

Prophets speak on becoming joint-heirs with Christ

Inquirer - You teach that man may become like God. I say, How could he, for God is so far in advance of man?

Joseph Smith - “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man. ...” (Teachings, 345; compare D&C 130:22.)

Inquirer - Am I to understand that God has not always been a God?

Joseph Smith - “... 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. 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.

“These are incomprehensible ideas to some, but they are simple. It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that 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; and I will show it from the Bible.” (Teachings, pp. 345–46.)

Inquirer - I can see from what you say that God was once a man; but was he really like us, limited and finite?

Brigham Young - “While He was in the flesh, as we are, He was as we are. But it is now written of Him that our God is as a consuming fire [Hebrews 12:29], that He dwells in everlasting burnings, and this is why sin cannot be where He is.” (JD, 4:54.)

Inquirer - Then perhaps it is possible for me to become like Him. If God was once finite and just as

we are now, how did he become what he is now?

Joseph F. Smith - “It is absolutely necessary that we should come to the earth and take upon us tabernacles; because if we did not have tabernacles we could not be like God, nor like Jesus Christ. God has a tabernacle of flesh and bone.

“... We must go through the same ordeal in order to attain to the glory and exaltation which God designed we should enjoy with him in the eternal worlds. In other words, we must become like him; peradventure to sit upon thrones, to have dominion, power, and eternal increase. God designed this in the beginning. We are the children of God. ... We are precisely in the same condition and under the same circumstances that God our heavenly Father was when he was passing through this, or a similar ordeal.” (Gospel Doctrine, p. 64. Emphasis added.)

Inquirer - If we must go through the same ordeal to reach the glory that God has, then it must be that when he was a man and lived on an earth, he was baptized, ordained, received his endowments, and was married.

Wilford Woodruff - “... He has had His endowments long ago; it is thousands and millions of years since He received His blessings. ...” (JD, 4:192.) ...

Inquirer – If what you say is true, when can a person like me expect to see God?

Brigham Young - “When you are prepared to see our Father, you will see a being with whom you have long been acquainted, and he will receive you into His arms, and you will be ready to fall into His embrace and kiss Him, as you would your fathers and friends that have been dead for a score of years, you will be so glad and joyful. Would you not rejoice? When you are qualified and purified, ... you can endure the glory of eternity, so that you can see your Father. ...” (JD, 4:54–55.)

Inquirer – What does Paul mean when he taught that we can become joint-heirs with Christ?

Bruce R. McConkie – “A joint-heir is one who inherits equally with all other heirs including the Chief Heir who is the Son. Each joint-heir has an equal and an undivided portion of the whole of

everything. If one knows all things, so do all others. If one has all power, so do all those who inherit jointly with him. If the universe belongs to one, so it does equally to the total of all upon whom the joint inheritances are bestowed” (Mormon Doctrine, 395).

Joseph Smith - [A joint-heir may] “inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before” (Teachings, 347).

Inquirer - Will it be possible for those who become like the Father to know everything that the Father knows?

Joseph Fielding Smith - “Those who receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom are promised the fulness thereof. ‘All things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come.’ [D&C 76:59.] Our Father in heaven is infinite; he is perfect; he possesses all knowledge and wisdom. However, he is not jealous of his wisdom and perfection, but glories in the fact that it is possible for his children who obey him in all things and endure to the end to become like him.

“Man has within him the power, which the Father has bestowed upon him, so to develop in truth, faith, wisdom, and all the virtues, that eventually he shall become like the Father and the Son; this virtue, wisdom, and knowledge on the part of the faithful does not rob the Father and the Son, but adds to their glory and dominion. Thus it is destined that those who are worthy to become his sons and joint-heirs with our Redeemer, would be heirs of the Father’s kingdom, possessing the same attributes in their perfection, as the Father and the Son now possess.” ...

Inquirer - Do these heirs receive from the Father such that they share his dominion as well?

Joseph Fielding Smith - “Now, how are they to receive all that the Father hath, if something is withheld? And if something is not withheld, how can they receive all that he hath and not become as he is, that is, be gods themselves?...

“How can the saints receive of his fulness and be equal with the Lord and not be as he is, that is, gods?

“The Father has promised through the Son that all

that he has shall be given to those who are obedient to his commandments. They shall increase in knowledge, wisdom, and power, going from grace to grace, until the fulness of the perfect day shall burst upon them. They shall, through the glory and blessing of the Almighty, become creators. All power, and dominion, and might shall be given to them, and they shall be the only ones upon whom this great blessing shall be bestowed. ...

“If the faithful, who keep the commandments of the Father, are his sons, then they are heirs of the kingdom and shall receive of the fulness of the Father’s glory, even until they become like the Father. And how can they be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect if they are not like him? ...

“Now, if they overcome all things, then there are not some things which they do not overcome. If these are to receive ‘of his fulness and of his glory,’ and if into their ‘hands the Father has given all things,’ then the Father has not withheld some of the fulness of his glory, or some things. And if they receive his fulness and his glory, and if ‘all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs,’ how can they receive these blessings and not become gods? They cannot.” (Doctrines of Salvation, 2:35–36, 39.)

Inquirer - Then it is not improper for me to have hope that I may advance and progress until I become just like He is?

Joseph Fielding Smith - “Paul wrote: ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.’ [Philippians 2:5, 6.]

“The Beloved Disciple John wrote:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.’ [1 John 3:1–3]

“Then President Snow, addressing himself to Paul and referring to the words written by John, penned these lines:

Dear Brother [Paul]:

Hast thou not been unwisely bold,
Man's destiny to thus unfold?
To raise, promote such high desire,
Such vast ambition thus inspire?

Still 'tis no phantom that we trace
Man's ultimatum in life's race;
This royal path has long been trod
By righteous men, each now a God:

As Abra'm, Isaac, Jacob, too,
First babes, then men—to gods they grew.
As man now is, our God once was;
As now God is, so man may be,—
Which doth unfold man's destiny.

For John declares: When Christ we see
Like unto him we'll truly be.
And he who has this hope within,
Will purify himself from sin.

Who keep this object grand in view,
To folly, sin, will bid adieu,
Nor wallow in the mire anew;

Nor ever seek to carve his name
High on the shaft of worldly fame;
But here his ultimatum trace:

The head of all his spirit-race.

Ah, well: that taught by you, dear Paul,
'Though much amazed, we see it all;
Our Father God, has ope'd our eyes,
We cannot view it otherwise.

The boy, like to his father grown,
Has but attained unto his own;
To grow to sire from state of son,
Is not 'gainst Nature's course to run.

A son of God, like God to be,
Would not be robbing Deity;
And he who has this hope within,
Will purify himself from sin.

You're right, St. John, supremely right:
Whoe'er essays to climb this height,
Will cleanse himself of sin entire—
Or else 'twere needless to aspire.

(Improvement Era 22:660–61 [June 1919.])

“Our whole purpose in life should be to do those things which will enable us to gain eternal life, and eternal life is the name of the kind of life possessed by the Father and the Son; it is exaltation in the eternal realms.” (Address at Snow College, 14 May 1971, pp. 3–7.)