:19-20). (p. 277)

Joseph Smith taught: “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God. . . . He was once a man like us; . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did” . . . Our Heavenly Father knows our trials, our weaknesses, and our sins. . . . He wants us to succeed even as He did. (p. 279)

Gospel Fundamentals, 2002.

It will help us to remember that our Father in Heaven was once a man who lived on an earth, the same as we do. He became our Father in Heaven by overcoming problems, just as we have to do on this earth. (p. 204)

Father in Heaven: A perfect being who looks like a mortal man but has a resurrected body of flesh and bones. He is the Father of our spirits, to whom we pray. (p. 280)

Doctrines of the Gospel: Student Manual, Religion 430 & 431, 2004.

[Quoting Joseph Smith] “God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man. . . he was once

a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; . . .” (Smith, *Teachings*, 345-46). (p. 8)

“God made man in his own image and certainly he made woman in the image of his wife-partner” (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 25). (p. 8)

“That Child to be born of Mary was begotten of Elohim, the Eternal Father, not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and, the offspring from that association of supreme sanctity, celestial Sireship, and pure though mortal maternity, was of right to be called the ‘Son of the Highest.’” (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 81).

“We believe absolutely that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, begotten of God, the first-born in the spirit and the only begotten in the flesh; that He is the Son of God just as much as you and I are the sons of our fathers” (Heber J. Grant, “Analysis of the Articles of Faith,” *Millennial Star*, 5 Jan. 1922, 2). (p. 9)

“All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity” (The First Presidency). (p. 14)

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, basing its belief on divine revelation, ancient and modern, proclaims man to be the direct and lineal offspring of Deity. God Himself is an exalted man, perfected, enthroned, and supreme. . . .

“Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God” (The First Presidency). (p. 17)

Doctrines of the Gospel: Teachers Manual, Religion 430 & 432, 2000.

The Prophet Joseph Smith's first vision in 1820 (see Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20) and the famous King Follett discourse given shortly before Joseph's martyrdom in 1844 (see Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 343–62) are significant doctrinal teachings on the nature of God. . . . In the

King Follett discourse, Joseph Smith declared that the first principle of the gospel consists of knowing the character of God. Joseph taught that God “was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself” (*Teachings*, p. 346; or *Supporting Statements B* on pp. 7–8 of the student manual). (p. 7)

Jesus stressed the fatherhood of God. . . . We are begotten spirit children of our Heavenly Father. We are actually his offspring. (p. 7)

God is a resurrected, exalted personage of flesh and bone. (p. 8)

A. Jesus Christ is literally the son of God the Eternal Father.

Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon bear witness that Jesus Christ is literally the son of God (see Luke 1:31–35; 1 Nephi 11:14–22); . . . Though married to Mary, Joseph was not the father of Jesus; Jesus always turned to Elohim as his Father. . . . Read Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:1, 13–14. What attributes did Jesus inherit from his divine Father? (see v. 14). Jesus inherited all of the Father's power and glory and the ability to live forever. But since Jesus was also born of Mary, who was mortal, he inherited all the weaknesses of the flesh. Jesus was subject to temptation, sickness, hunger, thirst, and fatigue (see Mosiah 3:7). This combination of a divine father and a mortal mother endowed Jesus with the qualities—both mortal and immortal—he needed to fulfill his unique mission on earth. (p. 9)

Eternal Marriage: Student Manual, Religion 234 and 235, 2003.

[Repeats the same quote from the First Presidency as quoted in *Doctrines of the Gospel*]

“Man is the child of God, . . . capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.” . . . (p. 167)

“Mortal persons who overcome all things and gain an ultimate exaltation will . . . have spirit children, thus becoming Eternal Fathers and Eternal Mothers.” (p. 167)

Your fatherhood is, in a sense, an apprenticeship to godhood. (p. 202)

The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women, Part A, 2000.

President Lorenzo Snow taught: “When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring, worlds without end. . . .” (p. 66)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the companionship role of the priesthood and women: “In the true Patriarchal Order man holds the priesthood and is the head of the household, . . . but he cannot attain a fulness of joy here or of eternal reward hereafter alone. Woman stands at his side a joint-inheritor with him in the fulness of all things. Exaltation and eternal increase is her lot as well as his. (*D. & C. 131:1–4.*) Godhood is not for men only; it is for men and women together. (*D. & C. 132:19–20*)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 844). (p. 91)

Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part A, 2000.

Eternal marriage is a basic doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ and a very important part of the Lord’s plan for us. Without it we cannot be exalted in the celestial kingdom in eternity. . . .

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “Our Heavenly Father has a plan for man’s growth from infancy to godhood.” (p. 256)

3. LDS MAGAZINES

Ensign, Nov. 2009, Dieter F. Uchtdorf,
Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

We are created in the image of our heavenly parents; we are God’s spirit children. Therefore, we have a vast capacity for love—it is part of our spiritual heritage. (p. 21)

Ensign, May 2009, Boyd K. Packer,
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

You are a son of God. You lived in a premortal existence as an individual spirit child of heavenly parents. (p. 50).

Ensign, May 2004, Dennis E. Simmons,
Second Quorum of the Seventy.

The world is a testing place for mortal men and women. When we understand that it’s all a test, administered by our Heavenly Father, who wants us to trust in Him and to allow Him to help us, we can then see everything more clearly.

His work and His glory, He told us, is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” He has already achieved godhood. Now His only objective is to help us—to enable us to return to Him and be like Him and live His kind of life eternally. (p. 73)

Ensign, May 2003, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Whether we be boys who have received the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood, or men who have received the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood, we each have had bestowed upon us something wonderful and magnificent, something of the very essence of godhood. . . . We are sons of God honored to hold His divine authority. (p. 58)

Ensign, June 2002, Statement of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The Lord’s plan of salvation requires that you pass through trials in this mortal life. Those trials seem to be greatest when you reach fatherhood, but be assured—fatherhood, in a sense, is an apprenticeship to godhood. (p. 12)

Ensign, January 2006, President Joseph Fielding Smith.

We are in the mortal life to get an experience, a training, that we couldn’t get any other way. And in order [for us] to become gods, it is necessary for us to know something about pain, about sickness, and about the other things that we partake of in this school of mortality. (p. 8)

Ensign, August 2008.

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president: “You are literally spirit daughters of Deity, ‘offspring of exalted parents’ with a divine nature and an eternal destiny. You received your first lessons in the world of spirits from your heavenly parents. You have been sent to earth to ‘prove’ yourselves . . .” (p. 69)

Ensign, “The Fulness of the Gospel: The Purpose of Life,” A series examining doctrines unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Aug 2006.

We cannot understand the purpose of this mortal life—why we are here—unless we first understand who we are, where we came from, and what our eternal destiny is. These truths, found in the scriptures and restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, teach us that we are literal spirit children of God, that we lived with Him in a premortal existence, and that we have within us the seeds of godhood, the potential to become like Him. (p. 64)

Liahona, Diane L. Spangler, July 2005.

One foundational gospel truth about the body is the principle that having a physical body is a godlike attribute—you are more like God with a body than without. Our religion stands virtually alone in believing that God has a tangible body of flesh and bone and that our bodies were literally created in His likeness. . . . Having a mortal body indicates that you chose righteously in the premortal state. Inherent in the mortal body are powers and capabilities that enable you to continue to progress toward godhood. (p. 16)

Ensign, July 2006, Robert F. Williams.

And so our Heavenly Father, to help fulfill His purpose “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39), ensured that the earth would be a place where His spirit children, endowed with mortal bodies, could be sealed to a companion in the new and everlasting covenant and continue their eternal progression toward godhood. . . . Here the Lord teaches that our mortal suffering, in some degree like the suffering of the Savior himself, can have significant purpose, meaning, and value that can enhance our growth and our development toward godhood. (pp. 29-30)

Ensign, June 2009, Douglas L. Callister, of the Seventy.

I imagine that our heavenly parents are exquisitely refined. In this great gospel of emulation, one of the purposes of our earthly probation is to become like them in every conceivable way so that we may be comfortable in the presence of heavenly parentage and, in the language of Enos, see their faces “with pleasure” (Enos 1:27). (p. 54)

4. LDS HYMNAL

Oh My Father, by Eliza R. Snow, No. 292

1. O my Father, thou that dwellest In the high and glorious place, When shall I regain thy presence And again behold thy face? . . .

3. I had learned to call thee Father, Thru thy Spirit from on high, But, until the key of knowledge Was restored, I knew not why. In the heav’ns are parents single? No, the thought makes reason stare! Truth is reason; truth eternal Tells me I’ve a mother there.

4. When I leave this frail existence, When I lay this mortal by, Father, Mother, may I meet you In your royal courts on high?

[This hymn is referring to Heavenly Father and his wife]

Praise to the Man, by W. W. Phelps, No. 27

Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven!
Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vain.
Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren;
Death cannot conquer the hero again.

5. 2007 INTERVIEWS with LDS Apostles on PBS, as quoted on the official LDS web site.

Apostle Boyd K. Packer:

“That vision [Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision] taught us some things. We learned about the personality of God the Father, a resurrected Being, as part of our gospel.” (<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/president-packer-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary>)

Apostle Dallin Oaks:

“The first revelation received by Joseph Smith was the appearance to him of the Father and the Son embodied, separate, identifiable, tangible Beings who appeared to him in what we refer to as the First Vision. And that first revelation, concerning the nature of God as an embodied, glorified, resurrected Being, challenged the creeds of Christianity. Christianity describes God as a disembodied, incomprehensible, spiritual entity that fills the whole universe, and an indistinguishable Father and Son.” (<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/elder-oaks-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary>)

JOSEPH SMITH'S TEACHINGS

While the Book of Mormon and early LDS publications taught that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one God (2 Nephi 31:21), Joseph Smith later introduced the doctrine of Heavenly Father's journey to godhood and the existence of multiple gods. In 1844 Joseph Smith proclaimed:

As the Father hath power in Himself, so hath the Son power in Himself, to lay down His life and take it again, so He has a body of His own. The Son doeth what He hath seen the Father do: then the Father hath some day laid down His life and taken it again; so He has a body of His own; each one will be in His own body; and yet the sectarian world believe the body of the Son is identical with the Father's.

Gods have an ascendancy over the angels, who are ministering servants. In the resurrection, some are raised to be angels, others are raised to become Gods. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book, 1977, p. 312)

In his famous "King Follett Discourse," given at the April, 1844, LDS Church conference, Joseph Smith declared:

"God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all Eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. . . . and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, . . ." (*Teachings*, pp. 345-346)

Joseph Smith's revelation on polygamy, dated July, 1843, contains the promise that if one is a faithful Mormon, as set out in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, he can attain godhood:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, . . . and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, . . . Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:19-20)

ONE GOD OF THE BIBLE

Mormonism affirms that God and man are the same species with the same potential. However, the Bible consistently affirms that there is only one God, who has always existed as God:

Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44:8)

. . . I will not give my glory unto another. Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. (Isaiah 48:11-12)

The Bible also declares that God is the creator of man, not his literal father.

I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself. (Isaiah 44:24)

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

For I am the Lord, I change not. (Malachi 3:6)



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