

Did Jesus Abolish the Priesthood? A Biblical Case for Priesthood Authority

A Biblical Examination of Three Common Claims

Introduction

Three claims are common among Protestants when discussing priesthood:

1. Jesus did away with the priesthood completely.
2. The authority the apostles had was not priesthood.
3. Anyone can go out and baptize anyone.

This document examines those claims against what the Bible actually says. The Latter-day Saint position will be stated, but the arguments here rely primarily on the biblical text itself. All quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

The goal is not to win an argument. It is to take the biblical evidence seriously and ask whether these three claims hold up under scrutiny.

1. "Royal Priesthood" Means Access, Not Authority

The most common proof text used to argue that all Christians share equal priesthood authority is 1 Peter 2:9:

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

This verse is frequently cited to argue that no special priesthood is needed because every believer is a "priest." But that reading conflates two very different things: access to God and authority to act in His name.

The distinction between access and authority

Consider an analogy from civic life. Every American citizen has access to the President. They can vote, petition, write letters, and participate in government. But having access does not mean every citizen has authority to sign executive orders, command the military, or represent the government in foreign negotiations. Access and authority are not the same thing.

1 Peter 2:5 clarifies what Peter means:

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5)

The "spiritual sacrifices" Peter describes are prayer, praise, righteous living, and devotion. He is describing every believer's direct relationship with God — no human mediator stands between the individual Christian and Christ. This is access.

But the Bible draws a sharp line between that general access and the specific authority to perform ordinances and govern the church. Consider Hebrews 5:4:

"And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Hebrews 5:4)

If priesthood authority belonged to every believer automatically, this verse would be meaningless. Why would the author of Hebrews emphasize that priesthood is conferred by God's calling — "as was Aaron" — if it were already everyone's birthright through faith?

Aaron did not volunteer. He did not declare himself a priest. Moses, acting under God's direction, ordained him (Leviticus 8). The pattern throughout scripture is consistent: priesthood authority is conferred by God through those who already hold it. It is never self-declared.

Peter himself distinguished access from authority

The same Peter who wrote about the "royal priesthood" in 1 Peter 2:9 also exercised specific priesthood authority that ordinary believers did not have. In Acts 8:14-17, after Philip had baptized the Samaritans, Peter and John traveled from Jerusalem specifically to lay hands on them so they could receive the Holy Ghost:

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:14-17)

If every believer had equal priesthood authority, Philip could have done this himself. He had already baptized them. But the text is explicit: the Holy Ghost was not conferred until the apostles came and laid hands on them. Philip had authority to baptize. He did not have authority to confer the Holy Ghost. The

distinction is right there in the text.

What happened next makes the point even sharper:

"And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." (Acts 8:18-20)

Simon recognized that the apostles had a specific power he did not have. Peter did not say, "You already have this authority — all believers do." He said Simon had "neither part nor lot in this matter." Authority to confer the Holy Ghost was not something every believer possessed.

2. Jesus Changed the Priesthood — He Did Not Abolish It

What Hebrews 7:12 actually says

The claim that Jesus eliminated the priesthood entirely rests on a misreading of Hebrews 7. The text says:

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." (Hebrews 7:11-12)

The word is "changed," not "abolished," not "eliminated," not "done away with." The Greek word is *metatithemenes* — transferred, altered, changed in form. The Levitical priesthood's sacrificial system ended because Christ was the final sacrifice. But the author of Hebrews does not say priesthood itself ceased to exist. He says it was changed.

What specifically changed?

What was abolished:

- Animal sacrifices — Christ was the final sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10)
- Ritual purification laws — clean/unclean foods, ceremonial washing (Mark 7:18-19)
- The Law of Moses as a system of salvation — salvation comes through Christ, not law-keeping (Galatians 3:24-25)

What was not abolished:

- The need for priesthood authority — Jesus ordained apostles (Luke 6:13)
- The need for ordinances — baptism (Matthew 28:19), the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20)

- The need for prophets and apostles — He gave them to the church (Ephesians 4:11-14)
- The Melchizedek priesthood — Jesus is the high priest of that order (Hebrews 6:20)

Jesus Himself stated:

*"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."
(Matthew 5:17)*

The Levitical sacrificial system was fulfilled in Christ. The Melchizedek priesthood — the higher priesthood that predated the Levitical system by centuries — continued through Christ and His apostles.

Hebrews 7:24 and the "non-transferable" misinterpretation

A common Protestant argument hinges on Hebrews 7:24:

"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." (Hebrews 7:24)

The argument goes: the Greek word *aparabatos* means "non-transferable," therefore Jesus cannot share or delegate His priesthood to anyone.

This interpretation has a serious problem. It is not supported by the Greek.

What the Greek lexicons say:

The standard Koine Greek lexicon, BDAG (Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich), defines *aparabatos* as "permanent, unchangeable." It explicitly notes that the meaning "non-transferable" is "found nowhere else" in ancient Greek literature.

The Moulton-Milligan Lexicon, the standard reference for New Testament Greek vocabulary, cites legal papyri spanning from 67 BC to AD 581. In every instance, *aparabatos* means "valid and inviolate" — referring to the permanence and binding nature of legal contracts. The meaning "non-transferable" does not appear in any of these documents across six centuries of usage.

What ancient Greek writers understood:

- Josephus, the 1st-century Jewish historian, uses *aparabatos* to mean "permanent/unchangeable" — never "non-transferable."
- Philo, the Jewish philosopher contemporary with Jesus, uses it the same way.
- Plutarch, the Greek historian of the 1st-2nd century, uses it the same way.

No ancient Greek author uses *aparabatos* to mean "non-transferable." The Protestant reading of Hebrews 7:24 depends on a definition that has no support in any Greek text outside this one interpretation.

What the context of Hebrews 7 actually argues:

Read the verse in context:

"And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." (Hebrews 7:23-24)

The contrast is straightforward:

- Levitical priests died and had to be replaced. Their priesthood was temporary.
- Christ lives forever. His priesthood is permanent.

The point is about Christ's eternal life versus the mortality of Levitical priests. It says nothing about whether Christ can share or delegate His authority. And the rest of the New Testament makes clear that He did exactly that.

Jesus explicitly shared His authority

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)

Jesus gave the apostles authority to remit and retain sins. This is not general access available to all believers. It is specific delegated authority.

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19)

Binding and loosing authority — the power to make ordinances valid in heaven — was given to Peter specifically, not to all believers.

"He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." (Luke 10:16)

Jesus told His authorized representatives that hearing them was equivalent to hearing Him. This language of delegated authority is unmistakable.

If Christ's priesthood were truly "non-transferable," these passages would be contradictions. Either Jesus shared His authority or He did not. The New Testament says He did.

3. The Apostles Held Priesthood Authority

The claim and its problems

The second claim — that the apostles' authority was not "priesthood" — often rests on the assumption that priesthood is exclusively an Old Testament concept that ended with Christ. But the New Testament uses explicitly priestly and sacrificial language to describe what the apostles were given.

The Last Supper: priestly ordination language

At the Last Supper, Jesus used language drawn directly from the sacrificial and priestly vocabulary of the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament that Jesus and the apostles used).

"This do" (*touto poieite*)

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)

The Greek phrase is *touto poieite*. The verb *poieo* in the Septuagint is technical sacrificial terminology:

- Exodus 29:38-41 (LXX) — uses *poieo* for "offer" sacrifices
- Leviticus 9:7 (LXX) — "Make [*poieo*] an offering"
- Numbers 15:3-13 (LXX) — repeated use of *poieo* for making sacrificial offerings

When Jesus said *touto poieite*, He was using the same verb structure used throughout the Greek Old Testament for priestly sacrificial acts. This is not generic language for "do this as a memory." It is language for "perform this sacrificial act."

"In remembrance" (*eis ten emen anamnesin*)

The Greek word *anamnesis* is not "mental recollection." In the Septuagint, it is memorial sacrifice terminology:

- Leviticus 24:7 (LXX) — the memorial portion of the bread offering
- Numbers 10:10 (LXX) — sacrifices as a "memorial [*anamnesis*] before your God"
- Psalm 38:1, 70:1 (LXX titles) — "For a memorial [*anamnesis*] offering"

Anamnesis refers to a re-presentation of a sacrifice before God. It is liturgical and priestly language.

"Given for you" / "Shed for many"

"This is my body which is given for you... This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:19-20)

The Greek verbs — *didomenon* ("being given," present passive participle) and *ekchynnomenon* ("being poured out," present passive participle) — are sacrificial offering language. Blood "poured out" directly echoes Leviticus 17:11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls."

Who received this command?

Only the twelve apostles were present at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:20, Mark 14:17, Luke 22:14). Jesus commanded them — not all believers — to "do this." He instituted a new sacrifice and commanded specific men to perpetuate it. This is a priestly function.

The logic from the Bible itself:

1. Jesus instituted a new sacrifice using explicit sacrificial language (Luke 22:19-20).
2. Every sacrifice requires a priest: "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer" (Hebrews 8:3).
3. Jesus commanded the apostles to perform this sacrifice ("this do").
4. Therefore, Jesus ordained the apostles to a priestly function.

You can reject this conclusion, but you have to account for the sacrificial terminology. If the Last Supper was not priestly, why did Jesus use the priestly vocabulary of the Septuagint to institute it?

The apostles conferred authority on others

The apostles did not treat their authority as something that died with them. They passed it on through ordination by the laying on of hands:

"And when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." (Acts 6:6) — The apostles ordained deacons.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13:2-3) — Barnabas and Saul were set apart by the laying on of hands.

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." (1 Timothy 4:14) — Timothy received a gift through ordination.

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6) — Paul reminds Timothy that his authority came through Paul's laying on of hands.

"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins." (1 Timothy 5:22) — Paul warns Timothy to be careful about whom he ordains, which only makes sense if ordination confers real authority.

The pattern is unmistakable. Authority was conferred through the laying on of hands, by those who already held it. It was not self-declared. It was not assumed. It was transmitted.

Paul's transmission language

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." (1 Corinthians 11:23)

The verbs "received" and "delivered" are technical rabbinic language for the authorized transmission of sacred tradition. Paul received authority from the risen Christ (Galatians 1:12) and transmitted it to others. This is a chain of authority, not a free-for-all.

4. Not All Baptisms Are Valid — Authority Matters

The claim

The third claim — that anyone can baptize anyone — sounds democratic and appealing. But the New Testament does not support it.

Acts 19: Paul re-baptizes disciples

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them." (Acts 19:1-6)

These disciples had been baptized. Their baptism was not recognized as sufficient. Paul re-baptized them and then laid hands on them for the Holy Ghost. If baptism by anyone is valid, why did Paul re-do it?

Acts 8: authority to baptize does not equal authority to confer the Holy Ghost

As discussed above, Philip baptized the Samaritans, but the apostles had to come from Jerusalem to confer the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17). There were levels of authority. Not everyone who could baptize could confer the Holy Ghost.

The logical problems

If anyone can baptize anyone:

- Can a person baptize themselves?
- Can a five-year-old child baptize?
- Can someone who does not believe in Christ baptize?
- If the answer to any of these is "no," then you have already acknowledged that some qualification or authority is required. The question is just where you draw the line — and on what basis.

The Bible draws the line at authorized ordination. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4).

5. Priesthood in the Hebrew Scriptures: The Melchizedek Order Predates the Levitical

Understanding the biblical history of priesthood is essential for evaluating the claim that Jesus "ended" it.

Melchizedek: before Aaron, before Moses, before the Law

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all." (Genesis 14:18-20)

Melchizedek held priesthood authority centuries before the Levitical system existed. Abraham — the great patriarch — paid tithes to Melchizedek, acknowledging Melchizedek's superior authority.

"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4)

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." (Hebrews 7:1-3)

The Melchizedek priesthood is presented as eternal, predating the Aaronic/Levitical system by centuries. Jesus holds this priesthood (Hebrews 6:20). It was never part of the Law of Moses, so the fulfillment of the Law of Moses cannot have abolished it.

Prophets held authority over both kings and priests

Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, prophets exercised authority that superseded both the political authority of kings and the religious authority of Levitical priests:

- **Moses** held authority over Aaron. He ordained Aaron and his sons to the Aaronic priesthood (Leviticus 8). Moses was not a Levite by priesthood office — he held the higher authority.
- **Samuel** anointed kings (1 Samuel 10:1, 16:13) and corrected King Saul when he fell into apostasy (1 Samuel 15). His authority did not come from the Levitical priesthood.
- **Elijah** rebuilt the altar of the Lord and offered sacrifice on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:30-38), exercising priestly authority outside the temple system. He confronted King Ahab and Queen Jezebel with authority that superseded their political power.
- **Nathan** corrected King David directly (2 Samuel 12:1-13).

- **Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel** prophesied, called Israel to repentance, and corrected both kings and priests without being members of the Levitical line.

The biblical text shows a clear hierarchy: prophets held the highest authority, presiding over both kings and priests. When kings tried to usurp priestly functions, they were condemned (1 Samuel 13:8-14; 2 Chronicles 26:16-21). When priests fell into apostasy, prophets corrected them. This presiding authority — distinct from and superior to the Levitical priesthood — is what the Bible associates with the Melchizedek order.

The two-priesthood structure

The Bible presents two priesthoods:

The Aaronic (Levitical) priesthood:

- Established through Moses ordaining Aaron (Exodus 28-29, Leviticus 8)
- Performed animal sacrifices, administered temple ordinances, taught the Law, collected tithes, maintained ritual purity
- Described in Hebrews as incomplete: "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood... what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec?" (Hebrews 7:11)

The Melchizedek priesthood:

- Predates the Levitical system (Genesis 14)
- Associated with prophets, apostles, and presiding authority
- Hebrews says Christ holds this order eternally (Hebrews 6:20, 7:17)
- Described as superior: Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, not the other way around (Hebrews 7:4-7)

When Hebrews says "the priesthood being changed" (7:12), the change is from the Levitical system to the Melchizedek order. The lesser was superseded by the greater. The greater was not abolished — it was restored to its proper place with Christ as the eternal high priest and the apostles as His authorized ministers.

6. The Bible Predicts Apostasy and Restoration

The predicted apostasy

The New Testament authors did not expect the church to continue without interruption. They warned repeatedly that a "falling away" would occur:

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

Paul told the Thessalonians that the Second Coming of Christ would not happen until a great apostasy occurred first. This is not a minor disruption. The Greek word *apostasia* means a deliberate departure or defection from the truth.

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30)

Paul warned the Ephesian elders that apostasy would come from both outside and inside the church.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." (1 Timothy 4:1)

The apostles expected apostasy. They said it was coming. They did not say "but the church will survive it intact."

The predicted restoration

If apostasy was predicted, what comes after? The Bible addresses that too:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21)

Peter prophesied a "restitution of all things" — a restoration of what was lost. If nothing was lost, no restitution would be needed. The word "restitution" (*apokatastasis*) means a restoration to a former state.

Apostles and prophets are needed until the work is done

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (Ephesians 4:11-14)

Paul says apostles and prophets were given to the church "till we all come in the unity of the faith." Have all Christians come to unity of the faith? With tens of thousands of denominations disagreeing on fundamental doctrines, the answer is plainly no. If the purpose of apostles and prophets has not yet been fulfilled, on what biblical basis would we conclude that God stopped providing them?

*"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."
(Amos 3:7)*

God's pattern throughout scripture is to work through prophets. Hebrews 13:8 says "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Malachi 3:6 says "I am the LORD, I change not." If God worked through prophets in every dispensation recorded in scripture, why would He stop?

7. A Note on Sola Scriptura

This document has relied primarily on the biblical text because that is the common ground. But it is worth noting that the Bible itself does not claim to be the sole source of God's revelation.

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

Paul instructs the Thessalonians to hold fast to traditions taught both by his letters and by his spoken word. He does not say "hold fast only to what is written."

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." (John 21:25)

John acknowledges that what Jesus said and did far exceeds what is recorded in scripture.

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:12-13)

Jesus told the apostles He had more to reveal, and that the Spirit would guide them into "all truth" — not just the truth that would eventually be written down.

The Bible is indispensable. It is the word of God. But the Bible itself tells us it is not the totality of God's revelation. A commitment to taking scripture seriously should include taking these verses seriously too.

8. The Latter-day Saint Position

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that priesthood authority was lost from the earth when the original apostles died and were not replaced. The Bible predicts both this apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and a subsequent restoration (Acts 3:19-21).

Latter-day Saints believe that restoration occurred beginning in 1829:

- **John the Baptist** appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood — the authority to baptize by immersion for the remission of sins. John the Baptist held this authority during his mortal life (he baptized Jesus Himself in Matthew 3:13-15) and restored it as a resurrected messenger.
- **Peter, James, and John** — the same apostles who received the keys of the kingdom from Christ (Matthew 16:19, Matthew 17:1-3) — appeared shortly afterward and conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood and apostolic keys.
- **Moses, Elias, and Elijah** later appeared and restored additional keys, including the sealing power prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

This is stated, not argued. You can evaluate it on its own terms. But the biblical framework presented in the preceding sections — the need for priesthood authority, the predicted apostasy, the predicted restoration — is the context in which Latter-day Saints understand these events.

The question the Bible raises is straightforward: if priesthood authority matters (and the passages above argue that it does), who has it today, and how did they get it?

9. Questions Worth Considering

These are not gotcha questions. They are genuine questions that deserve honest answers from anyone who takes the Bible seriously.

1. **Hebrews 5:4 says no man takes priesthood upon himself, but must be called of God "as was Aaron." Aaron was ordained by Moses through the laying on of hands (Leviticus 8). Who ordained the founders of Protestant denominations? Through what chain of authority?**
2. **If every believer already has full priesthood authority, why did the apostles need to travel from Jerusalem to Samaria to confer the Holy Ghost on people Philip had already baptized (Acts 8:14-17)? Why couldn't Philip do it himself?**
3. **Why did Peter tell Simon he had "neither part nor lot in this matter" when Simon wanted the power to confer the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:21)? If all believers share equal authority, Simon already had this power.**
4. **Why did Paul re-baptize the disciples in Ephesus who had already been baptized under John's baptism (Acts 19:1-6)? If any baptism by any believer is valid, their first baptism should have been sufficient.**
5. **Ephesians 4:11-14 says apostles and prophets were given "till we all come in the unity of the faith." Have all Christians come to unity of the faith? If not, why would God stop providing**

apostles and prophets before their stated purpose was fulfilled?

6. Where does the Bible teach that apostles and prophets would cease? The Bible predicts apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 Timothy 4:1, Acts 20:29-30) but where does it say those offices would be permanently discontinued?

7. Paul told Timothy to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). If authority is not conferred through ordination, what was Paul talking about?

8. Jesus gave Peter the keys to bind and loose (Matthew 16:19). If those keys matter — and the text says what is bound on earth is bound in heaven — who holds them today?

Conclusion

The biblical evidence, taken on its own terms, supports the following:

1. **"Royal priesthood" describes access to God, not authority to perform ordinances.** Hebrews 5:4 explicitly says priesthood must be conferred, not assumed.

2. **Jesus changed the priesthood; He did not abolish it.** The Levitical sacrificial system ended. The Melchizedek priesthood — which predated the Levitical system — continued through Christ and His apostles. The Greek word *aparabatos* in Hebrews 7:24 means "permanent," not "non-transferable," and has meant that in every Greek text for six centuries of documented usage.

3. **The apostles held priesthood authority.** Jesus used explicitly priestly and sacrificial language from the Septuagint at the Last Supper. He commanded the apostles to perform a sacrificial act. They conferred authority on others through the laying on of hands. Paul used technical rabbinic transmission language to describe how he received and passed on this authority.

4. **Not all baptisms are valid.** Paul re-baptized disciples in Acts 19. The apostles had to confer the Holy Ghost on Samaritans that Philip had already baptized in Acts 8. Authority mattered in the New Testament church.

5. **The Bible predicts both apostasy and restoration.** Paul warned the church would fall away (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Peter prophesied a "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). The purpose of apostles and prophets has not yet been fulfilled (Ephesians 4:11-14).

The question is not whether priesthood authority matters. The Bible is clear that it does. The question is who has it, and on what basis.

All biblical quotations are from the King James Version.