

Priesthood Authority & Prophets: Biblical Defense of LDS Restoration v2

Enhanced with Robert Boylan's "After the Order of the Son of God" scholarship

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

Access ≠ Authority: The Core Distinction

1 Peter 2:9 ("royal priesthood") describes **ACCESS to God**, NOT **AUTHORITY to perform ordinances**.

Analogy: Every American has access to the President (can vote, petition), but that doesn't mean everyone has authority to sign executive orders or act in the President's name.

Robert Boylan (Ch. 4): Protestant scholar John Elliott demonstrates 1 Peter 2:9 emphasizes **election and holiness**, NOT priesthood as authority structure for performing ordinances.

Hebrews 7:24 - The Protestant Misinterpretation

Protestant Claim: Hebrews 7:24 says Jesus has an "unchangeable" (Greek: *aparabatos*) priesthood, meaning it cannot be transferred to others.

REFUTED: Greek scholarship proves "aparabatos" means "permanent/unchangeable," NOT "non-transferable."

Evidence (Boylan, Ch. 1):

- **Moulton-Milligan Lexicon:** Legal papyri from 67 BC to AD 581 use *aparabatos* meaning "valid and inviolate," NOT "non-transferable"
- **BDAG (standard Greek lexicon):** Defines as "permanent, unchangeable" - the "non-transferable" meaning "is found nowhere else"
- **Theological Dictionary of the NT:** "We should keep to the rendering 'unchangeable,' the more so as the act. sense is not attested elsewhere"
- **Josephus, Philo, Plutarch:** All use *aparabatos* meaning "permanent/unchangeable," never "non-transferable"

The Verdict: Hebrews 7:24 teaches the Melchizedek Priesthood is eternal and unchangeable in nature, NOT that it cannot be delegated to apostles acting in Christ's name.

Two Priesthoods in the Bible

1. Aaronic (Levitical) Priesthood

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

Hebrews 7:11 — "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood... what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek?"

2. Melchizedek Priesthood - "After the Order of the Son of God"

- 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)
- **Alma 13:1-2, 7-9:** Called "after the order of his Son" - proper name revealed in Book of Mormon

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. LAST SUPPER: PRIESTLY, SACRIFICIAL LANGUAGE

Robert Boylan (Ch. 1): The Last Supper accounts contain explicit priestly and sacrificial language proving ordained ministerial priesthood in the New Covenant.

Key Biblical Evidence

Luke 22:19 — "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."

Greek Analysis:

- **"This do"** (Greek: *touto poieite*) = technical sacrificial language
- **"In remembrance"** (Greek: *anamnesis*) = OT memorial sacrifice terminology
- **"Given for you"** = sacrificial offering language

Hebrews 13:10 — "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."

Altar = Eucharistic table. "Right to eat" implies authority required - not everyone can minister at this altar.

John 20:23 - Authority to Remit/Retain Sins

John 20:23 — "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Boylan (Ch. 5): This establishes **agency role in spiritual matters** - cannot be exercised through "Bible alone."

James 5:14-15 - Anointing of Sick by Elders

James 5:14-15 — "Is any sick among you? let him call for **the elders of the church**; and let them pray over him, **anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord**: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick."

Boylan (Ch. 7): Early Christian texts confirm this was performed by **ordained elders with authority**, not just any believer.

III. 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.

Examples: Noah (flood), Abraham (Sodom), Moses (law), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel

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 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 45,000+ Protestant denominations, all disagreeing. By Ephesians 4's own standard, we STILL NEED apostles and prophets.

IV. 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."

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 only while apostles were still alive
- When James was killed (Acts 12:2), he wasn't replaced
- **Catholics:** Claim succession through bishops, but bishops ≠ apostles
- **Protestants:** Luther and Calvin were NEVER ordained by anyone with authority

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.

V. REFUTING CATHOLIC CLAIMS

Bishops ≠ Apostles (The Fatal Flaw)

Apostles	Bishops
Called directly by Christ/revelation	Ordained by apostles or delegates
Special witnesses of Christ's resurrection	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
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Acts 1:21-22 — "Wherefore of these men... must one be ordained to be a **witness with us of his resurrection.**"

Apostles were special witnesses of Christ's resurrection. Bishops are not.

Papal Supremacy Not in Bible

- Peter was *first among equals*, not supreme ruler
- **Acts 15**: Council of Jerusalem led by **James**, not Peter
- **Gal 2:11**: Paul rebuked Peter publicly — Peter wasn't infallible

VI. REFUTING PROTESTANT CLAIMS

The Authority Gap

Luther and Calvin were NEVER ordained by anyone with authority. They simply declared themselves reformers and started new churches.

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... Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter."

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
- No apostles or prophets to settle disputes

Problem 2: Ordinances become meaningless

- If everyone has authority, can you baptize yourself?
- Can a 5-year-old child baptize an adult?
- 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 hadn't heard of it. Paul **re-baptized** them and laid hands on them.

Not all baptisms are valid. Authority matters.

VII. 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.**

Question: 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."

VIII. JOSEPH SMITH'S PROPHECIES

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

D&C 87:1-3 — War will begin with "rebellion of South Carolina"... "Southern States shall be divided against Northern States"... "Southern States will call on... 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

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." 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." Now 17+ million members worldwide

IX. DOUBLE STANDARDS

Bible Prophets' "Failed" Prophecies

Protestant Critics: D&C 84 said temple in Independence, MO "in this generation." 185+ years—no temple. Joseph = false prophet.

LDS Response: It was a commandment, not unconditional prophecy. Saints violently driven from Missouri (1833). D&C 124:49-51 — God doesn't require work when enemies prevent it.

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?

X. 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 unity." 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 NT 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

XI. THE LDS RESTORATION

May 15, 1829: Aaronic Priesthood Restored

D&C 13 — John the Baptist appeared: "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.**"

May-June 1829: Melchizedek Priesthood Restored

D&C 27:12-13 — Peter, James, and John appeared and conferred **the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times.**

April 3, 1836: Additional Keys (Kirtland Temple)

- **Moses**: Keys of gathering of Israel
- **Elias**: Keys of Abraham's covenant
- **Elijah**: Sealing keys (bind families eternally)

XII. CONCLUSION

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

If it doesn't matter:

- 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"