

Latter-day Saints¹ and non-LDS Christians each have a priesthood, but they are vastly different in nature and purpose. Both, however, believe that without their particular priesthood one cannot gain access to God.

Before examining both priesthoods, the word “priest” needs to be defined. In the Old Testament, priests were men who stood between God and others. They presented offerings of atonement to God for the people’s sin. That action is known as “mediation.”

The three Biblical priesthoods

Priesthood 1:

The Levitical Priesthood

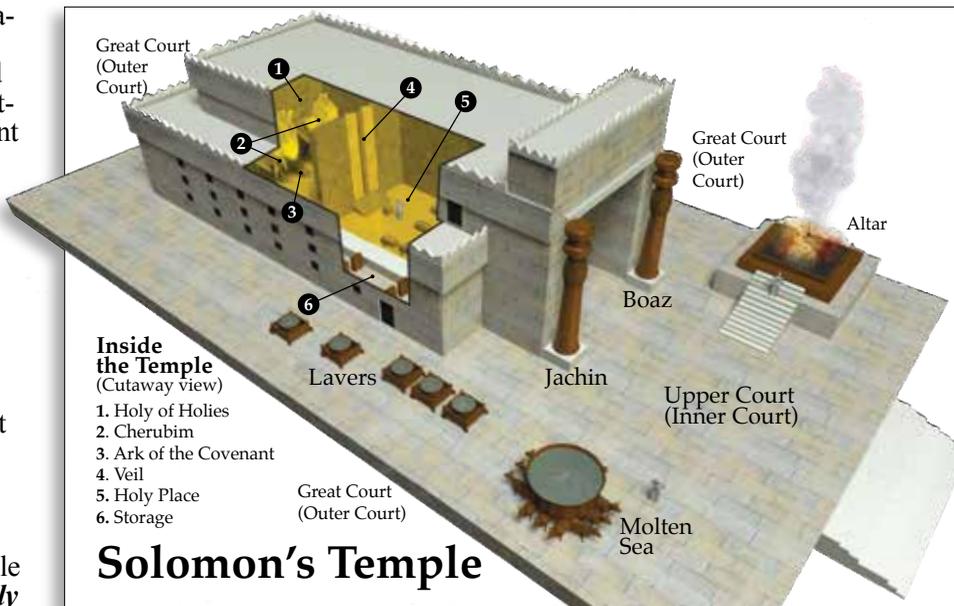
Mosaic Law states that only Aaron and his direct descendants could be priests (Num 3:10). The remainder of the Levites supported the priests in maintaining the tabernacle and later the **one and only** temple of God (Num 3:5-9).

Only one “high” priest at a time wore the special garments (breastplate, Urim and Thummim, etc.) indicating his unique authority to enter the Holy of Holies.

The most sacred duty for the high priest was to enter the Holy of Holies (located behind the Holy Place) on the Day of Atonement. He sacrificed a bull and a goat and sprinkled their blood on the Ark of the Covenant’s mercy seat to symbolize the atonement for sins committed that year. Only he could enter that room which was hidden from everyone else’s view by a veil (Lev 16:1-19, 30). When the high priest died, a new mediating priest succeeded him (Heb 7:23). This continued until Jesus, the great High Priest, became the permanent offering for sin (Heb 7:24-25).

One proof that Jesus is the last high priest is: the veil was torn in half the moment He died on the

cross (Mat 27:50-51) because His sacrifice fulfilled the Day of Atonement and Passover (Heb 10:8-14). That tearing exposed the Holy of Holies which no longer had a purpose, and it symbolized that all mankind can now have direct access to God through Christ alone, our Mediator/Priest (Heb



Solomon’s Temple

10:19-22; 8:1-2).

Since Jesus now lives forever (unlike Aaronic high priests), it’s not necessary to transfer his priesthood to another due to death (Heb 7:23-24). He thus ended the Aaronic order. Jesus, however, was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi, so how could he qualify to serve as a priest at all, let alone our High Priest (Heb 7:14)?

Priesthood 2: The Melchizedek Priesthood

The book of Hebrews says that Jesus’ priesthood was “after the order of Melchizedek,” who was the priest/king of Salem, the Canaanite city of the Jebusites that later became Jerusalem. After a great battle, Abraham gave Melchizedek an offering that he presented to God on Abraham’s behalf (Gen 14:18-20).

Genesis tells us nothing about Melchizedek’s parents or lineage, information normally required to qualify someone for a priesthood. Hebrews explains that this odd fact about Melchizedek made him a type “like the Son of God” (Heb 7:3), that

is, someone who prefigured Jesus. Because Jesus also had no lineage to be a priest, His priesthood is in the similitude of Melchizedek (Heb 7:14-16). In that likeness, Jesus as High Priest offered Himself as the sinless, permanent sacrifice for all the tribes and the Gentiles (Eph 2:14-18).

Melchizedek did not pass down his priestly office to future generations of believers in the true God. When Hebrews, quoting Psalm 110:4, speaks of Jesus as “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 17, 21), it is not referring to a literal “order” in the sense of a priesthood held by many individuals from one generation to the next. Rather, it is using the term figuratively to mean that Jesus was a priest “after the likeness of Melchizedek,” as Hebrews says explicitly (Heb 7:15).

As the sole Mediator of the new covenant (Heb 8:6; see also 1 Tim 2:5), Jesus is the only one to fulfill the requirements for being the priest like Melchizedek discussed in Hebrews, because only He:

- Saves completely those who come to God through Him (7:25)
- Intercedes for His followers without ceasing (7:25)
- Is sinless by nature (7:26) and committed no sin (4:15)
- Is the perfect, final sacrifice for sin (7:27; 10:10-14)
- Fulfilled “the word of the oath,” which is the guarantee of a better covenant (7:20-22, 28)
- Sits at God’s right hand (Heb 8:1; Ps. 110:5)
- Presently serves in the heavenly tabernacle (8:2, 9:23-26)
- Does not dwell on earth but in heaven (8:4-6)

No matter how worthy a believer is, or how they are called to an office of the church, they do not die for mankind’s sin, neither do they have a sinless nature, or sit at the right hand of God. Not even the head of a church meets those requirements. Thus, they can never be a priest like Melchizedek.

Priesthood 3: The Royal or Holy Priesthood

The royal priesthood is not conferred through a patriarchal order of priests or church ordination. Instead, it is given to all men, women,* and children instantly when they are born again and become the living temple of God (*Gal 3:26-29; 2 Cor 6:16b; 1 Pet 1:23 & 2:4-9).

The royal priesthood centers on serving Jesus because, as the high priest of the new covenant, He brings all believers into the presence of God and gives them access to the throne of grace with **boldness** (Heb 10:14, 19-22; Eph 2:13-18). As royal priests, Christians represent God directly through the authority of their High Priest Jesus, because they are **perfected** by His blood (Heb 9:14-15, 24-28; 10:10-14) and **sealed** by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13, 4:30). Thus, they bear His righteousness, or worthiness (2 Cor 5:21), and so rightly serve and act in Jesus’ name (Acts 1:8; Eph 1:3-14).

As God’s temple, Christians offer their bodies a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1-2) through righteous living, adoration of God and works of service (Eph 2:10); not for furthering self for eternity, but for “reverence for God” (2 Cor 7:1), and to declare His praises for calling them out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet 2:9). Through the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit, they function as the Church (Rom 12:4-16; 1 Cor 12-14; Eph 4:11-13). They have gone from eternal damnation to eternal life with the Father — in His kingdom (Jn 5:4; Rev 21:1-4). This transformation is the most radical exaltation one can imagine.

The Mormon priesthood

This priesthood is two-fold, organizational and theological. The organizational part has many similarities that are found in the Christian’s royal priesthood. Both priesthoods call people into offices and positions. Both work towards sanctification, emulate Christ, and have the same moral and charitable obligations.

The difference is the theology. “Priesthood power and authority” is the conduit for the right to see and serve God, the gospel, and all blessings (D&C 84:21-22; 107:18).² Through the laying on of hands, all righteous men beginning with Adam had it, and it was passed down from one Old Testament prophet to another (D&C 107:42-56). This priestly line of succession now allegedly continues through the living prophet of the LDS Church who passes it on to other Mormon males (D&C 107:35-40). (The LDS Church believes only they have true priesthood because, due to corruption around 100 AD, God removed “priesthood authority” making Christianity apostate. In 1829, it was allegedly restored.)

¹ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church or Mormon)

² This opposes Biblical authority, and the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7-14; 1 Cor. 12:3, 7-11).

The most critical difference is that the LDS Christ is not the last high Melchizedek priest. Their priesthood falls tragically short of the supremacy of Jesus' position as the only High Priest. The LDS Church claims that Christ is one of countless others who have that same priesthood. Latter-day Saints believe his priesthood and obedience gained him exaltation (also called a 'fullness') after his atonement and resurrection. Those two actions serve as mere stepping stones for the general resurrection of all people. Likewise, Mormons, as joint heirs, through obedience to their calling (just as Christ was obedient) can also obtain their exaltation (godhood). "Using" this priesthood³ to further one's eternal life through one's own righteousness⁴ gives priesthood holders the capability to be as Christ is, by progressing to godhood based on their worthiness:

All blessings, benefits, and inheritances of the Melchizedek Priesthood are equally shared and achieved by husband and wife *if they keep their covenants...*

"Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. They shall be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them (Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20)."⁵

These concepts are not in the Bible

Concerning the Old Testament, the LDS Church sometimes infers "priest" to mean a Melchizedek priest. In the New Testament, the "equipping" passages (Rom 12:4-16; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4:11-16) and description of the church's foundation (Eph 2:13-22) say nothing about Melchizedek or even an office of priest. The phrases "Melchizedek priesthood," "priesthood power," or "priesthood authority" are nonexistent, and there are no examples of believers receiving it through the laying on of hands.⁶ Remarkably, a BYU professor agrees that

³ THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, *Understanding the DOCTRINE, Living the PRINCIPLES*, 2018, Deseret Book, p. 52 (Abbreviated here-after as: TMP)

⁴ "The same is true for a priesthood holder. He becomes refined through his righteousness. The purer he becomes, the more he can do, the more he can withstand" Ibid, p 45

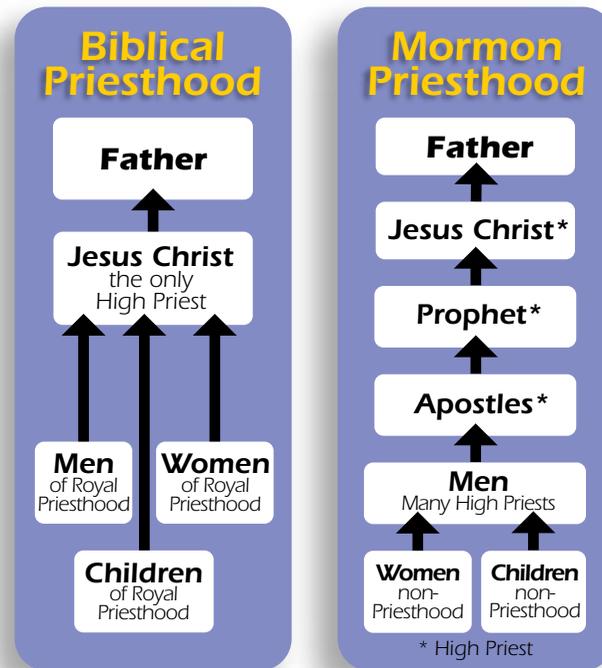
⁵ Ibid, p. 20; italics mine.

⁶ The Joseph Smith Translation (JST) adds several phrases, words and verses to passages that speak of Melchizedek and Christ's priesthood to fit LDS doctrine; however, the thousands of ancient texts discovered since Joseph Smith's death do NOT have any of these additions., and therefore are the evidence against his embellishments.

LDS priesthood is not in the Bible:

The New Testament doesn't explicitly state that the priesthood was given to any of Christ's disciples... Hebrews speaks of Christ being a "priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:6-10), but gives no indication that any of Jesus's disciples possessed this priesthood. There is no concept in Hebrews of a general order of the priesthood called the Melchizedek Priesthood. Christ alone is extolled [praised lavishly] as a priest in the "similitude of Melchizedek (Heb 7:15)."⁷

The profound difference!



Jesus is enough

Jesus is not enough

...there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5)

The significance and purpose of Christ's priesthood and His majesty (Heb 8:1) is utterly lost if others can receive the same priesthood as His (one that serves to exalt men). That diminishes Christ to "just another

⁷ Charles R. Harrell's 'This Is My Doctrine': The Development of Mormon Theology (August 2011) https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IqNwMOilfwWI3U40LCvrjcOibye3UQYOp8_yu4Zm5oc/pub

brother who did it right."

The high priesthood is **not** about us. It's about Christ the High Priest. Gaining eternal life has nothing to do with our worthiness; it's His worthiness/righteousness — only He is worthy. It's not about working for our kingdom; it's all about His kingdom working in us through the Spirit (Mat 6:10).

The Bible proclaims that Jesus' Priesthood is **enough** to guarantee our presence with Him and God the Father for all eternity! The LDS Church, on the other hand, promotes the fallacy that we are no different than Jesus, in nature, and can become worthy enough through self-effort and a gauntlet of priestly mediators, to "become as God is"—additional "gods"⁸—which God Himself declares will never happen: "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isa 43:10). All who are redeemed in Christ will be conformed to His image in glorious immortality and holiness as adopted children of God (Rom 8:14-23, 29-30), but we will not become all-powerful, all-knowing beings. We must look to the Lord alone and trust simply in Him for this wonderful gift of salvation: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa 45:22).

Do not be deceived with false promises!

Come to Christ. He is the one with all authority (Mat 28:18). You will lose **nothing** and instantly gain eternal life. Surrender the impossible burden of becoming a perfect priesthood holder and the equally unattainable goal of your own godhood. Instead, trust fully in Christ, the true and last High Priest, who through His righteousness (worthiness) makes you perfect, "For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Heb 10:14 NIV; 2 Cor 5:21). This is what puts you in the kingdom of the Father, both now (Eph 1:3; 2:1-6) and forevermore (Rev 21).

⁸ TMP, 2018, Deseret Book, p. 20, "Become as God is," paragraph 1. "gods," paragraph 2.



Christian Research & Counsel
 P O Box 23741, Rochester, NY 14623
 330-307-7542 • info@crmin.org • www.crmin.org
 Copyright © 2018 Christian Research & Counsel, Inc

