

ENTER

into the Rest of the Lord



**By Elder
W. Craig Zwick**
Of the Seventy

The Book of Mormon prophet Alma taught that priesthood ordinances were designed to prepare mankind to come unto Christ. He declared:

“Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord” (Alma 13:16).

He also taught that during premortality, God tested and selected the men who would be His priesthood leaders in this life. They were “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to

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the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works . . . to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest” (Alma 13:3, 6).

The Prophet Joseph Smith added, “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was.”¹

Thus, a primary responsibility of all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood is to teach the doctrines of salvation. To prepare us to enter into the rest of the Lord so that we might “rest with him in heaven” (Moroni 7:3) is what the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood are all about.

Heavenly Father loves each of His children and wants all of us to return to Him. He has

provided prophets and priesthood leaders with true priesthood authority to help us stay on the strait and narrow path. We have, then, the guidance of these leaders to help us enter into His rest.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–1985) taught: “The rest of the Lord, where mortals are concerned, is to gain a perfect knowledge of the divinity of the great latter-day work. [President Joseph F. Smith said,] ‘It means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else; we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive.’ It is ‘rest from the religious turmoil of the world; from the cry that is going forth, here and there—lo, here is Christ; lo, there is Christ.’ . . . The rest of the Lord, in eternity, is to inherit eternal life, to gain the fulness of the Lord’s glory.”²

From this we understand that in this life “the rest of the Lord” comes as we increase our knowledge of, and faith in, the reality of Jesus Christ, even to the assurance that He lives and loves us. “The rest of the Lord” in eternity is entering into the presence of the Lord.

Latter-day teachings on priesthood ordinances, foreordination, and entering into the rest of the Lord help us comprehend three important principles.

1. The gospel is built upon the foundation of priesthood authority.

One of the most important and distinguishing aspects of the Church is its priesthood, defined so beautifully by President Joseph F. Smith:

“[The priesthood] is nothing more nor less than the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and act legitimately; not assuming that authority, nor borrowing it from generations that are dead and gone, but authority that has been given in this day in which we live by ministering angels and spirits from above, direct from the presence of Almighty God.”³

Today we have living prophets, apostles, and priesthood leaders who were foreordained to their callings. They hold priesthood keys, authority, and power to lead, guide, and direct us so that we might enter into the rest of the Lord. There may be times in our lives when the way is not clear, when challenges, temptations, or discouragement obscure our path. During such times we can follow the wise counsel of priesthood leaders because we know they are called of God (see Articles of Faith 1:5).

2. As we sustain the priesthood, the priesthood will support us by helping us prepare to meet God.

When we become converted and follow the counsel of living prophets, when we obey the commandments of God, and when we willingly honor our callings, responsibilities, and priesthood, we will enter into the rest of the Lord.

When I was a young man, loving parents and wise leaders taught me the importance of serving a mission. At the time I turned 19, all young men in my country faced military requirements. For a while only a few young men could serve missions from any given ward. Because 17 priests lived in my ward



and were selected for missions according to age, I knew it would be a while before I could leave on a mission. I began thinking it would be too long to wait and that perhaps I should pursue other opportunities.

Looking back, I know Satan was trying to dissuade me from serving a mission. However, I was guided by the Spirit and counseled by a wise priests quorum adviser. I was blessed to make a good decision—I chose to serve a mission. My mission president taught me true principles. As I listened to him and followed his wise counsel, and as I obeyed and tried to honor my calling as a missionary, I was blessed to know of the divinity of Jesus Christ. My faith and testimony grew. My heart was fixed upon serving God and keeping His commandments. I felt joy and peace and was grateful that

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the words “enter into the rest of the Lord” applied to me.

But just serving a mission doesn't guarantee that we will enter into the Lord's rest. Throughout our lives we must choose to follow the counsel of our prophets and priesthood leaders. We must be worthy of our own foreordination through continued faith, repentance, and good works. We must live worthily to receive the blessings provided by foreordained priesthood leaders.

3. We honor our sacred priesthood covenants by faithfully fulfilling our callings.

Alma's teachings of foreordination should affect the way we sustain those who are called to preside over us, and they should affect our responses when priesthood leaders extend to us callings or other assignments.

The parable of the nobleman and the olive trees, given in revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, reinforces this principle (see D&C 101:43–62). In the parable, the nobleman commanded his servants to plant 12 olive trees on a choice piece of land. The nobleman also asked them to build a watchtower as a protection for the orchard. The servants dutifully planted the olive trees, built a hedge, and set watchmen. They began to build the tower, but in the early stages of construction, as they were laying the foundation, they started to murmur among themselves.

The servants questioned the need for a watchtower during a time of peace. They doubted the wisdom of their master, and during their disputations with each other, they lost focus of what their lord had asked them to do. The enemy, perhaps recognizing their weakness, broke down the hedge and destroyed the olive trees.

The nobleman was disappointed and asked his servants how this could have happened. Then, in a teaching moment, he reviewed what he had asked them to do and added, “Go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (v. 60).

We need to ask ourselves these questions:

- Do we accept callings from our priesthood leaders with joy and faith?
- Are we diligent in our callings, or do we begin but not complete our assignments as the servants did in the parable?
- Do we honor and sustain our priesthood leaders?

President Thomas S. Monson said:

“Miracles are everywhere to be found when

priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes.

“The priesthood is not really so much a gift as it is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others. . . .

“For those of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, our privilege to magnify our callings is ever present. We are shepherds watching over Israel. The hungry sheep look up, ready to be fed the bread of life. Are we prepared to feed the flock of God?”⁴

When we serve with all our heart and energy, we and others are blessed. At the waters of Mormon, the people “clapped their hands for joy” (Mosiah 18:11) over the prospect of entering a covenant to help, strengthen, comfort, and serve one another. After they had been baptized, had received the priesthood, and had accepted assignments to tend to the people of the Church, they were taught what they would receive from the Lord by magnifying their responsibilities:

“For their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the Spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God” (Mosiah 18:26).

This Book of Mormon scripture beautifully describes what it is like to enter into “the rest of the Lord.”

In mortality we can receive a testimony of Jesus Christ in our hearts and enter into the rest of the Lord as we learn and teach the gospel. We can know in whom to trust as we follow the counsel of our prophets and



priesthood leaders, honoring their—and our—foreordained roles, callings, and priesthood responsibilities. As we do so, our fears will be removed and we will walk uprightly before the Lord. We will feel the deep, spiritual peace that will give us a perfect brightness of hope.

Then, when we stand before the Savior to be judged of Him, it will be “according to [our] works, according to the desire of [our] hearts” (D&C 137:9). If we are faithful, we will rejoice in the magnificent blessings of the Savior and His Atonement, entering into His rest and presence. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 511.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 633.
3. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (1986), 139–40.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 50.

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