

Book of Mormon 24
Give Us Strength According to Our Faith in Christ
(Alma 13-16)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(The Book of Mormon reveals many marvelous things about the priesthood, later detailed through direct revelation)

I. Many amazing things were revealed in the Book of Mormon concerning the Priesthood.

A. **The Priesthood is the Governing Order of God the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ.**

B. Alma repeatedly stressed the word "order" in telling how the "Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order," using it in twelve verses (Alma 13:1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 18).

C. His repeated usage of the word draws our attention to its importance. And that subsequently draws our attention to the suffix "hood." [As in *priesthood*].

1. The suffix "hood" means **the bonding of a group in an orderly manner for a united cause.**

D. The scribes and printers of the Book of Mormon missed the need to capitalize "order" but later it is shown to be a title, "Order," as in the Doctrine and Covenants (See D&C 107:3).

E. The word also refers to the way it must function, i.e., in an orderly manner. This was made clear by President Gordon B. Hinckley.

1. "We of the priesthood are all part of the army of the Lord. We must be united. An army that is disorganized will not be victorious. It is imperative that we close ranks, that we march together as one. We cannot have division among us and expect victory. We cannot have disloyalty and expect unity." (President Gordon B. Hinckley, "The War We are Winning, "Ensign, November 1986, p. 44).

2. So "Order" here carries all the meanings of: "A governing organization which is headed by Jesus Christ and is bonded together through Him, is united in spirit, has an orderly organization of responsibilities, and works together in an orderly manner."

II. The Book of Mormon explains the necessary steps to receive the Holy Priesthood.

A. High Priests were ordained by those already holding the High Priesthood and who had authority to ordain others (Alma 13:1-2).

B. Furthermore, they were previously **foreordained** to those priesthood offices (Alma 13:3-4).

C. There they were "called with **a holy calling**, and ordained with a **holy ordinance**" (v. 8).

D. Finally they were called because of their faith, worthiness through Christ, and they must continue in personal worthiness to maintain true priesthood authority (Alma 13:10-12).

E. This understanding of how priesthood is received is very different from fallen Christianity where many accept that any man or woman can declare himself or herself as bearing priesthood [or set themselves on the path toward it]. In most cases there are few requirements of worthiness, just mandatory studies. One can see that such situations have no sense of true "order," and no relationship whatsoever to "the Order of God."

III. It was a marvelous revelation that individuals were **foreordained** to certain callings and offices in the priesthood.

A. One LDS writer expresses his feelings that while many believe that knowing we live again after this life gives us hope, knowing we lived **before** this life **gives us a feeling of worth.**

B. "Believing that we're more than a genetic coincidence, that we brought with us personalities and characters and gifts we developed in a place before, and that we are children of God sent

here for a purpose ... these beliefs can give us a self-respect and a sense of spiritual identity that can ennoble us and add dimensions to our hope for a life to come."

And he adds, "**What could be more important and more valuable than these two eternal 'bookends' of hope and worth?**" (Richard Eyre, *Life Before Life*, p. 15).

C. It is even more powerful to know we were foreordained to significant callings or missions.

D. The Book of Mormon says this was the manner by which Jesus Christ was selected for His role as Savior: having proved His faith and worthiness, and being foreordained (Alma 13:2-3).

IV. At the same time, marvelously, the Order of God's Holy Priesthood is available for everyone through proper channels: Faith and Worthiness the only issues to accessing its powers.

A. "Every worthy man in this Church is eligible to receive the priesthood of God, but his life must be in harmony with the principles of the gospel. The Lord has said that one of His purposes in restoring the gospel was that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world. We are, in very deed, a royal priesthood. [Meaning it comes from God Himself]. We do not receive the priesthood on the basis of wealth or standing in the community. We receive it on the basis of personal worthiness, and every man is a potential priesthood holder." (President Gordon B. Hinckley, Buenos Aires Argentina Fireside, November 12, 1996).

B. When we understand the full significance of the priesthood and its true potential, we know that **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only vehicle by which man can receive the true power and authority to act in the name of God**, and that those powers granted through the Church and only through the Church, help man to reach their greatest potential.

C. **The prophets testify of seeing great changes in those who receive it, even the humblest.** President Hinckley testified of seeing such changes. "I thank my Eternal Father for the restoration of the holy priesthood.... I have seen the beauty and wonder of that priesthood in the governance of this remarkable church. I have felt its power flow through me to the blessing and healing of the sick. I have seen the ennoblement it has given to humble men who have been called to great and serious responsibility. I have seen it as they have spoken with power and authority from on high as if the voice of God were speaking through them" ("My Testimony," *Ensign*, November 1993, p. 52).

V. And contrary to what many believe, **LDS women are not excluded.**

A. When we truly understand the Priesthood is the Order of the Son of God, we should humbly acknowledge **it is not to be "wrested," but only granted:** And it can only be granted by Him.

B. As He has bestowed truth "line upon line," **so He has granted authority line upon line.**

1. Even now He does grant "called" women the authority to serve in **capacities which are the most Holy** [temple work].

2. As one who has been blessed with that calling and authority, I can testify that there could be no greater! And there He does make promises of future, wider blessings.

C. Elder James E. Talmage explained some of what the future holds for all faithful women.

1. "In the sacred endowments associated with the ordinances pertaining to the House of the Lord, woman shares with man the blessings of the Priesthood.... When the frailties and imperfections of mortality are left behind, in the glorified state of the blessed hereafter, husband and wife will administer in their respective stations, seeing and understanding alike, and co-operating to the full in the government of their family kingdom.... Then shall woman reign by Divine right, a queen in the resplendent realm of her glorified state, even as exalted man shall

stand, priest and king unto the Most High God. **Mortal eye cannot see nor mind comprehend the beauty, glory, and majesty of a righteous woman made perfect in the celestial kingdom of God.**" (Emphasis added)

2. Remember these statements show the Lord has always bestowed His authority on those who prove "faithful." Being faithful means obedient, and not seeking power unrighteously. So those who may "demand" it, are likely cutting themselves off from eventually being granted it.

D. Any Latter-day Saint woman would be very foolish to forsake the Lord's very great and glorious and sure blessings to take up the empty shell of a false earthly priesthood.

VI. It is vital to know the **Priesthood is not just of this earth, but is Eternal** --- having no beginning and no end, being prepared from eternity to all eternity" (Alma 13:7).

A. The beautiful and orderly organization of the priesthood on earth is an extension of something far more powerful in the Heavens.

1. We see glimpses of this Order in the scriptures as **Heaven is described with celestial beings in their ranks surrounding God the Father and Jesus Christ.** (Rev. 7:4-10 is an example).

B. President Hinckley said, "I never confer the sealing authority upon a good man that I do not think of the profound importance of that priesthood power. It is **the only authority on the entire earth which reaches beyond the veil of death. It is divine in its nature.** It is eternal in its consequences. It is a part of the plan of God our Eternal Father to bless the lives of His sons and daughters of all generations." (Temple Presidents Seminar, August 23, 1988).

VII. God's Priesthood Powers are truly full of awe.

A. The world recently marveled that two individuals were able to control a robot with their thoughts. Both, paralyzed from the neck down, have learned to manipulate a robotic arm with just their thoughts, using it to reach out and grab objects. This has been done using tiny brain implants that transmit neural signals to a computer.

B. Knowing man has learned to do this mechanically, **why should we doubt the far greater power of God's true priesthood --- the ability to control all elements by command through the priesthood.**

1. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3).

2. "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.... And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful; how is it that ye have no faith? And they ... said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:37, 39-41).

C. Christ's disciples saw Priesthood power in action. But Christ's words show that very same power is available to every priesthood holder when they have developed sufficient faith, worthiness, and have need for its usage --- if they but have faith like unto a mustard seed.

D. The Book of Mormon adds its testimony about the power of the priesthood.

1. Alma and Amulek had been imprisoned. "And it came to pass that they all went forth and smote them... and when the last had spoken unto them the power of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose... And Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, **give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ,** even unto deliverance. And they broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them. And ... the earth shook mightily, and the walls of the prison were rent in twain, so that [the people who fled] fell to the

earth... and were slain by the fall thereof. And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for the Lord had granted unto them power, according to their faith, which was in Christ" (Alma 14:27-28). (Emphasis added)

VIII. The Book of Mormon reveals that though the highest priesthood is the Priesthood of the Son of God, it is named for Melchizedek, who was the great high priest of his day (Alma 13:17).

A. Melchizedek was given the honor of bearing the priesthood's name because he was a righteous high priest and the King of Salem, the City of Peace, and **therefore a type of Jesus Christ, the true High Priest and true King of Peace (Alma 13:18).**

B. Interestingly, the Old Testament referred to Melchizedek only briefly (Genesis 14:18-20). So Christians mostly ignored him. It required Latter-day revelation to help clarify his role and to explain why the highest priesthood is given his name, thus to show how and why Melchizedek was an important figure (See JST-Genesis 25-40; and "Melchizedek" in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*).

1. Recent discoveries of ancient texts show that Melchizedek *was* a personage of great importance, and his role should not be ignored. But this was revealed to Latter-day Saints first, and from the beginning, through the Book of Mormon.