

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

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When I was being interviewed to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood in preparation for going on a mission, the Stake President asked me to explain the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood. My reply was superficial. When it became obvious that I didn't really know, he suggested I read the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

I then asked him to explain it to me. I don't remember his exact words, but his response has remained vividly in my mind all these years. He was hesitant to attempt to explain it. His response energized my curiosity. When I got home I anxiously read through the 84th section. When I closed the book I understood the general lack of clarity on what the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood actually is.

It has taken me nearly thirty years to meet the challenge my Stake President issued that day. I would like to share with you what I have found.

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood is laid out in the 33rd and 34th verses of the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The next six verses list the blessings associated with it's fulfillment.

33 For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

34 They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

39 And this is according to the Oath and Covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

40 Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this Oath and Covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

(Doctrine and Covenants 84:33-40.)

These words bear a precious burden. Buried within them is a promise so glorious that it defies mortal thinking, and stretches the fabric of faith. Herein lies a "mystery of godliness," a grand key to the purpose of life, and those things which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man."

Let us carefully examine this scripture's parts in the hope that we can understand the whole.

Obtaining these two priesthoods and magnifying their calling

The journey to obtaining these two priesthoods began millennia prior to our birth. I believe we viewed the day of mortality as a focal point of our desire prior to this life. I believe obtaining these precious priesthoods was an almost unthinkably wonderful goal, a reason to press onward, and to walk the straight path through towering flames of opposition and eloquent, but dissident voices.

Why? Because in that long day of our spiritual nativity we understood what the priesthood meant to our eternal hopes. We understood this because we lived in the presence of God the Father, and could behold with our eyes what He was like, and we yearned to be like Him. We wanted to be like him because we loved Him, and for a more pragmatic reason – we wanted the life He possessed. The glory that we saw with our eyes, the very glory that made His countenance shine like the sun, that made his life not just everlasting, but Eternal, was the visible manifestation of His priesthood. In simplest terms, we wanted the same for ourselves.

In that life we were undoubtedly taught how His priesthood had evolved into glory that eclipses the brightness of the sun. We understood it then, but in this life it is a mystery, and one of considerable opacity.

Having now arrived in mortality, happily oblivious to the perilous journey that brought us so far to get here, we are only marginally aware of the glorious possibilities we were willing to risk all to obtain. We take our gifts for granted. We possess the priesthood with little more thought than owning a driver's license. We lose ourselves in the clatter, clutter and glamour of mortality.

For those who, by the grace of God, have come to possess the priesthood, the key to glory now lies in “magnifying their calling”.

Many times we have heard discussions on magnifying our callings. The question in my mind isn't how to magnify our calling, but what it is that we are to magnify. The question is, what is our calling? Once we know what our calling is we can magnify it. Until then, we may be magnifying the wrong thing.

There are two possible ways to look at ones calling. The first is that our calling is those labors we are asked to perform. The second is, that our calling is the eventual outcome of those labors. In other words, we are “called” (or ordained) to priesthood responsibilities, but our greater ordination, our greater “calling” is to become like God.

One example might be that we were “called” to be a mother or father in mortality, and, conditioned upon righteous fulfillment of that responsibility, we have also been “called” to be an eternal parent.

In other words, a calling is both what we are called to do, in the here-and-now, and what we are called to become as a result of those labors.

As priesthood holders we are called to do home teaching, man offices, perform ordinances and other services. We must be faithful to our duties, but these labors are only the mortal part of our calling. There is an eternal outcome, an eventual reward to which we are called upon righteous accomplishment of those labors.

It would be nearsighted of us to only view the calling of the priesthood as a series of duties to perform. Our greater priesthood calling is almost too amazing for mortals to comprehend. It is that we may eventually become like God.

A large part of what we are called upon to do may be home teaching and other earth-bound services, but our calling, that thing which we are magnifying through those earthly labors, is not earth-bound, but is vast and eternal. We are not magnifying home teaching, we are magnifying our call to divinity.

The Priesthood is a divinely ordained structure of magnificent glory that bridges two worlds – but not this world and the one hereafter. This bridge is entirely in the mortal world, and has one buttress in Babylon and the other in the presence of God.

34 Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?
 35 Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—
 36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. (Doctrine and Covenants 121:34-36.)

Many are called, that is, in the pre-mortal world many were called and ordained to both hold the priesthood, and to reap the outward blessings thereof, both male and female. This calling to hold the priesthood and receive its promised blessings has two obvious elements. The primary calling was a pre-mortal ordination to future blessings in mortality and beyond. Once in mortality we of necessity have to align ourselves with gospel truth and live a life so that we may receive the mortal calling to the priesthood. Then, upon righteous completion of that calling, we will be “elected” to receive the full weight of eternal glory associated with that calling. When these blessings are fully realized in mortality, we will find our “calling and election” made sure.

Actually, if the full blessings of salvation are to follow, the doctrine of election must operate twice. First, righteous spirits are elected or chosen to come to mortality as heirs of special blessings. Then, they must be called and elected again in this life, an occurrence which takes place when they join the true Church. (D. & C. 53:1.) Finally, in order to reap eternal salvation, they must press forward in obedient devotion to the truth until they make their "calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1), that is, are "sealed up unto eternal life." (D. & C. 131:5.)
 (Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 216.)

Still, with so great an advantage in this life, with blessings purchased at great cost in pre-mortality, there are apparently few people chosen to actually receive the promised rewards.

To be chosen is to arrive at the end objective of the priesthood. It is to receive the fullest blessings that priesthood has to offer – it is to fully and completely magnify our calling. It is to enjoy the paycheck of the priesthood. Few cross that bridge into glory. Why? Because as the scripture above proclaims, among other things, their hearts are so set upon the things of this world.

Every time we hear this accusation we allow ourselves to imagine it points its accusing finger at someone else, perhaps someone who bears the priesthood with hypocrisy or mediocrity, or who does it to be seen, or to enjoy worldly acclaim, positions and power.

One might be tempted to say, “Well yes, I know a few priesthood holders who are still caught up in the world, and who aspire to the honors of men. Or, yes brother so-and-so still won’t do his home teaching.” Yet, this verse doesn’t say only a few of us are caught in the trap, it says most of us are. “Few are chosen,” means that the vast majority of us are caught up in whatever this worldly trap is.

Since almost all of us are caught in this falsehood, it becomes a matter of simple logic to say that whatever it is that most of are doing constitutes having our “hearts set so much upon the things of this world.”

What are most of us doing? We’re going about our duties, working as best we can to get them done, and to do it so that it blesses our brothers and sisters. So, how could this constitute having our hearts set upon the world? It doesn’t make sense.

Yet, if our hearts are focused upon any worldly accomplishment, no matter how important, then our hearts are set upon a worldly thing. If we labor day by day with all of our hearts to fulfill a duty, then our hearts are set upon that earthly duty, and not upon the eternal outcome.

As verse 35 suggests, we who have our hearts upon these worldly accomplishments, “aspire to the honors of men.” In other words, we do our home teaching because we enjoy the rapport we gain with that family, they honor and respect us. They call upon us in their needs, and rely upon us for spiritual input and fellowship. We enjoy reporting that we have done a full and complete job, and relish the honor and praise of priesthood leaders. We like looking in the mirror and feeling good about ourselves.

These aren’t bad things, they’re just myopically devoting ourselves to the worldly duties with little or no view of the divine calling of the priesthood. In other words, we’re magnifying only part of our calling – the mortal part, and hence, our hearts are so set upon the things of this world.

One who is truly magnifying his eternal calling in the priesthood will still be a great home teacher, but will have his eye upon the greater rights and privileges that flow therefrom. His motivation for service will be to magnify a far greater calling. Otherwise, he is magnifying things of mortality, rather than things of eternity.

Such performances done for worldly reasons take on a life of their own. They become a lifestyle, having a form of godliness. Those outward acts become our reason for other works that outwardly appear righteous, yet still fail the divine test of eternal purpose. When done for the right reason, such acts become a small part of a divinely orchestrated straight and narrow path that leads unto immortality and eternal life.

The next verse proclaims that such people do not learn this one lesson:

36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. (Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.)

What are the rights of the priesthood? Notice that it says rights, not rites. A rite is an ordinance, like baptism. A right is a privilege one obtains through obedience to law. Righteous priesthood service gives us certain rights which are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven.

The powers of heaven are vast – the power to create, the power to heal, the power to know all truth, and the power to enter the presence of God among them. And, these powers are *inseparably* connected with the rights of the Priesthood. Inseparably means that if we are not experiencing the powers of heaven – we are not participating in the rights of the priesthood! Think about it. If one feels an absence in one’s life of true priesthood power – of healings, visions, miracles, walking on water, raising the dead and restoring the withered limbs – to name a scant few, then that individual has not yet enjoyed the rights of the priesthood and the inseparably connected powers of heaven.

In other words, it is a bleak truth that many are called, but *few*, very few it seems, are chosen. Why? The answer is obvious – we have yet to magnify our priesthood. Why? Again, the answer seems obvious. We have yet to understand how vast our calling is. We still think it’s home teaching and the like.

A few verses earlier in the 84th section the Lord gives us a grand definition of what both the duties and the rights of the priesthood are.

19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. (Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-22.)

Our mortal duties are to administer the gospel. These labors we perform are the mortal component of our calling. These include every service we perform, office we hold, and ordinance we officiate in. This is the earth-bound portion of our calling.

The eternal portion of our calling is described as the “key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.” The mysteries of the kingdom are specifically designed to unveil the “rights” of the priesthood as we become ready to receive them. These rights are the eternal element of the calling of the priesthood! These rights are the supernal blessings that we are to magnify during mortality.

They are mysteries for now because one must pass a rigorous process of preparation before the greater light of the gospel blesses rather than condemns. The fact that they are mysteries for now protects us. But, they must not forever remain a mystery. The door must open and the light of revealed glory be fully received in this life.

We have heard and even said many times that we should leave the mysteries alone. Yet, such a statement is not scriptural. The scriptures specifically instruct us to seek the mysteries, and promise that these are the very truths which bring eternal life! In fact, eternal life comes in no other way! This isn’t *a* way to immortal glory, it is *the* way.

Consider this list of scriptures:

7 Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich. (Doctrine and Covenants 6:7.)

11 And if thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous; therefore thou shalt exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, convince them of the error of their ways. (Doctrine and Covenants 6:11.)

5 For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

6 Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

(Doctrine and Covenants 76:5-10.)

61 If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.

(Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.)

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. (Luke 8:10.)

9 And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying: It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.

10 And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full.

11 And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 12:9-11.)

To those who harden their hearts, God gives the “lesser portion of the word.” This means they are left with the non-mysterious, the commonly known, the oft-spoken and commonly understood “portion of the word.” All of us begin here, but must not remain throughout our lives. Notice that in verse 11, Alma describes having only the lesser portion of the word and knowing nothing of the mysteries as being “taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction.”

Since many are called but few are chosen, this is apparently the condition of the vast majority of us. We are not seeking and finding the mysteries.

To those who will not harden their hearts, to them is given the “greater portion of the word,” until they know the mysteries in full. These mysteries unveil the “rights of the priesthood”. They are that which “bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.” For those who obtain these mysteries in full, their “wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven.”

Why will their understanding reach to heaven? Because they will see into heaven. “The wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the

things of many generations.” These mysteries are by very definition, the “greater portion of the word.” These are the things of the Spirit, and cannot be known any other way than by revelation. For he or she who refuses to reach beyond sight, into faith and into the grand mysteries, the mysteries of godliness are the things which “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.”

And consequently, this defines the vast majority of us whose hearts are so set upon worldly labors.

The ordinances of the priesthood are specifically given to manifest the power of godliness to mortals. As we read early the power of heaven is inseparably connected with the rights of the priesthood.

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.
 21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;
 22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. (Doctrine and Covenants 84:20-22.)

In words too powerful and plain to mistake, the Lord proclaims that through the ordinances – which include all of them, including temple ordinances, the power of godliness *is* made manifest unto men in the flesh. The next two verses tell us what happens without the authority of the priesthood – the power of godliness is not manifest, and no man can see God. Reworded in affirmative language, they proclaim, “With the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is made manifest unto men in the flesh; For with this, men can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.”

When stated in the negative, as verses 21 and 22 are, it sounds as if men who see God without the priesthood die. Yet, simple logic suggests it is not possible to see God in an unrighteous state. We have no record of such a thing happening. When stated in the positive, it says, that we may see God and live! In other words, we will see God and thereafter live a life that does not end in death. This is the prototype. This is the penultimate outcome of a personal interview with Deity. Those who specifically ask for it become partakers of everlasting life – not eternal life in the heavens, but everlasting life – life that does not terminate in death. In other words, “everlasting life” is the translated state.

Christ made the next few statements 2000 years ago. They are impossible to understand in any other light that translation. They can’t be dismissed. He said what he said. Either they are true, or Christ misspoke. Only in the light of glorious truth does the significance of these statements distill upon our souls. Notice in John 6 reference that He uses everlasting life and living forever synonymously.

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.
 48 I am that bread of life.
 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.
 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.
 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever . . .

(John 6:47-51.)

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.
(John 8:51.)

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though
he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.
(John 11:25-26.)

27 Verily, I tell you of a truth, there are some standing here who shall not taste of death,
until they see the kingdom of God coming in power.
(JST Luke 9:27.)

This then is the true and greater “calling” of the Priesthood: to see the face of God the Father – and live! This is the glorious calling that we hardly realize exists. Because it is *the* mystery of godliness, and we can hardly see it. Yet, the evidences are everywhere. When our souls realign to magnify *this* grand calling, then the remainder of our original quotation begins to make powerful sense.

33 For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken,
and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their
bodies. (Doctrine and Covenants 84:33)

Sanctified by the Spirit unto the Renewing of our Bodies

This verse is speaking of a beginning and an eventual outcome all in the same sentence. The Lord speaks of obtaining the priesthood, magnifying their calling, and then in a masterful over-simplification, sweeps forward in time to the grand fulfillment of that whole process and proclaims that we will be sanctified unto the renewing of our bodies.

There are many degrees of sanctification. The first noticeable experience with the power of the Holy Ghost to make saintly is when a person first accepts that Jesus is the Christ, and decides to make life changes for that knowledge. Such a change often occurs prior to baptism. Many Christians refer to this change as being born again, and so it is, in a very real, but rudimentary way. This is the point which John 3:5 suggests is being born again to “see” the kingdom of God. In other words, at this point the soul can view the future glories of eternal life, and begins to seek after them. The second rebirth mentioned in John 3:5 makes one able to enter the kingdom of God.

This further degree of sanctification to enter into the kingdom is when one receives the Holy Spirit and takes that sweet voice as a permanent and unfaltering guide, making them willing and anxious to sacrifice and consecrate all that they have to enter the kingdom of God. At this time the person is changed, upgraded, filled with righteous desire, and changed from fallen man to a saintly man or woman. Such a change is prefigured in Mosiah 3:19.

19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19.)

This degree of sanctification is generally referred to in the LDS community as being Born Again. As the verse above indicates, this change is accompanied by sweeping upgrades to the soul. The qualities of becoming like a child, submissive, meek, humble and so on, are enhancements to the soul brought on by the Holy Ghost at the marvelous change.

There is further sanctification and a greater change when one is so blessed to receive an assurance in mortality that they have a guaranteed place in the eternal kingdom. This change is often referred to as “making one’s calling and election sure.” Joseph spoke of this change many times, most notably in Teachings page 150-151, and D&C 88:3-4.

The other Comforter spoken of is a subject of great interest, and perhaps understood by few of this generation. After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted.

When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure . . .
(Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], 150.)

3 Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John.

4 This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;

5 Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—(Doctrine and Covenants 88:3-5.)

Notice that this is the “promise” of eternal blessings, not the actual receipt of them. It is a promise of eventual election into the church of the Firstborn, a subject we will touch upon later. This grand experience bestows upon the humble soul further degrees of sanctification which greatly expand the previously obtained perfections of the Rebirth.

Even beyond these glorious steps on the upward reaches of sanctification is the far greater blessing of at last entering into the presence of God, and there being changed and made able to endure His presence. This degree of sanctification, and the blessings it bestows upon the body and soul of righteous men and women is supreme. We will discuss these blessings a little later in this essay.

It is this glorious and nearly unthinkable powerful blessing of sanctification unto the renewing of their bodies that D&C 88:33 is describing. It is not referring to resurrection because all mankind will be resurrected. This renewing is wholly conditioned upon obtaining and magnifying priesthood. Renewal implies taking something worn out, and repairing it. Resurrection is not a renewal since the body has died and decayed into dust. Resurrection is a re-creation of the body, a return of life, not a renewal of the existing one.

There are other grand truths here that are less obvious. One is that if our bodies are being sanctified and renewed, then this whole process must take place while we yet have a body, while we are still mortal. The grand outcome of righteous priesthood is all to occur in this life.

The questions that arise are, what constitutes this renewing. How permanent is it? What effect does it have upon us. Has anyone actually achieved this change?

In order to answer these questions it is important to observe another grand truth of the Gospel; a rather simple one. It is this: “There is only one gospel.” This means that when you read about God’s dealings with ancient people you are reading “the” gospel, not some offshoot or derivation of it. It is true that God has at times withheld portions of his Gospel when we have not been worthy of more. But, those portions He revealed were snug pieces from the whole, not unique, tailor-made substitutes.

Another way to view this is that the Gospel is a whole. It is like a perfect sphere made of the finest material. There are no bumps, no hollow divots, and no attachments. Everything you read about the Gospel in the scriptures fits within the construct of the whole. The point here is that what happened to Enoch isn’t unique. What happened to

Lehi isn't a one-time event. What happened to the Brother of Jared will happen again and again and again.

We are not speaking of Lehi's calling, we're speaking of his privileges, blessings and power. We're speaking of the Gospel, and it never changes. If Lehi saw visions, so may we.

What this means is that when the scriptures speak of faith, all instances of faith in prior generations are prototypical of that faith which we seek. There are no occurrences of faith in past generations that are not part of the divine pattern. When the scripture speaks of a renewing of the body, we can go back and find every other instance of the renewing of someone's body, and it is the same renewing. Nothing is unique. The Gospel and its impact upon men is always the same.

Of course there are unique callings. There was only one Joseph Smith. But, the gospel Joseph understood and lived was not unique. Everything he experienced as a priesthood holder, we can experience. Every blessing, privilege, miracle and angelic visitation is offered to us – and even more.

God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know him . . . from the least to the greatest. (Teachings, p. 149.)

Thus, a search of the scripture for instances when bodies were renewed will bring to us what the Lord has always done, and continues to do when we follow the divine pattern.

Adam and most of the great patriarchs were changed so that they lived to an extraordinary age.

Enoch and his whole city was changed that they could not die.

Melchizedek was changed along with his city that they could not die

Moses was changed and taken up into heaven without tasting death.

Elijah was changed and taken up into heaven without tasting death.

Christ was changed that he could walk upon the waters, endure the rigors of Gethsemane, and rise again.

John the Beloved was changed that he could not die.

Phillip the Apostle was changed that he could go from place to place by the Spirit.

Nephi the son of Lehi was changed that he could go from place to place by the Spirit.

The Nephite Three were changed that they could never die.

There are undoubtedly many others, quite literally cities full of righteous souls, that are not recorded in our scriptures.

The pattern is set, and unchanging. Each of these changes occurred as a result of a personal interview with God. In the cases where we have a detailed account of that interview, the Lord asked each of them what they desire from him. The account of the Three Nephites is perhaps the most detailed.

4 And when he had spoken unto them, he turned himself unto the three, and said unto them: What will ye that I should do unto you, when I am gone unto the Father?

5 And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.

6 And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.

7 Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. (3 Nephi 28:4-7.)

Does it seem unthinkable that the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood, our priesthood, in this day, could be pointing us to translation? When bearing in mind that D&C 84:33 is speaking in superlative terms of the ultimate blessings of the priesthood, it isn't preposterous at all. In fact, it has to be true that if the outcome of Enoch's priesthood was to eventually be translated and walk and talk with God, that our priesthood, in this the fullness of times, must offer us the same.

Do we have claim upon these glorious promises in this day?

18 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. (Doctrine and Covenants 107:18-19.)

Notice here that becoming a member of the church of the Firstborn is made synonymous with enjoying the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Since the Gospel is unchanging, any time one enters into the presence of God in this life, the same privilege offered to the Three Nephites is offered to everyone. In other words, those who belong to the church of the Firstborn are generally translated beings.

I say generally because we have record of certain people who during their personal interview with God asked for gifts other than translation. The Nephite nine asked to speedily go into the kingdom of God. Solomon asked for wisdom. Lehi asked for the deliverance of his family from the destructions of Jerusalem. Nephi asked to see the same vision his father had seen, and that his record would be preserved and ultimately go to his descendants. The Brother of Jared asked (among other things) for sixteen stones to glow in the dark. Samson asked for strength, and the list goes on and on.

The pattern is that members of the Church of the Firstborn have had this personal interview, and have had the opportunity to request translation or some other gift.

94 They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace; (Doctrine and Covenants 76:71,94.)

21 And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn;

22 And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same [ie: Father and the Son], and are the church of the Firstborn. (Doctrine and Covenants 93:21-22. Comment added.)

The Sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the Church and kingdom, and the Elect of God

Who are the sons of Aaron and Levi today? They are, by virtue of the blessings of the Almighty, those who are ordained by those who hold the authority to officiate in the offices of the priesthood. It is written that those so ordained becomes the sons of Moses and of Aaron. Also: [Sec. 84:32, quoted.] So the Lord has spoken, and this was said to those who held the Melchizedek Priesthood. (Doctrines of Salvation, Joseph Fielding Smith, 1956, 3:93.)

At this time, the latter-day church is the kingdom of God on the earth.

The church is a kingdom; it is God's kingdom, the kingdom of God on earth, and as such is designed to prepare men for an inheritance in the kingdom of God in heaven, which is the celestial kingdom. (Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], 335.)

To become the seed of Abraham is to acquire by birthright, or adoption, the grand promise God made to Abraham, which is specifically that Abraham's posterity alone would be the bearers of this precious priesthood, and that in the eternal world all souls in heaven would be accounted his seed. (See Genesis 17:4,7; 22:18; Abraham 2:9-11 and Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, page 36.)

Therefore, we become righteous members of the living church, able to call down the blessings of priesthood upon ourselves and our families. Additionally, and of far greater eternal weight, we become the "elect of God."

To become the elect of God is to make the great leap from having been "called," to having the full blessings of that membership and priesthood unconditionally promised. It is to be "elected" unto eternal life, to have the promise of eternal glory made known in this life. It is to have your calling and election made sure.

Consider the words of Elder McConkie on this subject.

What is meant by having one's calling and election made sure?

To have one's calling and election made sure is to be sealed up unto eternal life; it is to have the unconditional guarantee of exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world; it is to receive the assurance of godhood; it is, in effect, to have the day of judgment advanced, so that an inheritance of all the glory and honor of the Father's kingdom is assured prior to the day when the faithful actually enter into the divine presence to sit with Christ in his throne, even as he is "set down" with his "Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21.)

But when the ratifying seal of approval is placed upon someone whose calling and election is thereby made sure—because there are no more conditions to be met by the obedient person—this act of being sealed up unto eternal life is of such transcendent import that of itself it is called being sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, which means that in this crowning sense, being so sealed is the same as having one's calling and election made sure.

(Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973], 3: 336.)

In having our election made sure we become a member of the heavenly kingdom of God. Our place in that eternal kingdom is made sure, such that it can only be lost on very grievous transgression. We are told by revelatory voice from the heavens that our place is reserved. A search of the scriptures reveals multiple ways whereby this message is delivered, and different language for each circumstance. It may be that every individual hears a unique message. It is beyond the scope of this essay to say much more than this. The language is immaterial. The message is everlasting.

And also all They who Receive this Priesthood Receive Me, Saith the Lord

The first two verses we have considered thus far of section 84 constitute the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood in its entirety. Beginning in verse 35 we read a description of the blessings that flow therefrom.

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;
 36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;
 37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;
 38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. (Doctrine and Covenants 84:35-38)

Now we come to the truly grand promises of the Priesthood, and the glorious “rights” of the Priesthood, that through the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood we may have free association with the Son, receive the Father, receive His kingdom, and ultimately receive all that the Father has.

Let us not twist the meaning of this diadem of truth by mentally inserting death. We are not discussing the eternities, nor the events after this life. The almost unthinkably grand endowment of the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood is to be enjoyed in this life.

The following quote by Elder McConkie is under the heading of “The righteous see him while in the flesh.”

We must not wrest the scriptures and suppose that the promises of seeing the Lord refer to some future day, either a Millennial or a celestial day, days in which, as we all know, the Lord will be present. The promises apply to this mortal sphere in which we now live. This is clearly set forth in the Vision of the Degrees of Glory. After Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon had seen the Father and the Son, concourses of angels, and the wonders of each kingdom of glory, and after they had written the account thereof, their continuing language says: "Great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; to whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory." (D&C 76:114-118.) While in the flesh! For those who "purify themselves before him," this is the time and the day and the hour when they have power to see their God! (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], 495.)

In all the passages of scripture wherein men and women are promised that they can see the Lord, nowhere is it even hinted that we must first die to do so. In fact, *every* instance in the scripture of man having an interview with God occurred to a mortal person. We have no record of a post-mortal visitation. Why would there be? Whatever occurs after death requires no warning; no instruction from the scripture. It just happens however it happens. What we must prepare to accomplish is this grand promise in mortality. This is the focus of the scripture, the burden of the teachings of the prophets,

and the nexus of the entire Gospel – the focal point – that to which all other doctrines point. It is the zenith of our faith in God, the pattern of the temple, the purpose of mortality.

It boggles the mind, then, that the principle is so obscure – and yet it is not! The scriptures everywhere attest to this one grand thing. We just read the associated statements and exclude ourselves by a trick of the mind. We mentally insert some fine print that ultimately excludes us personally. We may confuse ourselves by thinking it applies to an event after this life when all mankind will see God to be judged of him. We may conclude that it isn't something we can obtain in this life. We may silently conclude we've already sinned too much to even hope for such a thing. Or – far worse – we may simply not believe, no matter how voluminous the evidence, it just stretches the fabric of our ability to believe beyond its inherent strength.

There could also be another reason. Perhaps we simply have not had sufficient spiritual curiosity to attempt to see where the priesthood and the promises thereof are designed to take us. Perhaps we're just content with the lifestyle of the priesthood, and the palpable blessings that flow from church membership.

Such an attitude might be likened to the student who enrolls in college, signs up for a heavy load, and proceeds with the process of education with determination. He does so simply because he believes in college, yet has never glimpsed the purpose of his education that eventually he must graduate from his classes, declare a life profession and use his education as a springboard into a real life. Without a concept of what the greater purpose of college is, the process of education becomes a purpose unto itself. The process, society and fellowship of college life becomes life, rather than a gateway to a true life.

As odd as it may sound, priesthood membership is often just this way. It becomes a way of life when no concept of where it must take us exists in our hearts.

Another analogy may be one who buys an automobile with a stick shift and never realizes that there is anything other than first gear. So, you putter to work and putter home, and mosey to the store and back with no idea of what your automobile could do if you understood its potential, and its purpose.

We aren't in the priesthood for the ride. The purpose of the priesthood isn't the priesthood, or the labors we perform as a conscientious holder. These are the processes of the priesthood. The purpose of the priesthood isn't even the ordinances and offices and ordinations. The purpose of the priesthood is to prepare mankind to see God – in this life!

It bears remembering that there is only one Gospel in operation. It has taken different forms in different dispensations, but it is the same Gospel. We know by study of others who have been so privileged to have divine company that several things always happen. This is the pattern recorded in scripture:

First, we are shown a vision of all the workmanship of the Lord's hands. This vision often includes the grand events of earth's history. Moses saw this vision and penned the book of Genesis. Every prophet who records his personal experience with the Lord in any detail includes the "vision of all." The list is too long to mention them all. John the Beloved recorded a portion of his vision in the book of Revelation. Lehi saw and mentioned his experience. Nephi, inspired by his father's account, saw and recorded parts of his vision in First Nephi. Mormon saw our day. Moroni wrote to us with prophetic

vision because he knew us intimately. Joseph Smith recorded parts of his vision in Section 76. This very thing is typified in today's temple experience.

Secondarily, we are taught and edified, given knowledge that always eclipses what can be known by common man. Such a knowledge was given to many notables such as Adam, Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Daniel, Elijah, John the Baptist, and in fact, since there is only one Gospel – to all of the great patriarchs.

Thirdly, we are offered the chance to request some divine gift, (endowment). In some cases we are told what the righteous have requested of the Lord. In some cases we can surmise by the events of their lives. The pattern is, once the request is made, the Lord often grants that, and much more.

We have mentioned some of these earlier. If we could create a comprehensive list of those so blessed, it would be too vast to be reduced to paper.

Lastly, we are ordained of God and sent forth on a task of eternal consequence. If it is our inspired wish to become like Enoch, then we need but ask. We thus receive the translated gifts, the power to create, power over the elements, power to walk upon the waters, to calm the seas, raise the dead, restore the limbs and sight, and are given power over all things in heaven and on earth. We will be sent forth by the will of the Father, through Jesus Christ, his son.

When the glorious day comes that you or I stand in the presence of the Lord, this same divinely ordained and orchestrated event will again unfold.

Consider the following verse in this light.

26 He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all.
 27 Wherefore, he is possessor of all things; for all things are subject unto him, both in heaven and on the earth, the life and the light, the Spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son.
 28 But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin.
 29 And if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done.
 (Doctrine and Covenants 50:26-29.)

These words in Section 50 are only understandable in the light of this grand outcome of righteous Priesthood. Read them carefully and see in them the translated gifts that are promised. Note that in this life we are ordained by men. The only way to be ordained of God, is to be in the presence of God.

If we incorrectly interpret this verse to men those who are ordained of God to be the priesthood ordinations under the hands of authorized mortals, we create a logical conundrum of titanic proportions. If this a mortal ordination being referenced above, then ALL of those ordained must be possessors of all things, with all things being subject unto them in heaven of on earth. In other words, unless priesthood holders have and exhibit these powers – they simply were not authoritatively ordained. Stated in simplest terms, since nobody exhibits these gifts, nobody was truly ordained, the priesthood does not operate properly in this setting, and the church, by this logic, simply can't be true.

However, when understood as described above, that this ordination is under the hands of God, Himself, then there is vast evidences for this statement being true throughout history.

Our challenge, our privilege, is to rise to the same “rights” our forbearers in the priesthood rose to in their lives.

In the following quotation we again find the grand promises of the priesthood. Notice the tense of the verbs. Promised blessings in mortality are described as: “These are they who ARE” – not will be. The future promises of eternal glory read “These SHALL. . .” Each time the scripture says ARE, this incredible promises applies to this life!

52 That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

Note the similarity to Section 50:27 quoted above.

56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

After the order of Enoch suggests the power and privileges of Enoch, who with his whole city was translated.

58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

They are gods! Which suggests vast powers and “rights.” All things *are* theirs. Consider that if one has the power to create anything one needs or desires, you truly have *all* things at your fingertips. The power to see into the past and the future is ours, and we are Christ's, for it is by Him and His atonement that all this has occurred, and Christ is God's.

Notice now that the next few verses speak of future blessings.

60 And they shall overcome all things.

In other words, they have not yet overcome all things, including death. Death is only postponed with translation. It is overcome by resurrection.

61 Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

62 These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

63 These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

64 These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection.

65 These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

Now we return to the present blessings. Mount Zion is the city of the Living God. It is a place where we may come and go, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

66 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

67 These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

Verse 67 is a description of the types of beings in the city of the living God. The angels are those without bodies either unborn, or the righteous dead. The Church of Enoch is the grand assembly of those who are translated, and the church of the Firstborn are those for whom the blood of Christ has wrought its fullest blessings – those who have washed their garments in the blood of the lamb and become pure and holy, and thus entered His presence – in mortality! In other words, the “city of the living God” is in part, populated by mortals.

68 These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

69 These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

70 These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical.

(Doctrine and Covenants 76:52-70.)

Note that their bodies *are* celestial, meaning, they have been changed in mortality, to be able to endure the divine presence. These verses are not speaking of the Celestial Kingdom. They are speaking of celestialized mortality. Also observe how powerfully this next, oft quoted, and little understood, verse dovetails with the power of the promises of the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood.

(Moses 6:59-68.)

59 That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory;

We are to be sanctified from all sin and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world. The words of eternal life are when the Father utters the more sure word of prophecy, and gives notice that our place in the kingdom is made sure. Along with this earthly promise comes the assurance of eternal life, even immortal glory.

60 For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified;

Baptism in water is an unalterable commandment. The Spirit justifies and delivers promised blessings when the applicant is finally ready, perhaps even many years after the ordinance. The blood of Christ is the agent of purity and sanctification. However, this verse is saying far more than the obvious.

It is easiest to understand the meaning of verse 60 by examining verse 61. The fact that further explanation is being offered for being justified by the Spirit and sanctified by the blood in the next verse is indicated by “therefore.” It is similar to saying, you have a ticket, therefore you can watch the play. The play is the effect of having the ticket, and they are inseparably connected.

61 Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.

Verse 61 is describing the effect of verse 60. All of these descriptions add to our understanding of what happened in the former verse. What is being described is a series of events that flow from the glorious, but not uncommon events of baptism, justification, and sanctification.

The record of heaven refers to having your name written in heaven as one entitled to enter. It is to have your calling and election made sure. It is also described in D&C 88:2-4 as being “another comforter . . . even the Holy Spirit of promise.” This comforter is the promise of eternal life, and from that time onward abides in you, or becomes your constant companion.

2 Behold, this is pleasing unto your Lord, and the angels rejoice over you; the alms of your prayers have come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded in the book of the names of the sanctified, even them of the celestial world.

3 Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John.

4 This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;

(Doctrine and Covenants 88:2-4)

Then, verse 61 informs us that additionally we receive “the peaceable things of immortal glory.” Bearing in mind that these glorious gifts occur in this life, while we are mortals, then this phrase refers to immortal glory during mortality. In other words, through these promised gifts we enter into a state of peace and immortal glory, even while yet in mortality. There is ample evidence that this promise of peace is part of the divine pattern, and is often referred to as “entering into the rest of the Lord.”

12 Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

(Alma 13:12.)

Notice how the above reference combines being sanctified and becoming pure and spotless with entering into the “rest of the Lord.” Again and again we must remind ourselves, there is only one Gospel. The result of being sanctified is always the same, even when slightly different language emphasizes different things.

61 If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.
(Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.)

Now combine this peace, this entering into the rest of the Lord with the words “peaceable things of immortal glory,” and again the unspeakable promise of translation whispers in our souls almost unnoticed and unsung. To understand simply ponder this: What peace distills upon the soul of a newly translated soul, realizing afresh that the laws of mortality no longer bind you, that temptation no longer reaches you, that death, pain, sickness and even sadness cannot afflict you, that by your inspired word illness is healed, death is rebuked, that all elements of mortality must obey your words, and you have become the greatest of all, and the servant of all? Such peace surely would be entering into a state of rest that surpasses the ability of mortal man to comprehend.

The last great gift in Moses 6:61 is “the truth of all things.” There is only one source of all truth. Christ describes himself as “the Spirit of truth.”

11 And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us.
(Doctrine and Covenants 93:11.)

What follows in Moses 6:61 is further description of what the Lord means by “the truth of all things. He further describes it as, “that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment. Even though this appears to be a description of the Holy Ghost, it is not. The Holy Ghost is a messenger, and has no stated power. This is a concise description of Jesus Christ himself. What this verse promises is that that which will come and abide in us is Jesus Christ himself.

But, can Christ actually abide in us? Listen with new ears to the promises of John.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;
21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:
23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.
24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: (John 17:20-24.)

To become one with Christ, the Master comes and abides in us. We become one, as Christ and his Father are one, and in so doing, we inherit all the Father has, which fulfills the promise of Moses 6:61, that among other things, we will know “all things, and [have] all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment”.

We become one with Christ in the same process whereby Christ became one with His Father. We hear Christ’s voice, and do nothing other than what we are told to do. Christ’s will becomes our will and, perhaps more difficult to understand is that, our will become Christ’s. We become one with him, not overpowered and dominated by Him. We become consumed *in* Christ, not *by* Him.

A few verses previous to the ones we have been considering in Moses 6, we find the Lord promising all these blessings to Adam if he would turn unto Christ, and hearken to his voice.

52 And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you. (Moses 6:52.)

6 And even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice. (Doctrine and Covenants 33:6.)

Of course, the “elect” are those who inherit all the promised blessings of the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood.

So, returning to Moses 6:60-61, the promise is that through justification by the Spirit and sanctification by the blood of Christ, we may:

- 1) Have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.
- 2) Have our calling and election made sure.
- 3) Have a personal appearance and companionship of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4) Be translated or some other gift.
- 5) We may enter into the “rest of the Lord.”
- 6) And, as a direct result of these supernal gifts being “given to abide in you”, we will become One with Christ and because He dwells in us, we will possess:
 - 7) The truth of all things.
 - 8) Power to quicken and make alive all things (power over life and death.)
 - 9) Knowledge of all things.
 - 10) All power as governed by wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment.

Notice how fitly joined this list is with D&C 76:52-70 and D&C 50:26, which we have quoted above.

Not only is this the promise we enjoy, but it is the plan of salvation unto *all* men, in all ages. There is only one gospel, and it is unchanging. It is the pattern that Adam followed to his exaltation, and thus may all become the sons of God.

62 And now, behold, I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.

65 And thus he [Adam] was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man.
 66 And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever;
 67 And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.
 68 Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons. Amen.
 (Moses 6:62-68)

Conclusion

It is understandable that any enlightened discussion of the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood will give rise to more questions than it answers. Most of these questions will of necessity be answered to each individual as they seek and find their place in the grand plan of the eternities.

One question worth considering together is, “Why?” Why should we move ourselves into such a pursuit, such a life-altering, and potentially life-disturbing quest? The answer may seem trite – but it is because we have no choice. The price for eternal glory is fixed. The pathway is one, not many. Abraham paid a certain price, and we will pay the same price, though tailored for our needs. If we expect to emerge through the flames into glory, we will find ourselves at last upon *that* path, not some other.

Christ was not only the exemplar, he was the prototype. We come to glory by coming unto Him. He not only showed the way, he led the way – even more importantly, He *is* the way. When we finally emerge triumphant we will be like Him because of Him.

If being translated was part of Enoch’s eternal path, then it is a permanent part of *the* path. Since Christ is the supreme mortal, It is unthinkable that there is any spiritual attainment that Enoch enjoyed which Christ did not receive in the fullest. It is my opinion that our faith must lead us to conclude that Christ himself possessed the translated gifts. This is suggested in Section 76:

57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. (D&C 76:47)

Enoch’s priesthood, which is the priesthood of translation, was after the pattern and order of Christ’s priesthood, which pattern includes every gift, including translation.

Among other things, this suggests that Christ walked upon the water not because he was the genetic offspring of God, but because He was the spiritual offspring of God. In other words, he obtained it in the same way Enoch obtained – through the gospel plan He Himself established.

By this startling realization we fall to our knees in humble reverence before Him. Of course Christ walked the gospel path. He obtained all, and then in obtainment, turned and offered it nearly free of cost to us; undiluted, measured to overflowing and shaken down.

Christ commanded the winds and seas, healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out devils, and walked upon the waters, not by virtue of His divine parentage, a trait we cannot share, but by His obedience to Gospel law, the same law we now live.

I didn't understand the perfection of Christ's sacrifice until I realized that Christ possessed the translated gifts. A translated person by very definition does not feel pain. (3 Nephi 28:9) Christ truly did not have to suffer – He chose to. As a changed being, not only did he not have to submit, He did not have to feel the lash, endure the crown of thorns, or tremble as the nails were driven into his hands and feet – and no one would have known. He did not have to suffer in Gethsemane. He could truly have summonsed ten legion of angels to defend him, as he said. But, He did not.

Not only does this give light to how perfect His sacrifice was, but it gives rise to the incredible thought that it could not have been truly perfect any other way. Christ truly "overcame all things" including his ability to end the greatest suffering any mortal has endured by the flick of a mental switch.

The "why" of translation is simply this; Christ did, we can, therefore, if we expect the full weight of glory He promised, we must.

A note regarding priesthood and the sisters of Zion: One need only sit through one Temple session to learn every answer regarding a woman's place in these glorious things. Every promise, every gift, every ordination, every visitation and privilege is shared equally by our wives and daughters. There is only one place in the Temple where there is a greater privilege, and it is the sisters who have the favored, protected position.

The subject of this brief essay is taught in couched terms and in blatant symbolism in the Temple. The entire object of approaching the veil in this life and making requests of the Lord is symbolized within those holy walls. As we have said so many times – there is only one gospel. When you and I approach the veil, it will follow the pattern of Enoch and the Brother of Jared, which is undeviating in the blessings offered there. We learn in the Temple that priesthood holders have no more elevated privilege before the Lord than the sisters.

Is it necessary to be translated in order to enjoy Celestial glory? No. But, therein we may enjoy the fullest joy in this life, and the next. (3 Nephi 28:10) Translation isn't necessary to enter the Celestial Kingdom, but it endows us with the power to accomplish the greatest good in this life that we are able. (Call to witness here the blessings Alma the Elder, a translated man, called down upon his errant son.) It is the means whereby we are enabled to bestow the greatest blessings upon our posterity. When the Lord granted the Three Nephites the gift of translation He almost offhandedly remarks that it is the more blessed gift. (3 Nephi 28:7)

Furthermore, translation is vital to the purposes of God in this dispensation.

When Zion, the New Jerusalem, is established upon the earth prior to the return of Christ, it will be a city of the pure in heart. In the divine order of things, Enoch's Zion, which was translated and taken up into heaven, will return to the earth and be joined with our New Jerusalem. Together these two great cities will be called Zion.

62 And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

63 And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; (Moses 7:62-63.)

The salient point here is that our Zion, the New Jerusalem, must be equal to Enoch's Zion to join with it. Christ walks the streets of Enoch's Zion. (Moses 7:16) Notice that the plurality of pronouns "us" and "we" in verse 63 refers to Enoch and Christ. How shall Christ embrace us if His presence condemns or consumes us? The laws of worthiness that separate us from Christ and His angels will still be in full force. When Enoch's city appears it will be because we have become like them, a Holy City, a habitation of the "elect" of the earth. We will be as they are – even as Christ is.

This combined city of the righteous of many generations has been given many names, among them Zion, and the City of the Living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all, (D&C 76:66), "the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God" (D&C 84:34) and "the general assembly and church of the Firstborn" (D&C 107:19). Those who dwell there are described as being a "possessor of all things; for all things are subject unto [them], both in heaven and on the earth, the life and the light, the Spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son." (D&C 50:27)

But, the greatest description of that combined city of Zion is from the 76th section of the D&C. We have considered this already in this document. But, it is so precious that it bears review. Most interpret this as a description of the Celestial Kingdom, even though verse 63-65 clearly place these events prior to the second coming and the millennium, and consequently, prior to the establishment of the Celestial Kingdom which shall be this earth in its sanctified state. These words describe living people, people who *are*. Pay special attention to the tense of the verbs.

54 They are they who *are* the church of the Firstborn.

55 They are they into whose hands the Father *has* given all things—

56 They are they who *are* priests and kings, who *have* received of his fulness, and of his glory;

57 And *are* priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

58 Wherefore, as it is written, they *are* gods, even the sons of God—

59 Wherefore, all things *are* theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

60 And they *shall* overcome all things.

61 Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who *shall* subdue all enemies under his feet.

62 These *shall* dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

63 These are they whom he *shall* bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

64 These are they who *shall* have part in the first resurrection.

65 These are they who *shall* come forth in the resurrection of the just.

66 These are they who *are* come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

67 These are they who *have* come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

68 These are they whose names *are* written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

69 These are they who *are* just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

70 These are they whose bodies *are* celestial, whose glory *is* that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical. (Doctrine and Covenants 76:54-70. Italics and underlining added)

It is interesting that in verse 66 Mount Zion is described as being the city of the living God, “the heavenly place.” Clearly this is not heaven, but a place like heaven, the holiest of all. The holiest of all what? The holiest of all other places. In other words, there are places around it that are less holy, or perhaps not holy at all. In heaven there is no unholiness. During the pre-millennial day, this will be a heavenly place, the holiest place on earth.

From that combined city an elite missionary force of 144,000 will be sent forth to gather in the elect of the earth. The fact that they will be sent from the combined cities of Zion indicates they will be translated men and women. This will be the greatest missionary effort of all time. They will go forth with true power, miracles and undeniable witnesses to gather the elect. They will snatch the elect from the jaws of destruction, defy armies, move mountains, and deliver by the power of God. They will travel by the power of God into all the world and teach one of a city, two of a family, showing forth miracles, and bringing them to Zion, the throne of the Lord.

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.

17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. (Jeremiah 3:14-17.)

I am inclined to interpret the fact that one of a city and two of a family shall be claimed as meaning this great missionary effort shall occur rather quietly, individually, being sent to specific individuals who either are, or must shortly become, the elect of God. The miracles they perform will be largely invisible to the world, but be the power of salvation to those with eyes of faith anxiously waiting to be gathered in. The following quote is from Joseph Fielding Smith. Notice that he alludes to the fact that this great missionary force will be translated people.

This certainly is a great honor to be one of the 144 thousand who are especially called by the power of "the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth," to bring souls unto Christ. John the Apostle had the great desire to bring souls to Christ. [Sec. 7.] The three Nephite Disciples likewise sought this great honor and it was granted to them. [3 Nephi 28.] It is one of the noblest desires that a man can have. It will be a wonderful blessing to those who are called in this great group. (CHMR, 1948, 2:71-72.) (Roy W. Doxey, comp., Latter-day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], 3: 11.)

Why will this missionary force be translated beings? Orson Pratt, an Apostle and friend of the Prophet Joseph made this fascinating explanation.

“When the Temple is built [in the New Jerusalem] the sons of the two Priesthoods [Melchizedek and Aaronic] . . . will enter into that Temple . . . and all of them who are pure in heart will behold the face of the Lord and that too before he comes in his glory in the clouds of heaven, for he will suddenly come to his Temple, and he will purify the sons of Moses and of Aaron, until they shall be prepared to offer in that Temple an offering that shall be acceptable in the sight of the Lord. In doing this, he will purify not only the minds of the Priesthood in that Temple, but he will purify their bodies until they shall be quickened, and renewed and strengthened, and they will be partially changed, not to immortality, but changed in part that they can be filled with the power of God, and they can stand in the presence of Jesus, and behold his face in the midst of that Temple. “This will prepare them for further ministrations among the nations of the earth, it will prepare them to go forth in the days of tribulation and vengeance upon the nations of the wicked, when God will smite them with pestilence, plague and earthquake, such as former generations never knew. Then the servants of God will need to be armed with the power of God, they will need to have that sealing blessing pronounced upon their foreheads that they can stand forth in the midst of these desolations and plagues and not be overcome by them. When John the Revelator describes this scene he says he saw four angels sent forth, ready to hold the four winds that should blow from the four quarters of heaven. Another angel ascended from the east and cried to the four angels, and said, ‘Smite not the earth now, but wait a little while.’ ‘How long?’ ‘Until the servants of our God are sealed in their foreheads.’ What for? To prepare them to stand forth in the midst of these desolations and plagues, and not be overcome. When they are prepared, when they have received a renewal of their bodies in the Lord’s temple, and have been filled with the Holy Ghost and purified as gold and silver in a furnace of fire, then they will be prepared to stand before the nations of the earth and preach glad tidings of salvation in the midst of judgments that are to come like a whirlwind upon the wicked.” (In Journal of Discourses, 15:365–66.)

We often trouble ourselves with the timing of the Second Coming, looking for signs and storing food like squirrels. Yet, we know when Christ will come with precision. He will come when there is a Zion to receive Him – not before. So, the timing of His coming is actually up to us. When we are ready He will come.

Thus, we find ourselves in an awkward position of waiting for the doorbell to ring on a house we haven’t built.

If history is any teacher, there is one thing which evil cannot abide, will not endure, and upon which it unleashes all its fury to destroy. That thing is Zion. Every time God has brought forth Zion in any degree, the armies of evil have combined against it. This is the pattern. It occurred to Adam (in Cain’s rebellion), to Enoch (in wars of

nations), to Melchizedek (in wars and bloodshed), to Christ (in crucifixion and apostasy), to the Nephites (in wars and annihilation) and to Joseph Smith (in martyrdom and expulsion).

When the latter-day Zion is again established the pattern will again occur, and since this is the last and greatest Zion, all the nations of the earth will combine against it. And, thus will begin the great destructions every prophet has seen and foretold regarding the latter days. Thus will begin the final scenes of evil – not because evil has triumphed at last – but because Zion has triumphed at last!

The question is – where shall we stand, in Zion’s safety, or in the war-torn world looking through bitter tears at the unscalable walls of Zion?

Shall we be among the 144,000, or desperately hoping we are among those to whom they will minister? Shall we be among those terrified souls yearning to be saved, or the saviors.

The promise of the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood is a call to glory.

33 For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

34 They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

39 And this is according to the Oath and Covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

40 Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this Oath and Covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

(Doctrine and Covenants 84:33-40.)

May I be so bold as to reword it more plainly?

33 For whose is faithful unto the obtaining of these two priesthoods, and magnify their eternal callings, shall be sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies through translation.

34 They shall become the inheritors of the promises given to Moses, Aaron and Abraham, and will become the church and kingdom, and will have their calling and election made sure.

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood, I will personally visit them.

36 All who receive my servants (who will give you these priesthoods), I will visit.

37 All whom I visit, the Father will visit;

38 And all whom the father visits, will receive my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

39 And these blessings are according to the Oath and Covenant which belongs to the priesthood.

40 Therefore, all who receive this priesthood in its fullness will receive every blessing associated with the Oath and Covenant of my Father, which He always honors, which can never be altered.

If Zion is to exist in our dispensation then we alone bear the burden of it's establishment. The quest for Zion is not yet a universal phenomenon, but a private one. When there is one Enochian soul, there will soon be two, then four, then forty, then a hundred and forty four thousand, until the call comes to gather and by the power of God a city will glisten in the spiritual night. We will bring forth Zion by becoming Zion in the privacy of our own quest.