

# The King Follett Discourse in Light of the Bible

By Brian Hooper

In Historic Nauvoo as part of Nauvoo Pageant activities (2010) special dramas are being performed by certain pageant cast members. One of these is a historic depiction of Joseph Smith's famous King Follett Sermon which taught significant new doctrine for the LDS Church. Past LDS president Hinckley commented:

The text of that address has become **an important doctrinal document in the theology of the Church**. It is known as the King Follett Sermon. (*Ensign*, Sept. 1994)

The complete discourse is not presented as part of the historic depiction, though certain excerpts are. Unfortunately, some of the items not included in the drama are **the most significant and controversial teachings ever expounded by Joseph Smith**. The following is a look at some of these in light of God's previous revelation in the Bible. The Bible tells us to test the claims and teachings of those who claim to be prophets- not by our feelings, signs, or wonders, but by what God has already revealed in scripture. Deuteronomy 13:1-5; I Kings 13:17; Isaiah 8:20; 1 John 4:1.

## Joseph Smith's teachings on the nature of God the Father in the discourse:

### God An Exalted Man

"I will go back to the beginning before the world was, to show what kind of a being God is. What sort of a being was God in the beginning? Open your ears and hear, all ye ends of the earth, for I am going to prove it to you by the Bible, and to tell you the designs of God in relation to the human race, and why He interferes with the affairs of man.

**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; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another.

In order to understand the subject of the dead, for consolation of those who mourn for the loss of their friends, 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."

In the discourse we note the following teachings: 1.) God came to be God. 2.) God was not always God from all eternity. 3.) God was one a man like us. 4.) God progressed to become a God.

The Bible however declares that God is unchangeable (Malachi 3:6), and that has always been God “. . . even **from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God**” Psalm 90:2. The Bible also says that God is not a man: “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent:” Numbers 23:19 (see also: 1 Samuel 15:29; Hosea 11:9; Isaiah 31:3; Isaiah 31:3; Romans 1:20-23)

Furthermore, if as Smith taught, God was not always God but was once a man who progressed to become a God, then God would have needed *his own God* during his progression time. Joseph Smith taught this very thing in his later June 16, 1844 sermon- that there were many Gods and that God the Father had *his own* Father God.

**“The heads of the Gods** appointed one God for us; and when you take [that] view of the subject, it sets one free to see all the beauty, holiness and perfection **of the Gods.**”

“If Abraham reasoned thus—If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered **that God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father, you may suppose that He had a Father also.** Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son? Whenever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor? And everything comes in this way. Paul says that which is earthly is in the likeness of that which is heavenly, Hence if Jesus had a Father, **can we not believe that He had a Father also?** I despise the idea of being scared to death at such a doctrine, for the Bible is full of it.” (*History of the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 473-479)

Thus, Smith’s teaching became that there are many Gods in existence. The relatively recent LDS Church priesthood manual (*Search These Commandments*, Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide, 1984, pp. 151-153) also teaches this very thing. The teaching there are many Gods is also found in the creation account in the LDS scripture *The Pearl Of Great Price* (Abraham chapter 4).

The Bible though explicitly declares in numerous places that there is only one true God by nature, and that there is none else beside him. Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; Isaiah 44:8; 45:5; Psalm 86:10; Jeremiah 10:10; John 17:3. The Bible says that he alone is the creator of all things: Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 44:24; and that before him there was no God formed neither will there be any after him: Isaiah 43:10.

These are not trivial matters, the Bible warns:

“For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err; and *they that are* led of them *are* destroyed.” Isaiah 9:16

These are not trivial matters Jesus Christ himself said:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God,”