

WHAT, WHY, and HOW:

A BREAKDOWN OF THE RESTORATION

DISPENSATION

Prophets lead what are called *dispensations*, periods of time when (1) God has at least one authorized priesthood leader on the earth and (2) this leader, a prophet, learns about the plan of salvation directly from God. The prophet then teaches, or *dispenses*, the gospel to the people.

Thanks to the scriptures, we know about many of the dispensations. Some important ones were those of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Joseph Smith. The Lord began a dispensation through each of these prophets.

By Faith Sutherland Blackhurst
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Say you're on a weeklong trip to the beach with your friend's family. You've had lots of fun, but you're beginning to miss your own family. Then your dad sends you a text message to see how things are going—it's just what you needed to feel loved and remembered.

Life on earth is a little like that. God doesn't send us texts, but we are away from our heavenly home, so one way Heavenly Father communicates His love for us is by sending prophets.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEN SIMONSEN

To teach the gospel, you'll need to be able to explain what apostasy, dispensations, and the Restoration are. This chart can help.



APOSTASY

Apostasy=wickedness. When an individual or group turns away from the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, rejects the prophets, and falls into sin, they are in apostasy.

RESTORATION

A restoration is the act of returning something to its original condition. It is not a reformation, which alters something existing to create something new. For example, if you wanted to restore an old house, you would rebuild it with the same layout that it had originally. You might want to add a new fireplace, but then you would be changing the house, not restoring it.



The gospel of Jesus Christ needed to be restored because it was lost during the Great Apostasy. The people had lived for centuries without the true Church. So the Lord *restored* His Church and gospel through Joseph Smith, just as ancient prophets had prophesied (see Isaiah 2:1–3; 29:13–14; Acts 3:19–21; Revelation 14:6–7; 2 Nephi 3:3–15).

The true gospel of Jesus Christ is here to stay—so will you stay with it? Even though the world grows more and more wicked, Jesus Christ's Church will remain to the end.

You have a choice to make—the same choice that has faced mortals since the beginning of time: will you follow the prophet? If you do, you will be blessed and have the Spirit to guide you.



ADAM

Adam was a true pioneer: he was the first man on earth and the first prophet! He taught his family the gospel, but even in the beginning, many “sought their own counsels in the dark” and rejected the truth (Moses 6:28).



ENOCH

Have you ever heard of an entire city being taken up to heaven? Well, the city of Zion—established by Enoch—was so righteous that the people went to dwell with God (see Moses 7:23).



NOAH

You know about Noah's ark. Only eight people—Noah's family—survived the Flood because they listened to Noah's warnings (see Genesis 7; Moses 8). But did you know that he received the priesthood when he was 10 years old (see D&C 107:52) and that “giants . . . sought Noah to take away his life”? (Moses 8:18).



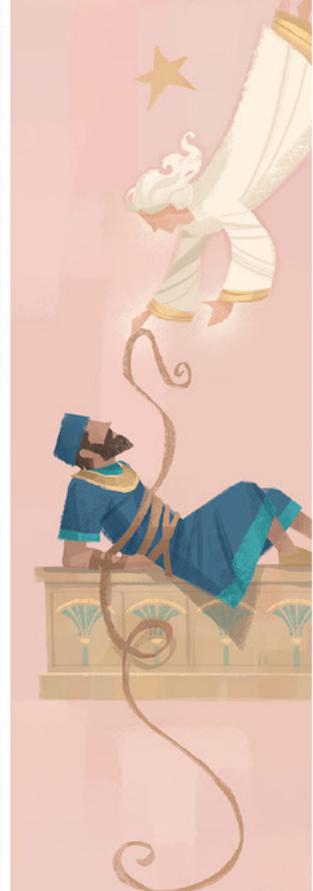
ABRAHAM

Abraham was almost sacrificed by wicked priests, but an angel saved him (see Abraham 1). He had some amazing revelations, including a vision of the premortal life. Members of the Church are his descendants, and the Abrahamic covenant is named after him. (See Abraham 2-5.)



MOSES

Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and helped them gain freedom. He “sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; but they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence” (D&C 84:23-24). In fact, because of their apostasy, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years!



HEADS OF DISPENSATIONS

These prophets were called of God, “on account of their exceeding faith and good works” (Alma 13:3; see also Abraham 3:22-23). The priesthood keys they held were restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Here are a few interesting things about these prophets. See what else you can learn about them as you study the scriptures.





JESUS CHRIST

Not only did Jesus Christ teach the gospel and perform many miracles, but He also established His Church on the earth. He atoned for our sins and was crucified and resurrected to enable us to overcome spiritual and physical death. He is the head of His Church today, and He and Heavenly Father are the source of priesthood authority.



THE GREAT APOSTASY

After the Savior's Resurrection, His Apostles and other Church leaders tried to spread the gospel, but people rejected their teachings and even killed most of the Apostles. Because of the people's wickedness, the fulness of the gospel was lost from the earth. The world fell into spiritual darkness (see Isaiah 60:2).

- For more than 1,000 years, the people had no access to the ordinances of salvation, the blessings of the temple, or the guidance of a prophet.
- Precious truths were lost from the Bible.
- False ideas were taught about the true nature of God.
- Some of the ordinances of salvation were changed or taught incorrectly (see Isaiah 24:5).
- This apostasy eventually led to the formation of many churches.



THE REFORMATION

During the Great Apostasy, some religious-minded people in Europe realized that the gospel of Jesus Christ was not being taught correctly. These reformers were not prophets, but they did their best to teach the truth as they understood it. They helped make the Bible available to more people. Many fought for religious freedom and opened the way for the Restoration of the gospel.



JOSEPH SMITH

So was the fulness of the gospel lost forever? No! God revealed important truths to Joseph Smith again. Heavenly messengers restored all of the necessary priesthood keys to him (see D&C 27:8-13; 110; 128:18-21), making this the "dispensation of the fulness of times" (D&C 138:48). It is also known as the latter-days because it's the last dispensation before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.



THE RESTORATION

Guess what? YOU have the blessings of the Restoration. Yes, you!

- The Church of Jesus Christ was restored with a prophet and apostles to lead it.
- The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and other modern revelation restored precious truths that had been lost (see 2 Nephi 27).
- Joseph Smith received the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist (see D&C 13) and the Melchizedek Priesthood from the Apostles Peter, James, and John (see D&C 128:20).
- Authorized priesthood holders perform the ordinances of salvation properly.
- And we know that the truth will never be lost through an apostasy again (see Daniel 2:44). ■