

Priesthood Authority & Prophets: Biblical Defense of LDS Restoration

I. Biblical Priesthood Authority

Core Principle: No one can take priesthood authority upon themselves—they must be called and ordained by those who have authority.

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

Laying On of Hands: The Biblical Method

- **Numbers 27:18-23** — Moses laid hands on Joshua to commission him
- **Acts 6:6** — Apostles laid hands on deacons to ordain them
- **Acts 13:2-3** — Paul and Barnabas set apart by laying on of hands
- **1 Timothy 4:14** — Timothy received authority through laying on of hands
- **Acts 8:14-20** — Only apostles could confer Holy Ghost by laying on hands. Simon tried to BUY this power → Peter rebuked him harshly

Biblical Pattern: Authority comes from God → Transmitted by laying on of hands → By those who already have authority

Two Priesthoods in the Bible

1. Aaronic (Levitical) Priesthood

- Established with Aaron and sons (Exodus 28-29)
- Performed sacrifices, taught law, administered ordinances
- Moses (holding higher priesthood) ordained Aaron

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?"

2. Melchizedek Priesthood

- Pre-dates Aaronic priesthood (Genesis 14:18-20)
- Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek → shows superiority
- Jesus is "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7:17)
- Higher, eternal priesthood

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

If authority doesn't matter, why did God establish these priesthoods with such specific requirements?

II. God Works Through Prophets

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

This is a principle, not a temporary arrangement. God ALWAYS works through prophets:

- **Noah** — warned of flood
- **Abraham** — warned of Sodom's destruction
- **Moses** — led Israel, received law
- **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel** — warned, prophesied

Did Revelation Stop After the Apostles?

Protestant Claim: Revelation ceased after apostles died. We have the Bible—that's all we need.

Biblical Response:

Hebrews 13:8 — "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."
Malachi 3:6 — "For I am the LORD, I change not."

If God worked through prophets yesterday, why would He stop today? He doesn't change.

Ephesians 4:11-14 — "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints... 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."

Have we reached "unity of the faith"? NO. There are thousands of Protestant denominations, all disagreeing. By Ephesians 4's own standard, we STILL NEED apostles and prophets.

III. How Authority Was Lost

The Apostasy Was Prophesied

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 — "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [Second Coming] shall not come, except there come a falling away first."

Acts 20:29-30 — "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you... Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things."

2 Timothy 4:3-4 — "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... And they shall turn away their ears from the truth."

When Apostles Died, Authority Died

Critical question: When the apostles died, who ordained new apostles?

Answer: No one.

- In Acts 1:21-26, apostles chose Matthias to replace Judas—BUT this only happened while apostles were still alive
- **Catholics:** Claim succession through bishops, but bishops ≠ apostles
- **Protestants:** Luther and Calvin were NEVER ordained by anyone with authority. They just started new churches.

If authority matters (and Bible says it does), then Catholics lost it and Protestants never had it.

Restoration Was Also Prophesied

Acts 3:19-21 — "Repent ye therefore... when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ... Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things."

"Restitution" = Restoration. Peter prophesied authority would be restored before Second Coming.

IV. Joseph Smith as Prophet: Book of Mormon Evidence

The Impossibility Argument

Joseph Smith's background:

- 23 years old, minimal formal education
- Farm laborer on frontier
- Dictated 531-page Book of Mormon in ~60 working days
- **No notes, no revisions, no outlines**

To write it, he would have needed to know:

- English Bible thoroughly (and Hebrew cultural context)
- Ancient Hebrew poetry and parallelisms
- Complex literary structures (chiasmus—unknown in 1829)
- Ancient Near Eastern culture, law, economics, warfare
- Multiple distinct writing styles

Chiasmus: Smoking Gun Evidence

Chiasmus = Ancient Hebrew literary form (ABCBA inverted parallelism). Completely unknown to American scholars in 1829. Not discovered in Book of Mormon until 1967—138 years later.

Alma 36: 250+ word, perfectly symmetrical chiasmus with 17 nested layers. Statistical probability of occurring by chance: **essentially zero.**

How could Joseph create complex chiastic structures if he didn't know chiasmus existed? And if he knew, why did it take 138 years for anyone to notice?

The 11 Witnesses Never Recanted

- **3 Witnesses:** Saw angel, heard God's voice
- **8 Witnesses:** Physically handled golden plates
- Several later left Church and became bitter enemies of Joseph

• **NOT ONE ever denied their testimony**—even when doing so would have destroyed Church

David Whitmer (1887): "I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof... Those who know me best, well know that I have always adhered to that testimony."

V. Joseph Smith's Prophecies

1. Civil War Prophecy (Dec. 25, 1832)

D&C 87:1-3 — War will begin with "rebellion of South Carolina"... "the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States"... "the Southern States will call on other nations, even... Great Britain"... "war shall be poured out upon all nations."

- **Published to world in 1851**—10 years before Civil War
- Civil War began with South Carolina's secession (Dec. 20, 1860)
- First shots at Fort Sumter, **South Carolina** (April 12, 1861)
- Confederacy sought British support
- Eventually led to World Wars (war "poured out upon all nations")

Philadelphia Sunday Mercury (May 1861): "In view of our present troubles, this prediction seems to be in progress of fulfillment, whether Joseph Smith was a humbug or not."

2. Other Fulfilled Prophecies

- **Stephen A. Douglas (1843):** Prophesied he'd aspire to presidency but "feel weight of Almighty's hand" if he turned against Saints. Douglas ran in 1860, lost to Lincoln, died in disgrace at 48.
- **Saints in Rocky Mountains:** When Church had few hundred members, prophesied they'd "fill the Rocky Mountains" and become "mighty people." Now 17+ million members worldwide.

VI. Double Standards: Bible Prophets' "Failed" Prophecies

Common Criticism: Jackson County Temple

Protestant Critics: D&C 84 (1832) said temple would be built in Independence, MO "in this generation." It's been 185+ years—no temple. Joseph = false prophet.

LDS Response:

- It was a commandment, not unconditional prophecy
- Saints violently driven from Missouri (1833). Gov. Boggs issued extermination order (1838)—legal to kill Mormons
- D&C 124:49-51 — God doesn't require work when enemies prevent it
- "This generation" may refer to last generation before Second Coming

Holding Bible Prophets to Same Standard

Prophet	Prophecy	"Failure"
Ezekiel	Ezek. 26: Nebuchadnezzar will destroy Tyre, "thou shalt be built no more"	Nebuchadnezzar besieged 13 years, FAILED to conquer. Ezekiel admits failure (Ezek. 29:18). Tyre still exists today (city of Sour, Lebanon)
Jonah	Jonah 3:4: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"	Nineveh NOT destroyed in 40 days. People repented, God spared city. Destroyed 100+ years later.
Jesus	Matt. 16:28: "some standing here... shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"	All apostles standing there died. Jesus hasn't returned yet.
Paul		

1 Thess. 4:15-17: "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (repeated twice)

Paul expected to be alive at Second Coming. He wasn't. Christ didn't return in Paul's lifetime.

If same rigid standard applied to Joseph is applied to Bible prophets, then Ezekiel, Jonah, Jesus, and Paul are ALL "false prophets."

The point: Prophecy involves conditionality, symbolism, human agency, and divine timing. If Bible prophets get this flexibility, why not Joseph Smith?

VII. Answering Protestant Objections

Objection: "We don't need prophets. We have the Bible."

- Where does Bible say revelation stopped? It doesn't.
- Eph. 4:11-14 says apostles/prophets given "till we all come in the unity of the faith." Have we? No—thousands of denominations disagree.
- Bible itself is product of prophets. If you believe Bible, you believe in prophets.

Objection: "Hebrews 1:1-2 says God spoke by His Son, so no more prophets needed."

- Verse says God spoke "in time past" by prophets and "in these last days" by Son. Doesn't say prophets stopped.
- Jesus worked through apostles/prophets. He called Twelve, called Paul, gave them authority.
- John 16:12-13 — Jesus promised FUTURE revelation: "he will shew you things to come"

Objection: "Revelation 22:18-19 forbids adding to scripture."

- Verse refers to Book of Revelation specifically ("this book"), not entire Bible
- When John wrote Revelation, "the Bible" didn't exist as one book
- Deuteronomy 4:2 has same warning. If it forbids new scripture, then entire New Testament is forbidden.
- Warning is against MEN adding their words. If God reveals new scripture through prophet, that's not "adding"—it's God speaking.

Objection: "Joseph practiced polygamy, so he can't be a prophet."

- Polygamy is biblical. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon all practiced it. God never condemned them. God GAVE David his wives (2 Sam. 12:8).
- If polygamy disqualifies Joseph, then Abraham, Moses, and David are also disqualified.

Conclusion: The Question Protestants Must Answer

Either priesthood authority matters, or it doesn't.

If it matters:

- Catholics lost it when apostles died (bishops ≠ apostles)
- Protestants never had it (Luther/Calvin never ordained)
- **LDS Church is only church with authority** through divine restoration (John the Baptist restored Aaronic Priesthood; Peter, James, John restored Melchizedek Priesthood—May-June 1829)

If it doesn't matter:

- Then throw out Hebrews 5:4, Acts 8, entire biblical pattern of priesthood

You can't have it both ways.

The LDS Church fulfills biblical prophecy:

- Restoration of apostolic authority (Acts 3:19-21)
- Church built on apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:19-20)
- God working through prophets (Amos 3:7)
- Book of Mormon as "another testament of Jesus Christ" proving Joseph's prophetic calling