

Why the LDS Church is a Cult: Theological Differences Between Christian and LDS Doctrines

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) claims to be the true Christian church. The LDS church does not like being referred to as a cult,¹ but they are a cult because their teachings differ significantly from historic Christian theology. This page explains what specific LDS doctrines make the LDS church a cult. As you will see, these differences are not merely minor changes in theology, but major disagreements about the nature of God, Jesus Christ, and mankind.

All material presented on this page comes directly from LDS scripture (the “Standard Works”) or the current LDS teaching book, *Gospel Principles*. Links to the official LDS website (lds.org) for all supporting information can be found in the footnotes. This paper examines some of the most fundamental aspects of theology:

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The nature of God

The LDS church promotes a theology about the nature of God that is radically different from orthodox Christianity. LDS doctrine states that gods, angels and humans are all *different forms* of the *same beings*. These beings begin their existence as spirit children - created through celestial procreation. Not only do we have a heavenly Father, but we also have a heavenly Mother. The spirit children produced by this union are said to be the angels. Some of these angels, led by Satan rebelled against God - becoming the demons. At some point, the obedient spirit children are given physical bodies and come to earth as human beings. Based upon their actions, these human beings

¹ The term “cult” can have many different meanings. However, in this page “cult” refers to a religious group that has broken off from another religion - differing significantly in theology and/or practice.

will inherit one of three levels of exaltation. Those humans who have followed the “gospel” of the LDS church will go to the celestial kingdom and themselves become gods and goddesses.

Christianity - one God

Christianity is monotheistic - the belief in one God. It originally split from Judaism by recognizing Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Jewish Messiah. The core belief of Judaism that separated it from the pagan cultures surrounding it was monotheism. The Hebrew Shema (pronounced Shmah) says, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”² Many other Old Testament verses affirm monotheism.³ Christianity continues the Judaic doctrine that there has been and always will be only one God – Creator, Sustainer, and Savior – over all creation. The concept is specifically

² See page *Is There One God?*.

³ And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God. (*Exodus 8:10*)

Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him. (*Deuteronomy 4:35*)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: (*Deuteronomy 6:4*)

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. (*Deuteronomy 32:39*)

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. (*Deuteronomy 33:26*)

There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, nor is there any rock like our God. (*1 Samuel 2:2*)

Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. (*2 Samuel 7:22*)

And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their (*1 Kings 8:23*)

That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else. (*1 Kings 8:60*)

AO Lord, there is none like Thee, neither is there any God besides Thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. (*1 Chronicles 17:20*)

And said, O LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and shewest mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their (*2 Chronicles 6:14*)

Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. (*Isaiah 43:10-11*)

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. (*Isaiah 44:6*)

Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (*Isaiah 44:8*)

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I (*Isaiah 45:5-6*)

Thus saith Jehovah, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. (*Isaiah 45:14*)

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (*Isaiah 45:21-22*)

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, (*Isaiah 46:9*)

Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Jehovah; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. (*Jeremiah 10:6*)

Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me. (*Hosea 13:4*)

And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. (*Joel 2:27*)

Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? (*Malachi 2:10*)

stated throughout the New Testament (along with the Hebrew Old Testament). Jesus Himself affirmed the Shema in the Book of Mark:

Jesus answered, "The foremost [commandment] is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD;'" (*Mark 12:29*)

Other New Testament passages that affirm monotheism are listed below:

- "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from **the one and only God**? (*John 5:44*)
- "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, **the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. (*John 17:3*)
- to **the only wise God**, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. (*Romans 16:27*)
- Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that **there is no God but one**. (*1 Corinthians 8:4*)
- yet for us **there is but one God**, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. (*1 Corinthians 8:6*)
- Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas **God is only one**. (*Galatians 3:20*)
- There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **one God and Father of all** who is over all and through all and in all. (*Ephesians 4:4-6*)
- Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, **the only God**, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (*1 Timothy 1:17*)
- For **there is one God**, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (*1 Timothy 2:5*)
- You believe that **God is one**. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (*James 2:19*)
- to **the only God our Savior**, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (*Jude 1:25*)

LDS church - many gods

LDS standard works (*Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price*) claim that the heavens and earth were created by a council of Gods.

- "...the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was..." (D&C 121:32)
- The Gods plan the creation of the earth and all life thereon... (PoGP:Abraham 4:Heading)
- ...And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth. (PoGP:Abraham 4:1)

The fourth chapter of Abraham continues a description of the creation account substituting the words "the Gods" for "God" found in the Genesis creation account. In fact, the term "the Gods" is found in every verse of Abraham 4 except 13, 15, 23 and 30.⁴

⁴ And the earth, after it was formed, was empty and desolate, because they had not formed anything but the earth; and darkness reigned upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of **the Gods** was brooding upon the face of the waters. (PoGP:Abraham 4:2)

The idea that this was a council of Gods can be seen in Abraham 5:

And the Gods said among themselves: On the seventh time we will end our work, which we have counseled; and we will rest on the seventh time from all our work which we have counseled. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:2*)

And they (**the Gods**) said: Let there be light; and there was light. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:3*)
And they (**the Gods**) comprehended the light, for it was bright; and they divided the light, or caused it to be divided, from the darkness. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:4*)
And **the Gods** called the light Day, and the darkness they called Night. And it came to pass that from the evening until morning they called night; and from the morning until the evening they called day; and this was the first, or the beginning, of that which they called day and night. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:5*)
And **the Gods** also said: Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and it shall divide the waters from the waters. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:6*)
And **the Gods** ordered the expanse, so that it divided the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so, even as they ordered. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:7*)
And **the Gods** called the expanse, Heaven. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that they called night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that they called day; and this was the second time that they called night and day. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:8*)
And **the Gods** ordered, saying: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the earth come up dry; and it was so as they ordered; (*PoGP:Abraham 4:9*)
And **the Gods** pronounced the dry land, Earth; and the gathering together of the waters, pronounced they, Great Waters; and **the Gods** saw that they were obeyed. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:10*)
And **the Gods** said: Let us prepare the earth to bring forth grass; the herb yielding seed; the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, whose seed in itself yieldeth its own likeness upon the earth; and it was so, even as they ordered. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:11*)
And **the Gods** organized the earth to bring forth grass from its own seed, and the herb to bring forth herb from its own seed, yielding seed after his kind; and the earth to bring forth the tree from its own seed, yielding fruit, whose seed could only bring forth the same in itself, after his kind; and **the Gods** saw that they were obeyed. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:12*)
And **the Gods** organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven, and caused them to divide the day from the night; and organized them to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years; (*PoGP:Abraham 4:14*)
And **the Gods** organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also; (*PoGP:Abraham 4:16*)
And **the Gods** set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to cause to divide the light from the darkness. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:17*)
And **the Gods** watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:18*)
And **the Gods** said: Let us prepare the waters to bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that have life; and the fowl, that they may fly above the earth in the open expanse of heaven. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:20*)
And **the Gods** prepared the waters that they might bring forth great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters were to bring forth abundantly after their kind; and every winged fowl after their kind. And **the Gods** saw that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:21*)
And **the Gods** said: We will bless them, and cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas or great waters; and cause the fowl to multiply in the earth. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:22*)
And **the Gods** prepared the earth to bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind; and it was so, as they had said. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:24*)
And **the Gods** organized the earth to bring forth the beasts after their kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after its kind; and **the Gods** saw they would obey. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:25*)
And **the Gods** took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness; and we will give them dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:26*)
So **the Gods** went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of **the Gods** to form they him, male and female to form they them. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:27*)
And **the Gods** said: We will bless them. And **the Gods** said: We will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:28*)
And **the Gods** said: Behold, we will give them every herb bearing seed that shall come upon the face of all the earth, and every tree which shall have fruit upon it; yea, the fruit of the tree yielding seed to them we will give it; it shall be for their meat. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:29*)
And **the Gods** said: We will do everything that we have said, and organize them; and behold, they shall be very obedient. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning they called night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that they called day; and they numbered the sixth time. (*PoGP:Abraham 4:31*)

The Gods are credited with more aspects of creation in Abraham 5 (which parallels Genesis 2).⁵ LDS scripture clearly teaches polytheism, in contrast to Christianity, which teaches monotheism. This is not a minor difference in theology!

Christianity - God is Spirit

Not only is there a major difference between Christianity and the LDS church in the number of Gods, but also a major difference in the nature of God(s). Christianity teaches that God is a spirit:

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

Other verses indicate that God is not made of earthly materials.⁶

The Bible directly states that God does *not* exist in human form:

and [they] exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (*Romans 1:23*)

⁵ the Gods finish their planning of the creation of all things--They bring to pass the creation according to their plans--Adam names every living creature. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:Heading*)
And the Gods said among themselves: On the seventh time we will end our work, which we have counseled; and we will rest on the seventh time from all our work which we have counseled. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:2*)
And the Gods concluded upon the seventh time, because that on the seventh time they would rest from all their works which they (the Gods) counseled among themselves to form; and sanctified it. And thus were their decisions at the time that they counseled among themselves to form the heavens and the earth. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:3*)
And the Gods came down and formed these the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were formed in the day that the Gods formed the earth and the heavens, (*PoGP:Abraham 5:4*)
According to all that which they had said concerning every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew; for the Gods had not caused it to rain upon the earth when they counseled to do them, and had not formed a man to till the ground. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:5*)
And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man's spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:7*)
And the Gods planted a garden, eastward in Eden, and there they put the man, whose spirit they had put into the body which they had formed. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:8*)
And out of the ground made the Gods to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life, also, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:9*)
And the Gods took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:11*)
And the Gods commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, (*PoGP:Abraham 5:12*)
But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the time that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord's time, which was after the time of Kolob; for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:13*)
And the Gods said: Let us make an help meet for the man, for it is not good that the man should be alone, therefore we will form an help meet for him. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:14*)
And the Gods caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he slept, and they took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof: (*PoGP:Abraham 5:15*)
And of the rib which the Gods had taken from man, formed they a woman, and brought her unto the man. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:16*)
And out of the ground the Gods formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that should be the name thereof. (*PoGP:Abraham 5:20*)
⁶ “Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. (*Acts 17:29*)

The God of the Bible is invisible and cannot be seen except if He reveals Himself to us in a three-dimensional form that we can see (in the form of Jesus Christ).

- But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” (*Exodus 33:20*)
- When He passes me I cannot see Him. When He goes by, I cannot perceive Him (*Job 9:11*)
- The Almighty is beyond our reach (*Job 37:23*)
- No man has seen God at any time... (*John 1:18*)
- No man has seen the Father... (*John 6:46*)
- And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. (*Colossians 1:15*)
- Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God... (*1 Timothy 1:17*)
- God... whom no man has seen or can see... (*1 Timothy 6:16*)
- ...Him who is unseen. (*Hebrews 11:27*)

So the Bible states that God is an invisible spirit that cannot be contained even within the entirety of the universe.⁷

LDS Church - God has a physical body

In contrast to the teaching of the Bible, the LDS scripture teaches that God has a body of flesh and bones.

“The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.” (*D&C 130:22*)

The official LDS teaching book, *Gospel Principles*, teaches that God “was once a man like us”:

“This is the way our Heavenly Father became God. 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...’ (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 345-46).”⁸

Gospel Principles goes on to state that not only did God once have a mortal body, but He still possesses a body “that looks like ours” and is made of “flesh and bones”:

Because we are made in his image (see *Moses 6:9*), we know that God has a body that looks like ours. His eternal spirit is housed in a tangible body of flesh and bones (see *D&C 130:22*).⁹

⁷ “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built!” (*1 Kings 8:27*)
“Can a man hide himself in hiding places, So I do not see him?” declares the LORD. “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?” declares the LORD. (*Jeremiah 23:24*)

⁸ *Gospel Principles*, 1997. Chapter 47 “Exaltation”. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁹ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 1 Our Father in Heaven.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Christianity - God is eternal

Christianity says that God is eternal. Both the Old Testament¹⁰ and New Testament¹¹ affirm that eternality is an essential characteristic of God's nature. According to the Bible, God has always existed:

Thy throne is established from of old; Thou art from everlasting. (*Psalms 93:2*)¹²

¹⁰ "The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms; And He drove out the enemy from before you, And said, 'Destroy!' (*Deuteronomy 33:27*)
And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. (*Genesis 21:33*)
Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. Then all the people said, "Amen," and praised the LORD. (*1 Chronicles 16:36*)
Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting. Amen, and Amen. (*Psalms 41:13*)
Before the mountains were born, Or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. (*Psalms 90:2*)
Thy throne is established from of old: Thou art from everlasting. (*Psalms 93:2*)
Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, "Amen." Praise the LORD! (*Psalms 106:48*)
For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (*Isaiah 9:6*)
"Trust in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock. (*Isaiah 26:4*)
Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. (*Isaiah 40:28*)
But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, And the nations cannot endure His indignation. (*Jeremiah 10:10*)
Art Thou not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. Thou, O LORD, hast appointed them to judge; And Thou, O Rock, hast established them to correct. (*Habakkuk 1:12*)
¹¹ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (*Romans 1:20*)
but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; (*Romans 16:26*)
Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (*1 Timothy 1:17*)
how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (*Hebrews 9:14*)
¹² Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. Then all the people said, "Amen," and praised the Lord. (*1 Chronicles 16:36*)
Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting. Amen, and Amen. (*Psalms 41:13*)
Before the mountains were born, Or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. (*Psalms 90:2*)
Thy throne is established from of old; Thou art from everlasting. (*Psalms 93:2*)
But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. (*Psalms 102:27*)
But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, (*Psalms 103:17*)
Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, "Amen." Praise the Lord! (*Psalms 106:48*)
Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. (*Isaiah 41:4*)
"It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And I am God. Even from eternity I am He; And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?" (*Isaiah 43:12-13*)
Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. (*Isaiah 44:6*)
Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. (*Isaiah 48:12*)
Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. Thou, O Lord, hast appointed them to judge; And Thou, O Rock, hast established them to correct. (*Habakkuk 1:12*)
"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." (*Micah 5:2*)
For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (*Malachi 3:6*)

The Bible also claims that God is the uncaused¹³ cause of everything in the universe.¹⁴

LDS Church - God was created

Joseph Smith, the founder of the LDS church, taught that God began His existence the same way as all men did - He was created and lived a mortal life as a man on "an earth." The principle is still taught by the LDS church, as seen in *Gospel Principles*.

"This is the way our Heavenly Father became God. 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' (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 345-46)."¹⁵

The nature of Jesus Christ

The nature of Jesus Christ is a vital part of Christianity. The LDS church radically changes Jesus Christ from being eternal God incarnate to being merely the first spirit child of God and "our elder brother."

Christianity - only begotten son of God

Christianity states that Jesus Christ is God,¹⁶ who left His glory to take on a human body to come to earth.

...Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (*Philippians 2:5-8*)

The Bible says that Jesus was eternally with God and was God – the Creator of all things.¹⁷

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (*John 1:1-3*)

¹³ And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (*Exodus 3:14*)

¹⁴ "It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands, And I ordained all their host. (*Isaiah 45:12*)
and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; (*Ephesians 3:9*)

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. (*Colossians 1:16*)
"Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created." (*Revelation 4:11*)

¹⁵ *Gospel Principles*, 1997. Chapter 47 "Exaltation". The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁶ See The Son is God.

¹⁷ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. (*Colossians 1:16*)
And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (*Ephesians 3:9*)

The Bible says that Jesus Christ has always been the same, *not progressing to be a god*:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. (*Hebrews 13:8*)

The Bible states that Jesus Christ is the *only* begotten son of God:

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. (*John 1:14*)¹⁸

LDS church - first of many sons

Contrary to the Bible, which says that Jesus Christ is the eternal God, *Gospel Principles* teaches that Jesus Christ is merely the first of billions of created spirit children - "literally our elder brother":

"Every person who was ever born on earth was our spirit brother or sister in heaven. The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ (see D&C 93:21), so he is literally our elder brother (see *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 26)."¹⁹

Gospel Principles not only teaches that Jesus Christ is our elder brother, but that He is the brother of Satan:

We needed a Savior to pay for our sins and teach us how to return to our Heavenly Father. Our Father said, "Whom shall I send?" (Abraham 3:27). Two of our brothers offered to help. Our oldest brother, Jesus Christ, who was then called Jehovah, said, "Here am I, send me" (Abraham 3:27)...

Satan, who was called Lucifer, also came, saying, "Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1).²⁰

The nature of mankind

One of the most radical departures from Christianity is the LDS teaching that humans can become gods through obedience to "the gospel." The LDS "gospel" claims that humans preexisted as spirit children in heaven, who are later given bodies to live on earth so that they may progress to godhead. In contrast, Christianity says that we are originally conceived in our mother's womb and will, if we accept His provision, enter His presence to live as His people for eternity.²¹

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. (*John 1:18*)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his **only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (*John 3:16*)

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the **only begotten Son** of God. (*John 3:18*)

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his **only begotten Son** into the world, that we might live through him. (*1 John 4:9*)

¹⁹ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. "Chapter 3 Jesus Christ, Our Chosen Leader And Savior." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²⁰ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. "Chapter 2 Our Heavenly Family." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, p. 11.

²¹ And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. (*Revelation 22:3-4*)

Christianity - no human preexistence

Christianity says that human beings began life in the womb, where our physical and spiritual life was first created:

For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb.
(*Psalms 139:13*)

The Bible says that nobody other than Jesus Christ, who is God, ever originated from heaven:

- “And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man. (*John 3:13*)
- “He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. (*John 3:30-31*)
- And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. (*John 8:23*)

The Bible says that humans are only adopted as sons, not literal sons of God:

- For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” (*Romans 8:15*)
- in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (*Galatians 4:5-6*)
- He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, (*Ephesians 1:5*)

LDS Church - humans preexisted as spirit beings

The LDS church (from *Gospel Principles*) teaches that all humans began life as spirit children:

“All men and women are . . . literally the sons and daughters of Deity. . . . 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” (Joseph F. Smith, “The Origin of Man,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1909, pp. 78, 80).²²

LDS teaching says that we made choices as spirit children that determined whether or not we would come to earth. Those who were obedient, received physical bodies.

- “We began to make choices as spirit children in our Heavenly Father’s presence.”²³
- “When we lived as spirit children with our heavenly parents, our Heavenly Father told us about his plan for us to become more like him.”²⁴
- “Thus, spirit children of our Heavenly Father began leaving his presence to come to the earth as they had been promised.”²⁵

²² *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 3 Jesus Christ, Our Chosen Leader And Savior.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²³ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 4 Freedom to Choose.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²⁴ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 5 The Creation.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

- “Other important truths that the Lord restored include the following:
2. We existed in premortal life as spirit children of God.”²⁶
- He revealed that one of the purposes of marriage is to provide mortal bodies for his spirit children.²⁷
- It [*motherhood*] is a sacred calling, a partnership with God in bringing his spirit children into the world.²⁸

“Heavenly Father has given us the law of eternal marriage so we can become like him. We must live this law to be able to have spirit children.”²⁹

Christianity - humans cannot become gods

The Bible explicitly states that humans cannot become gods, since there has never been or ever will be another God in existence:

“You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “And My servant whom I have chosen, In order that you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. **Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me.** (*Isaiah 43:10*)

LDS theology states that God would want us to be like Him.³⁰ However, the Bible states quite clearly that God is unwilling to share His glory with anyone else:

- “I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images. (*Isaiah 42:8*)
- “For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another. (*Isaiah 48:11*)

LDS Church - humans can become gods

The LDS church teaches that God created a plan by which his spirit children could progress to become gods themselves:

Since we could not progress further in heaven, our Heavenly Father called a Grand Council to present his plan for our progression (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 348, 349, 365). We learned that if we followed his plan, we would become like him. We would have a resurrected body; we would have all power in heaven and on earth;

²⁵ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 7 The Holy Ghost.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²⁶ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 17 The Church of Jesus Christ Today.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²⁷ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 36 The Family Can be Eternal.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²⁸ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 37 Family Responsibilities.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²⁹ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 38 Eternal Marriage.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³⁰ “All good things come from God. Everything that he does is to help his children become like him--a god.” *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 1 Our Father in Heaven.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

we would become heavenly parents and have spirit children just as he does (see D&C 132:19-20).³¹

Gospel Principles says that Temple Mormons can progress to Godhead, just as God the Father did:

“If we prove faithful to the Lord, we will live in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom of heaven. We will become exalted, just like our Heavenly Father. Exaltation is the greatest gift that Heavenly Father can give his children (see *D&C 14:7*).”

“These are some of the blessings given to exalted people:

1. They will live eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see D&C 76).
2. They will become gods.”³²

The nature of creation

The LDS church teaches a doctrine on the creation that is vastly different than that taught by Christianity.

Christianity - God creates from nothing

Christianity says that God existed before the universe was created. God created the entire universe at the same time that He created time itself.³³

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (*Genesis 1:1*)

The Bible indicates that all that we see were created from what cannot be seen.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. (*Hebrews 11:3*)

The Bible indicates that God’s kingdom is completely separate from the created universe:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; (*Hebrews 9:11*)

³¹ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. “Chapter 3 Jesus Christ, Our Chosen Leader And Savior.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³² *Gospel Principles*, 1997. Chapter 47 “Exaltation”. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³³ God was acting before the creation of time:

No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. (*1 Corinthians 2:7*)

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (*2 Timothy 1:9*)

The hope of eternal life, which God... promised before the beginning of time (*Titus 1:2*)

To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (*Jude 1:25*)

LDS Church - God organizes preexisting matter

According to *Gospel Principles*, creating merely involves organizing preexisting elements into a new form.

Create: To organize elements that already exist into a new form.³⁴

Not only does this doctrine contradict biblical teaching about the creation, but it also contradicts modern cosmology.

Conclusions

This paper shows that LDS doctrine as it exists today is quite different from Christian doctrine. Major differences include the nature of God, the nature of Jesus Christ, the nature of mankind, and the nature of the physical creation. Because of these large discrepancies, the LDS church cannot be considered to be a Christian church.

³⁴ *Gospel Principles*. 1997. "Glossary." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.