

D&C Lesson # 25
Priesthood: The Power of Godliness
(D&C 84 and 121)
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(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

- I. The early bestowal of priesthood authority and knowledge concerning it are evidences that the true priesthood resides in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. **Nothing about its reception was “happenstance” or an “afterthought.”**
- A. The Aaronic Priesthood was restored early by John the Baptist and the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter, James and John. **This was unique, as no other Christian group even seemed to value the Priesthoods under those names.**
 - B. The Lord continued to reveal more understanding, structure, and laws governing the Priesthood as needed.
 - C. And what the Lord revealed was vital information.
- II. He revealed the **full Power** of the priesthood.
- A. Its **power is “inseparably connected with the powers of Heaven”** (D&C 121:36) and those keeping it worthily will receive the fullest blessings of Heaven. “All that my Father hath shall be given unto him” (84:38).
 - B. This means it cannot be obtained simply by graduating from courses of study, without showing worthiness or any sure authorization by the Lord Himself.
 - C. This power is so **great the Lord says of that power, “I will not only shake the earth, but the starry heavens shall tremble. For I, the Lord, have put forth my hand to exert the powers of heaven”** (84:118).
 - D. For the worthy holders of the priesthood the Lord promised not only earthly powers, but **Eternal blessings.**
 - E.
 - 1. “Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dew from heaven” (121:45).
 - 2. “The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth: And thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (121:46).
- III. The Lord revealed the **great Sacredness** of the Priesthood.
- A. It is the “Power of Godliness,” and so sacred it can literally have an effect upon the body.
 - 1. “Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining of these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, **are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies**; they become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and ...the elect of God” (84:33-34). (Emphasis added)
 - B. “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned: By kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile” (121:41).
 - C. “Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly” (121:45).

IV. The Lord revealed **the breadth** of the Priesthood.

A. He had earlier revealed to Moses that His Kingdom should be “a nation of priests” (Exodus 19:6).

B. While that was not fulfilled in the day of Moses, [for only Levites held the priesthood], **it has been fulfilled in Christ’s Latter-day Kingdom. For every worthy male over the age twelve and older may now receive the Priesthood. No other church has achieved or** sought to achieve such a widespread blessing of priesthood holders.

C. Today, the Kingdom of God truly is a “nation of priests.”

V. The Lord revealed the **wise layers** of the priesthood.

A. He revealed to Joseph that there is a preparatory priesthood [the Aaronic] and the higher priesthood [the Melchizedek].

1. This in itself allows for greater opportunity for priesthood service and for growth in the Priesthood.

B. This two-ply structure was known in the day of Christ, for Paul speaks not only of the priesthood of Aaron, but also of the Melchizedek Priesthood in his “Epistle to the Hebrews” (Ch. 9).

C. However, with the apostasy, this understanding of two priesthoods was lost.

D. Not only did the Lord restore knowledge of these two priesthoods, but Joseph was taught how they were to be used.

E. The specific duties of each office of the priesthood was revealed (D&C 20:38-67).

F. The Lord further counseled: “...take with you those who are ordained unto the lesser priesthood, and send them before you to make appointments, and to prepare the way, and to fill appointments that you yourselves are unable to fill. Behold, this is the way that mine apostles, in ancient days, built up my church unto me” (84:107-08).

VI. The Lord revealed that the **priesthood can be lost, and how tragic it is when it is lost.**

A. The view of those who overtook Christ’s original church was that they could hold onto priesthood keys in spite of corruption. That there was terrible corruption has been acknowledged, and even apologies offered. But what has not been acknowledged is that **the priesthood powers do not survive such corruption.**

B. Therefore, the Lord revealed this truth in the Latter-days.

1. “all those who receive the priesthood receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved” (84: 23-31). “But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it and altogether turneth therefrom shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come” (84: 41).

2. “the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:36-7).

3. “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned. By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile” (121:42).

VII. The Lord revealed the **great burden** of the priesthood.

- A. The “Oath and covenant of the priesthood has been renewed, (84:48), confirmed upon brethren for their own sakes *and for the sake of the whole world. For the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin (v. 49).*
- B. The elders are forgiven of their sins if they “bear... testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you. Therefore go ye into all the world, and whatsoever place ye cannot go ye shall send, that the testimony may go from you into all the world unto every creature” (84:62).

VIII. The Lord revealed the **same full organizational structure that existed in the time of Christ.**

A. Because it came from God, it is a beautiful and meaningful structure, which allows all those holding the Priesthood to have significant roles and callings.

B. It is a structure based upon the consistent patterns of 3, 12, and 70, which are the anciently established structures of government. **All these elements of the structure have significant meaning.**

1. The presidency of the church, and all other presidencies and bishoprics are based upon a group of **three**, after the pattern of the governance in the Heavens: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
This pattern of three signifies that decisions are made through wise counseling together.
2. The counsels which govern under the First presidency and under stake presidencies are based upon **twelve** (12), after the pattern of governance of the House of Israel --- 12 Judges, one for each tribe of Israel. The number twelve likely get its significance from the fact the earth is considered to have four directions: East, West, North and South. When Israel camped in the wilderness, the Tabernacle always rested in the center. On each side of it were positioned three of the twelve tribes. This was symbolic of the three tribes governing each of the four portions of the world.
3. The pattern of **Seventy** (70) is based upon that number established to represent “all the nations of the earth.”* The calling of the Seventies are to go to all the nations of the earth and to oversee missionary work among them.

IX. Section 84’s special revelation on Priesthood **began on September 22, 1832, likely for a significant purpose.**

A. It has been shown that September 22 was a significant date for other events. It was September 22, 1827, when Joseph received the Golden Plates. That day was also Rosh Hashanah, Feast of Trumpets, or Day of Remembrance, that day which God had established as the time He would remember His people who were scattered and begin to re-gather them. **

B. So it is interesting that this revelation on the Priesthood was also received on September 22 [and 23] in 1832. However, this year, Rosh Hashanah fell on September 25 and 26.

It would be wise to ask ourselves whether there was something else significant about September 22, beyond the connection with Rosh Hashanah.

C. A careful examination indicates that there are indeed other interesting significances.

- September is the time of the harvest in the northern hemisphere. The Priesthood is needed for Christ’s latter-day spiritual harvest.
- There are twenty-two (22) letters in the Hebrew alphabet. **The 22nd letter** therefore carries the meaning of “Mark” and, being last, **of “Finality.”**

- Some students of the Bible claim that since 22 is a double of 11, [and 11 signifies judgment], that 22 means “double judgment,”(or Final Judgment).
- Certainly the beginning of the calling of the Twelve would be compatible with that, as they would be the **future judges over Israel.**
- By calling the full leadership of His church, and organizing it, the **Lord established those Priesthood powers which will judge the earth.**
- It is also shown by many students of the Bible that the number 22 is often used in connection with “Light.” They note there were **22 bowls providing oil to burn in the Tabernacle’s Golden Candlestick.** They further note that Numbers 3:39 says those priests who minister in the Tabernacle, **insuring the Candlestick’s Light burns continually, numbered 22,000. So the number 22 is definitely associated with bringing “Light.”**

X. When one looks at the message of D&C 84 as a whole, one sees that Christ’s true Latter-day Priesthood holders are **being called to take light to the world, which is “groaning in darkness”** (84:49). In issuing this call, the Lord had just shown the vital connection between His Spirit, Truth, and Light (84:44-49).

A. **Thus the elders of the Priesthood were being called to take His light into the darkness of the world, on September 22, the Time of the Harvest and the Time of the Giving of Light!**

*Ancient Jews and early Christians both understood “Seventy” as a number which signified “all the nations of the earth.” Genesis 10 recounts the beginnings of the diverse people of the earth. Seventy-two descendants of Noah’s sons are listed and have been interpreted by some Jewish writers as the beginning of “seventy” as symbolizing the nations of the earth. (Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality*, London: Burns and Oates, 1960, p. 173).

** For additional details see “The Golden Plates and the Feast of Trumpets,” *The Ensign*, January 2000, by this author.