

# Section 107

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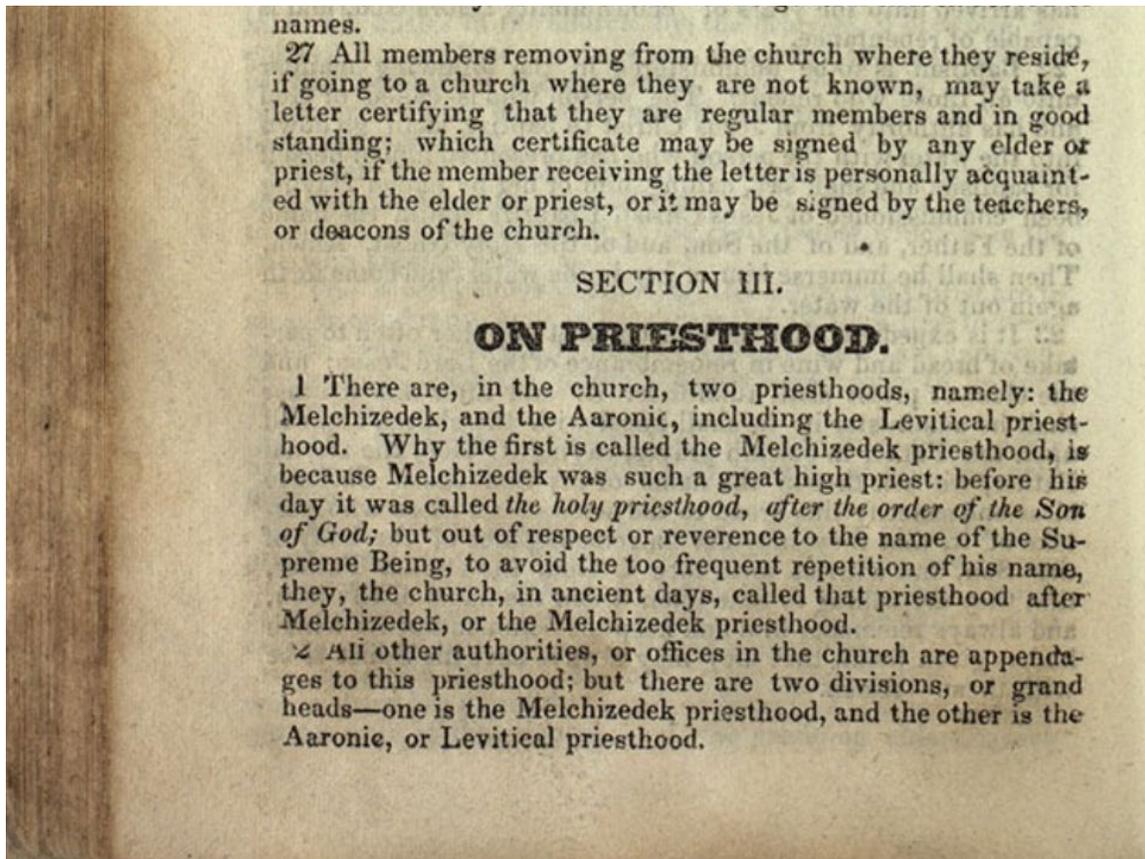
The members of the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the last dispensation were called and ordained between February and April 1835. They met frequently to receive instructions from Joseph. In their March 12 council meeting, Joseph proposed that the apostles spend the coming summer traveling “through the Eastern States, to the Atlantic Ocean, and hold conferences in the vicinity of the several branches of the Church for the purpose of regulating all things necessary for their welfare.”<sup>1</sup>

The apostles were all young men, the oldest ones being in their mid-thirties. They began to comprehend “that we have not realized the importance of our calling to that degree that we ought, we have been light minded and vain and in many things done wrong.” They repented, and as their mission approached, they united in prayer and asked God to “grant unto us through his Seer, a revelation of his mind and will concerning our duty the coming season even a great revelation that will enlarge our hearts, comfort us in adversity and brighten our hopes amidst the powers of Darkness.” Section 107 answered that prayer.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “[Record of the Twelve, 14 February–28 August 1835](#),” 4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> “[Minute Book 1](#),” 198, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020.



1835 edition of *Doctrine and Covenants* 107. Image via *Joseph Smith Papers*.

According to Heber Kimball, one of the apostles, the revelation “was given to Brother Joseph as he was instructing us, and we praised the Lord.”<sup>3</sup> In its current form, section 107 includes not only what Joseph received on that occasion but also the text of a revelation he dictated in November 1831 and other information on the duties of bishops and on the newly called Seventy. The amalgamated revelation was composed in time to be included in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*, and it highlights the priesthood precepts that Joseph had received to that point.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Times and Seasons* 6 (April 15, 1845): 869.

<sup>4</sup> See *Doctrine and Covenants* 107:1–58; 1835 and 1844 editions, 3:1–30. Before its 1835 publication, this revelation was redacted by Joseph, who added information about the priesthood offices of priest, bishop, elder, and seventy. Much of the new revelation draws on section 68:15–22. The redactions to section 107 include much or all of what is now verses 61, 69–71, 73, 76–77, 88, 90, and 93–98.

Section 107 begins with a clear description of the two divisions of priesthood and the names given to them—Aaronic and Melchizedek. In 1841 Joseph taught that “All Priesthood is Melchizedek; but there are different portions or degrees of it.”<sup>5</sup> Verses 18–19 declare the exalting power of the Melchizedek priesthood and verse 20 the preparatory power of the Aaronic.

Several offices are described within these divisions of priesthood and several quorums and councils composed of priesthood holders. Most notably, the revelation describes a First Presidency as a quorum of three presiding high priests who preside over all priesthood holders (D&C 107:21–22). Twelve apostles, “or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world,” form a quorum whose authority is equal to the First Presidency. Seventy missionaries to the Gentiles form a quorum whose authority is equal to the quorum of apostles. These quorums are to arrive at their decisions by consensus and, finally, unanimity in order to be binding. And the decision-making process is to be characterized by the Christlike attributes listed in verse 30 because they are the condition on which the Lord will endow the presiding quorums with His “knowledge” (v. 31). Verse 32 provides an appellate process in case decisions are made “in unrighteousness.”

Beginning in verse 33, section 107 describes the order and relationship of the quorums of twelve apostles, Seventy, and stake high councils. The apostles preside under the First Presidency and travel the globe to build and regulate the Church because they hold the keys to open doors through which the gospel is proclaimed (D&C 107:35, cross-reference D&C 112:16–19). The Seventy also travel the world to build and regulate the Church but under the direction of the apostles, who call on the Seventy for assistance. Verses 35–36 explain that the presidencies of the Church in Zion (Missouri) and the stake in Kirtland, Ohio, as well as future stakes, with the twelve high priests in each location that served as councilors to these presidencies, functioned with the same authority in their local jurisdictions as the general authorities did worldwide.

Patriarchs, or what verse 39 calls “evangelical ministers,” are to be identified by revelation to the apostles, who have the duty of ordaining them in any area where there are a large number of Saints, which, today, generally means a stake. Before

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. and comps., *Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1980), 59–60.

section 107 describes the next duty of the apostles in verse 58, verses 40–57 explain the rich history and provenance of the patriarchal priesthood, as recorded in the Book of Enoch, as it was handed down from Adam to his posterity. They tell how Adam gathered his righteous posterity prior to his death for a patriarchal blessing. Adam, “though bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation” (D&C 107:56).

Verse 58 transitions between the two major segments of section 107 and gives the apostles responsibility for implementing the November 1831 revelation (generally verses 59–100) by ordaining priesthood holders and setting the Church in order under their direction. Much of the subsequent verses restate, or, more accurately, were restated by, the first part of section 107 as well as section 68, including the nature of being a bishop, a provision for a “common council of the church” headed by the presiding bishop in case the president of the Church is tried for transgression (D&C 107:76–84).

Verses 85–88 describe the duties of presiding in Aaronic priesthood quorums, and beginning in verse 89, the Lord sets forth the duties of presiding in Melchizedek priesthood quorums both generally and locally. Having declared the duties of priesthood holders, quorums, and presidents clearly, the Lord finishes section 107 with a statement of accountability, a terse restatement of the oath and covenant of the priesthood that emphasizes learning and acting diligently in one’s appointed office or else being judged unworthy of that office in the holy priesthood (D&C 107:99–100).

Section 107 came at a time when American culture was beginning to erode fatherhood. Noting how section 107’s exalting priesthood principles seemed to have a powerful redeeming influence on Joseph’s own father, historian Richard Bushman went so far as to say that “in restoring priesthood, Joseph restored fatherhood.”<sup>6</sup> Section 107 continues to do that work.

It has evoked a response from countless men to quit being “slothful” and instead learn their duty and act accordingly. It inspires many men to “stand” (107:99–100). It’s a divine version of Lehi’s admonition to “arise from the dust, my sons, and be men” (2 Nephi 1:21).

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 263.