

Priesthood Doctrine Comprehensive

How It Works, Development in Scripture, Modern Use, & Refuting Catholic/Protestant Claims

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1. Access ≠ Authority: The Core Distinction

THE STRONGEST ARGUMENT

1 Peter 2:9 (“royal priesthood”) describes **ACCESS to God**, NOT **AUTHORITY to perform ordinances or govern the church**. This is the Protestant error.

The Analogy: Every American has access to the President (can vote, petition, write letters). But that doesn’t mean everyone has *authority* to sign executive orders, represent the government, or act in the President’s name.

ACCESS ≠ AUTHORITY

1 Peter 2:5, 9 – “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.” → This describes direct access to God (no human mediator needed), not authority to baptize, ordain, or lead the church.

Hebrews 5:4 – “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” → Authority must be conferred, not self-declared.

2. Priesthood Development in Hebrew Scriptures

The Beginning: Pre-Levitical Priesthood

Before the Law of Moses was given, priesthood authority existed through the patriarchs and prophets who held the **Melchizedek Priesthood** (also called “the holy priesthood after the order of the Son of God”).

Melchizedek: The First Mention

Genesis 14:18-20 – “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him [Abram], and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth... And he [Abram] gave him tithes of all.”

→ Melchizedek pre-dates the Levitical priesthood by centuries. Abraham (the patriarch!) paid tithes to Melchizedek, showing Melchizedek’s superior priesthood authority.

Psalms 110:4 – “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews 7:1-3 – “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham... To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all... 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.”

The Pattern: Prophets Had Presiding Authority

Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, **prophets held presiding authority over Israel**—including authority over the temple, the priests, and the kings.

Key Examples:

1. **Moses** – Received revelation directly from God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-24)
 - **Exodus 6:28-7:1** – “And the LORD said unto Moses... See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.”
 - Moses had authority OVER Aaron
 - Moses instituted the Law of Moses and the Levitical priesthood
 - Moses supervised temple/tabernacle construction and ordinances
 - Moses ordained Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8)
2. **Samuel** – Had authority over Israel independent of the temple
 - Anointed kings (1 Samuel 10:1, 16:13)
 - Corrected King Saul when he fell into apostasy (1 Samuel 15)
 - Authority did NOT come from the Levitical priesthood line
3. **Elijah** – Ordered and authorized sacrifices outside temple system
 - **1 Kings 18:30-38** – Elijah rebuilt the altar of the Lord and offered sacrifice on Mount Carmel in response to Baal worship

- Had authority over kings (confronted Ahab and Jezebel)
- This authority superseded the temple cult in Jerusalem

4. **Nathan** – Corrected King David (2 Samuel 12:1-13)

5. **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel** – All prophesied, called Israel to repentance, and corrected both kings and priests without being part of the Levitical line

The Transition: Moses Ordains Aaron

Leviticus 8 records Moses (who held Melchizedek Priesthood) ordaining Aaron and his sons to the Aaronic/Levitical Priesthood.

The Key Principle: - The **greater** (Melchizedek) priesthood has authority to ordain the **lesser** (Aaronic) priesthood - Prophets presided over priests - The Melchizedek priesthood held **keys of presidency**—the authority to direct and govern all other priesthood functions

Exodus 28:1 – “And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.”

→ Moses, acting under God’s direction, established the Aaronic priesthood. Moses had the greater authority.

Why the Melchizedek Priesthood Isn’t Mentioned More

The Josiah Reforms (2 Kings 22-23)

During King Josiah’s reign (640-609 BC), there was a centralization of religious authority in Jerusalem and the temple cult. Many scholars suggest this led to:

- Suppression of references to the higher priesthood that existed outside the temple system
- Emphasis on Levitical/Aaronic priesthood to centralize control
- De-emphasis on the prophetic tradition that had authority independent of the temple

Result: The biblical texts we have today reflect this centralization, which is why we see: - Extensive detail about Levitical priesthood (entire books of Leviticus, Numbers) - Limited explicit references to the Melchizedek priesthood (Genesis 14, Psalm 110, Hebrews 5-7) - Yet clear evidence that prophets operated with GREATER authority than priests

The Evidence: Functional Priesthood Hierarchy

Even without explicit labeling, the biblical text shows a clear hierarchy:

Office	Examples	Authority Level
Prophet (Melchizedek Priesthood)	Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah	Highest—receives revelation, governs Israel, supervises temple, corrects kings and priests

Office	Examples	Authority Level
High Priest (Aaronic Priesthood)	Aaron, Eli, Zadok	Middle—administers temple ordinances, teaches law
Priest/Levite (Aaronic Priesthood)	Sons of Aaron, tribe of Levi	Lower—performs sacrifices, maintains temple
King (Civil Authority)	Saul, David, Solomon	Political—subordinate to prophets in spiritual matters

The Pattern: - 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 - **Prophets had authority over both kings and priests**

D&C Confirmation of Ancient Priesthood Lineage

D&C 84:6-16 traces the Melchizedek Priesthood from Moses back to Adam:

“And the sons of Moses, according to the Holy Priesthood which he received under the hand of his father-in-law, **Jethro**... Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah; And from Noah till Enoch, through the lineage of their fathers; And from Enoch to Abel, who received the priesthood by the commandments of God, by the hand of his father Adam, who was the first man.”

→ **Moses received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Jethro** (who was a priest of Midian, not a Levite). This is how Moses had authority to ordain Aaron.

3. The Two Priesthoods Explained

Aaronic (Levitical) Priesthood: The Lesser

Hebrews 7:11 – “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?” → The Levitical priesthood was incomplete. Something greater was needed.

Origin: Established with Aaron (Exodus 28-29, Leviticus 8). Moses (who held Melchizedek priesthood) ordained Aaron.

Function in ancient Israel: - Performed animal sacrifices for sins - Administered temple ordinances - Taught the law of Moses - Collected tithes and offerings - Maintained ritual purity

Modern LDS use (ages 12-18, adult converts): - **Deacon (age 12):** Pass sacrament, collect fast offerings, assist in temporal matters - **Teacher (age 14):** Prepare sacrament, home/ministering teaching, watch over church - **Priest (age 16):** Bless sacrament, baptize, ordain to Aaronic offices - **Bishop:** Presiding high priest over a ward, holds keys for Aaronic priesthood

Key Principle

The Aaronic priesthood is **preparatory**. It prepares young men for Melchizedek priesthood and prepares all for higher ordinances. It's an "appendage" to the Melchizedek (**D&C 107:14**).

Melchizedek Priesthood: The Higher

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

Hebrews 7:15-17 – “And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” → Jesus holds Melchizedek priesthood eternally.

Function in ancient times: - Presided over the church (apostles, prophets) - Received revelation for the entire church - Confirmed members and bestowed Holy Ghost - Performed healings, miracles - Ordained others to priesthood offices

Modern LDS offices & use: - **Elder (age 18+):** Bestow Holy Ghost, give blessings, baptize, ordain, teach, minister - **High Priest:** Officiate in higher ordinances, serve in stake presidencies/high councils - **Patriarch:** Give patriarchal blessings - **Seventy:** Travel, preach gospel, build up church under apostles' direction - **Apostle:** Special witness of Christ, holds all priesthood keys, can delegate keys to others

Book of Mormon Teaching on Melchizedek Priesthood

Alma 13:1-2, 7-9 – “And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, **after his holy order**, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people... This high priesthood being **after the order of his Son**, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being **without beginning of days or end of years**, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things... thus they become high priests forever, **after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father**, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen.”

→ The Book of Mormon explicitly teaches that the higher priesthood is “after the order of the Son of God” (the Melchizedek Priesthood), existed from the foundation of the world, and is eternal.

Alma 13:14-18 – Melchizedek's example: “Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of **Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order** which I have spoken, who also **took upon him the high priesthood forever**... And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.”

2 Nephi 6:2 – Jacob’s ordination: “Behold, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, having been called of God, and **ordained after the manner of his holy order**, and having been **consecrated by my brother Nephi...**”

→ Shows Book of Mormon prophets understood they held priesthood authority by ordination.

⚡ **Why Both?**

Aaronic = Outward ordinances (baptism, sacrament, temporal service) **Melchizedek** = Spiritual gifts (Holy Ghost, healing, sealing, revelation)

Both are needed for a fully functioning church.

4. How Priesthood Changed: From Law of Moses to New Covenant

What Jesus Abolished

Hebrews 7:11-12 – “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 10:1, 4 – “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect... For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

Jesus abolished: - **Animal sacrifices** – He was the final sacrifice (Heb 10:10) - **Ritual purification laws** – Clean/unclean foods, ceremonial washing (Mark 7:18-19) - **The law of Moses as a system of salvation** – Can’t be saved by law-keeping alone (Gal 3:24-25)

What Jesus Did NOT Abolish

Matthew 5:17-18 – “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to **fulfil**. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

Jesus did NOT abolish: - **The need for priesthood authority** – He ordained apostles (Luke 6:13) - **The need for ordinances** – Baptism (Matt 28:19), sacrament/communion (Luke 22:19-20) - **The need for prophets** – He gave apostles and prophets to the church (Eph 4:11-14) - **The Melchizedek priesthood** – He IS the high priest (Heb 6:20)

🔑 **The Crucial Distinction**

Abolished: Levitical priesthood’s sacrificial system and ceremonial law

Retained: Melchizedek priesthood's authority to administer ordinances and lead the church

Hebrews 7:12 says “**the priesthood being changed**”—**CHANGED, not eliminated**. The Levitical priesthood ended. The Melchizedek priesthood continued through the apostles.

The New Covenant Priesthood

Under the New Covenant established by Christ:

Hebrews 7:23-24 – “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 8:6 – “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established upon better promises.”

Key Points: 1. Christ is the eternal High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 6:20) 2. The apostles held the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by Christ (Luke 6:13, John 15:16) 3. The apostles conferred this priesthood on others (Acts 6:6, 13:3, 1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6) 4. The Aaronic/Levitical priesthood system of animal sacrifices ended 5. The Melchizedek priesthood “**of necessity**” was **changed** to be opened beyond the literal descendants of Aaron

How It Was Changed: Opened to Gentiles

Hebrews 7:12-14 – “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that **our Lord sprang out of Juda**; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.”

→ Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, NOT Levi. Under the old covenant, He couldn't be a priest. The priesthood was “changed” to allow the Messiah (and His apostles, who were also not Levites) to hold priesthood authority.

Romans 11:17-24 – Paul's olive tree metaphor: Gentiles are “grafted in” to the covenant

Ephesians 2:12-13, 19 – “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ... Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”

→ The “change” in the priesthood meant it was no longer restricted to Aaron's literal descendants, but was opened to **all worthy males** (and eventually, after the resurrection, to Gentiles as well as Jews).

5. Priesthood Keys: Binding & Loosing Authority

Matthew 16:18-19 – “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 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.”

What are priesthood keys?

- **Keys = authority to direct priesthood use**
- Peter received keys from Christ
- Keys authorize ordinances to be valid in heaven
- Without keys, ordinances are not binding

Mount of Transfiguration

Joseph Smith taught: “The Savior, Moses, and Elias [Elijah], gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured before him” (**D&C 110:11-16**).

- **Moses**: Gave keys of gathering of Israel
- **Elijah**: Gave sealing power (bind families eternally)
- **Jesus**: Gave keys of the kingdom

Modern application:

- Only the President of the Church holds **all** priesthood keys
- He delegates specific keys to apostles, stake presidents, bishops, mission presidents
- Keys authorize: Who can baptize where, who can ordain, who can perform sealings, etc.

D&C 107 on Keys

D&C 107:8-9 – “The Melchizedek Priesthood holds **the right of presidency**, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things. The Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, have **a right to officiate in all the offices in the church.**”

D&C 107:18-19 – “The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold **the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church**—To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.”

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 KEY QUESTION

Catholics and Protestants: Who has the keys today?

- **Catholics say:** The Pope (successor of Peter)
- **Protestants say:** No one, or everyone (priesthood of all believers)
- **LDS say:** The President of the Church (restored through Peter, James, John in 1829)

If binding/loosing authority matters (and Jesus gave it to Peter), someone must have it today. Who?

6. The Restoration: John the Baptist and Peter, James, John

The Aaronic Priesthood Restoration

D&C 13 – Full text of John the Baptist’s conferral:

“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.**”

Date: May 15, 1829, near Harmony, Pennsylvania **Participants:** Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery **How:** John the Baptist appeared as a resurrected being, laid hands on them, and conferred the priesthood

Key Points: 1. John the Baptist held this priesthood anciently (Luke 1:15-17) 2. He acted under direction of Peter, James, and John (who held Melchizedek Priesthood keys) 3. This priesthood “shall never be taken again from the earth” until the sons of Levi offer in righteousness 4. Gave authority to baptize by immersion for remission of sins

The Melchizedek Priesthood Restoration

D&C 27:12-13 – “And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be **apostles, and especial witnesses of my name**, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them; Unto whom I have committed **the keys of my kingdom**, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.”

Date: May-June 1829 (shortly after Aaronic Priesthood restoration) **Participants:** Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery **How:** Peter, James, and John appeared as resurrected beings and conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood and apostolic keys

D&C 128:20 – “And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment 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 fulness of times!**”

Additional Keys Restored in Kirtland Temple

D&C 110:11-16 – April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared:

Verse 11 – Moses: “After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us **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.”

Verse 12 – Elias: “After this, Elias appeared, and committed **the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham**, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.”

Verse 13-16 – Elijah: “After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said: Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—Therefore, **the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands**; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.”

→ **Elijah restored the sealing keys**—the power to bind families for eternity (Malachi 4:5-6)

Why John the Baptist’s Restoration Was Acceptable

The Question: How could John the Baptist confer the Aaronic Priesthood if he died before the resurrection and the “change” in priesthood?

The Answer:

1. **John the Baptist held the Aaronic Priesthood during his mortal life**
 - Luke 1:13-17 – John was foreordained to prepare the way for Christ
 - He baptized with authority (he baptized Jesus Himself—Matt 3:13-15)
2. **He appeared as a resurrected being in 1829**
 - D&C 13 describes him appearing to Joseph and Oliver
 - As a resurrected being, he could confer the priesthood he held
3. **He acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John**
 - D&C 13 says this restoration happened “under the direction” of those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood keys
 - The Melchizedek presides over the Aaronic (D&C 107:8-9)

4. The Aaronic Priesthood continues in a different function

- Under the Law of Moses: animal sacrifices, Levitical law administration
- Under the New Covenant: baptism, sacrament, ministering of angels, preparatory ordinances
- Different function, same authority line (from Aaron through John the Baptist)

The Parallel: - Just as Moses (Melchizedek) ordained Aaron (Aaronic) in ancient times - Peter, James, and John (Melchizedek) directed John the Baptist (Aaronic) to restore the lesser priesthood first - Then Peter, James, and John appeared and conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood

7. Melchizedek Presiding Over Aaronic Until Sons of Levi Offer

The Temporary Nature of Current Aaronic Priesthood

D&C 13 – “...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.**”

D&C 84:31-33 – “And the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation... For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.”

What Does This Mean?

The Aaronic Priesthood as currently functioning in the LDS Church is **temporary** and **preparatory** until:

1. **A temple is built in the designated location** (D&C 84:3-5 specifies Missouri)
2. **The literal sons of Aaron/Levi are identified** and purified
3. **They offer an offering in righteousness** in that temple

Malachi 3:3-4 – “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.** Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.”

→ This is a prophecy about the Millennium when the Messiah returns. The sons of Levi will be purified and will offer sacrifices “as in the days of old” (memorial/symbolic, not for remission of sins—Christ already did that).

The Presiding Relationship

D&C 107:13-14 – “The second priesthood is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations. Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because **it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood**, and has power in administering outward ordinances.”

Current Function: - The Melchizedek Priesthood **presides over** the Aaronic Priesthood - A bishop (who is a high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood) presides over the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward - The Aaronic Priesthood holder acts under the **direction and keys** of Melchizedek Priesthood leadership

Until the Sons of Levi Offer: - The Aaronic Priesthood functions in its preparatory role - Young men ages 12-18 are ordained to prepare them for Melchizedek Priesthood - Adult male converts who are new to the church are ordained to Aaronic first, then Melchizedek - The Melchizedek Priesthood holds all keys and presidency

After the Sons of Levi Offer: - The literal descendants of Aaron/Levi will be identified - They will offer sacrifices in the temple (memorial in nature, pointing to Christ) - The Aaronic Priesthood will function in its **full, original capacity** - This happens during the Millennium when Christ reigns personally on earth

Why This Matters

The Argument: Critics ask, “If the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood ended, how can LDS claim to have it?”

The Answer: 1. The Aaronic Priesthood’s **sacrificial system for remission of sins** ended (Hebrews 10:1-10) 2. The Aaronic Priesthood’s **authority** to administer preparatory ordinances (baptism, sacrament, ministering of angels) did NOT end 3. John the Baptist held this authority and restored it 4. It functions in a different capacity now (no animal sacrifices, but baptism and sacrament which point to Christ’s sacrifice) 5. It’s an “appendage” to the Melchizedek Priesthood, which presides over it 6. It will be restored to the sons of Levi in full function during the Millennium

D&C 13 explicitly says it “shall never be taken again from the earth” **until** the sons of Levi offer. That means: - It’s on the earth NOW (not waiting for Millennium to be restored) - It will remain until the Millennium - Then the sons of Levi will perform its fullest functions

8. Why Catholic Apostolic Succession Fails

Catholic Claim

Catholics claim unbroken apostolic succession from Peter through bishops of Rome. They argue bishops ordained new bishops in an unbroken chain to the present Pope.

LDS Response: Bishops ≠ Apostles

🔥 THE FATAL FLAW

Apostles and bishops are different offices with different authority.

When the apostles died, no one had authority to ordain new apostles. Bishops continued, but **bishops were always subordinate to apostles**, not equal to them.

Acts 1:21-22 – “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, **must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.**” → Apostles were special witnesses of Christ’s resurrection. Bishops are not.

Ephesians 4:11 – “And he gave some, **apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” → Apostles are listed separately from other offices. They’re unique.

Apostles	Bishops
Called directly by Christ/revelation	Ordained by apostles or their delegates
Special witnesses of Christ	Local church leaders
Hold all priesthood keys	Hold limited keys for local area
Receive revelation for entire church	Receive revelation for local congregation
Can ordain new apostles (Acts 1:26)	Cannot ordain new apostles

📖 Historical Evidence

When did the apostles stop being replaced?

After Acts 1 (Matthias replacing Judas), there’s no biblical record of apostles ordaining new apostles. When James was killed (Acts 12:2), he wasn’t replaced. Why? Because the apostles were dying and **no one had authority to fill the quorum.**

By the end of the 1st century, the office of apostle had ceased. Bishops remained, but **without apostolic keys.**

Additional Catholic Problems

1. Papal Supremacy Not in Bible - Peter was *first among equals*, not supreme ruler - Acts 15: Council of Jerusalem was led by James, not Peter - Gal 2:11: Paul rebuked Peter publicly – Peter wasn’t infallible

2. Apostasy Happened Anyway - Hundreds of years of doctrinal drift (Trinity formulated 325 AD at Nicaea) - Indulgences, corruption, medieval abuses - Protestant Reformation proved Catholic church had departed from original

2 Thess 2:3 – “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [Second Coming] shall not come, except there come **a falling away** first.” → Bible predicts apostasy before Christ returns. It happened.

9. Why Protestants Need Priesthood Authority

Protestant Claim

Protestants claim “priesthood of all believers” means everyone has equal access to God and no special priesthood authority is needed. Martin Luther and John Calvin rejected Catholic priesthood.

LDS Response: They Have Zero Authority

THE AUTHORITY GAP

Luther and Calvin were never ordained by anyone with authority.

They simply declared themselves reformers and started new churches. By their own doctrine (sola scriptura), they violated **Hebrews 5:4**: “No man taketh this honour unto himself.”

If authority doesn’t matter, why did: - Moses ordain Aaron? (Lev 8) - Apostles ordain deacons? (Acts 6:6) - Paul ordain Timothy? (1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6) - Peter rebuke Simon for trying to buy authority? (Acts 8:18-20)

Acts 8:14-20 – Philip baptized Samaritans, but they didn’t receive Holy Ghost until Peter and John laid hands on them. When Simon tried to buy this power, Peter said: “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.”

→ **Authority cannot be self-declared or purchased. It must be conferred by those who have it.**

The Chaos of “Priesthood of All Believers”

Problem 1: No mechanism for unity - 45,000+ Protestant denominations, all claiming Bible as authority - All disagree on baptism, communion, predestination, salvation, tongues, end times, etc. - No apostles or prophets to settle disputes

Ephesians 4:11-14 – “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets... 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...** That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” → Apostles and prophets were given to create unity. Protestants have chaos.

Problem 2: Ordinances become meaningless - If everyone has authority, who can baptize? Can you baptize yourself? - Can a 5-year-old child baptize? Why or why not? - If anyone can administer communion, why did Jesus give it to apostles specifically?

Acts 19:1-6 – Paul found disciples baptized by John’s baptism. He asked: “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” They said they hadn’t heard of it. Paul **re-baptized them** and laid hands on them. → **Not all baptisms are valid. Authority matters.**

Problem 3: No binding authority - Protestant pastors have no keys to bind ordinances in heaven - Jesus gave Peter keys: “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Matt 16:19) - Without keys, baptisms/marriages/ordinations are not recognized in heaven

10. Devastating Questions

FOR CATHOLICS

1. **When was the last apostle ordained?** (They can’t name one after 1st century)
2. **Where in Bible does it say bishops = apostles?** (It doesn’t; they’re separate offices)
3. **If Peter was supreme, why did James lead Acts 15 council?**
4. **Why did Paul publicly rebuke Peter if Peter was infallible?** (Gal 2:11)
5. **Where does Bible teach papal infallibility?** (It doesn’t—Catholic tradition only)
6. **If succession never broke, why did Reformation happen?** (Proves apostasy occurred)

FOR PROTESTANTS

1. **Who ordained Martin Luther?** (No one—he had zero authority)
 2. **If everyone has priesthood, can you baptize yourself?**
 3. **Why did Peter rebuke Simon for trying to buy authority if authority doesn’t matter?** (Acts 8:18-20)
 4. **Why 45,000+ denominations if “priesthood of all believers” creates unity?**
 5. **Where’s the biblical support for cessation of apostles/prophets?** (Eph 4:11-14 says they’re needed “till we all come in unity”—have we?)
 6. **How do you perform Acts 19:1-6 today?** (Re-baptizing + laying on hands for Holy Ghost—requires authority)
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11. Conclusion: The Question No One Can Avoid

Either Authority Matters or It Doesn’t

If it matters: - Catholics lost it when apostles died (bishops ≠ apostles, no keys) - Protestants never had it (Luther/Calvin never ordained) - LDS Church is only church with authority through divine restoration

If it doesn't matter: - Throw out Hebrews 5:4 (“no man taketh this honour unto himself”) - Throw out Acts 8 (Peter rebuking Simon for seeking to buy authority) - Throw out Acts 6, Acts 13, 1 Tim 4, 2 Tim 1 (all the ordination by laying on hands passages) - Throw out Matthew 16:19 (keys to bind and loose)

You can't have it both ways.

Amos 3:7 – “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” → God works through prophets. He doesn't change (Mal 3:6, Heb 13:8).

D&C 1:30 – “And also those to whom these commandments were given, might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, **the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth**, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased.”

The LDS Position is Internally Consistent:

1. Priesthood authority is essential (Bible teaches this)
2. Authority was lost when apostles died (Bible predicts apostasy—2 Thess 2:3)
3. Authority was restored through heavenly messengers (Acts 3:21 predicts restoration)
4. Both priesthoods function today as in ancient times
5. Ordinances are binding in heaven because holders have keys (Matt 16:19)

Catholics and Protestants can't answer: Who has authority today and how did they get it?

LDS answer: Divine restoration through those who held it anciently.

Acts 3:19-21 – “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.”

→ Peter prophesied a “**restitution of all things**” = restoration. LDS claim fulfills this.

Why This Matters Today

Ordinance	LDS Authority	Catholic/Protestant
Baptism	Valid by Aaronic priesthood authority (priest)	No priesthood keys—not binding in heaven
Confirmation (Holy Ghost)	Valid by Melchizedek priesthood (elder+)	No authority to confer Holy Ghost by laying on hands
Sacrament/ Communion	Blessed by Aaronic priesthood (priest)	Not binding without keys
Temple Marriage		“Till death do us part”—not eternal

Ordinance	LDS Authority	Catholic/Protestant
	Sealed for eternity by sealing keys	
Healing Blessings	Elders lay hands on sick (James 5:14)	Rare; no consistent priesthood practice

The priesthood development in scripture shows: - Melchizedek Priesthood existed before Aaronic (Genesis 14, Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek) - Moses held Melchizedek and ordained Aaron to Aaronic (Leviticus 8, D&C 84:6) - Prophets presided over priests throughout Hebrew scriptures - Christ changed the priesthood “of necessity” to open it beyond literal Levites (Hebrews 7:12) - The apostles held Melchizedek Priesthood (ordained by Christ) - It was lost when apostles died (no one could ordain new apostles) - It was restored by John the Baptist (Aaronic) and Peter/James/John (Melchizedek) in 1829 - The Melchizedek presides over Aaronic until sons of Levi offer in righteousness (D&C 13, Malachi 3:3)

The question everyone must answer:

Does priesthood authority from God matter, and if so, who has it today?