

bers by the stake president. The elders' quorum presidency reports to the stake president, but for all, local activity and service remain under the operating jurisdiction of the bishop of the ward. The elders meet as a quorum at least each Sunday. They are responsible to fellowship one another and to assist in administering the programs and activities of the quorum, ward, and stake, with the intent to lift and improve the condition of humankind (*see* WELFARE SERVICES). Elders are directed by revelation to function in a spirit of love, gentleness, patient persuasion, and righteousness (D&C 121:41–46).

The LDS use of “elder” differs from the use of the term in those societies where it refers to the older people who exert influence and authority in the community because of their age, status, wisdom, experience, and character, or by appointment of the group. The term was common to ancient societies such as those in Egypt, Midian, and Moab (Gen. 50:7; Num. 22:7). Elders (i.e., the *zeqenim*, the “old ones”) were prominent leaders of the Israelite tribes during the Exodus (Ex. 4:29). They apparently assisted Moses in administering justice (Lev. 4:13–21; 9:1; Num. 16:25), and some were evidently authorized to participate in sacred religious ceremonies (Ex. 24:9–11; Num. 11:16–26). After the conquest of Canaan, the civic authority of elders increased, and they assisted in the government of the tribal communities. They served in accepting a king (2 Sam. 3:17–21; 5:3) and in other community and religious functions (1 Kgs. 8:1–3; 20:7–8). Scores of such functions are mentioned throughout the historical books of the Old Testament. With the prophet Ezekiel, these elders provided the primary leadership during the captivity in Babylon (605 B.C.; e.g., Ezek. 8:1; 14:1–5). Many years after the return from exile, the chief priests, scribes, and elders composed the Sanhedrin, the governing council of Judah. A local council of twenty-three elders governed each community. In New Testament times, elders were appointed as ecclesiastical leaders for each of the local Christian congregations (Acts 14:23; 15:6; 20:17–28; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1–4). They associated with the apostles in the councils and governance of the Church, and functioned among their Christian brethren in ways similar to the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 11:30; 15:2; 16:4; 21:18). From among the elders of good repute, “overseers” or “bishops” may have been chosen (Acts 20:17–28; Titus 1:5–9; cf. 1 Tim. 3:1–7).

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#### ELECT OF GOD

The elect of God are those who are heirs to all that the Father has. Although the faithful have always been the elect of God, even before Abraham, the present concept that God elects or chooses individuals or groups to whom he makes promises of eternal SALVATION, and in turn requires of them certain obligations, has its roots in the COVENANT God made with ABRAHAM. In ancient times Abraham's descendants were considered the elect, especially through Isaac and Jacob (Israel). For disobedience, the Israelites were eventually scattered throughout the world. However, God has not forgotten his covenant with their fathers. Biblical, Book of Mormon, and latter-day prophets have declared that ultimately the Israelite people will be gathered from their dispersion and restored to favor with God (cf. Amos 9:13–15). All persons who are not literally of Israel can be brought into the elect lineage of Abraham by the LAW OF ADOPTION when they accept the gospel (Abr. 2:10; D&C 84:33–34; Gal. 3:26–29; 4:5–7).

The GOSPEL of Jesus Christ, restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph SMITH, inaugurated the RESTORATION and the gathering of the elect from the four quarters of the earth (D&C 33:6; 110:11). When scattered children of Israel hear the gospel message of SALVATION, they are invited to come into the fold of Christ, his Church, by REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, and receiving the HOLY GHOST by the LAYING-ON OF HANDS (*MD*, p. 201).

To enjoy the fulness of the covenant BLESSINGS and the eternal felicity of God in the presence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the elect must be faithful in keeping all the covenants required of them by the Lord. Some may choose not to be so devoted, whereas others pursue such ex-

cellence in faithfulness that their CALLING AND ELECTION are made sure (cf. 2 Pet. 1:10). These become “the elect according to the covenant” (JS—M 1:22) and are made partakers of the same eternal reward that was extended to Abraham. That is, they are assured of EXALTATION in God’s presence with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Luke 13:28; D&C 132:29–32, 37).

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## ELIAS

Elias is both a name and a title and has four meanings: (1) Elias was a man, presumably of Abraham’s time, who “committed the dispensation of Abraham”—which included the blessings of God’s covenant with Abraham—to the Prophet Joseph SMITH and Oliver COWDERY on April 3, 1836, in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE (D&C 110:12); nothing more is known about this man. (2) “Elias” appears in the New Testament as the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name ELIJAH (e.g., Matt. 17:3; James 5:17–18). (3) A forerunner in building God’s kingdom is called “an Elias” (*TPJS*, pp. 335–36). (4) A prophet who helps restore something of particular importance is also referred to as an “Elias” (cf. JST Matt. 17:13–14). In scripture, therefore, the name Elias may refer to a preparer, a forerunner, a restorer, to Elias himself, or to Elijah.

Individuals who have acted as forerunners or restorers include Jesus Christ (JST John 1:21–28); Noah as Gabriel (D&C 27:6–7; *TPJS*, p. 157); John the Baptist (Luke 1:17); John the Revelator (D&C 77:9, 14); Adam as Michael, Moroni<sub>2</sub>, and Peter, James, and John (D&C 27:5–13; 128:20–21); and Joseph Smith (D&C 1:17–18; *TPJS*, p. 335). Each of these may be considered an Elias.

Preparatory work in the Church is primarily associated with the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD; but when performed by the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, it is done under the spirit and power of Elijah (*TPJS*, pp. 336–37). In this connection, the keys given by Elias in the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110:12) were specifically for the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

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## ELIAS, SPIRIT OF

The “spirit of Elias” is a LDS concept that refers to the preparatory power that initiates gospel RESTORATION following periods of APOSTASY. The Prophet Joseph SMITH explained, “The spirit of Elias is to prepare the way for a greater revelation of God, which is the Priesthood of Elias, or the Priesthood unto which Aaron was ordained. And when God sends a man into the world to prepare for a greater work, holding the keys of the power of Elias, it was called the doctrine of Elias, even from the early ages of the world. . . . We find the Apostles endowed with greater power than John [the Baptist]: their office was more under the spirit and power of Elijah than Elias” (*TPJS*, pp. 335–36).

JOHN THE BAPTIST was the forerunner of Jesus Christ in the MERIDIAN OF TIME (Matt. 11:12–14; 17:12; JST John 1:21–24). He “was ordained by the angel of God . . . to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord” (D&C 84:28). By authority of the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD, John preached repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, in preparation for the coming of one mightier who would baptize with the HOLY GHOST.

On May 15, 1829, John the Baptist, as a resurrected being, ordained Joseph Smith and Oliver COWDERY to the Aaronic Priesthood preparatory to Christ’s SECOND COMING. Describing this ordination, Joseph Smith stated:

An angel . . . laid his hands upon my head, and ordained me to a Priest after the order of Aaron, and to hold the keys of this Priesthood, which office was to preach repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, and also to baptize. But I was informed that this office did not extend to the laying on of hands for the giving of the Holy Ghost; that office was a greater work, and was to be given afterward; but that my ordination was a preparatory work, or a going before, which was the spirit of Elias [*TPJS*, p. 335].

Later, PETER, JAMES, and JOHN conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD (D&C 27:12), and still later (April 3, 1836) ELIJAH conferred additional keys upon them (D&C 110:13–16).

Joseph Smith further explained:

The spirit of Elias is first, Elijah second, and Messiah last. Elias is a forerunner to prepare the way,