

Lecture 5: Priesthood

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Oh, welcome, welcome Saturday morning. I guess in some parts of the world, in some groups (subgroups), it's Sabbath morning even still. 40 years ago, I had been a member of the Church for almost 2 months. Bishop Ernie Ellsworth (he would be transferred—he worked for the Navy, although he was a civilian—he would be transferred to Hawaii shortly after I left New Hampshire, but he was still Bishop at that point), and he called me to be the ward newsletter writer for the Portsmouth, New Hampshire Ward. That was the first calling I had in the Church. Although, before **that**, I had...

The fellow who ordained me to the Aaronic Priesthood (George Hoger, he was the Elders Quorum President; he ordained me—I mean, his line of authority... A topic that we might look at a little today...), and he had made me a home teacher, and then he took me home teaching. And I had a route that required that I leave the state of New Hampshire in order to go home teach ('cuz the wards and stakes back in New England, particularly in those days, were enormous). And so, I had to leave the state in order to home teach.

I had a fellow who was inactive and kinda hostile and lived up in Maine. And I went to home teach him with George, and he was kind of angry and upset and hadn't had a home teacher in a while and wanted to know what the crap we were invading his privacy for. Ya know, this was, ya know, my first impression of what home teaching was all about. And after he had vented a little while, and me (in the zeal of my recent conversion), I asked him, "Well, why the hell are you a damn Mormon, then, if you're gonna act like this?" Well, he showed up in the Portsmouth Ward shortly thereafter, and he said, "I got home taught. My home teacher wanted to know why the hell I was a damn Mormon." He said he thought that was interesting enough that the Church probably has some new characters in it. He was gonna show up and see what this was all about.

Well, today we're talking about priesthood—a topic about which probably everyone in this room thinks they know a whole lot and can recite a whole lot of history and give a whole lot of details and explain everything there is to know about it, in so far as the Restoration and what Joseph has said and what the scriptures tell us are concerned. And I'm gonna ask you, for purposes of today, to assume that what you know is riddled with incompletions, omissions, gaps in the storyline. And, in fact, Joseph Smith never set out to give—ever—a comprehensive accounting of the subject of priesthood. He gave snippets. He gave a grab here and a grab there. And in the process of doing so, he left things that have been filled in by the imagination of people—but not necessarily by anyone who, like Joseph, knew what he was talking about. Therefore, as you run into (and you will throughout the talk today) things that you think I'm off-base with or I'm making a mistake because it doesn't agree with what you **think** you already know, I would ask you to be patient enough to hear the whole matter through today. And then be further patient enough to take it back into the scriptures, and prayerfully look at it. Because it's just possible—in fact, in my view, it is

probable—that you know things that are wrong, and you need to abandon them. And so, I'd ask you to be patient as we go through this today, and at least... at least try it on for size, and see if something doesn't click.

Joseph Smith said, “**All** priesthood is Melchizedek, **but** there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion [which] brought Moses to speak with God face-to-face was taken away, but that which brought the ministry of angels remained. All prophets [had] the Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God himself.” That’s in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on pages 180 to 181.

Ask yourself if there is a possibility that when Joseph speaks about “different portions or degrees” of priesthood, that he’s talking about something altogether different from the offices in the Church of Elder, Priest, Teacher, Deacon, Bishop, Seventy, Apostle, High Priest, yada, yada... Because even in the understanding of the Church, the way in which we ordain today (and the way that we once ordained, before an interruption that lasted over two decades) was to lay hands upon someone and to confer upon them, alternatively, either the Aaronic priesthood or the Melchizedek priesthood; and then to ordain them to an **office**. And the way we phrase it today is an “office within that priesthood,” but they confer, on the one hand, Aaronic or, on the other hand, Melchizedek priesthood. I would like you to entertain the idea that Elder, Priest, Teacher, Deacon and so on aren't priesthood at all; they are **offices** in the Church—and that they occupy the position in the Church (of these various **offices**) with or without the presence of priesthood.

When the first missionaries went out and preached, taught, exhorted, and expounded, they did so because they had been sustained by common consent to an office within the Church. And since the Church had been organized by the command of God, the offices within the Church had the authority to go and to implement the program of the Church.

Therefore, I would like you to entertain the idea that an **office** in the Church is not coincidental with **priesthood**. There is no such thing as the priesthood of Deacon. There is no such thing as the priesthood of Teacher. There is an office in the Church called “Teacher.” There is an office in the Church called “Deacon.” And the occupant of that, out of tradition, is supposed to have Aaronic priesthood in order to discharge that.

However, within the Church, we also sustain as “teachers” (for example, Gospel Doctrine teachers) females who hold the office of “Gospel Doctrine **teacher**” within the Church. What is the difference between the office of Gospel Doctrine teacher (that we sustain by our common consent), on the one hand, and Teacher in the Aaronic priesthood (Teacher held by someone with the Aaronic priesthood), on the other hand? We make a big deal out of the **offices** in the Church which are associated with Aaronic priesthood. However, they are offices in the Church. They were offices in the Church to begin with; they are offices in the Church yet today. And priesthood and offices in the Church are not necessarily coincident with one another.

So, when Joseph says that there are different portions or degrees, that all priesthood there is... All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are “different portions or degrees” of it—I wanna suggest to you that he is not talking about offices in the Church. I wanna suggest to you that, instead, what he's talking about is a continuum that I hope, by the end of today, we have some greater appreciation or understanding of.

So, if we turn to the oath and covenant of the priesthood that's contained in Doctrine and Covenants 84—and that's something about which we all think we know because, as parents, we've heard our kids go through this; as adults, we've had it parsed through—but if you look at it with the idea that all priesthood is singular and that there are merely different portions or degrees of it, starting at verse 33 of section 84:

For whoso[ever] is faithful unto the obtaining [of] these two priesthoods... (D&C 84:33)

Now, I wanna pause there for a moment because here (in revelation, given through Joseph Smith) is a statement by the Lord in revelation to Joseph in which he calls it two priesthoods. And yet Joseph explains there's only one. There's only one, and the one is Melchizedek, but there's different portions of it. Here in the revelation, it's dividing it into two. Therefore, there are two portions of it or two distinctions. And the possibility that those two distinctions are significant enough that they warrant treatment in the plural instead of the singular shows up right here in the revelation. I think Joseph knew what he was talking about. And I think the Lord knows what He's talking about. Because they're trying to get ideas across into our minds that we tend to resist.

Now, I should mention as a footnote that there were... There were discussions in the leadership of the Church about what was required in order to pass along priesthood. And during the administration of Heber J. Grant, for a period of over two decades, he ceased the practice of conferring priesthood upon people—but he had them only ordained to an office in the Church. Therefore, whenever someone was ordained to priesthood during that two-decade-plus time period, they were ordained to an office. After the death of Heber J. Grant, the practice was reverted again, and they began to confer priesthood in addition to ordain into office. But that is something that Heber J. Grant, at least, did not think occupied any significance. So, when I tell you there is a difference between an office in the Church and the priesthood, Heber J. Grant, at least, would say that I'm dead wrong on that point, and I don't know what I'm talking about. But entertain the idea, and see where it takes you.

There are in the church, well...

Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining [of] these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling... (Ibid)

See, priesthood is not simply “yada, yada, yada”; “ipso facto”; “conorus mundorum”; there you are! It requires... See, ya get it, but then, “faithful to obtain”; and then, “faithful to

magnify”—and faithful to magnify it as a **calling** (calling being an operative word there that means service)...

...are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies... (Ibid)

“Sanctified by the Spirit”; “renewing their bodies”—these things have meaning. Perhaps we'll get to that at some point.

They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. (Ibid, vs. 34)

See, they **become**—but they become as a consequence of having been sanctified. They become sanctified because they magnify their calling. They had to first obtain the priesthood, and the obtaining of the priesthood requires something that is “faithful.” And you oughta ask yourself, Faithful to what? And always it is faithful to **Him**, to our Lord, the One who redeems. All of these things flow together as one continuum. It's not just “I got ordained.” Doesn't matter that you got ordained. There's a process that's involved after ordination in which you follow these steps. We read it as one sentence and say, There it is; he was faithful. I mean, he passed the Bishop's interview; he obtained it. That is, he sat down there, and they got a certificate. I mean, when I was on the High Council, I was the one responsible for fetching the Melchizedek priesthood certificates and delivering it to 'em. And that was a definite point in time at which we could point and say, On **this** day, **this** person gave **this** authority to **this** guy on **this** occasion... And when that happened, he also got a line of authority.

When I got ordained to be a High Priest, the Stake President handed me a line of authority which, when I looked at, I found mistakes in. And I went back, and I did the research, and I corrected the line of authority. Then I went back to my Stake President, and I said, “You gave me your line of authority, but it was wrong; here's the right one.” And then he had to go find all of the people that he had ordained and correct that. (Some fellow in the line had thought it would be more commendable to have been ordained by Marion G. Romney **after** he was an apostle rather than as he **was**: when Marion G. Romney was called to be the Bishop. And he called **this fellow** to be his counselor, and so Marion G. Romney was ordained to be a High Priest, to be the Bishop, and he ordained this other fellow to be a High Priest and his counselor. And then, subsequently, when Marion G. Romney got to be an apostle, this guy hailed his priesthood line from the date on which Marion G. Romney became an apostle, which screwed the whole line up.) And therefore, I had to fix that, and President Pugh was grateful. But it imposed upon him the obligation, then, to go back and straighten out all those whom he had ordained. Well, that's neither here nor there.

*They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the **seed** of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. (Ibid, emphasis added)*

I spoke in Centerville about what it meant to be the seed of Abraham. You ought to listen to that talk. We don't have time. We have to accumulate, we have to aggregate information.

And we gotta assume that you've "got" what we've talked about before, so that we can press on.

Once you have done those,

...also all they who receive this priesthood... (Ibid, vs. 35)

Now it's in the singular; now it has been reduced back to the unitary. Now we're talking about that which is the fullness—we're now talking about something other than the different portions. We're talking about **this** priesthood.

...receive me saith the Lord. (Ibid)

We take that to mean that not actually **the Lord**, for goodness sake—but to mean, rather instead, that if you have this priesthood, somehow the Lord has received you. Somehow, if you've got this, you belong to Him in some metaphysical sort of fashion in which, "On account of having priesthood, I am received of Jesus." Take the words literally, and say to yourself: if you've got **this**, if **this** is what you have managed to accumulate, then one of the evidences of having accumulated it will be receiving the Lord.

For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me. (Ibid, vs. 36)

I suggested in Centerville that the word "servants," in this context, meant angels. An "angel"... The word is derived from a Greek word that simply means "messenger." And the messenger can't be on their own errand. They have to have a message that is being brought from another, the other being the Lord. Therefore, if the message originates **with** the Lord, and the message is delivered by a messenger, it does not matter if the one delivering the message is a mortal, as we find in the Book of Mormon where someone says, Last night... King Benjamin, I believe, said, Last night the Lord told me this; or, Last night the angel taught me this, and so today I'm going to teach you this (see Mosiah 3:2-23; see also Mosiah 1:13-18). In that context, King Benjamin **was** the angel. And therefore, as long as they bear a message from the Lord, they fit the definition.

...he that receiveth my servants receiveth me. (D&C 84:36)

That is, if it's the voice of God and it's coming to you from Him and it's authentically His message and you receive it as if it were from His own mouth, then you've received from Him at least His voice. But it doesn't end there.

He that receiveth me receiveth my Father. (Ibid, vs. 37)

In this context, what he's talking about is the same thing that you find in the 14th chapter of the book of John, in which Christ says that He will not leave you comfortless, but He will come to comfort you. And then He and His Father will take up their *abode with [you]* (John 14:23; see also John 9:8 RE). This is not an abstraction. The idea that this is something that

happens in your heart (you can read in the Doctrine and Covenants) is an old sectarian notion and is false (see D&C 130:3). It means a literal appearance of these holy beings to minister, to comfort, and ultimately, to take up their abode.

...he that receiveth my Father [and I would add, while yet “in the flesh”] receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. (D&C 84:38-39)

And what is that oath and that covenant? It is the Father’s word which cannot be broken. It’s not something **you** aspire to, but it’s something that you accept by the conditions that are set out in Doctrine and Covenants section 84. It is something which, received by an oath and a covenant, given by the One who **can** give covenants (just as we talked about in Centerville)... It’s a covenant which originates from God. It is His word which cannot be broken (see Ether 3:12; see also Ether 1:12 RE). Therefore, when the Father covenants that you’re going to inherit, it is a covenant that **will** surely come to pass.

*Therefore, all...who receive the priesthood [singular, implying it in its fullest manifestation], receive this **oath and covenant of my Father**... (D&C 84:40, emphasis added)*

This is not talking about abstractions, quorums, churches, organizations, orders, choruses. This is talking about a direct, covenantal relationship established by **the Father** with **this—this priesthood—the one about which today I would like to speak—this priesthood...**

*...which he [the Father, he] cannot break [because if He were to break this once He has made this covenant with someone, He would cease to be God, and He cannot do that—therefore, **this** covenant cannot be broken by Him] neither can it be moved... (Ibid)*

That is, once the Father has made that covenant, earth and hell cannot make it otherwise.

But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor...the world to come. (Ibid, vs. 41)—

...a curious statement if your view of “this priesthood” is the mechanism you understand through the agency of the Church and the various quorums that result in someone becoming Melchizedek priesthood holder and an Elder. Does that mean that when an Elder drifts off into inactivity in the Church that he is not going to have forgiveness of sins in this world or the world to come?! It doesn’t mean that at all. It’s not talking about what has gone on in the Church, and it’s not talking about receiving an ordination and participating in an Elders Quorum or (thank God) a High Priest group. The string of obscenities that parse through my mind during any given High Priest group just... It’s a good thing that you’re not

always talking out loud. Sometimes I want to and then say, “Did I say that? Or did I just think that?” I bite my tongue.

But here in 42, now... 41 is talking about the condition of having arrived at the point in which the covenant has been established with the Father—**that** covenant. If you turn from that (because you are turning from the Father), you're in a state, at this point, of willful rebellion against **He who has called you** to be His son—against Him who sits on the Throne, in the midst of all eternity, from whose Throne He sustains everything that exists, including everyone in this room and this creation itself (see Mosiah 2:21; see also Mosiah 1:8 RE). You have been in contact with Him, and you've turned from Him. It's not the same thing as an Elder drifting into ~~activity~~ [inactivity]. It is standing in the light of the noon day sun and denying that it is light. It is rebellion—and it is rebellion against knowledge. That's what that verse is talking about.

But look at verse 42:

*And wo unto all those who come **not** unto this priesthood... (D&C 84:42, emphasis added)*

So, there is a “wo” associated with that. It is not: “wo, wo, wo.” It's not a threefold condemnation. It is not a dreadful, despicable, wretched outcome. It's simply disappointment because the invitation has been extended to you, and if you do not rise up to receive that invitation, then **you will** suffer disappointment. **You will** come to the point in which your condition is woeful, because there's something that you know that you might have obtained, and you did not.

Then we get to some words which I think are critical to understanding the topic, and we're gonna spend a lot of time on today:

...which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; ...even [as] I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you. (Ibid; see also T&C 82:16-17)

Oh my! You see, the priesthood is being conferred—and the priesthood is being conferred, not by the laying on of hands, but by the voice of God given to those who were present on this day.

On another occasion (this is section 84, which is in September of 1832)... On another occasion, there was a conferral of priesthood (in June of 1831). One of those upon whom it was conferred on that date, by the voice of God out of heaven, was Ezra Booth—Ezra Booth, who would later drift off into inactivity and write a series of nine letters that were published in a newspaper explaining why he rejected Mormonism. And so, he had had the conferral—by the voice of God—in June of 1831, and we get all the way down to January 1841 and we find out that the fullness had been taken away, at least as it pertained to the Church (see D&C 124:28; see also T&C 141:10).

Well, so we wanna focus on those words in [D&C 84:]42, but we've got some other things to look at in order to get there. First of all, I want to go to Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 14, which... I'm gonna need to borrow from someone. Does someone have Old Testament that I can use? (Yeah. I've taken that, and I've stapled it separately, and apparently, it's in my bedroom. I blame my briefcase.)

So, in Genesis chapter 14... This is in the back of your Bible. Verse 26:

Now Melchizedek was a man of faith... (JST Genesis 14:26)

By the way, Melchizedek is a title; it's a name-title. It's a compound of two words. One is "king," and one is "priest"—and therefore, in one sense, it's a name-title, and in another sense, it's a new name. And it's not the birth name given to someone, rather it is the new name/title which is fashioned after Christ because Christ is the great King and the great Priest who's the King of Kings, and He is the Great High Priest. And so, Melchizedek is really a name-title that belongs to Christ, it being used as a substitute to prevent the frequent repetition when you're talking about the Holy Priesthood—that the correct full name would be the *Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God*. But to prevent the too frequent repetition of that, Melchizedek (which is a name-title for Christ) got used as a substitute.

But Melchizedek—that is, the person who grew up to become the one that got that name-title,

*was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a **child** he feared God, and **stopped the mouths of lions**, and **quenched the violence of fire** [this is Melchizedek as a child; this is Melchizedek doing something by **faith**]. And thus having been approved of God, he was ordained [that is, ordination occurred **after** faith]... (Ibid, vs. 26-27, emphasis added)*

Can a man heal **by faith without priesthood**? Of course they can. Can Melchizedek, as a child without priesthood, stop the mouths of lions? Yes, the scriptures say so. Can "by faith" a man (Melchizedek being one who did so) quench the violence of fire without priesthood? Yes. Therefore, is it evidence that...

Oh, what was the guy's name in Oklahoma? The evangelical minister whose ministry was largely based upon healings? Can he heal? Can he do so without priesthood? Yeah, of course. I mean, these are two different things. These are altogether two different things.

So, Melchizedek accomplished these things by faith. And then, having accomplished these things by faith, God ordained him:

[a] high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch. It being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man nor by the will of man... (Ibid, vs. 27-28)

That is, we can't vote in **that guy**. We can't 'hope and pray and sustain with our prayers and faith and confidence' **that guy**. We can't have our will bundled into **that guy**. **That guy** comes as a consequence, exclusively, not of father, not of mother, not of the will of man, but by the will of God. This is, after all, sons of God that we're talking about.

... neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God... (Ibid)

...because God is endless; therefore, His word is endless, and His covenants are endless, and His commitments are endless. And if you lay hold upon it, you lay hold upon something which is itself endless.

And it was delivered, just as we saw in Doctrine and Covenants section 84:

And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name. For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God. (Ibid, vs.29-31)

Now, take that impressive list of things, and read it in light of this:

*...to do all things according to **his** will, according to **his** command, subdue principalities and powers; and this **by the will of the Son of God** which was from before the foundation of the world. (Ibid, vs. 31)*

See, such persons holding such power **are not freelancing**. And in fact, evidence of the possession of this power does not come as a consequence of someone displaying **every one** of these things, **but** if they display **any** one of these things... For example, Nephi (when he was bound in the desert and left to die by his brothers) broke every band that bound him, having been strengthened by God (see 1 Nephi 7:16-18; see also 1 Nephi 2:4 RE). And that **same Nephi**, bound to the mast when the storm came that threatened the survival of the ship, not only could not break the band, but when they finally got around to relieving him, he said his hands were much swollen as a consequence of the trauma that he'd suffered (see 1 Nephi 18:15; see also 1 Nephi 5:30 RE). Nephi—who had power given to him by God to break the bands that would've cost him his life—was left subject to the bands because it was not according to the Father's will or the word of the Son when he was bound to the mast. And so, had Nephi called upon that power and not suffered, Nephi would've been offending—and not conforming to—the will of God. And he would have had to suffer some loss.

Moses had power to divide the seas. And he did that by the word of God (see Exodus 14:15-16, 21; see also Exodus 9:3-4 RE). And yet, when Moses used the power to cause the rock to bring forth water (and not at the command of God), he suffered some loss.

Possession of the power does not mean you freelance. Because in the very statement about the possession and the capability and the capacity, it says it's according to His will. Therefore, in order to be someone who can be trusted, you have to be someone who will subordinate to His will.

The Lord was not mis-stating the case, when He said, "No man takes my life," because the Lord had the capacity, at His own word, to prevent the entire armies of Rome from doing any harm to him. "Don't you know," he asked Pilate, "if I asked, there'd be twelve legions of angels?" (see Matthew 26:53; see also Matthew 12:11 RE). You know, you don't even need a legion of angels to take on a legion of Rome, much less a little Centurion's cohort in Galilee (or in Judea, rather).

When you have someone who arises to this point **and** can be trusted, they nevertheless can be slain. Because, like our Lord, they don't get to **use**... Well, they are trustworthy enough so as not to **misuse** what has been entrusted to them. Therefore, the fact that they can "hold at defiance the armies of nations" means that they will do so only in accordance with His will—because sometimes it **is** His will to destroy the children of Israel, when they have sinned against Him. And then, they have to detect the error and repent of it before they can go forward. Well,

[all] men having this faith, coming up unto this order...were translated and taken up into heaven. (JST Genesis 14:32)

...that being a statement about not today but the moment of Melchizedek's ordination, his day, and those that had lived before him, in their day. *Translated and taken up into heaven*—we will get to the point later where we'll find out that this same authority that was in the beginning is going to return at the end of the earth, also. But its return at the end of the earth has a different purpose. At the beginning of the earth, **this** was the purpose.

And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, ...was called the Prince of peace [that is also is one of the titles given to the Lord, the Prince of Peace]. ...his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world. (Ibid, vs. 33-34)

See, and you wonder what they've been doing for lo these many thousands of years; and yet, if you understood the physics of it all, you'd realize that you can go out and back in a hurry, and it's overnight if you travel fast enough and far enough and return. There's really... Ah, well, that's another matter altogether.

*And [He] hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth **should** come together...* (Ibid, vs. 35, emphasis added)

See, they... That city of Enoch is reserved until the latter days of the end. It was separated from the earth, but it's going to come again in the latter days. And the Lord swore,

...with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire. (Ibid)

...meaning that when they return again, those sons who remain standing are going to have to be able to endure the fire that is coming. They who come shall burn them up—we talked about that briefly in Boise, and we've been trying to track that down through Idaho Falls, and now we see it again here. Therefore, this priesthood has something to do with all of the talks that I've been giving up to this point and where we go from here.

And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace [because he brought peace to them]. And he lifted up his voice, and he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; [whom] Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor. [And] Abraham paid...him... (Ibid, vs. 36-39; see also Genesis 7:18-21 RE)

...and so on. In any event, Melchizedek established priests/established righteousness; his city was a city of peace.

(And if you don't mind, I'm gonna hold onto this for a minute 'cuz we're gonna go back there, and so... Is your name on it? Oh, good; your name's on it. I'm using Carol's scriptures. And if you see me walking around with a set of scriptures that have Carol's name on it, you **know** I've stolen them.)

Priesthood is **not** a franchise. Priesthood is **not** something that is given in order to control others. Priesthood is an opportunity—afforded you by God, in its highest form—to serve and to bless others. (That's not true of it in other forms, and we'll get to that.) But in its highest form, it is a call to service. It is a call to save; it is a call to redeem; and it is a call to rescue.

Now I want to suggest a new definition for priesthood. And I wanna go to Doctrine and Covenants section 121 and read some old familiar words—and then see if today we can pour some meaning into this.

This is Doctrine and Covenants section 121, verse 36:

That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. (D&C 121:36)

I wanna suggest to you that the word “powers of heaven” is a proper noun and not just a phrase ~~incorporating~~ encompassing some abstraction. Powers of Heaven: oooo yada yada, can you feel it? Go get a pyramid, put it over your head. Ohmmmm, got some, got some... I can feel it! That's not it.

Powers of Heaven is actually a proper noun. If you are an Elder or you are a High Priest or you are a Seventy or you are a member of the Quorum of the Twelve... Whatever that office is, it is appropriate to refer to you by the nomenclature "Elder." "Elder" LeGrand Richards, "Elder" McConkie, "Elder" Nelson. (Hmm. Good thing we can't hear thoughts.) In any event... There is—within the structure of the afterlife—different rungs on Jacob's ladder. And they leak through in our scriptures, though Joseph never bothers parsing them. And whether you are talking about an Angel or an Archangel or a Principality or a Power or a Dominion or a Throne or a Cherubim or a Seraphim, it doesn't matter which one you are referring to, it is appropriate—just like it is appropriate to refer to all those offices as Elder—to refer to any and all of them as **Powers**.

The Powers of Heaven: Whatever rung these ministers may be upon, they are all **Powers**. So, I wanna suggest to you that the **real** definition of priesthood is an association between mankind, on the one hand, and those on the other side of the veil, on the other hand. It is a brotherhood.

Oh my! And it is potentially also a sisterhood. And it is a fellowship. And it is a ministry, if you will, in which there is connected together (and the real definition of priesthood is the connection between) a fellowship between the **Powers of Heaven**, on the one hand, and **you**, on the other.

We can form a fellowship—and **have**, among ourselves. And we've ordained one another in our various fellowships, and we've called ourselves Elders Quorums. And we've called ourselves High Priest Group. And we have called ourselves all kinds of different bodies of fellowship. And they are, I suppose, a form of priesthood. There are others who have formed different kinds of associations, and they are a form of priesthood.

But the scriptures are talking about a relationship between Powers of Heaven and the recipient of authority—that is, priesthood is fellowship. And when you do something to sever that fellowship, then you have done something that damages, injures, hinders, or altogether departs from the fellowship that you had.

and...the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon...principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, [it's] 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; [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (Ibid, vs. 36-37)

So then, if one has this fellowship and has this authority (or is in fellowship with that group from which such power reckons), how is it, then, that you exercise that authority? Well, the answer's also contained in the same revelation.

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, ...by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. (Ibid, vs. 41-42; see also T&C 139:5-6)

So, if you find someone who is armed with this, what you're gonna find is someone whose tool is persuasion and who offers knowledge—and whose knowledge will not reckon merely from the writings, the theories, and the philosophies of men, but it will reckon, rather, from a higher place.

I wanna turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 132 and take a look at that because in here we then run into a brief description of some of that “Powers” that exist. This is in Doctrine and Covenants section 132, verse 19. And it's about in the middle of that verse. It says you *come forth in the first resurrection [to] inherit* [and here are the words] *thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths*. Those are, in fact, referring to different steps in the process of rising up to the place where God is. This is telling you something about the map to the afterlife. This is telling you something about how there is a hierarchy that is organized there. And you proceed, as Joseph said, from one step to the next. When you begin to climb a ladder, you always begin at the bottom, and you go step-by-step until you reach the top.

Well, there are those... And I'm not gonna vouch for this, but I'll find it useful to use today. And I use this not because I'm trying to originate anything, but rather, this is already out there, and so I don't think I'm speaking out of turn. Rather like what Nephi did with Isaiah, if I can lay it at the feet of someone else, I can say, Well then, I didn't break any confidences.

In any event, the ranking goes:

- Angels, and then
- Archangels, and then
- Principalities, and then
- Powers, and then
- Dominions, and then
- Thrones, and then
- Cherubim, and then
- Seraphim...

(The Seraphim being those who dwell in everlasting burnings, the glorious ones, the ones who are flaming. For a description of them, we've already looked at that in Doctrine and Covenants section 109, [verse] 79. I'm not gonna go there.)

But in any event, here you have (in section 132) a listing of some of the things which get inherited. And you think that we have a singular afterlife that consists of heaven and hell or —oh, no! You're Mormons; therefore, you got three of them. You got your Telestial (which kingdom you're presently occupying, by the way). You've got your Terrestrial (we hope to manage to get there sometime during the Millennium, also occupying this same globe). And

you got your Celestial (which you know, apparently, you'll be all garbed up and glowing and wearing a robe and nicely put). However, this is suggesting a much more complex afterlife in which, literally, the ascent is by degrees as you move upward. As Joseph said (and I read that in Boise), it'll be a great time after we have crossed through the veil before we will have learned all that needs to be learned in order to qualify for our salvation and exaltation.

Well, let's go to Moses chapter 7. This is Moses chapter 7, verse 27: *Enoch beheld **angels** descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were **caught up by the powers of heaven** into Zion* (Moses 7:27, emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:15 RE). There they show up again—"the powers of heaven"—plural, in the same verse where it's talking about angels descending. This is the kind of thing that is littered throughout the scriptures if you have the eyes to see it. Because there is actually a structure there.

There are, within what we regard as priesthood, two brotherhoods or two fellowships:

- One is between men (or women). It is a fellowship that exists among us here on this side.
- There is a second one. There is a second fellowship. **That** exists with us to the other side, and on that other side, there is a fellowship or a priesthood.

And by and large, when the scriptures speak about priesthood having authority/priesthood having power, that is connected by a mortal with a fellowship that extends into the immortal, to the other side. It's a relationship with the "Powers of Heaven."

So that you can be clear in your own mind about this, let's look at Doctrine and Covenants section 107, and go to verse 52: *Noah was ten years old when he was ordained under the hand of Methuselah* (see also T&C 154:18). Okay? So, ~~Moses~~ [Noah] got priesthood as a consequence of the hand of Methuselah having ordained him. **That** is a priesthood (or fellowship or brotherhood) on this side of the veil.

Now, go back to Moses chapter 8. In Moses chapter 8, verse 19, it says, *And the Lord ordained Noah after his...order, and commanded him that he should go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch* (see also Genesis 5:8 RE)—or in other words, in the case of Noah, the fellowship that originated as a relationship between him and his older brethren **here** [was] extended by God ordaining him also to a fellowship on the other side. Therefore, he belonged not merely to the priesthood held by men but to the priesthood held by the immortals.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 107, and look at verse 48:

Enoch was twenty-five years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam. (D&C 107:48)

So, he got that when he was 25. But look at what happened when he was 65:

He was sixty-five and Adam blessed him. And he saw the Lord, and he walked with him, and was before his face continually; and he walked with God three hundred and sixty-five years, making him four hundred and thirty years old when he was translated. (Ibid, vs. 65; see also T&C 154:15)

And so, there is the ordination at 25, which allowed him to join in the fellowship (the brotherhood, the association, the priesthood) that involved men. And then at 65, there is another priesthood, there's another association, there's another fellowship.

Jethro, the father-in-law, ordained Moses—D&C 84. Look at that. D&C 84, verse 6:

And the sons of Moses, according to the Holy Priesthood which he [that is, Moses] received under the hand of his father-in-law, Jethro. (D&C 84:6)

Okay? Then go over to verses... Beginning at 21:

...without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. [For] this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory. Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also. (Ibid, vs. 21-25; see also T&C 82:3, 12-14)

If you go to Moses chapter 1, beginning at verse 1:

The [word] of God, which he spake unto Moses at [the] time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain, ...he saw God face to face, ...he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence. And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty [threefold; three titles], and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless? And, behold, thou art my son. (Moses 1:1-4; see also Genesis 1:1 RE)

And so, he was ordained by man, and he was ordained by heaven.

You can see it in the case of Jacob. We'll look at that, and then we'll stop. Jacob—go to 2 Nephi chapter 5, verse 26, *And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people* (see also 2 Nephi 4:5 RE). Then, if you go to Jacob chapter 1, and you look at verse 17 of Jacob chapter 1, you see Jacob saying, *Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them...words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord* (see also Jacob 1:4 RE)—because Jacob didn't go out and commence a ministry of teaching (even to his own people over whom he had been consecrated as a priest) until he had first obtained that second ordination.

Well, you can find it throughout if you look for it. The fact is that there are two levels, one of which requires a connection beyond the veil and one of which is here. It is not enough (and you ought never be content) to simply have the association that exists here.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, verse 26, it talks about *the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel* (see also T&C 82:14). Even the lesser priesthood holds **some** connection with heaven. Even the lesser priesthood holds forth the opportunity to have **some link with** the Powers of Heaven. Therefore, in the lesser priesthood there is an association—a fellowship—that is anticipated.

And, of course, the greater priesthood (that we looked at before in those verses describing what Moses...) is that a priesthood that has a power of godliness that gets manifest unto men, **in the flesh**—*For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live* (D&C 84:22; see also T&C 82:12)—

Don't let anyone deceive you into believing that this association is merely meant for the afterlife. If it were so, the words *in the flesh* would not appear here and other places in the scriptures that I pointed out to you as I've gone through these various talks. It was meant to be laid hold upon **here**. And as a consequence of laying hold upon it here, you qualify to receive that in the world to come (see D&C 76:118; see also T&C 69:29). And if you fail to lay hold upon that here, then *wo unto [you]*. That doesn't mean that you are condemned forever. That just means that you've wasted **an** opportunity—and therefore, the struggle for you will continue. Put it away; get it done.

The question was asked, and I read it before (I read the answer, not the question). The question was: "Was the priesthood of Melchizedek taken away when Moses died?"

Joseph said (and it was in this context where I began earlier): "All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it" (*TPJS*, 180-181). I'm hoping that now when we read that, you say to yourself, "Different portions or degrees of it has reference to these different fellowships, these different associations that one can have with those **Powers of Heaven** which exist on the other side"—because there is a level of growth, a level of development, and an entrustment of the authority and the power of godliness that continues on into eternity, until at last you arise at the point... Joseph calls it "attaining to the resurrection." And attaining to the resurrection, in that context, means to inherit everlasting burnings so to be able to dwell in a position of glory, from which descent is well-nigh impossible.

But remember, "all priesthood is Melchizedek but there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face-to-face was taken away but that which brought the ministry of angels remained" (*ibid*). Then he added, as I read, "All the prophets had the Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God himself" (*ibid*).

Possible, I suppose, to pass along “Melchizedek priesthood” in a fellowship between men, but invariably, it is the case that when you find someone in possession of the Melchizedek priesthood in the form in which Joseph was referring to it in **this** answer, it is **always** the case that all prophets had the Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God Himself. Always the case.

Now, all priesthood is perishable. We saw that in Doctrine and Covenants section 121, verse 37: *That [it] may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, ...gratify our pride, our vain ambition, ...to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness...* (see also T&C 139:5). And let me couple that with: What is the tool? How do I get to use the priesthood? How is it that I do get to exercise some influence? *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* (ibid, vs.41).

I thank God I do not preside over any of you. I thank God I have no responsibility for any of you, my family aside. (Yeah, okay. We’re getting close to the first break.) Let me tell you that even within my own family, I don’t feel it is my prerogative to do anything other than to use persuasion, to use long-suffering, to use gentleness and meekness and love unfeigned, and to try—**kindly**—to use pure knowledge to lay the matter out. But it is ever so much better to lay that out when the question is asked rather than it is to lay out the answer and force-feed it to someone who doesn’t even have the idea occur to them that there’s an issue to be discussed. One of the reasons why I solicited questions was to find out to what extent you’re ready to hear something about something that confuses you. And some of the questions are quite poignant, and we’ll hopefully be able to solve a number of them as we go along.

Priesthood is perishable. Even that priesthood conferred by the voice of God **is perishable**, if you are unwilling to **restrain** and to **contain** yourself within the bounds which the Lord has prescribed.

As we get to sealing power (and we will get there before the day is up), there are some things about that you need to have parsed, and you need to understand. But the fact of the matter is that when we talk about priesthood, we throw about lavish claims among ourselves because we have a vocabulary. And as a consequence of possessing that vocabulary, we think, then, that we have understanding when, in fact, the scriptures are telling us a whole different story. And that whole different story is what we’re pursuing here today. Hopefully, when we get to the end of this today, you’ll walk away saying, “I need to go back and study my scriptures, ’cuz it sounds like there’s a whole lot in there about priesthood that makes distinctions which I had not heretofore appreciated.”

(So, what we’re going to do is take...? What? Five minutes? We’re gonna take five minutes, and when they signal me, we’ll begin again.)

(Okay, we’re good to go.)

As a reminder that all priesthood is perishable, if you look at Doctrine and Covenants section 124, verse 28, it says, *There is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood* (see also T&C 141:10). Now, that's a verse that (at this moment) I'm not prepared to get into all of the implications of. I just want to use it as a reference point for the proposition that something given can be taken away—that priesthood is, in fact, perishable. While we are here in the mortal realm, it is possible that a person fall away.

(Carol, I returned your scriptures because I found it on my iPad. So, even though I resist the iPad as a source of scriptures—and mocked those who were early adopters in the lessons I taught—I nonetheless have a set of scriptures on my iPad.)

Okay, so, this then leads me to the next topic that I wanna try and get through—a topic about which some of you may be completely unaware, but one that has occupied a lot of attention of a number of very careful and thoughtful people (and with whom I will probably disagree—but it's not because I don't view their efforts to parse this topic as unworthy or worthless; it's because I reckon my understanding from a different point from which I triangulate on this topic—and not merely the record that we have before us).

This is from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. And *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* were a reduction (into a singular account) of a variety of note-takers' accounts of Joseph's words. The original note-takers' accounts have been gathered together in Andy Ehat's book, *The Words of Joseph Smith*. And so, if you go to the Andy Ehat version and you look at what all the note-takers say, you can see—and you can contrast—what the note-takers have and then what *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* have.

For my purposes, it's not important today to parse all the different accounts. It would take too long, and I find what's in *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]* to be adequate in order to talk about the topic. But it doesn't mean that I commend this as a great reconstruction—because, in fact, in many cases there's **doctrinal significance** to the difference between the note-taker's accounts; and you can almost feel that (from the varying accounts) that they're listening to Joseph and then recording their notes based upon **their** understanding, measuring Joseph's words against what **they** believed the doctrine to be—as opposed to, instead, allowing the words of Joseph to inform **them**. And then the compiler of *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* has made his own consolidation. But once again, this is adequate for my purposes today. I'm reading from page 322 of *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*. Beginning there:

Respecting the Melchizedek Priesthood, the sectarians never professed to have it; consequently they never could save any one, and would all be damned together. There was an Episcopal priest who said he had the priesthood of Aaron, but had not the priesthood of Melchizedek: and I bear testimony that I [have never] found the man who claimed the Priesthood of Melchizedek. The power of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to have the power of “endless lives”; for the everlasting covenant cannot be broken. (see also DHC 5:554-556; August 27, 1843)

See, Joseph here is referring to that covenant given when you obtain that priesthood **by the Father** who swears by Himself about the results of having attained unto that priesthood. So, it holds that power of endless lives—for the everlasting covenant made by the Father cannot be broken.

The law was given under Aaron for the purpose of pouring out judgments and destruction. (Ibid)

So, the Mosaic law was given, and the priesthood was accommodated in order to pour out judgments and destruction.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 1, there's this interesting set of verses beginning in verse 8 of D&C 1:

And verily I say unto you, that they who go forth, bearing these tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth, to them is power given to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious; Yea, verily, to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure—Unto the day when the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man. (D&C 1:8-10; see also T&C 54:2)

These are all negative. These are all sealing up unto destruction. These are all condemnations. These are all, in a word, **Aaronic**. But bear in mind, the Aaronic priesthood is not without hope, because within it is the power to baptize, which is an ordinance of hope. Primarily, however, the purpose of the Aaronic priesthood is to condemn.

There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here. 1st. The king of Shiloam (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. **Angels** [now, remember what I said earlier about there being different ranks, Angels] desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes. (DHC 5:554-556; August 27, 1843, emphasis added)

See, the angels were unwilling to receive what they might have received, and as a consequence of that, they could not go.

Look in Doctrine and Covenants section 132, verse 16: *Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.* Angels, in this context (if you will hear it), are included within Joseph's description of "angels desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes," as a consequence of their unwillingness to receive what God freely offers to all. And they're hedging up their own way by their failure to develop that faith and confidence necessary to lay hold upon the blessings of heaven, because they believe that those blessings are reserved for others and not for them; because, as the (de-canonized

now) Lectures on Faith suggest, they fear that they do not have the power to lay hold upon all the blessings which were entirely reserved and promised **to** them (see Lectures on Faith, Lecture Third, paragraph 23). Because they have not that faith required, they become limited in what they seek for and, therefore, what they obtain.

God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses. The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned (*DHC* 5:554-556; August 27, 1843)—

...which is why when the Lord sets something in motion and begins to declare the truth again (and He offers a message that needs to be received, and it is not received by those to whom it is offered), the results are 'they refuse to receive the blessing or knowledge that is offered to them, and therefore they will be damned'—damned in the sense meaning that they hedge up the way, that they limit the ability of God to confer upon them what they might have received. They partake of, ultimately, the sufferings of the damned because the pain of the mind is exquisite when they realize that they have not laid hold upon what God freely offered to give unto them, and therefore, they are their own condemnor, and they are their own judge.

The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law. (*Ibid*)

Can you imagine?! If the children of Israel in that day were cursed by God because they said Moses must talk to God and not us, **how much greater must be the damnation** upon those who say, "You must not talk to God, because we have one who does so for you! And you're not entitled to receive anything beyond the bounds of your limited position in this beehive we've constructed!" Damnable heresy! Doctrines of devils! Propounded by those who are purveyors of a false priestcraft! Unauthorized by God! Unsanctioned by Him! They suffer not themselves to enter in, and they will hedge up the way if you will heed them. There is no man... There is no man on his own errand in this world who can offer to you salvation. But if God sends a message, you'd better heed it, even if you find it difficult to hear.

What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers...outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings (*Ibid*)—

...because the Aaronic holds and is given for judgments and destruction. The Melchizedek is given for blessing. And when someone claims to hold Melchizedek priesthood and they use it in order to offer up judgment and condemnation and control and compulsion and authority over the souls of men—and they refuse to constrain themselves, to use persuasion only and gentleness and meekness—then you know you're listening to an

Aaronic and not a Melchizedek authority. Because the office and the authority and the keys of the Melchizedek is to bless; it's to enlighten; it's to raise and to bring to you light and truth.

In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam. (Ibid)

Because, once again, it is **always** genealogical. It is **always** familial. It has **always** been “turning the hearts of the children back to the fathers”—the final father in that chain being Adam.

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all...thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood. Salvation could not come to the world without the mediation of Jesus Christ. How shall God come to rescue...this generation? He will send Elijah the prophet. The law revealed to Moses in Horeb never was revealed to the children of Israel as a nation. Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. (Ibid)

This talk, on this day by Joseph Smith, is seven years **after** the 1836 Doctrine and Covenants section 110 incident. So,

Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. The anointing and sealing is to be called, elected, and made sure. “Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, ...made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.” The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right from the eternal God, and not by descent from father and mother; and that priesthood is as eternal as God Himself, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. (Ibid)

That is not to say that because one receives that priesthood that they cannot fall from that. Because while you are in **this** world, as Paul put it, you stand in jeopardy every hour. **Here** is the place in which the trial, the test, the temptation, the burden of mortality exists. And it exists for so long as you have the flesh. You do not... Even if you possess the authority, you do not have that abide with you continually on into eternity until you have finished the course, until you have resisted the temptation, until you have completed the race and finished the work. Only when you lay down the burden—here—successfully having completed it, are you permitted then to take it up there, as a matter of right. But here, although the priesthood is endless, although the covenant of God is eternal, a man may fall from it; and therefore, you proceed recognizing that you proceed with eternal peril.

The 2nd Priesthood is Patriarchal authority. Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood. (Ibid)

Now, there is a controversy in which, almost to a man, all of those who have researched the subject have reached the conclusion that Melchizedek priesthood is greater than Patriarchal priesthood and that Levitical priesthood is inferior to them all. So that if you were (as those who have researched it) ranking them, you would say it is Levitical and then Patriarchal and then Melchizedek. And that that's the way in which it's parsed. I disagree with that.

I disagree with that for two reasons. First of all, I do not believe that this talk, given by Joseph Smith, in the order in which he expresses it is top, middle, bottom. I believe it is middle, top, and then he picks up the bottom (with Levitical).

The other reason why I think Patriarchal ought to be viewed as the highest form is because the priesthood which began with Adam was priesthood which was after the Order of the Son of God. And that that priesthood after the Order of the Son of God descended from Adam down to the time of Enoch, and then it got renamed the Priesthood after the Order of Enoch. And then later it got renamed the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek or the priesthood of Melchizedek.

When Adam promises that the priesthood that was in the beginning is going to return at the end of the world also, he is talking about a return at the end of the world of that priesthood which was held by the original patriarchs—a time when, for generations, it was unitary (there was only one) and that the designation (the correct designation) of that priesthood is the “Holy Priesthood” or the “Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God.” It's a long name, but it was **that** priesthood that was held by the patriarchs. As a consequence of it being **that** priesthood, held by the original patriarchs, which was in the beginning of the world and is to return at the end of the world also, I prefer to regard the highest order under the name designation of Patriarchal priesthood. And so, when I use the term, I'm referring to that priesthood originally held by Adam, that priesthood held by Enoch, that priesthood which is more correctly called the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. Therefore, if you are going to say Patriarchal priesthood as a scholar and parse the words differently, you need to understand that I'm using them in this way. And I disagree with you. And I have my reasons for doing so. And I think that Joseph had reasons for doing so also, because of what I just read you.

Go to and finish the temple, and **God** will fill it with power, and you will then receive **more knowledge** concerning **this** priesthood. (Ibid, emphasis added)

I'm suggesting to you that something which, by its nature, required the completion of the temple and required the presence of God, which relates to the revelation given in January of 1841 that I read a few minutes ago—*For there[']s] not a place found on the earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood* (D&C 124:28; see also T&C 41:10)... It requires **Him**—God—to come to that place, and for **Him**—God—to restore to you that which has been taken away—**the fullness**. Go to, and God... You finish the temple, “God will fill it with power...you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.”

Even in the words of Joseph, taken together with Doctrine and Covenants section 124, [verse] 28 that I just read to you, it suggests that the highest form—the one which brings you into contact with God in His holy temple—that one, that priesthood, is correctly designated “Patriarchal.”

Therefore, in this talk, I don't think he's enumerating them by priority. I think he's just giving you a list. He's not trying to prioritize that list.

The 3rd is what is called...Levitical Priesthood, consisting of priests to administer in outward ordinances, made without an oath; but the Priesthood of Melchizedek is **[made] by** an oath and covenant. (*DHC* 5:554-556; August 27, 1843, emphasis added)

But the “oath and [the] covenant” is the oath and the covenant that is given by the Father—it's not what **we** read to the newly-ordained Elder; **that** is an aspiration, and it's very good to have aspirational notions preached to us in connection with the priesthood, but aspiration is not reality. And “knowledge concerning the content” is not possessing the same thing as the covenant itself. And therefore, if you're going to receive the covenant which cannot be broken... The covenant which cannot be broken is obtained by—and from—the Father.

The Holy Ghost is God's messenger to administer in **all** those priesthoods. (*Ibid*)

You see, it was by faith and the power of the Holy Ghost that Melchizedek did all that he did. And if someone gets possession of any or all of these priesthoods, the way in which the priesthood proceeds is in accordance with the power of the Holy Ghost. Joseph just said: it's by the power of the Holy Ghost.

So, let me ask **you** the question, and **you** answer it yourself: Let us assume the case that a woman is filled with the Holy Ghost—rather like Anna in the temple when Christ was brought; and Anna, by the power of the Holy Ghost, prophesies concerning the young boy, the babe, that was brought to the temple. Given the fact that the authority by which priesthood is to become operative (as Joseph just explained) is the Holy Ghost, what possible difference does it make if the prophetess Anna, standing in the temple, prophesying concerning the child who is brought in, cannot grab a knife and go over to the place they tied the animals and cut the throat of the sheep? And then divide it up and carry part of its carcass over and drop it on the iron at the top of the ramp on the altar where they burned? And can't take the bowl and hyssop and walk around and splatter the four corners of the altar at the bloodline of the altar? Why would it be more significant that Anna was deprived of the outward ordinance performance than that she, as a prophetess, filled with the Holy Ghost, spake and prophesied concerning the Son of God on the day that He was brought to the temple, for the offering of the cleansing of Mary, having completed her day? You see, the Holy Ghost is God's messenger to administer in all these priesthoods.

Well, you envy the unenviable, and you focus on the irrelevant because, quite frankly, given the fact that the purpose of that Aaronic priesthood is to pour out judgments and destructions, and its purpose is to seal people up to condemnation, I can't imagine... Well, I take that back—I can imagine why a woman would want to possess that. I have a partner who does divorce work. So, I can imagine. And she's a female too.

Jesus Christ is the heir of this Kingdom—the Only Begotten of the Father according to the flesh, and holds the keys over all this world. Men have to suffer that they may come [up unto] Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens. I know a man that has been caught up to the third heavens and can say, with Paul, that we have seen and heard things that are not lawful to utter. (Ibid)

Well, I believe that the purpose of the heavenly association is to accomplish two things: One is to have valid ordinances, and the second is to obtain answers or direction. I wanna read from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*:

Where did the kingdom of God begin? Where there is no kingdom of God there is no salvation. What constitutes the kingdom of God? Where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God gives His oracles; there is the kingdom of God and where the oracles [of God] are not, there the kingdom of God is not. In these remarks, I have no allusion to the kingdoms of [this] earth. We will keep the laws of the land; we do not speak against them; we never have, and we can hardly make mention of the state of Missouri, of our persecutions there, but what the cry goes forth that we [were] guilty of larceny, burglary, arson, treason, murder...which is false. We speak of the kingdom of God on the earth, not the kingdoms of men. (TPJS, 272; see also DHC 5:256-259)

If you've read that paper I wrote, *Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom*, you'll recognize in that that Brigham Young thought that the kingdom was to be an earthly institution. Joseph was denouncing that. He denounced a lot of things that we have subsequently taken up and said is really our cause.

The plea of many in this day is that we have no right to receive revelations; but if we do not get revelations, we do not have the oracles of God; and if they have not the oracles of God, [then] they are not the people of God. But say you, What will become of the world, or the various professors of religion who do not believe in revelation and the oracles of God as continued to His Church in all ages of the world, when He has a people on earth? I tell you, in the name of Jesus Christ, [that] they will be damned; and when you get into the eternal world, you will find it will be so, they cannot escape the damnation of hell. (Ibid)

...the "oracles of God" (meaning the revelations of God). And the revelations of God were given to us from Joseph Smith as the foundation, as the font from which we draw. But it was always intended that there should arise in **you** the power of obtaining oracles for yourself.

As touching the Gospel and baptism that John preached, I would say that John came preaching the Gospel for the remission of sins; he had his authority from God, and the oracles of God were with him, and the kingdom of God for a season seemed to rest **with John alone**. The Lord promised Zacharias that he should have a son who was a descendant of Aaron, the Lord having promised that [this] priesthood should continue with Aaron and his seed throughout their generations. Let no man take this honor upon himself, except he be called of God, as was Aaron; and Aaron received his call by revelations. An angel of God also appeared unto Zacharias while in the Temple, and told him that he should have a son, whose name should be John, and he should be filled with the Holy Ghost. Zacharias was a priest of God, and officiating in the Temple, and John was a priest after his father, and [he] held the keys of the Aaronic priesthood, and was called of God to preach the Gospel of the kingdom... The Jews, as a nation, having departed from the law of God and the Gospel of the Lord, prepared the way for transferring it to the Gentiles. But, says one, the kingdom of God could not be set up in the days of John, for John said the kingdom was at hand. But I would ask if it could be any nearer to them than to be in the hands of John. The people need not wait for the days of Pentecost to find the kingdom of God, for John had it with him, and he came forth from the wilderness crying out, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of...[God] is nigh at hand," as much as to say, "Out here I have got the kingdom of God, and you can get it, and I am coming after you; and if you don't receive it, you will be damned"; and the scriptures represent that all Jerusalem went out into John's baptism. There was a legal administrator, and those that were baptized were subjects for a king; and also the laws and oracles of God were there; therefore the kingdom of God was there; for no man could have better authority to administer than John; and our Savior submitted to that authority Himself, by being baptized by John; therefore the kingdom of God was set up on the earth, even in the days of John. (Ibid)

John was a legal administrator. Christ recognized him, even though there was an existing priestly authority He **also** respected who were in control of the temple at Jerusalem. (That's me—I'm inserting. That's not reading from *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*.)

There is a difference between the kingdom of God and the fruits and blessings that flow from the kingdom; because there were more miracles, gifts, visions, healings, tongues, &c., in the days of Jesus Christ and His apostles, and on the day of Pentecost, than under John's administration, it does not prove by any means that John had not the kingdom of God, any more than it would that a woman had not a milk pan because she had not a pan of milk, for while the pan might be compared to the kingdom, the milk might be compared to the blessings of the kingdom. John was a priest after the order of Aaron, and had the keys of that priesthood, and came forth preaching repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, but at the same time cries out, "There come[s] one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" and Christ came according to the words of John, and He was greater than John, because He held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood and kingdom of God, and had before revealed the priesthood of Moses,

yet Christ was baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness; and Jesus in His teachings says, "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What rock? Revelation. Again he says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter...the kingdom of God;" and, "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." If a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he can get into the kingdom of God. It is evident the kingdom of God was on the earth, and John prepared subjects for the kingdom, by preaching the Gospel to them and baptizing them, and he prepared the way before the Savior; or came as a forerunner, and prepared subjects for the preaching of Christ; and Christ preached through Jerusalem on the same ground where John had preached; and when the apostles were raised up, they worked in Jerusalem, and Jesus commanded them to tarry there until they were endowed with power from on high. Had they not work to do in Jerusalem? They did work, and prepared a people for the Pentecost. The kingdom of God was with them before the day of Pentecost, as well as afterwards; [as] it was also with John, and he preached the same Gospel and baptism that Jesus and the apostles preached after him. The endowment was to prepare the disciples for their missions unto the world. Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, **there** is the kingdom of God; but where these are not, the kingdom of God is not. All the ordinances, systems, and administrations on the earth are of no use to the children of men, unless they are ordained and authorized of God; for nothing will save a man but a legal administrator; for none others will be acknowledged **either by God or angels**. I know what I say; I understand my mission and business. God Almighty is my shield; and what can man do if God is my friend? I shall not be sacrificed until my time comes; then I shall be offered freely. All flesh is as grass, and a governor is [no] better than other men; when he dies he is but a bag of dust. I thank God for preserving me from my enemies; I have no enemies but for the truth's sake. I have no desire but to do all men good. I feel to pray for all men. We don't ask any people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more. What if all the world should embrace this Gospel? They would then see eye to eye, and the blessings of God would be poured out upon the people, which is the desire of my whole soul. Amen. (Ibid)

This is Joseph in January of 1843.

Joseph Smith also said, "John wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power...the glory from the Jews...by the holy anointing and decree of heaven." That's *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 276. Doctrine and Covenants section 84, verse 28 points out that John *was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power* (see also T&C 82:14). John was sent forth and, in part, was sent forth to be rejected of the Jews so that he could wrest "the keys, the kingdom, ...the power and the glory from the Jews, and this by the holy anointing and decree of heaven." Because an angel had established it and because it was the Powers of Heaven that were behind it.

Well then, we have this also from Joseph:

All men are liars who say they are of the true Church without the revelations of Jesus Christ and the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which is after the order of the Son of God. It is...the order of heavenly things that God should always send a new dispensation into the world when men have apostatized from the truth and lost the priesthood, but when men come out and build upon other men's foundations, they do it on their own responsibility, without authority from God; and when the floods come and the winds blow, their foundations will be found to be sand, and their whole fabric will crumble to dust. Did I build on [an]other man's foundation? [I've] got all the truth which the Christian world possessed, and an independent revelation in the bargain.

That's *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*, on pages 375 and 376.

There are three priesthoods. There are three orders of priesthood. And if you turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 107, that same prophet (who described the existence of three priesthoods) said in the opening verse of Doctrine and Covenants 107, *There are, in the church, **two** priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood* (D&C 107:1, emphasis added). This is yet another reason why I think the third priesthood ought be called Patriarchal. And it's not priesthood which one obtains by going and being sealed in the temple. It's one [that] one obtains by going and meeting with God in **His** temple. That greatest priesthood... *Before [the days of Melchizedek] it was called [this is verse 3 of section 107] the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*. My view is that we've had enough... We've had enough name changes—that when the priesthood returns again in the last days, it will no longer be called after a man (or men or those who have held it in the past), but it will be called the Holy Order after the Son of God—that being, at the end of the world, in conformity with that which was in the beginning.

Even Christ... Even Christ had to be ordained to this order. Look at Matthew; chapter 3 of Matthew, verse 16: *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matthew 3:16; see also Matthew 2:4 RE).

The other night, Margaret Barker suggested that if she were describing the voice, she would have that voice be the voice of a woman saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Which—I didn't say it at the time—but if I were staging it, I would have the voice of a man **and** a woman, speaking in unison the words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"...if I were staging such a thing or attempting to portray it.

Which reminds me of a conversation I'd had with her earlier that evening. They're doing a conference on weaving and sacred fabrics, and she's going to try and put together a veil—and was suggesting the depiction of cherubim as a winged disc ("winged disc" being the symbol of the feminine). And I suggested to her that if I were using that as a representation, I would have six feathers or six flutes on each wing to depict the state of

ascent. And she liked that idea. So, if in her next presentation in the veil of the temple there is a winged disk cherubim being depicted and it has six flutes, I told her she can own that. That's her idea. She can have it from me.

Again, in the book of Hebrews chapter 5, verse 4, beginning at verse 4: *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him...* (Hebrews 5:4-5). You see, Christ didn't do this. It was done by **he** that said unto him, *Thou art my Son, to day I have begotten thee* (ibid, emphasis added; see also Hebrews 1:12 RE).

Okay. Just... I'm gonna do this. It's a complete aside, but I really like the work that Bart Erhman has done because he's tried to reconstruct the Christological debates of the Second and Third Century, in which they rewrote the New Testament in order to conform with their false Christological ideas and arguments. See, when Christ was baptized, the statement that was made to Christ (Bart Erhman has shown) is the statement that you find in Psalms chapter 2, verse 7, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee* (see also Psalms 2:2 RE), which was changed to, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matthew 3:17) in order to solve a debate going on in the Second Century over the idea of adoptionism (that Christ was merely mortal, and He was **adopted** by God through that statement). And so, that statement—which appears in Psalms chapter 2, verse 7—was really what was one time in Matthew in the words I read you before. But it got changed. And Bart Ehrman points, in part, *Thou art my son, [to]day have I begotten thee...* This is the Hebrew statement, because Paul was writing the book of Hebrews at a time...

And I recognize there's an argument over whether Paul is the author of Hebrews, but we're just gonna take it as a given. Joseph didn't quibble over it. I'm not gonna quibble over it. I don't wanna go there; it's a whole 'nother argument. Leave that to the damned scholars, because they surely are damned.

This writing came at a time before the revisionism that occurred in those debates. And therefore, the words that we find here in Hebrews are the words that mirror the statement that you find in Psalms. It's an earlier record. The Deuteronomists were busy not only during the time of the Old Testament Second-Temple-Period; they were busy post-New Testament era, before the formation of the great harlot. (And they are surely busy even today—we call them “correlationists.”) And so, He was begotten by the Father. That is a statement that was made to Christ at the time of His baptism.

Go back to Moses chapter 1. I've already read it, but I wanna remind you that it's there. In Moses chapter 1, it is the Lord speaking to Moses:

Behold [this is verse 4], thou art my son; wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all... (Moses 1:4; see also Genesis 1:1 RE).

Look, this is another astounding example of what the purpose of God... The purpose of God is to bestow upon people the glory of God. And what is the glory of God? *The glory of God is*

intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth (D&C 93:36; see also T&C 93:11). And what is truth? It is the *knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come* (D&C 93:24; see also T&C 93:8). Those are all in the scriptures, and you ought to all know that. **That's** the purpose of God. And the glory of God is reflected when you know something (which is why I am trying to communicate something—so that **you** might have glory).

Look what happens to Moses:

Behold, thou art my son; wherefore look...I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease. (Moses 1:4; see also Genesis 1:1 RE)

Look at that! **God's words never cease**. Even when silence is caused to reign because the Powers of Heaven are so disgusted with humanity that **they** withdraw themselves, God's words don't cease at all. His words do not stop. And even if the angels refuse to minister, communicate, visit... Yet, will God still speak unto men.

Some people asked the question about God speaking to Cain (as a result of the talk I gave in Idaho Falls referring to your privilege of talking to God because He spoke to Cain). It doesn't say that God **appeared** to Cain; it says that God **spoke** to Cain. Cain heard the voice of God speaking to him. He didn't get caught up to the throne of God; he did not have a throne theophany; he was not brought back and redeemed from the fall—but he **heard** the voice of God. God spoke to Cain **after** the murder of Abel. The angels withdrew from him. The angels were grieved. They would have nothing to do—and yet, God still spoke to him.

His words are endless. I don't care what malignancy you think you carry around within you. The fact is, none of you have done the same crap that Cain did, because Cain possessed greater knowledge than you did at the time of the murder that he committed. And yet, God spoke to him still. Therefore, have the confidence—even if you grieve angels—that **God** will talk to you. ...*My words, for they never cease* (ibid).

Yeah, God is talkative. God desires us to know more than we know—if we will receive it. And the minute we tell Him to be quiet and withdraw and leave us alone, we are in the very act of damning ourselves. Because what we're saying is, “That which You offered unto us, we would prefer to be silence, instead.” Don't do that.

Abraham chapter 3, verse 12, we encounter ~~God~~ [Abraham] saying, *And he said unto me [Abraham saying]: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof* (Abraham 3:12; see also Abraham 5:3 RE). Once again, you have (at the same instance that he is being acknowledged as a son) the outpouring of the intelligence of God, the glory of God, light and truth—*knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come*.

Joseph—Joseph Smith—in Doctrine and Covenants section 121, verse 7: *My son, peace be unto thy soul* (see also T&C 138:11). Okay, if you view priesthood as a brotherhood or an association, then I want to suggest that the way in which you should parse the three orders of priesthood is to parse them this way:

- As among men, it's merely a brotherhood of men.
- As between mankind and the heavens:
 - the first order is an order in which there is an association between men and angels.
 - The second order is an order in which there is an association between mankind and the Son of God.
 - And the third order—the highest order, the Patriarchal order—brings one into contact with the Patriarch who (of all the names that He could choose to be called by) chooses to have us call Him *our Father who art in heaven*—the third grand order being sonship to the Father and association with Him who sits in the bosom of eternity and sustains all the creation. The highest priesthood is an association with the Father, brought about as a consequence of the Father calling: “My son.” It is the Holy Order after the Son of God because those who inherit that become, by definition, His Sons. They are the Church of the Firstborn because they are in association with—and made by the Father equal to—all those who rise up to be Firstborn.

Go to Moses chapter 5 [6]. This is a prophecy given by Adam which constituted one of the covenants which I referred to in the talk given at Centerville. Moses... (Oh, excuse me; it's chapter 6, verse 7): “Now this same Priesthood”—this is Adam speaking: *Now this same Priesthood which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world, also. Now this prophecy Adam spake, as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost* (Moses 6:7-8; see also Genesis 3:14 RE). Therefore, it was the power of the priesthood, animated by the Holy Ghost, which established, as a matter of right—and therefore, of covenant—the promise that this thing, this authority, this power, and this relationship which once existed in the beginning of the world is to exist again at the end of the world. And that that, too, arises as a consequence of the covenant given in the beginning.

So, what kind of person receives that ordination? I'm going back to the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 14. This is the kind of person: *Melchizedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness*. You have to have faith. You have to ~~wrought~~ perform righteousness, which is not the same thing as virtue. Virtue... Virtue can be **offended** by righteousness. Virtue is...

Virtue would never kill, okay? It just never would. But it is righteous—in the case of Nephi, at the command of God—to slay Laban. Virtue would never **do** any number of things, **say** any number of things, or **behave** in any number of ways in which John the Baptist behaved. *[You] generation of vipers* (Luke 3:7; see also Luke 3:5 RE). Look, we translate that as if what we're reading is some nicely-phrased King Jamesian version of an insult. If you were trying to put it into modern English... This is John the Baptist (a righteous man with whom the kingdom of God existed) essentially, in the language of their day, saying, “You sons of

bitches!" Because in our vernacular, by saying, "...sons of bitches," what you're saying is your mother is a female dog; and therefore, you are a dog; and since you're a dog, you are a cur, and you are unworthy. This is guttural language. We read, "You generations of vipers!" and we say, Oh, isn't that a nice way to parse out that John's thinks he's talking to the bad guys. And yet, we look sometimes at **righteousness**, and we say it can never be so because it is not virtuous. Because we overlay virtue atop righteousness—and it does not work and never has worked that way. Righteousness controls, and virtue surrenders. And virtue yields **every time** to righteousness—else Abraham could never have been commanded to slay his son. Because **that** was not virtuous. Therefore,

Melchizedek was a man of righteousness; ...when a child he feared God [not man], ...stopped the mouths of lions, ...quenched the violence of fire. ...thus, having been approved of God [not man]... (JST Genesis 14:26-27)

In fact, to be approved of God, in many cases, will make you offensive to man. But the opinions, and the vagaries, and the fashions of men, the opinion-polling and the drifts of what is and what is not popular at one point or another are damnable. They ought not even be considered. Righteousness **does not give** any regard to such things. And yet, it may be virtuous... It may be virtuous to be a limp-wristed, weepy, happy-go-lucky, "have a nice day" kind of chap... But righteousness will kick his ass everyday.

...having been approved of God... (Ibid)

It is God—and God's approval alone—that matters. It is what God regards of you. It is what is in your heart, because God can detect what is in your heart. God knows why you do what you do. God knows why you say what you say. God **knows** what is in your thoughts. Therefore, to be approved of God is to be weighed against the standard of righteousness and not the whims of fashion. Fashion will come and go. Ideas will be popular or unpopular. Righteousness will endure forever. This. This. This is the kind of man upon whom the words get spoken, "My Son."

The **fathers** (about whom I spoke in Centerville) had this association with God. They had this fellowship with God. They had this sonship **with** God. And they had this priesthood **from** God. And the hearts of the children need to turn to the fathers, and that, too, because Elijah is coming to plant in the hearts of the children the promises that were made.

Now, I wanna take another detour into parsing things in a way that you might not have considered before, and for this I wanna go to Doctrine and Covenants section 128, and I wanna look at verse 21. This is Joseph... This is Joseph writing a letter that got canonized. And he's talking about all of the stuff that had gone on in the process of getting the Restoration fully established on the earth, and he mentions in this letter that he writes these things:

And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through[out] all the travels and

*tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! [So the voice of God has been there throughout all of this, as Joseph presided and as the Church rolled forth.] **And** the voice of Michael, [Michael], the archangel; the voice of Gabriel ["El" being the name of God], and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, ...there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (D&C 128:21; see also T&C 151:15-17)*

So, I wanna suggest to you that Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are known to us as those who have come—though they were part of the El (or, in the plural form, the “Elohim”)—they came, and they served here. They came, and they ministered here:

- **Micha-el** descended, and he came to the earth, and he was known as Adam in mortality.
- **Gabri-el** came to the earth, and he was known in mortality as Noah.
- There is a big debate over the identity of **Rapha-el**. I'll tell you what **I** think, and you can take it or leave it. Raphael is the name that was given to the man who in mortality we know as Enoch.
- Now there are four angels who preside over the four corners of the earth. And Joseph **surely** knew that. And Joseph mentions the names of three of the four, but he leaves the fourth one out. And I find the absence of the fourth one rather extraordinary. The fourth one's name is **Uri-el**, also one of the Elohim. And although there are those who will absolutely cry heresy, throw dirt on their hair, and tear their clothes because they are scholars, and they are bona fide, and they know I'm talking out of my hat—but I'd remind you Joseph talked out of his hat, too—that fourth and missing, unmentioned angel is Uriel who, in mortality, was known to us as John.

Adam is the one in the East, the angel who was considered the one who presides over and has control of the air—which is apt because unto Adam was given the breath of life in the beginning.

Raphael is in the South, and he is associated with the power of fire—which is apt because of his fiery ascent with his people into heaven.

Gabriel is the angel in the West who has the power over water—which is apt because, in mortality, he managed through the Flood.

And Uriel, though not mentioned, is the one who, in the North, has the power over the earth—which is apt because he remains upon the earth, and he is the guardian at one gate, with Elijah at the other end.

But you can take and leave all that as you will. I find the mention here (in this letter by Joseph) of these individuals and these powers—and these four (three of whom are named;

the fourth of whom, potentially, is unnamed)—to be interesting, though he does mention *divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time* (ibid).

Now I wanna focus on... Are we out? Five minutes still? Okay. Now I wanna focus on...

You think, and you hear, and you get beaten into your head on a continuous drum beat... I know, 'cuz I go to your meetings too. And I know this 'cuz you broadcast your general conference, and so, I can hear what you guys think. And—ohmm—here's what you think: "Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! We got keys! We got keys! We got... We got... We're bustling with keeeeeees! We got your keys!"

Now, you tell me, Mormons... You tell me—you declare to me—what are your dispensations? Tell me what your rights are. Tell me what your keys are. Even John Taylor tried to develop the *Book of Keys* because he didn't know what they were. You tell me what they are. Stop proclaiming that you **own** them, and **tell me** what the hell they are. If you got 'em, you oughta understand 'em. Tell me what your honors are. Tell me what your majesty is. Tell me what your glory is. Tell me, then, what the power of your priesthood is. Because if keys alone were sufficient, I rather think that Joseph Smith (who understood what he was writing) would not have gone to the trouble of parsing through the words *dispensation...rights...keys...honors...majesty...glory, and...power* (ibid) if it was all speaking to exactly the same thing. It is **not** speaking to the same thing. There is so much more that has to go on and be understood **if** you are going to save yourself and any soul in this generation in that kingdom which **we claim** we would like to inherit. And we claim we would like to inherit it without any idea of the consequences of what it would take in order to ascend there—or without any regard to the fact that you don't take one of the El and bring them down into mortality pain-free. You say that the Son of God condescended to come and be here. And I say, so did Michael, and so did Raphael, and so did Gabriel—because coming down and condescending to be here (on a rescue mission) by those who dwell in glory is an act of service and sacrifice that we simply take for granted out of the abundance of our ignorance.

(Well, we're in need of another break. We have to change the disk, so another five minute break, and then we'll try and finish it.)

(Should we start? Okay.)

If you go to and you look at Doctrine and Covenants section 76, beginning at verse 50, and you read through the list of things that are descriptors of those that are going to inherit Celestial glory... Beginning at verse 50—and we don't have time to go through all of the things that are there—but in 51 it says that these are people:

...who received the testimony of Jesus [that is, Christ testifying to them that they're saved], ...believed on his name [these are people who]...were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in...water in his name, ...this according to the commandment which he has given—

*That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, ...receive the Holy [Ghost] by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power [that sounds a little different than what we do]; And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth...on all those who are just and true. [These] are they who **are** the Church of the Firstborn. [These] are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—*

*[These] are they who **are** priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory [I hope you read those words now with a little different meaning than you did from before 9:30 today]; And **are** priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods...*

*...all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs...they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. ...they **shall** overcome all things [that's in the future].*

*...let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet. These **shall** dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever. These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people. These are they who **shall** have part in the first resurrection. These are they who **shall** come forth in the resurrection of the just. These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all. ...just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant...*

...[bodies] whose bodies are celestial, ...glory...of the sun [those who inherit everlasting burnings]... (D&C 76:51-70, emphasis added; see also T&C 69:10-22)

These are those who are referred to as the “El.” **These** are those that were referred to when Moroni said that Elijah will come to *plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the father* (D&C 2:2; see also Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE) and when Joseph spoke in August the 27th of 1843 that Elijah **will** come. He **will** come. I've written a paper on this, and I'm not gonna repeat that.

I do wanna talk about sealing authority because there have been questions asked about sealing. I intended to address that, in any event. And I wanna suggest to you that there are three kinds of sealing authority which are given.

There is a first form of sealing power (and I'm talking about the kind of power not that can seal you up unto condemnation or judgment; I'm talking, instead, about Melchizedek sealing power, the kind that was designed to bless and to preserve). The first kind of sealing power is that kind which is given to someone when there is a dispensation of the gospel

being founded. An example of that you can find in Exodus chapter 34 (involving Moses as a dispensation head) where, in verses 27 and 28, the Lord says, *And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights...* (Exodus 34:27-28; see also Exodus 18:15 RE) and so on. And so, as a dispensation head, a form of sealing power is given to that person which establishes a covenant that was intended to go beyond that individual alone.

Take a look in Second Nephi chapter 1. And in Second Nephi chapter 1, we find Lehi speaking,

*Notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath **covenanted with me** should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.* (2 Nephi 1:5, emphasis added; see also 2 Nephi 1:1 RE)

This is a covenant made by God with Lehi as a dispensation head, the beneficiaries of whom are beyond merely that dispensation head. It includes all those who come thereafter. They are beneficiaries of that. The covenant gets established through one; it is intended for others.

Joseph, in Doctrine and Covenants section 22: *BEHOLD, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and...everlasting covenant, ...that which was from the beginning* (D&C 22:1; see also Joseph Smith History 18:8 RE). So, through Joseph there was a covenant formed which would be binding beyond the person with whom God covenanted directly.

Dispensation heads are given the power—the sealing power, the authority—the ability to use the power to “seal up” by embodying the covenant that is given to them by God **into an ordinance**. And that ordinance remains in effect **after** the death of Moses, **after** the death of Lehi, **after** the death of Joseph Smith, so long as it remains embodied within the **ordinance**. This kind of ordinance—or this kind of sealing authority—then requires, and gives rise to, the second kind.

And the second kind is a sealing power that is embodied within authoritative ordinances. All dispensations of the gospel follow the covenant-giver’s ordinances. For so long as the ordinances that were handed to you through the dispensation head are kept intact, the **covenant** is kept intact. And the second form of sealing power is a sealing power which is not dependent upon the persistent presence of a dispensation head. It is only dependent upon keeping faithfully the ordinance that has been established and handed down by God through covenant.

This second form of sealing power is the sealing authority which the Church claims to possess. It is the sealing authority that was referred to by Henry B. Eyring in the General Conference talk he gave in April 2012, “Families under Covenant,” in which he proclaimed that the Church has the authority to seal families together by using the ordinances that have been handed down. I’m quoting from his talk:

The Holy Spirit of Promise, through our obedience and sacrifice, must seal our temple covenants in order to be realized in the world to come... “The Holy Ghost is one who reads the thoughts and hearts of men, and gives his sealing approval to the blessings pronounced upon their heads. Then it is binding, efficacious, and of full force” (Melvin J. Ballard, quoted by Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 111).

I agree with what he has said. I believe that is a correct way to explain the limited authority to seal enjoyed by the Church and the condition that remains, even in the ordinance, requiring the faithfulness and the subsequent sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise in order for those ordinances to endure. Nevertheless, the Church possesses that second kind of sealing authority, and it uses it in the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The second form of sealing authority, however, has conditions upon it—because God is not bound by anything that differs one iota from His word. And that doesn't matter **who** it is. God is bound by His word, not by man's. Therefore, when you handle such ordinances, you need to keep in mind the admonition that was given in the prophecy of Isaiah:

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. (Isaiah 24:5-6; see also Isaiah 7:1 RE)

It's talking about a future time that is coming. But it's lamenting a condition that you have to decide about its currency. That's Isaiah chapter 24, verses 5 and 6.

So, when you have possession of that second form of sealing authority, you have to recognize that the covenant handed down from the dispensation head **can** be broken. It was broken rather abruptly in the case of the covenant given to Lehi when, at the death of Lehi, his family fragmented into two groups—one of whom desired to preserve the covenant, and one of whom rejected it and walked away from it. Therefore, it was not to the ones that had rejected the covenant that the Lord would subsequently come to appear—but they, by and large, would have been destroyed. So, handling the second form of the covenant, after the dispensation head has established it, is a matter of fidelity to the word of God and faithfulness to the word of God and faithfulness in preserving and practicing the ordinance that has been established.

There is a third kind of sealing power. And this third kind of sealing power goes beyond either of the first two. And it has absolutely unique application, and it is given only in rare circumstances and for highly specific purposes. That third form involves giving the authority to control the elements. This was authority that was possessed by Enoch. This was authority that was possessed by Melchizedek. This was authority that was possessed by Christ. This was the authority that Christ had to suspend (or not employ) in order to permit those who would kill Him to kill Him. This is the kind of authority which, in the case of **every** such individual, they give their lives up willingly. Their lives cannot be taken.

An example—and it's a good example, because it gives you insight into **why** such authority would ever be given to a man—is found in Helaman chapter 10, beginning at verse 5. This is the Lord speaking to Nephi, son of Helaman, son of Helaman. To Nephi he says:

And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness...

And the “unwearyingness” is described in verse 4—that is, Nephi has gone, and he's declared what the Lord has asked him to declare, and he hasn't feared **them**, nor has he sought to protect his own life, but he has instead sought to keep the commandments of God. Therefore, because he has done this with such unwearyingness...

*...behold, I [this is God speaking to Nephi] will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, **for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.** (Helaman 10:5, emphasis added)*

That's not a commandment. That's a description of the character and the nature of Nephi. That's not saying, “I'm giving this to you, but be careful how you use it. Please don't do anything that isn't according to my will.” That's the Lord saying, “I, God, have faith in **you**, Nephi—that **you**, Nephi, will not do anything other than my will.” You see... The whole thing turns on its head, at this point. You see, this is **God** having faith **in a man**. What manner of man, then, does **God** have faith in?

Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels. (Ibid, vs. 6)

Because this decree in this circumstance may require those who are watching to obey the word of the man. Therefore, the angels (the Powers of Heaven) must give heed—because God is declaring it in the presence of the hosts who are standing before Him.

I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people. Behold [that is a rather Aaronic behavior... Behold] I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye...seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; ...whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people. (Ibid, vs. 6-7)

This is rather Melchizedek because you can seal up unto eternal life. This is the positive side. This is the thing which those who are given this authority seek earnestly to do.

...thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done. (Ibid, vs. 8)

...because the temple is subordinate to the word of God. The temple is not the place that **controls** the word of God, the temple is the place which most of all ought be subject to the word of God. It's not a place to innovate in ordinances. It's a place to obey, to follow, to give strict heed unto, and to not vary.

And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done. And behold, if [thou shalt] say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass. (Ibid, vs. 9-10)

And then, because he knows the nature and the character of the man involved in giving this authority, God commands him. He has to go out and deliver the message:

...Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction. (Ibid, vs. 11; see also Helaman 3:19 RE)

He didn't wanna do that, because that's not in the character of the person who, with unwearyingness, would go out and declare the word of God—because such people have in their heart one and only one objective, and that is the salvation of the souls of men. But now this troubling message has to be given. And when he goes and he delivers it, he doesn't even use the authority that he's been given. He simply asks the Lord if the Lord will smite.

Look at Enoch in the book of Moses, chapter 6—because, once again, we're looking at someone to whom this authority was given. Moses chapter 6, verse 34 (God speaking to Enoch): *Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all **thy** words will **I** justify; and the mountains **shall** flee before you, and the rivers **shall** turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me* (emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:2 RE)—because it was Enoch's purpose to abide in God. Therefore, when he speaks and the elements obey, they obey precisely because it is the word of God which Enoch is speaking. It is not Enoch out there innovating. Enoch would have forfeited his life before he would have said or done anything that was not in accordance with the will of God, as would have Nephi. Therefore, they are trustworthy.

And then, we looked at Joseph Smith translation of Genesis chapter 14.

As to these three kinds of authority,

- the first authority, given unto a dispensation head: only God can pass that to man. Man cannot pass that to man.

- The second kind of sealing authority that we talked about can be passed from man to man, from generation to generation—remains in full force and effect for so long as the covenant is not broken.
- The third kind not only cannot be given by man to man but is given as a consequence of that extraordinary combination of mortality and immortality, in which you find a person on the earth that God has faith and confidence in. You be that kind of person.

Now, I wanna talk for a minute about sealing (as it manifests itself in some of the records of the Church) and parse some things that we find in the scriptures. Because in the minutes of Far West in October of 1831, Brother Joseph Smith, Jr. said that “the order of the high priesthood is that they have power given them to seal up the Saints unto eternal life. And said it was the privilege of every elder [present to be] ordained to the high priesthood,” which led everyone to think that they had the power to seal, and they ran about doing all kinds of sealing things which, again, I reckon that as authority given to a dispensation head, which at that point had not been embodied into an ordinance, and he was simply saying: We can do this stuff. At which point, those who thought they had that authority ran about doing that.

Well, if you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 68, first verses 3 and 4: *This is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.* Then go over to 12: *And of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life. Amen* (see also T&C 55:1-2).

So, this is talking in the context of someone having authority to seal when moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And that is authority which anyone of **you** (and the prophetess Anna, in the temple at Jerusalem, when Christ came into the temple—a **woman** can use) when moved upon by the power of the Holy Ghost. And it is the word of God, and it is the power to seal if it originates from God. That doesn't mean it's the same thing as a dispensation head. It doesn't mean it's the same thing as an ordinance. And it doesn't mean that it's the same thing as the control of the elements, given in those rare cases. But what it **does** mean is that the word of God will always be respected, both in time and in eternity, **if** it is given by God, **if** it is the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are those who have heard that their calling and election is made sure. And they've heard that as a witness from God. Don't doubt the word of God given to you. However, don't think for one moment that's the end of the matter. Remember (that in the cases that we looked at before) that one of the purposes of ascending up into the presence of the Father is to be endowed with knowledge, with light and truth, and with intelligence, to possess a God-like mind and a God-like understanding. Therefore, no matter what you receive, you ought to always search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God. Indeed, we're commanded to do so, as I reminded you in Boise and won't repeat again here. I've also read you previously and won't repeat it again here—Doctrine and Covenants section 1, verse 8...

8 thru 10 (see also T&C 54:2), the sealing power manifested in an Aaronic setting, in which it is sealed up unto condemnation.

I want to mention that beyond there being a fellowship of man (or males) and a brotherhood, there is also a fellowship that is extended, as well, to women. If you find a woman in scripture who has had the ministry of angels, you have a sister who has joined in that association. I won't take time to do so, but if you look in Judges chapter 13, verses 2 to 5, you have Samson's mother being ministered to by an angel promising the coming of the one who would be a judge in Israel (see also Judges 6:1 RE). You have in Genesis chapter 18, verses 9 to 15, Abraham's wife with angelic ministrants (see also Genesis 7:36 RE). And the most obvious case being Mary in the book of Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 to 31, in which Mary is ministered to by Gabriel, one of the Elohim, who came to announce that she would conceive and bear a child, though she knew no man (see also Luke 1:5 RE).

Boy... Take note that there are, on a number of occasions, women who conceive and bear children, but the births are miraculous. In the case of Mary, the child that was born was conceived in a miraculous way. As also was Samson. As was John. Whether it's infertility and barrenness, whether it's being past the age of menopause, or whether it's not having had intercourse, there are these beings who come into the world as a consequence of something other than the normal manner of conception. And yet, everything else unfolds biologically the same as a normal birth. The child that is born, obviously, inherits mortality and blood from the mother.

Parse that in your own mind, and then take a look at what the Lord says in Abraham chapter 3 about the "souls" in the pre-existence who were good. And recognize that the definition of the soul (given in the Doctrine and Covenants) is both the spirit and the body. And yet, they are "souls," and they're coming into this world, but...

Most people think of priesthood in a model that is given by the Church: that is, something that is passed from man to man; that it is something that involves a brotherhood among men; and that it can be removed by institutional shunning.

It is probably better to think of priesthood in terms of—at one degree (that we would call Aaronic or Levitical)—possesses an association with angels. And another order that possesses an association with the Son of God. And yet another level at which the association is one that makes you a son of God, which is the Holy Order **after** the Son of God; that is, the status of the individual involved has been changed to themselves being a son of God, a bar-El.

Now, how is priesthood communicated in every instance? If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 20 to find out how you do ordinations... Ordinations (in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants): *Every elder, priest, teacher, or deacon is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him;he is to be ordained by the **power of the Holy Ghost**, which is in the one who ordains him* (D&C 20:60, emphasis added; see also Joseph Smith History 16:14 RE). And so, it's the power of the Holy Ghost that animates the one

doing the ordination, and that ordination is to one of the **offices** in the Church that consists of Elder, Priest, Teacher, or Deacon. And **that's** the manner in which these offices are supposed to be filled.

In Moroni chapter 3: *After this manner did they ordain...* This is chapter 3, verse 4: *After this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men; ...they ordained them by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them* (emphasis added; see also Moroni 3:1 RE). And therefore, if they have the power of the Holy Ghost, they had the power to ordain.

At the beginning, when the Church was first formed, the notion that there was this integrated priesthood that animated everything **was not present**. And those that went out, went out because they had been chosen by common consent and ordained by those—through the Holy Ghost—to have the authority to go out and do these things. And they were supposed to preach, teach, exhort, expound, and so on. And they did so. And their baptisms had the required effect.

When we... When you read the Book of Mormon, and you look at the baptismal prayer that's furnished in the Book of Mormon, it says: *Having authority of Jesus Christ I baptize you in the name...* (3 Nephi 11:25; see also 3 Nephi 5:8 RE) and so on. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we say, *Having been **commissioned** of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father and...the Son and...the Holy Ghost* (D&C 20:73, emphasis added; see also Joseph Smith History 16:23 RE). That was actually a word change. It's a word change instituted by Joseph Smith, and it ought to give you confidence that since the Lord, in the first instance, **commissioned** The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (and He did so at a time in which priesthood had not been generally disseminated), that by commissioning the Church and giving to it the authority and the **commission** to go out and baptize, that the Church possesses the authority to baptize still.

Also, when John came (and it doesn't matter if you read the account that is given by Joseph in the Joseph Smith History, or you get it in the footnote in the Joseph Smith History, written by Oliver Cowdery—the words are, in effect, the same), that authority by Aaron to baptize, that's going to linger. That is a far more persistent form of priestly authority. It's gonna be around.

But it's a question that had been asked I want to answer; it's been asked by a variety of people in a variety of ways, and probably the most blunt way of posing the question was this, "Is there any priesthood authority or power in most of the LDS Church?"

I wanna remind you of an incident that we find in First Samuel—this is First Samuel chapter 1. Now, remember that Hannah is barren. Hannah cannot have a child. And Hannah is a faithful woman. She is a faithful, believing woman. And she goes up to the tabernacle presided over by Eli. (Eli, who raises despicable children, who will ultimately be slain by God; Eli, who will be replaced by Samuel—and replaced by Samuel on the same day that his two sons are slain in battle, the Ark is lost to the Philistines, his daughter—who was

pregnant—miscarries the child, and he—Eli—falls over backwards and fractures his skull and dies; the whole family wrapped up in a holocaust of death on the same day. This is Eli. This is oft-times called the “wicked priest Eli.”)

Well, Hannah goes up to the Tabernacle; and Hannah, in faith, is praying at the Tabernacle. And to give you an idea of the lowly state of the Tabernacle in that day, it’s so common-place a thing that when Eli sees her praying, her ~~mouths~~ lips moving but no words coming out, he assumes she’s like the rest of them there; she’s just drunk. And so, he’s a little upset that a drunken woman has joined in and is now here in the Tabernacle; and so, he complains. And she says...

Well, Eli (in verse 14 of the first book of Samuel first chapter): *How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.* And Hannah says, “No, I’m not. I’m not. I’ve come here to pray.” And verse 17, Eli answered and said, *Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him* (see also 1 Samuel 1:4-5 RE).

A faithless, wicked, insubordinate priest (who will be slain by the hand of God with his sons and his grandson, all on the same day) is able—because of the **worthiness** of Hannah—to give to Hannah—because of **her** faith—a blessing from God.

Because in the **ordinances**, the **power of God is manifest**; not because of some white-shirt wearing, dark-suit clad, institutional chap with a certificate and common consent is doing something; but because you come in faith to God, believing, and you wrestle a blessing from God, through the means that He has allowed it to be bestowed: by **your** faith. And you have God take note of **your** diligence and **your** faith.

I want to suggest that if you go to a patriarch in the Church, in faith, believing that God is able, through any inspired man giving a blessing by the power of the Holy Ghost, without regard to priesthood—because priesthood is animated by the power of the Holy Ghost—therefore, if they have the power of the Holy Ghost, it comes from God.

In large measure, your faith matters far more than you think it does. I know a great deal more than I knew at the time I went to the Jordan River temple to perform vicarious work for deceased ancestors, an incident that I recorded in one of the little vignettes in *The Second Comforter*. I went to the temple—in faith, believing—and I met eleven of my ancestors who were redeemed because of **my** faith. And they could use any condition in which they can find the rites, any tattered ruin left they could use, so long as there was **faith** upon the earth to act in their behalf.

We think there’s some magic, whammy voodoo in possession of a franchise which the franchise-holders are able to use in order to push away or gather in, and so that their families and their insiders and their beneficiaries and their cronies can get supercharged Celestial blessings. And “the least” can be shunned and held away. And all they are doing is behaving like a parade of fools. Don’t be taken in. **Your** faith matters. **Your** confidence matters. **Your** driving the power of the Spirit into your life matters. You want an

authoritative baptism? Go get someone to baptize you who claims that they know the ordinance and can perform it. And you go in faith, believing, and let the Holy Ghost ratify the event.

The first missionaries sent out by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were not ordained to anything. And they baptized, and their names are on the record of the Church, and we've done some revisionism with our history, and we kinda, kinda, sorta put priesthood on 'em now. But if you go to the contemporaneous stuff, it wasn't present. And yet, their baptism mattered—because the people came in faith, believing, repenting of their sins, and going before God to shed their sins. And they emerged from the waters of baptism, having been cleansed of their sins **by the power of the Holy Ghost**.

At the end of the day, the ordinance that you receive by the laying on of hands is simply an admonition for you to go get it! In fact, if you pay real careful attention to the scriptures... You look this up; prove it one way or the other—the only ones that have the power to give the **gift** of the Holy Ghost in all of scriptures are apostles. Now, we conflate it—because in the same verse it says *apostles*, it says *elders* (D&C 20:38; see also Joseph Smith History 16:11 RE). An Apostle is an Elder, and we can go on... yadda yadda... and we say, “Gift of the Holy Ghost.” But the purpose of establishing the apostleship was to give someone (who had contact with the Second Comforter) power to be able to give the Comforter. And so, the laying on of hands authoritatively was originally restricted. But the **admonition** is given to **all**; and therefore, **all** have the ability to lay hold upon it by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Lay hold upon it.

So, well. Joseph Smith said on page 308 of *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*, “If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments, and by obeying all the ordinances of [~~the house of God~~] the house of the Lord.”

I wanna suggest that if you define the house of God as a temple—a building with walls and a spire and an angel on top—if that's your definition, okay, then there are an infinite number of things that can interfere with your ability to accomplish this, one of them being that the temple has been defiled. Another one of them being that the ordinances have been changed; and therefore, the covenant has been broken. Another of them being that the officiator who shows up has left his adulterous paramour to come in and perform the sealing. And so, there's any number of ways in which you—at the altar, kneeling in good-faith—have no way of knowing whether or not you can do this, and therefore... Oh, oh, oh, you can let your doubts lay hold upon you.

Let me read it to you again though and offer another definition. “If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments, and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord.” I wanna redefine that “house”—not in terms of physical structure, but in terms of familial relationship, in which God alone establishes His house, and that too, by

acknowledging who His sons and daughters are. **That house** can never be overtaken, touched, trampled, broken, forsaken, compromised, or adulterated, because man is powerless. And so, when the house of God is to be set in order in the last days, don't think of that as a movement that you're awaiting for someone else to accomplish. How do you not know that the One Mighty and Strong, to be sent to set in order the house of God, is not Jesus Christ himself, waiting to minister to all those who will come to Him? Because receiving our Lord is, in itself, an ordinance.

Now, keeping in mind everything I've said, now we're really gonna parse the scriptures in a way that may not yet have occurred to you, but I find perfectly delightful. Doctrine and Covenants section 132; I wanna begin at verse 8. And I want you to remember what I've said the house of God is.

*Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion. Will I accept...an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which **I** have not appointed? And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, **before the world was?** I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord. And **everything** that is in the world, whether it be **ordained of men, [or] by thrones, or [by] principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be**, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, **shall be thrown down**, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in [or] after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God. For whatsoever things remain are by **me**; and whatsoever things are not **by me** shall be shaken and destroyed (D&C 132:8-14, emphasis added).*

The Powers of Heaven. And this is the reason why that third form of priesthood is so rare a commodity—because even the angels desire to inquire into it, but the angels don't possess it. And it doesn't matter if, in that hierarchy of those that exist on the other side of the veil, you manage to wrestle something from those who are powers there and possess thrones or principalities. God is saying in this revelation—if you understand the words—that even His **angels** (and those who have ascended far up) must, in every case, only establish that which comes by the will and covenant of the Son and the Father: the Son, because He possesses the keys to do so; the Father, because He is the one from whom the original covenant began in the pre-existence. So, don't think, because you've had an angel promise you something... In Doctrine and Covenants section 132, you have to connect up with the Father.

In the first meeting at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Adam was not considered to be among those who were mortal because Adam had begun life in the Garden in the presence of God. Therefore, mortals who were born into the mortal realm in that meeting began with Seth. The seven who gathered at Adam-ondi-Ahman were mortal because they were born outside of God's presence. And they were restored again into God's presence at the meeting at Adam-ondi-Ahman.

The fact is that that same thing that was in the beginning will be in the end of the world, also. That's the covenant; that's the promise; that's the destiny—and God will surely fulfill that.

I also think... We take a lot of comfort, and we spend a lot of money buying all of the stuff around Springhill, Missouri (valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman) because that was a place where Adam was. And it's the place where God will come to once again. I wanna suggest that the wicked, the knavish, the proud, the boastful, those who seek the honors of men will never have possession of and be able to control or prevent the unfolding of God's work. The words Adam-ondi-Ahman mean "Adam in the presence of the Father." Therefore, any place that the Ancient of Days comes to, while Christ is there also, is by definition "Adam-ondi-Ahman." Therefore, it doesn't matter if a fallen and corrupt society owns a piece of real estate that they claim. God is not bound by the stratagems of men. Nor are His purposes controlled by the vanities of men.

And yet, if they will repent and if they will hear what the Lord has to say, He can still work with them. But if not, then He'll work with **you**—assuming you came and you're willing to hear, and assuming your heart is soft and you're willing to take in the things that God required to be included in what I'm saying today (some of which came as recently as this morning).

I'm doing this to be faithful to the things that have been asked of me—not by man or men, but by God. I don't even control the content of this material. I'm not parsing these scriptures because I **think** they are nice. I'm telling you what I **know** to be true, because it's what I've been asked to declare by Him whose presence I have been in.

In *The Second Comforter*, I told you that shortly after being baptized into the Church, I was told by an angel: "On the first day of the third month in nine years, your ministry will begin, and so you must prepare." Well, a couple things about that: "On the first day of the third month in nine years," I was called to be Gospel Doctrine teacher. And so it began, then and there, and in that setting, and among you good people! But it has never ended. It began by a calling from an angel; it continues still. And therefore, don't think... Don't think I'm just some vain fellow hoping to attract notice. Most of what I attract in my universe, in my setting, it's... It's negative, as some of you know. It has not been the source of delight. It's been the source of profound discomfort.

But there was a question I was going to answer: "How are you and your family doing since the excommunication? We worry about you." Great. The blessings of God are without constraint. And you do not have, and no man can control, the outpouring of blessings upon those who will give heed to Him. And therefore, I've been surprised at how much of a rather non-event it has been, in many respects.

There are a couple things that are a little different, and that is that I really gotta go out of my way to make some people feel comfortable inside my own ward, because they just don't know how to behave. It's the damnedest apostate they've ever run into, 'cuz "he still has a

testimony and attends his meeting and all the rest of that.” But I feel worse for other people and their awkwardness. It's like “Ummmmmm... What do we talk about now? 'Cuz we used to, like, talk about doctrine and stuff, and we're not so sure that maybe your doctrine might be, like, like toxic waste. And so, if you say something, I might get poisoned by it. And so, ya know... How 'bout them Sox?” [laughter]

Hey, how 'bout them Sox? I mean really! They were supposed to be last place, and they won it all. I mean, Farrell, that guy... He's legit. Batting coach last year. World series manager this year.

Things are great, couldn't be better. We continue to preach, teach, exhort, believe, teach our children, go to Church, make compensation for the awkwardness with which people approach it. I even...

Look, if I had not been excommunicated, in the chili cook-off I was going to make the habanero chili, and I was gonna win the “hottest chili” award. My wife—wise counselor that she is—suggested that that might be viewed by some as retaliation [laughter]. And so, that's a difference. I toned the chili way down; we still had people, like, dancing around saying, “Oooo, ahhhh, oooo, ahhhh.” I mean, it was like the background to some of those do-wap songs.

But, I mean, things are fine. Things couldn't be better. And you know, my Little Leaguer is trying out again for the boys' baseball team, having dabbled once again in softball and found them unworthy of her presence. She's gonna go back to baseball, and so, we have things to do. And stuff to do.

I wanna thank you for coming. We've gone on way too long. Doug wanted to make an announcement, but I'm disconnecting all the paraphernalia and going.