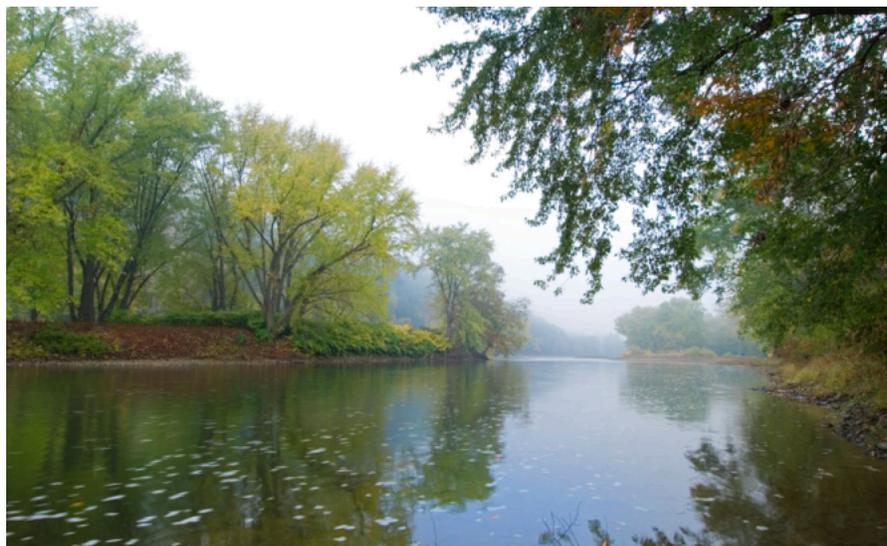


How God Provides Power and Authority in the Priesthood

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The Lesser, Aaronic or Levitical Order – *Outward Ordinances*

On May 15, 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery retired to the woods near the Susquehanna River of Harmony Pennsylvania to pray about baptism, a subject they came across in their translation of the gold plates (D&C 13). Calling upon the Lord, the Savior Jesus Christ *first* spoke “peace” to Joseph and Oliver. Then, “the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance” (JSH1, p. 59). According to Oliver Cowdery, the “angel” was John the Baptist. He was a “messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying; Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I **confer** the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the *keys* of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” (JSH 1:58-59, italics added). He then commanded the pair to baptize one another, informing them that he acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who held the administrative *keys of authority* in the greater priesthood, and that in due time the greater keys would also be given them (JSH 1:72).



Left; The Susquehanna River near Harmony, Pennsylvania, site of the baptism of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. It was near this river that both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Orders of Priesthood were given Joseph and Oliver, the power and authority of the Aaronic Order on May 15, 1829, and the power of the Melchizedek Order between June 5 and 14 of 1829, with Peter, James & John transferring authoritative keys in it later on July 6th.

The Empowering Voice of God An important, overlooked pattern in the overall restoration of priesthood (all three orders) is first seen in Oliver’s eloquent testimony at the back of our scriptures. *The voice of Jesus Christ was first heard by both men, empowering them with the priesthood of God* (see JST Genesis 14:27-29). Cowdery states, “...but one touch with the finger of his love, yes, one ray of glory from the upper world, or *one word from the mouth of the Savior*, from the bosom of eternity, strikes it all into insignificance, and blots it forever from the mind. The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel, the certainly that *we heard the voice of Jesus*, and the truth unsullied as it flowed from a pure personage, *dictated by the will of God*, is to me past description” (JSH1, p. 59). **Power in priesthood as supplied first by God’s voice**, is consistent in concept with JST Genesis 14, which states, “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.” This **power wasn’t given or transferred by the will or hands of man, nor from father to son**. Hearing the *voice* of the Lord was *prior* to their ordination by John the Baptist, an authorized servant. John then delivered *keys of authority* in the Levitical order, *but apparently not God’s power – the priesthood itself. That was and is God’s prerogative alone*. He “*calls*” all men everywhere

to the priesthood, but only a very few are “chosen” to receive real **power** in it via **His own voice**. This early important pattern showcases the difference between priesthood **power** and *authority*, and between those *called* versus those eventually *chosen* to receive an endowment of power in the priesthood.

Later, coming up out of the waters of baptism, both men prophesied and “were filled with the Holy Ghost...Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of” (verses 73-74). Note that there was no ordinance for the gifting of the Holy Ghost thereafter as is done today, yet the effects of priesthood – the companionship of the Spirit, were immediate for both men. They received a watery baptism, and immediately also received the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, wherein they *were* “filled with the Holy Ghost.”

My Doctrine, My Gospel, My Church The priesthood given Joseph and Oliver was **not** part of a formal church organization at this point in time – *according to the laws of men* at least. It was, nevertheless part of *the church of Christ*, where faith, repentance, baptism by water, and then baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost took place, just like in the days of Alma in the Book of Mormon. Though the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as we know it, was not formally organized – according to the laws of men in the State of New York – until April 6th of 1830, there was in reality priesthood given them first via God’s voice, then two baptisms (one by water and one by fire) and finally an endowment or gift from God following, that of the Holy Ghost given by God to Joseph and Oliver (only God baptizes us with fire, providing the Holy Ghost – “an endowment of *power from on high*” [see 3 Ne. 9:20; 12:1; 2 Ne. 31:12; 3 Ne. 11:35; JST Mat. 3:38; JST Luke 3:16; JST John 1:28] and only God provides priesthood power via His own voice).

What the Lord calls “**my church**” and “**my gospel**” were already present at this point in time (May 15, 1829) as defined by the Lord Himself in D&C 10 (1828), apparent in verses 40 to 70 (see also 2 Ne. 31:11-21; 32:1-6; Alma 5). In D&C 39:6 the Lord said, “And this is **my gospel** – repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which showeth all things and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.” Being “*born again*” or receiving the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost is what the Lord defines as “**my doctrine**” in 2 Nephi 31:21 – a part of “*the way*” - “the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.” It sends us through the gate [Jesus Christ] and onto the pathway to eternal life (see also 2 Ne. 32:1-6).

The Lesser Priesthood According to later teachings by the Prophet Joseph Smith, the lesser Levitical, or Aaronic order consists of “priests to administer in outward ordinances, made without an oath.”¹ This was the priesthood of Aaron (under Moses). Joseph Smith taught that the associated Law of Moses, or the Levitical Law, was added or substituted because of transgression.² The Aaronic Order (telestial) tests men to see if they will honor it for the purpose of receiving more (see D&C 84:26, 30; 107:14). The right to this priesthood originally came through inheritance, or blood in patriarchal lineal succession (father to son). We read in D&C 107:20, “The *power* and *authority* of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the *keys* of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments.”

The LDS church today is especially good with its missionary program around the world, which feature the first covenants and ordinances of the lesser gospel, not the fulness of the gospel (see D&C 39:6 & 11). They are made at entrance into the Lord’s church at baptism and pertain to *salvation* through the lesser, Levitical, or Aaronic “order.” The lesser order is fulfilled in the “born again” experience, when God provides the fiery baptism and endows us with the Holy Ghost. The lesser priesthood ordinances entitle men and women on the telestial earth to the ministering of angels, but not the personal presence of Jesus Christ, or that of God the Father. The lesser priesthood features preparatory, outward ordinances, including those pertaining to *the gathering of Israel* – missionary work.

We are taught that after Jesus Christ appeared in the Kirtland Temple, accepting it and the sacrifice of the Kirtland Saints in building it under great duress, that the Aaronic Priesthood keys of gathering the elect from the four corners of the earth were then given to Joseph and Oliver by Moses on April 3, 1836. D&C 110 states that Moses may have been the first of three translated beings to *confirm* priesthood keys on the two men there (D&C 110).³ The great gathering of the Saints—first to Kirtland, then Nauvoo—followed. According to the Prophet

Joseph, “The main object [in gathering] was to build unto the Lord a house whereby he could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose.”⁴ There was more light to be had, however, in both “*the fulness* of the gospel” of Christ and “*the fullness* of the priesthood,” in the greater Melchizedek priesthood.

Alma of the Book of Mormon taught that those who harden their hearts receive a lesser portion of the word, while those who do not are given “the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full” (Alma 12:10). At Sinai, Moses brought all of the children of Jacob under the initial stages of the Eternal Covenant (*salvation*). They would not embrace the higher covenants and ordinances pertaining to *exaltation*, however. As a result they were given the lesser law of carnal commandments - a lesser order of priesthood. Moses and the greater powers were thus removed out of their midst (D&C 84:25). We read of this in JST Exodus 34:1-2, “And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two other tables of stone, like unto the first, and I will write upon them also, the words of the law, according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest; but it shall not be according to the first, for I will take away **the priesthood** out of their midst; therefore **my holy order**, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them; for *my presence* shall *not* go up in their midst, lest I destroy them. But I will give unto them the law as at the first, but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment; for I have sworn in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my *presence*, into my *rest*, in the days of their pilgrimage...” Thus we see that without the “Holy Order” – the greatest priesthood - we cannot enter into “the fulness” of the Lord’s “rest” or “glory” (see also D&C 84:21-27).

The Greater or Melchizedek Order – *Administering the Ordinances, the Spiritual Portions of Priesthood*

Administrative keys of *authority* in the priesthood were restored to the earth in Joseph Smith’s day as part of a *commission* to teach and preach the gospel *before* an official church recognized by men in the State of New York was organized on paper. The official organization of *the church of Christ* on April 6th, 1830 was done for recognition according to the man-made laws of New York State, as various people were challenging the Prophet Joseph on his right to administer in things existing “churches” had rights for at the time (like marriage contracts).

Dispensing of Priesthood The Presidency of the High Priesthood in the meridian of time – Peter, James and John – appear to have come to **confer** keys of *authority* they held upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the last days – to begin their particular *dispensation of priesthood* (D&C 128:21). We read in D&C 20:1-2; “The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days...it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God [on April 6th, 1830]...Which commandments were given to Joseph Smith, Jun., *who was called of God* [by His own voice] and *ordained* an apostle of Jesus Christ [later by Peter, James and John], to be the first elder of this church.”

Restoration of the Greater Melchizedek Priesthood According to historian Andrew Ehat, the restoration of the greater priesthood occurred some time between June 5th and June 14th of 1829, via **the voice** or *calling* of God Himself. Ordination via the laying on of hands, granting *keys of authority* by Peter, James and John, then followed, most likely on July 6th.⁵ Like the return of Levitical powers, God’s return of greater Melchizedek **power** came to mortals on earth via **God’s own voice**, not via other men. The three ancient presidents then brought “keys” of authority in it for this last dispensation of the gospel, in the fullness of times, doing so via the laying on of hands. Joseph and Oliver were thus “*commissioned*” to serve as the first “*elders*” in the Church – the word “*elder*” as this time meaning a “*spiritual teacher*.” Early on an Elder was not a priesthood office, only a title as part of their *commission to act*. Like John the Baptist earlier, these heavenly beings brought keys they held responsibility for (John was translated). With *empowerment* first via **God’s voice** first, keys of *authority* were then transferred to man via authorized servants sent by God. “Keys” are typically associated with presiding in man-recognized *authority*. Keys unlock limits, leading to new levels of limits.



Peter Whitmer Home, Fayette New York, site of restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood (the power of God given via his voice – D&C 128:21), and the later organization of the Church on April 6th, 1830.

Rethinking the Restoration of Power

Ehat has done a particularly good job in helping us look deeper at how the priesthood was restored. *Conferral* of **Power** from God came first, then a confirmation of that power via an ordination under the hands of His messengers (translated men) took place thereafter, where keys of *authority* were transferred. In searching for truth, we need not be afraid to find that which challenges tradition and previous assumptions. In 2 Nephi 28:28, the Prophet Nephi places a “wo” or curse upon “all those who tremble, and *are angry because of the truth of God!* For behold, he that is built upon the **rock** [who is Christ] receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.”

Ehat has reconciled current history and tradition with statements by Joseph Smith on the *restoration* of what we today call the greater Melchizedek Priesthood (but not “*the fullness*” of the Melchizedek Priesthood, where all three orders are fully “in-tact”). He used the Prophet Joseph’s own words to override *assumptions* B.H. Roberts and others made, leading to long-standing *traditions* in the Church on the restoration of the priesthood authority and power. According to Ehat, “Roberts practically demands that we **not** consider *the 1829 revelation* [on the *conferral of power via the voice of God*] as anything more than setting the agenda for the 6 April 1830 organizational meeting of the Church – no one afterward ever seemed to acknowledge the importance of that June 1829 revelation.” Ehat asserts that Peter, James and John did *not* bestow priesthood power on Joseph and Oliver. That transfer was and is accomplished only via *the voice of God* – in *revelation* (see D&C 128:21). This is consistent with JST Genesis 14, Alma 13, and Joseph’s own words about *how real power* is given – only by **God’s voice** – *the power of His word*. Peter, James and John appear to have come later to confer *keys of authority* upon Joseph and Oliver, in a commission God gave them to *act* on His behalf, and to *confirm* them as Apostles. This **confirmed** the prior **conferral of power** by God. When, where, and how did this happen?

Writing his history as an introduction to D&C 18 (the revelation of the Lord on the calling of the Twelve in the latter days), the Prophet Joseph wrote about his fervent desire to receive the greater Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost [by “*apostles*” – “sent ones” [Greek] of Christ who have seen Him and been in His presence – they have “*the testimony of Jesus*” – see D&C 76:51-70]. The greater priesthood was promised Joseph and Oliver in John the Baptist’s prior visit. Joseph stated, “we had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the chamber of Mr. Whitmer’s house...to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired; and here, to our unspeakable satisfaction, did we realize the truth of the Savior’s promise – ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you’ – for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when ***the word of the Lord came unto us*** in the chamber, commanding us that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder [spiritual teacher] in the Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office; and then to ordain others, as it should be made known to us from time to time...and have them decide *by vote* whether they were willing to accept us as *spiritual teachers* or not; when also we were commanded to bless bread and break it with them, and to take wine, bless it, and drink it with them; afterward

proceed to *ordain each other* according to commandment; then call out such men as the Spirit should dictate, and ordain them; and then attend to the laying on of hands for *the gift of the Holy Ghost* [see Mor. 2:2; 3 Ne. 18:37, 19:9] upon all those whom we had previously baptized, doing all things in the name of the Lord. The following commandment will further illustrate the nature of our calling to this Priesthood, as well as that of others who were yet to be sought after.”⁶

Mosiah 5:12 states that we will “hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also the name by which *he* shall call you.” Then in Mosiah 5:15 we read, that this is so God “may seal you His, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life” (see D&C 84:21-22). With changed hearts (being “born again”) and these additional experiences, we become God’s sons and daughters (verse 7).



Left, the Susquehanna River near Harmony, Pennsylvania. Escaping from a nearby Colesville courtroom, Joseph and Oliver were given keys of authority in the Melchizedek Priesthood at daybreak under the hands of Peter, James and John on July 6th of 1829. Earlier, they were given power in the greater priesthood by the voice of God sometime between June 5 and 14 of 1829 in the home of Peter Whitmer in Fayette New York (D&C 128:21); Right; Statue of Joseph Smith receiving keys in the Higher Priesthood, Temple Square, Salt Lake City.

The Same Apostolic Pattern with Paul D&C 18 alludes to the idea and pattern that Joseph, Oliver and David Whitmer were “called even that same calling” as was “Paul mine *apostle*.” Those so called were to proclaim the gospel to both Jew and Gentile (D&C 18:9, 26) and to baptize. How was Paul *called* and given priesthood power? It was in the same manner Joseph and Oliver received it - by *the voice of God*, in direct *revelation*. In Acts 22:8 we read of Paul’s journey on the road to Damascus in which the Savior *spoke* to him. Those that were with Paul saw the great light, but did not hear the Lord’s *voice* (verse 9). Paul states that at about noon, “suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and head a *voice* saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.” Later in Acts 26:15-16, Paul adds that the Savior then said, “Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for **I have appeared unto thee** for this purpose to make thee a *minister* and a *witness*” (an *apostle*, a *special literal witness* for and of God). The Lord then told Paul to go to Damascus where he met and submitted to Ananias, who pronounced a priesthood blessing of returned sight on him. He may have also provided priesthood keys of authority. Ananias stated, “The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and **see** that Just One, and shouldest *hear the voice* of his mouth. For thou shalt be **his witness** unto all men of what thou hast **seen and heard**” (Acts 22:13-14, italics added). He was then baptized and later set apart in the ministry by those in *authority* (Acts 9:5, 18, 26-31; 13:1-3; 14:14).

Ehat states that, “the virtue of his [Paul’s] **apostolic** witness originated with the **vision** he received of Jesus that put this man “born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8) on a par with those who fully complied with an apostle’s qualifications (see Acts 1:21-25). To me, the *revelation* in the chamber of Father Whitmer’s cabin likewise *qualified* Joseph and Oliver as **true apostles** and witnesses of Christ’s name...I am convinced that the instant ‘**the word of the Lord**’ told them they should ordain one another, that very authorization did indeed constitute the *conferral* of the [what we today call] Melchizedek Priesthood. What greater authority would they require than the ‘**word of the Lord**.’” Ehat adds that Christ simply *breathed* on his **apostles** and “**said** once to them all ‘**receive ye the Holy Ghost**...Do not all priesthood blessings and conferrals have more to do with the inspired pronouncement [in reality *an invitation* to receive the real thing] rather than simply the outward act of laying on of hands?”⁷

Conferral of Keys of Authority Thus the role of Peter, James and John was to deliver “*keys of the Lord’s kingdom, and a dispensation of the priesthood for the last times*” (D&C 27:12-13), not **power** in the greater priesthood itself. They came to ordain and **confirm** Joseph and Oliver as **apostles**, *confirming* the Lord’s prior Whitmer chamber *conferral* of **power** on them. Their ordination most likely also included words of comfort and blessing in their *commission* to act as spiritual teachers – the first “elders” of the Church. This parallels the pattern the Lord established in his mortal ministry, where He, Jesus made His disciples **apostles** (Matthew 10). They later received the “keys of the kingdom” as found in Matthew 16-18.

When did this transfer of keys in the greater Melchizedek priesthood occur for Joseph and Oliver? According to the Addison Everett account, Joseph Smith was being questioned and accused of being a false prophet in a Colesville courtroom on July 5, 1829. Removed to a back room by his lawyer, Joseph and Oliver escaped through a window, avoiding a potential mobbing, many men gathering outside for this purpose. Traveling in the dense forest of the area through the night, and in deep mud and water, the two were exhausted as morning approached. Finally, at daybreak, following a very difficult night, Oliver exclaimed, “How long O Lord? How long brother Joseph have we got to endure this thing? ‘There,’ said brother Joseph, ‘at that very time Peter James and John came to us and **ordained us to the Apostleship**’”⁸ The brilliance of the rising sun, following the great sacrifice of both men the night before, appears to have signaled the restoration of light - of the greater Melchizedek priesthood. They became the first two “elders” in the Church. Its restoration, and that of the lesser priesthood, both occurred in the wilderness area of the Susquehanna River, the keys for the greater priesthood between Harmony and Colesville Pennsylvania, and nearly three months after their receipt of the lesser priesthood first (see D&C 128:20).

D&C 128:20-21 adds clarification. “And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, *declaring* the fulfillment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A **voice of the Lord** in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! *The voice of Michael* on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! *The voice of Peter, James, and John* in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fullness of times! 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 all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And *the voice of Michael*, the archangel; *the voice of Gabriel*, 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, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!” Note the roles of these ancient “fathers.”

Power Versus Symbol As we have seen, **power** is inherent in God and *His voice*. His extended arm, or that of His servants (especially those with sealing power) is a symbol, accompanying their **words of power**, whether used in blessing or cursing. Out of tradition we have come to see the laying on of hands as the priesthood ordinance transferring *power*. Yet in reality, it is **the words spoken by God** that possess *power* - not symbolic hand or arm gestures. It was **God’s voice** (His will and command via speaking) that initiated the creation of man and the world. “...by the **power of his word** man came upon the face of the earth, which earth was created by

the power of his word. Wherefore, *if God being able to speak and the world was, and to speak and man was created*, O then, why not able to command the earth, or the workmanship of his hands upon the face of it, according to his will and pleasure” (Jacob 4:9, italics added)? In Ether 4:9 we read, “And at my command the heavens are opened and are shut; and at my command the earth shall shake; and at my command the inhabitants thereof shall pass away, even so as by fire.” In addition, those who obtain the promise of eternal life in mortality (“redemption” – “approved by God” [JST Genesis 14:27]) also do so via the *calling* or **voice of God**.

God’s Oath Unlike the Aaronic priesthood, the higher priesthood is accompanied by an *oath and a covenant* (see D&C 84). A covenant “is a formal agreement, bargain, or a sealed contract,” whereas an oath is the “invoking of God or some sacred or revered person or thing as witness of the truth of a statement or the binding nature of a promise.”⁹ The oath and covenant of the priesthood is a two-way sacred promise between man and God (D&C 84; Hebrews 7:21). Men make *covenants* with God, and God gives His *oath* that they will receive all that is promised as a result of obedience to the covenants. According to Elder McConkie, “Man...solemnly agrees to magnify his *calling* in the priesthood, to keep the commandments of God, to live by every **word** that procedeth forth from the mouth of Deity, and to walk [uprightly] in paths of righteousness and virtue...God on His part agrees to give such persons an inheritance of exaltation and godhood in His everlasting presence—His *oath*. The oath is the solemn attestation of deity—His sworn promise—that those who keep their part of the covenant shall come forth [in the morning of the first resurrection] and inherit all things according to the promise.”¹⁰ When men honor and magnify their priesthood, they have opportunity to be washed clean – to be *sanctified* - and become free of the blood and sins of the world, becoming joint-heirs with Christ, priests “of the Most High after the order of Melchizedek...[and] gods, even the sons of God.”¹¹

Beyond the saving portions of the Everlasting Covenant of the gospel lie the full blessings of the greater priesthood, given by invitation to those whom the Lord Himself deems worthy. The blessings in connection with their “keys” represent the capstone ordinances of the church and kingdom of God, given to those who seek the Lord’s face (D&C 101:38; Psalm 105:4); those who work towards receiving eternal life here. They are the sanctified, the redeemed. In scripture we read of righteous individuals who were “sealed up” to eternal life, including Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph Smith, among others.¹² These righteous ones were tested and had the complete trust of the Lord. They were eventually given great **power** to *seal* on earth and in heaven, as part of God’s Holy Order (the Patriarchal Order). Advancing through each of the covenants and ordinances of the Everlasting Covenant, remaining righteous through the refining fires of life, and receiving instruction and sanctification through the Holy Spirit, is the pathway to God’s greatest gift—eternal life and a portion of God’s power.

We have been taught that the sealing power was given Joseph and Oliver at the Kirtland Temple by Elijah, apparently the last prophet to hold this power. We are also taught that Joseph Smith transferred these keys to Brigham Young and others just prior to his death. Additional research suggests an alternate view.¹³ These powers are part of God’s higher Order, those who are sanctified members of the church of the Firstborn. Their power is given them directly by God, not by other men.

End Notes

¹ Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., Deseret Book, p. 323.

² Ibid, p. 60. The Law of Moses was an appendage to the Melchizedek priesthood. Joseph Smith taught, “When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned. The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law.” Joseph Smith, History of the Church 5:554. See also JST Exodus 34:1-2, 14 and D&C 84:21-27.

³ *Current D&C 110 Theology* D&C 110 infers that on this important occasion the Savior accepted the temple, saying, “For behold I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. Yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house...” (D&C 110:2-8). After His acceptance of the sacrifice of the

Saints, later verses state that additional heavenly visitors then brought back keys of priesthood authority to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. They reportedly came in the following order:

1st Translated Messenger thereafter, Moses - transferring Keys of the Aaronic or Levitical Order As a translated being, with a resurrected body, Moses was capable of directly transferring priesthood keys and authority to Joseph and Oliver through the laying on of hands. According to Joseph Smith, these keys included “the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north” (missionary work / D&C 110:11). Joseph further explained, “What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world?...The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His houses and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation.” (Joseph Smith, Jr., Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., Deseret Book, pp. 307-308).

2nd Translated Messenger, Elias (Gabriel-Noah) – transferring Keys of the Patriarchal Order As used here the name Elias is a descriptive term referring to ‘one preparing the way beforehand.’ According to Joseph Smith, the angel Gabriel was previously known as Noah while on the earth. It was the angel Gabriel or Noah who appeared to Zacharias in the Jerusalem Temple in Luke 1:19 to prepare the way for the birth of the Lord, first through the miraculous conception and birth of John (the Baptist) to the aged parents, and later to Joseph and Oliver at the Kirtland Temple (D&C 27:6-7) An apparent reason for his visitation at the Kirtland Temple was to commit the Keys of the Gospel of Abraham to Joseph and Oliver, or in other words, the keys to Celestial marriage, providing opportunity for eternal increase or childbearing in the eternities. According to Bruce R. McConkie, “It was a divine promise that both in the world and out of the world his seed should continue “as innumerable as the stars” (D&C 132:30; Genesis 17; Abraham 2:1-12). Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary Vol. 2, p. 361.

3rd Translated Messenger, Elijah – Melchizedek Priesthood Keys – the Sealing Power For many, D&C 110 asserts that Elijah came to ‘reveal’ or unveil the sealing power of the greater priesthood to Joseph and Oliver in the Kirtland Temple. New research suggests that our Elijah theology may need modification, as it appears Elijah did not confer sealing power on Joseph and Oliver at this time, but instead he may have confirmed the status of the already existent greater power held by Joseph Smith in the higher Melchizedek priesthood given him earlier by God Himself (via His voice again) in the 1829 revelation at the Whitmer home in Fayette New York (see D&C 128:21, see endnote 5 below). Statements by Joseph Smith consistently indicate that Elijah’s visit was to be a future one.

⁴ Joseph Smith, Jr., Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., Deseret Book, p. 308.

⁵ According to Ehat Joseph and Oliver First received *power* in the Melchizedek Priesthood *via the voice of God* in the Peter Whitmer home in Fayette New York (D&C 128:21). This occurred sometime between June 5th and June 14th. This was later followed by *ordination of authoritative keys* in it on July 6th under the hands of Peter, James and John. Both dates are found in, Andrew F. Ehat, *The Joseph Smith 1839 Account of the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood: A Personal Essay*.

⁶ History of the Church, volume 1, p. 62, *BYU Studies* Priesthood Restoration Documents 13 and 14, see also D&C 128:21, italics added.

⁷ See Andrew F. Ehat, *The Joseph Smith 1839 Account of the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood*, pps. 10-18.

⁸ See Oliver B. Huntington, *Diary*, Feb. 1883, Typescript, pps. 208-09, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, Provo, Utah, italics added. See also Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe*, pps. 103-04. Andrus was the first to publish the Addison Everett account of this event.

⁹ The New Lexicon Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, Lexicon Publications, pps. 224, 691.

¹⁰ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Bookcraft, 2nd ed., p. 480.

¹¹ See D&C 76:57-58. Men and women have different promises and responsibilities as part of the early washing ordinances. Women are already apparently “clean,” as part of the sacrifice of childbearing. The Oath and the Covenant of the Priesthood, entered into earlier by men, requires them to honor and magnify their priesthood. When they do so, they cleanse themselves (in connection with the Atonement) of the blood and sins of those they serve through missionary service, leadership positions, performing priesthood ordinances, etc. The ordinance of washing of feet has relationship to this cleansing process. See D&C 84; 107 and John 13. It is also a part of an official cursing ordinance to be performed only as authorized by God. See D&C 124:93 and Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pps.175-76.

¹² Scripture confirms that a number of individuals have been sealed up to eternal life by the Lord Himself or His word in this life. Such was the case with Joseph Smith in D&C 132:49. Others may include Seth, Enoch, Melchizedek, Moses, Elijah, and Daniel from the Old Testament; Jesus Christ, Philip, John, and Paul (2 Timothy 4:6-8) from the New Testament; and Alma (Mosiah 26:20), Enos, the Brother of Jared (Ether 3:13), Moroni (Ether 12:37), and Nephi from the Book of

Mormon. See *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., Grandin Book, pps. 19, 84-85, 311. See also Marion G. Romney, Conference Report, October 1965.

¹³ Additional historical sources suggest the visit by Elijah in the Kirtland Temple was not the place of a transfer of sealing power, something God alone does. See endnote 3 and *Pillars of the Priesthood*, by the author, www.digitalegends.com