

May 10 Traveled 30 mi. each way to ask Joseph Knight for provisions—while Knight had traveled to Harmony, PA to help

May 15 Aaronic Priesthood received from John the Baptist (JBpst) after translating 3 Nephi 12:1* (see D&C 13)

May 25 Oliver baptized Samuel Smith

May (later) Trip to Colesville to preach. David Whitmer came to meet Joseph and remained in Harmony.

June 1 Joseph and Oliver leave Harmony, and move to Fayette, NY into the Whitmer home (~100 mi) and Emma came later.

June 4-29 Translation in the upstairs of Peter Whitmer's home—with Oliver and Whitmer sons (Christian, John, David) as scribes. A guest saw them coming down from translation and recorded seeing “exceedingly white” faces.

June 26 The newspaper, *Wayne Sentinel*, published Book of Mormon title page.

June 30 Translation of the Book of Mormon finished (Word of Mormon or Moroni)

***Timing of the Translation: May 15, 1829**

Oliver Cowdery described: “After writing the account given of the Savior’s ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob, upon this continent” (JS-H 1:75, footnote). We assume he had just translated 3 Nephi 12:1, “. . . the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize was twelve . . . whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water.” To reach 3 Nephi 12, by May 15, Joseph must have re-started his translation at Mosiah on April 7.

Additionally, Joseph sister, Katharine Smith Salisbury, remembered that after the loss of the 116 pages, Joseph “fasted and prayed several days,” the angel told him to “to begin where he had left off” (Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 93). As mentioned previously, the text, and the original chapter numbers, suggests that the first chapter or two of Mosiah was actually lost as part of the 116 pages (Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 2*). Only the *Words of Mormon’s* editorial clarifications connect to the present beginning of Mosiah. The text now fits as precise as if a divine surgeon cut and connected the small plates to fit into Mormon’s edited version.

Second Great Awakening Historical Background against Priesthood

In order to appreciate the context of Joseph receiving the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, I want to put it in an eighteenth-century background. With each new revelation, the Lord tore down false ideas—including the Trinity and churches in 1820; angels, and revelation in 1823, scripture in 1827, priesthood in 1829; and many, many others (i.e. the fall, atonement, repentance, etc.). Most early American Protestants held the Bible as sacred, divinely inspired, their source of authority. A battle ensued when the Prophet Joseph Smith introduced new scripture (and claimed it was even more accurate than the Bible), they interpreted it as *diminishing* the Bible. Even if Joseph did not intend to deny the truth of the Bible by opening the canon—it did to most in the Second Great Awakening.

Not only was the Bible the source of Protestant authority, but also 18th and 19th century Protestants also saw Catholic claim to priesthood authority as from the devil. At that time, Protestants often referred to Catholic priesthood as: “Popish” (*Pope-ish*). Anything about a “priest” or “priesthood” was interpreted by protestants as corrupt. For example publications at the time include statements like these three samples: 1) “. . . we distinctly know that the Popish Priests only seek for power that they may employ it against our principles . . .” (1824), 2) “The act was entitled, ‘An act against Jesuites [*sic*] and Popish priests’” (1842), and 3) “these monstrous doctrines Popish priests have enforced . . .” (1856).

The views that Joseph restored on the priesthood brought an abrupt and radical change to the early American Protestant culture. In fact, it stood in opposition to the society norms. Even though the priesthood shares a biblical foundation—both OT and NT—Joseph did not uncover it there. He was taught of the restored Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations through the Book of Mormon and divine revelation.

Restoration of the Priesthood: 70 Contemporaneous Documents (Welch, *Opening*, 215)

We can examine many early church documents that discuss the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods from 1830-1850. In 1835 Oliver Cowdery remembered that Joseph learned about the priesthood from Moroni’s first visits Sept 21 and 22, 1823, “the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some and they shall begin to proclaim this gospel and baptize by water and after that they shall have power to give the holy ghost by the laying on of their hands” (*BYU Studies*, 35.4, 1995/6, 163-164).

Joseph and Oliver learned much about the priesthood while translating The Book of Mormon—including the necessary to have authority to perform ordinances: Baptism (3 Ne 11:22), Sacrament (3 Ne 18:5), and the Gift of the Holy Ghost (3 Ne 18:37, Moro 21:3), Laying on of hands for ordinations (3 Ne 18:38, Moro 3:1-4), and the roles of different priesthood offices (Moro 2:1-2; Alma 13:6, 14, 18) All of these references (and many more) stimulated Joseph’s and Oliver’s quest to understand and receive the priesthood. Similar to the First Vision, it appears they did not speak of the sacred events until 1832. Joseph’s most detailed account of the priesthood restoration corroborates with Oliver’s records (see <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/priesthood-restoration-documents>). An 1844 document from Joseph refers to the preparatory priesthood as “the Spirit & Power of Elias” (ibid., 181). Many of these documents were repeatedly published and well known by the 1840s and 1850s.

JBpst Restored the Aaronic Priesthood. According to the research used by the authors of *Saints*, “The spring of 1829 was cold and wet well into May” (65). Joseph had never been baptized, and very curious about the Lord’s direction to baptize. By piecing together historical data mentioned above, it appears that on May 14 or 15, 1829, they may have been translating 3 Ne 12:1, about the need for authority. Oliver recorded: “After writing the account given of the Savior’s ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob, upon this continent, it was easily to be seen . . . that . . . none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel” (Cowdery, “Letter 1,” 15). Joseph wanted to pray about it his questions, and Oliver joined him. The rains had cleared and they went outside (ibid.). Their prayer was answered by the prophet, JBpst—son of Elizabeth and

Zacharias—both descended from Aaron, and thus carrying the genealogical line of authority (Lk 1:5). But we have no evidence that JBpst was the direct first born of the first-born tracing back to Aaron. He was not the High Priest, nor in that lineage.

JBpst acted as a bridge between to the old and new covenants. His genealogy, how he lived, looked, ate, and acted all fit into the pattern of faithful OT prophets (2 Kgs 1:8; Mt 3:4; Mk 1:6). He even baptized in Bethabara, where Joshua entered the Promised Land (Jos 4:5-18). Simultaneously, he preached the message of the new covenant—that Jesus had fulfilled the Law as the promised Messiah. JBpst’s prophetic role included restoring truths in both the meridian of time and the fullness of times. JBpst preached repentance as well as baptism. The JST adds a significant addition to his preaching, JBpst taught: “I indeed baptize you with water, *upon your repentance*”

As the keeper of the keys for the Aaronic priesthood, JBpst returned as a resurrected being to restore them to the earth, again preparing the way for another restoration (D&C 13; 27:8; 84:27). After JBpst ordained the new prophets, he told them to baptize each other in the Susquehanna River. After their ordination their minds were clearer (*Saints*, 68).

Peter, James, and John Restored the Melchizedek Priesthood

The Melchizedek Priesthood was restored by the Lord’s Apostles: Peter, James, and John. These three were of Jesus who were often singled out for special experiences in the NT—at the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mk 5:37; Lk 8:51), on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:1), and in Gethsemane (Mk 14:33). In the restored church we often refer to them as acting like a First Presidency. In the Apostolic Church they are called, “pillars of the church” (Gal 2:9). Peter became the chief apostle after Jesus’ death, and John the Beloved has continued to minister on the earth to heirs of salvation (Acts 2:37; D&C 7:6).

The timing of the Peter, James, and John’s visit to restore the Melchizedek priesthood was not recorded as clearly. We have several details that can be carefully fit together to see the puzzle of the ordination’s timing:

- It followed the Aaronic Priesthood ordination, May 15, 1829 (D&C 13).
- It preceded the organization of the church, April 6, 1830, where the higher priesthood was used to confirm members to receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost (D&C 20:41-43).
- June 1829, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer the Lord called Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer apostles, “even as unto Paul . . . for you are called even with that same calling” (D&C 18:9).
- In the 1835 edition of D&C 27 (dated August 1830), it includes the first precise publication of Melchizedek ordination from Peter, James, and John.

A secondhand account from Brother Everett combines many of these details (and mixes a few up, as the account wasn’t recorded for decades afterward). It fits into the timing of translation of the Book of Mormon in Harmony PA (Ap 7 – May 30). Brother Addison Everett remembered visiting with Joseph at his home shortly before his martyrdom when he heard the prophet say (*all spelling is original*):

. . . they Ware Tran[s]lating the Book of Mormon at His Father In Laws in Susquahanah County Penny. T[h]ey ware thretned By a Mob and in the same time Father Kn<i>gths came Down from Cole[s]vill[e] Broom[e] County New York and Desired them to go home with him and preach to them in his Neighbourhood And on Account of the Mob Spirit prevailing they concluded to goe.”

After arriving at the Knights’ in Colesville, a mob gathered and forced them to return to Harmony. Everett continued:

. . . they wandered in a dense Forest all Night and often times in Mud and water up to thare Knees. And Brother Oliver got quite exausted in the After Part of the Night and Brother Joseph had to put his arm around him and allmost carry him. And Just as the day Broke in the East Brother Oliver gave out Entirely and he[,] Br Joseph[,] leaned him against an Oake tree Just out side a field fenc[e] Br Oliver Crying out how long O Lord O how Long Br Joseph hav[e] we got to suffer these things[?] Just this moment Peter James & John came to us and Ordained to <us to> the Holy Apostelshp and gave <unto> us the Keys of the Disp<e>nsation of the fullness of times. And we had some 16 or 17 miles to goe to reach our place of residence and Brother Oliver could travel as well as I could” (Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 229; or see *BYU Studies*, Brian Cannon, for free PDF).

This account is collaborated by Joseph’s records that speak of making more than one trip to Colesville, Broome County, NY during their time translating the Book of Mormon in Harmony, PA. Here is one published from Joseph’s teachings:

When I first commenced this work, and had got two or three individuals to believe, I went about thirty miles with Oliver Cowdery to see them. We had only one horse between us. When we arrived a mob of about one hundred men came upon us before we had time to eat, and chased us all night; and we arrived back again [in Harmony] a little after daylight, having traveled about sixty miles in all and without food” (*History of the Church*: 5:219).

D&C 20 states that the ordinations occurred before the organization of the church. The visit and ordination were two events.

Biblical Melchizedek Priesthood (Quote from *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*: Adam, the first of the spirit children of God to live on earth, received the holy priesthood, with all its power, authority, and keys. "And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance" (Moses 5:59 This authority was delegated to others in an unbroken chain from one prophet to another. "All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood" (Smith, *TPJS*, p. 181). Abraham sought the blessings of his fathers and the right to be ordained to the priesthood. Because he had qualified himself for the priesthood, even though his own father had not, Abraham obtained the priesthood from Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God (Abr 1:2-5). Melchizedek met Abraham and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth part of all he had (Heb 7:1-3). Melchizedek exercised mighty faith and used his priesthood to bring a people practicing iniquity to repentance. None was greater than he (Alma 13:17-19). Originally, the priesthood was known as the "Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God" (D&C 107:2-4).

How did Joseph Define the Priesthood in the D&C?

Scriptural: D&C 2:1; 13:1; 20:67; 27:8; 68:2, 15-21; 78:1; 81:2; 84:6, 14-19, 33-42, 107; 85:11; 86:8, 10-11; 94:6; 107:1-22; 40; 64-91; 112:30; 113:6-8; 119:2-4; 121:21; 36-37; 41, 45; 122:9; 124:28; 34, 42, 91, 95, 123, 130, 132, 137; 128:8-21; 131:2, 5; 132:7, 19, 28, 44-45, 58-59, 61-64; JS-H 1:70; (more in the Book of Mormon and below in *italics*, *History of the Church*= HC)

In Conjunction with the Spirit

April 6, 1830—Journal record of the proceedings of the day:

We now proceeded to call out and ordain some others of the brethren to different offices of the Priesthood, according as the **Spirit** manifested unto us: and after a happy time spent in witnessing and feeling for ourselves the powers and blessings of the **Holy Ghost** (HC, 1:79).

September 22, 23, 1832—Revelation on the Priesthood, given after the elders began returning from their missions:

. . . *John, whom God raised up, being filled with the **Holy Ghost** from his mother's womb. . . . Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the **Spirit** unto the renewing of their bodies . . . (D&C 84:27,33, HC, 1:287, 289).*

Between summer 1832 and late November, 1832—History:

. . . forthly a confirmation and reception of the high Priesthood after the holy order of the son of the living God power and ordinance from on high to preach the Gospel in the administration and demonstration of the **Spirit** the Keys of the Kingdom of God conferred upon him and the continuation of the blessings of God to him. . . (*The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. 1:7).

March 26, 1833—Journal record of a Council of 21 High Priests:

. . . claiming for themselves as much power by the authority of their Priesthood, and gift of the **Holy Ghost**, as those set apart and appointed to preside over the branches . . . (HC, 1:336).

July 2, 1833—Published First Presidency Letter to the troubled branch of Eugene:

. . . but you did not manifest that degree of humility to the brethren that was required, but remained obstinate; for that reason God withdrew His **Spirit** from you, and left you in darkness (HC, 1:370).

July 23, 1833—History of treatment in Missouri:

the mob again assembled, armed with weapons of war, and bearing a red flag; whereupon the Elders, led by the **Spirit of God** . . . entered into a treaty (HC, 1:394).

July 1833—Letter to the Elders Stationed in Zion & Churches Abroad, in Love & Greeting published in the Evening and Morning Star:

. . . that you may be enabled to deliver His message in the demonstration of His **Spirit**. . . ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto them, by the power of the **Holy Ghost** which is in the one who ordains them (HC, 1:385, 388).

June 23, 1834—Journal account of the conclusion of Zion's Camp:

The following individuals were called and chosen, as they were made manifest unto me by the voice of the **Spirit** and revelation, to receive their endowments (HC, 2:112).

December 5, 1834—Handwritten Journal entry recording the ordination of Oliver Cowdery as assistant-president:

According to the direction of the **Holy Spirit** brethren Joseph Smith Jr. Sidney, Frederick G. Williams, and Oliver Cowdery, assembled to converse upon the welfare of the Church, when brother Oliver Cowdery was ordained an assistant President of the High and Holy Priesthood. . . . The voice of the **Spirit** is, that brother Sidney speak to the congregation this day, first, Brother Joseph next, bro. Oliver [next?] and if time bro Zebedee [Coltrin]. . . (Jessee, *Personal Writings of Smith*, 38; HC, 2:176).

August 17, 1835—Article on marriage read at a General Assemble of the Church at Kirtland

Marriage should be celebrated with prayer and thanksgiving, and at the solemnization, the persons to be married, standing together, the man on the right and the woman on the left, shall be addressed by the person officiating as he shall be directed by the **Holy Spirit** (HC, 2:247).

March 20, 1836—Journal entry of Sunday meetings:

In the afternoon administered the Lord's Supper, as we are wont to do on every Sabbath, and the Lord blessed our souls with the outpouring of His **Spirit**, and we were made to rejoice in His goodness (HC, 2:408; Jessee, *Personal Writings of Smith*, 170).

May 1, 1839—Journal entry from Quincy Illinois, reporting news from the British mission:

Elder Kimball said the **Spirit** signified to him that Russell was secretly trying to lead away the Church at Alston, England, and wished the Elders to see to it. The **Spirit** had manifested the same thing to Elder Richards. . . . Elder Richards being led by the **Spirit of God**, soon unfolded the sophistry and falsehood of this letter to the convincing of the Saints at Alston and Brampton (HC, 3:342, 344).

July 2, 1839—Sermon to the Twelve in Commerce, Illinois:

Being born again, comes by the **Spirit of God** through ordinances. . . . Every **Spirit**, or vision, or singing, is not of God (HC, 3:392).

February, 1842—Book of Abraham:

*Fig. 7. Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the **Holy Ghost** unto Abraham, in the form of a dove (Pearl of Great Price: Abraham Facsimile #2; HC 4:521).*

March 1, 1842—Historical Sketch for John Wentworth:

On the 6 of April, 1830, the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,' was first organized in the town of Manchester, Ontario co., state of New York. Some few were called and **ordained** by the **Spirit** of revelation, and prophesy, and began to preach as the **Spirit** gave them utterance, and though weak, yet were they strengthened by the power of God, and many were brought to

repentance, were immersed in the water, and were filled with the **Holy Ghost** by the laying on of hands. They saw visions and prophesied, devils were cast out and the sick healed by the laying on of hands (Jessee, *Personal Writings of Smith*, 216).

March 27, 1842—Sermon on baptism for the dead (After speaking to the Saints for some time . . . I baptized one hundred and seven individuals): Again; if we can, by the authority of the **Priesthood** of the Son of God, baptize a man in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the **Holy Ghost**, for the remission of sins, it is just as much our privilege to act as an agent, and be baptized for the remission of sins for and in behalf of our dead kindred, who have not heard the Gospel, or the fullness of it (HC, 4:569).

May 16, 1843—Journal entry of conversation with William Clayton on—Importance of the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant: . . . those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life, and continue without committing the sin against the **Holy Ghost**, will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory (HC, 5:391).

May 17, 1843—Journal entry of meeting held in Fountain Green:

The more sure word of prophecy means a man's knowing that he is sealed up into eternal life by revelation and the **Spirit** of prophecy, through the power of the holy priesthood. It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance (HC, 5:392).

June 11, 1843—Sermon on the Purpose of the Gathering of Israel—points out Christian view of **Spirit** :

The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the **ordinances** of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose. . . . So far God may reveal and I will believe (HC, 5:423-424).

July 12, 1843—Revelation on the marriage covenant, recorded here, though may have been received earlier:

*Therefore prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same; for, behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant . . . All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations that are not made and entered into and sealed by the **Holy Spirit** of promise, of him who is **anointed**, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment, through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this **power**, (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this **Priesthood** are conferred) . . . (D&C 132:3-4,7; HC, 5:601);*

*If a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the **Holy Spirit** of promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid, neither of force, when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word . . . And again, verily I say unto you, If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the **Holy Spirit** of promise, by him who is **anointed**, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this Priesthood, and it shall be said unto them, Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection (D&C 132:18,19; HC, 5:502).*

*. . . If a man marry a wife according to my word, and they are sealed by the **Holy Spirit** of promise, according to mine appointment, and he or she shall commit any sin or transgression . . . The blasphemy against the **Holy Ghost**, which shall not be forgiven in the world, nor out of the world (D&C 132:26,27; HC, 5:503).*

. . . I reveal it unto you, my servant Joseph, then shall you have power, by the power of my Holy Priesthood to take her and give her unto him that hath not committed adultery, but hath been faithful; for he shall be made ruler over many; for I have conferred upon you the keys and power of the Priesthood, wherein I restore all things, and make known unto you all things in due time. . . . I will reveal more unto you hereafter; therefore let this suffice for the present. Behold, I am Alpha and Omega. Amen (D&C 132:44,66; HC, 5:505, 507).

October 9, 1843—Sermon at the Funeral of James Adams:

What is the object of our coming into existence, then dying and falling away, to be here no more? It is but reasonable to suppose that God would reveal something in reference to the matter, and it is a subject we ought to study more than any other. We ought to study it day and night, for the world is ignorant in reference to their true condition and relation. If we have any claim on our Heavenly Father for anything, it is for knowledge on this important subject. Could we read and comprehend all that has been written from the days of Adam, on the relation of man to God and angels in a future state, we should know very little about it. Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*, can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the **ordinances** of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject . . . (HC, 6:50).