



AARONIC 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.