

D & C Lesson 8

THE RESTORATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Prepared by Duane S. Crowther, March 2001

1. Definition and purpose of the Priesthood and Priesthood Keys

A. *Priesthood is the eternal power and authority of God.*

1. It is the power by which He created and governs the heavens and the earth.
2. It is the power by which He redeems and exalts His children.
3. God gives a portion of His priesthood power and authority to worthy male members of His Church so they can (a) preach the gospel, (b) administer the ordinances of salvation, (c) govern His kingdom on earth, (d) bless His children, and (e) help His children prepare for exaltation.
4. **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.” [from *Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, pp. 41-42.]
5. Priesthood is one of the main themes of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

2. The restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood [the lesser priesthood]

A. The restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood was the first bestowal of divine authority in this dispensation.

B. When the Angel Moroni first met with Joseph Smith on the Hill Cumorah in September 1823, he gave important instructions about the restoration of Priesthood authority to the earth, including the following declaration: “When [the gold plates] are interpreted the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some, and they shall begin to proclaim this gospel and baptize by water, and after that they shall have power to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.” [“Letter from Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps,” *Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1835, p. 199, as cited in *Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, pp. 11-12, 147.]

C. When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were translating 3rd Nephi [see “Joseph Smith’s Susquehannah Years,” *Ensign*, February 2001, p. 48; perhaps *3 Ne. 11:18-28, 19:6-15, or 27:13-21?*], the Aaronic Priesthood was restored by John the Baptist, who appeared to them on May 15, 1829, on the banks of the Susquehannah River near Harmony [now known as Oakland], Pennsylvania. [See *JS-H 1:68-73*, Joseph’s history of the event; *P of GP pp. 58-59*: Oliver Cowdery’s description of the event; *D&C 13:1*, John the Baptist’s ordination of Joseph and Oliver. [See also *D&C 84:26-27*, which states that John the Baptist was ordained by an angel of God when only eight days old.]

D. Read about the Aaronic (and Levitical) Priesthood in the *Bible Dictionary*, pp. 599-600.

E. The authority and blessings restored with the Aaronic Priesthood include:

1. **the keys of the ministering of angels** [*D&C 13; 84:26; 107:20*. See also *3 Ne. 7:15, 18; 17:23-24; Moro. 7:25, 29-31; D&C 84:88; 2 Ki. 6:15-17*, also “Angels,” and “Angels, Ministering” *Bible Dictionary*, pp. 10-11.]

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.” [*Ensign*, November 1982, p. 45]

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.”

[*Ensign*, November 1998, p. 39]

2. ***the keys of the gospel of repentance, baptism, the remission of sins, the law of carnal commandments, the outward ordinances and the letter of the gospel*** [the *preparatory gospel*] [D&C 13:1; 84:26-27; 107:20]

F. John the Baptist preached repentance and baptized people in preparing the way for the Savior [Mt. 3:1-6, 11]. His coming to prepare the way for the Lord in the last days prophesied: Mal. 3:1-3 [3 Ne. 24:1-3] with Lk. 7:27-28 (where Jesus said the messenger would be John).

G. Duties of the Aaronic Priesthood: see D&C 20:46-60. See also “Priesthood, Aaronic,” in the Triple Combination *Index*, p. 278.

3. **The restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood** [the greater priesthood]

A. Restored by Peter, James and John, who appeared to Joseph and Oliver “in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna River” [in Pennsylvania, or New York?] [D&C 128:20], probably June, 1829.

B. Through Peter, James and John, the Lord (1) “ordained you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name”, (2) and “to bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them,” (3) and “committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times” [and “for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, and also with all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world”] [D&C 27:12-14].

C. Others who were sent to restore Priesthood authority and keys:

1. **Moroni** - revealed the Book of Mormon, held the keys of the stick of Ephraim [D&C 27:5-6].

2. **Elias** - held the keys of bring to pass the restoration of all things, and the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, and to gather together the tribes of Israel [D&C 27:6, 110:12; 77:9,14]. It was Elias who visited Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, and told him he would have a son. [D&C 27:7]

3. **Elijah** - held the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, to prevent the earth from being smitten by a curse [D&C 27:9, 2:1-3, 110:13-16].

4. **Moses** - committed 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 [D&C 11].

5. D & C allusions to others who have come or will come: **Joseph, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Michael** (also known as **Adam**, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days), **Gabriel, Raphael**, and “**diverse angels**” [D&C 27:5-14; 128:20-21].

D. The **name of the higher priesthood:** *The Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*. Called the Melchizedek Priesthood to avoid too frequent repetition of the name of the Son of God. [See D&C 107:2-4.] Learn to pronounce this name correctly: Mel-chi-ze-dek, not Mel-che-ze-dik.

E. The blessings and powers restored with the Melchizedek Priesthood include:

1. **Authority to administer the gospel of Jesus Christ** [D&C 84:19].

2. **The keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church** [D&C 107:18], including “*the key of the mysteries of the kingdom,*” and “*the key of the knowledge of God*” [D&C 84:19-23; 107:19]

3. **The right of presidency** [D&C 107:8-9]

4. The keys of the gathering of Israel [D&C 110:11]

5. The keys of the gospel and promises given to Abraham [*D&C 110:12; Abra. 2:6-11; Gen. 17:1-22; Gal. 3:14,27-29*]

F. Major D&C sections on the Priesthood: *D&C 20, 84, 107*. Read them!

G. Read “Priesthood, Melchizedek” in the Triple Combination *Index*, pp. 278-279.

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