

Chronology Pertaining to Blacks and the LDS Priesthood

Richley Crapo, Utah State University

This is not a position piece. It is a simple compilation of historical references that are deemed reliable and pertinent by the authors. Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure their reliability and accuracy. Every reasonable effort has been made to make the chronology exhaustive, but there are almost certainly obscure references that have been overlooked.

- 1830 - The Book of Mormon is published. The Book uses a dark-skin motif as a sign of sinfulness by the Lamanites, descendants of Israel through Menasseh whom are considered ancestors of contemporary Native American Indians, "The Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon [the Lamanites]", cf. 1 Ne. 5:21.
 - The dark skin is equated with a curse which was a result of rebellion, "And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them", cf. 2 Ne. 5:21.
 - The dark skin is explicitly presented as a "mark", a "curse... because of...transgression" and as a means of separating different cultures, "And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against their brethren, who consisted of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Sam, who were just and holy men. And their brethren sought to destroy them, therefore they were cursed; and the Lord God set a mark upon them, yea, upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women. And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction", cf. Alma 3:6-8.
 - It also states that it was "against [Nephite civil] law" to hold slaves, cf. Alma 27:9 and Mosiah 2:13.
- 1830 - Black Pete joins the Church in Kirtland. There is no evidence pro or con of his having been ordained to the Priesthood.
- Jul 1831 - Smith identifies Negroes as lineage of Canaan, "The first Sabbath after our arrival in Jackson county, Brother W. W. Phelps preached to a western audience over the boundary of the United States, wherein were present specimens of all the families of the earth; Shem, Ham and Japheth; several of the Lamanites or Indians--representative of Shem; quite a respectable number

of negroes--descendants of Ham; and the balance was made up of citizens of the surrounding country..." (History of the Church, 1:190).

- 1832 - Joseph Smith Jr. predicts an insurrection beginning in South Carolina in which slaves would rise up against their masters and great bloodshed would result, cf. D&C 87.
- 1832 - Elijah Abel baptized. There is presently some dispute over his exact ethnicity. Reports vary from his being white, which seems impossible given later actions regarding him, to being light-skinned to being octaroon (1/8 Negro).
- 1833 - W. W. Phelps editorial in the Evening and Morning Star, "Free People of Color" expresses an anti-slavery viewpoint and outlines procedures for the migration of free Blacks to Missouri: "So long as we have no special rule in the church, as to people of color, let prudence guide; and while they as well as we, are in the hands of a merciful God, we say: Shun every appearance of evil."
- 1834 - According to Zebedee Coltrin (as recalled in 1879, some 45 years later) Joseph Smith in the presence of Coltrin receives a revelation that Blacks are not to be ordained. See 1879 entry for quote.
- 1835 - "Messenger & Advocate" uses "black skin" motif, indicating that it is a mark of sinfulness that can come on members of any race. No mention of a racial ban on the Priesthood related to race. W. W. Phelps writes in January that Ham married a black wife.
- Aug 1835 - In a general declaration concerning governments and civil laws, the following statement is made, "We believe it just to preach the gospel to the nations of the earth, and warn the righteous to save themselves from the corruption of the world; but we do not believe it right to interfere with bond-servants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them contrary to the will and wish of their masters, nor to meddle with or influence them in the least to cause them to be dissatisfied with their situations in this life, thereby jeopardizing the lives of men; such interference we believe to be unlawful and unjust, and dangerous to the peace of every government allowing human beings to be held in servitude (cf. D&C 134)."
- Sep 1835 - LDS Messenger & Advocate declares that the Gospel's "order was the same; it produced the same effect among all" and its "order was the same; it produced the same effect among all people, whether they were Seythian, Barbarian, bond or free, Jew or Gentile, Greek or Roman, it mattered not what they were; for in this respect, there was neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, male nor female; but they were all one in Christ Jesus, and the same blessings belonged to all, and the same fruits followed all, and the order was the same, whether it was in Africa, Asia, or Europe".
- Nov 1835 - Joseph Smith reaffirms his earlier proclamation of an "official" anti-abolitionist position for the Church in To the Elders of the Church. He says that Elders are to avoid going "unto...slaves or servants...unless granted permission by their masters."

- 1835-39 - Various sections of Doctrine and Covenants present a "universalist" view of the gospel being for all peoples and races and of all peoples being equal in the Gospel (e.g., D&C 1:2; 38:16; 1:10; 10:51; 1:23; 1:34; 112:4.)
- 1836 - Kirtland Temple's initial rules of conduct were addressed inclusively to "old or young, rich or poor, male or female, black or white, believer or unbeliever".
- March 1836 - In a discourse on the subjects of slavery and abolition, Smith states that the curse of Ham is "not yet taken off" from the Negroes. "After having expressed myself so freely upon this subject, I do not doubt, but those who have been forward in raising their voices against the South, will cry out against me as being uncharitable, unfeeling, unkind, and wholly unacquainted with the Gospel of Christ. It is my privilege then to name certain passages from the Bible, and examine the teachings of the ancients upon the matter as the fact is uncontrovertible that the first mention we have of slavery is found in the Holy Bible, pronounced by a man who was perfect in his generation, and walked with God. And so far from that prediction being averse to the mind of God, it remains as a lasting monument of the decree of Jehovah, to the shame and confusion of all who have cried out against the South, in consequence of their holding the sons of Ham in servitude. 'And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.' 'Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant' (Gen. 9:25, 26). Trace the history of the world from this notable event down to this day, and you will find the fulfillment of this singular prophecy. What could have been the design of the Almighty in this singular occurrence is not for me to say; but I can say, the curse is not yet taken off from the sons of Canaan, neither will be until it is affected by as great a power as caused it to come; and the people who interfere the least with the purposes of God in this matter, will come under the least condemnation before Him; and those who are determined to pursue a course, which shows an opposition, and a feverish restlessness against the decrees of the Lord, will learn, when perhaps it is too late for their own good, that God can do His own work, without the aid of those who are not dictated by His counsel." (History of the Church, 2:438-439).
- Mar 1836 - Elijah Abel ordained an Elder (Eunice Kenny says by Joseph Smith Jr. in My Testimony of the Latter Day Work, ms. in LDS Church Historical Department, although she wrote this four decades after the ordination, and Abel did not cite Joseph Smith as having ordained him in his defense against the later challenge to his status). The certificate of ordination was dated 3 Mar 1836. Newell G. Bringhurst (Saints, Slaves and Blacks, p. 60) notes that certificates were sometimes delayed, so the ordination could have been sooner than this, but Abel is still listed among the recently licensed elders in Jun 1836 (Messenger & Advocate, 2:335).
- Mar 1836 - Elijah Abel given a Patriarchal Blessing by Joseph Smith Sr. No lineage is declared, rather, Abel is proclaimed "an orphan" (this phrase may have been meant literally). Patriarchal blessing states, "Thou shalt be made equal to thy brethren, and thy soul be white in eternity and thy robes glittering." Sometime in the Kirtland era, Abel is washed and anointed in the Kirtland Temple by Zebedee Coltrin, who would much later remember having never had "such unpleasant feelings."
- Apr 1836 - Joseph Smith's front-page editorial in the Messenger and Advocate says "we have no right to interfere with slaves, contrary to the mind and will of their masters."

- Jun 1836 - The Messenger and Advocate (page 335) lists the names of several Elders including "Elijah Abel".
- Dec 1836 - Elijah Abel advances to the rank of Seventy and becomes a "duly licensed minister of the Gospel" for missionary work in Ohio. He also serves missions to New York and Canada. Ordination was performed by Zebedee Coltrin according to certificate. Abel was apparently re-ordained on April 4, 1841.
- 1837 - Apostle Parley P. Pratt expresses his desire to preach the gospel "to all people, kindreds, tongues, and nations without exceptions" (in A Voice of Warning). No indication of differentiation between races with regard to system of preaching the Gospel of the kind that accompanies the Priesthood ban in later times.
- circa 1837 - Joseph Smith begins working on the Pearl of Great Price. (See 1842 for material on contents)
- Jul 1838 - The term "black" is used in a blatantly figurative statement referring to the spiritual condition of apostates, "Therefore, rejoice ye Elders of Israel. Believe not the slangs and foul reports against our beloved brethren, Joseph Smith, Jr. and Sidney Rigdon. They are groundless and as black as the apostate authors who will not protect that little stone that is hewn out of the mountain without hands and who exerts their utmost endeavors to impede the progress of the kingdom which God has set up for the salvation of man in these last days" (A. Ripley, Elders' Journal, page 39).
- Jun 1839 - Elijah Abel's activities discussed, but his holding the Priesthood is not documented as being questioned, in a meeting attended by Joseph Smith, Jr.
- 1839 - Elijah Abel made a member of the Nauvoo Seventies Quorum.
- 1839 - Apostle Parley P. Pratt reports that there are fewer than "one dozen free negroes or mulattoes" in the Church. (Late Persecution of the Church of Latter-day Saints, 1840)
- 1839 - Apostle Parley P. Pratt refers to the "mission of the Twelve" to all nations including those on "India's and Afric's [sic] sultry plains...where darkness, death, and sorrow reign" (from The Millenium and Other Poems).
- 1839-46 - Nauvoo reported to have 22 Blacks, including free and slave.
- Jun 1841 - Regarding the events surround an arrest, Smith refers to one "Elijah Able", note the different spelling of the last name. It seems likely that Smith was referring to "Elijah Abel", but it is not entirely clear that is the case as no direct references to Elijah Abel appear in History of the Church. "News of my arrest having arrived in Nauvoo last night, and being circulate through the city, Hosea Stout, Tarleton Lewis, William A. Hickman, John S. Higbee, Elijah Able, Uriel C. Nickerson, and George W. Clyde started from the Nauvoo landing, in a skiff in order to overtake me and rescue me, if necessary. They had a heavy head wind, but arrived in Quincy at dusk; went up to Benjamin Jones's house, and found that I had gone to Nauvoo in charge of two officers." (History of the Church, 4:365)

- Oct 1841 - In a discourse on fault-finding among the brethren, Smith tangentially comments upon the curse Noah laid upon Ham, and states that the curse remains upon the posterity of Canaan until the present day. "I referred to the curse of Ham for laughing at Noah, while in his wine, but doing no harm. Noah was a righteous man, and yet he drank wine and became intoxicated; the Lord did not forsake him in consequence thereof, for he retained all the power of his priesthood, and when he was accused by Canaan, he cursed him by the priesthood which he held, and the Lord had respect to his word, and the priesthood which he held, notwithstanding he was drunk, and the curse remains upon the posterity of Canaan until the present day" (History of the Church, 4:446).
- Jan 1842 - Smith enters various comments into the history and tangentially remarks upon Negroes being "sons of Cain", which may or may not be intended literally, "Signed deeds for lots, to Law; transacted a variety of business in the city and office. In the evening debated with John C. Bennett and others to show that the Indians have greater cause to complain of the treatment of the whites, than the negroes, or sons of Cain" (History of the Church, 4:502).
- 1842 - Pearl of Great Price completed (Note: work on the Pearl of Great Price began about 1837). The work makes two references relevant to the issue at hand:
 - Enoch ministers the gospel to surrounding nations but does not go to those of the lineage of Cain, which are identified as being "black", cf. Moses 7:12 for Enoch not calling on the people of Canaan to repent; Moses 7:22 for the seed of Cain being "black". Regarding the "seed of Cain were black", the LDS community has traditionally interpreted Moses 7 as referring to a black skin color rather than "black" in deeds or spirituality.
 - Lineage of Ham via Canaan is cursed by Noah for "seeing the nakedness of his father". This curse is equated with a black skin and Priesthood ban by inference, (cf. Abr. 1.)
- Mar 1842 - Smith writes the following in a letter on the subject of slavery, "I have just been perusing your correspondence with Doctor Dyer, on the subject of American slavery, and the students of the Quincy Mission Institute, and 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? I fear for my beloved country mob violence, injustice and cruelty appear to be the darling attributes of Missouri, and no man taketh it to heart! O tempora! O mores! What think you should be done?" (History of the Church, 4:544)
- 1843 - Apostles Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt and John Page restrict Elijah Abel's missionary work to his own people. There is no indication from the documentation of this meeting that any of these three Apostles remark upon there being something wrong with Abel's holding the Priesthood.
- 1843 - Elijah Abel serves another mission.
- 1843 - Sometime in the Nauvoo era, Elijah Abel participates in at least two baptisms for the dead.
- Jan 1843 - Regarding Negroes in general, Smith states, "At five went to Mr. Sollars' with Elders Hyde and Richards. Elder Hyde inquired the situation of the negro [sic]. I replied, they came into

the world slaves mentally and physically. Change their situation with the whites, and they would be like them. They have souls, and are subjects of salvation. Go into Cincinnati or any city, and find an educated negro, who rides in his carriage, and you will see a man who has risen by the powers of his own mind to his exalted state of respectability. The slaves in Washington are more refined than many in high places, and the black boys will take the shine of many of those they brush and wait on.

- "Elder Hyde remarked, 'Put them on the level, and they will rise above me.' I replied, if I raised you to be my equal, and then attempted to oppress you, would you not be indignant and try to rise above me, as did Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and many others, who said I was a fallen Prophet, and they were capable of leading the people, although I never attempted to oppress them, but had always been lifting them up? Had I anything to do with the negro [sic], I would confine them by strict law to their own species, and put them on a national equalization." (History of the Church, 5:217-218)
- Some feel that Smith is referring to Elijah Abel above in the reference to "Cincinnati" as Abel took up residence there for a time. There is only circumstantial evidence to support this.
- 1844 or earlier - Walker Lewis, a Black member and barber in Lowell, MA ordained an Elder either by William Smith (a younger brother of Joseph Smith Jr.)--reported by William L. Appleby in a letter to Brigham Young dated June 2, 1847 and in his "Journal History" dated 19 May 1847--both in LDS Archives or (according to Jane Elizabeth James in a letter dated 7 Feb 1890 to Joseph F. Smith) "Parley P. Pratt ordained Him and Elder" (reported by Wolfinger in A Test of Faith, p. 149).
- Nov 1844 - Apostle Wilford Woodruff visits Lowell, MA and observes that "a Coloured Brother who was an Elder" (presumably Walker Lewis) was present and raised his hand in support of the leaders of the Church. No remark about the existence of a Black Elder being contrary to doctrine or practice.
- 1844 - Joseph Smith Jr. campaigns for the presidency of the United States and espouses an anti-slavery platform aimed at ending all slavery by 1850. His earlier position had been anti-slavery but also anti-abolitionist. Smith states, "Pray Congress to pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands, and from deduction of pay from the members of Congress, break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire him to labor with other human beings, for an hour of virtuous liberty on earth is worth a whole eternity of bondage...."
- Jun 1844 - Assassination of Joseph Smith Jr.
- Apr 1845 - Article addressing issue of abolition appears using a mix of apparently literal (i.e. "black skin") and figurative (i.e. "black hearts") "black" references. No author is cited, but the periodical at that time was edited by John Taylor. "The descendants of Ham, besides a black skin which has ever been a curse that has followed an apostate of the holy priesthood, as well as a black heart, have been servants to both Shem and Japheth, and the abolitionists are trying to make

void the curse of God, but it will require more power than man possesses to counteract the decrees of eternal wisdom" (Times and Seasons, Vol.6, p.857).

- Oct 1845 - Apostle John Taylor, editor of Times & Seasons, characterized Africa as a "meadow of black flowers [used] to beautify white gardens" and lamented the buying and selling of people (in Nauvoo Neighbor, 29 Oct 1845).
- 1844-45 - Sometime in 1844-45 the Lowell, MA area was visited by Apostles Ezra Taft Benson and Brigham Young, neither of whom apparently mentioned anything amiss about a Black elder's existence. Brigham Young's later (1847) statement makes it clear that he was aware of Walker Lewis's holding the Priesthood.
- 27 Apr 1845 - Orson Hyde refers to Negroes as the cursed lineage of Canaan and says that the curse of servility which they bore was for actions in the Preexistence ("Speech Delivered Before the High Priests Quorum in Nauvoo", MS in Utah State Historical Society). He also expressed the fear that the curse of Cain would come on him and his posterity if he did not repent his apostasy.
- Oct 1846 - William McCary baptized and ordained by Apostle Orson Hyde (reported by Voree Herald, Oct 1846). See also Fall 1847 entry on McCary.
- Apr 1847 - Apostle Parley P. Pratt writes concerning William McCary, "This black man has got the blood of Ham in him which lineage [sic] was cursed as regards to the Priesthood"
- Jun 1847 - William L. Appelby (in charge of eastern states church activity) questions the right of Walker Lewis to hold the Priesthood in a letter to Brigham Young (dated 2 Jun 1847) and inquires whether it is acceptable. The letter arrives at Winter Quarters after Young's departure, so it is not replied to by Young.
- 26 March 1847 - Brigham Young confronts Black Indian member, William McCary, concerning his erratic behavior and says "its nothing to do with the blood for of one blood has God made all flesh, we have to repent (and) regain what we av [sic] lost--we av [sic] one of the best Elders an African in Lowell [i.e., Walker Lewis]." This positive reference to an African Priesthood holder in the context of "its nothing to do with the blood" appears to indicate that no ban existed as of this date.
- Fall 1847 - Black Indian "prophet", William McCary seduces a number of Mormon women into his own polygamy rites. McCary was subsequently excommunicated.
- 1847 - Brigham Young declares Blacks ineligible for certain temple ordinances, potentially reactionary to the William McCary affair.
- 1847 - Elijah Abel arrives in Utah, a free man. A carpenter by trade, he works on building the Salt Lake Temple. He and his wife Mary Ann manage the Farnham Hotel. Mary Ann Abel was Negro according to the 1850 Hamilton County Ohio census and 1860 Utah census.
- 1847 - First slaves brought to Utah by LDS members. Slavery is practiced until 1862, when it is abolished by Congress in all territories.

- Feb 1849 - Brigham Young declares "because Cain cut off the lives [sic] of Abel...the Lord cursed Cain's seed and prohibited them from the Priesthood". This is currently the earliest known documented statement by a Church President explicitly making a Church policy of a Priesthood ban for Blacks.
- 1850 - Twelve Mormon slave owners possess between 60 and 70 black slaves in Deseret Territory. There is one Apostle, Charles C. Rich, among these slave owners.
- 1852 - An Act in Relation to Service gives legal recognition to black slaveholding in the Territory of Deseret.
- 1852 - First public statement by Brigham Young that Blacks may not hold the Priesthood. Though it is couched in phraseology that implies it was not a new policy, Brigham Young says, "in the name of Jesus Christ I know it is true."
- 1852 - Brigham Young, in a speech regarding slavery before the territorial legislature declares "The seed of Canaan will inevitably carry the curse which was placed upon them until the same authority which placed it there, shall see proper to have it removed". He also expresses his personal opposition to slavery: "that no property can or should be recognized as existing in slaves" (Brigham Young's father had been a bond servant to a man who also held slaves and who had mistreated both).
- 1853 - Elijah Abel not allowed by Brigham Young to receive his endowment.
- 1860 - Utah census lists 59 Blacks, 29 of whom were slaves.
- 1862 - Slavery becomes illegal in Utah when Congress abolishes slavery in all territories.
- 1865 - Joseph Smith III, of the RLDS Church, ordains Blacks and asserts that his father never instituted a ban on Blacks holding the Priesthood.
- Oct 1868 - Juvenile Instructor asserts that "Fiji [sic] Islanders" and New Zealanders were a problem because they were "greatly mixed...with the Negroes"
- 1879 - Abraham Smoot (the owner of 2 slaves) and Zebedee Coltrin claim Joseph Smith instituted the Priesthood ban in the 1830s (L. John Nuttall, Diary, May 31, 1879, p. 170, Special Collections, BYU). The Smoot affidavit, attested to by L. John Nuttall, appears to refer only to a policy concerning slaves, rather than to all Blacks, since it deals with the question of baptism and ordination of Blacks who had "masters". This affidavit says that Smoot, "W. W. Patten, Warren Parish and Tomas B. Marsh were laboring in the Southern States in 1835 and 1836. There were Negroes who made application for baptism. And the question arose with them whether Negroes were entitled to hold the Priesthood. And...it was decided they would not confer the Priesthood until they had consulted with the Prophet Joseph; and subsequently they communicated with him. His decision was they were not entitled to the Priesthood, nor yet to be baptized without the consent of their Masters. In after years when I became acquainted with Joseph myself in Far West, about the year 1838, I received from Brother Joseph substantially the same instructions. It was on my application to him, what should be done with the Negro in the South, as I was

preaching to them. He said I could baptize them by consent of their masters, but not to confer the Priesthood upon them" (quoted in Wm. E. Berret, Historian, BYU VP of the CES, The Church and the Negroid People).

- Coltrin more emphatically generalizes that the ban was applied to all Blacks. The Journal of L. John Nuttall (pages 290-293) reads, "Saturday, May 31st, 1879, at the house of President Abraham O. Smoot, Provo City, Utah, Utah County, at 5 O'Clock p.m. President John Taylor, Elders Brigham Young, Abraham O. Smoot, Zebedee Coltrin and L. John Nuttall met, Coltrin: I have heard him [Joseph Smith] say in public that no person having the least particle of Negro blood can hold the Priesthood."
- According to Coltrin, "...Brother Joseph kind of dropped his head and rested it on his hand for a minute, and then said, 'Brother Zebedee is right, for the spirit of the Lord saith the Negro has no right nor cannot hold the Priesthood.'... Brother Coltrin further said: 'Brother (Elijah) Abel was ordained a Seventy because he had labored on the Temple...and when the Prophet Joseph learned of his lineage he was dropped from the Quorum, and another was put in his place. I was one of the 1st Seven Presidents of the Quorum of Seventy at the time he was dropped.'" Coltrin claims that Abel was dropped from the quorum of Seventy sometime before or during 1837 when Joseph Smith Jr. learned that Abel was Black. Apostle Joseph F. Smith successfully argues against this point on the grounds of Abel's two additional certificates of ordination to the office of Seventy, one dated 1841 and the other from some time in the 1850s after Abel arrived in Salt Lake City. Coltrin's memory is shown to be unreliable in at least two specifics: His claimed date (1834) for Joseph Smith's announcing the alleged ban is impossible, since Coltrin himself ordained Abel a Seventy in 1836. Also, he incorrectly identifies which of the quorums of Seventy Abel was ordained to. Abel, on the other hand, claims that "the prophet Joseph told him he was entitled to the priesthood." President John Taylor, on the other hand, said that Abel's ordination as a Seventy "was allowed to remain."
- 1880 - Elijah Abel again denied the endowment, this time by the Quorum of the Twelve.
- 1883 - Elijah Abel still on record as a Seventy.
- 1884 - Elijah Abel sent on a mission. He returns home and dies in Dec of 1884.
- 1895 - Elijah Abel, now 10 years dead, is again discussed by the Quorum of Twelve. Joseph F. Smith again rebuffs claims that Abel had been dropped from the priesthood. On the contrary, he makes two new, otherwise unverifiable claims: that Abel's original ordination was done under the direction of Joseph Smith Jr., and that Abel was ordained a High Priest after being a Seventy. At this meeting, George Q. Cannon makes the first known claim--other than by Coltrin--that Joseph Smith himself instituted the ban. Cannon later clarifies that his statement was not firsthand information (Cannon was 17 when Joseph Smith Jr. died), but that he "understood" that to have been the case, citing John Taylor as his source.
- 27 Nov 1900 - Enoch Abel, son of Elijah Abel, ordained an Elder (photocopy of ordination certificate published by Modern Microfilms).

- 1902 - Jane Manning James, a faithful Black member of the Church since the days of Joseph Smith Jr, is given a special temple endowment as a "servant" to Joseph Smith Jr.
- 1908 - Joseph F. Smith, on unspecified grounds, reverses his former position about Elijah Abel's status and now claims that Joseph Smith himself declared Abel's ordination "null and void".
- 5 Jul 1934 - Elijah Abel, grandson of Elijah Abel, is ordained a priest (Modern Microfilms document).
- 29 Sep 1935 - Elijah Abel, grandson of Elijah Abel, is ordained an Elder (Modern Microfilms document).
- 1940 - Apostle J. Ruben Clark, Jr., recommends the appointment of a sub-committee to the council of Twelve to "make some ruling or re-affirm whatever ruling that has been made on this question in the past as to whether or not one drop of negro [sic] blood deprives a man of the right to receive the priesthood" ("Council Meeting" 25 Jan 1940, George Albert Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives).
- 1947 - A Church First Presidency investigation concerning the racial situation among Brazilians finds "the races...badly mixed" because "no color line is drawn among the mass of the people" and that "a great part of the population of Brazil is colored." In Brazil, a shift occurs to using Patriarchal Blessings as the means for determining whether the Priesthood ban applies.
- 1949 - First Presidency statement issued stating that the Church's position is a result of revelation, "The attitude of the Church with reference to the Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time." No specific revelation is cited.
- circa 1955 - Melanesian "Blacks" (e.g., Fijians) defined by the Church, under David O. McKay, as not under the Priesthood ban. Previously were banned from the Priesthood.
- Jun 1958 - B. R. McConkie publishes Mormon Doctrine. Under heading for "Negroes" he states that Negroes are lineage of Cain through Ham's wife, they were less valiant in the pre-existence, are banned from the Priesthood, and the gospel message is not to be carried to them. He cites passages from Moses 7 and Abraham 1 as proof texts.
- Jan 1959 - M. G. Romney delivers report authorized by Pres. D. O. McKay on Mormon Doctrine. The report identifies "controversial issues" which "might have been omitted . . . [or] modified" if "the work been authoritatively supervised." McConkie's comments concerning the Negro are not cited in the report. Unsold copies of the edition are recalled and destroyed.
- circa 1960-1970 - The Church actively engages in proselyting African Negroes. "In 1960, at the request of the First Presidency, Glen G. Fisher visited...[Nigeria] ...as he returned to Utah from his assignment as president of the South African Mission.... by 1961 President McKay concluded that the Church must permit the Nigerians to be baptized and confirmed members of the

Church.... Before the end of February 1962, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve decided to open a mission in Nigeria. In March [1962], [Lamar S.] Williams was called...along with his wife, Nyal, to preside over a [mission] district to be established under the umbrella of the West European Mission. Four additional couples were soon selected to assist. On November 21 Williams was set apart by President McKay as the first missionary to the black people of Nigeria and told to establish the Church, conduct missionary work, and organize all the auxiliaries, with local members supervising the auxiliaries. . . . Nigeria had only recently gained independence from British colonial rule, and government officials were suspicious of outsiders. When they learned of the priesthood policy they immediately denied visas to LDS missionaries. . . . Twice Williams returned briefly on temporary visitor's visas.... [In Dec. 1965 the Biafran War erupted and precluded any missionary efforts.]

- 1962 - "Sometime in 1962 a missionary tract, the "Joseph Smith Story", found its way into the hands of a black religious leader [in Ghana], Dr. A. F. Mensah, who was converted almost immediately. He soon converted several others, organized a 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints', and began to correspond with LaMar Williams at the Missionary Department of the Church. In 1964 he gave a copy of the Book of Mormon as well as other literature to J. W. B. Johnson who, after reading it and receiving a series of dramatic personal revelations, was also converted and became equally successful in spreading the gospel among fellow Ghanians. Eventually Johnson and his followers formed several 'Latter-day Saint' congregations, somewhat independent of Mensah. Mensah, Johnson, and others continued through the 1970s to preach the gospel as they understood it, and to plead with the Church for missionaries and for the official establishment of the Church among them." (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints: Correlating the International Church, 1960-1973*)
- 1963 - Apostle Hugh B. Brown quoted as saying that the Church was "looking toward the possibility of admitting Negroes" to the Priesthood. (*New York Times*, 7 Jun 1963)
- 1963 - Joseph Fielding Smith in *Answers to Gospel Questions*, Vol 4 addresses a question concerning the Church's position towards Negroes (pages 169-172). He states "the Latter-day Saints... have no animosity towards the Negroe [sic]. Neither have they described him as belonging to an 'inferior race.' There are Negroes in the Church who are respected and honored for their integrity and faithful devotion. The door into the Church is open to all." He also states "if a Negro joins the Church through the waters of baptism and is confirmed by the laying on of hands and then he remains faithful and true to the teachings of the Church and in keeping the commandments the Lord has given, he will come forth in the first resurrection and will enter the celestial kingdom of God."
- 1963 - Spencer W. Kimball states, "The things of God cannot be understood by the spirit of men.... I have wished the Lord had given us a little more clarity in the matter. But for me, it is enough. The prophets for 133 years of the existence of the Church have maintained the position of the prophet of the Restoration that the Negro could not hold the priesthood nor have the temple ordinances which are preparatory for exaltation. . . . The doctrine or policy has not varied in my memory.... I know the Lord could change his policy. . . . If the time comes, that he will do, I am sure." Concerning members who were pressuring Church leaders to make a change regarding blacks and the priesthood Kimball states, "These smart members who would force the issue, and

there are many of them, cheapen the issue and certainly bring into contempt the sacred principle of revelation and divine authority."

- Sep 1966 - The Second Edition Mormon Doctrine is published, with a number of the items noted in M.G. Romney's report to the First Presidency edited out. Statements concerning the Negro remain unedited and intact from the 1st Edition.
- 1969 - President Hugh B. Brown proposes that the Church's policy be reversed and that Blacks be given the Priesthood. This policy was approved by the Quorum of Twelve and the First Presidency with President McKay and Harold B. Lee absent. (President McKay was disabled due to age and President Lee was traveling on Church business.) When President Lee returned, he called for another vote and the measure was defeated this time. (Edwin B. Firmage, editor. The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown, "Editor's Afterward." Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988.) President Brown wrote about the issue:
 - "A serious problem that has confronted us, especially during the past few decades has been our denying the priesthood to the Negro. Personally, I doubt if we can maintain or sustain ourselves in the position we have adopted but which has no justification in the scriptures, as far as I know. The president says it can only come by revelation. If that is true, then change will come in due course. It seems to me that if we had admitted the Negro to the church as a full member, at the time of Joseph Smith, we would have had more trouble with the government than we then had. Holding ourselves aloof from that until after the Civil war gave us the opportunity to establish the church without that question coming to the front. It was, in other words, a policy, not necessarily a doctrine" (1988. Edwin B. Firmate, editor. The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown. Salt Lake City: Signature Books. P. 129.)
- 1973 - Upon becoming President of the Church, S. W. Kimball was asked about the position of the Church regarding the blacks and the priesthood, he states, "I am not sure that there will be a change, although there could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father, and this is not my policy or the Church's policy. It is the policy of the Lord who has established it, and I know of no change, although we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case he should ever wish to make a change."
- 1978 - "In 1960 stakes began to be organized in foreign nations, and today the Church is clearly an international organization. With the decision to build a temple in Brazil, the policy regarding the African blacks came into sharp focus because interracial marriage is a common practice there. Under these conditions President Spencer W. Kimball began an exhaustive personal study of the scriptures as well as statements of Church leaders since Joseph Smith, and asked other General Authorities to share their personal feelings relative to the longstanding Church policy. Then he began to inquire of the Lord if the time was not right to extend the priesthood blessings to this restricted people. Recalling this period, President Kimball stated, 'Day after day, and especially on Saturdays and Sundays when there were no organizations in the temple, I went there when I could be alone.' The result was a revelation on 1 June 1978:
 - "On Thursday, 1 June 1978, the First Presidency and ten of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the matter special attention. Then, following the monthly fast meeting of the

General Authorities in the Salt Lake Temple on 1 June, President Kimball 'asked the Twelve not to go home,' but to stay for a special prayer circle with him. It was on this occasion, at 2:45 p.m., that the Lord confirmed the wishes of the Brethren to rescind the policy that prohibited African blacks from receiving the priesthood." (Lyndon Cook, Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

- 1 Jun 1978 - Revelation is received granting the Priesthood to those of African Negro descent. Concerning the revelation Kimball states, "I offered the final prayer and 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. . . . I knew that the time had come."
- 8 Jun 1978 - Under the direction of President Spencer W. Kimball, the First Presidency announces a revelation extending the Priesthood to "every faithful, worthy man in the Church". (See Official Declaration-2.)
- Aug 1978 - In a public lecture, B. R. McConkie states,
 - "We have revelations that tell us that the gospel is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people before the second coming of the Son of Man. And we have revelations which recite that when the Lord comes he will find those who speak every tongue and are members of every nation and kindred, who will be kings and priests, who will live and reign on earth with him a thousand years. That means, as you know, that people from all nations will have the blessings of the house of the Lord before the Second Coming.
 - "We have read these passages and their associated passages for many years. We have seen what the words say and have said to ourselves, "Yes, it says that, but we must read out of it the taking of the gospel and the blessings of the temple to the Negro people, because they are denied certain things." There are statements in our literature by the early brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things, and people write me letters and say, "You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?" And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.
 - "We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. We have now had 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 any more.
 - "It doesn't make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year." (All Are Alike Unto God, A SYMPOSIUM ON

THE BOOK OF MORMON, The Second Annual Church Educational System Religious Educator's Symposium, August 17-19, 1978)

- Sept 2000 - Alexander Morrison in an Ensign article in Sept 2000, said:
 - "Unfortunately, racism - the abhorrent and morally destructive theory that claims superiority of one person over another by reason of race, color, ethnicity, or cultural background - remains one of the abiding sins of societies the world over. The cause of much of the strife and conflict in the world, racism is an offense against God and a tool in the devil's hands. In common with other Christians, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regret the actions and statements of individuals who have been insensitive to the pain suffered by the victims of racism and ask God's forgiveness for those guilty of this grievous sin. The sin of racism will be eliminated only when every human being treats all others with the dignity and respect each deserves as a beloved child of our Heavenly Father.
 - "How grateful I am that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has from its beginnings stood strongly against racism in any of its malignant manifestations."
- 28 Sep 2002 - Apostle Russell Ballard dedicates a marker to Elijah Abel.