



STATEMENT DM505

Witnessing Tips: Mormon Priesthood

One of the first subjects a Mormon will bring up in an encounter with a Christian is authority and priesthood. Mormonism teaches that the true church 'was lost after the death of the apostles, and that, after 1800 years, the true church with "authority" was restored through Joseph Smith.

Every Mormon elder claims to hold the Melchizedek priesthood. Without it, the foundation of their authority fails, as does their claim to be the only true church. A witnessing situation with priesthood under discussion might proceed as follows:

Mormon: By what authority do you (or, your pastor) preach, baptize and, in general, act for God?

Christian: By the authority of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 1:12—13; Acts 1:8).

Mormon: But the authority to act for God comes through the Melchizedek priesthood. This was given to me by the laying on of hands by one who has this authority.

Christian: Can you show me from the Bible where it states that the "authority" to preach the gospel, to baptize, and to offer the sacraments, comes from being a member of the Melchizedek priesthood? In fact, can you show me in the New Testament where anyone but Jesus Christ ever held the Melchizedek priesthood?

Mormon: In Hebrews 5:4 it tells us that no one takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Christian: The very next verses tell us that God called Jesus, and no one else, to the honor of holding the Melchizedek priesthood (Heb. 5:5-10). Once again I must ask: Where does the New Testament state that the apostles or anyone else but Jesus ever held the Melchizedek priesthood which Mormonism teaches is the authority to act for God?

Mormon: John 15:16 tells us that Jesus laid hands on His disciples and ordained them. This is where He gave them the Melchizedek priesthood.

Christian: The word "ordain" means to appoint. The verse tells us that Jesus appointed His disciples to go and bring forth fruit. John 15:16 does not even mention the Melchizedek priesthood, nor does it say that Jesus laid hands upon them. In the Book of Acts there *are* several Scriptures which make mention of the laying on of hands for the ordination to service, but *none* speak of an ordination to the Melchizedek priesthood.

Mormon: By modern-day revelation we know that Peter, James and John came down from heaven and ordained Joseph Smith to the Melchizedek priesthood, thereby once again restoring the church and the true authority to the earth.

Christian: In order to bestow the Melchizedek priesthood, Peter, James and John would have to possess it. Where does the New Testament state that they or anyone but Jesus ever held the Melchizedek priesthood?

Mormon: We know this by modern-day revelation. And besides, the Bible does not state that the disciples did *not* hold the Melchizedek priesthood.

Christian: Please turn in your Bible to Hebrews 7:1-3. This passage tells us what the qualifications are for a Melchizedek priest. Let us determine whether you (or anyone in your church) meet these qualifications. The name Melchizedek means *King of Righteousness*. Who is the King of Righteousness?

Mormon: Jesus, the Christ.

Christian: Correct! Now let us look at verse three. Melchizedek was “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.”

Many Bible scholars interpret this to mean that there was no record of who Melchizedek’s parents were, and he possessed no genealogy. There is no record of his birth or death. He was “made like unto the Son of God.” His priesthood was continuing and everlasting.

Do you know who your father and mother are? Do you know when you were born? Do you have a genealogy?

Mormon: The answer is yes to all three of your questions.

Christian: In addition, Hebrews 7:26 gives further qualifications for a Melchizedek priest. “For such a high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;...” Are you holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens?

Mormon: No.

Christian: Therefore, you do not possess the Melchizedek priesthood nor the authority you presume to hold. However when you have believed and received the genuine Jesus Christ of the Bible you will have the authority (John 1:12) and the correct priesthood (1 Pet 2:9—10) of the Scriptures.

Mormon: You have given me something to think about.

—*Marian Bodine*