

# Gospel Doctrine Lesson 8: The Restoration of the Priesthood

(Doctrine and Covenants 13, 20, 27, 84, 107, 110)

**LESSON GOAL:** To increase our appreciation for the restoration of the priesthood, to encourage brethren to magnify their offices and callings in the priesthood, and to help us enjoy more fully the blessings of the priesthood.

Questions to consider during this lesson:

- What influence has the priesthood had on you?
- How have you seen the power of the priesthood manifested in your life?
- How has the priesthood blessed and strengthened your family?
- How can you make the influence and power of the priesthood more effective in your life and for your family?

## 1. Definition and purpose of the priesthood

**Joseph F. Smith:** "It is necessary that every act performed under this authority shall be done at the proper time and place, in the proper way, and after the proper order. The power of directing these labors constitutes the **keys** of the Priesthood" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 136).

**Priesthood keys** authorize priesthood holders to preside over and direct the Church within a jurisdiction, such as a stake, ward, or quorum. **Presiding priesthood leaders receive these keys when they are set apart.** All offices in the priesthood and organizations in the Church function under the direction of these presiding authorities.

**Joseph F. Smith:** "As pertaining to man's existence on this earth, **priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of men.** It is the power by which the gospel is preached; by which the ordinances of salvation are performed so that they will be binding on earth and in heaven; by which men are sealed up unto eternal life, being assured of the fulness of the Father's kingdom hereafter; and by which in due course the Lord will govern the nations of the earth and all that pertains to them" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 136).

## 2. The restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

The restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood occurred on May 15, 1829, near Harmony, Pennsylvania.

**Joseph Smith:** "We on a certain day went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins. While we were thus employed, **praying and calling upon the Lord**, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying: Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, **I confer the Priesthood of Aaron**, which holds **the keys of the ministering of angels**, and of the gospel of **repentance**, and of **baptism** by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness" (JS-History 1:68-69)

**Oliver Cowdery** "I shall not attempt to paint to you **the feelings of this heart**, nor the majestic beauty and glory which surrounded us on this occasion; but you will believe me when I say, that earth, nor men, with the eloquence of time, cannot begin to clothe language in as interesting and sublime a manner as this holy personage. No; nor has this earth power to give the joy, to bestow the peace, or comprehend the wisdom which was contained in each sentence as they were delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit! Man may deceive his fellow-men, deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may have power to seduce the foolish and untaught, till naught but fiction feeds the many, and the fruit of falsehood carries in its current the giddy to the grave; but one touch with the finger of his love, yes, one ray of glory from the upper world, or **one word from the mouth of the Savior**, from the bosom of eternity, strikes it all into insignificance, and blots it forever from the mind. The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel, the **certainty that we heard the voice of Jesus**, and the **truth unsullied** as it flowed from a pure personage, dictated by the will of God, **is to me past description**, and I shall ever look upon this expression of the Savior's goodness with wonder and thanksgiving while I am permitted to tarry; and in those mansions where perfection dwells and sin never comes, I hope to adore in that day which shall never cease" (*Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1 (October 1834), 14-16).

**James E. Talmage:** "As soon as I had been ordained, a feeling came to me such as I have never been able to fully describe. It seemed scarcely possible, that I, a little boy, could be so honored of God as to be called to the priesthood. ... I felt strong in the thought that I belonged to the Lord, and that he would assist me in whatever was required of me. **The effect of my ordination ... entered into all the affairs of my boyish life.** ... When at play on the school grounds, and perhaps tempted to take unfair advantage in the game, when in the midst of a dispute with a playmate, I would remember, and the thought would be as effective as though spoken aloud—**'I am a deacon; and it is not right that a deacon should act in this way.'** On examination days, when it seemed easy for me to copy some other boy's work ... , I would say in my mind, **'It would be more wicked for me to do that than it is for them, because I am a deacon.'**" (*Incidents from the Lives of Our Church Leaders [Deacon's Instruction Manual, 1914], 135-36).*

## A. The keys of the ministering of angels (D&C 13; 84:26; 107:20)

**Gordon B. Hinckley:** "That means, as I interpret it, that if you live worthy of the priesthood, you have the right to receive and enjoy the very power of heavenly beings to guide you, to protect you, to bless you" (*CReport*, Oct. 1982)

**D&C 84:26-27:** And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel; Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments (the law of Moses/Ten Commandments). . ."

**Dallin H. Oaks:** "The ministering of angels can occur through personal appearances and can also be unseen. Angelic messages can be delivered by a voice or merely by thoughts or feelings communicated to the mind . . . Most angelic communications are felt or heard rather than seen. . .

"Through the Aaronic Priesthood ordinances of baptism and the sacrament, we are cleansed of our sins and promised that if we keep our covenants we will always have His Spirit to be with us. I believe that promise not only refers to the Holy Ghost but also to the ministering of angels, for 'angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ' (2 Nephi 32:3). **So it is that those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood open the door for all Church members who worthily partake of the sacrament to enjoy the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and the ministering of angels**" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1998, 51).

**Thomas S. Monson:** When I was approaching my eighteenth birthday and preparing to enter military service near the close of World War II, I was recommended to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Mine was the task of telephoning my stake president, Paul C. Child, for an appointment and interview. He was the one who loved and understood the holy scriptures. It was his intent that all others should similarly love and understand them. Knowing from others of his rather detailed and searching interviews, my telephone conversation with him went something like this:

"Hello, President Child, this is Tom Monson. I have been asked by the bishop to seek an interview with you."

"Fine Brother Monson. When can you visit with me?"

Knowing that his sacrament meeting time was six o'clock, and desiring minimum exposure of my spiritual knowledge to his review, I suggested, "How would Sunday at five o'clock be?"

His response, "Oh Brother Monson, that would not provide sufficient time to peruse the scriptures. Could you please come at two o'clock and bring with you your personally marked and referenced set of scriptures?"

Sunday finally arrived, and I visited President Child's home on Indiana Avenue. I was greeted warmly, and then the interview began. He said, "Brother Monson, you hold the Aaronic Priesthood. Have you ever had angels administer to you?"

My reply was, "No, President Child."

"Do you know that you are entitled to such?"

Again came my response, "No."

Then he instructed, "brother Monson, repeat from memory the thirteenth section of the Doctrine and Covenants."

I began, "Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of the Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels . . ." (D&C 13:1).

"Stop," President Child directed. Then in a calm, kindly tone he counseled, "Brother Monson, never forget that as a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood you are entitled to the ministering of angels." It was almost as if an angel were in the room that day. I have never forgotten the interview. I yet feel the spirit of that solemn occasion. I revere the priesthood of Almighty God. I have witnessed its power. I have seen its strength. I have marveled at the miracles it has wrought. (*Inspiring Experiences That Build Faith: From the Life and Ministry of Thomas S. Monson*, 1994, 192).

## B. The keys of repentance and baptism (D&C 13; 84:26–27; 107:20)

Repentance and baptism are also called the "preparatory gospel" (D&C 84:26–27). This is because repentance and baptism help us prepare to receive the greater blessings that are administered through the Melchizedek Priesthood, such as the gift of the Holy Ghost and temple ordinances. In addition to baptism, Aaronic Priesthood holders may officiate in the ordinance of the sacrament.

**Jeffrey R. Holland:** "We ask you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood to prepare and bless and pass these emblems of the Savior's sacrifice worthily and reverently. **What a stunning privilege and sacred trust given at such a remarkably young age!** I can think of no higher compliment heaven could pay you. We do love you. Live your best and look your best when you participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1995, 89).

### 3. The restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood

Some weeks after John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood, Peter, James, and John appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood. The exact date is not known, but we can reasonably conclude that it was restored between May 15 and May 29, 1829, 16–17 miles north of Harmony, Pennsylvania, while fleeing their enemies.

**Addison Everett:** "[Joseph] said that at Colesville, New York, in 1829, he and Oliver Cowdery were under arrest on a charge of deceiving the people. . . . [While conferring with their attorney in private he advised them] 'If they get hold of you they will perhaps do you bodily injury; and I think the best way for you to get out of this is to get right out there,' pointing to the window and hoisting it. They got into the woods. . . a few rods from the house. It was night and they traveled through brush and water and mud, fell over logs, etc., until Oliver was exhausted. Then Joseph helped him along through the mud and water, almost carrying him.

"They traveled all night, and just at the break of day Oliver gave out entirely and exclaimed, 'Oh, Lord! Brother Joseph, how long have we got to endure this thing?' **They sat down on a log to rest, and Joseph said that at that very time Peter, James and John came to them and ordained them to the apostleship.** They had sixteen or seventeen miles to go to get back to Mr. Hale's, his father-in-law's, but Oliver did not complain any more of fatigue" (Letter of Addison Everett to Oliver B. Huntington, February 17, 1881, *Young Women's Journal*, II (November, 1890), 76–77).

**JS-History 1:74:** Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of. In the meantime we were forced to keep secret the circumstances of having received the Priesthood and our having been baptized, owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood.

**Ted Gibbons:** "I was reading Alma 13 recently and discovered an insight into the Melchizedek Priesthood that I had missed before. This chapter calls those who receive this higher priesthood have received **a holy calling** (13:4,5,6,8) to **a holy order** (13:6) and that received it by **a holy ordinance** (13:8). Reflect on this as you consider those you know who hold this higher priesthood—they were called with a holy calling to a holy order by a holy ordinance. There is not another office in the world like this one. What an honor to assume responsibility **(1) to administer the gospel** (D&C 84:19), **(2) for all spiritual blessings** in the church (D&C 107:18), **(3) for presiding in the Church**, **(4) for gathering Israel**. And while the Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys of the ministering of angels, without the Melchizedek Priesthood, "no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live" (D&C 84:22)

**Victor W. Matthews:** "Many years ago my brother, LeRoy E. Matthews, and his family lived in a neighboring state in a town where a state hospital was located. One day Roy was invited to the hospital superintendent's office for a brief interview. The superintendent explained that after a great deal of consideration, he had decided to ask Roy to serve as chaplain to the hospital for the coming year. He further explained that for many years it had been the hospital's policy to appoint a different minister each year from among the churches in that area on a kind of rotation basis. Up to that time, these appointments had gone to clergymen of other churches, even though the town was approximately 50 percent Latter-day Saint.

"Roy told the superintendent that he felt honored and would be very happy to accept this appointment.

"A few days later, however, Roy was called back to the superintendent's office, where **he learned that the ministers of the area had objected to his appointment.** They pointed out that they had nothing against Roy Matthews personally, but were very much opposed to his appointment as chaplain because **he was 'not even an ordained minister of the gospel.'**

"The superintendent then asked Roy if he had any document that might substantiate his position as a minister of the gospel. Roy said he would go home and be back in less than an hour with the necessary information.

"Shortly afterward, Roy returned to the office and handed the superintendent a card on which was typed his priesthood line of authority, a list showing how ordination to the priesthood had descended to him through earlier brethren who had each been ordained in turn. The superintendent read it carefully and then said, **'Do you mean, Roy, that your authority traces back to our Lord?'**

"'Yes, Doctor, that is correct,' he replied.

"The superintendent expressed joy and amazement and asked if he could keep the card for a few days. Of course Roy consented.

"Later in the week Roy was called back to the office, where the superintendent explained that he had met with the ministers, had read Roy's line of authority to them, and **asked if they had anything that could compare with this. Their only reply was that they had each been schooled and ordained in ministerial colleges.**

"Roy was granted the appointment without further protest or opposition" ("The Chaplain's Authority," *Ensign*, July 1985, 50-51).

**Joseph Smith:** "The Melchizedek Priesthood . . . is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven" (TPJS, 166-167).

The Melchizedek Priesthood is the greater priesthood. It possesses all the authority, knowledge, and covenants necessary for the exaltation of God's children, including the authority to govern the Church, preach the gospel, and administer the ordinances of salvation:

1. The keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood (D&C 107:18–20)

**Joseph Smith:** "Melchizedek Priesthood . . . is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven" (TPJS, 166-67).

2. The authority to administer the gospel of Jesus Christ (D&C 84:19)

**D&C 84:19:** And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

3. The right of presidency in spiritual things (D&C 107:8–12)

**D&C 107:8-9:** The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things. The Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, have a right to officiate in all the offices in the church.

4. The keys of all the spiritual blessings of the Church (D&C 107:18–19)

**D&C 107:19:** To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

**Spiritual blessings that come through the Melchizedek Priesthood:**

- **Knowledge of the mysteries** of the kingdom and knowledge of God (D&C 84:19; 107:19; this knowledge comes through the gift of the Holy Ghost).

**D&C 84:19:** And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

- **The power of godliness**, which is manifested through the ordinances of the gospel (D&C 84:20–21)

**D&C 84:20-21:** Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

- The opportunity to see, commune with, and enjoy the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (D&C 84:22; 107:19).

**D&C 84: 22:** For without this [greater priesthood] no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

- a. Access to **temple ordinances** and the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom (D&C 84:19–21).
- b. The right to have **the heavens opened and receive revelation** (D&C 107:19)
- c. The **ability to see God** and stand in His presence (D&C 84:19, 22)

**D&C 107:18-19:** The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church— **To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them**, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to **enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.**

5. The keys of missionary work (D&C 110:11)

**D&C 110:11:** After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and **Moses** appeared before us, and committed unto us **the keys of the gathering of Israel** from the four parts of the earth, and the **leading of the ten tribes** from the land of the north.

## 6. The keys to perfection of the Saints (D&C 110:12)

**D&C 110:12:** After this, **Elias** appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that **in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.**

## 7. The keys of genealogical and temple work (D&C 110:13–16)

**D&C 110:13-15:** **Elijah** the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said: Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—**To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—**

## 4. Blessings of the priesthood for all people

**John A. Widtsoe:** "Priesthood is to be used for the benefit of the entire human family, for the upbuilding of men, women, and children alike. There is indeed no privileged class or sex within the true Church of Christ. ... Men have their work to do and their powers to exercise for the benefit of all the members of the Church. ... **So with woman: Her special gifts are to be exercised for the benefit and uplift of the race**" (quoted by, comp., in *Priesthood and Church Government*, rev. ed. [1954], 92–93).

**Boyd K. Packer:** "Some years ago I gave a talk entitled "What Every Elder Should Know: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government." Later, when it was to be published, I changed the title to read "What Every Elder Should Know—and Every Sister as Well." I include the sisters because it is crucial for everyone to understand what is expected of the brethren. **Unless we enlist the attention of the mothers and daughters and sisters—who have influence on their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers—we cannot progress. The priesthood will lose great power if the sisters are neglected**" (*Ensign*, April 2010, "The Power of the Priesthood")

**Bruce R. McConkie:** "In the true Patriarchal Order **man holds the priesthood** and is the head of the household, ... but he cannot attain a fulness of joy here or of eternal reward hereafter alone. Woman stands at his side a joint-inheritor with him in the fulness of all things. Exaltation and eternal increase is her lot as well as his. (D&C 131:1–4.) **Godhood is not for men only; it is for men and women together.** (D&C 132:19–20)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 844).

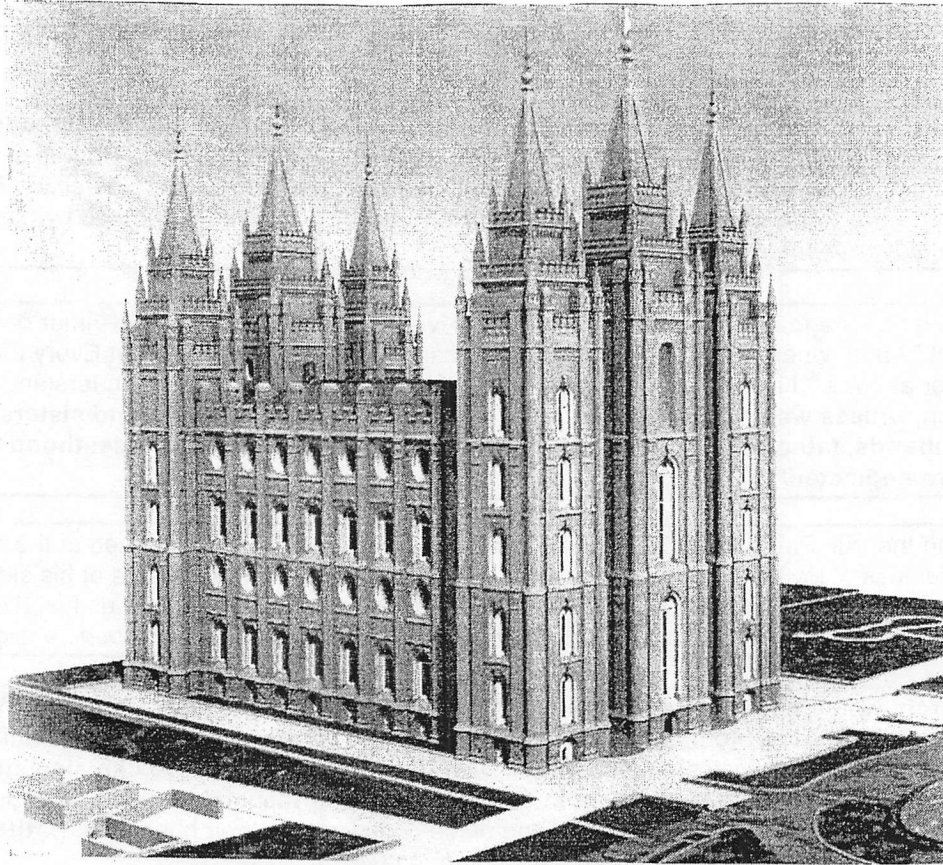
**As women in the Church, we can have great influence on the priesthood holders in our home.** We can support and encourage our husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons in fulfilling their priesthood responsibilities. If we request a blessing and then honor that blessing, we communicate our support of the priesthood. **We can also strengthen the priesthood bearers in our home by including them in our prayers.** The Prophet Joseph Smith counseled women of the Church to "concentrate their faith and prayers for, and place confidence in their husbands; ... **that we should arm and sustain them with our prayers**" (*History of the Church*, 4:604–5).

**Joseph Fielding Smith:** "This matter of holding the priesthood is not a light or a small thing. We are dealing with the Lord's power and authority, which he has given to us by the opening of the heavens in this day so that every blessing might again be available to us, as they were when man was first placed upon the earth" (*CR* report, Oct. 1971, 108)

**Brigham Young:** "An individual **who holds a share in the Priesthood**, and continues faithful to his calling, who delights himself continually in doing the things God requires at his hands, and continues through life in the performance of every duty, will secure to himself not only the privilege of receiving, but **the knowledge how to receive the things of God**, that he may know the mind of God continually; and he will be enabled to discern between right and wrong, between the things of God and the things that are not of God. **And the Priesthood—the Spirit that is within him, will continue to increase until it becomes like a fountain of living water; until it is like the tree of life; until it is one continued source of intelligence and instruction to that individual**" (*Journal of Discourses*, 3:192).

**Spencer W. Kimball:** "We commemorate the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, called 'the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God' (D&C 107:3), once more this month. It is an event of supreme importance to man in this dispensation, for the priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things pertaining to the salvation of men. **It is the means whereby the Lord acts through men to save souls. Without this priesthood power, men are lost. Only through this power does man "hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church,**" enabling him to receive "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened" unto him (D&C 107:18–19), enabling him to enter the new and everlasting covenant of marriage and to have his wife and children bound to him in an everlasting tie, enabling him to become a patriarch to his posterity forever, and **enabling him to receive a fulness of the blessings of the Lord**" (*Ensign*, June 1975, 3).

**Ezra Taft Benson:** "No honor that will ever come to any of us conferred by men of the world, or any man-made honorable body, will ever approach in importance the great honor and blessing which came to us the day we were ordained to the holy Melchizedek Priesthood. This is a priceless blessing, an eternal blessing, and I hope and pray that we will honor it all the days of our lives. **Wealth, power, position are as nothing, by comparison, to the honor and blessing which come through the priesthood of the Living God**" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft, 223*).



The spires on the east end of the Salt Lake temple are higher than those on the west end. Note also that there are five sets of windows on the east spires and four sets of windows on the west spires. This design was intended to represent the priesthood, with the Melchizedek Priesthood and its five offices (elder, high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle) represented by the east spires and the Aaronic Priesthood and its four offices (deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop) represented by the west spires.

Several months had passed since the Prophet received section 83. At that time, he was counseling with the saints in Missouri. In early May 1832, he started back to Kirtland. While en route, the Prophet and Bishop Newel K. Whitney were riding in a carriage when, "the horses became frightened, and while going at full speed Bishop Whitney attempted to jump out of the coach, but having his coat fast, caught his foot in the wheel, and had his leg and foot broken in several places; at the same time I jumped out unhurt." (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, 1:271) The Prophet sent Sidney Rigdon on to Kirtland while he stayed back to care for his injured Bishop. The two travelers would not get back to Kirtland until early June of 1832. The Prophet spent the summer primarily working on the translation of the Bible.

"In September 1832, the Prophet moved from the Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, into quarters above Bishop Whitney's store in Kirtland, with a kitchen downstairs. During the time Joseph had been in Missouri, Emma, pregnant again and still grieving for the death of her adopted son, Joseph, had been required to live with three different families in Kirtland under cramped and difficult circumstances.

"During 1832 certain difficulties involving Sidney Rigdon began. Sidney had suffered from depression from time to time but for the most part had been able to keep it under control. During the mobbing of 24 March 1832, Sidney was also dragged by his heels along the ground, so that his head suffered severe blows. Following this physical abuse, in addition to his emotional trauma, his depression apparently worsened. After returning to Kirtland from Missouri, Sidney claimed on 5 July 1832 to have had a revelation and 'was telling the people that the kingdom was rent from them, and they might as well all go home for they were rejected.' Reportedly, he also bemoaned that 'it was useless to pray or do anything.' His emotional distress is particularly apparent in this last statement.

"In response to Sidney's claims, Joseph went immediately from Hiram to Kirtland and relieved Sidney of his priesthood calling and of his license to preach, but three weeks later a repentant Sidney Rigdon was reinstated in the Presidency of the High Priesthood. Joseph Smith, ever kindhearted, explained these events in a letter to W. W. Phelps: 'When Brother Sidney learned the feelings of the Brethren [in Missouri] in whom he had placed so much confidence, for whom he had endured so much fatigue and suffering, and whom he loved with so much love, his heart was grieved, his spirits failed, and for a moment he became frantic, and the adversary taking the advantage, he spake unadvisedly with his lips... [B]ut [he] has since repented like Peter of old, and after a little suffering by the buffeting of Satan, has been restored to his high standing in the church of God.' Nevertheless, President Rigdon was never quite the same man after the mobbing and beating in March 1832 and the difficult journey to Missouri immediately thereafter. Sidney had already moved from Hiram, so when Joseph returned with Bishop Whitney in late June, he spent the rest of that summer in Hiram working on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible with Frederick G. Williams as scribe rather than Sidney. In August 1832, Joseph received Doctrine and Covenants 99 in Hiram.

"Several months before, in January 1832, the Lord had called at least twenty-four elders on missions, mostly to the eastern states (D&C 75). By September 1832, these missionaries began returning to Ohio with accounts of their many successes." (Stephen E. Robinson, H. Dean Garrett, A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2001] 3:23-24)

#### **DC 84:6-16 The importance of priesthood line of authority**

"Priesthood authority comes directly from God himself. Prophets are a necessary link in the priesthood chain between God and man. When I was ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood I received a priesthood line of authority indicating how my priesthood authority comes from God. My father laid his hands on my head and ordained me. He was ordained by my grandfather. The line of priesthood authority goes back several generations to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who received his priesthood from Peter, James, and John. They received their priesthood directly from the Lord Jesus Christ." (Alan S. Fuller, "Priesthood Authority Binds Eternal Ordinances," LDS Church News, 1992, 05/09/92)

"Many years ago my brother, LeRoy E. Matthews, and his family lived in a neighboring state in a town where a state hospital was located.

"One day Roy was invited to the hospital superintendent's office for a brief interview. The superintendent explained that after a great deal of consideration, he had decided to ask Roy to serve as chaplain to the hospital for the coming year. He further explained that for many years it had been the hospital's policy to appoint a different minister each year from among the churches in that area on a kind of rotation basis. Up to that time, these appointments had gone to clergymen of other churches, even though the town was approximately 50 percent Latter-day Saint.

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gospel. Roy said he would go home and be back in less than an hour with the necessary information.

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"Roy was granted the appointment without further protest or opposition." (Victor W. Matthews, "The Chaplain's Authority," Ensign, July 1985, 50-51)

"Recent growth of the Church and the simplification of the Church's record-keeping procedures have made it increasingly difficult for the Church Historical Department to trace a member's priesthood line of authority. As a result, the Church Historical Department no longer traces each member's priesthood authority line.

"These changes have placed the responsibility and opportunity of record keeping squarely on the family and on the individual. It is important for each of us to recognize that it is our responsibility and privilege, not the Church's, to preserve records about ourselves and our families." (Glenn N. Rowe, "I Have a Question," Ensign, July 1994, 67)

"If a priesthood bearer desires to trace his own line of authority, he should pursue his current office in the priesthood—not former offices. Bishops and patriarchs should trace their line of authority as high priests. In completing an authority line, each step should go back through the office held by the person at the time he performed the ordination.

"It is not appropriate to trace the line of authority in cases of setting apart or for other ordinances." ("Church Policies and Announcements," Ensign, Aug. 1976, 66)

#### **DC 84:6 Moses...received [the priesthood] under the hand of his father-in-law, Jethro**

"From modern revelation we learn that it was Jethro (a descendant of Abraham through Abraham's wife Keturah and thus a non-Israelite) who ordained Moses to the Melchizedek Priesthood (D&C 84:6). This was done through a priesthood line outside of Israel. We are accustomed to thinking of ancient priesthood holders such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, and so on, but here we learn that others also had the holy priesthood of God. As the modern missionary effort spreads the gospel wider across the earth, it may be a great plus in the presentation for it to become known that Moses, the great prophet of ancient Israel, obtained the priesthood not through the house of Israel, but through another Semitic lineage." (Robert J. Matthews, A Bible! A Bible! [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990], 60.)

**Bruce R. McConkie:** There were also in the days of Abraham other nations and peoples of whom we know nothing—except that they dwelt on earth and worshipped the true God—who also held the priesthood. Through these nations the priesthood descended to Jethro, who conferred it upon his son-in-law Moses. The revealed account speaks of one Esaias, of whose ministry we know nothing, except that he received the priesthood under the hand of God (meaning, apparently, by special dispensation); that he lived in the days of Abraham and was blessed by him; and that he conferred the priesthood upon Gad. From Gad it descended by successive and authoritative conferrals to Jeremy, Elihu, Caleb, and Jethro, and then to the great lawgiver, Moses. (D&C 84:6-15.) (The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-1981], 1: 55.)

#### **DC 84:7-10 Caleb, Elihu, Jeremy, and Gad**

"Significant for this discussion are the unfamiliar names of the priesthood bearers between Jethro and Abraham. The Lord does not provide any detail about the relationship of Caleb, Elihu, Jeremy, Gad, and Esaias to Jethro or Abraham. It is not clear from the revelation whether these men are Midianite ancestors of Jethro or simply righteous men with no direct relation to the Midianites." (Sperry Symposium Voices of Old Testament Prophets: The 26th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997], 25 - 26.)

"That the priesthood had been given to Jethro through Midian implies—once again, as was the case with the priesthood descending through Abel, in addition to Seth (D&C 84:6-16; 107:40)—that there was more than one line of authority. It may be that the priesthood was transmitted through several lines but that the keys or right of presidency remained with and were passed on by the ordained patriarchs." (Sperry Symposium Voices of Old Testament Prophets: The 26th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997], 203.)

#### **DC 84:12 Esaias received it under the hand of God**

Interesting, isn't it, that Moses could not trace his priesthood line back to Adam? He could trace it to an unknown prophet, Esaias, who received it directly from God. Esaias must have been a man of great enough faith to open the



heavens and receive his authority directly from the source.

Esaias and Adam were not the only prophets who received the priesthood directly from the Lord. The prophets who lived since the days of Moses ministered by the Melchizedek priesthood. This would include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Daniel, Lehi, Nephi, etc. These men apparently received the priesthood in the same manner as did Esaias, for Joseph Smith said they "had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 180-181)

#### **DC 84:14 Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek**

Abraham's father, Nehor, was a wicked, idolatrous man. He would make idols of stone and then require young Abraham to sell them by the side of the road. (Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham, Tvedtnes et al, 53). Horrified by his father's evil practices, Abraham could entertain no hope of receiving the priesthood from his father. Instead, he said:

I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.

It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me.

I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed.

My fathers having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice; (Abr 1:2-5)

Joseph Smith

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood. (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 322-323)

#### **DC 84:14 Melchizedek...received it through the lineage of his fathers**

Ancient Jewish traditions and the apocryphal work, The Book of Jasher, suggest that Melchizedek is none other than Shem, the favored son of Noah. Probably based on The Book of Jasher, John Taylor, proposed the same thing in Times and Seasons 5:746, dated Dec. 15, 1844. Over the years, this has led to the tradition that Shem and Melchizedek are the same individual. A careful reading of D&C 84:14 refutes this claim. If Melchizedek was Shem, the verse would read, "Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek; and Melchizedek received it under the hand of his father Noah." Instead, the text indicates that there are multiple generations between Melchizedek and Noah, for Melchizedek "received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah." Certainly, we should believe the Doctrine and Covenants as the supreme doctrinal treatise over apocryphal works and Jewish traditions.

**Bruce R. McConkie:** There is an unsupported tradition to the effect that Melchizedek was the same person as Shem the son of Noah. That this could hardly have been the case is seen from the revelation which says: "Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah." (D. & C. 84:14.) In other words, there seem to have been at least two generations between Melchizedek and Shem. (Mormon Doctrine, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 475.)

#### **DC 84:17 Which priesthood...is without beginning of days or end of years**

Very little is contained in the Bible about Melchizedek and his priesthood. The most impressive reference was made by Paul, but even it has been a source of confusion. The text implies that Melchizedek was "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God." (Heb 7:3). This passage has been a mystery for Christendom.

**Joseph Fielding Smith:** Many Christian teachers have been greatly puzzled because of the reference in the Book of Hebrews to Melchizedek. Bible commentators have scratched their heads and reached false conclusions trying to solve the mystery. It was not Melchizedek who was without father and without mother and without beginning of days or end of life, but it was the priesthood which he held. (Doctrines of Salvation, 3 vols., edited by Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956], 3: 82

**Joseph Smith:** The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam's authority. (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 157)

## **DC 84:19 the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God**

**Joseph Fielding Smith:** This Holy Priesthood which is eternal, is the authority which prevails in all the universe. The ordinances of the gospel are made valid through its power, and without it the knowledge of God could not be made manifest. It is by this authority and through the ordinances that man is able to know of God. Without the priesthood it would be impossible for man to gain the knowledge which would bring him into the presence of the Father. Is there any wonder, then, that the world, deprived of the priesthood, is in such spiritual darkness and confusion?

Men may search and they may study, but they will never come to a knowledge of God until they receive the gospel and obtain light through the power of the priesthood and the ordinances of the gospel. (Conference Report, April 1967, General Priesthood Meeting 98.)

**Marion G. Romney:** The Prophet Joseph Smith used to repeatedly urge the brethren to make their calling and election sure. There is no way to do this except by receiving the Priesthood and magnifying it. (Conference Report, October 1960, General Priesthood Meeting 73.)

## **DC 84:21 without the ordinances...the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh**

The worthy male member must receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds "the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God" (D&C 84:19; see also D&C 107:18-19), in order to receive these "mysteries." Therein lies the key to the principal purpose of the higher priesthood-to reveal the principles of exaltation in the house of the Lord through ordinances, consisting of washings, anointings, the priesthood endowment, and marriage for eternity. (See D&C 124:37-42.) Marriage for eternity is an order of the priesthood "in which the participating parties are promised kingdoms and thrones if they are true and faithful to their obligations." (Joseph Fielding Smith, Ensign, December 1971, p. 98.) These blessings include the power to beget spirit children after the resurrection. In this regard, Joseph Smith said:

"The question is frequently asked, 'Can we not be saved without going through with all those ordinances?' I would answer, No, not the fulness of salvation. ...

"If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord." (Teachings, pp. 331, 308.) (Roy W. Doxey, "Accepted of the Lord: The Doctrine of Making Your Calling and Election Sure," Ensign, July 1976, 52)

**Charles W. Nibley:** "That is what holds these people together-the power of the priesthood. And in the administration of it we have seen and do see the power of godliness; not a form of godliness, mind you, but the power of godliness. Paul said that in the latter days men would be 'having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof;' but what I refer to is the power of godliness. Have you ever seen it manifested in your lives? We heard of it this morning from the leader of the Church as manifested in the healing of the sick. We see it in the temples of the Lord." (Conference Report, April 1927, First Day-Morning Meeting 26.)

**James E. Faust:** Of course, going to the temple is a matter of choice, but many do not realize that in order to come unto Christ receiving the ordinances of the temple is not optional, it is essential. No one will be able to come unto Christ without these steps and ordinances. (In the Strength of the Lord: The Life and Teachings of James E. Faust [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1999], 443.)

**Ezra Taft Benson:** Many parents, in and out of the Church, are concerned about protection against a cascading avalanche of wickedness which threatens to engulf [the world]. ... There is a power associated with ordinances of heaven-even the power of godliness-which can and will thwart the forces of evil if we will but be worthy of those sacred [covenants made in the temple of the Lord]. ... Our families will be protected, our children will be safeguarded as we live the gospel, visit the temple, and live close to the Lord. (Dean L. Larsen, "The Importance of the Temple for Living Members," Ensign, Apr. 1993, 12)

## **DC 84:23 Moses...sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God**

"This, in fact, was the goal Moses sought when he brought the children of Israel to Mount Sinai. Jehovah had wanted to sanctify Israel and make them 'a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation' through covenant with him. (See Ex. 19:5-6.) Their sanctification would have been accomplished as God has ordained-through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. By exercising faith in Christ unto repentance and covenanting to keep his commandments by being baptized, each of the children of Israel could have been sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost. (See 2 Ne. 31:17-20; 3 Ne. 27:18-21.)

"Thus sanctified by the Spirit and endowed with the gift of the Holy Ghost, Israel would have entered a heightened spiritual state in which, through the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood now administered in God's holy temples, they could have access to the 'mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.'

"With that key, they would, in effect, have the key to eternal life. Eventually, they might have so risen in spiritual stature, going 'from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation,' that they could enter into God's rest fully and forever to 'dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.' (See

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 298-99, 346-47; see also D&C 93:11-20.) They would truly have come to know God, which the Savior said is eternal life. (See John 17:1-3.)" (Melvin J. Petersen, "I Have a Question," Ensign, Dec. 1985, 61)

#### **DC 84:25 Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also**

By virtue of their rebellion, the Lord would give the people a lesser law. With it would come a lesser priesthood, a lesser temple with lesser temple ordinances, lesser covenants, and lesser blessings. Could this lesson apply to us? Is our prophet seeking diligently to sanctify us so that we might behold the face of God? Are we hardening our hearts so that we cannot endure his presence?

**Henry B. Eyring:** I pray with all my heart that you will sense the tragedy in that. I have deep appreciation for the blessings of the Aaronic Priesthood, for the ministering of angels, and for the gospel of repentance. But can you imagine the grief of Moses, of Aaron, and of the people who rejected God's offer to commune with him when they understood what they had lost? We will not lose that blessing again as a people, but you and I could lose it as individuals, and perhaps for all in our families who will come after us.

So I don't just invite you to read the scriptures, to pray, to listen for the word of God. I plead with you. Put yourself where you can hear the words of testimony. Listen with the simplicity of a child. Expect that spirit of testimony and revelation to impel you to action, to keep the commandments. And never think you have been taught enough, that you have listened long enough, that now is your time and turn to rest. (To Draw Closer to God: A Collection of Discourses [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997], 39.)

#### **DC 84:28 John...was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old**

This verse should not be construed to mean that John the Baptist was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by this angel. John received the priesthood from his father by virtue of his lineage through the tribe of Levi. This is how the Levitical Priesthood was transferred—from father to son—by birth, not by ordination. This is what is meant by the preceding verses, "the lesser priesthood continued...with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John."

Then to what power was John ordained by this angel? He was certainly ordained to be an Elias, the great forerunner of Christ. This calling was above and beyond the priesthood he would receive from his father. His calling as Elias could not be better described than with the charge "to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord."

**Joseph Fielding Smith:** The reason Zacharias could not ordain John is because of the fact that John received certain keys of authority which his father Zacharias did not possess. Therefore this special authority had to be conferred by this heavenly messenger, who was duly authorized and sent to confer it. John's ordination was not...the bestowal of the Aaronic Priesthood, which his father held, but...the conferring of certain essential powers peculiar to the time among which was the authority to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews and "to make straight the way of the Lord." Moreover, it was to prepare the Jews and other Israelites for the coming of the Son of God. This great authority required a special ordination beyond the delegated power that had been given to Zacharias or any other priest who went before him, so the angel of the Lord was sent to John in his childhood to confer it. (Answers to Gospel Questions, 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-1966], 5: 2.)

#### **DC 84:29-30 the offices of elder and bishop are necessary appendages**

"Webster defines appendage as 'something attached to a greater thing.' The Doctrine and Covenants describes the position of the Melchizedek Priesthood, indicating that 'all other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood' (107:5). Thus, the Aaronic Priesthood 'is called the lesser priesthood ... because it is an appendage to the greater' (107:14).

"In section 84, the Lord refers to the offices of bishop and elder as being 'necessary appendages belonging unto the high priesthood,' and the offices of teacher and deacon as being 'necessary appendages belonging to the lesser priesthood' (84:29-30). Smith and Sjodahl state that 'while it is here stated that these offices are `necessary appendages` to the Priesthood, this does not signify, as some have supposed, that the other offices in the Priesthoods are not appendages. All the offices grow out of, and are appendages to the Priesthood as well as those mentioned here.' (SS, 504.)

**"President Joseph F. Smith** emphatically declared: 'There is no office growing out of this Priesthood that is or can be greater than the Priesthood itself. It is from the Priesthood that the office derives its authority and power. No office gives authority to the Priesthood. No office adds to the power of the Priesthood.' (GD, 148.)" (Hoyt W. Brewster, Jr., Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 23.)