

closed-circuit wire and will reach members of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall and in approximately 650 other separate locations from coast to coast and in Canada. It is estimated that approximately 150,000 will participate in this meeting by direct wire. This does not include the 10,000 gathered in the Tabernacle and in the Assembly Hall.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir, with Richard P. Condie conducting, and Alexander Schreiner at the organ.

We shall begin this service by the chorus singing, "Prayer at Evening," after which Elder Benjamin L. Bowring, former president of the Los Angeles Temple, will offer the invocation.

"Prayer at Evening" was sung by the Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir.

Elder Benjamin L. Bowring, former president of the Los Angeles Temple, offered the invocation.

#### President N. Eldon Tanner

The Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir will now favor us with "Thou Art Repose."

The Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "Thou Art Repose."

#### President Tanner

At this point we should like to acknowledge the presence of Brother David M. Kennedy, Secretary of the Treasury in the Nixon cabinet, and other federal and state officials and representatives. We are happy to have priesthood holders representing us, and I would like to say to them as they magnify their priesthood, the Lord will bless them and direct and guide them in their offices.

It is my privilege now to introduce to you and call upon our President, Joseph Fielding Smith.

President Joseph Fielding Smith knew Brigham Young, watched the building of the Salt Lake Temple. He is a grandson of Hyrum, the brother of Joseph Smith. He is a grand-nephew, therefore, of Joseph the Prophet. He is the son of Joseph F. Smith, who presided over this Church. Therefore, he was raised in the home of a prophet of God.

He was ordained an apostle sixty years ago. It so happens that I was ordained a deacon the same year.

He has sat under all of the presidents of the Church excepting the Prophet Joseph, and has been an apostle with most of them. He is a prophet himself, and it is a great privilege to associate so closely with him, as I have had that opportunity. No one could be better prepared as the mouthpiece of the Lord to direct his work here upon the earth.

It is my privilege now, and yours,—mine to call on him, and yours to hear President Joseph Fielding Smith.

#### President Joseph Fielding Smith

● My dear brethren of the priesthood: I welcome this opportunity to speak to the priesthood holders who are gathered in many places throughout the Church.

I desire to call your attention to the

oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood. I think if we have a clear understanding of the covenant we make when we receive offices in the priesthood, and of the promise the Lord gives if we magnify our callings, then we

shall have a greater incentive to do all the things we must do to gain eternal life.

May I say further that everything connected with this higher priesthood is designed and intended to prepare us to gain eternal life in the kingdom of God.

### Revelation on priesthood

In the revelation on priesthood, given to Joseph Smith in September 1832, the Lord says that the Melchizedek Priesthood is everlasting; that it administers the gospel, is found in the true church in all generations, and holds the keys of the knowledge of God. He says that it enables the Lord's people to be sanctified, to see the face of God, and to enter into the rest of the Lord, "which rest is the fulness of his glory." (See D&C 84:17-24.)

Then, speaking of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, the Lord says: "For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

"They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

"And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

"And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

"Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved."

The penalty for breaking the covenant and altogether turning therefrom is then given, together with this commandment: ". . . beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

"For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (D&C 84:33-44.)

### Gospel covenants

As all of us know, a covenant is a contract and an agreement between at least two parties. In the case of gospel covenants, the parties are the Lord in heaven and men on earth. Men agree to keep the commandments and the Lord promises to reward them accordingly. The gospel itself is the new and everlasting covenant and embraces all of the agreements, promises, and rewards which the Lord offers to his people.

And so when we receive the Melchizedek Priesthood we do so by covenant. We solemnly promise to receive the priesthood, to magnify our callings in it, and to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. The Lord on his part promises us that if we keep the covenant, we shall receive all that the Father hath, which is life eternal. Can any of us conceive of a greater or more glorious agreement than this?

### Magnifying our callings

Sometimes we speak loosely of magnifying our priesthood, but what the revelations speak of is magnifying our callings in the priesthood, as elders, seventies, high priests, patriarchs, and apostles.

The priesthood held by man is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of mankind. Priesthood offices or callings are ministerial assignments to perform specially assigned service in the priesthood. And the way to magnify these callings is to do the work designed to be performed by those who hold the particular office involved.

It does not matter what office we hold as long as we are true and faithful to our obligations. One office is not greater than another, although for administrative reasons one priesthood holder may be called to preside over and direct the labors of another.

### Authority from priesthood

My father, President Joseph F. Smith, said: "There is no office growing out of this priesthood that is or can be greater than the priesthood itself. It is from the priesthood that the office derives its authority and power. No office gives authority to the priesthood. No office adds to the power of the priesthood. But all offices in the Church derive their power, their virtue, their authority, *from the priesthood.*"

We are called upon to magnify our callings in the priesthood and to do the work which goes with the office we receive. And so the Lord says, in the revelation on priesthood: "Therefore, let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling; . . . that the system may be kept perfect." (D&C 84:109-10.)

This is one of the great goals toward which we are working in the priesthood program of the Church, to have elders do the work of elders, seventies the work of seventies, high priests the work of high priests, and so on, so that all priesthood holders may magnify their own callings and reap the rich blessings promised from such a course.

### Oath of priesthood

Now may I say a few words about the oath which accompanies the reception of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

To swear with an oath is the most solemn and binding form of speech known to the human tongue; and it was this type of language which the Father chose to have used in the great Messianic prophecy about Christ and the priesthood. Of him it says: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Ps. 110:4.)

In explaining this Messianic prophecy, Paul says that Jesus had "an unchangeable priesthood," and that through it came "the power of an endless life." (See Heb. 7:24, 16.) Joseph Smith said that "all those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God, abiding a

priest continually," that is, if they are faithful and true.

And so Christ is the great prototype where priesthood is concerned, as he is with reference to baptism and all other things. And so, even as the Father swears with an oath that his Son shall inherit all things through the priesthood, so he swears with an oath that all of us who magnify our callings in that same priesthood shall receive all that the Father hath.

### Promise of exaltation

This is the promise of exaltation offered to every man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood, but it is a conditional promise, a promise conditioned upon our magnifying our callings in the priesthood and living by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

It is perfectly clear that there are no more glorious promises that have or could be made than those that came to us when we accepted the privilege and assumed the responsibility of holding the holy priesthood and of standing as ministers of Christ.

The Aaronic Priesthood is a preparatory priesthood to qualify us to make the covenant and receive the oath that attends this higher priesthood.

It is my prayer that all of us who have been called to represent the Lord and hold his authority may remember who we are and act accordingly.

### Gratitude for priesthood

May I conclude by saying how grateful I am that I hold the holy priesthood. I have sought all my days to magnify my calling in that priesthood and hope to endure to the end in this life and to enjoy the fellowship of the faithful saints in the life to come.

I bear my testimony that we do in fact have the holy priesthood, that it is God's power, and that through it we may inherit the fullness of our Father's kingdom hereafter, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○