

# LDS Leaders Define Their Concept of JESUS CHRIST

By Sandra Tanner

Often Mormons will say that they believe in the same Jesus as standard Christianity. However, their leaders' definition is very different. Gordon B. Hinckley, past president of the LDS Church, made a very telling comment about Jesus Christ in a talk in Geneva, Switzerland, June 6, 1998. The *Deseret News* reported:

In bearing testimony of Jesus Christ, President Hinckley spoke of those outside the Church who say Latter-day Saints "do not believe in the **traditional Christ. No, I don't**. The traditional Christ of whom **they** speak is **not** the Christ of whom **I** speak. For the Christ of whom I speak has been revealed in this the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.

He together with His Father, appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in the year 1820, and when Joseph left the grove that day, he knew **more** of the nature of God than **all the learned ministers** of the gospel of the ages." (*Deseret News*, Church News section, Salt Lake City, Utah, week ending June 20, 1998, p. 7)

Mormonism teaches that somewhere in eternity past God and his wife first existed as mortals on a different earth, overseen by their Heavenly Father and Mother.

This mortal couple died, received resurrected bodies, and eventually achieved godhood. They then procreated the millions of spirit children that would be sent to this earth as mortals. Thus God is part of an eternal chain of gods procreating spirit children for different worlds. Joseph Smith preached:

God himself, was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how He came to be so; for I am going to tell you **how God came to be God**. (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 305)

The LDS Church teaches that men, gods, angels and devils are all the same species. Thus both Jesus and Lucifer are literally our elder brothers. As men are viewed as being the same species as God and Jesus they have the same potential to achieve godhood. Brigham Young preached:

We have a Father; He is in heaven; . . . He says that we are His children. . . . we actually believe that **God the Father is our heavenly Father, that we are His children**; and we believe that **Jesus Christ is our elder brother**—that he is **actually** the Son of our Father and that he is the Savior of the world, and was appointed to this before the foundations of this earth were laid. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 13, February 20, 1870, pp. 235-256)

On another occasion Brigham Young declared:

He [Jehovah] was the Son of our Heavenly Father, **as we are the sons of our earthly fathers**. God is the Father of our spirits, which are clothed upon by fleshly bodies, begotten for us by our earthly fathers. **Jesus is our elder brother spirit** clothed upon with **an earthly body begotten by the Father** of our spirits. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10, September 28, 1862, p. 2)

Past LDS President Joseph F. Smith wrote:

Among the **spirit children of Elohim** the **firstborn** was and is **Jehovah or Jesus Christ** to whom all others are juniors. . . . There is no impropriety, therefore, in speaking of Jesus Christ as the **elder brother** of the rest of humankind. . . . Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any and all others by reason (1) of His seniority as the **oldest** or firstborn; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the **offspring** of a mortal mother and of **an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father**; (3) of His selection and foreordination as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of the race; and (4) of His transcendent sinlessness. (*Improvement Era*, vol. 19, June 30, 1916, pp. 941-942)

On February 8, 1857, Brigham Young explained how God came to be God and fathered Jesus:

Now to the facts in the case; all the difference between Jesus Christ and any other man that ever lived on the earth, from the days of Adam until now, is simply this, **the Father**, after He had once been in the flesh, and lived as we live, **obtained His exaltation**, attained to thrones, gained the ascendancy over principalities and powers, and had the knowledge and power to create—to bring forth and organize the elements upon natural principles. This He did **after His ascension**, or His glory, or His eternity, and was actually classed **with the Gods**, with the beings who create, with those who have kept the celestial law while in the flesh, and again obtained their bodies. Then He was prepared to **commence the work of creation**, as the Scriptures teach. It is all here in the Bible; I am not telling you a word but what is contained in that book.

Things were first created spiritually; **the Father actually begat the spirits**, and they were brought forth and lived with Him. Then He commenced the work of creating earthly tabernacles, precisely as He had been created in this flesh himself, by partaking of the course material that was organized and composed this earth, until His system was charged with it, consequently the tabernacles of His children were organized from the coarse materials of this earth.

When the time came that **His first-born, the Saviour**, should come into the world and take a tabernacle, the Father came Himself and favoured that spirit [Mary] with a tabernacle instead of letting any other man do it. **The Saviour was begotten by the Father of His spirit, by the same Being who is the Father of our spirits, and that is all the organic difference between Jesus Christ and you and me.** And a difference there is between our Father and us consists in that **He has gained His exaltation**, and has obtained eternal lives. The principle of eternal lives is an eternal existence, eternal duration, eternal exaltation. Endless are His kingdoms, endless His thrones and His dominions, and endless are His posterity; they never will cease to multiply from this time henceforth and forever. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pp. 217-218)

Apostle George Q. Cannon preached that Christ, Satan and all the mortals born on this earth are actually brothers and sisters from a pre-earth life:

We are here to be tested and tried. There is a war between Satan and God. **We are brethren and sisters of Satan as well as of Jesus.** It may be startling doctrine to many to say this; **but Satan is our brother. Jesus is our brother.** We are the children of God. God begot us in the spirit in the eternal worlds. This fight that I speak of arose, as we are told, over the question as to how man should work out his earthly probation in a tabernacle of flesh and bones and obtain redemption. Satan differed from God, and he rebelled. We are told in the scriptures that he drew after him one third of the family of God. They thought his plan better than that of the Savior Jesus Christ. From that time until the present he has been struggling to destroy the plans of Jehovah, and to seduce the children of men—**his brothers and sisters**—from their allegiance to God. (Apostle George Q. Cannon, March 11th, 1894, *Collected Discourses*, compiled by Brian Stuy, vol. 4, p. 23)

## JESUS ACHIEVED GODHOOD

Speaking in 1949, LDS leader Milton R. Hunter, of the First Council of the Seventy, stated:

You and I were sons and daughters of our Eternal Parents in the spirit world. In fact, all the people in this world were of that family, and Jesus Christ was the Firstborn.

**During his pre-mortal life Jesus Christ rose to the status of Godhood.** At that time he was foreordained to be the Savior of this world. Father Abraham was privileged to see in vision the grand council in heaven that was held prior to the peopling of this earth, and he saw, as the Lord showed him, “many of the noble and great ones.” (*LDS Conference Report*, October 1949, p. 69)

Apostle James E. Talmage taught:

Through the sure word of revealed truth we learn of the actual relationship between God and man, and that this is the **literal relationship of parent to child.** The

spirits of men are the **offspring of Deity**, born in the antemortal world and endowed with the Divine birthright of eternal development and progression, in which course of advancement the life on earth is but a stage. . . . To become perfect as God is perfect is to attain the state, power, dignity, and authority of **godship**. Plainly there is a way provided by which the child of God may follow the footsteps of the Father, and in time—sometime in the distant eternities—**be as that Divine Father is.** Even as **Christ**, the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh, endured the experiences of **mortality**, passed the portals of death and became a resurrected Being, **so the Father before Him had trodden the same path of progression from manhood to Godhood**, and today sits enthroned in the heavens **by right of achievement.** He is the Eternal Father and with Him, crowned with glory and majesty, is the **eternal Mother.** They twain are the parents of the spirit-children for whose schooling in the lessons of mortality this earth was framed. . . . Eternal exaltation is the assured attainment of those who obey in its fulness the whole law of the Gospel of Christ; theirs it is to become like unto their **Celestial Parents.**

“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” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:20). (*The Essential James E. Talmage*, edited by James P. Harris, pp. 132-133)

## LITERAL SON OF GOD

While Mormon leaders assert that they believe in the virgin birth they have changed the definition. The LDS Church teaches that God the Father has a physical, tangible, resurrected body and that God literally sired Jesus in the same physical sense that any other man begets a child. Consequently “the virgin birth” is redefined to mean Mary had intercourse with a god, not a mortal, in order to literally conceive the baby Jesus. In a 1916 doctrinal statement by the LDS First Presidency we read:

1. “*Father*” as *Literal Parent* . . . God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title “Elohim,” **is the literal Parent** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race. Elohim is the **Father in every sense** in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits. . . . Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and **bodily offspring**; that is to say, Elohim is **literally the Father** of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh, and which body died on the cross and was afterward taken up by the process of resurrection, and is now the immortalized tabernacle of the eternal spirit of our Lord and Savior. (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 4, pp. 1670-1671)

In a Christmas message to the general membership, the LDS First Presidency wrote:

A CHRISTMAS GREETING FROM  
THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

The Latter-day Saints unite with the people of every creed and tongue and race in the general commemoration of the day observed throughout Christendom as the anniversary of the **God-Man's earthly birth**. . . . We bow to Him as the veritable Son of the living God in the fullest sense of the hallowed term. As Mary was His saintly mother, **so the Mighty God was His everlasting and literal Father**. He was "the only begotten" of Deity, **in the flesh**, to die that man may live. This we once more affirm and declare as a glorious truth and a fundamental of "Mormon" faith. (*Messages of the First Presidency*, vol. 4, pp. 318-319)

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

God the Father is a **perfected, glorified, holy Man**, an immortal Personage. And Christ was born into the world as the **literal Son of this Holy Being; he was born in the same personal, real, and literal sense that any mortal son is born to a mortal father**. There is **nothing figurative about his paternity**; he was **begotten, conceived** and born in the **normal and natural course of events**, for he is the Son of God, and that designation means what it says. (Bruce R. McConkie *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 742)

Apostle McConkie explained that there was nothing figurative about Mary's conception:

And so it is with the Eternal Father and the **mortal birth** of the Eternal Son. The Father is a Father; he is not a spirit essence or nothingness to which the name Father is figuratively applied. And the Son is a Son; he is not some transient emanation from a divine essence, but a **literal, living offspring of an actual Father**. . . . **There is nothing figurative or hidden or beyond comprehension in our Lord's coming into mortality. He is the Son of God in the same sense and way that we are the sons of mortal fathers.** (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 468-469)

In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, under the heading JESUS CHRIST we read:

He was able to accomplish his unique ministry—a ministry of reconciliation and salvation—because of who and what he was. President Ezra Taft Benson stated, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God **in the most literal sense**. The **body** in which He performed His mission in the flesh was **fathered by that same Holy Being** we worship as God, our Eternal Father. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, nor was He begotten by the Holy Ghost. **He is the Son of the Eternal Father!**" . . . From Mary, a mortal woman, Jesus inherited mortality, including the capacity to die.

From **his exalted Father** he inherited immortality, the capacity to live forever. (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, pp.724-725)

On another page of the same volume we read:

The fact of Jesus' being the **literal** Son of God in the **flesh** is crucial to the ATONEMENT, . . . For Latter-day Saints, **the paternity of Jesus is not obscure. He was the literal, biological son of an immortal, tangible Father** and Mary, a mortal woman (see Virgin Birth). Jesus is the only person born who deserves the title "the Only Begotten Son of God" . . . He was not the son of the Holy Ghost; it was only through the Holy Ghost that the power of the Highest overshadowed Mary (Luke 1:35; 1 Ne. 11:19). (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 729)

Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

Throughout the scriptures he is spoken of as the Son of God. **The story of his birth is plain and free from mystery, insofar as the fact is made that he is in very deed the Son of God**. We are emphatically informed that he was **begotten by the Father**. He recognized God as his Father. He referred to himself as being the Son of God. **This is not a mystery**. . . . It is true of Jesus Christ, as it is of any other son, he was **begotten** in the image of his Father and in his case **his Father is the Eternal God**, and the scriptures inform us that Jesus was the express image of his Father. (*The Restoration of All Things*, p. 61)

Apostle McConkie declared that Jesus was begotten in the normal way:

And so, in the final analysis it is the faithful saints, those who have testimonies of the truth and divinity of this great latter-day work, who declare our Lord's generation to the world. Their testimony is that Mary's son is **God's Son; that he was conceived and begotten in the normal way; that he took upon himself mortality by the natural birth processes**; that he inherited the power of mortality from his mother and the **power of immortality from his Father**—in consequence of all of which he was able to work out the infinite and eternal atonement. (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 472-473)

Apostle James E. Talmage wrote:

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." In His nature would be combined the powers of Godhood with the capacity and possibilities of mortality; and this **through the ordinary operation of the fundamental law of heredity**, declared of God, demonstrated by science, and admitted by philosophy, that living beings shall propagate—after their kind. The Child

Jesus was to inherit the physical, mental, and Spiritual traits, tendencies, and powers that characterized His **parents—one immortal and glorified—God**, the other human—woman. (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 81)

## JESUS ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

The Bible declares that Jesus is fully God, not a subordinate deity. He eternally exists as God and is our creator.

**John 1:1-4, 14:** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

**Isaiah 9:6:** *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

**John 8:58:** *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

**1 Timothy 3:16:** *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

**Hebrews 13:8:** *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.*

**Colossians 1:16-17:** *For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

For more on the Biblical view of God and Jesus read the books *The Forgotten Trinity*, by James White, *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism* and *The New Mormon Challenge*.



Utah Lighthouse Ministry  
1358 S. West Temple  
Salt Lake City, UT 84115  
(801) 485-8894  
[www.utlm.org](http://www.utlm.org)