



# Doctrinal Mastery

Core Document



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# Doctrinal Mastery

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### Introduction to Doctrinal Mastery

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Helaman taught his sons, “It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation” (*Helaman 5:12*). Building a foundation upon Jesus Christ—which includes coming to understand, believe, and live according to His doctrine—will deepen our conversion and commitment as His disciples, protect us against the influences of the adversary, and help us bless the lives of others.

One of the ways we accomplish this is by studying the scriptures sequentially together in class. Another way we build our foundation upon Jesus Christ and His doctrine is through an effort called Doctrinal Mastery.

Doctrinal Mastery focuses on two outcomes:

1. Learning and applying divine principles for acquiring spiritual knowledge

Heavenly Father has revealed principles for acquiring spiritual knowledge. These principles include acting in faith, examining concepts and questions with an eternal perspective, and seeking further understanding through divinely appointed sources. We develop doctrinal mastery as we practice implementing these principles and learn to seek answers to doctrinal and historical questions in a way that invites the Holy Ghost to strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ and His doctrine.

2. Mastering the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the scripture passages in which that doctrine is taught

This outcome of Doctrinal Mastery is achieved by:

- a. Developing a deeper understanding of each of the following topics and the key statements of doctrine identified with each topic:
  - The Godhead
  - The plan of salvation
  - The Atonement of Jesus Christ
  - The Restoration
  - Prophets and revelation
  - Priesthood and priesthood keys
  - Ordinances and covenants
  - Marriage and family
  - Commandments
- b. Knowing how the statements of doctrine are taught in doctrinal mastery scripture passages and being able to remember and locate those passages.
- c. Explaining each statement of doctrine clearly, using the associated doctrinal mastery passages.
- d. Applying what we learn in our daily choices and in our responses to doctrinal, social, and historical issues and questions.

# Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge

Because our Heavenly Father loves us and wants us to progress toward becoming like Him, He has encouraged us to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (*D&C 88:118*). In our search for truth, we can trust Him completely, relying on His wisdom, His love, and His power to teach and bless us. God knows all things and is the source of all truth (see *Mosiah 4:9*). He has promised to reveal truth to our minds and hearts through the Holy Ghost if we will diligently seek Him (see *D&C 8:2–3*).

To help us, Heavenly Father has taught us how to acquire spiritual knowledge. He has established the conditions we must follow in order to gain such knowledge. His divinely ordained pattern requires that we have an honest desire to know the truth (see *Moroni 10:4–5*) and are willing to live according to that which God has revealed (see *John 7:17*). Our sincere desire will lead us to seek truth through prayer (see *James 1:5–6*; *2 Nephi 32:8–9*) and a serious study of the word of God (see *2 Timothy 3:15–17*; *2 Nephi 32:3*).

Sometimes we may discover new information or have questions regarding the doctrine, practices, or history of the Church that seem difficult to understand. Asking questions and seeking answers is a vital part of our effort to learn truth. Some of the questions that come to our minds may be inspired by the Holy Ghost. Inspired questions should be considered gifts from God that provide opportunities for us to increase our understanding and to strengthen our assurance that the Lord is willing to teach us. Whatever the source of our questions may be, we have been blessed with the ability to think and reason and to have the Lord’s influence expand our minds and deepen our understanding. The attitude and intent with which we ask questions and seek answers will greatly affect our ability to learn through the Holy Ghost.

The following three principles can guide us as we seek to learn and understand eternal truth and resolve questions or issues: Act in faith, examine concepts and questions with an eternal perspective, and seek further understanding through divinely appointed sources.

## 1. Act in Faith

We act in faith when we choose to trust God and turn to Him first through sincere prayer, a study of His teachings, and obedience to His commandments.

As we seek to develop our understanding and to resolve concerns, it is important that we rely on the testimony that we already have of Jesus Christ, the Restoration of His gospel, and the teachings of His ordained prophets. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught: “When those moments come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, *hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes*” (“Lord, I Believe,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 94). The Lord Himself has invited us to “look unto [Him] in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (*D&C 6:36*).

During times when we may not immediately find answers to our questions, it is helpful to remember that although Heavenly Father has revealed all that is necessary for our salvation, He has not yet revealed all truth. As we continue to seek for answers, we must live by faith—trusting that we will eventually receive the answers we seek (see *Proverbs 3:5–6*; *Ether 12:6*). As we are faithful to the truth and light we have already received, we will receive more. Answers to our questions and prayers often come “line upon line, precept upon precept” (*2 Nephi 28:30*).

## 2. Examine Concepts and Questions with an Eternal Perspective

To examine doctrinal concepts, questions, and social issues with an eternal perspective, we consider them in the context of the plan of salvation and the teachings of the Savior. We seek the help of the Holy Ghost in order to see things as the Lord sees them. This allows us to reframe the question (to see the question differently) and view ideas based on the Lord’s standard of truth rather than accepting the world’s premise or assumptions (see *1 Corinthians 2:5, 9–11*). We can do this by asking questions such as “What do I already know about Heavenly Father, His plan, and how He deals with His children?” and “What gospel teachings relate to or clarify this concept or issue?”

Even questions that relate to historical events may need to be examined with an eternal perspective. As we stay anchored to our trust in our Heavenly Father and His plan of salvation, we are able to see issues more clearly. It may also help to examine historical questions in the proper historical context by considering the culture and norms of the time period rather than imposing current perspectives and attitudes.

It is important to remember that historical details do not carry the saving power of ordinances, covenants, and doctrine. To be distracted by less significant details at the expense of missing the unfolding miracle of the Restoration is like spending time analyzing a gift box and ignoring the wonder of the gift itself.

### 3. Seek Further Understanding through Divinely Appointed Sources

As part of the Lord's appointed process for obtaining spiritual knowledge, He has established sources through which He reveals truth and guidance to His children. These sources include the light of Christ, the Holy Ghost, the scriptures, parents, and Church leaders. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—the Lord's prophets upon the earth today—are a vital source of truth. The Lord has chosen and ordained these individuals to speak for Him.

We can also learn truth through other trustworthy sources. However, sincere seekers of truth should be wary of unreliable sources of information. We live in a time when many "call evil good, and good evil" (*Isaiah 5:20*). Satan is the father of lies and seeks to distort truth and persuade us to turn away from the Lord and His appointed servants. As we turn to the Lord's divinely appointed sources for answers and direction, we can be blessed to discern between truth and error. Learning to recognize and avoid unreliable sources can protect us from misinformation and from those who seek to destroy faith.

## Helping Others Acquire Spiritual Knowledge

When others come to us asking questions or investigating Church doctrine, practices, or history, how might we best assist them in their quest for truth? The following are some of the ways we can help them:

***Listen carefully and prayerfully:*** Listen attentively before you respond, seeking to clarify and understand the actual questions they are asking. Thoughtfully seek to understand the true intent of their questions and their feelings and beliefs.

***Teach and testify of gospel truths:*** Share applicable teachings from the scriptures and modern prophets and how they have made a difference in your life. Help those with whom you speak examine or reframe their questions in the context of the gospel and the plan of salvation.

***Invite them to act in faith:*** Remember that the Lord requires us to seek spiritual knowledge for ourselves. We must therefore invite others to act in faith through prayer, obedience to the commandments, and diligent study of the word of God, using divinely appointed sources, particularly the Book of Mormon. If applicable, invite them to remember experiences they may have had when they felt the Holy Ghost and to hold fast to eternal truths they have learned until additional knowledge comes.

***Follow through:*** Offer to search for answers, and then follow through by sharing what you learn. You could also search for answers together. Express confidence in the Lord's promise to provide personal revelation.

*Related references:* Jeremiah 1:4–5; Amos 3:7; Matthew 5:14–16; Matthew 16:15–19; John 15:16; John 17:3; Ephesians 2:19–20; Ephesians 4:11–14; 2 Nephi 2:27; Mosiah 18:8–10; 3 Nephi 18:15, 20–21; D&C 1:37–38; D&C 18:15–16; D&C 21:4–6

*Related doctrinal topics:* The Godhead; The Holy Ghost; The Atonement of Jesus Christ; Faith in Jesus Christ; Prophets and Revelation; Commandments

# Doctrinal Topics

## 1. The Godhead

There are three separate personages in the Godhead: God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost. The Father and the Son have tangible, glorified bodies of flesh and bone, and the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit (see *D&C 130:22–23*). They are one in purpose and are perfectly united in bringing to pass Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation.

*Related references:* *Genesis 1:26–27; Luke 24:36–39; Joseph Smith—History 1:15–20*

### God the Father

God the Father is the Supreme Being whom we worship. He is the Father of our spirits (see *Hebrews 12:9*). He is perfect, has all power, and knows all things. He is also just, merciful, and kind. God loves each of His children perfectly, and all are alike unto Him (see *2 Nephi 26:33*). His work and glory is to bring about the immortality and eternal life of man.

*Related references:* *John 17:3; Mosiah 4:9; Moses 1:39*

### Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of the Father in the spirit and is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. Under the Father’s direction, Jesus Christ created the heavens and the earth. He is Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Messiah of the New Testament.

Jesus Christ does the will of the Father in all things. He lived a sinless life and atoned for the sins of all mankind (see *3 Nephi 11:10–11*). His life is the perfect example of how we are to live (see *3 Nephi 12:48*). He was the first of Heavenly Father’s children to be resurrected. In our day, as in ancient times, He stands at the head of His Church. He will come again in power and glory and will reign on the earth during the Millennium (see *D&C 29:10–11*). He will judge all mankind.

Because Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Mediator with the Father, all prayers, blessings, and priesthood ordinances should be done in His name (see *3 Nephi 18:15, 20–21*).

*Related references:* *Isaiah 53:3–5; Luke 24:36–39; 1 Corinthians 15:20–22; Revelation 20:12; Alma 7:11–13; Alma 34:9–10; Helaman*

*5:12; Moroni 7:45, 47–48; D&C 1:30; D&C 6:36; D&C 18:10–11; D&C 19:16–19; D&C 76:22–24*

*Related topic:* The Atonement of Jesus Christ

## The Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. He is a personage of spirit and does not have a body of flesh and bone. He is often referred to as the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Comforter.

The Holy Ghost bears witness of the Father and the Son, reveals the truth of all things, and sanctifies those who repent and are baptized. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, we can receive spiritual gifts, which are blessings or abilities given by the Lord for our own benefit and to help us serve and bless others.

*Related references:* *John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:5, 9–11; 2 Nephi 32:3; 2 Nephi 32:8–9; Mosiah 3:19; Mosiah 18:8–10; 3 Nephi 27:20; Moroni 7:45, 47–48; Moroni 10:4–5; D&C 8:2–3; D&C 130:22–23*

*Related topics:* Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge; Ordinances and Covenants

## 2. The Plan of Salvation

In the premortal existence Heavenly Father introduced a plan to enable us to become like Him and obtain immortality and eternal life (see *Moses 1:39*). To fulfill this plan and become like our Father in Heaven, we must come to know Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, and have a correct understanding of Their character and attributes (see *John 17:3*).

The scriptures refer to Heavenly Father’s plan as the plan of salvation, the great plan of happiness, the plan of redemption, and the plan of mercy. This plan includes the Creation, the Fall, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and all of the laws, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel. Moral agency—the ability to choose and act for ourselves—is also essential to Heavenly Father’s plan. Our eternal progression depends on how we use this gift (see *Joshua 24:15; 2 Nephi 2:27*).

Jesus Christ is the central figure in Heavenly Father’s plan. The plan of salvation enables us to become perfected, receive a fulness of joy, enjoy our family relationships throughout the eternities, and live forever in the presence of God.

*Related references:* *Malachi 4:5–6; 3 Nephi 12:48; D&C 131:1–4*

## Premortal Life

Before we were born on the earth, we lived in the presence of our Heavenly Father as His spirit children (see *Abraham 3:22–23*). In this premortal existence we participated in a council with Heavenly Father’s other spirit children. During that council Heavenly Father presented His plan and the premortal Jesus Christ covenanted to be the Savior.

We used our agency to follow Heavenly Father’s plan. Those who followed Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ were permitted to come to the earth to experience mortality and progress toward eternal life. Lucifer, another spirit son of God, rebelled against the plan. He became Satan, and he and his followers were cast out of heaven and denied the privileges of receiving a physical body and experiencing mortality.

*Related references: Jeremiah 1:4–5; Hebrews 12:9; 2 Nephi 2:27; 3 Nephi 11:10–11*

## The Creation

Jesus Christ created the heavens and the earth under the direction of the Father (see *D&C 76:22–24*). The Creation of the earth was essential to God’s plan. It provided a place where we could gain a physical body, be tested and tried, and develop divine attributes.

Adam was the first man created on the earth. God created Adam and Eve in His own image. All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God (see *Genesis 1:26–27*). Gender is an essential characteristic of each person’s premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

## The Fall

In the Garden of Eden, God joined Adam and Eve in marriage. While Adam and Eve were in the garden, they were still in God’s presence and could have lived forever. They lived in innocence, and God provided for their needs.

God gave Adam and Eve their agency while they were in the Garden of Eden. He commanded them not to eat the forbidden fruit—the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Obeying this commandment meant that they could remain in the garden. However, Adam and Eve did not yet understand that if they remained in the garden they could not progress by experiencing opposition in

mortality. They could not know joy because they could not experience sorrow and pain. Furthermore, they could not have children.

Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and they chose to do so. Because of this choice, they were cast out from God’s presence and became fallen and mortal. Adam and Eve’s transgression and the changes they experienced as a result, including spiritual and physical death, are called the Fall. Spiritual death is separation from God. Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the mortal body.

The Fall is an essential part of Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation. As a result of the Fall, Adam and Eve could have children. They and their posterity could experience joy and sorrow, know good from evil, and progress (see *2 Nephi 2:22–25*). As descendants of Adam and Eve, we inherit a fallen condition during mortality. We are separated from God’s presence and are subject to physical death. We are also tested by the difficulties of mortal life and the temptations of the adversary. While we are not accountable for Adam and Eve’s transgression, we are responsible for our own sins. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can overcome the negative effects of the Fall, receive forgiveness for our sins, and eventually experience a fulness of joy.

*Related references: Genesis 1:28; Mosiah 3:19; Alma 34:9–10*

*Related topic: The Atonement of Jesus Christ*

## Mortal Life

Mortal life is a time of learning, during which we prove that we will use our agency to do all that the Lord has commanded and prepare for eternal life by developing divine attributes. We do this as we exercise faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repent, receive saving ordinances and covenants such as baptism and confirmation, and faithfully endure to the end of our mortal lives in following the example of Jesus Christ.

In mortality our spirits are united with our physical bodies, giving us opportunities to grow and develop in ways that were not possible in the premortal life. Because our Father in Heaven has a tangible body of flesh and bone, our bodies are necessary for us to progress and become like Him. Our bodies are sacred and should be respected as a gift from our Heavenly Father (see *1 Corinthians 6:19–20*).

*Related references:* Joshua 24:15; Matthew 22:36–39; John 14:15; 2 Nephi 2:27; 3 Nephi 12:48; Moroni 7:45, 47–48; D&C 130:22–23

*Related topics:* The Godhead; The Atonement of Jesus Christ; Ordinances and Covenants; Commandments

## Life after Death

When we die, our spirits enter the spirit world and await the Resurrection. The spirits of the righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise. Those who die without knowledge of the truth and those who are disobedient in mortality enter a temporary place in the postmortal world called spirit prison.

Every person eventually will have the opportunity to learn the principles of the gospel and receive its ordinances and covenants. Many of the faithful will preach the gospel to those in spirit prison. Those who choose to receive the gospel, repent, and accept the ordinances of salvation that are performed for them in temples will dwell in paradise until the Resurrection (see *1 Peter 4:6*).

Resurrection is the reuniting of our spirit bodies with our perfected physical bodies of flesh and bone. After resurrection we will be immortal—our spirit and body will never again be separated. Every person born on earth will be resurrected because Jesus Christ overcame physical death (see *1 Corinthians 15:20–22*). The righteous will be resurrected before the wicked and will come forth in the First Resurrection.

The Final Judgment will occur after the Resurrection. Jesus Christ will judge each person to determine the eternal glory that he or she will receive. This judgment will be based on each person's desires and obedience to God's commands (see *Revelation 20:12*).

There are three kingdoms of glory: the celestial kingdom, the terrestrial kingdom, and the telestial kingdom (see *1 Corinthians 15:40–42*). Those who are valiant in the testimony of Jesus and obedient to the principles of the gospel will dwell in the celestial kingdom in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and with their righteous family members.

*Related references:* Luke 24:36–39; John 17:3; D&C 131:1–4

*Related topics:* The Atonement of Jesus Christ; Ordinances and Covenants

## 3. The Atonement of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was foreordained in the premortal council to be our Savior and Redeemer. He came to earth and willingly suffered and died to redeem all mankind from the negative effects of the Fall and to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus Christ's triumph over spiritual and physical death by His suffering, death, and Resurrection is called the Atonement. His sacrifice benefits each of us and demonstrates the infinite worth of each and every one of Heavenly Father's children (see *D&C 18:10–11*).

It is only through Jesus Christ that we can be saved because He was the only one capable of making an infinite and eternal Atonement for all mankind (see *Alma 34:9–10*). Only He had the power to overcome physical death. From His mortal mother, Mary, He inherited the ability to die. From God, His immortal Father, He inherited the power to live forever or to lay down His life and to take it up again. He alone could redeem us from our sins. Because He lived a perfect, sinless life, He was free from the demands of justice and could pay the debt for those who repent.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ included His suffering for the sins of mankind in the Garden of Gethsemane, the shedding of His blood, His suffering and death on the cross, and His literal Resurrection. He was the first to be resurrected. He rose from the tomb with a glorified, immortal body of flesh and bone (see *Luke 24:36–39*). Because of His Atonement all mankind will be resurrected with perfect, immortal bodies and be brought back into God's presence to be judged. Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice provided the only way for us to be cleansed and forgiven of our sins so that we can dwell in God's presence eternally (see *Isaiah 1:18; D&C 19:16–19*).

As part of His Atonement, Jesus Christ not only suffered for our sins, but He also took upon Himself the pains, temptations, sicknesses, and infirmities of all mankind (see *Isaiah 53:3–5; Alma 7:11–13*). He understands our suffering because He has experienced it. As we come to Him in faith, the Savior will strengthen us to bear our burdens and accomplish tasks that we could not do on our own (see *Matthew 11:28–30; Ether 12:27*).

In paying the penalty for our sins, Jesus Christ did not eliminate our personal responsibility. In order to accept His sacrifice, be cleansed from our sins, and inherit eternal life, we must exercise faith in Him, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure faithfully to the end of our lives.

*Related references:* John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 15:20–22; Mosiah 3:19; 3 Nephi 11:10–11; 3 Nephi 27:20; D&C 76:22–24

*Related topics:* The Godhead: Jesus Christ; The Plan of Salvation: The Fall; Ordinances and Covenants

## Faith in Jesus Christ

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our faith can lead to salvation only when it is centered in Jesus Christ (see *Helaman 5:12*).

Having faith in Jesus Christ includes having a firm belief that He is the Only Begotten Son of God and the Savior of the world. We recognize that the only way we can return to live with our Heavenly Father is by relying on His Son’s infinite Atonement and by trusting Jesus Christ and following His teachings. More than passive belief, true faith in Jesus Christ leads to action and is expressed by the way we live (see *James 2:17–18*). Our faith can increase as we pray, study the scriptures, and obey God’s commandments.

*Related references:* Proverbs 3:5–6; Ether 12:6; D&C 6:36

*Related topic:* Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge

## Repentance

Faith in Jesus Christ and our love for Him and Heavenly Father lead us to repent. Repentance is part of Heavenly Father’s plan for all of His children who are accountable for their choices. This gift is made possible through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Repentance is a change of mind and heart. It includes turning away from sin and turning our thoughts, actions, and desires toward God and aligning our will with His (see *Mosiah 3:19*).

Repentance includes recognizing our sins; feeling remorse, or godly sorrow, for committing sin; confessing our sins to Heavenly Father and, if necessary, to others; forsaking sin; seeking to restore, as far as possible, all that has been damaged as a result of our sins; and living a life of obedience to God’s commandments (see *D&C 58:42–43*). The Lord promises to forgive us of our sins at baptism, and we renew that covenant each time we sincerely partake of the sacrament with the intent of remembering the Savior and keeping His commandments.

Through sincere repentance and the grace offered through Jesus Christ’s Atonement, we can receive God’s forgiveness and feel peace. We feel the influence of the Spirit in greater abundance, and we are more prepared to live eternally with our Heavenly Father and His Son.

*Related references:* Isaiah 1:18; John 14:15; 3 Nephi 27:20; D&C 19:16–19

*Related topic:* Ordinances and Covenants

## 4. The Restoration

God has restored His gospel in these latter days by reestablishing His truths, priesthood authority, and Church upon the earth. Ancient prophets foretold the latter-day Restoration of the gospel (see *Isaiah 29:13–14*; *Acts 3:19–21*).

The Restoration began in 1820. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith in response to Joseph’s prayer, and They called him to be the Prophet of the Restoration (see *Joseph Smith—History 1:15–20*). God called Joseph Smith to be a latter-day witness of the living Christ. As the Prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God (see *D&C 135:3*). With the Bible, the Book of Mormon testifies of Jesus Christ and contains the fulness of the gospel (see *Ezekiel 37:15–17*). The Book of Mormon is also a witness of Joseph Smith’s prophetic calling and the truthfulness of the Restoration.

As part of the Restoration, God sent angelic messengers to restore the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. He then directed that His Church be organized anew upon the earth on April 6, 1830. Because it was established by God Himself, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (*D&C 1:30*).

*Related references:* Amos 3:7; Ephesians 2:19–20; Ephesians 4:11–14; D&C 13:1; D&C 76:22–24; D&C 107:8

*Related topics:* The Godhead; Prophets and Revelation

## Apostasy

The need for the latter-day Restoration of God’s truths, priesthood authority, and Church arose because of apostasy. Apostasy occurs when one or more individuals turn away from the truths of the gospel.

Following the Savior’s crucifixion and the deaths of His Apostles, many people turned away from the

truths the Savior had established (see *2 Thessalonians 2:1–3*). Principles of the gospel and parts of the holy scriptures were corrupted or lost. Unauthorized changes were made in Church organization and priesthood ordinances. Because of this widespread wickedness, the Lord withdrew the authority and keys of the priesthood from the earth. Although there were many good and honest people who worshipped God according to the light they possessed and received answers to their prayers, the world was left without divine revelation through living prophets. This period is known as the Great Apostasy.

Other periods of general apostasy have occurred throughout the history of the world.

*Related topics:* Prophets and Revelation; Priesthood and Priesthood Keys; Ordinances and Covenants

## Dispensation

When God’s children have fallen into a state of apostasy, He has lovingly reached out to them by calling prophets and dispensing gospel blessings anew through His prophets to the people. A period of time when the Lord reveals His truths, priesthood authority, and ordinances is called a dispensation. It is a period in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the holy priesthood and who has a divine commission to dispense the gospel and to administer its ordinances.

Dispensations are identified with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and others. The latter-day Restoration of the gospel, which the Lord began through the Prophet Joseph Smith, is part of this pattern of dispensations.

In every dispensation, the Lord and His prophets have sought to establish Zion. Zion refers to the Lord’s covenant people who are pure in heart, united in righteousness, and care for one another (see *Moses 7:18*). Zion also refers to a place where the pure in heart live.

Today we are living in the final dispensation—the dispensation of the fulness of times. It is the only dispensation that will not end in apostasy. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will eventually fill the whole earth and stand forever (see *Daniel 2:44*).

*Related topics:* Prophets and Revelation; Priesthood and Priesthood Keys; Ordinances and Covenants

## 5. Prophets and Revelation

A prophet is a person who has been called by God to speak for Him (see *Jeremiah 1:4–5; Amos 3:7; John 15:16; D&C 1:37–38*). Prophets testify of Jesus Christ and teach His gospel. They make known God’s will and true character. They denounce sin, warn of its consequences, and help us avoid deception (see *Ezekiel 3:16–17; Ephesians 4:11–14*). At times, they prophesy of future events. Prophets are able to perform these responsibilities because they receive authority and revelation from God.

Revelation is communication from God to His children. Most revelation comes through impressions, thoughts, and feelings from the Holy Ghost. Revelation can also come through visions, dreams, and visitations by angels.

During His mortal ministry and again in our day, the Lord organized His Church on the foundation of prophets and apostles (see *Ephesians 2:19–20*). The President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s prophet to all the people of the earth today. We sustain the President of the Church as a prophet, seer, and revelator and as the only person on the earth who receives revelation to guide the entire Church. If we faithfully receive and obey the teachings of the President of the Church, God will bless us to overcome deception and evil (see *D&C 21:4–6*). We also sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators.

The scriptures—the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price—contain revelations given through ancient and latter-day prophets. As we study the words of prophets, we can learn truth and receive guidance.

While God gives revelation through prophets to guide all of His children, individuals can receive revelation to help them with their specific needs, responsibilities, and questions and to help strengthen their testimonies. However, personal inspiration from the Lord will never contradict the revelation God gives through His prophets.

*Related references:* *Abraham 3:22–23; Matthew 16:15–19; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Nephi 32:3; D&C 8:2–3; D&C 76:22–24*

*Related topics:* Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge; Priesthood and Priesthood Keys

## 6. Priesthood and Priesthood Keys

The priesthood is the eternal power and authority of God. Through the priesthood, God created and governs the heavens and the earth. Through this power He redeems and exalts His children.

God gives priesthood authority to worthy male members of the Church so they can act in His name for the salvation and edification of all of His children (see *D&C 121:36, 41–42*).

The keys of the priesthood are the rights of presidency, or the power God gives to man to govern and direct the kingdom of God on the earth (see *Matthew 16:15–19*). Priesthood keys are necessary to direct the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the ordinances of salvation.

Jesus Christ holds all the keys of the priesthood pertaining to His Church. He has conferred upon each of His Apostles all the keys that pertain to the kingdom of God on earth. The President of the Church is the only person authorized to exercise all of those priesthood keys. Temple presidents, mission presidents, stake presidents, bishops, and quorum presidents also hold priesthood keys that allow them to preside over and direct the work they have been commissioned to do.

All who serve in the Church—men and women—are called under the direction of one who holds priesthood keys. Thus, they are entitled to the power needed to serve and fulfill the responsibilities of their callings (see *D&C 42:11*).

Those who are ordained to the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods enter into the oath and covenant of the priesthood. If they magnify their calling and faithfully receive the Lord and His servants, they will obtain the blessings of exaltation. Women are likewise promised the blessings of exaltation as they are faithful to the covenants they have made with the Lord.

*Related references:* *John 15:16; Ephesians 2:19–20*

*Related topics:* The Restoration; Prophets and Revelation; Ordinances and Covenants

### Aaronic Priesthood

The Aaronic Priesthood is often called the preparatory priesthood. The Aaronic Priesthood “holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of

repentance, and of baptism” (*D&C 13:1*). Through the exercise of this priesthood, the sacrament is prepared, blessed, and administered. The offices of the Aaronic Priesthood are deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop.

### Melchizedek Priesthood

The Melchizedek Priesthood is the higher, or greater, priesthood and “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” (*D&C 107:8*). All of the blessings, ordinances, covenants, and organizations of the Church are administered under the authority of the President of the Church, who is the President of the Melchizedek Priesthood. This priesthood was given to Adam and has been on the earth whenever the Lord has revealed His gospel. Within the Melchizedek Priesthood are the offices of elder, high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle.

*Related reference:* *Ephesians 4:11–14*

## 7. Ordinances and Covenants

### Ordinances

An ordinance is a sacred act that is performed by the authority of the priesthood. Each ordinance was designed by God to teach spiritual truths, often through symbolism.

Some ordinances are essential to exaltation and are called saving ordinances. Only by receiving the saving ordinances and keeping the associated covenants can we obtain all of the blessings made available through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Without these saving ordinances we cannot become like our Heavenly Father or return to live in His presence eternally (see *D&C 84:20–22*). The saving ordinances are performed under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys.

The first saving ordinance of the gospel is baptism by immersion in water by one having authority. Baptism is necessary for an individual to become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ and to enter the celestial kingdom (see *John 3:5*).

After a person is baptized, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders confirm him or her a member of the Church and bestow upon him or her the gift of the Holy Ghost (see *3 Nephi 27:20*). The gift of the Holy Ghost is different from the influence of the Holy Ghost. Before baptism, a person can feel the influence

of the Holy Ghost and receive a testimony of the truth. After receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, a person who keeps his or her covenants has the right to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Other saving ordinances include ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood (for men), the temple endowment, and the marriage sealing. In the temple, these saving ordinances can also be performed vicariously for the dead. Vicarious ordinances become effective only when the deceased persons accept them in the spirit world and honor the related covenants.

Other ordinances, such as administering to the sick and the naming and blessing of children, are also important to our spiritual development.

*Related references:* Malachi 4:5–6; Matthew 16:15–19; 1 Peter 4:6; D&C 131:1–4

*Related topics:* The Godhead: The Holy Ghost; The Plan of Salvation: Life after Death; The Atonement of Jesus Christ; Priesthood and Priesthood Keys

## Covenants

A covenant is a sacred agreement between God and man. God gives the conditions for the covenant, and we agree to do what He asks us to do; God then promises us certain blessings for our obedience (see *Exodus 19:5–6; D&C 82:10*). If we do not abide by our covenants, then we will not receive the promised blessings.

All of the saving ordinances of the priesthood are accompanied by covenants. For example, we covenant with the Lord through baptism (see *Mosiah 18:8–10*), and men who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood enter into the oath and covenant of the priesthood. We renew covenants we have made by partaking of the sacrament.

We make further covenants as we receive the saving ordinances of the endowment and the marriage sealing in the temple. We prepare to participate in ordinances and make covenants in the temple by living the standards of worthiness the Lord has set (see *Psalms 24:3–4*). It is vital that we are worthy to enter the temple because the temple is literally the house of the Lord. It is the most holy of any place of worship on earth.

## 8. Marriage and Family

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, and the family is central to His plan of salvation and to our happiness (see *Genesis 2:24; D&C 49:15–17*). Only by entering into and faithfully keeping the covenant of celestial marriage can a man and a woman fulfill their divine, eternal potential (see *1 Corinthians 11:11; D&C 131:1–4*).

God has commanded His children to multiply and replenish the earth (see *Genesis 1:28*). The sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between a man and a woman who have been lawfully wedded as husband and wife (see *Genesis 39:9; Alma 39:9*). Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. Parents are to rear their children in love and righteousness and provide for their physical and spiritual needs.

Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and provide the necessities of life. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.

The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to continue beyond the grave. The earth was created and the gospel was revealed so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally. Through family history and temple service, we can make the ordinances and covenants of the gospel available to our ancestors (see *Malachi 4:5–6*).

(Adapted from “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.)

*Related references:* Moses 1:39; Genesis 1:26–27; Exodus 20:3–17; Matthew 16:15–19; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 2 Nephi 2:22–25; Mosiah 2:41; Alma 41:10; D&C 84:20–22

*Related topics:* The Plan of Salvation; Commandments

## 9. Commandments

Commandments are the laws and requirements that God gives to help us progress and become like Him. The commandments are a manifestation of God's love for us. We manifest our love for Him by keeping His commandments (see *John 14:15*). Keeping the commandments will always bring happiness and blessings from the Lord (see *Mosiah 2:41; Alma 41:10*). God will not give us a commandment without preparing a way for us to obey it (see *1 Nephi 3:7*).

The two most basic commandments are "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . And . . . love thy neighbour as thyself" (see *Matthew 22:36–39*). We can love and serve God by choosing to love and serve others (see *Mosiah 2:17; Moroni 7:45, 47–48*).

One of the earliest commandments given to man was to keep the Sabbath day holy. God commands His children to honor Him by doing His will rather than our own on the Sabbath, and He promises great blessings to those who keep His day holy (see *Isaiah 58:13–14*).

The Ten Commandments are a vital part of the gospel and are eternal principles that are necessary for our exaltation (see *Exodus 20:3–17*). The Lord revealed them to Moses in ancient times, and He has restated them in latter-day revelations.

God's commandments include praying daily, studying the word of God, repenting, obeying the law of chastity, paying a full tithe (see *Malachi 3:8–10*), fasting (see *Isaiah 58:6–7*), forgiving others (see *D&C 64:9–11*), observing the Word of Wisdom (see *D&C 89:18–21*), and teaching the gospel to others (see *Matthew 5:14–16; D&C 18:15–16*).

*Related references:* *Genesis 39:9; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; James 1:5–6; 2 Nephi 32:3; 2 Nephi 32:8–9; Mosiah 18:8–10; Alma 39:9; 3 Nephi 18:15, 20–21; D&C 58:42–43; D&C 82:10*

*Related topics:* Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge; The Atonement of Jesus Christ: Repentance; Ordinances and Covenants

For more information on these topics, go to [gospeltopics.lds.org](http://gospeltopics.lds.org) or see *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004).

## Doctrinal Mastery Passages

The following is a list of all 100 doctrinal mastery passages:

Old Testament	New Testament	Book of Mormon	Doctrine and Covenants and Church History
Moses 1:39	Matthew 5:14–16	1 Nephi 3:7	JS—H 1:15–20
Moses 7:18	Matthew 11:28–30	2 Nephi 2:22–25	D&C 1:30
Abraham 3:22–23	Matthew 16:15–19	2 Nephi 2:27	D&C 1:37–38
Genesis 1:26–27	Matthew 22:36–39	2 Nephi 26:33	D&C 6:36
Genesis 1:28	Luke 24:36–39	2 Nephi 28:30	D&C 8:2–3
Genesis 2:24	John 3:5	2 Nephi 32:3	D&C 13:1
Genesis 39:9	John 7:17	2 Nephi 32:8–9	D&C 18:10–11
Exodus 19:5–6	John 14:15	Mosiah 2:17	D&C 18:15–16
Exodus 20:3–17	John 15:16	Mosiah 2:41	D&C 19:16–19
Joshua 24:15	John 17:3	Mosiah 3:19	D&C 21:4–6
Psalms 24:3–4	Acts 3:19–21	Mosiah 4:9	D&C 29:10–11
Proverbs 3:5–6	1 Corinthians 2:5, 9–11	Mosiah 18:8–10	D&C 42:11
Isaiah 1:18	1 Corinthians 6:19–20	Alma 7:11–13	D&C 49:15–17
Isaiah 5:20	1 Corinthians 11:11	Alma 34:9–10	D&C 58:42–43
Isaiah 29:13–14	1 Corinthians 15:20–22	Alma 39:9	D&C 64:9–11
Isaiah 53:3–5	1 Corinthians 15:40–42	Alma 41:10	D&C 76:22–24
Isaiah 58:6–7	Ephesians 2:19–20	Helaman 5:12	D&C 82:10
Isaiah 58:13–14	Ephesians 4:11–14	3 Nephi 11:10–11	D&C 84:20–22
Jeremiah 1:4–5	2 Thessalonians 2:1–3	3 Nephi 12:48	D&C 88:118
Ezekiel 3:16–17	2 Timothy 3:15–17	3 Nephi 18:15, 20–21	D&C 89:18–21
Ezekiel 37:15–17	Hebrews 12:9	3 Nephi 27:20	D&C 107:8
Daniel 2:44	James 1:5–6	Ether 12:6	D&C 121:36, 41–42
Amos 3:7	James 2:17–18	Ether 12:27	D&C 130:22–23
Malachi 3:8–10	1 Peter 4:6	Moroni 7:45, 47–48	D&C 131:1–4
Malachi 4:5–6	Revelation 20:12	Moroni 10:4–5	D&C 135:3









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