

**ITEMS ON PRIESTHOOD,
PRESENTED TO THE
LATTER-DAY SAINTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649245673

Items on Priesthood, Presented to the Latter-day Saints by John Taylor

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Cover @ 2017

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JOHN TAYLOR

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GIVEN IN HONOR OF HIS PARENTS, THEIR SIMPLICITY
SINCERITY AND FEARLESSNESS

ITEMS ON
PRIESTHOOD

PRESENTED TO

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS

— BY —

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

Geo. J. Cannon & Sons Company, Printers and Publishers.

1899.

THE FOLLOWING
ITEMS ON PRIESTHOOD

ARE PRESENTED TO THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS BY

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR.

AS THERE is more or less uncertainty existing in the minds of many of the Bishops and others in regard to the proper status and authority of the Bishopric and what is denominated the "Aaronic or Levitical" Priesthood, I thought it best to lay before the brethren a general statement of the subject, as contained in the Bible and Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

With this view, I have made copious extracts from both of the above sacred records, and so arranged them that they can be readily comprehended by those who hold the Priesthood and are conversant with the holy order of God; adding only such remarks, for explanation, as the plain statements warranted; preferring to give generally the simple quotations, and to let them speak for themselves.

In the elucidation of this subject I have necessarily had to refer, more or less, to the Melchizedek Priesthood, as the two Priesthoods are inseparably united, the one with the other. I have also given a brief Scriptural synopsis of the Levitical Priesthood, as recorded in the Old Testament.

The following views have been submitted to the Council of the Twelve and have received their sanction; they were also laid

before the Priesthood Meeting at the Semi-Annual Conference, held in the Assembly Hall, Salt Lake City, October 9th, A. D. 1880, and were unanimously accepted by the large body of Priesthood present on that occasion.

THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD.

AS CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE.

First.—The Aaronic, or Levitical Priesthood, spoken of in the revelations as being “lesser” than the Melchizedek; Aaron was made the mouthpiece of Moses, while Moses was as a God to Aaron. The Lord having called Moses to deliver Israel, the Prophet realized his weakness and plead to be excused. We quote from the Scriptures :

“And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee *instead of a mouth*, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.”—Ex. iv, 14-16.

It would seem from the foregoing that the Lord was angry with Moses, because he doubted the ability of God to sustain him and to enable him to speak: “And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O, my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of *him whom* thou wilt send.”—Ex. iv, 11-13.

The Lord further says: “And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.”—Ex. iv, 17.

“And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the Mount of God,

and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him."—Ex. iv, 27-28.

"These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the Lord said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies. These are they which spake to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these are that Moses and Aaron."—Ex. vi, 26, 27. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt."—Ex. xii, 1.

It may be noticed that Aaron was with Moses, that God called him and spake to him and Moses, and that he assisted in bringing the message to Pharaoh, and was a prophet to Moses before he held the Aaronic Priesthood, or before that Priesthood known to us as the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood was given. But it would seem also that the Lord spake to Aaron himself;—how and on what principle? The Lord also said to Moses, "I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do." And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. The Lord had before spoken to Moses on this subject; he now spake to Aaron. Hence Paul says, "No man taketh this honor unto himself: but he that is called of God as was Aaron." What did the Lord say to him? "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." And then Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord, who had sent him. Moses was thus his instructor and guide, or in other words, acted as a God to him. Thus, Aaron being selected to assist Moses and to be his mouthpiece, went with him to Egypt, and was with him in his intercourse with Pharaoh, and in the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. But Moses always took the lead, and when Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, met him, "Moses sat to judge the people [not Aaron]; and the people stood by Moses, from the morning unto the evening." And when Jethro saw the excessive labors of Moses, he counseled him, *If God should command him*, to choose able men to be rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens; to judge the smaller cases, while Moses should have charge of the most important. Thus Moses, and not Aaron, was the most prominent personage in these matters.

We further find that Aaron was permitted to go up to Mount

Sinai. "And the Lord said unto him [Moses], Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the Priests and the people break through to come up-onto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them."—Ex. xix, 24. It may be here asked, Who were these Priests? for the Aaronic Priesthood, as we know it, was not then introduced. But Moses was his leader, and it was he who obtained the word of the Lord, and it was he with whom the Lord conversed. For we find, "And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel. * * * And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish."—Ex. xix, 3, 20, 21. Moses always took the lead: "And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the Elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him."—Ex. xxiv, 1, 2. They *saw God* and did eat and drink: "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink." (v. 11.) And afterwards Moses was with the Lord forty days. "And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights." (v. 18.) By what power did Aaron see God? May we not suppose it was by the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood? for without that no man can see the face of God and live. It, the Melchizedek, holds the keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. (Doc. and Cov., sec. 84, p. 290.) Moses had these keys; but Aaron also saw God, as well as the seventy Elders of Israel, and the people saw his glory and heard his voice.—Ex. xx, 22; Deut. iv, 36.

It would seem that Aaron and the seventy Elders of Israel then had the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the Aaronic was about being combined with it, as we have them now. Moses held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and presided over the whole. Aaron was then in possession of the Melchizedek Priesthood; but

another or lesser Priesthood was about to be conferred upon him, which was done soon after. We quote, "And take thou unto thee 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, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty."—Ex. xxviii, 1, 2.

Does it not seem probable that Aaron, when he received this lesser Priesthood, was in the same position (as to Priesthood) that our Presiding Bishop is, holding the Melchizedek and lesser Priesthoods, but presiding over the latter, and Moses presiding over all—the Melchizedek as well as the Aaronic or Levitical, the latter being an appendage to the former? For we read that the law was added because of transgression; added to what? Was there anything but the Gospel to add it to? The children of Israel, at this time, had the Gospel and the pattern of the ark, and the commandments were given under its auspices. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount."—Ex. xxv, 40. (See also the whole chapter.) And further, the words of the Lord, the book of the covenant or law of the Lord were given under the Gospel. (See Ex. xxiv, 1-8.) And the sacrifices and burnt offerings were also performed under the Gospel; and as the great Presiding High Priest, Moses, gave directions concerning the sacrifices, and himself sprinkled half of the blood upon the altar, and put half into basins, hence we have the following:

"And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."—Ex. xxiv, 6-8. Moses was with the Lord forty days in the mount receiving these things, viz., the laws and covenants, the pattern of the ark and tabernacle, and the tables. (See Ex. xxiv to xxxii.)

We here have a statement of the manner in which Aaron and his sons were set apart to administer in the Aaronic Priest's office, while yet under the Gospel; for we read, "And Aaron and his sons thou