

Overview of Priesthood Restriction

- 1830 – Church restored in America, a slave nation. Many people of African descent lived in slavery, and racial distinctions and prejudice were not just common but customary among white Americans.
- 1832 – Joseph Smith conferred the priesthood on Elijah Abel. Over the years, at least four other black men are ordained to the priesthood. There has never been a Churchwide policy of segregated congregations.
- 1833 – D&C 101:79: “no man should be in bondage”
- 1835 – D&C 134:12: official **policy** states to not teach or baptize slaves
- 1830s – Some quote theory blacks come from lineage of Cain and are cursed
- 1844 – Joseph campaigns for President, anti-slavery is part of his platform
- 1850s – Slavery is neither legal or illegal in Utah Territory (few slaves)
- In 1852, President Brigham Young publicly announced that men of black African descent could no longer be ordained to the priesthood, though thereafter blacks continued to join the Church through baptism. At the same time, President Young said that at some future day, black Church members would “have [all] the privilege and more” enjoyed by other members.⁹
- 1862 – Slavery abolished nation-wide
- 1954 – Brown v. Board of Education, school segregation, Rosa Parks, refuses to give up her bus seat

Overview of Priesthood Restriction

- 1958 Nigerian Honesty John Ekong writes the Church (read details)
- 1958: Non African blacks are authorized to receive the priesthood
- 1960 – Black college students hold sit-ins in the South
- 1961 – Freedom riders take buses around the south and insight protests.
- 1962 – First black students enrolls at U of M, Kennedy sends 5000 troops
- 1963 – MLK Jr. arrested for protests, 200,000 Washington march, his “I have a dream” speech
- 1964 – Johnson signs civil rights act
- 1965 – Affirmative Action
- Over time, Church leaders and members advanced many theories to explain the priesthood and temple restrictions. None of these explanations is accepted today as the official doctrine of the Church.
- 1978 – Revelation received permitting all worthy males to receive the Priesthood**
- 1988 – Civil Rights restorations Act
- 1991 – Civil Rights Act
- 1992 – Race riots in L.A.
- 2003 — U of M affirmative action upheld by supreme court
- 2008 — Civil Rights Act
- 2013 — Portion of voting rights act struck down by supreme court
- 2013 — Black Lives Matter movement begins

Statements about race in general



Joseph Smith:

"it makes my blood boil within me to reflect upon the injustice, cruelty, and oppression of the rulers of the people. When will these things cease to be, and the Constitution and the laws again bear rule?"

Statements about race in general



Brigham Young:

"If the Government of the United States, in Congress assembled, had the right to pass an anti-polygamy bill, they had also the right to pass a law that slaves should not be abused as they have been; they had also a right to make a law that negroes should be used like human beings, and not worse than dumb brutes. For their abuse of that race, the whites will be cursed, unless they repent."

Statements about race in general



Joseph Fielding Smith, 1958:

"No church or other organization is more insistent than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that the negroes should receive all the rights and privileges that can possibly be given to any other in the true sense of equality as declared in the Declaration of Independence."

Statements Prior to the Revelation



David O. McKay, 1954:

"There is not now, and there never has been a **doctrine** in this church that the negroes are under a divine curse. There is no doctrine in the church of any kind pertaining to the negro. *We believe* that we have a scriptural precedent for withholding the priesthood from the negro. It is a **practice**, not a **doctrine**, and the practice someday will be changed. And that's all there is to it.'

Statements Prior to the Revelation



Harold B. Lee, 1972:

"For those who don't believe in modern revelation there is no adequate explanation. Those who do understand revelation stand by and wait until the Lord speaks...It's only a matter of time before the black achieves full status in the Church. We must believe in the justice of God. The black will achieve full status, we're just waiting for that time."

Statements Prior to the Revelation



Spencer W. Kimball, 1972:

"Intolerance by Church members is despicable. A special problem exists with respect to black people because they may not now receive the priesthood. Some members of the Church would justify their own un-Christian discrimination against black people because of that rule with respect to the priesthood, but while this restriction has been imposed by the Lord, it is not for us to add burdens upon the shoulders of our black brethren. They who have received Christ in faith through authoritative baptism are heirs to the celestial kingdom along with men of all other races. And those who remain faithful to the end may expect that God may finally grant them all blessings they have merited through their righteousness. Such matters are in the Lord's hands. It is for us to extend our love to all."

Feelings Before



Dallin H. Oaks:

I had been troubled by this subject through college and my graduate school, at the University of Chicago where I went to law school. I had many black acquaintances when I lived in Chicago... I had many times that my heart ached for that, and it ached for my Church, which I knew to be true and yet blessings of that Church were not available to a significant segment of our Heavenly Father's children. **And I didn't understand why; I couldn't identify with any of the explanations that were given. Yet I sustained the action;** I was confident that in the time of the Lord I would know more about it, so I went along on faith.

The Revelation



Spencer W. Kimball

I told the Lord if it wasn't right, if He didn't want this change to come in the Church that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I'd fight the world against it if that's what He wanted.

But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it.

The Revelation



President Gordon B. Hinckley

“There was a hallowed and sanctified atmosphere in the room. For me, it felt as if a conduit opened between the heavenly throne and the kneeling, pleading prophet of God who was joined by his Brethren. ... By the power of the Holy Ghost there came to that prophet an assurance that the thing for which he prayed was right, that the time had come, and that now the wondrous blessings of the priesthood should be extended to worthy men everywhere regardless of lineage.

“Every man in that circle, by the power of the Holy Ghost, knew the same thing. ...

“... Not one of us who was present on that occasion was ever quite the same after that. Nor has the Church been quite the same” ([“Priesthood Restoration,”](#) Ensign, Oct. 1988, 70).

The Revelation



Elder Bruce R. McConkie:

“On this occasion [when the revelation contained in Official Declaration 2 was received], because of the importuning and the faith, and because the hour and the time had arrived, the Lord in his providences poured out the Holy Ghost upon the First Presidency and the Twelve in a miraculous and marvelous manner, beyond anything that any then present had ever experienced. The revelation came to the President of the Church; it also came to each individual present” (“All Are Alike unto God” [address to CES religious educators, Aug. 18, 1978], 3, [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org)).

Reactions to the revelation



Jeffrey R. Holland:

I started to cry, and I was absolutely uncontrollable. I felt my way to a chair ... and I sort of slumped from the doorway into the chair and held my head, my face in my hands and sobbed... There's no issue in all my life that I had prayed more regarding -- praying that it would change, praying that it would come in due time. I was willing to have the Lord speak, and I was loyal to the position and the brethren and the whole concept, but there was nothing about which I had anguished more or about which I had prayed more. And for that to be said in my lifetime, when I wasn't sure it would happen in my lifetime...it was one of the absolute happiest days of my life...

Reactions to the revelation



Dallin H. Oaks:

I went outside and I told my boys, and I sat down on a pile of dirt and cried. And I still feel emotion for that moment. I cried for joy and relief that the Lord had spoken through His prophet, that His blessings were now available to all: the blessings of the priesthood, the blessings of the temple, and the blessings of eternity. That's what we desired. I praise God for it.

Bruce R. McConkie



“Forget everything that I have said,
or what President Brigham Young
or President George Q. Cannon or
whoever has said in days past that
is contrary to the present
revelation.”

Bruce R. McConkie



“We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world. We get our truth and light line upon line and precept upon precept. We have now added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness and all the views and all the thoughts of the past.”

“They don’t matter anymore.”

What About the Reasons I've heard?



“If you read the scriptures with this question in mind, “Why did the Lord command this or why did he command that,” you find that in less than one in a hundred commands was any reason given. It’s not the pattern of the Lord to give reasons. We [mortals] can put reasons to revelation. We can put reasons to commandments. When we do, we’re on our own. Some people put reasons to the one we’re talking about here, and they turned out to be spectacularly wrong. There is a lesson in that. ... I decided a long time ago that I had faith in the command and I had no faith in the reasons that had been suggested for it.’



“I’m referring to reasons given by general authorities and reasons elaborated upon ... by others. The whole set of reasons seemed to me to be unnecessary risk taking. ... Let’s don’t make the mistake that’s been made in the past, here and in other areas, trying to put reasons to revelation. The reasons turn out to be man-made to a great extent. The revelations are what we sustain as the will of the Lord and that’s where **safety lies**’ (Apostles Talk about Reasons for Lifting Ban,” Daily Herald, Provo, Utah, June 5, 1988, 21 (AP))” (Dallin H. Oaks, Life’s Lessons Learned [2011], 68–69).



Elder Helvécio Martins

“On a clear April night in 1972 ... Helvécio Martins contemplated his family’s search for truth. He and his wife, Rudá, had investigated many religions, but none seemed to fill their spiritual void. ‘I conversed with God that night, asking for help,’ he says.”

A few days later missionaries came to their home in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Elder Martins recalled, “The moment those two young men stepped into our apartment, all of my gloom and spiritual discomfort immediately disappeared and was replaced by a calm and serenity which I now know came from the influence of the Holy Spirit.”

As Helvécio and Rudá, who are of African descent, conversed with the missionaries, Helvécio asked about the role of black people in the Church. The Martins learned that at that time, Church policy restricted black males of African descent from being ordained to the priesthood. This led them to ask the missionaries further questions.

The Martins family was baptized on July 2, 1972, and served faithfully in the Church. When their oldest son, Marcus, received his patriarchal blessing, it promised that he would preach the gospel. Although the priesthood restriction at that time prevented Marcus from serving a full-time mission, his parents opened a missionary savings account. In 1975 the Church announced that a temple would be built in São Paulo, Brazil. To help with the fundraising, Sister Martins sold her jewelry. Brother Martins faithfully served as a member of the publicity committee for the temple. The Martins family made these sacrifices even though they believed they would not have the opportunity to receive priesthood ordinances in the temple.

“‘We had found the truth, and nothing would stop us from living it.’ ... ‘When the Spirit tells you the gospel is true, how can you deny it?’” (in “Elder Helvécio Martins of the Seventy,” 106).

After the announcement:

“I could not contain my emotions. Rudá and I went into our bedroom, knelt down, and prayed. We wept as we thanked our Father in Heaven for an event we had only dreamed about. The day had actually arrived, and in our mortal lives” (Autobiography, 69–70). The Martins family was sealed in the temple. Their son Marcus was the first Church member of African descent to serve a mission after the revelation to end the priesthood restriction. Helvécio Martins became a local priesthood leader and eventually was called to serve as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

Marvin Perkins



Many of you know that this issue almost kept me from joining the Church. As I was confronted with it, I thought, 'I'll just ask some of the members.' The more people I asked, the more offended and distant from the Church I became. I saw in the eyes of my friend who had introduced me to the Church a desperate desire to find anyone who could give me better answers. The foolish virgins that did not prepare the lamps with oil come to my mind. No one that my friend knew, including herself, had prepared themselves to be able to answer the question that so greatly plagues the Church. And she feared that this baptism would not happen. I was fortunate enough to learn probably the most crucial lesson of my life before I was baptized. When the Stake President said that he couldn't answer my question either, but if this book is true, holding up the Book of Mormon, that there are answers out there somewhere, I knew right then that my testimony would have to always be based on the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ alone, and not any other issue. That I would move forward based upon what I did know, and never be held back because of what I didn't know.

The true discipleship shown by those great Blacks who endured their earthly trials very well, and remained strong and faithful regardless of what they suffered, knowing that by remaining faithful to God, all that God hath, would be given unto them. Those Blacks who accepted the Gospel years before it would be able to be brought to them. Those who have triumphed over all obstacles, to embrace the Lord's Church and become examples for all. There are Blacks joining the Church here in the US, in small numbers, and we are not yet where we want to be. But by the efforts of the Saints, you and me, we'll get there. There is no other way. The withholding of the Priesthood is over, and Blacks can and are fully partaking of every blessing. However, there were walls created for the more than 100 years while the restriction was in place. The 1978 revelation alone, will not take these walls down. This must be done by the Latter-day Saints. There is a race of people who will flood unto the Church if only we seek the tools to help them over the walls. Who will help them if you don't? Seriously, who will help them?