God Was Never a Man

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If you are a Latter-day Saint, you have probably heard that our Heavenly Father was once a man like us who progressed until He became God, and that we can follow the same path. We are not writing to mock you. We are writing because the question of who God is matters more than any other, and we invite you to weigh this teaching against the Bible, which your church also accepts as the word of God.

What the LDS Church teaches

The official manual *Gospel Principles*, in chapter 47, "Exaltation," quotes Joseph Smith's King Follett sermon of 1844:

> "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."

Gospel Principles (2009), ch. 47, quoting *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 345 and 346

The same chapter lists among the blessings of exaltation that the faithful "will become gods" and adds, "He wants us to succeed even as He did." Joseph Smith also said that the Father "has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). Joseph Smith said this is the first principle of the gospel, so let us test it carefully.

1. God has always been God

> **Psalm 90:2** "Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

Moses does not say God has been God for a very long time. He says God is God "from everlasting," with no starting point. A being who became God at some moment after living as a man on another earth could not be God from everlasting. Paul calls Him "the King eternal, immortal, invisible" (1 Timothy 1:17).

2. God says plainly that He is not a man

> **Numbers 23:19** "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent."

> **Hosea 11:9** "For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst."

The Bible draws the line between God and man as sharply as it can. The LDS teaching places God and man in the same family, differing only in progress. Scripture places them in different categories: the Creator and the creature.

3. There were no gods before Him and there will be none after Him

> **Isaiah 43:10** "'You are My witnesses,' says the LORD, 'And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me.'"

> **Isaiah 44:6** “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’”

> **Isaiah 44:8** “Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.”

If the Father had a Father who was God before Him, then there was a God formed before Him. If faithful people become gods after Him, then there will be gods after Him. God Himself says neither is true. He even says He knows of no other. If there were gods before Him, the God who knows all things would know them.

4. God does not change

> **Malachi 3:6** “For I am the LORD, I do not change.”

Moving from a mortal man to an exalted God would be the greatest change imaginable. Yet God says He does not change. James 1:17 adds that with the Father of lights “there is no variation or shadow of turning.” A God who was once a sinner or a learner would not be the unchanging God of the Bible.

5. God is Spirit

> **John 4:24** “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Jesus also said, “a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39). The Father does not have a body of flesh and bones. The only person of the Godhead with a body is the Son, and He received it when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). He was God first and then took on humanity. That is the opposite of a man becoming God.

6. The oldest lie

> **Genesis 3:5** “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The first temptation was the promise that people could rise to be like God. Paul describes where this leads: men “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man” (Romans 1:23). We do not say this to accuse you, but because we love you and want you to see how serious it is.

For Christians talking with Latter-day Saints: Be gentle and ask questions. Read Isaiah 43:10 and 44:8 together and ask, “If God knows of no other God, where did the Father’s Father come from?” Then let the text speak. Walter Martin’s *The Kingdom of the Cults* and Watchman Fellowship are helpful for further study.

The God who came down for us

The good news is not that man can climb up to become God. It is that the eternal God came down to rescue man. We have all broken God’s commandments, and no amount of progress can erase our sin. But Jesus, God the Son, became a man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose from the dead. God commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Turn from your sin and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and He will give you eternal life as a free gift (Romans 6:23). Worship the God who has always been God.