

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood — Part 2

A podcast for members of the Bountiful Utah South Stake

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Guests: Seven young men and young women preparing to serve missions — Milo, Eden, Sam, Nev, Annie, Owen, and Max

Introduction

Adam Olsen: Welcome to this podcast on the oath and covenant of the priesthood. My name is Adam Olsen. I'm a counselor in the stake presidency of the Bountiful Utah South Stake. I'm here with Aaron Coombs, our stake Sunday School president. Aaron, thanks for joining us.

Aaron Coombs: Glad to be here.

Adam: And today we have with us a few of our amazing youth. Say hi, folks. Let's do a couple of introductions.

Guests: I'm Milo. I'm Eden. I'm Sam. I'm Nev. I'm Annie. I'm Owen. I'm Max.

Adam: Thanks, you guys. We're excited to have you here. Before we dive in, Aaron, what are you excited about learning in today's discussion?

Aaron: I enjoyed last discussion because we got the chance to talk about the oath and covenant of the priesthood — what's really going on there, how it plays into the gathering of Israel and God's purposes in restoring His people. What will be wonderful about this discussion is that it's still in Section 84, a magnificent section, and we're going to be talking about the blessings that come as we keep that covenant. Because we keep the covenant of magnifying our calling and participating in the Lord's work, there are some things Heavenly Father promises to those who are doing His work.

Questions from Part 1

Adam: As we get started, we wanted to find out if there were any questions from last week that we needed to clarify, or that came up as you've been thinking about it. Anything you'd like to talk about before we dive into the second part?

Guest: How do the Abrahamic covenant and the Melchizedek covenants play into the oath and covenant of the priesthood?

Adam: Great question, because even this section references a couple of different covenants. President Nelson has said the Abrahamic covenant and the new and everlasting covenant are essentially the same covenant. It is the everlasting covenant that God made with his children before we came to Earth — essentially a promise that Jesus Christ would be the one to overcome all the things that keep us from returning to God's presence and becoming like him. He is the guarantor of the promises God has made with us.

So that's a group of covenants with slightly different names, related to but a little different from the oath and covenant that belongs to the priesthood in Section 84. As we said in Part 1, the oath and covenant of the priesthood is a covenant that priesthood holders make to bring others to the everlasting covenant. It's like a covenant to bring people to the covenant. Anything you'd add?

Aaron: The only thing I'd add is the definition you'll find in the Topics and Questions part of the Gospel Library under "everlasting covenant." In answer to the question, what is the everlasting covenant:

"The everlasting covenant, also known as the Abrahamic covenant, is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and includes all the ordinances and covenants that we need to obtain salvation and exaltation. It is new whenever the Lord renews or restores it, and it is everlasting because it does not change. The everlasting covenant was established on the earth with Adam and was most recently renewed by God through the prophet Joseph Smith as part of the restoration of the gospel in the latter days."

Think of the new and everlasting covenant as the umbrella that contains all the other covenants — and those covenants all help us fulfill the new and everlasting covenant. So how does it relate? If it's the Abrahamic covenant, it's one and the same — the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Adam: Did we answer the question? Did we over-answer it?

Aaron: No, I thought it was great.

Guest: Can I ask a question from that? Just for clarity — so men make the covenant, and do women just participate in the covenant? They don't physically make the covenant? How does that work?

Adam: Great question. Here's something I should have said last week, so I'll say it this week: I am still learning a lot. I'm surprised at how much I'm continuing to learn. When I was your age and looked at somebody old like me, I thought, "By then I'll know everything." That is nowhere near true. So everything we're talking about is our best answer, given with the understanding that probably next week we'll know even more.

Let me try to phrase this the right way. There is a covenant that men make when they're ordained to the priesthood — specifically the Melchizedek Priesthood. It includes the obligation to magnify their calling in the priesthood, which we learned last week is about restoring God's children to the everlasting covenant and preparing them to return to His presence. That is the work of the priesthood — which is to say, it's God's work, and He accomplishes it through His priesthood power.

Now, who participates in that work today? Is it just men who hold the priesthood? Do women also participate — serving missions, fulfilling callings, helping prepare people to return to God's presence? It's a work we're all invited to participate in, and as we participate, we grow, we learn, we become more like Him. The blessings of that work are given to everyone. In fact, even beyond the blessings, the *authority* to participate is given to everyone. As Aaron read last time from President Oaks, whether it's a call to serve in your ward or as a missionary, that is priesthood authority. As women hold those callings, they receive the authority of the priesthood and the power of God to accomplish that work.

Aaron: I'll add, where much is given, much is required. Because men are ordained to the priesthood and enter into this covenant, there are expectations the Lord has for them, and will hold them accountable for, that are different from the expectations He has for His daughters. As you go to the temple — which for many of you is coming shortly — listen to the wording in the washing and anointing, and as you begin the endowment. There are a few differences in the blessings promised to men and women, and some of those promises are actually unconditional for the sisters. For the men to receive them, faithfulness is required — which connects right back to Section 84 about being faithful to obtaining these two priesthoods.

Adam: So how do men and women differ? Number one, they don't differ in terms of their importance. They don't differ in terms of what good they can do in the world and what the Lord will do with them. And they don't differ in their ability to teach and preach and testify of the Savior Jesus Christ. But there are some differences in specific things our Heavenly Father has asked of men. And why is that? We don't have an answer to that one right now.

The Connection: Priesthood and Sharing the Gospel

Adam: Let me ask a question to get us started. At the beginning of Section 84, the Lord talks about how the purpose of this church is to restore God's children to the everlasting covenant and to prepare them to return to His presence. A lot of that is related to sharing the gospel — and the rest of Section 84 is all about sharing the gospel.

Before we dive in: what is the connection between the oath and covenant that belongs to the priesthood, and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with all the world?

Annie: One of the primary purposes of God's church is to restore His people, and people can't be converted or restored to the church without first learning about it and understanding it.

Adam: Great answer. Part of that original Abrahamic covenant was that through Abraham's lineage, the whole earth would be blessed — and this is a lot of how that happens. We have to take it to the world. Other thoughts?

Nev: I was thinking about the ultimate purpose of this life — how we are all children of God, all trying to go live with Him again. Part of this journey is helping to bring others unto Christ as well, especially in this time of gathering Israel. Part of our individual priesthood responsibility is helping to gather Israel.

Adam: Absolutely. So why do you need priesthood authority to spread the gospel and gather Israel? Or can we do it totally without priesthood authority?

Milo: Priesthood authority is of God, and God needs to be able to touch people's hearts in order for them to be converted. And once people are converted, they can make covenants and oaths with God.

Adam: Why do we need priesthood authority with covenants?

Eden: Priesthood authority is what allows us to perform covenants. And we're set apart as missionaries through the priesthood. My first thought was that the priesthood is God's power on the earth — so knowing that when we're out as missionaries we always have access to God's power gives me so much strength. It truly is through the priesthood that we can make covenants with God.

Adam: A couple of things I heard there. Milo, you said God needs to be able to bless us — President Christofferson has said if you want full access to the power of the Savior Jesus Christ and his atonement, you have to make covenants, and that requires priesthood. And Eden, two important things: priesthood authority allows us to speak and teach with the authority of the Savior, in a way people recognize as authoritative and that allows the Holy Ghost to be there. And — primary, most important — we can't make binding covenants that truly connect us with our Heavenly Father unless we do it through priesthood authority. Once you've tapped Jesus in, he's all in. He's relentless. We have a special relationship with him, and that requires priesthood authority.

Endowed with Power Before Going Out

Adam: Eden, something you said makes me think of President Nelson's teaching. As you're called and set apart as full-time missionaries, you're set apart by a stake president who holds the keys to give you authority to do that part of the Lord's work. Beyond that, President Nelson has taught that one of the ways we access the power of God is through our covenants — not just the oath and covenant of the priesthood, but the endowment. Throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord talks about how he will endow his people with power before He sends them out to preach.

Several years ago, our oldest son was called to serve a mission — January of 2020. You may remember a little worldwide thing happened that year. He went out while temples were closed, in that first group of missionaries, and served three or four months before the temples opened enough for that group to be endowed. It's fun to hear him talk about the difference between teaching as a missionary before the endowment and after. He said it was like a light switch turned on in his mind — his ability to teach, to receive inspiration and guidance for how to answer people's questions, was totally different after he received the endowment.

Aaron: Remember D&C 84 is coming to missionaries — the six, then eleven, in that multi-day revelation. It's talking to people authorized to speak in the Savior's name. So the second part, the blessing side: as we keep covenants and act with the proper authority that comes through someone who holds priesthood keys, you have the ability to teach in a really powerful way. That's the exciting thing. Eighteen-year-olds now go out, both sisters and elders. The rest of the world doesn't trust 18-year-olds — but we're sending them out to be the frontline preachers of Jesus Christ. There's a lot of power when you can testify, invite, and promise blessings with authority as a set-apart messenger and ambassador of the Savior. And that's only possible because of the restoration of the priesthood and of covenants, including the oath and covenant of the priesthood.

Annie: I've always been told they want young people because we're able to connect with the young and the old. We're at that part of life where we're starting adulthood but barely leaving childhood, so we can connect with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Adam: Totally agree. And imagine how astounding it is for someone in the world without the Church to meet these 18- and 19-year-olds who, from their perspective, are just babies — and to have God work through you in powerful, miraculous ways. That's a testimony that this is God's work, that his church is so true he is able to work through 18-year-olds. In some ways you're a little like Joseph Smith, one of the simple things of the world through whom the Lord did miracles beyond what he was clearly capable of. You'll find yourselves in positions where you have no idea what to say, and God will help you in ways that are clearly miraculous — because no 18-year-old should have been able to say that, know that, or do that.

The Great Commission and Promised Blessings (Verses 62-88)

Adam: Let's jump to Section 84, verse 62. The Lord gives a command, then a whole list of blessings to those who do it. Max?

Max:

"Therefore go ye into all the world, and unto whatsoever place ye cannot go, ye shall send, that the testimony may go from you into all the world, unto every creature."

Adam: Cool side note: he said almost the exact same thing to his apostles in the New Testament after his resurrection — the Great Commission: "Go into all the world. Teach every creature." Now let's talk about the promised blessings. Annie, read verse 65?

Annie:

"And these signs shall follow them that believe—in my name they shall do many wonderful works; in my name they shall cast out devils."

Group (continuing):

"In my name they shall heal the sick. In my name they shall open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf; and the tongue of the dumb shall speak; and if any man shall administer poison unto them it shall not hurt them; and the poison of a serpent shall not have power to harm them."

Adam: These are also promised blessings given to the apostles in Jesus' day. You all have mission calls. Which of these blessings do you really hope you'll see on your mission?

Guest: Verse 69, "unstop the ears of the deaf." I feel like it also applies to connecting with someone who has decided to be deaf to the gospel, who has decided they don't want to follow. Instead of just thinking, "I'm going to give hearing to someone who's never heard," you can see it as, "I'm going to bring the gospel to someone who decided not to hear anymore."

Adam: Or has never heard it before. President Holland said teaching and healing are very similar in the gospel — almost synonymous in the scriptures. When we teach the gospel, we're helping the spiritually blind or the spiritually deaf. That's awesome.

Owen: You'll get the gift of tongues on your mission. It can help you learn a language, but it can also help you know what to say and how to say it so people hear what you want them to hear. Why would you want that on a mission? Because we're 18-year-olds — people wouldn't naturally want to listen to us. It's a great way to get people to actually care about what we're saying.

Sam: Verse 68, "in my name they shall heal the sick." For someone who wants to go down the medical road, healing someone in his name is not normal — you'd give them medicine or treat them. So it would be super interesting to be able to heal the sick.

Adam: Love that — thinking both spiritually and physically. Owen mentioned knowing the words, and these can be healing words. We have to speak them so that those who believe on your words want to be baptized. I love verse 85:

"Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man."

Learn, and then you'll know what to say. And Sam's point that healing seems abnormal — yes, there's physical healing, but combine that with President Holland's point: healing also takes place because of the words of the Savior. Someone who's never had peace can learn to have peace because of the Savior. Someone who's only experienced chaos can have comfort. When we preach so the Holy Ghost can be in their lives, that brings healing in an abnormal way — and physical healing absolutely can happen too.

Guest: In Elder Wakolo's talk this last general conference, I loved when he said sometimes you plant a seed and it takes a while to break the earth. God is going to tell you what to say, but he's also going to let you know when you've said enough — and then it's up to them and their hearts to soften.

Adam: Important to know. You may be saying the right things and not feel like you're seeing things happen. Something I remembered on my mission: not everyone believed Jesus. If not everyone believed the perfect teacher, I should probably be a little easy on myself — no matter how well I teach, I won't touch everyone in that moment. But you never really know what's happening, because you're touching more people than you know.

Adam: A couple more promises before we move on. Verse 80 — the Lord promises that any man who goes to preach the gospel of the kingdom and fails not to continue faithful "shall not be weary in mind, neither darkened, neither in body, limb, nor joint; and a hair of his head shall not fall to the ground unnoticed." (That last one some of us appreciate more than others — and yes, that was a bald joke; this is an audio recording.) Then he promises you won't need to worry about enough to eat, drink, or wear — he'll take care of you. Verse 85, Aaron mentioned — he'll help you know what to say. All of that leads up to what may be the greatest promise of all, one President Monson quoted often. Verse 88?

Guest:

"And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."

Adam: What does that promise mean to you now, looking forward to going out?

Nev: It reminds me of my favorite scripture, Joshua 1:9 — he will be with us wherever we go. Even when we're going somewhere and doing things we've never done before, he will be with us through everything and help us.

Adam: Beautiful — there's the protection side and the comfort side, and also the idea that God goes before you to prepare the way. In Alma 8, before Alma goes back to Ammonihah after being rejected, the Lord sends an angel to bear him up, essentially saying, "I'm the same one who showed up before — now go back." He meets Amulek, and everything changes, because God had been there first. Amulek says, "I knew you were coming; an angel told me." The Lord is saying in verse 88, "I'll do the same for you. I'll prepare the way." There are people you'll teach whose hearts he will have softened, who will be ready to recognize you. That's a beautiful part of this promise.

Guest: It helps that he'll always be there. He can help you say what you want to say, but he can also help you do things you otherwise couldn't do by yourself. Being able to say what you're saying and having priesthood power kind of go together — you need one, you also have the other.

Adam: That reminds me of what Nephi said — the Holy Ghost will carry the words of Christ unto the hearts of others. We'll say a lot of things, but it's his Spirit that gives them impact and touches hearts. And, leading back to Eden's earlier point, there's really only so much we can do; the Holy Ghost carries the words to their hearts, but there's a point where it's up to them. They've got to make a choice to believe.

Our Role vs. God's Role (Verses 45-48)

Adam: Let's go back to verse 46. As we read, look for: What does the Spirit do, and what does God do?

“And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.”

What does the Spirit do?

Annie: Gives light to every man.

Adam: And enlightens every man through the world that does what?

Group: Listens — hearkens.

Adam: Right — *hearken*, which doesn't just mean inviting the message in for a glass of water and then, “Nice to have you visit, see ya.” It means being willing to act on it. Now verse 47:

“And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father.”

For those who hearken, what happens?

Group: They come to God.

Adam: They come to a point where they want to know more, and they put themselves in a position where he can teach them. Verse 48:

“And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he hath renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world.”

For those who come unto the Father, what does the Father do?

Group: Teaches them the covenant.

Adam: Which covenant — the oath and covenant, or the everlasting covenant?

Group: The everlasting covenant.

Adam: Right. We go out as part of the oath and covenant to teach people and bring them to the everlasting covenant. But what we learn here is: you teach, and it's the Spirit that touches hearts. If they hearken and come unto God, then he'll make sure they learn about his everlasting covenant — and he may do that through you, or he may have other ways too.

What Makes a Successful Missionary

Adam: What thoughts do you have about how to judge whether you're a successful missionary?

Nev: That's a very common question missionaries ask, and it's hard to know when you've been successful. But the mission is for the people you teach *and* for your own personal conversion. So to be a successful missionary is to at least grow your own testimony and bring yourself unto the gospel.

Adam: Absolutely true. Our own conversion is a critical part of our missionary service.

Annie: That was a lesson one of my brothers had to learn. My oldest brother served in Virginia and baptized one person his entire mission. My other brother has been serving in Madagascar and has helped baptize hundreds. That's been hard for the older one to realize — that the success of his mission wasn't defined by how many people he brought to the waters of baptism, but by the hearts he touched and the work he did. It was hard for him, but he brought himself closer to Christ — and that was as important as bringing others.

Adam: Our Heavenly Father is the one over the vineyard. We work with him; he knows what he's doing, and people have agency. D&C 29 defines the elect as those who hear his voice and hearken to it.

Aaron: I'd offer a model from the story of Nephi, son of Helaman, in the book of Helaman. He's preaching, no one's listening. He gets up on his garden tower and prays, and people gather because he sounds sincere. He turns, sees them, and tells them they're wicked — that right now the chief judge is being murdered by his brother. It turns out to be true, and there's a miraculous moment where everyone thinks he must be a prophet. But it's anticlimactic — they all just walk away, and Nephi's left alone, wondering what to do. And the Lord comes to him in that moment:

"Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done... thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments. And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works."

Notice the Lord measures what *Nephi* has done — not the people's reaction to him. Too often we think our righteousness is measured by others' actions. It's not. Our righteousness is measured by our own covenant keeping — and as we do that, we care more for others and become more adept at teaching in ways that let the Holy Ghost touch their hearts.

Guest: I'm grateful to know I'm not the one who converts those I teach — it truly is the Holy Ghost. I almost see that as merciful: I don't have to define the success of my mission by who I converted, because it was truly by the Holy Ghost that they were converted unto Jesus Christ.

Adam: Well said. Here's how Preach My Gospel puts it:

"Your success is not determined by how many people you teach or help bring to baptism, nor is it determined by holding leadership positions. Your success does not depend on how others choose to respond to you, to your invitations, or to your sincere acts of kindness. People have agency to choose whether to accept the gospel message or not."

Relating it back to *Nephi* — it wasn't about how the people responded to him, but how he responded to the Savior and the effort he made. In the end, we're changed even if nobody else chooses to be.

Guest: It's also beautiful that even if we're not the ones to change them, they will someday know the truth. It reminds me of the Standard of Truth. Can I read it?

"The Standard of Truth has been erected. No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done."

Even if we're not the ones to bring them, they will be brought. We can be sad we weren't the ones, but we can also have hope that God will someday touch their hearts.

Adam: What a great way to get to the conclusion. The Lord is able to do His work — and this is His work. He does it through His priesthood power and authority, and He invites us to participate with Him. Last time we talked about how covenants establish relationships; this covenant creates an apprenticeship relationship, where as we work with Him, He teaches us the family business — bringing to pass the exaltation of all His children.

Final Thoughts

Adam: As we wrap up, are there things we haven't talked about that were important to you this week, or final impressions?

Guest: When we read verses 61 through 88 and talked about the blessings one looks forward to on a mission — I was thinking all of those are things that Christ did. It made me so happy to know that while you're on your mission, you are representatives of Christ, and you'll be able to do what He did.

Adam: What a great insight — that's exactly what's happening. He invites us to be like him and to do his work, and that can't help but change us.

Aaron: As we keep our covenants — and because we can make those covenants through priesthood authority and the restoration of the oath and covenant of the priesthood — we now get to behave like the Savior Jesus Christ. There's nothing that brings more joy than acting like the Savior. It's what all his disciples end up doing: taking upon themselves his name, acting in his name, being witnesses of him in all things. That's what we're all headed toward — that we can actually become like him.

Conclusion: Restoration, Gathering, and Mount Zion

Adam: To conclude, let me tie together three scriptures — two we've already talked about, and one near the end of this section.

In Part 1, we talked about the everlasting covenant and how the Lord promised to restore it in the last days. Remember Jeremiah, watching the destruction of the Lord's people and wondering how the covenant would be fulfilled? The Lord says in Jeremiah 31:31:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord."

At the beginning of Section 84, the Lord says he established his church in the last days for the restoration of his people — as spoken by the mouth of his prophets, including Jeremiah — and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion. We've spent a lot of time on restoring the people and sharing the gospel. Let's end with gathering the saints to stand upon Mount Zion.

Mount Zion here represents the temple in these last days. What mount did God take Israel to out of Egypt to establish a covenant relationship?

Group: Mount Sinai.

Adam: Right. Mount Zion is a reference to a latter-day Mount Sinai — a place where we come to make covenants with God and come to know him in Zion. You'll see this thread running through Section 84. Verse 97 — the Lord is talking about the last days, sending us out to teach. There will be some scary things — scourges and plagues — and he says these "shall not be taken from the earth until I have completed my work, which shall be cut short in righteousness." Now listen to verse 98 — it should harken back to Jeremiah:

"Until all shall know me, who remain, even from the least unto the greatest, and shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this new song."

He gives us a song — we won't read the whole thing — about the Lord bringing Zion, redeeming his people, restoring them to the covenant of their fathers, and bringing peace to the earth: "and the heavens have smiled upon her; and she is clothed with the glory of her God; for he stands in the midst of his people." That is the glorious end to this whole story. It's why he sent us here in the first place — to bring us back into his presence through this covenant relationship. And that is the role he asks us to play in sharing the gospel and restoring people to that covenant, so that as they make and keep those covenants, the Father can teach them of the everlasting covenant, and we come to know him and become like him.

Testimony

Adam: It's my testimony that the Lord loves us beyond what we can imagine — so much that he made this promise to us. He created a plan to bring us back into his presence and make us like him, and he would send his Son to make it possible. He wants everybody to know about him. But right now, not everybody does. So he invites us — some by covenant obligation and some by invitation — to participate in this great work with him: to restore people to this covenant, share the everlasting gospel, and bring them back into his presence. As we participate, the blessings to us are amazing. We change as we come to know him. The joy and peace that come because we're focused on Jesus are beyond description, and incredibly critical for the challenges each of us will face as we prepare to become like him and return to his presence.

I know he loves you, and that he is excited for you to participate in his work. I testify that he is grateful for your willingness to make and keep covenants with him, and to invite others to participate in those covenants as well. He will go before your face, and he will be on your right hand and on your left, and his Spirit will be in your hearts, and his angels round about you to bear you up. As you are in his service and keeping your covenants to work with him, you will not be alone, and he will use you to work miracles among his children. I share that in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Group: Amen.

Adam: We are grateful, both for those of you here in the room and those listening, for your time and attention. We hope these have been helpful. If you have questions or suggestions, we invite you to reach out through the stake website.

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