

## ***Priesthood***

Priesthood is instituted by God to be used in the manner designed of God. From the very beginning of recorded history God has called men and women to serve him. He has called men into His priesthood to bless and be a blessing to His creation. Throughout the ages we find God touching the lives of men to assist restoring mankind to Him through ministries of priesthood. At Calvary we see the supreme evidence of God's love and sacrifice in order for restoration to be possible. We are humbled by the knowledge that is found in John 3:16-17, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish; but have everlasting life, For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."*

To believers I need not explain the importance and function of priesthood. However, we need to examine this essential part of the gospel and see if this too, is being used in the manner designed of God, and recognize it when it is not. There are evidences of good priesthood ministry, *to be sure*, found in our day. We must also understand that this should not be taken for granted, and we must always seek to discern when men fall or fail for a time. We will only look at a few references recorded in scripture on this subject.

The first place to look at is the *Book of Mormon*. We find a term used in the Book of Mormon called "priestcraft". In Alma, chapter 1 we find some basic understanding. Alma 1:24 states, *"Nevertheless this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft, through the land; for there were many who loved the vain things of the world, and they went forth preaching false doctrines, and this they did for the sakes of riches and honor."* We see that those who were guilty of this could and would do any of these things – love the vain things of the world, preach false doctrines, seek for riches and seek for honor for themselves. Lying would not be out of the question, and according to Alma 1:25 the lies would become part of their beliefs.

We next read in Ezekiel 34 the Lord has something to say to those who are shepherds of the flock. He says in Ezekiel 34:2&4, *"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost but; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them."* We see the Lord's displeasure with those called to be shepherds. He chastises them for not taking care of the sick {spiritually and physically}, not taken care of the broken and the broken-hearted, not seeking out for the lost, and for exercising cruelty and being uncaringly harsh with the sheep." Jesus would remind Peter and the disciples years later to "feed My lambs and feed My sheep". The Lord put the New Testament church on notice anything less would not be acceptable to Him.

In the gospel of Mark we find the Lord *“upbraided them {the disciples} with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which has seen him after he was risen.”* On this occasion he reminded them that they were not the only ones who would have testimony of the Lord and that they had to be willing to receive the testimony of others and have a heart to hear the testimony of the people. We are reminded in D&C 11:4-5, *“no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope and charity, being temperate in all things whatsoever shall be intrusted to his care. Behold, I am the light and the life of the world, that speak these words; therefore, give heed with your might, and then you are called. Amen.”*

Finally, I want to mention one other reference. When Jesus ministered on earth, he many times pointed to the work of the Pharisees as not being right with Him. He was not pleased with their prayers, their fasting, their giving alms, and even their proselyting. Jesus said this to his disciples in this regard in Luke 12:1, *“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”* The same Jesus who was called a friend of sinners by the Pharisees (Luke 7:34) counseled the Twelve to not be hypocritical and say one thing and do the opposite.

These scriptures give some background on the priesthood not using their callings in the manner designed of God. Praise the Lord that we live in a day when there are many faithful priesthood.

There are many fine examples to look to at in the scriptures – Enoch, Moses, Nephi, the prophets, Joseph Smith, Arthur Oakman to just name a few. Hopefully, all of us can recall those in our own lives who faithfully served the Lord and had an everlasting impact on our lives. We are told of a time that will come when there will be a reunion of the faithful on the earth and those of the Church of the Firstborn.

I wish to give one example. I am speaking not of the priesthood of the man but his role as a king. We find in Mosiah 13:58-61 that King Mosiah was a servant of God and a blessing to the people.

*“and they did wax strong in love toward Mosiah; yea, they did esteem him more than any other man;*

*For they did not look upon him as a tyrant, who was seeking for gain, yea, for the lucre which doth corrupt the soul,*

*For he had not exacted riches of them, neither had he delighted in the shedding of blood; but he had established peace in the land, and he had granted unto his people that they should be delivered from all manner of bondage;*

*Therefore, they did esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure.”*

Mosiah was a true servant of God, and because of this - the people of God were blessed.