

1. Overview: Church members are taught that the prophet speaks for the Lord and will never lead the church astray (even when they are wrong). President Heber J. Grant said: “Always keep your eye on the President of the church, and if he ever tells you to do anything, **even if it is wrong**, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it but you don’t need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray.” (Conference Report, October 1960, p. 78.) I don’t expect prophets to be perfect, but I am uncomfortable blindly following modern-day prophets in light of the numerous falsehoods and disavowed doctrines taught by previous Church leaders.

2. Adam-God: President Brigham Young taught a doctrine now known as the “Adam-God theory.” He taught that Adam is “our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do.” Young not only taught this doctrine over the pulpit at the 1852 and 1854 General Conferences, but he also introduced this doctrine at the [Lecture at the Veil](#) in the Temple endowment ceremony. (Journal of [L. John Nuttall](#), personal secretary of Brigham Young, February 7, 1877 in BYU Special Collections). Consider the following statements made by Brigham Young with regard to the Adam-God theology.

- “How much unbelief exists in the minds of Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me — namely that Adam is our father and God ..Then he said, ‘I want my children who are in the spirit world to come and live here. I once dwelt upon an earth something like this, in a mortal state. I was faithful. I received my crown and exaltation...I want my children that were born to me in the spirit world to come here and take tabernacles of flesh that their spirits may have a house, a tabernacle ...’” (Brigham Young, *Deseret Weekly News*, June 18, 1873, page 308; *Deseret Evening News*, June 14, 1873)
- “Who was the Savior begotten by?... Who did beget him? His Father, and his father is our God, and the Father of our spirits, and he is the framer of the body, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who is he? He is Father Adam; Michael; the Ancient of Days.” (President Brigham Young, Feb. 19, 1854, Brigham Young Collection, LDS Archives; ; *Brigham Young Addresses*, 1850–1854, Vol. 2, by Elden J. Watson, sheet 179 (in chronological order), Historical Dept. Church, Ms d 1234, Box 48 Fd. 11; also in *Adam Is God???*, pp. 9–10; *Adam-God Maze*, p.101)
- “Some have grumbled because I believe our God to be so near to us as Father Adam. There are many who know that doctrine to be true.” (Brigham Young, October 7, 1857, *Journal of Discourses* 5:331).
- “Some years ago I advanced a doctrine with regard to Adam being our Father and God...It is one of the most glorious revealments of the economy of heaven....” (President Brigham Young, in the Tabernacle, General Conference, October 8, 1861, 10:30 a.m.; Brigham Young Addresses, 1860–1864, Vol. 4, by Elden J. Watson, sheet 134 (in chronological order), Historical Dept. Church, Ms d 1234, Box 49 fd 8)

Prophets and apostles after Young renounced the Adam-God theology as false doctrine. President Spencer W. Kimball renounced the Adam-God theory in the October 1976 Conference:

“We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which are not according to the scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such, for instance, is the Adam-God theory. We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine.” (President Spencer W. Kimball, [Our Own Liahona](#))

Along with President Spencer W. Kimball and similar statements from others, Bruce R. McConkie made the following statement:

“The devil keeps this heresy [Adam-God theology] alive as a means of obtaining converts to cultism. It is contrary to the whole plan of salvation set forth in the scriptures, and anyone who has read the Book of Moses, and anyone who has received the temple endowment, has no excuse whatever for being led astray by it. Those who are so ensnared reject the living prophet and close their ears to the apostles of their day.” (Bruce R. McConkie, [The Seven Deadly Heresies](#))

Ironically, Elder McConkie’s June 1980 condemnation asks church members to trust him and President Kimball as living prophets without commenting on the applicability of this instruction to members living during Brigham Young’s day. Further, McConkie points to the endowment ceremony as a source of doctrinal information without mentioning that Brigham Young implemented the Adam-God theory into the endowment ceremony in his day. It is as if yesterday’s doctrine is today’s false doctrine and yesterday’s prophet is today’s heretic. Why should today’s Church members trust modern prophets when past church members were taught false doctrine by previous prophets?

3. Blood Atonement: Along with Adam-God, Brigham Young taught a doctrine known as “[Blood Atonement](#),” which was a controversial doctrine indicating that murder was so heinous that the atonement of Christ does not apply to murderers. Thus, to atone for murder, the perpetrator must have his or her blood shed as a sacrificial offering. Brigham Young taught as follows:

“There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; and the smoking incense would atone for their sins, whereas, if such is not the case, they will stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world.

I know, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it is strong doctrine; but it is to save them, not to destroy them ...

And furthermore, I know that there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to shed their blood, that the smoke thereof might ascend to God as an offering to appease the wrath that is kindled against them, and that the law might have its course. I will say further;

I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.

It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, yet men can commit sins which it can never remit.... There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days; and there are sins that the blood of a lamb, or a calf, or of turtle dove, cannot remit, but they must be atoned for by the blood of the man.” (Brigham Young, [Journal of Discourses, Vol. 4, p. 53-54](#))

The doctrine of blood atonement was later declared false by subsequent prophets and apostles. Why should today’s Church members trust modern prophets when past church members were taught false doctrine by previous prophets?

4. Polygamy: Brigham Young taught that polygamy is required for exaltation: “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.” (Brigham Young, [Journal of Discourses 11:269](#).) Likewise, several prophets after Young, including John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, and Joseph F. Smith taught that the New and Everlasting Covenant of plural marriage was doctrinal and essential for exaltation. The importance and eternal nature of polygamy is further supported by [Doctrine & Covenants 132:4](#): “For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.” Note that the entire section deals with the prac-

tice of polygamy and that the revelation was given to Joseph Smith to answer his inquiries into polygamy (D&C 132: 1-2).

In a September 1998 Larry King Live [interview](#), Hinckley was asked about polygamy:

- Larry King: You condemn it [polygamy]?
- Hinckley: I condemn it. Yes, as a practice, because I think it is not doctrinal.

Notably, Doctrine and Covenants 132 is canonized scripture. The Church is, in essence, still practicing plural marriage in the Temple. Apostles Elder Oaks and Elder Nelson are modern examples of LDS polygamists in that they are sealed to multiple women.

So, some prophets claim that polygamy is doctrinal. Other prophets apparently claim it is not. Again, why should today's Church members trust modern prophets when past church members were taught false doctrine by previous prophets?

5. Race and the Priesthood: For close to 130 years, those of African descent were banned from holding the priesthood and black men and women were prohibited from participating in temple endowment or sealing ordinances. All prophets from Brigham Young through Harold B. Lee kept this ban in place. Joseph Smith, however, permitted at least two black men to receive the priesthood, [Elijah Abel](#) and [Walker Lewis](#). In other words, Joseph Smith gave African Americans the priesthood. Brigham Young banned the practice. All 10 prophets from Brigham Young to Harold B. Lee supported the ban, which Spencer W. Kimball referred to as a "possible error" (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 448-449). Finally, the ban was lifted in 1978.

Today, the Church teaches that no explanation has ever been given as to why the ban remained in place for 130 years. Additionally, the Church recently released an essay, entitled [Race and the Priesthood](#), in which it disavowed "the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else. Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form."

The problem with the Church's preceding statement is that it directly contradicts the Church's official declarations on the matter from past prophets. For example, on August 17, 1949, [the First Presidency issued an official statement](#) relating to race and the priesthood. In so doing, the Church made the following declarations:

"The prophets of the Lord have made several statements as to the operation of the principle. President Brigham Young said: 'Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the holy priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to.'

....

"The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality"

Both LDS scripture and modern-day prophets perpetuate the idea that dark skin is a curse. The Book of Mormon teaches that the Lamanites were "cursed" with dark skin due to their iniquity. [2 Nephi 5:21](#). By contrast, the Book of Mormon teaches that the Lamanites' skin was made white when they repented. [3 Nephi 2:15](#). Likewise, many prophets over many years made incredibly racists com-

ments from the pulpit and presented such comments as doctrine. For example:

- **Brigham Young** uttered numerous racist remarks in his role prophet. “Should I tell you the laws of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain (those with dark skin) the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so.” (*Journal of Discourses*, 10:110.)
- **John Taylor** stated: “And after the flood we are told that the curse that had been pronounced upon Cain was continued through Hams wife, as he had married a wife of that seed. And why did it pass through the flood? Because it was necessary that the devil should have a representation upon the earth as well as God;” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 22, pg. 304.)
- **Joseph Fielding Smith** stated that Cain was the father “of an inferior race,” (*The Way to Perfection*, p. 101), and that black men could not receive the priesthood because “those who were not faithful [in the pre-mortal life] received less.” (*Doctrines of Salvation* 1:61.)
- Apostle **Mark E. Peterson**, in a 1954 address to BYU students, stated: “If that Negro is faithful all his days, he can and will enter the Celestial Kingdom. He will go there as a servant, but he will get celestial glory.”

The LDS Church professes to be God’s one true Church that is led by prophets that communicate with God. How could nearly every prophet since Brigham Young be so wrong about something so important if they spoke with God? Why would this not be challenged by any of the prophets since Brigham Young if they were real prophets? If the LDS Church was really God’s one true church on earth, you would expect the leaders to proclaim racial equality in the 1800s, and not wait until 1978 to change their position on equal rights.

6. Doctrine versus Opinion: It is virtually impossible to determine when prophets are speaking as men versus when they are speaking as prophets. For example, Church members are often told that Brigham Young was a man of his time and that he was acting as a man when he taught the Adam--God doctrine. However, this ignores the fact that he taught the doctrine over the pulpit in two General Conferences and introduced the theology into the endowment ceremony. Additionally, if a prophet (speaking in General Conference) is merely providing opinion and does not represent the Church, what is the point of Conference?

Notably, Brigham Young made it clear that he was always speaking as a prophet during his sermons: “I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call scripture.” (*Journal of Discourses* 13:95.)

How can we trust modern-day prophets as speaking for the Lord when so many statements and doctrines made by previous prophets have been disavowed by the Church?

Simply stated, the Church claims the benefit of two contradictory positions. On the one hand, the Church proclaims that its leaders are inspired in their teachings, and that the prophets will never lead the Church astray. On the other hand, when prophets’ teachings turn out to be false, embarrassing, or out of vogue, the Church claims that such statements and doctrines were merely personal opinions (even if they were made in General Conference). These conflicting positions cannot both be true.