

“Melchizedek Priesthood” in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979, pp. 475-483.

MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD.

See AARONIC PRIESTHOOD, APOSTLES, APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION, CELESTIAL MARRIAGE, CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, ELDERS, ENDOWMENTS, EXALTATION, GOSPEL, HIGH PRIESTS, KEYS, MELCHIZEDEK, ORDINATIONS, PATRIARCHS, PERFECTION; PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN; PRIESTHOOD, PRIESTHOOD OFFICES, PRIESTHOOD QUORUMS, QUORUM PRESIDENTS, REST OF THE LORD, SANCTIFICATION, SEVENTIES. To avoid the too frequent repetition of the name of

Deity, the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God is called the Melchizedek Priesthood. (D. & C. 107:1-4.) This "Melchizedek Priesthood comprehends the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood, and is the grand head, and holds the highest authority which pertains to the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom of God in all ages of the world to the latest posterity on the earth; and is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven.

"Its institution was prior to 'the foundation of this earth, or the morning stars sang together, or the sons of God shouted for joy,' and is the highest and holiest priesthood, and is after the order of the Son of God, and all other priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers and blessings belonging to the same, and are held, controlled, and directed by it. It is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing his glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which he has continued to reveal himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which he will make known his purposes to the end of time." (Teachings, pp. 166-167.)

"All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood. . . . 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 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 First-born, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." (D. & C. 107:5, 8, 18-19.)

Everything on earth is subject to the power and authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. When He reigns whose right it is, this power will be manifest without restriction and all nations will bow to the gospel rod. The Melchizedek Priesthood "is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam." (Teachings, p. 322.)

Even under the present circumstances with apostate powers ruling on earth, the Lord's decree is still in force "that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this

by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world." (Inspired Version, Gen. 14:30-31.)

Like God himself, the Melchizedek Priesthood is eternal and everlasting in nature. "The priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years." (Teachings, pp. 157-158, 323; D. & C. 84:17; Inspired Version, Heb. 7:1-3.) Adam and others obtained the priesthood "in the creation, before the world was formed." (Teachings, p. 157.)

Alma says that those "ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God" were "in the first place," that is in pre-existence, "on the same standing with their brethren," meaning that initially all had equal opportunity to progress through righteousness. But while yet in the eternal worlds, certain of the offspring of God, "having chosen good, and exercising exceeding great faith," were as a consequence "called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God" to enjoy the blessings and powers of the priesthood. These priesthood calls were made "from the foundation of the world," or in other words faithful men held priesthood power and authority first in pre-existence and then again on earth. (Alma 13.) "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was or-

daind to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was." (Teachings, p. 365.)

As pertaining to mortality, the priesthood was first given to Adam. (Moses 6:67-68.) He stands at the head as the presiding high priest (under Christ) over all the earth for all ages. (Teachings, pp. 157-158.) This priesthood of the holy order continued with his worthy descendants until the day of Moses. (D. & C. 84:5-16; 107:41-53.) Through Moses the Lord attempted to set up the house of Israel as a kingdom of priests of the holy order, with each man and his family enjoying the full blessings of the patriarchal order and priesthood. (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6.) But Israel rebelled, rejected the higher law, and the Lord took Moses and the fulness of the priesthood from them. (Inspired Version, Ex. 34:1-2; D. & C. 84:17-25.) From then until the personal ministry of our Lord among men, the Aaronic Priesthood continued as the most prevalent authority of God on earth. (D. & C. 84:26-28.)

There were at many times, however, and may have been at all times, prophets and worthy men in Israel who held the Melchizedek Priesthood. Joseph Smith said, "All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself," that is, those persons so honored held their authority by special dispensation, for the general priesthood rule found among the

people was the Levitical order. (*Teachings*, p. 181; *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, pp. 80-102.) Among those ancient Israelites who were blessed with the fulness of the higher priesthood were the Nephites. (Alma 13.)

When Christ came, he being a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 2:17-18; 3:1; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:15-17, 21), this holy order was again spread forth among the people. (John 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.) Under apostolic direction a kingdom of priests again was found on earth. But *after the apostles ceased to minister among mortals, there was no one left holding the keys to authorize a person to be ordained to any priestly office, and in this manner the Lord took the priesthood from the earth.* (Rev. 12.)

In June, 1829, by divine appointment, Peter, James, and John came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood. (D. & C. 27:12-13.) By the hands of Elijah and others of the prophets, also, an additional revelation of the priesthood was given, meaning that these ancient prophets came with keys and powers which authorized the use of the priesthood for additional purposes. (D. & C. 110:11-16; 128:17-21; Jos. Smith 2:38.) This priesthood—with all its powers, parts, keys, orders, and ramifications—is now fully operative among men. Again there is a kingdom of priests on earth, and the divine

promise is that this situation will continue, the priesthood never again being lost. (D. & C. 65.)

Those who are faithful in their priesthood callings in this life shall continue on in their holy authorizations in eternity; they shall remain forever “priests and kings”; their destiny is to stand as “priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.” (D. & C. 76:56-57.)

As compared to the Aaronic Priesthood, as administered in ancient Israel, the order of Melchizedek did not come “by descent from father and mother.” (*Teachings*, p. 323.) That is, the right to this higher priesthood was not inherited in the same way as was the case with the Levites and sons of Aaron. Righteousness was an absolute requisite for the conferral of the higher priesthood. This “order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God; And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.” (*Inspired Version*, Gen. 14:28-29; Heb. 7:1-3.)

But each righteous spirit called to minister in priestly offices has been ordained to come through a particular lineage. Consequently it has become the right of those holding special inheritance in the Lord’s chosen lineage to receive the priest-

hood, provided they are obedient and faithful. Thus Abraham “sought for the blessings of the fathers,” and by righteousness “became a *rightful heir*, a High Priest, holding the *right* belonging to the fathers.” The priesthood, he says, “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 foundations of the earth to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, on the first man, who is Adam, our 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.*” (Abra. 1:1-4.)

Thereafter Abraham received the promise that his seed after him would be entitled, as of right, to the same priesthood inheritance that he had won. “In thee (that is, in thy Priesthood),” the Lord said to him, “and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that *this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body)* shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.” (Abra. 2:11.)

Accordingly, the seed of Abraham “are *lawful heirs, according to the flesh,*” of the priesthood and its blessings. Though they “have

been hid from the world with Christ in God,” yet in the restoration of all things the priesthood is again being given to them *because of their “lineage.”* (D. & C. 86:8-11.) They are the ones “unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood,” and all that appertains to it. (D. & C. 113:6.) But though they are lawful heirs according to the flesh, they do not receive their inheritance until they qualify for it as a result of faith, devotion, and righteous conduct. Personal worthiness is an invariable prerequisite to conferral of the higher priesthood.

Conversely, gospel blessings are denied the rebellious who persecute the saints. “They shall not have *right* to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them from generation to generation.” (D. & C. 121:21.)

Those spirits sent to earth through the lineage of Cain and of Ham were denied the priesthood until June, 1978, when the new revelation on priesthood was received.

Without the Melchizedek Priesthood salvation in the kingdom of God would not be available for men on earth, for the ordinances of salvation—the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, for instance—could not be authoritatively performed. Thus, as far as all religious organizations now existing are concerned, the presence or the absence of this priesthood establishes the divinity or falsity of a professing church. It “continueth

in the church of God in all generations," and it "administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God" (D. & C. 84:17-19), whom to know is eternal life. (John 17:3.) If there is no Melchizedek Priesthood on earth, the true Church is not here and the gospel of Christ is not available to men. But *where the Melchizedek Priesthood is, there is the kingdom, the Church, and the fulness of the gospel.*

This higher priesthood is designed to enable men to gain exaltation in the highest heaven in eternity. Paul says it is ordained "after the power of an endless life." (Heb. 7:16.) The Prophet says, "*The power of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to have the power of 'endless lives'; for the everlasting covenant cannot be broken.*" (Teachings, p. 322.) Perfection can be gained only in and through and because of this priesthood. "I advise all to go on to perfection, and search deeper into the mysteries of godliness," the Prophet said. "A man can do nothing for himself unless God direct him in the right way; and *the priesthood is for that purpose.*" (Teachings, p. 364.) Through this priesthood men become joint-heirs with Christ, receiving and possessing the fulness of the Father's kingdom. "*And all those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God, abiding a priest continually.*" (Inspired Version, Heb.

7:3.)

Indeed, everything connected with the higher priesthood is designed to point man's attention to spiritual things and to mark the course leading to eternal life. By means of it faithful men enter into the rest of the Lord, "which rest is the fulness of his glory." Because of it they have power to sanctify their souls, and the sanctified inherit the celestial world.

Every person upon whom the Melchizedek Priesthood is conferred receives his office and calling in this higher priesthood with an *oath and a covenant*. The *covenant* is to this effect: 1. Man on his part solemnly agrees to magnify his calling in the priesthood, to keep the commandments of God, to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of Deity, and to walk in paths of righteousness and virtue; and 2. God on his part agrees to give such persons an inheritance of exaltation and godhood in his everlasting presence. The *oath* is the solemn attestation of Deity, his sworn promise, that those who keep their part of the covenant shall come forth and inherit all things according to the promise.

As a holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Christ himself is the prototype in this as in all things pertaining to salvation and exaltation. As Paul explained, priests of the Aaronic order receive their calls "without an oath," but Jesus received his priesthood appointment

"with an oath by him that said unto him, *The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.*" (Heb. 7:21; Teachings, p. 323.) Those who are *priests forever*, who "are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, . . . are gods, even the sons of God." (D. & C. 76:57-58.) They have become joint-heirs with Christ, having kept the same covenant and been bound by the same oath.

In revealing the terms and conditions of the oath and covenant of the priesthood in this dispensation, the Lord said: "For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord; For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me; And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. But whoso breaketh this

covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come. And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you. And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life. For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (D. & C. 84:33-44.)

What callings do brethren receive in the priesthood, and how do they go about magnifying them? For convenience of analysis, it might be said that there are two kinds of callings—*ordained callings* and *administrative or set apart callings*. Brethren for instance are ordained elders, seventies, or high priests in the Melchizedek Priesthood; these are ordained callings. Some are set apart to serve as quorum presidents, as high councilors, as members of stake presidencies, or to other positions of administrative responsibility. These are administrative or set apart callings.

Now, to magnify as here used means to enlarge or increase, to improve upon, to hold up to honor and dignity, to make the calling noble and respectable in the eyes of

all men by performing the mission which appertains to the calling in an admirable and successful manner. So to magnify a calling in the ministry requires brethren first to learn what duties go with their respective offices and callings and then to go to with their might and do the work assigned them. By doing this, which includes within it the requirement to "give diligent heed to the words of eternal life," and to "live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" (D. & C. 84:43-44), they are assured of an eventual inheritance of eternal life in the kingdom of God.

The greatest blessings are reserved for those who obtain "the fulness of the priesthood," meaning the fulness of the blessings of the priesthood. *These blessings are found only in the temples of God.* (D. & C. 124:28, 34, 42; 127:8.) "There are certain key words and signs belonging to the priesthood which must be observed in order to obtain the blessing." (*Teachings*, p. 199.) These, of course, are revealed only in the temples. "Washings, anointings, endowments, and the communication of keys," the Prophet says, are essential to enable one "to secure the *fulness* of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn, and come up and abide in the presence of Elohim in the eternal worlds." (*Teachings*, p. 237.) Celestial marriage itself is an "order of the priesthood" without which no

one can gain the fulness of glory in the eternal worlds. (D. & C. 131:1-4; 132.) Anciently the elders of Israel who married out of the temple, were said to "have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood." (Neh. 13:25-30.)

"Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessing." (*Teachings*, p. 322.) "If a man gets a fulness 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. . . . All men who become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ will have to receive the fulness of the ordinances of his kingdom; and those who will not receive all the ordinances will come short of the fulness of that glory, if they do not lose the whole." (*Teachings*, pp. 308-309.)

Unfortunately, "there are many called, but few are chosen." That is to say, *many are called to the priesthood, but few are chosen for eternal life.* (D. & C. 95:5-6, 12.) "And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only

upon the principles of righteousness." (D. & C. 121:34-46.)