

## Summary Handout

# Priesthood: “The Power of Godliness”

Lesson

25

Summary

**Scripture Summary:** *Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, September 22 and 23, 1832. HC 1: 286–295. During the month of September, elders had begun to return from their missions in the eastern states and to make reports of their labors. was while they were together in this season of joy that the following communication was received. The Prophet designates it a revelation on priesthood. 33–44, Men gain eternal life through the oath and covenant of the priesthood.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–46; Prayer and prophecies written by Joseph Smith the Prophet, while he was a prisoner in the jail at Liberty, Missouri, dated March 20, 1839. HC 3: 289–300. The Prophet with several companions had been months in prison. Their petitions and appeals directed to the executive officers and the judiciary had failed to bring them relief. 33–40, Why many are called and few chosen; 41–46, The priesthood should be used only in righteousness.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 107; Revelation on priesthood, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, dated March 28, 1835. HC 2: 209–217. On the date named the Twelve met in council, confessing their individual weaknesses and shortcomings, expressing repentance, and seeking the further guidance of the Lord. They were about to separate on missions to districts assigned. Although portions of this section were received on the date named, the historical records affirm that various parts were received at sundry times, some as early as November 1831. 1–6, There are two priesthoods: the Melchizedek and the Aaronic; 7–12, Those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood have power to officiate in all offices in the Church; 13–17, The bishopric presides over the Aaronic Priesthood, which administers in outward ordinances; 18–20, The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the keys of all spiritual blessings; the Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys of the ministering of angels; 21–38, The First Presidency, the Twelve, and the Seventy constitute the presiding quorums, whose decisions are to be made in unity and righteousness; 39–52, Patriarchal order established from Adam to Noah; 53–57, Ancient saints assembled at Adam-ondi-Ahman, and the Lord appeared to them; 58–67, The Twelve are to set the officers of the Church in order; 68–76, Bishops serve as common judges in Israel; 77–84, The First Presidency and the Twelve constitute the highest court in the Church; 85–100, Priesthood presidents govern their respective quorums.*

**Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:** **Covenant, a Name of the Lord:** The Priesthoods restored in Latter-days are covenants between God and man. Consider that one of the many names that describe Him is “covenant.” He is the Messenger “. . . the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant . . . “ (*Malachi 3:1*)

**Old and New Covenant:** To the Jews who have lost the priesthood and thereby have lost the true understanding of God, comes an encouraging promise—that they will receive a new “covenant.” This could also mean that their current concept of God, “old” to them, will be replaced with a “new” (yet original) understanding of Him. The restoration brings back the Lord and His priesthood that was broken. “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD” (*Jeremiah 31:31-33*)

**Attempts to Return to Original Organization:** The Dead Sea Scrolls describe the Essenes organization including a Teacher of Righteousness and two assistants. There was also a council of twelve overseers. Their priestly system included two castes: One of a higher authority that connected with an order of the *Melech Zedek* (righteous king), and another of lesser authority that connected with the Levitical, or Order of Aaron. They were bound by a strict order of unity. Some suggest that this governing system was copied by Jesus, and that he may have studied with this sect. Yet, it is highly unlikely. However, Jesus did use the same system of government that was given to Moses, a system that partially continued to exist in other Jewish traditions up to and at the time of Jesus.

**Comparison of Old and New:** “. . . he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve . . . (*Luke 6:13*) “These . . . were numbered . . . being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers.” (*Numbers 1:44*) “Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.” (*Joshua 3:12*) “After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also . . .” (*Luke 10:1*) “And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.” (*Exodus 24:1*)

**Parallels of Past, Present and Future:** The organization and growth of the Church in the Meridian of Times parallels the organization of the Church in ancient and modern times. These were and are men, in their respective times, who had authority from God to bring light and truth to the people. Both in the Bible and in The Book of Mormon the term “judge” has an ecclesiastical connection. They were the leading elders of the people. Latter-day Saints have “Elders” who are the “Judges of Israel.”

**Judges, Elders of Israel:** “Now the confessed offender is not left without hope, for he can obtain forgiveness by following the course outlined, and by forsaking sins comparable to that committed, as well as all other sin, and living before the Church and the Lord in such manner as to win approbation of both. The offender who has brought stigma and affront to the ward, the stake or the mission should seek the forgiveness of those he has thus offended. That may be had at times through the presiding authorities of the various divisions of the Church. At other times it may be appropriate and quite necessary to make amends for public offenses and seek forgiveness before organizations of the people. The Judges of Israel will determine this matter. (Conf. Rep., Apr., 1954, pp. 10-13.)” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.3, p.278*)

**Leadership Called by Revelation:** “Whenever God has called and authorized men to perform a work in any age or dispensation, it has been done by revelations, and not by mere impressions, or some undefinable, internal feelings, which leave the mind in uncertainty and doubt. Noah was called by the word of the Lord to be a preacher of righteousness, and to build an ark. Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, were called by revelation to perform a great variety of duties. Moses and Aaron were called to the priest's office by the word of the great Jehovah. Seventy elders of Israel were called by revelation to assist Moses. Joshua was appointed by the word of the Lord through Moses to be his successor in leading Israel. The successors of Aaron were appointed to the priesthood by revelation. The Judges of Israel were called by visions, by angels and by the inspiration of the Spirit. Samuel was called by the voice of the Lord. And finally, all their officers, wise men and prophets, down to the days of Malachi, were called by new revelation.” (*Orson Pratt Divine Authenticity of BofM, No. 2 (1850), p.17*)

**Leadership Not Always Determined by Age:** “Because of the experience of the aged, old age and wisdom are sometimes regarded as going together. Thus, throughout the Bible and Talmud, the word ‘elder’ means judge, leader, or sage. On the other hand, the Book of Job also stresses that there are young men who are wiser than old men. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Qualifications of Judges:** “The *shofet*, or judge, had to meet strict qualifications, besides just knowing the law. Among these qualifications were piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and human understanding. When Moses set up the first courts, he looked for ‘able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain’ (Exodus 18:21) and ‘wise men, and understanding and full of knowledge’ (Deuteronomy 1:13). They were charged to ‘hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger,’ not to be partial in judgment but to ‘hear the small and the great alike, fear no man, for judgment is God's’ (Deuteronomy 1:16–17). A judge was forbidden to accept any gift from a person being tried; no matter how disinterested he considered his own judgments, since ‘bribes blind the eyes of the righteous . . .’ (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Mormon “Judges in Israel:”** The Latter-day Saints have an ecclesiastical legal system that includes “Judges in Israel.” They are the Branch Presidents, Bishops and the Stake Presidents. The modern Hebrew word for president is “nasi.” “In biblical use, *nasi* refers to a person of importance, a leader, a tribal ruler or a king. Under the Roman occupation of Erez Israel toward the end of the period of the second Temple, when there was no independent Jewish leadership, the term *nasi* was used by Jewish rulers to show their authority while not claiming kingship.

**Religious Meaning of “President:”** “The title is best known for its reference to the presiding judge of the Sanhedrin (high court) although some sources claim the term was first applied to Judah ha-Nasi who was head of the Sanhedrin toward the end of the second century. The *nasi* presided over court sessions . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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