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The Postdiluvian Dispensations

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Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God. Noah after the flood lived three hundred and fifty years, being nine hundred and fifty years old when he died (Gen. 9:28-29).

Standing out in bold relief among the patriarchs of the postdiluvian period is Melchizedek, described in Genesis as the King of Salem, who met Abraham after his conquest of several of the petty kings in the land of Canaan. This Melchizedek was “priest of the most high God,” and he brought forth bread and wine and administered it to Abraham saying: “Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand” (Gen. 14:19-20).^a And Abraham gave Melchizedek tithes of all (that is, one-tenth of the spoils taken from the kings he had conquered).

Paul in the book of Hebrews makes reference to this high priest of the early postdiluvian age as being a priest-type after the order of the Son of God, saying, “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he ⟨God⟩ [that] said unto him, Thou art my Son, ⟨this⟩ [to] day have I begotten thee. . . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec . . . called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:5, 6, 10). It must ever be that the Christ, being the Word that was in the beginning with God, and that was God, and afterwards “was made flesh” and dwelt among men (cf. John 1:1-14), must have precedence over Melchizedek; and the question then arises, how comes it that the Christ is spoken of as being a “priest forever after the order of Melchisedec?” The mystery disappears when we come to the knowledge that it is Melchizedek who is a high priest after the order of the Son of God, rather than the Son of God an high priest after

^aRoberts introduced the word “administered.” The King James Version simply reads, “brought forth bread and wine.” The Joseph Smith Translation, however, adds, “he brake bread and blest it; and he blest the wine.”

the order of Melchizedek; and this is learned from a revelation to the Prophet of the New Dispensation in the following language:

There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic. . . . Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest. Before his day it was called the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God. But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood. (D&C 107:1-4)

This changing of the name of the priesthood, however, from “the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God” (who was to come in the meridian of time) to the “Melchizedek Priesthood,” did not change the nature of the priesthood itself, and it was still after the change of the name “the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God”; and the Son of God, of course, takes precedence over Melchizedek, and it is Melchizedek that derives his priesthood from the Son of God, rather than the Son of God deriving ought from Melchizedek. Melchizedek was merely a prototype of that high priest, that was to be developed in the Christ, the Son of God, when he should appear in the earth in the meridian of time.

Much speculation has been indulged in regard to ~~who~~ Melchizedek *who was he*. Little doubt can exist, however, but that he was Shem, the son of Noah,¹ and therefore in the direct line of both the postdiluvian patriarch Noah, and through him in the line of antediluvian patriarchs back to Adam. It is most appropriate, therefore, that Abraham who was to become the great head of the Hebrew race should receive blessing from him, and take his place in the line of the patriarchs from Adam to his own day, and then pass on that same connection through his descendants Isaac and Jacob, whence sprang the Hebrew race and nation, destined to become God’s witness, par excellence in the earth.

“The call” of Abraham. This connection established between the patriarch Shem (Melchizedek) and Abraham, the head of the Hebrew race, introduces the Abrahamic dispensation of things in the earth, for in addition to this connection with the patriarch Shem, God also directly revealed himself to Abraham and called him to the special work unto which he had been appointed, even in the spirit world before his earth life began (cf. Abr. 3:22-23). The genealogy of Abraham, and some of his history, is given in the eleventh chapter of Genesis,

¹See note in text at close of this chapter.

and from it we learn that he originally dwelt in the land of Ur of the Chaldees and here the Lord spake unto Abraham commanding him to leave that country and his kindred and go into a land that the Lord had appointed unto him—the land of Canaan, “and I will make of thee a great nation,” said the Lord; “and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:2-3). This is generally referred to in theological writings as the “call of Abraham.” A famine diverted him from immediately possessing Canaan and hence came Abraham’s sojourn in Egypt from which he afterwards returned and settled in Canaan where came his contact with Shem (Melchizedek). God’s reason for calling Abraham is thus given: “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen. 18:19). That is, make of him the head of a people and nation and that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him and in his seed. Also the patriarch received the further compliment of being called the “friend” of God (2 Chr. 20:7), and “I ⟨God⟩ have chosen ⟨Jacob⟩, the seed of Abraham my friend” (Isa. 41:8).

“The gospel” preached to Abraham. We learn from another scripture that a dispensation of the gospel was given to Abraham.^b This is the passage: “The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal. 3:8). Let it be remembered that there is but one gospel, but one plan for man’s salvation, one covenant which God made of eternal life, and though an angel should preach any other than this one gospel he is under apostolic anathema (Gal. 1:6-9; Titus 1:2). Paul himself asks the question, “wherefore then serveth the law?” (Gal. 3:19)—having reference to the law of Moses, given, of course, subsequently to this gospel, which had been preached unto Abraham, and which was “the law of [a] carnal commandment(s)” (Heb. 7:16; 9:10), under which Israel lived, and of which we shall say something more later. But the question again: “wherefore then serveth the law,” if the gospel was preached to Abraham? The answer of Paul to that question is,

It was added because of transgressions, till the seed ⟨the Christ⟩ should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels

^bOn dispensationalism, see pages 657-58 below.

in the hand(s) of a mediator. Wherefore the law (again referring to the law of Moses) was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:19, 24-26)

Which simply means that the gospel was preached unto Abraham, but later, when his posterity had developed into a people who proved themselves unfaithful and inadequate to live in harmony with the gospel as it had been revealed to Abraham, (and later to Moses), because of transgression, an inferior law, called in the scriptures “the law of carnal commandments,” a law of symbols and ceremonies for their training, was given to them in place of the gospel of faith and grace and the higher spiritual life and union with God. But the gospel as known from of old was given to Abraham *and also to Moses* before the law, known as the law of Moses, was given.

Mosaic dispensation. This course of events brings us now to Moses, the next great prophet following after the patriarchal period which seems to have closed with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and Joseph, son of Jacob. And we now enter the prophetic period in the development of God’s purpose in the earth.

To Moses and to Israel under Moses the gospel was first presented before a coming in of the law of Moses.[†] This is evident from the scriptures. It is written by Paul:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:1-4)

It is written, and here let me say, in quoting this passage from Hebrews, I take no note of the fact, except for this remark, that the passage is made up of the closing verses of chapter three and the opening verses of chapter four. It must be remembered that the inspired writers of the scriptures are not responsible for these divisions of their writings into chapters or verses, and sometimes passages of scripture that relate to one thing and ought not to be divided by so much as a period, are

[†]The committee of the Quorum of the Twelve cautioned regarding chapter 39, page 7: “The law of Moses not an eternal law. In the chapter it is so stated with other law.” Roberts commented: **not in ch. 39.** In fact, the relevant material was on this page of chapter 38.

nevertheless sometimes torn apart by being placed in separate chapters. The passage I am about to quote is an instance of this kind. Paul speaking of Israel, part of whom provoked God by their transgressions, as they were led out of Egypt by Moses, says:

But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: (ancient Israel under Moses mentioned above), but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. (Heb. 3:17-19; 4:1-2)

And so the gospel was preached not only to Abraham, but also to Israel under Moses, before the law was given; but not being equal to living in harmony with its excellence, and because of their transgression, God gave them the law of carnal commandments. The fact that the gospel was first offered to Israel through Moses established by the above scriptures, makes clear also the knowledge that Moses evidently had knowledge of the Christ to come in the future, for it is written of him,

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. (Heb. 11:24-26)

The priesthood under the Mosaic dispensation. Again the fragment, which we call the book of Moses revealed to Joseph Smith, contains the evidence that the gospel was made known unto Moses from the council in heaven to the full development of the gospel as it had been revealed unto Adam after the "Fall," and to Enoch, and also to Noah. Also Moses organized the priesthood after the order of the Son of God, the same that is known as the Melchizedek priesthood or priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. And in our modern revelation to the Prophet of the New Dispensation it is made known that Moses received this priesthood under the hands of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian (Ex. 3:1),^c who received this priesthood through a line of men reaching back to Abraham, and thence to Melchizedek who conferred that priesthood upon Abraham, and thence

^cExodus 3:1 identifies Jethro as Moses's father-in-law and priest of Midian. The lineage of Moses' priesthood is found in D&C 84:6-18.

back to Noah, and from Noah **back** to Adam, through the line of the ten patriarchs to Adam, who is the first man. “Which priesthood,” says this revelation, “continueth in the Church of God in all generations, and is without beginning of days or end of years” (cf. D&C 84:6–17). In this revelation also is mentioned the fact that “the Lord confirmed a priesthood upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations” (D&C 84:18). Why it is called the lesser priesthood, is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek priesthood and has power in administering **chiefly** outward ordinances. This “priesthood also continueth and abideth forever with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God” (D&C 84:18)—i.e., after the order of the Son of God.

Referring again to this higher order of priesthood, the Melchizedek—the revelation continues:

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. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory. Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also (i.e., the priesthood after the order of the Son of God); And the lesser priesthood (i.e., which he had conferred upon Aaron) continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel; Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John (i.e., the Baptist), whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb. For he was baptized while he was yet in his childhood, and was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power. (D&C 84:19–28)

Visions of God under Moses. Notwithstanding what is written above about the failure of Moses to bring his people into full and sustained contact with God because of the hardening of their hearts,

which made it impossible for them to endure the presence of the Lord, and that ~~which~~ ultimately resulted in the Lord taking Moses and *the* higher priesthood as an organization out of their midst, still there are some bright spots during that time when Moses was seeking to induce his people to live in harmony with the higher law of the gospel, and he was able to bring some part of his people into visible and actual communion with God. As for instance—we read in Exodus:

And he ⟨the Lord⟩ said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, ⟨and⟩ Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him. (Ex. 24:1-2)

This commandment Moses delivered to assembled Israel, and

then went up Moses, [and] Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the Elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and *there* was under his feet as it were a paved work of *a* sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink. (Ex. 24:9-11)

Above in this chapter it has been set forth that without holding the Melchizedek priesthood, the priesthood after the order of the Son of God, man may not see the face of God and live. But since this number of men out of Israel could be brought into the presence of the Lord and eat and drink in his presence (was it a sacramental eating and drinking on that occasion?) it is evident that they must have held the priesthood after the order of the Son of God, ~~after the order of Melchizedek~~, and to that extent, at least, that Moses succeeded in bringing his people into that intimate relationship which he would have brought all Israel into, had it not been for the hardening of their hearts; but because of “transgression,” the gospel which had been preached to Abraham, and which was given to Moses to introduce to Israel, but which they were unworthy of and unable to live, therefore this holy priesthood ~~after the order of Melchizedek~~, was taken from them as an organization, and also Moses, who held the keys of it. And Israel was left with the lesser priesthood, and the law of carnal commandments to be their schoolmaster to prepare them finally for the coming of that great high priest himself, from whom all others in the world, in ancient times, in meridian times, and in the last days shall derive whatsoever of priesthood they may hold.

Taking away Moses and the Melchizedek priesthood, and leaving for the purpose named the lesser priesthood, left Israel also with only

the lesser law. Later the gospel dispensation, graced by the presence of the Christ, the great high priest, who offered himself as a sacrifice for the redemption of the world, was ushered in—then the higher priesthood again assumed the direction of things, the lesser priesthood occupying its proper subordinate relationship, and the law was supplanted **by** the gospel, with its higher spiritual powers and life.

Melchizedek priesthood held by the prophets of Israel. There remains but one thing more to be accounted for, namely, that some of the prophets in Israel between the departure of Moses and the coming of the Christ, seem to function in a manner that could only be warranted by their possessing the Melchizedek priesthood, as for instance: Where Isaiah had the face to face vision of God,

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims. . . . And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. (Isa. 6:1-5)

The explanation of this must be, that while the priesthood as an organization, together with Moses was taken away from Israel, from time to time individual prophets received direct individual ordination from God in order to accomplish his purposes in the earth.^d We have such an instance as this in the case of Esaias, where the revelation of God to our Prophet of the New Dispensation traces back the line of Jethro's priesthood (father-in-law of Moses and of whom Moses received the ordination to the priesthood), through four predecessors in the line of his priesthood to Esaias who also lived in the days of Abraham and of whom it is said, "and Esaias received it ⟨the priesthood⟩ under the hand of God" (cf. D&C 84:7-12).^e Since Esaias lived in the days of Abraham and Abraham was blessed of him, is it not quite possible that

^dThis is supported by a statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith: "All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181). Further evidence that the Melchizedek Priesthood was available to various individuals in the Old Testament period can be seen in Alma 13.

^eIn reference to the "hand of God," note D&C 36:2, where the Lord said to Edward Partridge, "And I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon."

this “Esaias” *under that name* was Melchizedek[†] and that he was the one to whom the priesthood of Jethro is traced in this revelation here considered, for Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, received his priesthood from one Caleb, “who received the priesthood from Elihu, who received the priesthood under the hand of Jeremy, and Jeremy received the priesthood under the hand of Gad, and Gad under the hand of Esaias,” who is also the one who received his priesthood under the hand of God, and Esaias also lived in the days of Abraham and blessed him (cf. D&C 84:7-14). He doubtless was the Melchizedek and this name, which he appears under here (“Esaias”) accounts for the variation perhaps of this Elias who appeared in the Kirtland Temple.

This brief historical sketch made possible by reason of the revelations given in the New Dispensation to Joseph Smith, and quoted in this chapter, unites the dispensations of Moses and the prophets of Israel with Abraham on the one hand, and with Christ, the Messiah, on the other, which dispensation we are to consider in the next chapter.

Note: *Melchizedek-Shem*.^f That Melchizedek was Shem is recognized by the “Palestinian Targum” and also by Jerome of the fourth and fifth centuries in his comments on Isaiah 41.² It may be interesting to record also that it was Shem who offered the sacrifices ~~on the earth~~ after Noah and his family came out of the ark (cf. Gen. 8:20), since tradition has it that Noah had been crippled by the lion, and was therefore unfitted for the priestly office (Lev. 21:17-23); Noah gave Shem the priestly garments also which he had inherited from Adam. This, too,

[†]The committee of the Quorum of the Twelve succinctly stated: “We question the statement that Esaias and Melchizedek are the same, based on what is written in D&C 84.” Roberts noted in response: **Obj[ection] not valid**, but nevertheless he appears in response to have made a slight modification by adding “under that name.”

^fIn his argument identifying Shem with Melchizedek, Roberts is summarizing evidence from articles in Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, Kitto’s *Cyclopaedia*, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. See also a similar summary in *Seventy’s Course in Theology* 2:86-88. A recent LDS scholar has summarized the discussion since Roberts’s time: “It was asserted by some early LDS leaders that Melchizedek was Shem, son of Noah (see, for example, *Times and Seasons* 5:746). Though Shem is also identified as a great high priest (D&C 138:41), it would appear from the Doctrine and Covenants 84:14 that the two might not be the same individual (*Mormon Doctrine*, 475), and Jewish sources equating Melchizedek and Shem are late and tendentious.” Bruce Satterfield, “Melchizedek: LDS Sources,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 2:879-80. See also the excellent review of ancient sources in Birger A. Pearson, “Melchizedek: Ancient Sources,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 2:880-82.

²*Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th ed.), s.v. “Melchizedek.”

confirms the tradition held in relation to Shem being the successor to Noah in the patriarchal line.³ The Samaritans also identified the city of Samaria with the city of Salem,[†] and their sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim. The Rabbis of later generations also identified Melchizedek with Shem, the ancestor of Abraham.⁴ In one of the Messianic Psalms (Ps. 110:4) it is foretold that the Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, which the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 5:20) cites as showing that Melchizedek was a type of Christ, and the Jews themselves certainly, on the authority of this passage of the Psalm, regarded Melchizedek as a type of the regal priesthood, higher than that of Aaron to which the Messiah should belong.⁵

A mysterious supremacy came also to be assigned to Melchizedek,⁶ but by reason of his having received tithes from the Hebrew patriarch Abraham; and on this point the author of the epistle to the Hebrews expatiates strongly (Heb. 7:1-2); but the Jews in admitting this official or popular superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham sought to account for it by alleging that the Royal priesthood was no other than Shem, the most pious of Noah's sons, who according to the shorter chronology (Ussher's) might have lived at the time of Abraham (according to that chronology Shem's life overlapped into the life of Abraham over one hundred and fifty years). Shem as a survivor of the deluge is supposed to have been authorized by the superior dignity of old age to bless even the father of the faithful, and entitled as the paramount Lord of Canaan (Gen. 9:26) to convey his light to Abraham (Gen. 14:19). This opinion (i.e. that Shem was Melchizedek) was embraced by Martin Luther, his strong supporter and learned friend Melancthon, by H. Broughton, Selden, Bishop Lightfoot, Jackson, and many others.

Jerome of the fourth and fifth centuries in his epistle written in Rome⁷ which *is* entirely devoted to consideration of the person and dwelling place of Melchizedek, states that this (i.e., that Melchizedek is Shem) was the prevailing opinion of the Jews in his time, and it was also ascribed to the Samaritans.

³*Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1905), s.v. "Shem."

[†]The committee of the Quorum of the Twelve added: "We also question the statement that Salem and Samaria are the same." Roberts defended the point: **Obj not valid. (not mine. quote. Ency. Jewish see)**

⁴*Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Shem."

⁵McClintock and Strong, *Encyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, s.v. "Melchizedek," covering the two next paragraphs.

⁶Philo, *Opp. Rom.* 2:34 [Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis*, 2, 3, 79-82; and Philo, *On Abraham*, 235]. [No work by Philo entitled *Opp. Rom.* has been found. An account of Abraham giving tithing to Melchizedek in Philo is found in *On Abraham (De Abrahamo)*, 235.]

⁷Jerome, *Epistle 73* [in *Patrologia Latina* 22:681].

Also it is interesting to note that in an editorial in the *Times and Seasons*, December number for 1844, published at Nauvoo, Illinois, the statement is made, that Melchizedek was Shem: “And with the superior knowledge of men like Noah, Shem (who is Melchizedek), and Abraham the father of the faithful, holding the keys of the highest order of the priesthood,” etc.⁸

Other conjectures in relation to Melchizedek on account of the mystery that shadows his name and career, is that he was an impersonal power, virtue, or substance of God personified; that he was the son of God, appearing in human form; that he was the Messiah (Jewish opinion); also that he was Ham, which, of course, in the light of what we have already said of Ham would be *obviously* ridiculous.

*Shem, Melchizedek, and Elias identical?*⁹ The establishment of the identity of Shem and Melchizedek leads to the likelihood of an important fact connected with the New Dispensation. We read in the Doctrine and Covenants of the appearing in the Kirtland Temple to the Prophet Joseph Smith and to Oliver Cowdery, first the Savior; ~~afterwards~~ **then** Moses, who restored to the Prophet the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the North; then of Elias who appeared and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying to Joseph and Oliver that in them “and in their seed all generations after them should be blessed.” Then follows the account of the appearing of Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death (see D&C 110).

The question arises, who is this “Elias” who committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham? Why is it that in all our modern revelations Abraham never appears as coming with the keys of a dispensation, since he is so prominent a figure of antiquity? The answer, of course, would be that a greater than Abraham lived in his day, and held the keys of that dispensation; and who ordained Abraham to his special work of perpetuating the patriarchal line after the departure of

⁸Unsigned editorial, *Times and Seasons* 5 (December 15, 1844): 745-46.

⁹The identification of Elias has generated various opinions. For example, Joseph Fielding Smith argued that Elias in D&C 110 was probably Gabriel (Noah), basing his argument on D&C 27:6-9, where Gabriel is identified as an Elias. *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957-66), 3:138-41. The only direct scriptural evidence about Elias is found in D&C 110:12, where he “committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham.” The article “Elias” in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* declares: “Nothing more is known about this man.” George A. Horton, Jr., “Elias,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 2:449.

that greater one, who held the keys of the dispensation in which Abraham was started upon his career in the priesthood. Between Noah and the appearance of Abraham on the scene, the one intervening great character that looms large, is Melchizedek, and with the fact established that he was Shem, we have a beautiful and unbroken line of God's great servants from antediluvian patriarchs through Noah into the postdiluvian period in which period Noah continued his life for three hundred and fifty years. Shem continuing to live contemporaneously with him through that period, meeting with Abraham, conferring the priesthood upon him and thence the line continuing until Israel arose to be enlarged into a nation to perpetuate the work of God through the earth. This conception of the course of things arising out of the identification of Elias who appeared in the Kirtland Temple to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery with Melchizedek, and Melchizedek with Shem, perpetuates the patriarchal line of the priesthood, and it was doubtless that patriarchal feature of the priesthood and the work of God linking the generations of men together in the patriarchal line that Elias—or Melchizedek—came to restore.

“Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed” (D&C 110:12).

Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901-1906, s.v. “Melchizedek” and “Abraham”; Josephus, *Works of Flavius Josephus*, bk. 1, ch. 10; standard Bible commentaries and dictionaries, esp. Kitto, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*, s.v. “Melchizedek” and “Abraham”; Roberts, *Seventy's Course in Theology* 2:86-90; Gen. 20; Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6-10; 6:20.