

**Aaronic Priesthood--Scouting Satellite Broadcast**  
**Saturday, May 12, 2006 at 6:00 p.m.**

"The Aaronic Priesthood in the Here and Now"

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Presiding Bishop

We are delighted to join with you in this satellite broadcast to discuss matters very dear to our hearts---Aaronic Priesthood and young men. We are grateful for the presence of stake presidencies, bishops, bishops' counselors, Young Men presidencies, and others vitally interested in our young men. We are thankful for the fathers and sons choir, which opened the broadcast with "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered." I'm grateful for the technology that allows us to be gathered together.

Following my remarks, we will hear from Brother Charles Dahlquist, Young Men general president. Brother Dahlquist will be followed by a discussion led by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We will once again hear from the fathers and sons choir singing a medley including "If the Way Be Full of Trial, Weary Not" and "Rise Up, O Men of God."

Indeed we live in an exciting time. I have often contemplated the thrilling moments that surrounded the sacred events of the gospel's Restoration and the formation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. No doubt they were important and even electrifying periods in Church history. But as stirring as that period was, I'm convinced that the here and now, 2007, is the most exciting time to be alive.

Why is the here and now the most exciting time to live? In part it centers on the technological miracles of the day. But the far greater part centers on the fulfillment of divine prophecy as the gospel of Jesus Christ rolls forward around the world at an accelerating pace. To see the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ connect with the souls of men and women all around this planet and witness the great surge of growth in His kingdom is amazing. Yes, it is a spectacular time to live and an exciting time to be serving in His Church.

It is exciting to be a player in the quest to build faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts and souls of our Father in Heaven's children. It is exciting to be part of a team that supports and strengthens families. It is exciting to assist parents of young men as they prepare them to magnify Aaronic Priesthood duties, receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, serve missions, receive the blessings of the temple, and ultimately be successful fathers and patriarchs. The Lord has reserved the best, brightest, most devoted and obedient young men to come forward to carry out His purposes at this exciting and challenging time. I pray that you will have feelings of excitement as together we focus on important aspects of our participation in this divine process.

Bishops, you play quarterback in the process of helping parents prepare their young men for the blessings and challenges that await them. Your team members, consisting of counselors, clerks, Young Men presidency, ward mission leader, auxiliary leaders, and priesthood quorums, are eager to get in the game. You have been entrusted with the team's "playbook" and are responsible to carry out the game plan. By virtue of your ordination and setting apart, you have been given important priesthood keys and

responsibilities. One of the responsibilities placed on you is that of president of the Aaronic Priesthood, as well as president of the priests quorum.

On occasion the Aaronic Priesthood is referred to by other names. Sometimes it is identified as the *lesser priesthood* because it is an appendage to the Melchizedek Priesthood,<sup>1</sup> and sometimes it is called the *preparatory priesthood* because it prepares its holders to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, in which they can partake of the blessings of missions, the temple, and so on. On occasion it is referred to as the *Levitical Priesthood*. This name bears great historical significance that we should understand as we pursue our Aaronic Priesthood responsibilities.

Using the words of President Boyd K. Packer to describe the importance of the name *Levitical Priesthood*, I quote:

"The word *Levitical* comes from the name Levi, one of the twelve sons of Israel. Moses and Aaron, who were brothers, were Levites.

"When the Aaronic Priesthood was given to Israel, Aaron and his sons received the *presiding* and administrative responsibility. The male members of all other Levite families were put in charge of the ceremonies of the tabernacle, including the Mosaic law of sacrifice.

"The law of sacrifice had been observed since the days of Adam. It was symbolic of the redemption that would come with the sacrifice and the atonement of the Messiah. The Mosaic law of sacrifice was fulfilled with the crucifixion of Christ.

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"Anciently they looked forward to the atonement of Christ through the ceremony of the sacrifice. We look back to that same event through the ordinance of the sacrament.

"Both sacrifice before, and the sacrament afterward, are centered in Christ, the shedding of His blood, and the atonement He made for our sins. Both then and now the authority to perform these ordinances belongs to the Aaronic Priesthood.

"This is indeed a sacred responsibility and includes you in a brotherhood with those ancient servants of the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

I suspect there may be some of you, bishops particularly, who are asking yourselves questions like, "Is Bishop Burton suggesting we have need to pick up the pace of Aaronic Priesthood--related service? If so, how do I accommodate all the aspects of my assignment? If I devote more time to the Aaronic Priesthood, where does my own life, my wife, my family, and my employer fit into the scheme of things?"

I am suggesting that Aaronic Priesthood work needs our attention. From my experience, I know a little about the many responsibilities you bishops face and the need to satisfy obligations to wife, family, and employer. I also know that far too many of our young men are not realizing their full priesthood potential. Many families need to be spiritually strengthened. Many young men are in need of having their fragile faith in the Lord Jesus Christ reinforced. Time is short, but the need is great.

Perhaps a simple suggestion about priorities could be helpful to assist you in

accomplishing the most important aspects of your assignment while appropriately caring for your family and employer.

A number of years ago, someone grouped the many responsibilities of a bishop into a few convenient categories. Included were the following: common judge, presiding high priest, president of the Aaronic Priesthood, person in charge of providing for the poor, receiver of the tithes and offerings, and---more recently---leader responsible for ward missionary activities. All of the categories contain important and even critical tasks that need to be accomplished. What does a bishop, with a finite amount of time to devote to his work, do to make certain all important tasks are completed? For most bishops, the answer centers on delegation with accountability. Get *all* the players involved in the game. Give team members responsibility and have them be accountable. For some, delegation is difficult, because it runs counter to the expectations some members have of their marvelous bishops. For many the question then becomes, "What tasks can I delegate, and what do I need to accomplish myself?" All of the six categories mentioned require the attention of the bishop, but we note that two require the bishop's direct, personal involvement, while the remaining four can largely be delegated to counselors, clerks, quorum leaders, Relief Society leaders, and home and visiting teachers. With appropriate delegation, a bishop may find more time for those tasks that only he is empowered to do, such as those related to his roles as president of the Aaronic Priesthood and common judge. The remainder of the team can give much valued service as well.

Hopefully, with delegation, the president of the priests quorum can find time to be fully vested in quorum meetings and activities. The same could be said for bishops' counselors and Young Men presidencies. Ideally the president of the priests quorum and bishops' counselors would have time to cultivate personal relationships with quorum members and thereby gain insight and understanding as to their needs and challenges. To assess the adequacy of your involvement with the Aaronic Priesthood quorums, ask yourselves the following: "How long has it been since I stayed for the entire quorum meeting? When did I last attend Mutual for the whole evening? Am I deferring one-on-one interviews because of time?" Your answers to questions such as these, along with the inspiration you are entitled to, will give you an indication about the adequacy of your involvement with the Aaronic Priesthood.

One evening when I was a young man, I responded to an invitation to visit with my bishop. He was endeavoring to help me understand that it was far more important to respond to a mission call than to pursue a career in golf. After the appointment, I quietly entered the rear door of our home. I could hear my parents talking in the living room. My mother was expressing concern to my father about me and her perception that I was not planning on a mission and that I would not respond favorably to an invitation to serve. My dad, knowing that the bishop was working with me, said: "Oh, Blanche, don't worry. The boy will make the right decision." I did end up in far-off Australia, and what a wonderful experience and a life-changing two years it was for me. In a far simpler time, my bishop took the time to know me better than I knew myself. I'll be eternally grateful to the president of my priests quorum!

Youth is an excellent period of life for learning. It is a time when young, fertile minds can absorb much---good or challenging. We ask, "What should a young man learn or glean from his time as a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood?" Many items of learning could be mentioned, but I note just three. All of the spiritual lessons young men need can best be taught in the home; all can be lived in the home; all can be reinforced and

strengthened in priesthood quorums and in fulfilling priesthood assignments.

First, Aaronic Priesthood young men should understand the importance of making and keeping covenants. We are a covenant people. Since the days of Adam, our Father in Heaven has dealt with his children via covenants. When the gospel was restored, the new and everlasting covenant was reaffirmed. Covenants made at baptism and when the priesthood is conferred are part of the new and everlasting covenant. Covenants made when receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood and when receiving holy temple ordinances are also part of the new and everlasting covenant. All covenants bundled together are referred to as the new and everlasting covenant. These covenants are new because they apply to our day and everlasting because they are eternal in nature. Covenants consist of mutual pledges between God and man. We promise to keep His commandments, and He promises certain blessings. Young men need to understand that great obligation follows the making of covenants. President Spencer W. Kimball stated, with respect to priesthood covenants: "One breaks the priesthood covenant by transgressing commandments---but also by leaving undone his duties. Accordingly, to break this covenant one needs only to do nothing."<sup>3</sup>

Second, The Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, while engaged in the work of translating the Book of Mormon plates, determined they should inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins. While they were praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended, laid his hands upon them, and ordained them, saying, "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."<sup>4</sup> Aaronic Priesthood young men should understand they are entitled to the presence of ministering angels, coupled with officiating in the outward ordinances. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explains what it means to hold the key of ministering of angels and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism, and the remission of sins. He states: "The meaning is found in the ordinance of baptism and in the sacrament. Baptism is for the remission of sins, and the sacrament is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. Both should be preceded by repentance. When we keep the covenants made in these ordinances, we are promised that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. The ministering of angels is one of the manifestations of that Spirit."<sup>5</sup>

Third, young men of the Aaronic Priesthood should acquire an understanding of what priesthood authority is. President John Taylor taught that the priesthood "is a pattern of things in the heavens" and the means "through which the blessings of God flow to his people on the earth."<sup>6</sup> Others have said that priesthood is the unseen power and authority of God delegated to man. I like the simple explanation President Boyd K. Packer used in addressing the young men of the Church in a 1981 general priesthood meeting. He said:

"I want to tell you about the unseen power of the Aaronic Priesthood. . . .

"Some think that unless a power is visible it cannot be real. I think I can convince you otherwise. Do you remember when you foolishly put your finger in that light socket? While you did not see exactly what happened, surely you felt it!

"No one has ever seen electricity, not even a scientist with the finest instruments. However, like you they have felt it. And we can see the results of it. We can measure it,

control it, and produce light, and heat, and power. No one questions that it is real simply because he cannot see it.

"Although you cannot see the power of the priesthood, you can *feel* it, and you can see the results of it."<sup>7</sup>

President Hinckley has stated: "We cannot be ordinary people. We must rise above the crowd. We must stand a little taller. We must be a little better, a little kinder, a little more generous, a little more courteous, a little more thoughtful, a little more outreaching to others."<sup>8</sup> Young men, holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, can and will rise to higher levels with priesthood leaders who are committed to teach and assist.

The launch and the conclusion are the two most important parts of any endeavor. The Aaronic Priesthood is the spiritual launch for a young man's life. If successful, great blessings will follow. If not successful, the spiritual flight through life may be jeopardized, and the triumph of the landing may be impaired.

May our Father in Heaven inspire us as we reach out with love and concern to this royal generation of youth, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. D&C 107:14.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 45; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 31.
3. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 497.
4. Joseph Smith---History 1:69.
5. "The Aaronic Priesthood and the Sacrament," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 37.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 12.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 30.
8. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 149.