



**WIN Program: Witnessing in Neighborhoods  
Advanced Class on Mormonism  
Week Nine: Aaronic Priesthood and Priesthood after  
the Order of Melchizedek**

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## ARONIC PRIESTHOOD

The LDS Church functions under two Priesthood classifications. The first, or lesser priesthood (See D&C 85:11) is called the Aaronic Priesthood, which includes the Levitical priesthood (See D&C 107: 1,6 ).

Mormons believe that the same priesthood that was conferred upon Aaron functioned until and including John The Baptist. They teach that it was restored to the earth on May 15, 1829. The Introduction and single verse of D&C 13 describe the event.

"Ordination of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic Priesthood along the bank of the Susquehanna River, near Harmony, Pennsylvania, May 15, 1829. (HC 1: 39-42) The ordination was done by the hands of an angel, who announced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. The angel explained that he was acting under the direction of Peter, James and John, the ancient apostles....

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness"

In function, the Aaronic Priesthood is said to be for the ministry of the temporal needs of the church. Bruce R. McConkie, in his book, *MORMON DOCTRINE*, page 11, describes it in this way:

"Perfection does not come by the Levitical order, and this lesser priesthood is not received with an oath. (Heb. 7:11, 21; *TEACHINGS*, p 323) But it is a preparatory priesthood, the Priesthood of Elias, the schooling ministry, which prepares its worthy and faithful ministers for the oath and covenant and perfection that appertain to the Melchizedek order."

In practice, the LDS church brings up its male youth through this priesthood. The priesthood has three offices or levels within it, The office of Deacon, Teacher and Priest. The *GENERAL HANDBOOK OF INSTRUCTIONS* , (HANDBOOK-1976 Edition-page 40) describes the process of ordination in this manner:

"Those who are worthy may be ordained to offices in the Aaronic Priesthood at the following minimum ages: Deacon, age 12; Teacher, age 14; Priest, age 16....

"The Aaronic Priesthood is conferred and brethren are ordained to offices therein under the direction of the Bishop....

"Newly baptized male members over the age of 12 should receive the appropriate Aaronic Priesthood office shortly after baptism, Adults may be ordained Priests and considered to be prospective Elders. If they are worthy of baptism, they are worthy of holding the priesthood."

Much of the special work of the Aaronic Priesthood is in support of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In a small congregation, an Elder may have a youngster assigned to go along to help with his Home Teaching. Deacons or other members of the Aaronic order are assigned to collect Fast Offerings on the first Sunday of each month. It is their custom for the Teachers to prepare and clear the Sacrament elements and table. The Deacons usually pass the Sacrament each service, while the Priests are normally appointed to officiate at the Sacrament table. Worthy Priests in the Aaronic order may perform the ordinance of Baptism.

It's pretty obvious that the LDS church uses this priesthood to groom its young men and new male members for the "Higher Priesthood." In the HANDBOOK (p. 40), the Bishop is given a 13 step test of worthiness with which to judge each candidate for advancement. These range from simple instructions to Speak and act Honestly to one that requires the young man to Pay a full tithing or to a more open ended one that requires he Do his duty in the Church and live in accordance with its rules and doctrines.

The question we must ask from the position of orthodoxy is "Is this Aaronic Priesthood valid?" Let's go back to the start of the story. Joseph's claim was that John the Baptist descended in the flesh, with all parts of his body re-attached and he restored the Levitical priesthood of Aaron, conferring it upon Joseph and Oliver. This can only lead one to believe that Joseph Smith had little or no knowledge of Bible history and tradition.

First, Mormon priesthood procedure is very simple in its order or line of authority. No one who does not hold a priesthood office or one higher can ordain assist in the ordination of any LDS priesthood office. No one, not even Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery could be ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood without first being raised up in the Aaronic.

That makes the the entire system without merit. First, Jesus himself never held the Levitical Priesthood, yet the Mormon church agrees that Jesus was our High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek. How? As a Restorationist movement, they are in a box of sorts. In their hurry to restore the purity of the priesthood order, they left out the head of the church himself.

Second, John the Baptist never held the Levitical Priesthood and could not restore and pass on something he never had, not even in Mormon theology. John wore the skins of an animal and ate food that was considered unclean to the Levitical Priests. He functioned among the people, calling them to repent and be baptized. The Levitical Priests functioned within the Temple, at the altar. Yet, members of the LDS Levitical priesthood are denied entrance to the LDS Temples, except to be sealed to their parents and to be baptized by proxy for the dead. In these functions, young women (without the priesthood) have equal access.

If John the Baptist were a member of the priesthood, its leaders knew nothing of it. When

challenged by Christ in this very matter, they were ignorant of John's authority (Matthew 21: 23-27). Further, this priesthood that functions in the LDS church does not deal with the key functions of the Levitical priesthood, the offering of gifts according to the law (Hebrews 8:4). The Word declares that were Jesus on earth, he would not be a Priest, since their function was to offer gifts according to the law. Jesus put an end to the law, and has given us a better covenant, established upon better promises and has made the old to vanish away (Hebrews 8: 3, 6, 7, 13).

The Bible admonishes that "the Deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own house well" (I Tim 3: 8). In Mormonism, the Deacon is a 12 year old child.

<http://www.saintsalive.com/mormonism/aaronicpriesthood.htm>

## **A Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedek**

### **Do you have a valid priesthood?**

To claim a valid priesthood, one must know the origin and lineage of that priesthood. The "Royal Priesthood" or the "believers priesthood" the Christians have, comes to them, not by lineage or ordination, but by faith in Christ, having been born-again from above and adopted into God's family.

In contrast to that, the LDS Church claims to have the "restored" Aaronic or Levitical and Melchizedek Priesthood, because according to them, both Priesthoods were lost and needed to be restored.

Joseph Smith claimed to have received the Aaronic Priesthood together with Oliver Cowdery from John the Baptist in May 1829. Joseph Smith claimed that they were later visited by Christ's apostles, Peter, James and John, that he and Oliver were ordained into a higher or the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Let's look into the origin of the priesthood and see what the Word of God, the Bible, has to say about the subject, and after that, Joseph Smith's claims.

Melchizedek is first mentioned in Genesis 14:18 and in Psalms 110:4 and again in the New Testament, in the letter to the Hebrews, 5:6,10; 6:10; 7:1, 10-11, 15, 17, 21. Melchizedek is presented in Genesis as the one who "brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God" to whom Abraham gave tithes. The name Melchizedek means the "King of Righteousness." He was introduced as the King of Salem, Salem meaning "Peace" - an early name of Jerusalem, where David later ruled as the King and where the Messiah is to come to be the final King of Kings and Lord of Lords to all of Abraham's seed. Priests were first mentioned as heads of families, patriarchs, who offered sacrifices to God in behalf of their families. The first mention of this is made in Job 1:5 and elsewhere. As families grew into a tribe, the head of the family became the King of the tribe as well as the priest of the tribe, thus he was a Priest-King to them.

When Moses brought the Hebrews out of Egypt, they were organized by tribes into one nation and the Levites were formally separated into the service of God, Aaron being their first High Priest. Upon his death his oldest son became the High Priest - and thus it was established in Israel, having many Levitical priests, but only **one** High Priest at a time.

In the tribe of Levi, Aaron's descendants were established as the priestly line in Israel. The Bible often speaks of "priests and Levites" - they were all from the tribe of Levi, but not all Levites were priests. The entire tribe was separated into the service of God, but all other Levites, besides the descendants of Aaron, were more like assistants to the priests. These "assistants" took care of the tabernacle and later the temple, provided music and

prepared sacrifices. Priests made offerings to God and lead in confession of the sins of the people. The priests acted as mediators between God and men, offering sacrifices for their sins (Lev. 4:20, 26, 31). These sacrifices demonstrated to the people that the penalty for sin is death (Ez. 18:4, 20; Romans 6:23), and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22). This was understood from the Garden of Eden onward.

Abel offered a sacrifice that pleased God (Gen. 4:4) and so did Noah (8:20), Abraham (12:7-8), Isaac (26:25), Jacob (35:1-7), and Job (Job 1:5), all of them acting as priests. While still in Egypt, each family killed a Passover Lamb as an offering to God (Ex. 12:6). When God established Israel as His chosen Nation at Mount Sinai, after their deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 6:7; 19:5-6), the Priesthood was formally established through Moses' brother Aaron, and his descendents. As Levi's descendants through Aaron, they were to serve God at the altar. (Num. 8:9-18).

There were many requirements put on those serving as priests, even though the office itself was hereditary to the sons of Aaron. Those serving as priests could not have any physical defects (Lev. 21:16-21). Bodily perfection was to symbolize spiritual wholeness and holiness. Everything about them and their lives had to be in harmony with devotion to God (Lev. 21:7). The Bible Dictionary explains it this way,

"Aaron and his sons were consecrated for the priesthood, in an elaborate seven-day ceremony (Ex. 29:30, 35, 37). Their bodies were bathed to symbolize the purifying of their souls from sin. Then they were clothed in their priestly garments and anointed with oil as sacrifices were made in their behalf. The entire dedication procedure was an outward sign of their SANCTIFICATION in God's service (Ex. 29:9). The clothes the priest wore also carried great significance. Their white linen garments symbolized holiness and glory. They also wore a coat woven in one piece without a seam to indicate their spiritual integrity, wholeness and righteousness. The four-cornered cloth of the coat signified that the priest belonged to the kingdom of God. The cap, resembling an open flower, symbolized fresh, vigorous life of the one who wore it. The girdle, or sash, a belt that encircled the priest's body, was the priestly sign of service. It showed that the wearer was an office-bearer and administrator in the kingdom of God (Ex. 39). The priests had several responsibilities as mediators between sinful people and their holy God...the priests had to make sure that the sacrificial rituals were carried out correctly. Otherwise, the people could not be cleansed of their sins until the priest had made the atonement for the error (Num. 18:1). As 'messengers of the LORD' (Mal. 2:7), the priests were to also teach the Law to the people of Israel. In addition to instructing in the Law year by year, they were also responsible for reading the Law at the Feast of Tabernacles every seventh year (Deut. 31:9-13). By their example, the priests also taught people how to 'distinguish between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean' (Lev. 10:10)." (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p. 1029.)

Eventually corruption crept into their ranks and they departed from God, worshipping idols along with the rest of the people (Ezekiel 22:26). Malachi, in his book (Mal. 1:6; 2:7-9), points out that because of false teachings creeping in, people started to neglect the offerings and festivals of the Temple. "Thus the Old Testament closes with the announcement that God in His judgment 'will suddenly come to His temple...like refiners fire; to purify the priest (Mal. 3:1-3). God was determined to preserve His human priests *until* the appearance of His true priest, Jesus Christ." (Ibid. p. 1030)

"The office of priest was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Son of God became a man (Heb.2:9-14) so that He might offer Himself as a sacrifice 'once to bear the sins of many' (9:28). *Hence, there is no longer a need for priests to offer a sacrifice to atone for man's sin. A permanent sacrifice has been made by Jesus Christ through His death on the Cross.*" (Ibid. p. 1030) (Emphasis added). When Christ died on the Cross of Calvary, God ripped the veil of the temple, "from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:51). That veil had separated men from God (where only priests could have entered after ceremonial cleansing), now there is no more a veil, allowing all believers access to Him through Jesus Christ, abolishing the old Aaronic priesthood and making all true believers in Christ His "royal priesthood, an holy nation" to "offer sacrifices of praise to God continually...giving thanks to His name." (Hebrews 13:15.)

As we noted before, there was a person, a type of Christ, Melchizedek, who is said to have been "without beginning of days, nor the end of life; but made like unto the Son of God." (Heb. 7:3) All of chapter 7 in the letter to the Hebrews clearly demonstrates that there is only one who qualifies for that priesthood, and that is Jesus Christ, who "does not have beginning of days nor end of life." He is Eternal God, Immanuel, who became a man to offer the Ultimate Sacrifice, Himself, as the payment for our sins. *As there was only one high priest at a time in Israel, so we have only one High Priest now - Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, who does not need to be replaced like the old high priest, who because of death, had to be replaced. He lives forever, making intercession for us. He has the Priesthood "that does not pass from one to another".* (Hebrews 7:24) There never were other Melchizedek priests! Jesus Christ alone is our High Priest. He is our Prophet, Priest and soon coming King.

### **The Mormons claim to the Priesthood**

The Mormon Church claims that on May 15, 1829, John the Baptist appeared and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants is cited as evidence that the Aaronic Priesthood was conferred on Joseph and Oliver. One must remember, however, that this **section did not appear in the revelations as they were originally printed in the Book of Commandments.** (Later known as the Doctrine and Covenants). The revelation was published in the Times and Season on August 1, 1842, but it was **not** added to the Doctrine and Covenants **until 1876.**

Section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants might lead one to believe that in 1830 the ordination of Joseph and Oliver to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist was



common knowledge in the Church. In verse 8 we read, "*Which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron;*"

Since the introduction to this revelation states that it was given in 1830, Mormon writers use it in their attempt to prove the Restoration of the Priesthood. A careful examination of this revelation, however, reveals that it has been falsified. Verse 8 was **not** in the revelation as it was originally published in the Book of Commandments. It was added to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835.

Mormon author La Mar Petersen offers some interesting information about the changes concerning the Priesthood which have been made in Joseph Smith's revelations.

"The important details that are missing from the 'full history' of 1834 are likewise *missing from the Book of Commandments* in 1833. The student would expect to find all the particulars of the Restoration in this first treasured set of 65 revelations, the dates of which encompassed the bestowal of the two Priesthoods, but they are **conspicuously absent...** The notable revelations on Priesthood in the Doctrine and Covenants, before referred to, Sections 2 and 13, are missing, and Chapter 28 gives no hint of the Restoration which, in actual, it had been known about for 4 years. *More than 400 words were added* to this revelation of August, 1829 in Section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the additions made to include the names of heavenly visitors and two separate ordinations. The Book of Commandments gives the duties of Elders, Priest, Teachers, and Deacons and refers to Joseph's apostolic calling but there is no mention of Melchizedek Priesthood, High Priesthood, Seventies, (which office was done away with by Ezra Taft Benson while he was President) High Priests, nor High Councilors. These words *were later inserted* into the revelation on Church organization and government of April, 1830 making it appear that they were known at that date, but they do not appear in the original, Chapter 24 of the Book of Commandments three years later. Similar interpolations were made in the revelations known as Sections 42 and 68." *Problems in Mormon Text, La Mar Petersen, pp.7-8*

### **Melchizedek Priesthood**

It is claimed today by Mormon leaders that before the Church was organized, Peter, James and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Doctrine and Covenants 27:12 is cited as proof that the Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred at a very early date: "And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles,..."

This verse, however, *did not* appear in the revelation when it was published in the Book of Commandments in 1833. It was added into the Doctrine and Covenants, and therefore it cannot be cited as proof that the Melchizedek Priesthood was in the Church at the time the revelation was said to be given. It is also claimed that an Elder is an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood, although neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon teach this. In the Doctrine and Covenants 107:7 we read: "The office of an Elder comes under the priesthood of Melchizedek." There is evidence that in the beginning the Elders of the Mormon Church did not claim to have the Melchizedek Priesthood. Joseph Smith himself made this statement concerning it in a conference held in June, 1831: "...the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood was manifest and conferred for the first time upon several of the **Elders**." History of the Church 1:175-176.

If the Melchizedek Priesthood is really necessary, it is certainly odd that the Elders were able to function from the organization of the church until June 1831, without it. All evidence points to the fact that the Melchizedek Priesthood did not come from the hands of Peter, James and John in 1829, but rather from the mind of Sydney Rigdon, in Ohio in 1831.

Mormon historian, B. H. Roberts, made the following admission concerning the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood: "...there is no definite account of the event in the history of the Prophet Joseph, or, for matter of that, in any of our annals,..." *History of the Church, 1: 40, footnote*. Another interesting confession was made by David Whitmer, (one of the Book of Mormon witnesses): "The next grievous error which crept into the church was in ordaining high priests in June, 1831. This error was introduced at the instigation of Sydney Rigdon. The office of high priest was never spoken of, and never thought of being established in the church until Rigdon came in. Remember that we had been preaching from August 1829, until June, 1831 almost two years - and had baptized about 2,000 members into the Church of Christ, and had not one High Priest." *An Address To All Believers in Christ, p. 35*.

With all this evidence from the beginnings of the Mormon Church, why then do they persist in claiming they have the Melchizedek Priesthood? And further yet, their missionary force is out there still trying to convince people that there is a need to have the priesthood, this "authority to act in God's name." The missionary discussions promote the idea and force the missionaries to propagate the mistaken idea that Christ's original apostles had the Melchizedek Priesthood. Mormons use John 15:16 as proof, they say, that shows that Christ laid his hands on them and gave them the Melchizedek Priesthood. They mistakenly assume that the word "ordained" means a transfer of priesthood authority. However, different Greek words are used in the New Testament, but all are translated "ordained" in English. The meaning of these Greek words varies from "preparation" to "commitment" to "evangelize", etc. *but no priesthood* was given this way. Priests had to be born into the family of Aaron to be priests. In addition to this requirement for the priesthood, it ended when Jesus died on the cross. No one can have what has been *abolished* by God. Mormons are reading into the passage what they want it to say.

**Whitmer continues...**"High Priests were only in the church before Christ; and to have this office in the 'Church of Christ' is not according to the teachings of Christ in either of the sacred books: Christ himself is our great and last High Priest. Brethern - I will tell you one thing which alone should settle this matter in your minds; it is this: you cannot find in the New Testament part of the Bible or the Book of Mormon where one single high priest was ever in the Church of Christ." *Address to all Believers in Christ, David Whitmer p. 62.*

### **Which tribe is it that can hold the Priesthood?**

Joseph Fielding Smith, the 10th president and prophet of the LDS Church, said in vol. 3 of *Doctrines of Salvation*, that Joseph Smith was from the tribe of Ephraim. The largest part of the membership of the LDS Church are from that tribe, according to their patriarchal blessings.

### **Let's look at what Mormon scriptures have to say about this.**

In *The Pearl of Great Price*, *The Book of Abraham*, chapter 1:20-26, we read:

- v.20 "Behold, Potiphar's Hill was in the land of Ur, of Chaldea. And the Lord broke down the altar of Elkenah, and the gods of the land, and utterly destroyed them, and smote the priest that he died; and there was great mourning in Chaldea, and also in the court of Pharaoh; which pharaoh signifies king by royal blood."
21. "Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth."
22. "From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land."
23. "The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden."
24. "When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which **preserved the curse** in the land."
25. "Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the oldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal."
26. "Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, **but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.**" (Emphasis added).

From this we see that the Pharaoh and all the Egyptians *were cursed* and could not hold the priesthood, according to LDS scriptures, because they came through the lineage of Ham. (We are told that all "worthy men" are now allowed to receive the LDS priesthood,

since 1978.) In God's Word, the Bible, in Genesis, chapter 41, verse 45 we read, "And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On, and Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt."

Here we see that Joseph married an Egyptian woman. In verse 50 we continue,

v. 50 "And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came,..."

v. 51, "And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh..."

v. 52, "And the name of the second called Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Thus we see that Ephraim and Manasseh were half Egyptian - born of an Egyptian mother and a Hebrew father. These are the ones that are **cursed** concerning the priesthood, according to the Book of Abraham. So they could not hold the priesthood, even if another tribe, besides the Levites, would have been allowed to have the priesthood. And most, if not all, male members of the Mormon church that claim the priesthood, come from the lineage of Ephraim or Manasseh.

Going back to what Joseph Smith claimed, that he and Oliver Cowdery, received the Aaronic Priesthood first from John the Baptist and then the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James and John; **there is no way Joseph Smith could have been given either priesthood, if his own scriptures be true. In addition to this, Hebrews 7 declares that the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood was abolished.** It is also clear from the Bible that **there was no Melchizedek priesthood. The Apostles did not have the Melchizedek Priesthood. Only Jesus can hold the Melchizedek Priesthood.**

The Book of Abraham states that the lineage of Ham was cursed. Because the lineage Joseph Smith and all male LDS members claim to come from is cursed, they cannot hold the priesthood according to Joseph Smith's own scriptures.

The Bible is trustworthy in what it contains. It requires intense study to know what God has in store for the believer. For it is *to them that believe he gives power and authority.* (1 Peter 2:9.)

In Acts we see that the Apostles went out preaching and healing people *in the name of Jesus*, not by the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In John 1:12 it says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power..."

<http://hismin.com/priesthood.htm>