

The Interrelationship Between the Priesthoods

An Explanation for New Priesthood Holders and Recently Endowed Sisters

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The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the following about the interrelationship between the priesthoods:

“[The] Melchizedek Priesthood ... holds the highest authority which pertains to the priesthood, and the keys of the Kingdom of God in all ages of the world to the latest posterity on the earth ... [It] is the highest and holiest Priesthood, and ... all other Priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers and blessings belonging to the same, and are held, controlled, and directed by it.

“All Priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it.”
(Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith pp.166, 180)



Perhaps my 1994 diagram will help visualize that there is only one priesthood—with “appendices,” or “departments,” of which only a few have been revealed to us as of this writing (2024).

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, when young men or recently converted adult men receive the Aaronic Priesthood, they receive the “entire” Aaronic Priesthood and are immediately “ordained to an office” (deacon, teacher, or priest) that establishes the respective “limits” of authority they may exercise in each office.

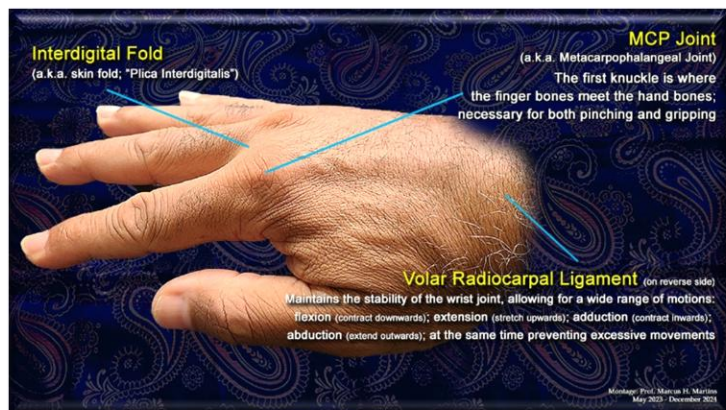
When a man receives the Melchizedek Priesthood, he also receives the “entire” Melchizedek Priesthood—and all other priesthoods (known or still not revealed) that “belong” to--i.e., are “held, controlled, and directed by” the Melchizedek Priesthood. Likewise, this man is immediately ordained to an “office” (usually elder, and later, if necessary, high priest, patriarch, seventy, or apostle), which establishes the respective “limits” of authority he may exercise in each office.

When a woman receives her own endowment, she receives both priesthoods—the Aaronic and the Melchizedek, but she is not ordained to an office of these priesthoods in the Church—I repeat, she is not ordained to an office of the priesthood ... *in the Church*.

When a couple enters into the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage, they—as a couple—“enter” the patriarchal order of the priesthood. At this time, we understand that the offices of this priestly order will be exercised after the resurrection, in the celestial glory.

When we consider the interrelationship between the priesthoods, we understand that the Aaronic Priesthood does not have the authority to confer the Holy Ghost, heal the sick, etc. But the Melchizedek Priesthood may exercise functions of the Aaronic Priesthood such as preaching the gospel, baptizing, blessing and passing the sacrament, etc.

Using a simple analogy, someone who obtains a driver's license to drive an 18-wheeler truck can also use that same license to drive a passenger car ... but not vice versa. Both are drivers, but with different "classes" and "functions", and with authorization to use different "tools".



As a rough comparison, if we represent the priesthood as a "hand", the Aaronic Priesthood would be represented by the fingers, and the Melchizedek by the palm and the wrist. Together, they form "one single member", having different but complementary functions. The Aaronic Priesthood provides the "elementary tools" that the Melchizedek Priesthood will use for even higher purposes (D&C 107:1-6, 13-14, 18-20).

This priesthood has a single name, which the Church in ancient times stopped using out of respect for the name of the deity. (D&C 107:1-2)

Orders ("parts", "portions", "subdivisions", or "departments") have been organized throughout the ages to progressively prepare people to receive the riches and glories of eternity. (D&C 78:18; 133:57-58)

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