

ONE PRIESTHOOD —THE MELCHIZEDEK

Priesthood is:

1. (In the eternal sense): The power by which the worlds were made, etc.
2. (To us): The power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of men.

“All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it.” (Joseph Smith.)

“In viewing the Church as a whole we may strictly denominate it one priesthood.” (Joseph Smith.)

It is “after the order of the Son of God, and all other priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers and blessings belonging to the same and are held, controlled, and directed by it.” (Joseph Smith.)

TWO PRIESTHOODS—”TWO DIVISIONS OR GRAND HEADS”

“1. There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood.

“6. But there are two divisions or grand heads—one is the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood.” (D&C 107:1, 6.)

“THREE GRAND ORDERS OF PRIESTHOOD”

1. The Melchizedek Priesthood.
2. The Patriarchal Order.

“Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.” (Joseph Smith.)

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

“And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

“He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.” (D&C 131:1-4.)

3. The Levitical Priesthood.

“THE FULNESS OF THE PRIESTHOOD”

“The fulness of the priesthood” is received only in the temple. (D&C 124:29.)

“Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings.” (Joseph Smith.)

PRIESTHOOD OFFICES

The Melchizedek Priesthood (this was enclosed in a pie chart)

Elders—6 April 1830

High Priests—September 1831

Patriarchs—December 1833

Apostles—14 February 1835

Seventies—28 February 1835

The Aaronic Priesthood (this was enclosed in a pie chart)

Deacons

Teachers

Priests

Bishops

PRIESTHOOD OFFICES

The Melchizedek Priesthood

1. Priesthood is conferred upon us. We receive all of it; it does not come in portions.

2. We are ordained to offices in the priesthood which constitutes an assignment to serve, on the basis of primary responsibility, in a segment of the priesthood circle.

3. Brethren do not advance in the Melchizedek Priesthood. Rather, their field of assignment is changed.

“There is no office growing out of this priesthood that is or can be greater than the priesthood itself. It is from the priesthood that the office derives its authority and power: No office gives authority to the priesthood. No office adds to the power of the priesthood. But all offices in the Church derive their power, their virtue, their authority, from the priesthood. If our brethren would get this principle thoroughly established in their minds, there would be less misunderstanding in relation to the functions of government in the Church than there is.

“Today the question is, which is the greater—the high priest or the seventy—the seventy or the high priest? It tell you that neither of them is the greater, and neither of them is the lesser. Their callings lie in different directions, but they are from the same priesthood. If it were necessary, the seventy, holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, as he does, I say if it were necessary, he could ordain a high priest; and if it were necessary for a high priest to ordain a seventy, he could do that? Why? Because both of them hold the Melchizedek Priesthood.

“Then again, if it were necessary, though I do not expect the necessity will ever arise, and there was no man left on earth holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, except an elder—that elder, by the inspiration of the Spirit of God and by the direction of the Almighty, could proceed, and should proceed, to organize the Church of Jesus Christ in all its perfection, because he holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. But the house of God is a house of order, and while the other officers remain in the Church, we must observe the order of the priesthood, and we must perform ordinances and ordinations strictly in accordance with that order, as it has been established in the Church through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors.” (Joseph F. Smith.)

“In the Era for February, it was stated that several persons who had acted as counselors in the First Presidency had never been ordained apostles. Several correspondents have objected to the statement that Sidney Rigdon, Jedediah M. Grant, Daniel H. Wells, John R. Winder, and others were not ordained apostles. We still maintain, upon lack of convincing evidence to the contrary, that none of these brethren was ever ordained an apostle. We do know positively that John R. Winder, Sidney Rigdon, William Law and Hyrum Smith, all of whom were members in the First Presidency of the Church, were never ordained apostles. But, be that as it may, however, the main point we wish to make is this, that it was not necessary that they should be so ordained apostles in order to hold the position of counselor in the First Presidency. The leading fact to be remembered is that the priesthood is greater than any of its offices; and that any man holding the Melchizedek priesthood may, by virtue of its possession, perform any ordinance pertaining thereto, or connected therewith, when called upon to do so by one holding the

~roper authority, which proper authority is vested in the President of the Church, or in any whom he may designate. Every officer in the Church is under his direction, and he is directed of God. He is also selected of the Lord to be the head of the Church, and so becomes, when the Priesthood of the Church (which includes its officers and its members), shall have so accepted and upheld him. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107:22.) No man can justly presume to have authority to preside, merely by virtue of his priesthood as is the case with Joseph Smith of the reorganized church, for in addition, he must be chosen and accepted by the Church. The reverse was the case with him. Such action was repudiated by the Twelve, the quorum in authority after the martyrdom, and by the whole Church. An office in the priesthood is a calling, like apostles, high priest, seventy, elder, and derives all its authority from the priesthood; these officers hold different callings, but the same priesthood.

“The apostolic office in its very nature, is a proselyting office. When an apostle presides, he, like the high priest, the seventy, the elder, or the bishop, presides because of the High Priesthood which has been conferred upon him; and furthermore because he has been called upon so to do by the acknowledged head of the Church. (Doctrine and Covenants, section 107:23-33.) And so with the high priest who has been called to officiate in the First Presidency, in which case he is ‘accounted equal’ with the President of the Church in holding the keys of the Presidency (section 90:6) as long as the President remains. When he dies, the calling of his counselors ends, and the responsibility of Presidency falls upon the quorum of Twelve Apostles, because they hold the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood and are the next quorum in authority. (Doctrine and Covenants, section 107:24.) It is not the apostleship (Doctrine and Covenants section 107), but the priesthood and the calling by proper authority which enables any person to preside. Every man holding the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood may act in any capacity and do all things that such priesthood holds, provided he is called upon by proper authority to so officiate; but he would have no right to depart from the limitations of his office, unless he is specially called upon by one whose calling, from those over him up to the head, would clearly authorize him to give such instructions. It is always to be presumed, also, that order will be observed, and that the servants of the Lord will not depart from that order, and call upon men to do things which the law of the priesthood and the nature of their office do not authorize, unless there is special occasion for it. The Lord says that all things are governed by law. (See Doctrine and Covenants, section 88:42.) It is not consistent, for instance, to imagine that the Lord would call upon a deacon to baptize.

“Witness the calling, on February 14, 1835, of David Whitmer and Martin Harris, both high priests, by the Prophet Joseph, in conformity with prior revelation from God (See Doctrine and Covenants, section 18) to ‘search out the Twelve.’ They chose the Twelve, ordained and set-them apart for their exalted callings, because they were called upon by the prophet of God who had been instructed of the Lord, and also because these men held the necessary authority of the priesthood, which authority was exercised, in this case as it should be in all cases, upon proper calling. The Doctrine and Covenants makes it very

clear that while each officer in the Church has a right to officiate in his own standing, 'the Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the Church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things.' (Doctrine and Covenants, section 107:8.)

"Further, in the same revelation verses 65 and 66, we are told:

"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;

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

"It is well to remember that the term 'High Priesthood,' as frequently used, has reference to the Melchizedek Priesthood, in contradistinction to the 'lesser,' or Aaronic Priesthood." (Joseph F. Smith)

PRIESTHOOD OFFICES VARY ACCORDING TO NEEDS

1. From Adam to Moses there was no Aaronic Priesthood and no offices of deacon, teacher, priest, or bishop.
2. Christ was a priest. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4.) This same office we know as "high priest." (Heb. 5:6-10.)
3. Aaron and his sons after him were high priests of the Aaronic Priesthood.
4. The Levites held the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood and served in capacities analogous to deacons and teachers in our day. (Joseph Fielding Smith.)
5. It is our practice to ordain to the office of elder only in our vicarious performances.
6. Certain people have been and are ordained kings and priests in the Melchizedek Priesthood preparatory to certain work they will perform in the life to come.
7. The priests and teachers among the Nephites before the coming of Christ held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

BRETHREN CAN SERVE IN MORE THAN ONE OFFICE AT A TIME

1. Patriarchs are also high priests.
2. Bishops are also priests and high priests.

3. Members of the First Quorum of the Seventy are both seventies and high priests.

4. Members of the Council of the Twelve serve in all priesthood offices.

5. Queries:

When an apostle baptizes or administers the sacrament is he acting in the office of a priest or an apostle?

When a high priest does home teaching is he acting in the office of an elder or a high priest?

When a patriarch is called as a stake president is he serving as a patriarch or a high priest?

OFFICE OF BISHOP

WARD BISHOP

“The bishop is a high priest, and necessarily so, because he is to preside over that particular branch of church affairs, that is denominated the Lesser Priesthood, and because we have no direct lineal descendant of Aaron, to whom it would or right belong.” (Joseph Smith)

“What! ordain a High Priest to the lesser Priesthood? No; we call it ordaining a Bishop; and though we say, ‘We ordain you to be a Bishop, with our hands upon your head,’ it really and virtually means, ‘We set you apart to officiate as a Bishop in the midst of the people of God, by virtue of your holy priesthood, which is after the order of Melchizedek, which is after the order of the Son of God. We set you apart to officiate in this office of the Aaronic Priesthood, blessing you with all the keys and authority of the same.’” (Brigham Young)

“The duties and powers of a Bishop cease the very moment he steps over the Aaronic Priesthood, which is to officiate in temporal things; when he passes this he immediately begins to officiate by the authority and power of the Melchizedek Priesthood, though he may not know it.” (Brigham Young.)

“Can the Bishop baptize the people, according to his Bishopric? He can. When the people he has baptized assemble for confirmations, can he confirm them? He cannot, under the power of his Bishopric; but as he has been ordained to the office of High Priest to confirm them into the Church by the laying on of hands.” (Brigham Young)

THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD ADMINISTERS IN BOTH SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL MATTERS

1. There was no Aaronic Priesthood from Adam to Moses.

2. Sacrifices were offered by those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, as among the Nephites.
3. Elders administer the sacrament.
4. The First Presidency of the Church govern the properties and temporal interests of the Church.

THOSE HOLDING ONE OFFICE CAN BE PLACED IN ANOTHER QUORUM

1. President David O. McKay ordained members of the First Council as high priests and specifically directed that they retain their membership in the seventies “quorum.” He said: “This is your quorum.”
2. President Spencer W. Kimball ordained high priests as seventies and placed them in the First Quorum of the Seventy. Previously they were members of the high priests quorums in their stakes.
3. Patriarchs are members of high priests quorums.
4. Bishops are presidents of priests quorums and members of high priests quorums.

SERVING IN OUR OWN OFFICE AND CALLING

“And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also.

“Therefore, 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 not able to fill.

“Behold, this is the way that mine apostles, in ancient days, built up my church unto me.

“Therefore, let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling; and let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?

“Also the body hath need of every member, that all may be edified together, that the system may be kept perfect.

“And behold, the high priests should travel, and also the elders, and also the lesser priests; but the deacons and teachers should be appointed to watch over the church, to be standing ministers unto the church.” (D&C 84:106-111.)

1. High priests are called to be “standing presidents” Only those serving in positions of presidency can stand in their own office and labor in their own calling.
2. Seventies are called to be “travelling ministers.” Only those serving as missionaries can stand in their own office and labor in their own calling.