

Denver Snuffer Podcast 157: Completing God's Image, Part 4

This is part four of a series where Denver addresses listener-submitted questions relating to the roles of Women in scripture and in the restoration movement. Today, Denver discusses women and the priesthood, women in the resurrection and the next life, and women in Zion.

DENVER: Go back to what is most basic. It is the basic truths which matter most. All great truths are simple.

What is “priestly?” Whether it is done by a “priest” or by a “priestess” what exactly is “priestly?”

At the core, to perform a priestly act is to do something for the Lord; to act as His surrogate, or to act as His agent. The greatest of these priestly acts are rendered through service to others, and can be done by anyone, almost at any time, and in almost any circumstance.

When administering relief to others, you can act on the Lord’s behalf. When you clothe the naked and needy, or visit the sick and confined, or feed the hungry, you are doing His work. (Matt. 25: 34-46.)

The “chief seats” don’t matter. When men obtain the honors of others, sit in the chief seats, and receive public acclaim, they are not the ones to envy. Those who support themselves through the widow’s tithes are damned. (Luke 20: 45-47.)

The Lord has respect to the obscure, and He took greater notice of the faithful who donated her two mites than the rich who made a show. (Luke 21: 1-4.) This is who He is. This is who you are to serve. He has no respect for those who consume these donations from the poor. When you serve others, you are a priestess whom the Lord will recognize and are the one He intends to exalt. (Matt. 23: 11-12.) It is not the ruler who will be honored, but the servant. (Matt. 23: 8-12.)

There is nothing to envy from anyone who receives public acclaim, praise, adoration and celebration. (Matt. 23: 5-8.) When crowds gather to proclaim your greatness, this is neither priestly nor godly, and you have your reward. (Matt. 6: 1-4.) But when you serve in quiet and are faithful in secret, then you are priestly and the Lord will honor you. (Matt. 6: 5-6.)

There is nothing preventing you from acting the part of the priestess in blessing others and serving on the Lord’s behalf. (D&C 58: 26-29.) If you wait to act the part of a priestess until someone calls you to a priestly position, and then only want to hold office to be seen and recognized as a priestess, then you have failed to know your Lord.

You have confused priestly service for God and to your fellow man with rank, position and institutional authority. That is nothing. Worse than nothing. These institutional positions confuse both holders and observers into thinking this is what matters. Misused church position can become little different than membership in a civic club, as some leaders I have known. You probably have seen such people in your own experience. If your “service” is

entirely confined there, and you do nothing to benefit the poor, the weak, the needy, the naked and you let the beggar pass by you unnoticed, then priestly service is for you only vanity and pride. It is not something to connect you with God. (Mosiah 4: 12-27.) You can do that without any institution conferring upon you, like “the Great and Powerful Oz” what is in reality nothing more than a watch, a certificate and a medal.

I would advise against looking to those who are almost always damned to decide what example to follow. (D&C 121: 39-40.) The ones acclaimed the most, celebrated the most, and who hold the greatest public eye generally have no authority from God anyway. (D&C 121: 34-37.) Do not either envy them or take them for your model. People who make this mistake aspire to be a child of hell. (Matt. 23: 10-15.)

Even if we receive all the praise men can bestow upon us, we are STILL not priestly. For that, you need to serve our Lord. The honors of men are nothing. They never have been anything. (D&C 121: 34-36.)

You want to be priestly? Then cry repentance. It will offend others, and will cause them to despise you, but will bring you to know your Lord. He is meek and lowly. He speaks to man in plain humility, as one man speaks to another.

His first witness of His resurrection, and therefore the first apostolic voice having authority to declare her witness that He who was dead is alive, was a woman. She was not among the church hierarchy, but the Lord rebuked the men for ignoring her authoritative and true witness. They were “fools and slow of heart” for this error.

At the time that John the Baptist visited Joseph and Oliver and conferred the priesthood, the form in which he conferred it was limited but it was durable, and he prophesied that it would not be taken again from the earth until—it depends on whether you read Oliver’s words or Joseph’s words—that they may yet, or until they do, the impression is still the same. There is some future sacrifice that’s expected by the sons of Levi and that the priesthood will endure to then. There’s a form of priesthood upon the earth that is remarkably durable. Even the Jews that killed Christ held it. Pretty durable stuff. There is also, in scripture, a teaching that says that all priesthood is one, the original name for which was the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. It’s all that, but there are different degrees or portions of that one unified priesthood. Therefore, if you have anything, if you have any priesthood at all, you have some portion of the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God, however limited that may be.

I gave a talk in Orem in which I explained that the best way to regard priesthood is as a fellowship. You can have priesthoods among all kinds of people. Women can have priesthoods is a fellowship of women but fellowship determines priesthood. If you have a fellowship with men you have a priesthood of men. If you have a fellowship with angels you have a priesthood that involves something called the “keys of the Aaronic priesthood” because your fellowship with angels has extended into the angelic realm. If you have fellowship with the Son of God you have priesthood that is associated with that. And if you’ve been in the presence of the Father you have an association with Him, and you hold priesthood that is a Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. The degree to which a

priesthood conferral upon a person takes effect is dependent upon the heed and diligence that they pursue the things of God and the degree to which they acquire fellowship with such heavenly things.

Well, if you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 68, first verses 3 and 4: This is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation. Then go over to 12: And of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life. Amen.

So, this is talking in the context of someone having authority to seal when moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And that is authority which anyone of you (and the prophetess Anna, in the temple at Jerusalem, when Christ came into the temple—a woman can use) when moved upon by the power of the Holy Ghost. And it is the word of God, and it is the power to seal if it originates from God. That doesn't mean it's the same thing as a dispensation head. It doesn't mean it's the same thing as an ordinance. And it doesn't mean that it's the same thing as the control of the elements, given in those rare cases. But what it does mean is that the word of God will always be respected, both in time and in eternity, if it is given by God, if it is the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are those who have heard that their calling and election is made sure. And they've heard that as a witness from God. Don't doubt the word of God given to you. However, don't think for one moment that's the end of the matter. Remember (that in the cases that we looked at before) that one of the purposes of ascending up into the presence of the Father is to be endowed with knowledge, with light and truth, and with intelligence, to possess a God-like mind and a God-like understanding. Therefore, no matter what you receive, you ought to always search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God. Indeed, we're commanded to do so, as I reminded you in Boise and won't repeat again here. I've also read you previously and won't repeat it again here—Doctrine and Covenants section 1, verse 8... 8 thru 10, the sealing power manifested in an Aaronic setting, in which it is sealed up unto condemnation.

I want to mention that beyond there being a fellowship of man (or males) and a brotherhood, there is also a fellowship that is extended, as well, to women. If you find a woman in scripture who has had the ministry of angels, you have a sister who has joined in that association. I won't take time to do so, but if you look in Judges chapter 13, verses 2 to 5, you have Samson's mother being ministered to by an angel promising the coming of the one who would be a judge in Israel. You have in Genesis chapter 18, verses 9 to 15, Abraham's wife with angelic ministrants. And the most obvious case being Mary in the book of Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 to 31, in which Mary is ministered to by Gabriel, one of the Elohim, who came to announce that she would conceive and bear a child, though she knew no man.

Boy... Take note that there are, on a number of occasions, women who conceive and bear children, but the births are miraculous. In the case of Mary, the child that was born was conceived in a miraculous way. As also was Samson. As was John. Whether it's infertility and barrenness, whether it's being past the age of menopause, or whether it's not having had intercourse, there are these beings who come into the world as a consequence of something other than the normal manner of conception. And yet, everything else unfolds biologically the same as a normal birth. The child that is born, obviously, inherits mortality and blood from the mother.

Parse that in your own mind, and then take a look at what the Lord says in Abraham chapter 3 about the "souls" in the pre-existence who were good. And recognize that the definition of the soul (given in the Doctrine and Covenants) is both the spirit and the body. And yet, they are "souls," and they're coming into this world, but...

Most people think of priesthood in a model that is given by the Church: that is, something that is passed from man to man; that it is something that involves a brotherhood among men; and that it can be removed by institutional shunning.

It is probably better to think of priesthood in terms of—at one degree (that we would call Aaronic or Levitical)—possesses an association with angels. And another order that possesses an association with the Son of God. And yet another level at which the association is one that makes you a son of God, which is the Holy Order after the Son of God; that is, the status of the individual involved has been changed to themselves being a son of God, a bar-El.

John the Baptist—when he restored the authority (in Joseph Smith verse 69... Joseph Smith History 1:69)—said that it ...holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken...from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness (see also Joseph Smith History 14:1 RE).

The Gospel of repentance is returning to face God. Baptism by immersion is for the remission of sins. And John's declaration does not say that it will not be taken from the church; it says it will be [not] taken...from the earth. It was restored to remain on the earth. And no matter what happens among those that choose to abuse one another, it needs to be preserved by a faithful few so that it doesn't cease from the earth. It is still here—though it has been much neglected, and it has been much abused. But with you, renew it. Renew it using Alma's example.

He'd been previously ordained as one of the priests in wicked King Noah's court. And he'd been ordained by him precisely because he was wicked: he qualified; he was corrupt. Noah wanted him, and so he got ordained. But before he undertook to use the authority, he asked God to give him power. And God, seeing penitence on the earth, respected it and poured out His Spirit upon him so that Alma could baptize with authority. And the proof of that consisted not merely in what it was that Alma experienced with the Spirit empowering him to perform the ordinance, but it consisted also in the effect that the ordinance itself had

upon both Helam and Alma (who himself went into the water at the same time). The Spirit was poured out upon them. Renew it.

Likewise, we need to renew a community—not an organization, but a fellowship; not a hierarchy, but a group of equals. The community needs to be renewed. Men who have been ordained already should renew this in the manner I just described.

In my disgust and in my personal preference, I asked that priesthood get extended beyond the confines of the men who have continually abused and neglected it. And I was told that priesthood is confined to men because of the Fall and that until we reverse things in the Millennium, that's the way it's going to remain (as to the ordinances thus far given in public). I asked the Lord to change that order. And it's not going to change. Here is how, then, you should proceed:

Even if you have already been ordained—as part of the community, the community itself needs to recognize that someone is authorized. However, given the fact that men have abused and neglected the priesthood that they've been given, and given the fact that if men are only going to hold the priesthood that there ought to be some other independent check, I would suggest—and it is agreeable to the Lord—that when it comes to sustaining men to perform as priesthood, only women should vote. No man should be allowed to vote to sustain another priesthood holder—period. If only men hold it, then only women should sustain them.

The saying pleased the Lord, but He set a criteria. He said if that is to be the case, then there must be at least seven women who vote. Call a conference. In the conference attended by a minimum of seven women, at least seven women must vote to sustain. When that's done, all seven who vote to sustain should sign a certificate. If you look in the Joseph Smith Papers, these were just handwritten things. But they did it, and they did it in the early church, and you can look, and it was the practice back then—except back then it was men. We're gonna change that. Call a conference, at least seven women vote, all seven sign the certificate. If the man is married, his wife must be among the seven women. If his wife will not sustain him, he is unworthy.

When you ordain, you should ordain no one to an office; you only confer the priesthood. Have no offices among you. Let everyone be equal. Be without ranks. Keep your lines of authority—it reckons from the one ordaining—but power can only come from Christ. And without ratification (from the Spirit) of your ordination, wait until the Spirit ratifies it before you act.

After April 2014... After April 2014 General Conference, only reckon your line of authority in these proceedings—not from LDS Church lines after April of 2014. All ordained keep a record of your line of authority and pass it down. And be prepared to defend your line of authority because of the records you keep. All of the women who vote to sustain: Put it in your diaries and in your journals. Let the records be kept so that if anyone questions, there will be an abundance of witnesses.

Conferences can be called by any who desire it, but you must have seven women if the business includes a priesthood ordination.

Again, the husband is to hold priesthood to baptize and bless the sacrament of bread and wine in the home, and the husband and wife are to bless their children together. For the husband to use authority to administer outward ordinances outside his own family, his wife must sustain him. I have told you that to remove authority to use priesthood outside a man's family requires a unanimous decision by twelve women. A council of twelve women must be convened either in the man's home fellowship among those who are acquainted with his daily walk, or in private at a general conference also including among the twelve women from the conference those who are acquainted with his daily walk, so that no injustice results. Reinstatement of the man's authority must be considered by the same council of twelve women when the man petitions for the decision to be rescinded, and requires seven of the twelve to agree upon his reinstatement, which can occur at any time. During the period of suspension, nothing affects the man's duties and responsibility to his own family.

Marriage was, in the beginning, between one man and one woman, and was intended to remain so for the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve, that they may multiply and replenish the Earth. I commanded that there shall not any man have save it be one wife, and concubines he shall have none. I, the Lord your God, delight in the chastity of women, and in the respect of men for their wives. Marriage was established at the beginning as a covenant by the word and authority of God, between the woman and God, the man and woman, and the man and God. It was ordained by my word to endure forever. Mankind fell, but a covenant established by my word cannot fail, and therefore in death they were not to be parted. It was my will that all marriages would follow the pattern of the beginning, and therefore all other marriages would be ordained as at the first. But fallen men refused my covenant, did not hearken to my word, nor receive my promise, and marriages fell outside my rule, disorganized and without me, therefore unable to endure beyond the promises made between the mortal man and the mortal woman, to end when they are dead. Covenants, promises, rights, vows, associations and expectations that are mine will endure, and those that are not cannot endure. Everything in the world, whether it is established by men, or by Thrones, or by Dominions, or by Principalities, or by Powers, that are not by my word and promise shall be thrown down when men are dead, and shall not remain in my Father's Kingdom. Only those things that are by me shall remain in and after the resurrection. Marriage by me, or by my word, received as a holy covenant between the woman and I, the man and woman, and the man and I, will endure beyond death and into my Father's Kingdom, worlds without end. Those who abide this covenant will pass by the angels who are appointed, and enter into exaltation. Concerning them it shall be said, You shall come forth in the first resurrection, and if they covenant after the first resurrection then in the next resurrection, and shall inherit in my Kingdom their own thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, all heights and depths and shall pass by the angels to receive exaltation, the glory of which shall be a fullness and a continuation of their posterity forever. Marriage is necessary for the exaltation of the man and woman, and is ordained by me through the Holy Spirit of Promise, or in other words by my covenant, my law, and my authority. Like the marriage in Eden, marriage is a sacrament for a sacred place, on holy

ground, in my presence, or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister. But rebellion has kept mankind from inheriting what I ordained in the beginning, and therefore women and men have been left to marry apart from me. Every marriage established by me requires that I be part of the covenant for it to endure, for Endless is my name and without me the marriage cannot be without end: for so long as I endure it shall also endure, if it is made by my word and covenant. But know also that I can do my work at any time, for I have sacred space above, and can do my work despite earth and hell. The wickedness of men has not prevented my will but only kept the wicked from what they might have received. Whenever I have people who are mine, I command them to build a house, a holy habitation, a sacred place where my presence can dwell, or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister, because it is in such a place that it has been ordained to recover you, establish by my word and my oath your marriages, and endow my people with knowledge from on high that will unfold to you the mysteries of godliness, instruct you in my ways, that you may walk in my path. And all the outcasts of Israel will I gather to my house, and the jealousy of Ephraim and Judah will end. Ephraim will not envy Judah and Judah will not provoke Ephraim. And again, I say to you, Abraham and Sarah sit upon a Throne, for he could not be there if not for Sarah's covenant with him. Isaac and Rebecca sit upon a Throne, and Isaac likewise could not be there if not for Rebecca's covenant with him. And Jacob and Rachel sit upon a Throne, and Jacob could not be there if not for Rachel's covenant with him. And all these have ascended above Dominions and Principalities and Powers, to abide in my Kingdom. Therefore the marriage covenant is needed for all those who would likewise seek to obtain from me the right to continue their seed into eternity, for only through marriage can Thrones and Kingdoms be established.

Some of you read my blog and saw that post I put up about a talk that was just given in General Conference. And it's important... It's important, because of the dynamic that is on display, to talk about that for just a moment. When Joseph Smith established the Relief Society, he established an independently-functioning woman's organization that the women controlled and ran. They were an auxiliary to the church, to be sure, but it was a women's organization. Today, we like to say that it is the longest-lived, oldest women's organization on the earth. And that was true at one point, but it is no longer true. Through the process of correlation, the Relief Society (which once had its own budget; it once had its own checkbook; it once had its own control; it once had its own magazine; it once had its own lessons—it was a women's run organization)—what happened was through correlation, the women's organization was brought into the correlated authority of the local priesthood that's gonna run everything. As a result of which, the women lost their budget. The women lost their magazine. The women lost control over their curriculum. The women lost their Relief Society. And what it became was an appendage to the correlated priestly control.

As a result of it being an appendage to the correlated priestly control, it's just a matter of time... Just, I mean, start the watch... Start... You can measure it. It's just a matter of time. Sooner or later, some woman, as a Relief Society President, knowing what needs to be done, will want to do what needs to be done, and some priesthood local authority (Bishop or Stake level/Stake President) is going to say "no." And he's gonna say "no" for not a very good reason. And before long there will be an accumulation of incident after incident, problem after problem, disappointment and frustration after disappointment and

frustration, to the point where, in the natural chain of events, there will be women who say, "We've got a problem." And the solution to the problem in the correlated church consists in obtaining possession of the right to be the one with the thumb; to be the one who is asserting the thumb, not the one that is under the thumb. So, the solution to the problem is, "We can't govern ourselves because it's now a man's organization populated by women." It's no longer a women's organization; it is man's organization populated by women. So, what do the women say? The women are saying, "The problem here is that we want control back, and the way we get control back is (since it's a correlated deal and that means priesthood)—we want to fetch for ourselves priesthood so that we can get control back."

And the oblivious correlators, not recognizing that the problem is correlation itself, have determined that "We have a solution! The solution to the problem is that we have key holders. We have Thomas Monson; he's chief key-holder—belt is completely full of those things [laughter]. And then we got the Twelve, and then we got Seventy, and we got Area Seventies, and we got Stakes, and we got Bishops. And when we get down to Bishop, he's got like four or five keys left on his key chain." But they got key-holders, and with that key... And it's on a retractable... [laughter], I mean, you can't drop it. You can hop on your Harley, and you can go to Sturgis, but you're not gonna... Every time you drop it, it's retracting right back on. You're gonna hold on to them keys. I can take that key—I can take it out, and I can touch, touch the little lady, "There you go, little lady, now you have the authority from the key-holder! Voilà, I have brilliantly... I have solved the problem! The women agitating for ordained women are now empowered by the authority of the Priesthood."

That was what Elder Oaks' talk was all about: giving them the authority of the Priesthood so that they can go out, and they can perform a function like as if they were a priesthood holder. Misses the point! Swoosh, went right over! I would say gave him a haircut [laughter], but he's like my friend Jon here; he's follical-challenged. Went right over the head of the one who was given the responsibility of announcing the new program that will allow women to exercise the authority of the priesthood, because that's not what they want! They would like to get back their organization. And I don't blame 'em.

And therefore, if you decide to experiment upon the words we have found in scripture today, and if you decide that you're going to try and together collect your own tithes and administer to your own poor among you, I would suggest that not only should women have an equal voice, but that Joseph Smith was really on to something. Long before the notion of a Bishop controlling a storehouse, and even after the existence of a storehouse, the Relief Society was a lively partner in the process. I would suggest when you are 'one,' and when there is relief that is needed, and when as a result of what the Lords needs to have happen is for people to gather with love unfeigned, forget the nonsense about who is greater and who is less. Look among whatever group you participate in and ask yourself, "Who's more compassionate, and who loves more?" And listen to her [laughter]. And listen to all of the 'hers,' because when it comes to the home and the hearth and the needs of children, there is a competency among the women that is innate. And love can be feigned by the presiding authorities. But women generally have a difficult time pulling that kind of nonsense off. Men can pretend to many things...

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's blog post dated August 30, 2012 titled "Role of Women, Part 4" subsequently recorded for this podcast on February 21, 2022;
- His talk titled "Other Sheep Indeed", given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29th, 2017;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 titled "Priesthood" given in Orem, UT on November 2nd, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10 titled "Preserving the Restoration" given in Mesa, AZ on September 9th, 2014;
- The presentation of "Answer and Covenant", given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3rd, 2017; and
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 titled "Zion" given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12th, 2014.