

D&C#25 Priesthood: "The Power of Godliness"

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I. Introduction

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of men. It is the power by which the gospel is preached; by which the ordinances of salvation are performed so that they will be binding on earth and in heaven; by which men are sealed up unto eternal life, being assured of the fullness of the Father's kingdom hereafter; and by which the Lord will govern the nations of the earth and all that pertains to them. (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., pp. 136-200)." (*Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition, 1966], 594).

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler expand on difference between the power and the authority of the priesthood,

"Authority in the priesthood is obtained by the laying on of hands and must always be traceable to one who had it and was properly authorized to confer it upon the one laying claim to it. Authority functions in such a manner that every priest in the Church has the same authority as every other priest in the Church. One priest cannot perform a baptism that has greater effect than any other priest, nor can anyone holding any other priesthood office perform a baptism that is more efficacious or binding than a baptism performed by a priest. In like manner every elder in the

Church has the same authority as every other elder in the Church. Thus there would be no difference found in any ordinances performed that required the office of an elder or one holding the office of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

"Power in the priesthood differs from authority in that it does not come by the laying on of hands but rather through righteousness, faith, and knowledge. Thus, no two priesthood holders have the same power in their priesthood. To give, for instance, a patriarchal blessing, one must both hold the office of a patriarch and be so living as to enjoy a rich outpouring of the spirit of revelation. The office comes by ordination; the inspiration or ability to receive revelation comes through the companionship of the Holy Ghost, having a clear understanding of the principles of the gospel, and experience in responding to the direction of the Spirit." (*Revelations of the Restoration*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 954-955).

Because the priesthood is the power delegated by God to man, all the ordinances that pertain to our eternal salvation are binding only when they have been performed by one holding the requisite authority. Thus, for example, eternal marriage and unity in the Church, are only possible because the authority and power of the priesthood have been restored to Joseph Smith, by God's appointed servants, in these latter days.

II. Order in the Restoration of the Priesthood and Its' Offices

As we discussed in lesson [D&C#8], the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood were restored to the earth in 1829. Following the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830, other priesthood offices, quorums, and councils were organized. The following timeline notes their restoration.

Chart 1: Priesthood Restored and Quorums Organized

Date	Quorum	Scripture
15 May 1829	Aaronic Priesthood	D&C 13
May/June 1829	Melchizedek Priesthood	D&C 128:20
April 1830	Elder, priests, teachers, and deacons	D&C 20:38-60

4 Feb 1831	Bishop	D&C 41:9-10
June 1831	High Priests	Heading:D&C 52
1832-1833	First Presidency	D&C 81; 90
18 Dec 1833	Patriarch	TPJS, [1976] 38-39
17 Feb 1834	High Council	D&C 102
1835	Quorum of Twelve Apostles	D&C 107:23-24
1835	Seventies	D&C 107:25
1835	First Quorum of Seventy	D&C 107:26, 93-97

Reference: *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 141.

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"An important part of the restoration of priesthood authority was the organization of the presiding quorums of the Church. Counselors had been called to assist the Prophet Joseph as early as March 1832 (D&C 81:1), and the First Presidency was formally organized one year later. [See the heading to D&C 90, which states, "Revelation to Joseph Smith the Prophet, given at Kirtland, Ohio, March 8, 1833. This revelation is a continuing step in the establishment of the First Presidency (see the heading to Section 81); as a consequence thereof, the counselors mentioned were ordained on March 18, 1833." (*Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, [2013], 176]. In February 1835, twelve men were called and ordained to be Apostles, and the Quorum of the Twelve was formed. Soon afterward, the Prophet organized the First Quorum of Seventy." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 144).

We will now address the responsibilities of each of the three presiding quorums of the Church as given by revelation.

A. The First Presidency

Victor L. Ludlow states,

"The head of the Church (representing Christ) is the President [and Prophet of the Church]. As President of the High Priesthood of the Church, he presides over the entire Church (See D&C 107:65-67, 91.) He and two other apostles or righteous high priests form a quorum and constitute the First Presidency of the Church, in whom the supreme authority and keys of the kingdom reside." (*Principles and Practices of the Restored Gospel*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 548).

A. Responsibilities of the First Presidency.

Doctrine and Covenants 107:9, 22, 65-66, 78-81, 91-92

9 The Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of the Melchizedek Priesthood have a right to officiate in all the offices of the church.

22 Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.

65 Wherefore, it must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High Priesthood of the Church;

66 Or, in other words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church.

78 Again, verily, I say unto you, that most important business of the church, and the most difficult cases of the church, inasmuch as there is not satisfaction upon the decision of the bishop or judges, it shall be handed over and carried up unto the council of the church, before the Presidency of the High Priesthood.

79 And the Presidency of the council of the High Priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve, to assist as counselors; and thus the Presidency of the High Priesthood and its counselors shall have power to decide upon testimony according the laws of the church.

80 And after this decision it shall be had in remembrance no more before the Lord; for this is the highest council of the church of God, and a final decision upon controversies in spiritual matters.
81 And there is not any person belonging to the church who is exempt from this council of the church.

91 And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses--

92 Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.

Doctrine and Covenants 112:30-32

30 For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given, for the last days and for the last time, in the which is the dispensation of the fulness of times.

31 Which power you hold, in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation;

32 For verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation, which ye have received, have come down from the fathers, and last of all, being sent down from heaven unto you.

In these revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Quorum of the First Presidency, was again established upon the earth in these latter days. Today, the Prophet and his two counselors, acting under the direction of Jesus Christ, oversee and direct the work of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

B. Responsibilities of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Andrew C. Skinner states,

"Though the term *apostle* (from Greek *apostellein*) literally means 'one sent forth as an agent or representative,' in the Church it almost always refers to one ordained to that specific office in the **Melchizedek Priesthood**. Apostles are

special witnesses of the name of Christ--his divinity and reality--in all the world (D&C 107:23). The Church of **Jesus Christ** in this last dispensation includes a **quorum** of twelve apostles, as did the ancient Church, for which Jesus chose from among his disciples twelve whom he named apostles (Luke 6:13) and sent forth to be his witnesses and leaders after his ascension (Acts 1:2-6)." (**Apostle**, in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. Edited by Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 36).

Victor L. Ludlow adds,

"The Twelve Apostles form a quorum 'equal in authority and power with the three presidents' (D&C 107:24), but officiating under their direction (D&C 107:33; 112:30)...Besides governing the established Church, the Quorum of the Twelve, under the direction of the First Presidency, is also called 'to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.' (D&C 107:35.) Weekly, these two presiding quorums of the Church 'meet jointly as the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Meeting in a room in the Salt Lake Temple, this council discusses and decides all major Church appointments and policy matters. At the death of the President [of the Church], the First Presidency is automatically dissolved, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles become the presiding body of the Church until a new president is ordained." (*Principles and Practice of the Restored Gospel*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 549).

Doctrine and Covenants 107:23, 33, 35, 39, 58

23 The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world--thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

33 The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews.

35 The Twelve being sent out, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and first unto the Gentiles and then unto the Jews.

39 It is the duty of the Twelve, in all large branches of the church to ordain evangelical ministers ['An Evangelist in a Patriarch'], as they shall be designated unto them by revelation--

58 It is the duty of the Twelve, also, to ordain and set in order all the other officers of the church, agreeable to the revelation..

Doctrine and Covenants 112:30-32

30 For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given for the last days and for the last time, in the which is the dispensation of the fulness of times.

31 Which power you hold, in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation;

32 For verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation, which ye have received, have come down from the fathers, and last of all, being sent down from heaven unto you.

C. Responsibilities of the Quorum of the Seventy.

S. Kent Brown states,

"**Seventy.** A **priesthood** body known since antiquity, the seventy in modern times hold an office in the **Melchizedek** Priesthood and are charged with the responsibility 'to be especial witnesses [of] **Jesus Christ**] unto the Gentiles and in all the world' (D&C 107:25). This ministry is grounded in ancient precedent, when Jesus sent his seventy disciples to preach the gospel (Luke 10:1-12, 17-20)." (**Seventy**, in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. Edited by Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 1091).

Victor L. Ludlow adds,

"The First Quorum of the Seventy holds special authority to help govern the Church together with the Council of the Twelve, but it acts 'under the direction of the Twelve..in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations.' (D&C 107:34; see also vv. 22-30)." (*Principles and Practice of the Restored Gospel*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 549).

Doctrine and Covenants 107:25-26, 34, 38, 97

25 The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world--thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

26 And they form a quorum, equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named.

34 The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews--

38 It is the duty of the traveling high council to call upon the Seventy, when they need assistance, to fill the several calls for preaching and administering the gospel, instead of any others.

97 And these seventy are to be traveling ministers, unto the Gentiles first and also unto the Jews.

Victor L. Ludlow summarizes,

"The First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the First Quorum of the Seventy are the standing, presiding council of the Church. These general priesthood officers of the Church are collectively known as General Authorities. Their stewardship is Churchwide and they may receive assignments anywhere in the world to administer Christ's kingdom on earth." (*Principles and Practice of the Restored Gospel*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 549).

In our day, the Lord continues to give revelations about the organization and responsibilities of the priesthood to guide the growth of the Church. One example is the calling of Area Authority Seventies and the accompanying organization of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Quorums of the Seventy in 1997.

III. The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood was given on 22 September 1832 as part of the Section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The oath and covenant, is binding upon those men who have been found worthy to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, and serves to emphasize the importance God attaches to those who hold the higher priesthood.

Victor L. Ludlow states,

"Worthy men eighteen and older may become elders. Since Melchizedek Priesthood offices come under the supervision of the stake president, a member of the stake presidency interviews the prospective elder. He asks questions concerning the man's readiness and worthiness to receive the higher priesthood and usually gives instructions concerning the oath and covenant of the priesthood. An oath is a solemn promise, and a covenant is a witnessed act of commitment. A man who receives the priesthood makes a solemn promise to the Lord to righteously magnify [fulfilling all responsibilities associated with the office in] that priesthood. The covenant act of the commitment is the ordination, which is witnessed by the priesthood holder performing the act and by others." (*Principles and Practices of the Restored Gospel*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 534).

As each recipient of the Melchizedek Priesthood takes upon themselves the Oath and Covenant of the priesthood, it is important that we understand its importance.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"There is no exaltation in the kingdom of God without the fullness of the priesthood, and every man who receives the Melchizedek Priesthood does so with an oath and covenant that he shall be exalted.

"The covenant on man's part is that he will magnify his calling in the priesthood (D&C 84:33), and that he will live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God, and that he will keep the commandments (Matt. 4:4).

"The covenant on the Lord's part is that if man does as he promises, then all that the Father hath shall be given unto him (D&C 84:38); and this is such a solemn and important promise that the Lord swears with an oath that it shall come to pass. (D&C 84:39)" ("Magnifying Our Callings in the Priesthood," in *Conference Report*, April 1970, 58-59).

Carlos E. Asay adds,

"Of all the holy agreements pertaining to the gospel of Jesus Christ, few, if any, would transcend in importance the oath and covenant of the priesthood. It is certainly one of the most sacred agreements, for it involves the sharing of heavenly powers and man's upward reaching toward eternal goals." ("The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood," in *Ensign*, November 1985, 43).

Some may, in error, conclude that the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood applies to the young men of the priesthood only. The blessings apply also to women of the Church.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"The blessings of the priesthood are not confined to men alone. These blessings are also poured out...upon all the faithful women of the Church...The Lord offers to his daughters every spiritual gift and blessing that can be obtained by his sons, for neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord. ("Magnifying Our Callings in the Priesthood," in *Conference Report*, April 1970, 59).

Before we address the elements of the covenant agreement, it is important that we understand that there is an important distinction when a covenant is entered into between God and man.

The LDS Bible Dictionary states,

"Covenant. "...an agreement...between God and man; but...it is important to notice that the two parties to the agreement do not stand in the relation of independence and equal contractors. God in his good pleasure fixes the terms, which man accepts." (LDS Bible Dictionary in *Holy Bible*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, 651).

Let us now address the terms of the covenant agreement entered into by the Melchizedek priesthood holder and God, the Father.

A. Priesthood Holders Covenant

The covenant that the holder of the priesthood makes with the Lord is found in Doctrine and Covenants 84:33, 36, 43-44. We will examine these verses in order to further increase our understanding of the responsibilities we take upon ourselves as holders of the priesthood.

"a. To be faithful in obtaining the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:33

33 For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods [Aaronic and Melchizedek] of which I have spoken,...

At the age of twelve, if we have kept the commandments since our baptism and reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are invited to meet with our Bishop. He will ask questions concerning our attendance at church meetings, our personal prayers, reading the scriptures, and obeying our parents. He may ask us to repeat the Articles of Faith and to answer other questions concerning our knowledge of the Church and the importance of the priesthood. Our faithfulness in fulfilling the duties of the office of Deacon, Teacher, and Priest, with the Aaronic priesthood, that will prepare us to receive the Melchizedek priesthood.

"b. Magnify their calling.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:33

33 ... and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"That word magnify is interesting. As I interpret it, it means to enlarge, to make more clear, to bring closer, and to strengthen.

"We magnify our priesthood and enlarge our calling when we serve with diligence and enthusiasm in those responsibilities to which we are called by proper authority... [As] we magnify our calling, we enlarge the potential of our priesthood when we reach out to those in distress and give strength to those who falter...We magnify our calling when we walk with honesty and integrity...We honor our priesthood and magnify its influence when we walk in virtue and fidelity. Immorality and infidelity are totally inconsistent with the priesthood of God." ("Magnify Your Calling," in *Ensign*, May 1989, 48-49).

It is important that in our performance of our priesthood responsibilities we balance our responsibility to care for our families.

Mark 8:36

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"Sometimes, unintentionally, even certain extracurricular Church activities, insensitively administered, can hamper family life. Instructively, after the resurrection Jesus taught the Nephites, He said, 'Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said,' and pray and prepare 'for the morrow' (B/M, 3 Nephi 17:3). Jesus did not say go to your civic club, town meetings, or even stake centers!" ("Take Especial Care of Your Family," in *Ensign*, May 1994, 89).

"c. Receive the Lord's servants.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:36

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

We receive the Lord's servants when we listen to their words and then seek to implement their inspired counsel into our daily lives. Obedience on our part always demonstrates our reception of the Lord's counsel as well as that given through His servant.

Doctrine and Covenants 1:38

38 ...whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

"d. Give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:43-44

43 And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

44 For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

Monte S. Nyman states,

"To 'live by every word' tells us we cannot be selective in keeping the commandments, but must 'serve [the Lord] and keep all [His] commandments' (D&C 42:29). We must keep the whole law (James 2:10). The Prophet Joseph Smith declared: 'Any person who is exalted to the higher mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law too' (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 331)." (*It Came From God: Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 2. Orem, Utah: Granite Publishing and Distribution, LLC, 2009, 114).

("a-d." *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 141-142).

B. The Lord Covenants

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"The covenant on the Lord's part is that if man does as he promises, then all that the Father hath shall be given unto him (D&C 84:38); and this is such a solemn and important promise that the Lord swears with an oath that it shall come to pass. (D&C 84:39)" ("Magnifying Our Callings in the Priesthood," in *Conference Report*, April 1970, 58-59).

"a. Sanctify us by the Spirit.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:33

33 ... are sanctified by the Spirit...

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett state,

"To be sanctified is to be made holy. We are reminded here that the agent by which we are sanctified and made holy (or made Saints) is the Holy Spirit (see B/M, Alma 5:54; 13:12; 3 Nephi 27:20)." (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2004, 42).

Brigham Young states,

"[S]anctification...consists in overcoming every sin and bringing all into subjection to the law of Christ. God has placed in us a pure spirit; when this reigns predominant...and triumphs over the flesh and rules and governs and controls as the Lord controls the heaven and the earth, this I call the blessing of sanctification" (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 10. London: Latter-Day Saint's Book Depot, 1865, [8th Reprint, 1974], 173).

Hoyt W. Brewster, Jr. states,

"Thus, *sanctification is the process of becoming pure and spotless before God* through the power of the Sanctifier, who is the Holy Ghost. It is made possible through the grace of Christ (D&C 20:31; B/M, 3 Nephi 27:19-20; Moroni 10:32-33). It occurs when men yield 'their hearts to God' (B/M, Helaman 3:35)." (*Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2012, [Revised Edition], 492).

"b. Renew our bodies.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:33

33 ...unto the renewing of their bodies.

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett state,

"But the power of the Spirit does not sanctify only our spirits; it also sanctifies our physical bodies. The sacrament bread is blessed to sanctify the souls (both spirits and bodies; see D&C 88:15) of those who partake of it (see B/M, Moroni 4:3; D&C 20:77). Moreover, this power of the Spirit to sanctify our bodies while we are still in the flesh is experienced to different degrees by different individuals.

"President Hugh B. Brown once testified that President David O. McKay had 'been sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of his body' and added that 'some of rest of us are better off today than we were many years ago so far as physical health is concerned--and we attribute that fact to [the Lord's] blessing.'" (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2004, 42-43).

"c. Gives us the blessings promised to Abraham and his posterity.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:34

34 They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom,...

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett state,

"The seed of Abraham. When this term is used in a singular sense, it refers to Jesus Christ (see Galatians 3:16). In a collective sense, however, it refers to all who, like Abraham, have faith in Christ (see Galatians 3:7). Just as those who follow Moses and Aaron in obtaining the priesthood become the children (sons) of Moses and Aaron, so all those who follow Abraham by having faith in Christ become the children, or seed, of Abraham. They are adopted into the house of Israel, and they become heirs of all the blessings promised to Abraham (see Galatians 3:27-29; PGP,

Abraham 2:10)." (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol.3. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2004, 43).

The Abrahamic Covenant consists of: (1) Salvation-receive the gospel; (2) Exaltation-eternal marriage and increased posterity; (3) Blessings offered to all mortal prosperity; and, (4) Certain lands as eternal inheritance. (see LDS Bible Dictionary. *Holy Bible*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, 602).

"d. Make us His elect, or chosen.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:34

34 ...and the elect of God.

Hoyt W. Brewster, Jr. states,

"Those who are ultimately 'elected' for exaltation within God's kingdom will be those who righteously use their agency and cast their ballots in God's favor, choosing to serve Him faithfully to the end." (*Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2012, [Revised Edition], 492).

Bruce R. McConkie adds,

"The *elect of God* comprise a very select group, an inner circle of faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are the portion of church members who are striving with all their hearts to keep the fulness of the gospel law in this life so that they can become inheritors of the fulness of the gospel rewards in the life to come.

"They are endowed in the temple of the Lord (D&C 95:8), enter into that 'order of the priesthood' named 'the new and everlasting covenant of marriage' (D&C 131:1-4), and, overcome by faith until, as the sons of God, they merit membership in the Church of the Firstborn (D&C 76:50-70, 94-96). The elect of God are the chosen of God;..." (*Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition], 218).

Those who are the "elect of God," are those who have chosen Him. They seek to obey Him in all things and at all times, repenting when they error, and to stand in holy places throughout their mortal lives.

"e. Give us all that the Father has.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:38

38 And he that receiveth my Father's receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Garrett state,

"This is the promise of exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God. It is the promise of becoming like God, of becoming gods...Those who receive the priesthood and magnify their offices or callings will, as joint-heirs with Christ, receive all that the Father now possesses, just as Christ has received it. They will receive all the power, comprehension, and knowledge of God the Father. They will share his celestial glory and will live his type of celestial life." (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2004, 44).

"f. Give His angels charge over us.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:42

42 And wo unto all those who come not unto the priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you.

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett state,

"**Charge.** That is, instructions. It would seem from this and other passages that at times God does direct his angels to watch over his servants (see D&C 84:88; 109:22; Matthew 18:10)." (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2004, 44).

("a-f." *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 142).

From the moment we humble ourselves and seek to know the truthfulness of the message of the gospel, and throughout our lives, as we seek His guidance and direction, angels do watch over us to give us guidance and protection. I do know that left to my own limited understanding and knowledge, I would not have survived physically, never mind spiritually, in the world in which we live. I am very grateful to angels, both seen and unseen, who have blessed my life in numerous ways.

Carlos E. Asay states,

"Perhaps I can place in clearer perspective...the oath and covenant of the priesthood by relating a story based on a true experience.

"The son of a very wealthy man was called to serve a full-time mission. He entered the mission field and began his work. At first things went well, however, as he met rejections and as other challenges of finding and teaching surfaced, the young man's faith wavered.

"Mission associates gave encouragement, but it did not seem to help. One day the young man announced to the mission president that he was abandoning his call; he was returning home. The mission president did all within his power to dissuade the missionary. It was to no avail

"When word of the missionary's decision reached the father, he obtained permission to visit his son in the mission field. In one of the many tense conversations, the father said, 'My son, I have lived for the day when you would serve a full-time mission. I did so because I love you and I love God. And I know that there is no work more essential than that of teaching the truth to the people of the world.'

"Somewhat sobered by his father's words, the son meekly replied, 'Dad, I didn't realize that a mission meant so much to you.'

"It means everything to me," the father declared. Then he added with some emotion, "All my life I have worked and saved with one person in mind: you. And my one goal has been to provide you with a decent inheritance."

"But Dad," the son interjected, "the work is difficult and I don't enjoy..."

"The father didn't allow him to finish his sentence. Instead he asked, "How can I trust my business to your care if you cannot prove yourself by serving the Lord for two short years?"

There was an awkward pause as the son pondered the father's question and studied his anxious countenance.

"Then with measured words, the father promised, "My son, my only heir, if you will be faithful in this calling and prove yourself worthy in every respect, all that I have will be yours."

"Noticeably touched by these earnest pleadings, the son rose to his feet, embraced his father, and sobbed, "I will stay."

"The son did stay in the mission field; he did serve faithfully from that day forward. And yes, in due time, he received from his father the promised inheritance, even all that his father had to share.

"...we are the son of God. He has endowed us with his power, and he has called each of us to serve missions in a place called mortality. Our missions mean very much to Him, and they should mean everything to us. In this mortal life, we are to prove ourselves worthy of his love and worthy of the inheritance he has offered.

"What is that inheritance? It is all that he has, even eternal life. This blessed and promised gift will be ours only if we keep the covenants, particularly the covenant of the priesthood, and remain faithful to the end." ("The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood," in *Ensign*, November 1985, 45).

The crowning promise in the oath and covenant of the priesthood is that we can receive "all that [the] Father hath" (D&C 84:38).

*How can knowledge of this promise help us in times of adversity?

During times of discouragement and adversity, if I remain faithful and obedient, the blessings for which I am striving, will come. My faith in God gives me strength to go forward. It helps me to find hope and to continue on, even into the darkness, knowing someday the reward will come.

*How can it help us in times of plenty?

I must never forget nor forget, the blessings I enjoy are based upon my continuing to be obedient and faithful, even when it is difficult. If I let my guard down and forget who I am and who I can yet become, I will lose all that I hold of value and importance in my life. There have been others who were faithful who have fallen. If I am not faithful, it could happen to me. The peace and guidance I now enjoy would then be lost.

IV. Principles For Using the Priesthood

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"In Doctrine and Covenants, Section 121, verses 34-46,...the Lord reveals principles for using the priesthood. He also reveals promises to those who use it righteously. In addition to their application to priesthood holders, these principles apply generally to all human relationships. Therefore, they are also important for those who do not hold the priesthood." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 141-143).

In D&C 121:34-40, the Lord reveals why some priesthood holders are not able to exercise the priesthood with power. You will recall that we noted that while all priesthood holders hold the same *authority*, not all experience the same power.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler state,

"Power in the priesthood differs from authority in that it does not come by the laying on of hands but rather through righteousness, faith, and knowledge. Thus, no two priesthood holders have the same power in their priesthood." (*Revelations of the Restoration*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 954).

We will examine these verses so we may be able to better understand some of the reasons for the loss of priesthood power.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:35

35 Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of the world, and [they] aspire to the honors of men,...

Jesus during his earthly ministry cautioned his servants that He had called them out of the world.

John 15:19

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

The world in which we live seeks to satisfy the desires and appetites of the natural man. Having more "things" than others, having power over others, receiving the attention and praise of others, equating wealth with being successful, having little regard for the poor and needy, and the gratification of their own desires and passions without concern for others, are some of the qualities the world values.

*How can seeking what the world offers keep us from receiving what the Lord offers?

Obtaining the things and honors of the world are often in direct contrast to the teachings of the gospel. Pride vs. humility and meekness; No controls on their freedom vs. being free through obedience to God's commandments; and,

Disregard for the wellbeing of others vs. caring for our neighbor.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:37, 39

37 ...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.

39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

*What are some ways that people "exercise unrighteous dominion" (D&C 121:39)?

By not giving others the opportunity to voice their opinions or to give the opinion of others any credence in making decisions that affect them. Another is assuming control in the family because they hold the priesthood and others do not.

*What are the consequences of doing this?

Anger among those who feel they have no voice, that may be manifest by covert or overt rebellion. It may also result in the individual having no respect for others who hold the priesthood as a result of the example in their home.

The underlying power of the priesthood is found in the love and righteousness of the recipient. Without the qualities of love or righteousness, the individual will experience a loss of the Spirit until they recognize their actions and seek repentance.

M. Russell Ballard states,

"Those who hold the priesthood must never forget they have no right to wield priesthood authority like a club over the head of others in the family or in Church callings...Any man

who...seeks to use the priesthood in any degree of unrighteousness in the Church or home simply does not understand the nature of his authority. Priesthood is for service, not servitude; compassion, not compulsion; caring, not control." ("Strength in Counsel," in *Ensign*, November 1993, 78).

In Doctrine and Covenants 121, verses 41-42, the Lord instructs his priesthood holders regarding the qualities that are necessary in order to access the power by which the priesthood is to be exercised.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:41-42

**41 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;
42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile--**

These are the qualities which should guide our interaction with family members, neighbors, associates at work, and others.

In Doctrine and Covenants 121, verses 43 and 44, the Lord provides the formula by which we are to provide any correction or discipline.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:43-44

**43 Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;
44 That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.**

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"*betimes* means 'promptly' or 'soon.' In the context of this passage, *with sharpness* means 'clearly' or 'precisely,' not 'severely' or 'roughly.'" (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 141-143).

Brigham Young counseled,

"[N]ever chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 9. London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1862, [Eighth Reprint, 1974], 124-125).

The key to providing a "divine correction," is not to take any action, unless you are "moved upon by the Holy Ghost" (D&C 121:43). In this manner, the words that are spoken will be understood by the individual to have been given in the spirit of love and kindness. If you do not, feel this prompting, the admonition of the Lord is no correction is to be given.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:45

45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

*What does it mean to "let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly"?

Monte S. Nyman states,

"Definitions of virtue include moral excellence, and mainly strength and courage...To garnish is to add color or attractiveness. The thoughts of the priesthood must be pure, and directed toward the purposes of the kingdom. He must be doing the right thing for the right reason (see B/M, Moroni 7:5)." (*It Came From God: Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 2. Orem, Utah: Granite Publishing and Distribution, LLC, 2009, 464).

*How can we keep evil or unvirtuous thoughts out of our minds?

Our focus must be on doing the work of the Lord. It is when we get "out of focus," that our thoughts get diverted, and

Satan is ready to fill in the void. Silent prayer for strength, repeating memorized scriptures, being steadfast in purpose, and reminding ourselves whom we represent, can, during momentary lapses, assist us in returning to our original purpose.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:45-46

45 ...then shall thy confidence was strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.
46 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.

In these verses, the Lord outlines His blessings for those who are faithful in the manner in which they honor the priesthood of God.

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett state,

"A scepter is a physical symbol of royal power and authority. This phrase implies that the exalted become eternally kings and queens over their own dominions--if they abide by the conditions described in verses 35-45. The blessings and dominions bestowed upon the exalted will be unchanging and everlasting. They can never thereafter be taken away.

"[It is important to remember that], all eternal relationships are voluntary. God forces no one; he enables us to improve but only if we want to. No one will be sealed for eternity to a person one does not wish to be with. Thus, it is the righteousness, the love, and the goodness of the priesthood holder, not merely ordination, that attracts to him--of their own volition--those who would be associated with him forever. As we come to Christ and covenant with him of our own free will because of who and what he is and what he has done for us, so our dominion in eternity will come to us 'without compulsory means' because of who we are and what we have become through living correctly the principles of his gospel and through his atonement on our behalf..." (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and*

Covenants, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2004, 167).

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"It has been my privilege on various occasions to converse with Presidents of the United States and important men in other governments. At the close of each such occasion I have reflected on the rewarding experience of standing with confidence in the presence of an acknowledged leader. And then I have thought, what a wonderful thing, what a marvelous thing it would be to stand with confidence--unafraid and unashamed and unembarrassed--in the presence of God. This is the promise held out to every virtuous man and woman." ("From My Generation to Yours with Love," in *Improvement Era*, December 1970, 73).

V. Conclusions

The privilege of receiving the priesthood is one of the greatest honors that can be bestowed upon mortal man. The man who honors his priesthood in turn honors all women, and treats them with the respect to which they are entitled. No action by a woman ever justifies a physical reaction. In patience and forbearance in all his words and actions, he honors His God, and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Having received the authority to act in God's name, he strives to manifest its power in all righteousness. It is one thing, as we know, to receive the authority of the priesthood; it is another to be worthy to exercise its power at all times and in all circumstances. At the sacrament table, in the dim light of a hospital room, on the battlefield, or alone in his room, he always maintains his worthiness to exercise the priesthood of God.

Order in the Restoration of the Priesthood and Its'

Offices: Following the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood, step-by-step, the quorums of the Priesthood were organized. It did not occur all at once, as Chart 1 indicated, but over a number of years, as the need arose. The three presiding councils of the Church were among the last to be organized. As the responsibilities of the Prophet Joseph Smith increased, others were called to serve.

The Presiding Quorums of the Church are: (A) The First Presidency; (B) The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and, (C) The Quorum of the Seventy. Each quorum, by revelation, have distinct, but complementary responsibilities. Each works in harmony, under the direction of Jesus Christ, in fulfilling the work of the Lord and building the kingdom of God on earth.

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood: It is the privilege and honor for each who receives the Melchizedek priesthood to enter into the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood. It is a covenant between man and God, accompanied with an oath pronounced by God. It requires the young man to: (a) Be faithful in obtaining the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood; (b) Magnify their calling; (c) Receive the Lord's servants in complete obedience; and, (d) Give diligent heed to the words of eternal life. These are sacred promises made to God.

The promised blessing of God to the young man includes: (a) Sanctification by the Spirit; (b) Renewal of our bodies; (c) Gives the blessings promised to Abraham and his posterity; (d) Makes us His elect, or chosen; (e) Gives all He has; and, (f) Gives His angels charge over the individual. These blessings, including eternal life and increase, are the greatest blessings God has to bestow upon His worthy children.

Principles for Using the Priesthood: Because of the wonderful blessings of the priesthood as contained in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood, Satan seeks to divert the focus of the holder of the priesthood, so that he will not be qualified to receive them. He does this by tempting the priesthood holder by the honors and things of the world; by preying upon his pride and temptation to sin, and the desire to exercise control and dominion over others.

The Lord reminds his servant that only as he develops the qualities of long-suffering, gentleness, meekness and genuine and sincere love and kindness, can the power of the priesthood be granted.

As these qualities are acquired, including a sensitivity to the direction of the Holy Ghost which requires the development of charity toward others, always based upon a

foundation of virtuous thought and action, we will then be qualified to be taught by the Lord.

In this manner, we may stand in the presence of the Lord, being numbered among those who hold the power of Godliness on the earth...His Holy Priesthood.

Our next lesson [D&C#26] will focus upon our responsibility to share the gospel with others, even if it requires a sacrifice on our part. We will also address the challenges of remaining "true to the faith," even in the face of adversity or persecution.