

## Priesthood Study Series Study #3 - Two Priesthoods

### There Are Two Priesthoods

- ◆ The Scriptures reveal a priesthood and a connected line of priests, clearly set out, all the way back from the apostles to Aaron, which is traceable through the Levites. This is called the Aaronic priesthood, but it did not originate with Aaron, or in his day, neither was it prepared for him, but he for it. (See Ex. xxviii. 1.) God said unto Moses, “Take Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.” An office already extant, and in waiting for an occupant. (See also Ex. xix. 23, 24.)

A chief duty of this office was to offer a lamb upon the altar, which was a type of the sacrifice of the Son of God. Cain and Abel were commanded to obey this rule. (Gen. iv. 3, 4.) They brought offerings before the Lord for a sacrifice, which clearly proves that the authority of the priesthood and the office of a priest were vested in someone at that time. “The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.”

To argue that the Aaronic priesthood came into existence in the time of Aaron simply because it bears his name, would be to assume that the high priesthood originated with Melchisedec because it bears his name. Admitting, this for the argument, will someone tell us by which authority men administered at the altar before the time of Melchisedec, by which Abel offered an “acceptable offering,” and Noah officiated as a priest? If men could properly administer before the Lord in olden times without the authority of either the Melchisedec or the Aaronic priesthoods, why was the use of either established? The admission that God has at any time committed the priesthood as a means of authorizing, men to administer before him acceptably, must be taken as positive evidence of its necessity.

The inspired records clearly reveal and provide for the existence of two priesthoods, viz., the Melchisedec and the Aaronic. Under one or both of these the government of God was administered from Abel to Christ, each priesthood having its separate and specific duties assigned. *Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley, Chapter 1*

- ◆ There are, in the church, two priesthoods; namely: the Melchisedec, and the Aaronic, including the Levitical priesthood.
  - **Why the first is called the Melchisedec priesthood**, is because Melchisedec was such a great high priest: before his day it was called the holy priesthood, after the order of the Son of God; but out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchisedec, or the Melchisedec priesthood. - *Doctrine and Covenants 104:1a-c*
- ◆ All other authorities, or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood; but there are two divisions, or grand heads--one is the Melchisedec priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic, or Levitical priesthood -*Doctrine and Covenants 104:1-2*
  - **The second priesthood is called the priesthood of Aaron, because** it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations. Why it is called the lesser priesthood is, because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchisedec priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances. - *Doctrine and Covenants 104:8a-8b*
- ◆ That priesthood has neither descent, “beginning of days, or end of life.” It was before Melchisedec. Priests of that order are “made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” (Heb. vii. 3.) After the time of Melchisedec the high priesthood was called by his name instead of by its former title, evidently because Melchisedec was a noted and a very worthy high priest; and the lesser priesthood was called after the name of Aaron, because he also was such a distinguished high priest of that order. These two priesthoods were conferred upon men, in the ages that are past, as a means of authorizing them to administer

acceptably in the government of God. Their duties were separate and distinct. Those of the Aaronic priesthood are clearly and definitely set out. (See Ex. xxviii. 29 ; Lev. vii; Ex. xxx. 17-21; Lev. x.9; xxi. 7-14; vi.12; 2 Chron. xiii.11 ; Num. iv.5-15 ; xviii.26-28; Lev. x.11 ; Deut. xxx.10, etc.) - ***Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley, Chapter 1***

### **Why Two Priesthoods**

- ◆ For this Melchizedek was ordained a priest after the order of the Son of God, which order was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life. And all those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God, abiding a priest continually. - ***Hebrews 7:3***
- ◆ If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? - ***Hebrews 7:11***
- ◆ This shows (Hebrews 7:11) a distinction in the two priesthoods, the Melchisedec being the greater. The “law of carnal ordinances” was administered by the Aaronic priesthood. It did not “make the comers thereunto perfect.” Priests of that order were made “after the law of a carnal commandment,” this phrase expresses simply the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic institutions that were “added because of transgressions,” and which were not a necessary part of the gospel (Gal. iii.19),—and “were not suffered to continue by reason of death.” (Heb. vii.16, 18, 19, 23; x.9, 10, 11, 12; Gal. ii.16; Acts xiii.39; Rom. iii.20, 21, 28, and viii.3; Eph. ii.5; Col. ii.20, etc.) - ***Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley, Chapter 1***
- ◆ If the Melchisedec priesthood is not the one by which the gospel should be preached and its laws administered, why did God introduce and authorize men to work by it in the time of the Saviour? If the gospel could have been properly preached and administered without it, why was its use established? If Christ and his ministry were empowered with this priesthood as an essential means of presenting the gospel system, who shall be so presumptuous as to affirm that the gospel can be acceptably administered without it in any age? To argue that it can is to charge Deity with instituting a nonessential—something of no worth. The priesthood was not limited to a given time and then to cease, but was to be continued with the true order of worship. ***Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley, Chapter 1***

### **Two Priesthoods – Priesthood Distinctions Explained**

- ◆ The “Aaronic Priesthood” administers the “law of carnal ordinances”  
This [Hebrews 7:11] shows a distinction in the two priesthoods, the Melchisedec being the greater. The “law of carnal ordinances” was administered by the Aaronic priesthood. It did not “make the comers thereunto perfect.” Priests of that order were made “after the law of a carnal commandment,” this phrase expresses simply the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic institutions that were “added because of transgressions,” and which were not a necessary part of the gospel (Gal. iii.19),—and “were not suffered to continue by reason of death.” (Heb. vii.16, 18, 19, 23; x.9, 10, 11, 12; Gal. ii.16; Acts xiii.39; Rom. iii.20, 21, 28, and viii.3; Eph. ii.5; Col. ii.20, etc.) - ***Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley***
- ◆ The “Melchisedec Priesthood” administers the “perfect law of liberty,” the gospel  
This is to argue that the Melchisedec priesthood administered a higher code, a more perfect system than did that of Aaron. Priests of this order were made “like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” (Heb. vii.3.) Made “after the power of an endless life.” (Heb. vii.16.)  
What was this higher and more perfect code or system that required the authority of the Melchisedec priesthood for its administration? It was evidently the gospel: for James presents the gospel as “the perfect law of liberty.” (i.25.) Again, a “royal law.” (ii.28.) This is the system through which perfection may be secured to the believers, “as pertaining to the conscience.” It converts the soul, makes wise the simple. (Ps. xix.4.) In short, “It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

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What authority administers this perfect code? A law would be a nullity without some power to administer it. The “law of Moses,” the “schoolmaster,” which brought “death,” was administered by the Aaronic priesthood: it follows, then, that “the royal law,” the “perfect law of liberty,” the gospel, is administered by the authority of the Melchisedec priesthood.

This will account for its having been reinstated in the time of our Saviour’s personal ministry among men. Moses’ law was to be done away and the gospel reinstated. The “glad tidings of great joy,” the immutable laws of life, were to be preached in all the world; and of necessity it required the unchangeable priesthood to administer it, as in days of old. - *Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley*

### **The Existence and Relevance of Melchisedec Priesthood is Questioned by Some**

- ◆ Thus it has been shown:
  - (1.) That previous to the advent of the Saviour, two priesthoods had been committed, viz., the Melchisedec and the Aaronic; that the gospel was administered by the authority of the Melchisedec priesthood, and the law by that of Aaron; that the priesthood was conferred in the days of Adam, and was held by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses; and that the Aaronic priesthood continued with the Jews from the time of Moses until the coming of Christ. It is claimed at least that the line was an unbroken one.
  - (2.) That when Abraham was blessed of Melchisedec, Abraham was a priest and accustomed to administer at the altar. This he could not have done acceptably had he not held the priesthood. Melchisedec having, held the authority to bless Abraham shows him to have been the greater of the two, and proves the existence of two classes of priests extant at that time. Paul says, “Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better” (greater). (Heb. vii.7.) In the same chapter he affirms that the authority held by Melchisedec is without beginning of days or end of life.
  - (3.) That God is unchangeable and his law immutable; that he committed these two priesthoods in ancient times for the purpose of authorizing men to administer his government on the earth; and it is but legitimate to conclude that his law could not be legally administered without them ; and as we look to this same unchangeable God, by obeying, his unchangeable laws, to obtain *life*, it is plain that these priesthoods should exist among men in this day, that religious observances may be with authority and acceptable. As it is written in the Epistle of James, chapter one and seventeenth verse : “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” - *Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley*

### **Melchisedec Priesthood Prerogatives**

- ◆ The office of an elder comes under the priesthood of Melchisedec. The Melchisedec priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church, in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things. - *Doctrine and Covenants 104:2-3b*
- ◆ The power and authority of the higher, or Melchisedec, priesthood, is -
  - to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church;
  - to have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;
  - to have the heavens opened unto them;
  - to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn; and
  - to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. - *Doctrine and Covenants 104:9a-b*

## Duties of the Melchisidec Priesthood

- ◆ An apostle is an elder, and it is his calling to baptize, and to ordain other elders, priests, teachers, and deacons, and to administer bread and wine--the emblems of the flesh and blood of Christ; and to confirm those who are baptized into the church, by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the Scriptures; and to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church; and to confirm the church by the laying on of the hands, and the giving of the Holy Ghost, and to take the lead of all meetings.  
The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God. - *Doctrine and Covenants 17:8 & 9*

## Aaronic Priesthood Prerogatives

- ◆ The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic, priesthood is, **to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances--the letter of the gospel--the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeably to the covenants and commandments.** - *Doctrine and Covenants 104:8&10*
- ◆ Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst and the holy priesthood also; and the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth **the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel, which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments,** *Doctrine and Covenants 83:4*

## Duties of the Aaronic Priesthood

- ◆ The priest's duty is to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament and visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret, and attend to all family duties:  
and he may also ordain other priests, teachers, and deacons;  
and he is to take the lead of meetings when there is no elder present, but when there is an elder present he is only to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize,  
and visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret, and attend to all family duties.  
In all these duties the priest is to assist the elder if occasion requires.
- ◆ The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with, and strengthen them, and see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other; neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;  
and see that the church meet together often,  
and also see that all the members do their duty,  
and he is to take the lead of meetings in the absence of the elder or priest,  
and is to be assisted always, in all his duties in the church, by the deacons, if occasion requires;  
but neither teachers nor deacons have authority to baptize, administer the sacrament, or lay on hands; they are, however, to warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ. *Doctrine and Covenants 17:10 & 11*