



# The Church of Jesus Christ Today

## *Chapter 17*

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### **The Church of Jesus Christ Was Taken from the Earth**

- Why was the Church of Jesus Christ removed from the earth shortly after the Savior's death and Resurrection?

When Jesus lived on the earth, He established His Church, the only true Church. He organized His Church so the truths of the gospel could be taught to all people and the ordinances of the gospel could be administered correctly with authority. Through this organization, Christ could bring the blessings of salvation to mankind.

After the Savior ascended into heaven, men changed the ordinances and doctrines that He and His Apostles had established. Because of apostasy, there was no direct revelation from God. The true Church was no longer on the earth. Men organized different churches that claimed to be true but taught conflicting doctrines. There was much confusion and contention over religion. The Lord had foreseen these conditions of apostasy, saying there would be “a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. . . . They shall . . . seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11–12).

- How does the famine spoken of in Amos 8:11–12 affect people?

### **The Lord Promised to Restore His True Church**

- What were some of the conditions in the world that prepared the way for the Restoration of the gospel?
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The Savior promised to restore His Church in the latter days. He said, “I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder” (Isaiah 29:14).

For many years people lived in spiritual darkness. About 1,700 years after Christ, people were becoming more and more interested in knowing the truth about God and religion. Some of them could see that the gospel Jesus taught was no longer on the earth. Some recognized that there was no revelation and no true authority and that the Church that Christ organized did not exist on the earth. The time had arrived for the Church of Jesus Christ to be restored to the earth.

- In what ways is the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel a “marvellous work”?

### **New Revelation from God**

- When Joseph Smith received his First Vision, what did he learn about God?

In the spring of 1820, one of the most important events in the history of the world occurred. The time had come for the marvelous work and wonder of which the Lord had spoken. As a young boy, Joseph Smith wanted to know which of all the churches was the true Church of Jesus Christ. He went into the woods near his home and prayed humbly and intently to his Heavenly Father, asking which church he should join. On that morning a miraculous thing happened. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith. The Savior told him not to join any church because the true Church was not on the earth. He also said that the creeds of present churches were “an abomination in his sight” (Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also verses 7–18, 20). Beginning with this event, there was again direct revelation from the heavens. The Lord had chosen a new prophet. Since that time the heavens have not been closed. Revelation continues to this day through each of His chosen prophets. Joseph was to be the one to help restore the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Why was the First Vision one of the most important events in the history of the world?

## **Authority from God Was Restored**

- Why was the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods necessary?

In restoring the gospel, God again gave the priesthood to men. John the Baptist came in 1829 to confer the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (see D&C 13; 27:8). Then Peter, James, and John, the presidency of the Church in ancient times, came and gave Joseph and Oliver the Melchizedek Priesthood and the keys of the kingdom of God (see D&C 27:12–13). Later, additional keys of the priesthood were restored by heavenly messengers such as Moses, Elias, and Elijah (see D&C 110:11–16). Through the Restoration, the priesthood was returned to the earth. Those who hold this priesthood today have the authority to perform ordinances such as baptism. They also have the authority to direct the Lord’s kingdom on earth.

## **Christ’s Church Was Organized Again**

- What events led to the organization of the Church on the earth again?

On April 6, 1830, the Savior again directed the organizing of His Church on the earth (see D&C 20:1). His Church is called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:4). Christ is the head of His Church today, just as He was in ancient times. The Lord has said that it is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased” (D&C 1:30).

Joseph Smith was sustained as prophet and “first elder” of the Church (see D&C 20:2–4). Later the First Presidency was organized, and he was sustained as President. When the Church was first organized, only the framework was set up. The organization would develop as the Church continued to grow.

The Church was organized with the same offices as were in the ancient Church. That organization included apostles, prophets,

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**For teachers:** Bearing testimony invites the Spirit. As part of this lesson, bear your testimony of the Restoration and give others the opportunity to do the same.

seventies, evangelists (patriarchs), pastors (presiding officers), high priests, elders, bishops, priests, teachers, and deacons. These same offices are in His Church today (see Articles of Faith 1:6).

A prophet, acting under the direction of the Lord, leads the Church. This prophet is also the President of the Church. He holds all the authority necessary to direct the Lord's work on earth (see D&C 107:65, 91). Two counselors assist the President. Twelve Apostles, who are special witnesses of the name of Jesus Christ, teach the gospel and regulate the affairs of the Church in all parts of the world. Other general officers of the Church with special assignments, including the Presiding Bishopric and the Quorums of the Seventy, serve under the direction of the First Presidency and the Twelve.

The offices of the priesthood include apostles, seventies, patriarchs, high priests, bishops, elders, priests, teachers, and deacons. These are the same offices that existed in the original Church.

The Church has grown much larger than it was in the days of Jesus. As it has grown, the Lord has revealed additional units of organization within the Church. When the Church is fully organized in an area, it has local divisions called stakes. A stake president and his two counselors preside over each stake. The stake has 12 high councilors who help do the Lord's work in the stake. Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are organized in the stake under the direction of the stake president (see chapter 14 in this book). Each stake is divided into smaller areas called wards. A bishop and his two counselors preside over each ward.

In areas of the world where the Church is developing, there are districts, which are like stakes. Districts are divided into smaller units called branches, which are like wards.

### **Important Truths Were Restored**

- What important truths have been brought back with the Restoration of the Church?

The Church today teaches the same principles and performs the same ordinances as were performed in the days of Jesus. The first principles and ordinances of the gospel are faith in the Lord

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Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost (see Articles of Faith 1:4). These precious truths were returned in their fulness when the Church was restored.

Through the gift and power of God, Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, which contains the plain and precious truths of the gospel. Many other revelations followed and have been recorded as scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price (see chapter 10 in this book).

Other important truths that the Lord restored include the following:

1. Our Heavenly Father is a real being with a tangible, perfected body of flesh and bones, and so is Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit.
  2. We existed in premortal life as spirit children of God.
  3. The priesthood is necessary to administer the ordinances of the gospel.
  4. We will be punished for our own sins and not for Adam's transgression.
  5. Children do not need to be baptized until they are accountable (eight years old).
  6. There are three kingdoms of glory in the heavens, and through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, people will be rewarded according to their actions on earth and according to the desires of their hearts.
  7. Family relationships can be eternal through the sealing power of the priesthood.
  8. Ordinances and covenants are required for salvation and are available for both the living and the dead.
- How have these truths influenced you and others?

### **The Church of Jesus Christ Will Never Be Destroyed**

- What is the mission of the Church?
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Since its restoration in 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has grown rapidly in membership. There are members in nearly every country in the world. The Church will continue to grow. As Christ said, “This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:31). The Church will never again be taken from the earth. Its mission is to take the truth to every person. Thousands of years ago, the Lord said He would “set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, . . . and it shall stand for ever” (Daniel 2:44).

- How have you helped in the work of the kingdom of God? What can you do to continue this work?

### **Additional Scriptures**

- Acts 3:19–21; Revelation 14:6; Daniel 2:44–45; Isaiah 2:2–4; 2 Nephi 3:6–15 (Restoration foretold)
- D&C 110; 128:19–21; 133:36–39, 57–58 (Restoration of the gospel)
- Ephesians 2:20 (Jesus Christ the cornerstone of the Church)
- D&C 20:38–67 (duties of officers of the Church)
- Matthew 24:14 (gospel to be preached to all nations)