

**Come Follow Me Lesson 9**  
**February 22-28**  
**D&C 18-19**

**D&C 18**

*Revelation to Joseph Smith the Prophet, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer, (David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery were brothers-in-law.) given at Fayette, New York, June 1829. (This was written prior to June 14<sup>th</sup>) HC 1: 60—64. When the Aaronic Priesthood was conferred, the bestowal of the Melchizedek Priesthood was promised. See heading to Section 13. In response to supplication for knowledge on the matter, the Lord gave this revelation. (In preparation for the organization of the Church, the Prophet had directed Oliver Cowdery to prepare a foundational document for that purpose. Frustrated in his efforts to do so, Oliver asked the Prophet to inquire of the Lord for direction on that matter. This section came in response to that request. Describing these events, Joseph Smith said, "We had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the chamber of Mr. Whitmer's house, in order more particularly to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired; and here, to our unspeakable satisfaction, did we realize the truth of the Savior's promise—'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'—for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the word of the Lord came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office; and then to ordain others, as it should be made known unto us from time to time. We were, however, commanded to defer this our ordination until such times as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together, when we must have their sanction to our thus proceeding to ordain each other, and have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers or not; when also we were commanded to bless bread and break it with them, and to take wine, bless it, and drink it with them; afterward proceed to ordain each other according to commandment; then call out such men as the Spirit should dictate, and ordain them; and then attend to the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, upon all those whom we had previously baptized, doing all things in the name of the Lord" (History of the Church, 1:60-61). As a consequence of the instructions given in this revelation, the document known as the "Articles and Covenants of the Church" (D&C 20), which led to the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was written. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 135-6)*

*1—5, Scriptures show how to build up the Church; 6—8, The world is ripening in iniquity; 9—16, The worth of souls is great; 17—25, To gain salvation, men must take upon them the name of Christ; 26—36, The calling and mission of the Twelve are revealed; 37—39, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer are to search out the Twelve; 40—47, To gain salvation, men must repent, be baptized, and keep the commandments.*

1 NOW, behold, because of the thing which you, my servant Oliver Cowdery, have desired to know of me, I give unto you these words:

2 Behold, I have <sup>a</sup>manifested unto you, by my Spirit in many instances, that the <sup>b</sup>things which you have written are <sup>c</sup>true; wherefore you know that they are true. **(These words constitute a testimony by the God of heaven that the Book of Mormon is true.** To say that the book is true means that it is a reliable representation of the truths of salvation. No equivalent statement from the God of heaven exists relative to either the Old or New Testaments or any of the books within them. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 136. Brigham Young: [Oliver Cowdery] left the Church because he lost the love of the truth; and after he had travelled alone for years, a gentleman walked into his law office and said to him, "Mr. Cowdery,

what do you think of the Book of Mormon now? Do you believe that it is true?" He replied, "No, sir, I do not." "Well," said the gentleman, "I thought as much; for I concluded that you had seen the folly of your ways and had resolved to renounce what you once declared to be true." "Sir, you mistake me: I do not believe that the Book of Mormon is true; I am past belief on that point, for I KNOW that it is true, as well as I know that you now sit before me." "Do you still testify that you saw an angel?" "Yes, as much as I see you now; and I know the Book of Mormon to be true." (Eldin Ricks, *The Case of The Book of Mormon Witnesses* [Deseret News Press, 1971], 8.))

3 And if you **know** that they are true, behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you <sup>a</sup>rely upon the things which are <sup>b</sup>written;

4 For **in them are all things** <sup>a</sup>written concerning the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my <sup>b</sup>rock. (Of necessity the Church was to be founded on correct principles, principles distinctive to the restoration, not principles borrowed from some other source. That source is here identified as the Book of Mormon. It is of particular importance to note that the Book of Mormon had to come forth before the organization of the Church, for it was to constitute the foundation of the same. So it was that the first copies of the Book of Mormon— five thousand in number, a rather remarkable expression of confidence—were completed in March 1830, and the Church was organized the next month on 6 April. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 136)

5 Wherefore, if you shall build up my <sup>a</sup>church, upon the **foundation** of my gospel and my <sup>b</sup>rock, the <sup>c</sup>gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

6 Behold, the <sup>a</sup>world is <sup>b</sup>ripening in iniquity; and it must needs be that the children of men are stirred up unto repentance, both the <sup>c</sup>Gentiles and also the house of Israel.

7 Wherefore, as thou hast been <sup>a</sup>baptized by the hands of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., according to that which I have commanded him, he hath fulfilled the thing which I commanded him.

8 And now, marvel not that I have <sup>a</sup>called him unto mine own purpose, which purpose is known in me; wherefore, if he shall be <sup>b</sup>diligent in keeping my commandments he shall be <sup>c</sup>blessed unto eternal life; and his name is <sup>d</sup>Joseph.

9 And now, Oliver Cowdery, I speak unto you, and also unto David Whitmer, by the way of commandment; for, behold, I <sup>a</sup>command all men everywhere to repent, and I speak unto you, even as unto **Paul mine** <sup>b</sup>apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called. (Brigham Young taught that Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer were the first Apostles of this dispensation. "Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer were the first Apostles of this dispensation, though in the early days of the Church David Whitmer lost his standing, and another took his place." JD 6:320. To these, according to Heber C. Kimball, Martin Harris was later added. "Peter comes along with James and John and ordains Joseph to be an Apostle, and then Joseph ordains Oliver, and David Whitmer, and Martin Harris; and then they were ordered to select twelve more and ordain them. It was done." JD, 6:29. These men were instructed to find and ordain twelve others who would form the Quorum of the Twelve. Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, p. 35)

**SCRIPTURE MASTERY 10, 15-16:** 10 Remember the <sup>a</sup>worth of <sup>b</sup>souls is great in the sight of God; (Let me emphasize that the noblest aim in life is to strive to live to make lives better and happier. The most worthy calling in life is that in which man can serve best his fellowman. David O. McKay, CR Apr 1961, p. 131)

11 For, behold, the Lord your <sup>a</sup>Redeemer suffered <sup>b</sup>death in the flesh; wherefore he <sup>c</sup>suffered the <sup>d</sup>pain of all men, (How can we begin to comprehend the cumulative suffering of all mankind, or as taught by Elder Orson F. Whitney, "the piled up agony of the human race"? What is thrown on the scale of remorse, as observed by Truman Madsen, when we aggregate "the cumulative impact of our vicious thoughts, motives, and acts"? What, as Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone inquired, is the "weight and immensity of the penalties of all broken laws crying from the dust and from the future—an incomprehensible tidal wave of guilt"? How many searing consciences has this world

produced and to what depths of depravity has this earthly sphere sunk? Can anyone possibly fathom the horrendous consequences of such sin? Not only did the Savior fathom it—he felt it, and he suffered it. (Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 134)) that all men might repent and <sup>c</sup>come unto him.

12 And he hath <sup>a</sup>risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of <sup>b</sup>repentance. (There is nothing in all the eternities—both the love and grace of Christ included—to which conditions are not attached. That which is without conditions is without existence. So it is that we understand that Christ came to save us from our sins not in them (Helaman 5:11). Through his atonement, Christ brings "salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption" (Alma 34:15-16). Repentance is the condition on which the receipt of all blessings is predicated (D&C 138:19). *Revelations of the Restoration*, p. 138)

13 And how great is his <sup>a</sup>joy in the <sup>b</sup>soul that <sup>c</sup>repenteth!

14 Wherefore, you are called to <sup>a</sup>cry repentance unto this people.

15 And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one <sup>a</sup>soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! (We need to have the same love for God's children as God does. Ether12:33-34:)

16 And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the <sup>a</sup>kingdom of my Father, how great will be your <sup>b</sup>joy if you should bring many <sup>c</sup>souls unto me! (Rudger Clawson: And if one of these men should labor all his days, and bring save it be but one soul unto Christ, and that one should be his wife, what great joy he would have with his wife in heaven. Then if he should labor all his days and bring unto Christ the souls of his wife and his children, and none else perchance, how great would be his joy in heaven with his wife and children. (CR, April 1901, pp. 7-8 ))

17 Behold, you have my gospel before you, and my rock, and my <sup>a</sup>salvation. (The Book of Mormon.)

18 <sup>a</sup>Ask the Father in my <sup>b</sup>name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are <sup>c</sup>expedient unto the children of men. (Joseph Fielding Smith: **If members of the Church would place more confidence in the word of the Lord and less confidence in the theories of men, they would be better off.** I will give you a key for your guidance. Any doctrine, whether it comes in the name of religion, science, philosophy, or whatever it may be, that is in conflict with the revelations of the Lord that have been accepted by the Church as coming from the Lord, will fail. It may appear to be very plausible; it may be put before you in such a way that you cannot answer it; it may appear to be established by evidence that cannot be controverted, but all you need do is to bide your time. Time will level all things. You will find that every doctrine, theory, principle, no matter how great it may appear, no matter how universally it may be believed, if it is not in accord with the word of the Lord, it will perish. Nor is it necessary for Us to try to stretch the word of the Lord to make it conform to these theories and teachings. The word of the Lord shall not pass away unfulfilled. . . . The theories of men change from day to day. . . but the word of the Lord will endure forever. (Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine, October 1930, pp.155-56.))

19 And if you have not <sup>a</sup>faith, <sup>b</sup>hope, and <sup>c</sup>charity, you can do nothing.

20 <sup>a</sup>Contend (Contention is of the devil, even when we are right in our point.) against no church, save it be the <sup>b</sup>church of the devil. (The titles church of the devil and great and abominable church are used to identify all churches or organizations of whatever name or nature — whether political, philosophical, educational, economic social, fraternal, civic, or religious — which are designed to take men on a course that leads away from God and his laws and thus from salvation in the kingdom of God. *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 137-8)

21 Take upon you the <sup>a</sup>name of Christ, and <sup>b</sup>speak the truth in <sup>c</sup>soberness. (James E. Talmage: We are oftentimes charged with being very exclusive, and we admit the charge; we are exclusive, but in a rational sense. How can we solemnly testify that this is the Church of Jesus Christ and then ascribe that same high title to other organizations that have been formed not under the direction of Jesus Christ, but according to man's thoughts and plans? Some people say that we are illiberal because we do not admit that all other churches are what they profess to be, when their profession is based on facts. Now when we say that the Lord is not pleased with those churches, we do not mean that he is not pleased with the members thereof. We hold that God is no respecter of persons, but, on the contrary, that he will acknowledge good in any soul, no matter whether that person belongs to a church or not. But the Lord is not pleased with those churches that have been constructed by men and then labeled with his name. He is not pleased with those doctrines that are being taught as being his doctrines when they are only the effusion of men's brains, undirected by inspiration and utterly lacking in revelation. He has expressed himself with regard to the churches that are built by man and has said they shall be overthrown. Indeed he has applied strong terms to some of those churches, or to church organizations in general, that have been brought into being by men. Read his words to John the Revelator. See what he means by the synagogue of Satan to which some of the people belonged. [Rev. 2:9; 3:9.] Read what he has said about the great and abominable church, the mother of abominations. [Rev. 17.] The church as such may be wholly corrupt because of the false claims that are being made for it, and yet within that church as members there may be people who are doing their best. They have been deceived. As to the degree of culpability that will be charged up to them for their having become subjects of deception, we may not be able to judge. But I do not understand that when the Lord states that those churches shall be overthrown—I mean the church of the devil, using his expression, and those that are making false claims, and shall be thrown into the fire, as he says [Rev. 18]—I do not understand that all members of those churches are to meet destruction, physically or otherwise. He is speaking there of the church collectively, and he is not pleased with it; but individually he may be well pleased with many of his sons and daughters who have been under an environment that has led them into those churches which are not of God. (CR, October 1928, p. 120.))

22 And as many as repent and are <sup>a</sup>baptized in my name, which is Jesus Christ, and <sup>b</sup>endure to the end, the same shall be saved.

23 Behold, Jesus Christ is the <sup>a</sup>name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be <sup>b</sup>saved;

24 Wherefore, all men must take upon them the <sup>a</sup>name which is given of the Father, for in that name shall they be called at the last day; (Does everyone have to accept Christ? Yes. If you want to be exalted.)

25 Wherefore, if they <sup>a</sup>know not the <sup>b</sup>name by which they are called, they cannot have place in the <sup>c</sup>kingdom of my Father. (Celestial Kingdom)

26 And now, behold, there are others who are <sup>a</sup>called to declare my gospel, both unto <sup>b</sup>Gentile and unto Jew;

27 Yea, even twelve; and the <sup>a</sup>Twelve shall be my disciples, (These will be the apostles. The Nephite disciples were also apostles.) and they shall take upon them my name; and the Twelve are they who shall desire to take upon them my <sup>b</sup>name with full purpose of heart. (The Twelve won't be called until 1835, six years later.)

28 And if they desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart, they are called to go into all the <sup>a</sup>world to preach my <sup>b</sup>gospel unto <sup>c</sup>every creature.

29 And they are they who are ordained of me to <sup>a</sup>baptize in my name, according to that which is written;

30 And you have that which is written before you; wherefore, you must perform it <sup>a</sup>according to the words which are <sup>b</sup>written. (The baptismal prayer is written.)

31 And now I speak unto you, the <sup>a</sup>Twelve—Behold, my grace is sufficient for you; you must walk

uprightly before me and sin not.

32 And, behold, you are they who are ordained of me to <sup>a</sup>ordain <sup>b</sup>priests and teachers; (Book of Mormon language) to declare my gospel, <sup>c</sup>according to the power of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and according to the <sup>d</sup>callings and gifts of God unto men;

33 And I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it.

34 These <sup>a</sup>words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man;

**35 For it is my <sup>a</sup>voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another; and save it were by my power you could not have them;**

**36 Wherefore, you can <sup>a</sup>testify that you have <sup>b</sup>heard my voice, and know my words.** (S. Dilworth Young: In 1835 the Twelve were chosen, as you know, and on one occasion they were called together and given their instructions. Oliver Cowdery was the spokesman; and after having given them some very powerful and heartwarming instruction, so moved was he, himself, that he had to stop two or three times to weep. He finally read the revelation to which I refer and this verse. Brigham Young was so impressed by it that he copied it in his laborious handwriting into his diary. I am impressed by it likewise. These are the words: "These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man; "For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; (now this is six years later that they are hearing it) for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another; and save it were by my power you could not have them"; And this is the verse—"Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words." (D&C 18:34-36.) **The thing that impresses me about this is, and I have never thought of it before, when I read a verse in the Doctrine and Covenants I am hearing the voice of the Lord as well as reading his words, if I hear by the Spirit.** Now I have heard it said many times by men that they have often asked the Lord for a special testimony and oftentimes haven't had it. They seem to want to hear the voice of the Lord. I confess I have often wanted to hear the voice of the Lord, without knowing that all these years I have been hearing it with deaf ears. This woke me up. I can testify that, having read, I hear the voice of the Lord. I also testify to you that when you hear the Prophet here sitting on the stand, speak by the voice of prophecy and by the spirit of the inspiration which possesses him, you also hear, through him, the voice of the Lord. CR, Apr 1963, p. 74)

**37 And now, behold, I give unto you, Oliver Cowdery, and also unto David Whitmer, that you shall search out the Twelve, who shall have the desires of which I have spoken;** (Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were given the charge to "search out" or find those worthy and capable of holding the office of an apostle. As one of the Three Witnesses, Martin Harris would share in this responsibility. Following the experiences of Zion's Camp, the time for choosing arrived. In Kirtland on 14 February 1835, Joseph paid tribute to those who had marched with Zion's Camp and then proposed that the time had come to ordain twelve men to the office of an apostle. "President Joseph Smith, Jun., said that the first business of the meeting was, for the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, to pray, each one, and then proceed to choose twelve men from the Church, as Apostles, to go to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. "The Three Witnesses, viz., Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, united in prayer. "These three witnesses were then blessed by the laying on of the hands of the [First] Presidency. **"The Witnesses then, according to a former commandment [the present revelation], proceeded to make choice of the Twelve. Their names are as follows: "1. Lyman E. Johnson 2. Brigham Young 3. Heber C. Kimball 4. Orson Hyde 5. David W. Patten 6. Luke S. Johnson 7. William E. M'Lellin 8. John F. Boynton 9. Orson Pratt 10. William Smith 11. Thomas B. Marsh 12. Parley P. Pratt"** (Smith, History of the Church, 2:186-87). These men were ordained in the quorum according to age, from oldest to youngest. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 142. Since this first calling of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation, there have been 102 men called as Apostles. Seniority in the quorum of the Twelve was changed to give seniority to the one ordained the earliest. Age did not matter.

This change occurred while Joseph Smith was still alive.)

38 And by their <sup>a</sup>desires and their <sup>b</sup>works you shall know them.

39 And when you have found them you shall show these things unto them.

40 And you shall fall down and <sup>a</sup>worship the Father in my <sup>b</sup>name.

41 And you must preach unto the world, saying: You must <sup>a</sup>repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ;

42 For all men must repent and be baptized, and not only men, but women, and <sup>a</sup>children who have arrived at the years of <sup>b</sup>accountability. (Age 8)

43 And now, after that you have received this, you must keep my <sup>a</sup>commandments in all things;

44 And by your hands (God uses us to accomplish his works on earth.) I will work a <sup>a</sup>marvelous work among the children of men, unto the <sup>b</sup>convincing of many of their sins, that they may come unto repentance, and that they may come unto the kingdom of my Father.

45 Wherefore, the blessings which I give unto you are <sup>a</sup>above all things.

46 And after that you have received this, if you <sup>a</sup>keep not my commandments you cannot be saved in the kingdom of my Father. (Orson F. Whitney: At Far West, in April, 1838, Presidents Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were excommunicated from the Church. The charges sustained against the former were for urging vexatious lawsuits against the brethren, slandering President Joseph Smith, contempt of the Church in not attending meetings, leaving his calling in which God had appointed him by revelation, for the sake of filthy lucre, and turning to the practice of law, disgracing the Church by being connected in the bogus business, dishonesty, and finally for "leaving or forsaking the cause of God, and returning to the beggarly elements of the world, and neglecting his high and holy calling, according to his profession." President Whitmer was charged with not observing the Word of Wisdom, neglecting meetings and possessing the same spirit as the dissenters, writing letters to the dissenters in Kirtland, unfavorable to the cause of God and the character of his Prophet, neglecting the duties of his calling and separating himself from the Church and signing himself President of the Church of Christ, after being cut off from the Presidency, in an insulting letter to the High Council. (Life of Heber C. Kimball, 1945, p. 185.))

47 Behold, I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, and your <sup>a</sup>Redeemer, by the <sup>b</sup>power of my Spirit have spoken it. Amen.

## The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods

By Larry C. Porter

*Ensign*, Dec 1996, 30–47

Historical records and the testimony of Joseph Smith's associates tell the manner, order, and pattern of priesthood restoration and indicate that the time of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood was probably within the 13-day period of 16 to 28 May 1829.

The growth of the Church in the latter days can be seen as a stone rolling forth "until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2). Even so, fundamental historical events of the decade before the appointed day for the Church's organization on 6 April 1830 are to be seen as seminal events that gave life-giving power necessary to form anew the Lord's Church in the latter days.

Among these events is the restoration of the Aaronic and the Melchizedek Priesthoods, bringing back priesthood power and authority required for the organization of the Church on earth. The Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood, with its authority to baptize, on 15 May 1829. The Melchizedek Priesthood was restored next, bringing to earth all the power and authority

necessary to organize and direct the Church of Jesus Christ and to perform additional saving priesthood ordinances. **While the Prophet and his associate, Oliver, did not record the date that they received the Melchizedek Priesthood, historical records and the testimony of witnesses indicate that it occurred between the day after the Aaronic Priesthood restoration and 28 May 1829.** Both the scriptures and the testimony of contemporaries attest that the brethren on whom the Lord had bestowed the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood—the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery—acted in the authority of those keys as they organized the Church on 6 April 1830.

## The Aaronic Priesthood Restored

Nearly six years before Oliver Cowdery began serving as Joseph Smith’s scribe, the young Prophet Joseph received divine instruction from the angel Moroni relative to the restoration of priesthood authority. On 22 September 1823 Moroni taught Joseph that “when they [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 their hands.” [1](#)

The first step toward fulfillment of that promise took place on 15 May 1829 while Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were in the process of bringing forth the Book of Mormon. The Prophet recalled:

“We still continued the work of translation, when, in the ensuing month (May, 1829), we on a certain day went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates. 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. ...*

*“He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us ... that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.*

“Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded.

“The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that *he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us*” ([JS—H 1:68–72](#); emphasis in [JS—H 1:70, 72](#) added). [2](#)

John the Baptist’s procedure in ordaining Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic Priesthood involved, first, his conferring the priesthood upon them, followed by their baptizing each other and then his instructing them to lay hands on each other and confer the priesthood that the angel had recently bestowed. Among the reasons suggested for this unusual pattern, other than “for so we were commanded,” are the following:

“First, to confer the Priesthood before baptism, is contrary to the order of the organized Church, therefore they were commanded to confer the Priesthood upon each other in the regular way; after they were baptized. Second, the angel did for them that which they could not do for themselves. There was no one living in mortality who held the keys of this Priesthood, therefore it was necessary that this messenger, who held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood in the Dispensation of the Meridian of Time, should be sent to confer this power. It is contrary to the order of heaven for those who have passed beyond the veil to officiate and labor for the living on the earth, only wherein mortal man cannot act, and thereby it becomes necessary for those who have passed through the resurrection to act for them. Otherwise John would have followed the regular order, which is practiced in the Church, and would have first baptized Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and then conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood.” 3

In looking back six years later on that great and significant event of 15 May 1829, Oliver recorded a very interesting description of the physical setting and events of that day. While copying into a book some blessings given earlier by the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver wrote on 28 September 1835 what might be termed a preface to the book of blessings:

“He [Joseph Smith] was ordained by the angel John, unto the lesser or Aaronic priesthood, in company with myself, in the town of Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, on Fryday, the 15th day of May, 1829, after which we repaired to the water, even to the Susquehanna River, and were baptized, he first ministering unto me and after—I to him. But before baptism, our souls were drawn out in mighty prayer—to know how we might obtain the blessings of baptism and of the Holy Spirit, according to the order of God, and we diligently sought for the right of the fathers and the authority of the holy priesthood, and the power to admin[ister] in the same: ... the Lord ... answered us out of the heavens, and while we were in the heavenly vision the angel came down and bestowed upon us this priesthood; and then, as I have said, we repaired to the water and were baptized. After this we received the high and holy [Melchizedek] priesthood.” 4

Shortly after recording this 1835 “preface,” Oliver then transcribed a blessing Joseph Smith had given him on 18 December 1833. The text of this 1833 blessing is important as an early account of the restoration of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods and the persons involved:

“These blessings shall come upon him [Oliver] according to the blessings of the prophecy of Joseph in ancient days, which he said should come upon the Seer of the last days and the Scribe that should sit with him, and that should be ordained with him by the hand of the angel in the bush, unto the lesser priesthood and after receive the holy priesthood under the hands of they who had been held in reserve for a long season even those who received it under the hand of the Messiah while he should dwell in the flesh upon the earth, and should receive the blessings with him, even the Seer of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saith he, even Joseph of old, by his hand, even God.” 5

The Prophet said that they at first kept private the circumstances of their baptism and conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood on 15 May 1829 because of the spirit of persecution in Harmony, where they had been threatened with being mobbed.

Despite threats, Joseph and Oliver concluded that their message was too urgent for them to be intimidated. They soon began to “reason out of the scriptures” with family members and other acquaintances. Among the first to receive their ministrations was Samuel H. Smith, the Prophet’s younger brother. Joseph and Oliver taught him out of the Bible and showed him what they had accomplished thus far in the work of translating the Book of Mormon. Samuel was baptized for the



remission of sins on 25 May 1829 near Joseph Smith's Harmony homestead and thereafter "returned to his father's house, greatly glorifying and praising God, being filled with the Holy Spirit." [6](#) Before Samuel reached home in Palmyra, Hyrum Smith, Joseph's elder brother, came to Harmony to make inquiries concerning Joseph and Oliver's labors and to know what the Lord would have him do. He was the recipient of a revelation admonishing him to "wait a little longer, until you shall have my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel, that you may know of a surety my doctrine" ([D&C 11:16](#)). He was baptized the next month for the remission of sins in Seneca Lake, Fayette Township, Seneca County, New York, by Joseph Smith in June. [7](#)

### **The Melchizedek Priesthood Restored**

During the appearance of John called the Baptist, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were informed that the Melchizedek Priesthood, with its power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost, "would in due time be conferred on us" ([JS—H 1:72](#)). [8](#) Just when was that "due time"?

The day, month, and year designation that so precisely identifies the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood (15 May 1829) is absent in the case of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Similarly, knowledge of the attendant circumstances of that restoration is limited. Even so, sufficient elements of the historical puzzle can be put together to give us a close approximation of the time sequence. Evidence suggests a date within the 13-day period from 16 May to 28 May 1829.

To begin, the scriptures clearly attest that the foretold restoration of the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood and bestowal of apostolic authority were accomplished. In September 1830 the Lord unmistakably confirmed this fact when he spoke to the Prophet Joseph Smith of "Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them" ([D&C 27:12](#)). [9](#) Still earlier in the year, when the Church was organized on 6 April, reference was made to commandments that "were given to Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church;

"And to Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the second elder of this church, and ordained under his hand" ([D&C 20:2-3](#)).

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained why Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery ordained each other elders nearly a year after they had received the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood: "The priesthood is greater than the office, and all offices in the priesthood, we are taught, are appendages to the priesthood [see [D&C 107:5](#)]. ... The priesthood with its keys existed before the Church organization, but not the offices in the Church, which belong to the Church and are held by the consent of the same." [10](#)

That Joseph and Oliver had previously received the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James, and John is further affirmed by the proceedings of the organizational meeting held on 6 April 1830. Without those keys, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery would not have been authorized or would not have had the priesthood power to take the actions they took on that day. Although each already had received the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood and apostolic authority, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery ordained each other to be an elder to "signify that they were elders in the newly organized Church." [11](#) They then used the higher priesthood to confirm those who had previously been baptized members of the Church and conferred upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. Of that occasion the Prophet stated, "The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree—some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord, and rejoiced exceedingly." [12](#)

Ordinations of other brethren to various offices in the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were also performed by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery both on that day and on the occasion of the first conference of the Church, which followed on 9 June 1830. [13](#)

In addition to the testimony of the events themselves on that appointed day of 6 April 1830, there are the statements of men who were closely associated with the Prophet, who sat in council with him. These statements provide invaluable affirmation that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had indeed received the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood well before the organization of the Church.

Orson Pratt, who joined the Church on 1 September 1830, understood the restoration process very well. Later a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he affirmed: “It would be impossible for a Church to be re-organized upon the earth, unless God had bestowed the authority upon men to act in his name, that is, had spoken from on high and called them by revelation.”

Elder Pratt explained that John, the restorer of the Aaronic Priesthood, had taught while he was upon the earth that there was a greater priesthood—the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek—through which the obedient could receive the higher baptism, of fire and the Holy Ghost. *“Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery sought after this higher authority, and the Lord gave it to them, before the rise of this Church, sending to them Peter, James and John. What for? To bestow upon them the Apostleship. ...*

*“Now, who would be better qualified to administer the sacred office of the Apostleship than the three men who held it while they were here on the earth? ... It has to be a man who holds authority in heaven that can bestow it here on the earth; and such men were Peter, James and John, who restored that authority to earth in our day, by bestowing it upon Joseph Smith. When this authority was restored, the Church was organized on the 6th day of April 1830, ... and then there was power in existence, not only to baptize, but to confirm by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost; and from the authority then sent down afresh from heaven has this Church been enabled to pass along, and receive the great blessings which the Lord has bestowed upon it.”* [14](#)

Hiram Page, a son-in-law of Peter Whitmer Sr., and one who was present on the day of the Church’s 6 April 1830 organization, later confirmed that “Peter, James and John” had come and bestowed the Holy Priesthood “before the 6th of April 1830.” [15](#)

Brigham Young, confidant of the Prophet, began his examination of the gospel in 1830 and joined the Church in 1832. He declared, “I know that Joseph received his Apostleship from Peter, James, and John, before a revelation on the subject was printed, and *he never had a right to organize a Church before he was an Apostle.*” [16](#)

Perhaps the earliest document referring to the bestowal of the higher priesthood before the organization of the Church is a manuscript in Oliver Cowdery’s handwriting with the designation, “Written in the year of our Lord & Saviour 1829—A true copy of the articles of the Church of Christ.” In the “articles,” the Lord specifies, “I command all men every where to repent & I speak unto you even as unto Paul mine apostle for ye are called even with that same calling with which he was called.” [17](#) We may note that the essentials of this quotation are contained in [D&C 18:9](#), revealed in June 1829. As a preface to section 18, the Prophet recorded in his history, “The following commandment will further illustrate the nature of our calling to this Priesthood, as well as that of others who were yet to be sought after.” [18](#) In verse 9 of that revelation, the Lord stated: “And now, Oliver Cowdery, I speak unto you, and also unto David Whitmer, by the way of commandment; for, behold, I command all men everywhere to repent,

and I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called.”

Thus, by this point—sometime in June 1829—not only had Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the divine apostolic call, but David Whitmer also had received a calling to serve as a third special witness of the Lord (see accompanying sidebar article titled “David Whitmer’s Calling,” p. 37).

It is also apparent that their apostolic calling came before mid-June. In a letter dated 14 June 1829, Oliver Cowdery wrote from Fayette, New York, to the Prophet’s brother Hyrum Smith, then residing in Manchester Township, Ontario County, New York. The letter contains wording very parallel to section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants. A comparison strongly suggests that Oliver was quoting and referring to the revelation, [19](#) indicating that it had already been received by that date. (See accompanying sidebar article titled “An Early Quoting of Section 18,” p. 38). By focusing on the point that the apostleship spoken of in [D&C 18:9](#) is the same held by Jesus’ ancient Twelve, we see that the Melchizedek Priesthood had been restored before 14 June 1829.

In fact, further evidence suggests that this restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood took place at least several days before the end of May 1829! Joseph and Oliver experienced a decided increase in opposition to their work of translation and to their other activities in the area of Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, in the first part of 1829. Lucy Mack Smith mentioned that the situation had become so bad that “evil-designing people were seeking to take away his (Joseph’s) life, in order to prevent the work of God from going forth to the world.” [20](#) As a consequence, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were searching for a safer location to complete the translation of the Book of Mormon. Oliver sent out a call for assistance to his friend, David Whitmer.

David later stated that a letter from Oliver told “me to come down into Pennsylvania and bring him and Joseph to my father’s house, giving as a reason therefor that they had received a commandment from God to that effect. I went down to Harmony, and found everything just as they had written me.” [21](#) The Prophet said that they accordingly went to the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. “in the beginning of the month of June.” [22](#) In addition, David Whitmer said that “the translation at my father’s farm, Fayette Township, Seneca County, New York occupied about one month, that is from June 1, to July 1, 1829.” [23](#)

Consequently, we must ask when the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood could have taken place between 16 May and 14 June 1829.

Could the event have transpired as Joseph, Oliver, and David (Emma remained in Harmony with her parents for a time) were on their way from Harmony to Fayette? According to David Whitmer, the answer is *no*. Orson Pratt asked him the direct question: “Can you tell the date of the bestowal of the Apostleship upon Joseph, by Peter, James and John?” David replied: “I do not know, Joseph never told me.” [24](#) So the visitation did not occur while the three men were traveling together for the estimated standard three-day travel time that it took to travel from Harmony to Fayette.

Could the Melchizedek Priesthood restoration have occurred shortly after Joseph and Oliver removed to Fayette, New York? Did they travel to the Whitmer farm, in the Finger Lakes area of west central New York, only to take a three-day return trip to Harmony, Pennsylvania, and the area where the visitation of Peter, James, and John evidently occurred, [25](#) sometime during the month of June for a hurried visit and then to take three more days for going back to Fayette? Extremely unlikely—because the demands of continued translation of the Book of Mormon and securing the copyright on 11 June, along with Oliver’s

previously mentioned letter to Hyrum Smith on 14 June, place them in Fayette during the first two weeks of that month. And as we have seen, the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood had occurred by the middle of June. In addition, efforts to explain their work to some of the residents of the Fayette area fairly well preclude a return to Harmony during the remainder of June. In fact, Joseph detailed just how busy they were with the many people seeking information. <sup>26</sup> It is quite apparent that all these pressures kept Joseph and Oliver engaged at Fayette during all of June 1829 and that there was no intermediate six-day travel period in the first half of June to go back and forth from Harmony.

Thus, by looking at the time period when the visitation of Peter, James, and John could have occurred, we are left with the days between 16 May 1829 (the day after the Aaronic Priesthood was restored) and near the end of that month, before Joseph and Oliver's departure with David Whitmer for Fayette, where they arrived on 1 June.

Further, since David Whitmer's journey from Fayette to Harmony, where he picked up Joseph and Oliver, occupied its anticipated three days, <sup>27</sup> and since a similar amount of time likely was expended on the trip to arrive at the Whitmer home on 1 June, it is clear that Joseph and Oliver left the Harmony area certainly two, and likely three, days before 1 June 1829. Consequently, these factors point to the visitation of Peter, James, and John to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood as occurring within the 13-day period of 16 to 28 May 1829.

Although Peter, James, and John had conferred the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and bestowed on them apostolic authority, the two men had not yet been authorized to follow the pattern applied by John the Baptist during the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. Receipt of the Aaronic Priesthood had involved their first having the priesthood conferred upon them by the messenger who held the keys, and then they were authorized to perform their own baptisms and conferrals in the same order that we are familiar with today.

However, in the case of the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, the ancient Apostles had instructed Joseph and Oliver to not yet ordain each other to an office within the Melchizedek Priesthood. Thus, while Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were at the Whitmer farm in June 1829, they continued to inquire of the Lord concerning when they might ordain each other to an office within the Melchizedek Priesthood. In answer to their prayers, they learned by "the word of the Lord" that the period of deferment of their ordaining each other was to continue until events preliminary to the actual organization of the Church could be completed and until these two men could meet with their brethren and receive their sanction by vote of common consent as to whether or not their brethren accepted them as their spiritual leaders. This revelation came when they went into the chamber (bedroom) of the Whitmer home to pray for direction concerning the exercise of the Melchizedek Priesthood authority they had earlier received by the Susquehanna. Joseph Smith related the results of their petition:

"We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the angel that conferred upon us the Aaronic Priesthood had given us, viz., that provided we continued faithful, we should also have the Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the chamber of Mr. Whitmer's house, in order more particularly to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired; and here, to our unspeakable satisfaction, did we realize the truth of the Savior's promise—'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'—for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the *word of the Lord* came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the

Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office; and then to ordain others, as it should be made known unto us from time to time. *We were, however, commanded to defer this our ordination until such times as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together, when we must have their sanction to our proceeding to ordain each other, and have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers or not; ... [and] then call out such men as the Spirit should dictate, and ordain them; and then attend to the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, upon all those whom we had previously baptized, doing all things in the name of the Lord.*” [28](#)

Peter, James, and John had previously conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood upon them. Now “the word of the Lord” taught them that their ordination within that priesthood would be tied to the organization of the Church, and that this organizational event would be at a future time yet to be specified. Obviously, it was instruction of great joy to them and alerted them to a great future event for which they would need to be prepared. Later, by revelation the Lord set the date of 6 April 1830 for the organization of the Church, for the attendant actions of common consent, and for ordinations of the Melchizedek Priesthood within the newly-organized Church. [29](#) As a consequence, the Lord’s June 1829 “blueprint” for Church organization was formally carried out on the appointed day, 6 April 1830, by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery at the Peter Whitmer Sr. home in Fayette, New York, in the very home wherein they had received the revelation instructing them concerning the unfolding of all these matters.

Of the organizational events on 6 April, the Prophet declared: “We proceeded, according to previous commandment, to call on our brethren to know whether they accepted us as their teachers in the things of the Kingdom of God, and whether they were satisfied that we should proceed and be organized as a Church according to said commandment which we had received. To these several propositions they consented by a unanimous vote. I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery, and ordained him an Elder of the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints;’ after which, he ordained me also to the office of an Elder of said Church. ...

“We now proceeded to call out and ordain some others of the brethren to different offices of the Priesthood.” [30](#)

The above sequence of events is precisely that which Oliver Cowdery bore witness of when he addressed the Saints in Kaneshville, Iowa, in October 1848, saying: “I was with Joseph when an holy angle [sic] from god came down from heaven and confer[r]ed or restored the A[a]ronic priesthood. ... I was also present with Joseph when the melchizedek priesthood was confer[r]ed by the holy angles of god—which we then confirmed on each other by the will and commandment of god.” [31](#) With this same consistency Oliver Cowdery testified to Samuel W. Richards of the restoration process in which “John the Baptist holding the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood; Peter, James and John, holding the *keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood*, have also ministered for those who shall be heirs of salvation, and with these ministrations ordained men to the same Priesthoods.” [32](#) This is also the same series of events prophesied by Joseph of Egypt and described by the Prophet Joseph Smith as he gave an 1833 blessing on the head of Oliver Cowdery, declaring: “These blessings [pronounced in the blessing proper] shall come [to] him [Oliver], according to the blessings of the prophecy of Joseph in ancient days, which he said should come upon the Seer of the last days and the Scribe that should sit with him, and that should be ordained with him by the hand of the angel in the bush, unto the lesser priesthood and after receive the *holy priesthood* under the hands of they who had been held in reserve for a long season, even those who received it under the hands of the Messiah.” [33](#)

The Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery set forth the order and manner of priesthood conferral and ordination, affirming that Peter, James, and John had been given the authority and responsibility for conferring the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood on them, Joseph and Oliver. “The word of the Lord” that had come in the chamber of the Whitmer log house to Joseph and Oliver was not a bestowal of Melchizedek Priesthood authority by “voice command.” Rather, it was instruction that with the future acceptance of their leadership from the consent of assembled brethren, Joseph and Oliver could organize the Church, using the authority that had already been bestowed upon them by the three ancient Apostles, Peter, James, and John, by the Susquehanna River (see [D&C 128:20](#)). Then they could proceed to ordain each other as first and second elder within that Church (see [D&C 20:2–3](#)). [34](#)

### Where Was It Restored?

Little firsthand information is available on the physical circumstances of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Though both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery wrote of the consequences of Peter, James, and John’s visitation, both gave very little information about the setting. There are, however, a number of observations that help us focus on the site.

In April and May 1829 Joseph and Oliver were engrossed in the translation of the Book of Mormon at Harmony, Pennsylvania. The urgency they felt for completing the work, which had already been delayed by the earlier loss of 116 manuscript pages, left little or no time for them to engage even in the daily pursuit of the necessities of life. Although the Isaac Hale family was in a position to assist them in their plight, Joseph Knight Sr. stated, “His [Joseph Smith’s] wifes father and familey ware all against him and would not h[e]lp him.” [35](#) This difficulty was greatly alleviated through the exceptional generosity of the Knight family, who on more than one occasion supplied Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery with food and even paper for the Book of Mormon manuscript. [36](#)

Understandably, Joseph Smith felt a particular affinity for the Knight family—a feeling that was reciprocated. Joseph Knight Sr. had shown interest in the work of the Prophet from the outset, having been present at the Smiths’ Manchester home on 22 September 1827, when Joseph first retrieved the plates from the Hill Cumorah. Later, while living in Harmony, the Prophet made a number of 28-mile trips from his Harmony home to the Joseph Knight farm, which was situated on the east side of the Susquehanna River in Colesville Township, Broome County, New York. Information indicates that the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood took place somewhere along the 28-mile stretch of road bordering the river between those places. In fact, the Prophet wrote of “the voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!” ([D&C 128:20](#)).

In addition, the reminiscences of a Church member named Addison Everett may be helpful regarding the site and circumstances of the restoration of the higher priesthood. In 1881 he wrote a letter to a Church member named Oliver B. Huntington and then, in 1882, another letter to President Joseph F. Smith (Second Counselor to President John Taylor at the time), sharing at their request what he knew of that event. [37](#) In his letter to President Smith, he recalled hearing the Prophet, in Nauvoo a few days before the Martyrdom, relate the circumstances surrounding the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Joseph Smith, Brother Everett wrote, “Said as they Ware Tran[s]lating the Book of Mormon at His Father In Laws in Susquhanah County Penny. T[h]ey ware thretned By a Mob and in the same time Father Knights came Down from Cole[s]vill[e] Broom[e] County New York and Desired them to go home with him and preach to them in his Neighbourhood And on Account of the Mob Spirit prevailing they concluded to goe.”

*But even after they arrived at the Knights' residence in Colesville, opposition soon plagued them. Once again circumstances forced them to flee in haste from the mob and to return to Harmony. Brother Everett's letter continues: "And they wandered in a dense Forest all Night and often times in Mud and water up to thare Knees. And Brother Oliver got quite exausted in the After Part of the Night and Brother Joseph had to put his arm arround him and allmost carry him. And Just as the day Broke in the East Brother Oliver gave out Entirely and he[,] Br Joseph[,] leaned him against an Oake tree Just out side a field fenc[e] Br Oliver Crying out how long O Lord O how Long Br Joseph hav[e] we got to suffer these things[?] Just this moment Peter James & John came to us and Ordained to the Holy Apostelship and gave us the Keys of the Dispnsation of the fullness of times. And we had some 16 or 17 miles to goe to reach our place of residence and Brother Oliver could travel as well as I could . [See [D&C 84:33.](#)] Now as to time and Place. I heard the Name of the Banks of the Susquehanah river spoken But whare it was pla[c]ed I cannot till. No doubt the Oake tree and the field fence was ajacent to the river. As to time I cannot Be Very Explsit. But as the Mob spirit had not abated when they returned they had to remove to Father Whitmores to finish the Translation. I should it to the Latter part of August [1829]."*

As dramatic as Brother Everett's account is, our enthusiasm for aspects of it must be tempered by the fact that he wrote it some 38 years after hearing the Prophet tell of those events. Undoubtedly Addison Everett, who served as a bishop in Winter Quarters and again in Salt Lake City, was a man of great faith and integrity. <sup>38</sup> But good men not intimate to the details of an event may make mistakes of understanding—especially in their 76th year as they try to recall details they heard nearly four decades earlier.

It is necessary to note this because Brother Everett's account, though probably true in other respects, is inconsistent in its chronology. He incorrectly recalls that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery "had to remove" to the Whitmer farm in August (it was about 1 June 1829, as we have already noted), but he is correct in saying the visitation came before their move to Fayette to complete the translation of the Book of Mormon. Thus this remembrance, in company with all the other information we have examined, would correctly place the restoration of the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the apostleship, and the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times about 11 months before the organization of the Church on 6 April 1830.

Yet also in his account, Brother Everett wrote that Joseph and Oliver made their escape from the mob by fleeing from a court where the case against them had just been dismissed. They received help, he said, from "a Lawyer By the Name of Reede I think." This is undoubtedly a reference to John Reid, a lawyer hired by Joseph Knight Sr. to defend the Prophet in a trial sequence that commenced at South Bainbridge, New York, on 1 July 1830 and concluded in Colesville, New York, approximately three days later. <sup>39</sup> As a result of this reference to John Reid, some have concluded that the appearance of Peter, James, and John was in July 1830, after the organization of the Church—a conclusion that contradicts a great body of evidence and actions associated with the Melchizedek Priesthood and is not supported even by Addison Everett's recollection, as we have noted.

The lasting contribution of Brother Everett is in his relaying the dramatic circumstance in which the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood apparently occurred. Further, he apologized in his letter to President Joseph F. Smith for his lack of technical skills, saying he was "Not Writing as wone [one] of the Lords Historians." <sup>40</sup> Whatever his lapses may have been in recalling details, he obviously intended to relay what the Prophet Joseph Smith had said about the circumstances surrounding the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

## **The Authority of God among Men**

In later references to the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were more concerned with the ramifications of the event than with a delineation of its time and circumstance. One of the most telling statements in this regard came from the Prophet when he affirmed:

“The Priesthood is everlasting. The Savior, Moses, & Elias—gave the keys to Peter, James & John on the Mount when they were transfigured before him. The Priesthood is everlasting, without beginning of days or end of years, without Father, Mother &c.—

“If there is no change of ordinances there is no change of Priesthood. Wherever the ordinances of the Gospel are administered there is the Priesthood. How have we come at the Priesthood in the last days? They came down, down in regular succession. Peter James & John had it given to them & they gave it up [to us].” 41

In addition, when Oliver Cowdery and his family returned to the Church at Kanesville, Iowa, in the fall of 1848, he addressed the conference of the Saints on 21 October, bearing a strong personal witness of the priesthood to the congregation:

“The channel is here, the priesthood is here, I was present with Joseph when an holy angle from god came down from heaven and conferred, or restored the Aronic priesthood. And said at the same time that it should remain upon the earth while the earth stands. I was also present with Joseph when the melchiesideck priesthood was conferred by the holy angles of god,—which we then confirmed on each other by the will and commandment of god. This priesthood is also to remain upon the earth untill the Last remnant of time. This holy priesthood we conferred upon many. And is just as good and valid as if god had conferred it in person.” 42

Oliver also expressed the following testimony in a statement he wrote for Samuel W. Richards while a guest in the latter’s home in the “upper part of Missouri” on 13 January 1849: “These Priesthoods [Aaronic and Melchizedek], with their authority, are now, and must continue to be, in the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Blessed is the Elder who has received the same, and thrice blessed and holy is he who shall endure to the end. Accept assurances, dear Brother, of the unfeigned prayer of him, who, in connection with Joseph the Seer, was blessed with the ... ministrations [of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John], and who earnestly and devoutly hopes to meet you in the celestial glory.” 43

### **According to Design**

Both scripture and history attest that the restoration of the keys and powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood took place as a necessary prerequisite to the reestablishment of Christ’s Church upon the earth and that those keys and powers continue today in His Church. The authority conferred by Peter, James, and John embraced all of the offices of the priesthood, including the keys of the apostleship, the highest authority conferred upon men in the flesh. By virtue of these keys, Joseph Smith proceeded in the coming years to ordain and set in order the various priesthood quorums as they are known in the Church today.

All of this was done in accordance with the design of the Lord so that he might “raise up a peculiar people to himself, a holy nation, a royal Priesthood—a kingdom of Priests, that shall be saviors upon Mount Zion, not only to preach the Gospel to the scattered remnants of Israel, but to save to the



uttermost the nations of the Gentiles, inasmuch as they will listen and can be saved by the plan which God has provided.” 44

## **The Divine Pattern for the Restoration of Priesthood Authority**

### **Aaronic Priesthood**

1. The Aaronic Priesthood was conferred on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist because there was no mortal being who could act in behalf of that priesthood.
2. Thus empowered, Joseph and Oliver, as commanded, baptized each other.
3. Joseph and Oliver then conferred the priesthood on each other, establishing the pattern for the Church.

### **Melchizedek Priesthood**

1. Peter, James, and John conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. They were instructed to defer ordination of each other as elders within the Church until they could meet with their brethren and receive sanction by common consent as to whether their brethren accepted them as their spiritual leaders.
2. On 6 April 1830, after consent from the assembled brethren, Joseph and Oliver organized the Church and ordained each other to the office of elder.
3. Joseph and Oliver then conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood on other brethren who had been previously baptized and ordained them to different offices in the priesthood.

## **Approximate Time Period for the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood**

### **15 May 1829**

On this date the Aaronic Priesthood was restored by John the Baptist, acting under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who John the Baptist said would confer the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery “in due time” (see [JS—H 1:72](#)).

### **16–28 May 1829**

**All evidence demonstrates that the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood occurred nearly 11 months before the organization of the Church. Historical records and testimonies show it is not probable that the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood occurred while Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, in company with David Whitmer, were on the trip from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to Fayette, New York, in late May and early June 1829, nor is it probable that the restoration occurred after the June 1829 move to Fayette. Therefore, it is highly likely that the Melchizedek Priesthood restoration occurred within the period of 16–28 May 1829.**

### **June 1829**

A revelation received in June 1829 indicates that by this time Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were called with the same calling as the Apostle Paul (see [D&C 18:9](#)).

The “word of the Lord” in the Whitmer home instructed Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery that their ordination within the Melchizedek Priesthood was to be tied to the occasion when the Church would be organized (History of the Church, 1:60–61).

## **6 April 1830**

A revelation dated 6 April 1830 identifies “Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church; and . . . Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the second elder of this church” ([D&C 20:2–3](#)). That the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood had already been conferred on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by 6 April 1830 is affirmed by the following events on the day the Church was organized:

- Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery ordained each other elders of the Church.
- They confirmed those who were baptized, bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- They conferred the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood on others.

Those closely associated with the Prophet knew that the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter, James, and John occurred before the “rise of the Church” ([D&C 20:1](#)).

## **30 September 1830**

The earlier bestowal of apostolic authority on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by Peter, James, and John is subsequently referenced by revelation (see [D&C 27:12](#)).

## **David Whitmer’s Calling**

By **Larry C. Porter**

Larry C. Porter, “David Whitmer’s Calling,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 37

Along with Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer later also served as a special witness of the Lord. In fact, nearly a year before the Church was organized, the Lord told David and Oliver they had been called with that same calling given “unto Paul mine apostle” ([D&C 18:9](#)) anciently.

David maintained that he had received the priesthood at the hands of the Prophet Joseph during the month of June 1829, <sup>1</sup> and President Brigham Young once told the Saints, “Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer were the first Apostles of this dispensation, though in the early days of the Church David Whitmer lost his standing.” <sup>2</sup> Even though Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were not yet to ordain to offices within the priesthood, apparently the Prophet felt guided to confer upon David Whitmer Melchizedek Priesthood authority and apostleship. However, the priesthood-ordinance focus of Joseph and Oliver remained one of baptism and not of confirmation of the gift of the Holy Ghost until the organization of the Church.

During an interview with David Whitmer in 1877, visitor Edward Stevenson brought up the matter of David’s reception of the priesthood. Later, in reporting his observations to President Wilford Woodruff, Edward Stevenson wrote:

“Now what strikes me forcably, is, David said soon after his return [1 June 1829] from his little mission to bring Joseph the Prophet and Company from Pa. Joseph Babtized him and Ordained him as the 3d Elder in the Church. Mark it, this was the very next month after the conferment of the Aronic Priesthood in Pa. on the Susquhanah River, now I have always believed that our Prophet recd. the Melchisedic Priesthood soon after the Aronic, and at the same place—before going to Peter Whitmers at Fayett Senaca Co. NY—to continue the Translation of the Book of Mormon. Davids telling me that he was babtized in Senaca Lake or River, in June <1829>, and being ordained, and imediately after called to assist in the great work June 1829, is good evidence to me.”<sup>3</sup>

1. See Larry C. Porter, “The Priesthood Restored,” in Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, eds., *Studies in Scripture Volume Two: The Pearl of Great Price* (1985), 397.

2. In *Journal of Discourses*, 6:320. Wilford Woodruff also sustains the understanding that among the very early “elders” of the Church there was a distinctive group of Apostles, albeit when he referenced this matter over 50 years later he mentioned only two of the three Apostles: “There were no Apostles in the Church then [he means no Quorum of the Twelve] except Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery” (in *Conference Report*, 8 Apr. 1898, 57). President Woodruff likely did not mention, or perhaps did not remember to mention, David Whitmer because of David’s limited service to the Church and his excommunication and resultant disaffection. The issue addressed here is important because critics have said there were no men—Joseph Smith included—who held apostolic power, keys, and authority before the organization of the Church or for a period following its organization; the critics claim that all the ordained brethren were “elder” not only in title but also in similar priesthood authority. President Woodruff’s words clearly show he understood there was apostolic authority in the Church apart from the priesthood authority held by the rest of the brethren.

3. Letter of Edward Stevenson to President Wilford Woodruff, 6 Oct. 1891, LDS Church Archives; spelling and underlining as per original. For Stevenson’s interviews with David Whitmer, see *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 22–23 Dec. 1877, LDS Church Archives.

## **An Early Quoting of Section 18**

By **Larry C. Porter**

Larry C. Porter, “An Early Quoting of Section 18,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 38

In *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 18, dated June 1829, the Lord not only mentioned the apostolic calling of Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer but also commanded them and “all men everywhere” ([D&C 18:9](#)) to repent and come unto him, for they could be saved only through him.

In a letter to Joseph Smith’s brother Hyrum, dated 14 June 1829, Oliver Cowdery wrote a call to repentance using words identical to or in places paraphrasing the revelation, thus indicating that section 18—and the apostolic calling to which it referred—had come before mid-June of 1829:

### **Doctrine and Covenants 18 (June 1829)**

9. And now, Oliver Cowdery, I speak unto you, and also unto David Whitmer, by the way of commandment; for, behold, I command all men everywhere to repent, and I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called.

10. Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

11. For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

12. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

13. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!

14. Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people. ...

21. Take upon you the name of Christ, and speak the truth in soberness.

22. And as many as repent and are baptized in my name, which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved.

23. Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved;

24. Wherefore, all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father, for in that name shall they be called at the last day;

25. Wherefore, if they know not the name by which they are called, they cannot have place in the kingdom of my Father.

### **Oliver's Letter to Hyrum (14 June 1829)**

Dear Brother Hyrum

These few lines I write unto you feeling anxious for your steadfastness in the great cause of which you have been called to advocate and also feeling it a duty to write to you at every opportunity[.] remember the worth of Souls is great in the Sight of God[.] behold the Lord your God Suffered death upon the cross after the manner of the flesh. wherefore he Suffered the pains of all men that all men might repent and come unto him and he and he [sic] hath risen again from the dead that they might bring all men unto him upon conditions of repentance and how great is his joy in the Soul that repents and behold he commandeth all men everywhere to repent and not only be baptized and not only men but women [and] children which have arrived to the years of accountability. Stir up the minds of our friends against the time we come unto you that thus [then?] they may be willing to take upon them the name of Christ for that is the name by which they shall be called at the last day and if we know not the name by which we are called I fear we shall be found on the [left?] hand. I have many things to write but if the Lord will I shall shortly come unto you then tell Mrs. [Mr.?] Rockwell that those shoes fit well and I received them as from the Lord[.] I tell him that what ever he does in the cause of Zion he will in no wise loose his reward.

(Letter in LDS Church Archives; emphasis added.)

### **The Testimony of Oliver Cowdery**

By **Larry C. Porter**

Larry C. Porter, "The Testimony of Oliver Cowdery," Ensign, Dec. 1996, 40

After they came back to the Church, Oliver Cowdery and his family planned to travel to the Rocky Mountains to unite with the Saints there. What was to have been an interim visit to Richmond, Missouri, turned into an extended stay as Oliver's health steadily declined because of an illness. While attempting to recuperate at the home of his father-in-law, Peter Whitmer Sr., Oliver entertained an acquaintance from the Ohio and Missouri days of the Church, Elder Jacob Gates. Called on a mission to England, Elder Gates stopped in Richmond on his way from Utah to the port at New Orleans. In the course of their conversation, Jacob pressed two all-important questions. First:

“ ‘Oliver, I want you to tell me the whole truth about your testimony concerning the Book of Mormon—the testimony sent forth to the world over your signature and found in the front of that book. Was your testimony based on a dream, was it the imagination of your mind, was it an illusion, a myth—tell me truthfully?’ ”

“Oliver seemed deeply touched. Without saying a word, he moved from his chair to the bookcase and retrieved an edition of the Book of Mormon. He then read in a solemn manner the words of testimony to which he had subscribed his name, and addressing Elder Gates, he said, ‘Jacob, I want you to remember what I say to you. I am a dying man, and what would it profit me to tell you a lie? I know ... that this Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God. My eyes saw, my ears heard, and my understanding was touched, and I know that whereof I testified is true. It was no dream, no vain imagination of the mind—it was real.’ ”

“Then Jacob followed with a second question, asking about the reality of the angel, John the Baptist, under whose hands Oliver had first received the priesthood. Oliver replied, ‘Jacob, I felt the hand of the angel on my head as plainly as I could feel yours, and could hear his voice as I now hear yours.’ ”<sup>1</sup> It was a simple observation, but the testimony was sure: “ ‘I felt the hand ... and could hear his voice.’ ”

Oliver Cowdery is reported to have cited this same kind of experience in describing his ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter, James, and John. David H. Cannon visited David Whitmer in Richmond, Missouri, in 1861, where Oliver had died on 3 March 1850. At the site of Oliver's grave, David Whitmer re-created for Brother Cannon his brother-in-law's last moments. David Cannon said of that experience:

“The thing which impressed me most of all was, as we stood beside the grave of Oliver Cowdery the other Witness, who had come back into the Church before his death, and in [David Whitmer's] describing Oliver's action, when bearing his [Oliver's] testimony, [David said that Oliver] said to the people in his room, placing his hands like this upon his head, saying ‘I know the Gospel to be true and upon this head has Peter James and John laid their hands and confer[r]ed the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood,’ the manner in which this tall grey headed man [David Whitmer] went through the exhibition of what Oliver had done was prophetic. I shall never forget the impression that the testimony of ... David Whitmer made upon me.”<sup>2</sup>

1. “Testimony of Jacob Gates,” *Improvement Era*, March 1912, 418–19. Elder Gates was later one of the seven Presidents of the Seventy in the Church, from 1862 to 1892.

2. David H. Cannon, *Autobiography*, 13 March 1917, 5; photocopy of holograph in possession of BYU professor Richard Lloyd Anderson.

## Notes

1. As quoted by Oliver Cowdery in a letter to W. W. Phelps printed in *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1835, 199. Original spelling and punctuation are retained in all quoted sources in this article.
2. Compare with *History of the Church*, 1:39–40; [D&C 13](#). Because of various reports circulated by those whom the Prophet termed “evil-disposed and designing persons,” he proposed to “put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts” by this recitation of events ([JS—H 1:1](#)); see also Joseph Smith, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, 2 vols. (1989–92), 1:290–91.
3. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, 27th ed. (1974), 58.
4. Blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr. to Oliver Cowdery, 18 Dec. 1833, Kirtland, Ohio, transcribed 2 Oct. 1835, Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, pp. 8–9, Historical Dept., Archives Division, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives. Oliver’s statement is part of an explanatory note or preface that he entered in the record book identifying some blessings which were given by the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. in Kirtland on 18 December 1833 but not transcribed into this record until October 1835; see also p. 10. The reader will note the close similarities between part of Oliver’s text and Abraham 1:2 [[Abr. 1:2](#)]: “We diligently sought for the right of the fathers. . . .” These lines are undoubtedly an outgrowth of the translation of the Abraham papyri, which Joseph Smith Jr. had received in July 1835.
5. Oliver’s transcription of this blessing is signed, “Oliver Cowdery, Clerk and Recorder. Given December 18th 1833 and recorded in this book October 2 1835” (Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, p. 12, LDS Church Archives; underlining in original). Throughout this article, strike-through marks indicate words crossed out by the original author, and angle brackets (<>) represent material inserted above the line by the original author.
6. *History of the Church*, 1:44; see also *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:292.
7. See *History of the Church*, 1:51. At the same time Hyrum Smith was baptized, David Whitmer and Peter Whitmer Jr. were also immersed in the waters of Seneca Lake in June 1829. Joseph said, “From this time forth many became believers, and some were baptized whilst we continued to instruct” (*History of the Church*, 1:51; see also *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:294).
8. See also *History of the Church*, 1:40; *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:290–91.
9. Section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants is a two-part revelation. [D&C 27:12](#), pertaining to Peter, James, and John, was not included in this revelation as printed in Chapter XXVIII of the 1833 Book of Commandments. However, the verse was included as an additional clarification of the original revelation to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and placed in section 50, verse 3, of the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants and dated September 1830. The inspired content of this verse affirms that the higher priesthood had been restored before September 1830.
10. *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:96, 99.
11. L. Tom Perry, *Ensign*, May 1996, 54. In addition to Elder Perry’s instruction concerning why Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery ordained themselves elders after having received the apostleship, in the context of the revelation in [D&C 20:2–3](#), the title elder might also be read in the same sense it is used to refer to the special witnesses who lead The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today—those apostles and prophets who sit in its directing quorums. For insights into the use of the term elder, as applied to both the office in the priesthood and to those in leadership roles, see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 214–16; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:146–48; Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 2:447–48.
12. *History of the Church*, 1:77–78; see also *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:302–3.
13. See Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (1983), 1.
14. In *Journal of Discourses*, 16:294–95; emphasis added.

15. Letter of Hiram Page to “Brother Wm. [William E. McLellin],” 4 March 1848, Fishing River, Missouri, Second Part, RLDS Archives, Independence, Missouri.
16. In *Journal of Discourses*, 1:137; emphasis added. Presidents Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff all expressed strong views on (1) the sequence of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood and the apostleship under the hands of Peter, James, and John, and (2) the organization of the Church (see Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:240 and 11:126; John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:32; and Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:266; 25:206–7).
17. Oliver Cowdery, “Written in the year of our Lord & Savior 1829—A true copy of the articles of the Church of Christ,” MS 1829, LDS Church Archives.
18. *History of the Church*, 1:61–62; *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:300.
19. See letter of Oliver Cowdery to Hyrum Smith, 14 June 1829, Fayette, New York, LDS Church Archives.
20. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley (1958), 147.
21. *Kansas City Daily Journal*, 5 June 1881.
22. *History of the Church*, 1:48–49; *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:293.
23. *Kansas City Daily Journal*, 5 June 1881.
24. “Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,” *Deseret Evening News*, 16 Nov. 1878, 1.
25. See D&C 128:20; *History of the Church*, 1:40–41n; Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, rev. ed., (1972), 810.
26. *History of the Church*, 1:51.
27. See “Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,” *Deseret Evening News*, 16 Nov. 1878. David Whitmer stated: “Oliver told me that Joseph had informed him when I started from home, where I had stopped the first night, how I read the sign at the tavern, where I stopped the next night, etc., and that I would be there that day before dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me.” So the trip involved a three-day period.
28. *History of the Church*, 1:60–61; emphasis added.
29. *History of the Church*, 1:64–70, 75–79.
30. *History of the Church*, 1:77–79.
31. *Reuben Miller Journal*, 21 Oct. 1848, MS 1392, LDS Church Archives; emphasis added.
32. Statement of Oliver Cowdery to Samuel W. Richards, 13 Jan. 1849, quoted in *Deseret Evening News*, 22 March 1884, 2; emphasis added.
33. Blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr. to Oliver Cowdery, 18 Dec. 1833, Kirtland, Ohio; emphasis added. See note 4.
34. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “Now I am going to call your attention to something that is not, I regret to say, generally known. Oliver Cowdery was called to be what? The ‘Second Elder’ of the Church. . . . Oliver Cowdery’s standing in the beginning was as the ‘Second Elder’ of the Church, holding the keys jointly with the Prophet Joseph Smith” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 1:211–12; emphasis in original. See also p. 217, “Keys First Given to Joseph and Oliver”).

35. Dean C. Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (autumn 1976): 35.

36. Recalling a business trip to Catskill, New York, Joseph Knight Sr. related:  
"I Bought a Barral of Mackrel and some lined paper for writing. And when I Came home I Bought some nine or ten Bushels of grain and five or six Bushels taters [potatoes] and a pound of tea, and I went Down to see him [Joseph Smith] and they ware in want. Joseph and Oliver ware gone to see if they Could find a place to work for provisions, But found none. They returned home and found me there with provisions, and they ware glad for they ware out" ("Joseph Knight's Recollection," 36).

37. See letter of Addison Everett to Oliver B. Huntington, 17 Feb. 1881, St. George, Utah, recorded in "Oliver Boardman Huntington, Journal #14" under backdate of 31 Jan. 1881, Brigham Young University Archives. Additional information is found in "O. B. Huntington Diary #15," 18 Feb. 1883, 44–47, where the letter is again recorded with a few additional particulars.

See also the letter of Addison Everett to Joseph F. Smith, 16 Jan. 1882, St. George, Utah, Joseph F. Smith Collection, Personal Papers, MS 1325, LDS Church Archives. Addison followed this with yet another letter to Joseph F. Smith on 24 Jan. 1882 in which he gave a brief paragraph on Oliver Cowdery and miscellaneous commentary.

38. See Andrew Jenson, comp., *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (1901–36), 4:702.

39. See *History of the Church*, 1:88–97; compare *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:312–18.

40. Letter of Addison Everett to Joseph F. Smith, 16 Jan. 1882.

41. Quoted by Willard Richards in "Willard Richards Pocket Companion, written in England," 65, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.

42. Quoted in Reuben Miller Journal, 21 Oct. 1848.

43. Statement of Oliver Cowdery to Samuel W. Richards, 13 Jan. 1849, quoted in *Deseret Evening News*, 22 March 1884, 2; statement of Samuel W. Richards concerning meeting with Oliver Cowdery in January 1849, Salt Lake City, 21 May 1907, MS 3703, LDS Church Archives.

44. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:183.

### Notes

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### D&C 19

(During the summer of 1829, after the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed, Egbert B. Grandin, owner of the *Wayne County Sentinel* in Palmyra, New York, agreed to print five thousand copies of the book for three thousand dollars. On 25 August 1829, Martin Harris, who had repented of his previous sins and had subsequently received a vision of the angel and the plates to become one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, put up 240 acres of his Palmyra farm as collateral to guarantee payment of the three thousand dollars. If the books sold, the proceeds would redeem Martin's note, but if they did not sell, portions of Martin's acreage would be sold at public auction until the debt to Grandin was satisfied. Opposition to the Book of Mormon was intense even before its publication. During the winter of 1830, a man named Abner Cole had somehow gained access to the printer's copy of the manuscript and attempted to publish parts of it as installments in his newspaper, the *Reflector*, under the pseudonym of O. Dogberry; the first installment was printed on 2 January 1830. The *Reflector* was also printed in Palmyra on E. B. Grandin's press. Cole apparently hoped to profit from his literary theft and at



the same time preempt sales of the real Book of Mormon when it appeared, but Joseph was able to stop this infringement of copyright by threatening legal action. Then in March 1830, a large number of citizens in the Palmyra area held a mass meeting in opposition to the forthcoming book and mutually agreed to boycott it when released. These same citizens also applied pressure to Grandin, who, fearing the Smiths might not make good their debt if the boycott proved successful, stopped the printing. When Martin Harris learned of the planned boycott, being aware he would lose his farm if the book didn't sell, he went to Joseph in Manchester, New York, and demanded a revelation from the Lord. Joseph Knight Sr. later gave this account of that meeting: "He [Martin Harris] Came to us [Joseph Smith Jr. and Joseph Knight Sr.] and . . . says, 'The Books [Book of Mormon] will not sell for no Body wants them.' Joseph says, 'I think they will sell well.' Says he, 'I want a Commandment [a revelation].' 'Why,' says Joseph, 'fulfill what you have got.' 'But,' says he, 'I must have a Commandment.' Joseph put him off. But he insisted three or four times he must have a Commandment. . . . "In the morning [the next day] he got up and said he must have a Commandment to Joseph and went home. And along in the after part of the Day Joseph and Oliver Received a Commandment which is in Book of Covenants"—Doctrine and Covenants 19. After receiving Doctrine and Covenants 19, Joseph and Martin, whose home was in Palmyra, visited Grandin in Palmyra and reassured him that their debt would be paid one way or the other. Consequently, the printing of the Book of Mormon resumed and was finished in March 1830. On 5 February 1831, the debt to the printer became due. Obedient to the Lord's command that he had received in section 19 (see vv. 32–35), on 7 April 1831 Martin sold off 151 of the mortgaged acres at twenty dollars per acre to satisfy the three thousand dollar debt owed E. B. Grandin. This amounted to a little over half of Martin's entire farm. **Doctrine and Covenants 19 is one of the most important revelations we have dealing with repentance, the nature of hell, and the atonement of Christ.** As one whose own life had recently been marked with sins and failures (see D&C 3:12–13), but who still desired to serve God, Martin Harris needed to understand the relationship between God's eternal judgments, individual repentance, and the atonement of Christ. **Most of the churches in Joseph Smith's day taught that the punishments of God last forever and that sinners will suffer endless burning in fire and brimstone. Martin had previously suffered the pain of losing the Spirit (see v. 20), and now the Lord informed him that his only choices, like ours, were to repent of his sins or to suffer judgment. The Lord clarified the doctrine of hell in section 19, however, by explaining that the condemned do not suffer forever, though the scriptures sometimes give that impression for the sake of increased effect (see v. 7). ACD&C 1:110-112)**

Joseph Smith Papers, 25

*Revelation given through Joseph Smith, at Manchester, New York, March 1830. HC 1: 72–74. In his history the Prophet introduced it as “a commandment of God and not of man, to Martin Harris, given by him who is Eternal.”*

*1–3, Christ has all power; 4–5, All men must repent or suffer; 6–12, Eternal punishment is God's punishment; 13–20, Christ suffered for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; 21–28, Preach the gospel of repentance; 29–41, Declare glad tidings.*

1 I AM <sup>a</sup>Alpha (first letter) and Omega (last letter), <sup>b</sup>Christ the Lord; yea, even I am he, the beginning and the end, the Redeemer of the <sup>c</sup>world.

2 I, having accomplished and <sup>a</sup>finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father, concerning me—having done this that I might <sup>b</sup>subdue all things unto myself—

3 Retaining all <sup>a</sup>power, even to the <sup>b</sup>destroying of Satan and his works at the <sup>c</sup>end of the world (end of the telestial world), and the last great day of judgment, which I shall pass upon the inhabitants thereof,

<sup>d</sup>judging every man according to his <sup>e</sup>works and the deeds which he hath done. (The last great day of judgment. **Reference is to the time that follows the Millennium** — a period of one thousand years of righteousness. It is instructive in the context of this revelation to note that the scriptures do not speak of a final judgment in which all people of the earth are brought before God at one time to receive rewards and punishments. Rather, **the Lord speaks of judgment that has a great last day in which he will banish Satan and his hosts into their own place. At that time all of God's children who belong to this earth will have had judgment passed upon them. Statements, such as those found in the Book of Mormon, that "the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works" (Alma 11:41) do not intend to convey the idea that all will be judged on one final day of judgment any more than all will be resurrected the same day. The principle being taught is that there will be judgment for each individual's works and that there is a time at the end of the Millennium when all will have received that judgment.** Revelations of the Restoration, 144-45)

4 And surely every man must <sup>a</sup>repent or <sup>b</sup>suffer, for I, God, am <sup>c</sup>endless. (We can either repent and suffer according to a broken heart and contrite spirit, or we can suffer as Christ suffered. "One has not begun to repent until he has suffered intensely for his sins. . . . "We must remember that repentance is more than just saying, 'I am sorry.' It is more than tears in one's eyes. It is more than a half a dozen prayers. Repentance means suffering. If a person hasn't suffered, he hasn't repented" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 88, 99).)

5 Wherefore, I <sup>a</sup>revoke not the judgments which I shall pass, but woes shall go forth, weeping, <sup>b</sup>wailing and gnashing of teeth, yea, to those who are found on my <sup>c</sup>left hand.

6 Nevertheless, it is <sup>a</sup>not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written <sup>b</sup>endless <sup>c</sup>torment. (This does not refer to a duration of torment, but the quality or type of torment.)

7 Again, it is written <sup>a</sup>eternal damnation; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's glory. (This phrase is found elsewhere in scripture only in Mark 3:29 and Doctrine and Covenants 29:44, where it is used concerning those who sin against the Holy Ghost and who will not repent either in this life or the next. Interestingly, *dammed* and *damned* are not two forms of the same word. *Damned* comes from the Latin *damnare*, "to inflict injury or loss," while *dam* comes from Old and Middle German, the hypothetical root being *dammjan*, "to hinder." Damnation does not refer to stopping one's forward progress, as in "damming" a river. Rather, in the Bible it always translates from forms of the Greek *apoleia*, "destruction," or *krisis*, "judgment." Damnation is the "condemnation" received at judgment. **Technically, eternal damnation, meaning eternal destruction or eternal condemnation, applies only to those who are cast into outer darkness after the Resurrection and who die the "second death."** Perhaps the term is intended by its ambiguity to have an effect on the rest of us—it easily catches our attention and affects our hearts. ACD&C 1:115-16)

8 Wherefore, I will explain unto you this <sup>a</sup>mystery, for it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles.

9 I speak unto you that are chosen in this thing, even as one, that you may enter into my <sup>a</sup>rest.

10 For, behold, the <sup>a</sup>mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am <sup>b</sup>endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless <sup>c</sup>punishment, for <sup>d</sup>Endless is my name. Wherefore—

11 <sup>a</sup>Eternal punishment is God's punishment. (Not only a duration of punishment, but the quality of punishment.)

12 Endless punishment is God's punishment. (The punishment will be final and will be forever.)

13 Wherefore, I command you to repent, and keep the <sup>a</sup>commandments which you have received by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., in my name;

14 And it is by my almighty power that you have received them;

15 Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I <sup>a</sup>smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your <sup>b</sup>sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know

not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. (Those who do not repent will become sons of perdition. All who eventually repent will obtain a kingdom of glory.)

**SCRIPTURE MASTERY:** 16 For behold, I, God, have <sup>a</sup>suffered these things for all, (Only a God can atone for the sins of another. Referring to the atoning sacrifice of the Savior, Amulek explained that "it must be **an infinite and eternal sacrifice**" (Alma 34:10). Further, Christ was able to offer himself a sacrifice for sin, explained Lehi, because of his "merits, and mercy, and grace" (2 Nephi 2:8). **The Savior uniquely merited the ability to suffer for the sins of others because he was sinless, and justice, therefore, could not demand that he suffer punishment for sin. When he suffered for sin, it was not for his own sins; rather, his suffering met the demands of justice for the sins of others. He was not constrained by law to suffer for the sins of others but did so out of his mercy and loving kindness to them. The concept of grace indicates aid that comes from a divine source. Therefore, Christ was uniquely qualified to offer grace through the atoning sacrifice because as a member of the Godhead he condescended to become the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh. His divine sonship as the Only Begotten Son of God enabled him to suffer "more than man can suffer, except it be unto death"** (Mosiah 3:7). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 147) that they might not <sup>b</sup>suffer if they would <sup>c</sup>repent; (The condition is our repentance.)

17 But if they would not repent they must <sup>a</sup>suffer even as I; (**How long must the suffering go on?** The suffering referred to by the Savior is not a quantity of punishment meted out and experienced for a predetermined length of time. **Individuals suffer as long as they remain in sin. When they repent, the atonement of Christ has claim upon them.** "Hence the salvation of Jesus Christ was wrought out for all men," taught the Prophet Joseph Smith, "in order to triumph over the devil; for if it did not catch him in one place, it would in another; for he stood up as a Savior. **All will suffer until they obey Christ himself**" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 357). Therefore, **the suffering continues until individuals repent and forsake their sins. There are those who have falsely supposed that Christ's suffering supplants suffering on the part of those who repent. This simply is not the case. There is no repentance without suffering.** Teaching this principle to his son Corianton, Alma said, "Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul. Now, how could a man repent except he should sin? How could he sin if there was no law? How could there be a law save there was a punishment? Now, there was a punishment affixed, and a just law given, which brought remorse of conscience unto man" (Alma 42:16-18). **What the present text means is that the repentant soul will not have to suffer "even as" the Savior suffered. But it does not mean that they will not have to suffer. Nor should it be supposed that their suffering is confined to the natural consequences of their actions. In addition to those consequences, he or she must experience the anguish associated with true repentance. President Spencer W. Kimball said of personal suffering that it "is a very important part of repentance. One has not begun to repent until he has suffered intensely for his sins. . . . If a person hasn't suffered, he hasn't repented. . . . He has got to go through a change in his system whereby he suffers and then forgiveness is a possibility"** (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 88, 99). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 147-48)

18 **Which <sup>a</sup>suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore,** (Elder Merrill J. Bateman: "For many years, I have thought of the Savior's experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin of was heaped upon Him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi, Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has been changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people. As Jesus felt our infirmities, bore our griefs, carried our sorrows and was bruised for our iniquities. The atonement was an intimate, personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us. The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Moses was shown all the inhabitants of the earth, which were numberless as the sand upon the seashore. If Moses beheld every soul, then it seems reasonable that the Creator of the universe has the power to become intimately acquainted with

**each of us. He learned about your weaknesses and mine. He experienced your pains and sufferings. He experienced mine. I testify that He knows us. He understands the way in which we deal with temptation. He knows our weaknesses, but more than that. More than just knowing us, He knows how to help us if we come to Him in faith."** Conference Report, April 1995.

Joseph Fielding Smith: We get into the habit of thinking, I suppose, that his great suffering was when he was nailed to the cross by his hands and his feet and was left there to suffer until he died. As excruciating as this pain was, that was not the greatest suffering that he had to undergo, for in some way which I cannot understand, but which I accept on faith, and which you must accept on faith, he carried on his back the burden of the sins of the whole world. It is hard enough for me to carry my own sins. How is it with you? And yet he had to carry the sins of the whole world, as our Savior and the Redeemer of a fallen world, and so great was his suffering before he went to the cross, we are informed that blood oozed from the pores of his body, and he prayed to his Father that the cup might pass if possible, but not being possible, he was willing to drink. (CR, October 1947, pp. 147-48.) and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might <sup>b</sup>not drink the bitter cup, and shrink— (This revelation is unique among all scripture in its intimacy. Jesus Christ speaks of his suffering and of the feelings attending it. No one else shared this experience with him. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: "**We do not know, we cannot tell, no mortal mind can conceive the full import of what Christ did in Gethsemane. We know he sweat great goutts of blood from every pore as he drained the dregs of that bitter cup his Father had given him. We know he suffered, both body and spirit, more than it is possible for man to suffer, except it be unto death. We know that in some way, incomprehensible to us, his suffering satisfied the demands of justice, ransomed penitent souls from the pains and penalties of sin, and made mercy available to those who believe in his holy name. We know that he lay prostrate upon the ground as the pains and agonies of an infinite burden caused him to tremble and would that he might not drink the bitter cup. We know that an angel came from the courts of glory to strengthen him in his ordeal, and we suppose it was mighty Michael, who foremost fell that mortal man might be. As near as we can judge, these infinite agonies—this suffering beyond compare—continued for some three or four hours"** (Conference Report, April 1985, 9-10). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 149-50)

19 Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and <sup>a</sup>finished my preparations unto the children of men. (The way is prepared for all to come back into the presence of God through Christ's atoning for the transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and through his resurrection from the dead. Further, the Atonement and the Resurrection completed the Savior's preparation of the way in which we can be redeemed from spiritual death caused by our own sins and return to our Father again to dwell with him throughout eternity. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 150)

20 Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I <sup>a</sup>humble you with my almighty power; and that you <sup>b</sup>confess your sins, lest you suffer these <sup>c</sup>punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have <sup>d</sup>tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit. (When the 116 pages were lost.)

21 And I command you that you <sup>a</sup>preach naught but repentance, and show <sup>b</sup>not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me. (Just preach the basics of faith, repentance, baptism, etc.)

22 For they cannot <sup>a</sup>bear meat now, but <sup>b</sup>milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish.

23 <sup>a</sup>Learn of me, and listen to my words; <sup>b</sup>walk in the <sup>c</sup>meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have <sup>d</sup>peace in me.

24 I am Jesus Christ; I <sup>a</sup>came by the <sup>b</sup>will of the Father, and I do his will.

25 And again, I command thee that thou shalt not <sup>a</sup>covet thy <sup>b</sup>neighbor's <sup>c</sup>wife; nor seek thy neighbor's life.

26 And again, I command thee that thou shalt not <sup>a</sup>covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon, which contains the <sup>b</sup>truth and the word of God—

27 Which is my word to the <sup>a</sup>Gentile, that soon it may go to the <sup>b</sup>Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a <sup>c</sup>remnant, that they may believe the gospel, and look not for a <sup>d</sup>Messiah to come who has already come.

28 And again, I command thee that thou shalt <sup>a</sup>pray <sup>b</sup>vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private.

29 And thou shalt <sup>a</sup>declare glad tidings, yea, <sup>b</sup>publish it upon the mountains, and upon every high place, and among every people that thou shalt be permitted to see.

30 And thou shalt do it with all humility, <sup>a</sup>trusting in me, <sup>b</sup>reviling not against revilers.

31 And of <sup>a</sup>tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and <sup>b</sup>faith on the Savior, and <sup>c</sup>remission of sins by <sup>d</sup>baptism, and by <sup>e</sup>fire, yea, even the <sup>f</sup>Holy Ghost.

32 Behold, this is a great and the last <sup>a</sup>commandment which I shall give unto you concerning this matter; for this shall suffice for thy daily walk, even unto the end of thy life. **(Martin Harris had demanded a commandment, or revelation, on this matter, and here he gets it—the last revelation that will be addressed directly and exclusively to him in the Doctrine and Covenants. Martin is commanded to restrict himself for the rest of his life to declaring the basic message of the Restoration and to leave theology alone.** As Joseph Smith taught, "After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel." **As a special witness to the Book of Mormon, Martin's duty to bear witness of the Restoration was even greater than that of some others.** If he ignored the Lord's counsel in these matters, he would both lose his property and suffer misery. In the matter of Martin's immediate concern, the possible loss of his property, the Lord commanded him to sell what he did not need for the support of his family and to pay the debt to the printer. This was a great sacrifice to ask of him, considering it was not Martin's understanding at the beginning of the project that the publishing costs would come out of his pocket. Originally, payment of the printing costs was supposed to come from the proceeds of book sales, and Martin's property merely guaranteed payment should the book not sell as expected. Eventually, the book did "sell well," as Joseph Smith is quoted as saying in the account of Joseph Knight Sr. but not in time to save Martin's farm. **It should be noted that Martin later claimed he got all his money back and more. It is a tribute to Martin that he did as the Lord commanded him and settled the entire debt out of his own pocket.** ACD&C 1:123-24)

33 And misery thou shalt receive if thou wilt slight these <sup>a</sup>counsels, yea, even the destruction of thyself and property.

34 <sup>a</sup>Impart a portion of thy property, yea, even part of thy lands, and all save the support of thy <sup>b</sup>family.

35 Pay the <sup>a</sup>debt thou hast <sup>b</sup>contracted with the printer. Release thyself from <sup>c</sup>bondage.

36 <sup>a</sup>Leave thy house and home, except when thou shalt desire to see thy family;

37 And <sup>a</sup>speak freely to all; yea, preach, exhort, declare the <sup>b</sup>truth, even with a loud voice, with a sound of rejoicing, crying—Hosanna, hosanna, blessed be the name of the Lord God! (*Hosanna* is a compound Hebrew word, a *hiphil* imperative, **meaning "save now."** It is often associated with the arrival of the Lord at his temple, whether Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to visit the temple there, or the arrival of the divine presence at a temple dedication in the modern Church. We might also shout "hosanna" whenever the word, Spirit, or presence of God is manifested among us. ACD&C 1:124)

38 <sup>a</sup>Pray always, and I will <sup>b</sup>pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing—yea, even more than if you should obtain <sup>c</sup>treasures of earth and corruptibleness to the extent thereof.

39 Behold, canst thou read this without <sup>a</sup>rejoicing and lifting up thy heart for <sup>b</sup>gladness?

40 Or canst thou run about longer as a <sup>a</sup>blind guide?

41 Or canst thou be <sup>a</sup>humble and meek, and conduct thyself wisely before me? Yea, <sup>b</sup>come unto me thy Savior. Amen.