

# The Unseen POWER

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*Although you cannot see the power of the priesthood, you can feel it, and you can see the results of it.*

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, heat, and power. No one questions that it is real simply because he or she cannot see it.

Although you cannot see the power of the priesthood, you can feel it, and you can see the results of it. The priesthood can be a guiding and protecting power in your life. Let me give you an example.

After President Wilford Woodruff joined the Church he desired to serve a mission.

“I was but a Teacher,” he wrote, “and it is not a Teacher’s office to go abroad and preach. I dared not tell any of the authorities of the Church that I wanted to preach, lest

they might think I was seeking for an office.”<sup>1</sup>

He prayed to the Lord, and without disclosing his desire to any others, he was ordained a priest and sent on a mission. He and his companion went to the Arkansas Territory.

They struggled through 100 miles of alligator-infested swamps, wet, muddy, and tired. Brother Woodruff developed a sharp pain in his knee and could go no further. His companion left him sitting on a log and went home. Brother Woodruff knelt down in the mud and prayed for help. He was healed and continued his mission alone.

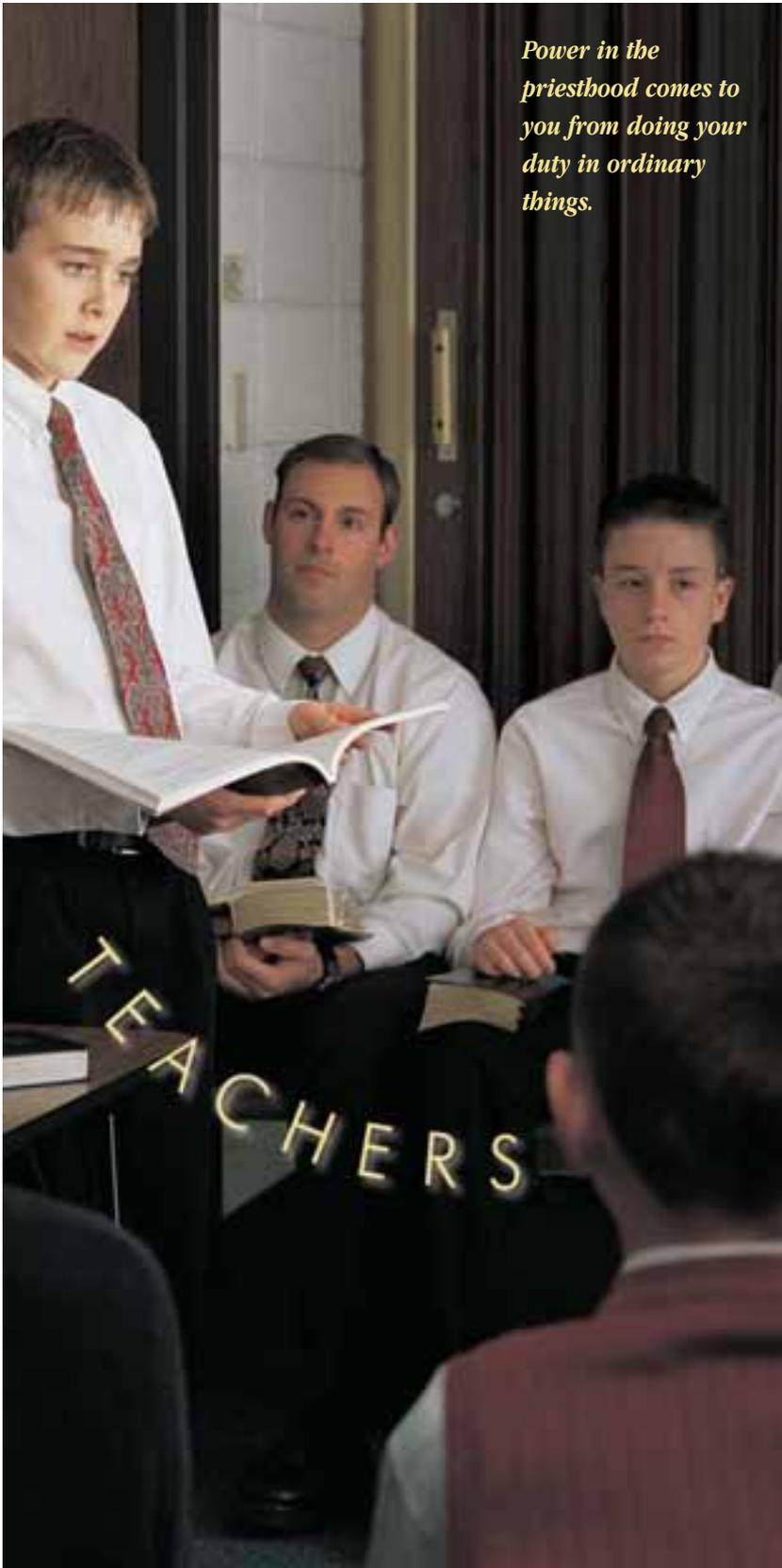
Three days later he arrived in Memphis, Tennessee, weary, hungry, and very muddy. He went to the largest inn and asked for something to eat and for a place to sleep, although he had no money to pay for either.

When the innkeeper found he was a preacher, he laughed and decided to have some fun with him. He offered Brother Woodruff a meal if he would preach to his friends.

A large audience of the rich and fashionable people of Memphis gathered and were



DEACONS



*Power in the priesthood comes to you from doing your duty in ordinary things.*

quite amused by this mud-stained missionary.

None would sing or pray, so Brother Woodruff did both. He knelt before them and begged the Lord to give him His Spirit and to show him the hearts of the people. And the Spirit came! Brother Woodruff preached with great power. He was able to reveal the secret deeds of those who came to ridicule him.

When he was finished, no one laughed at this humble holder of the Aaronic Priesthood. Thereafter he was treated with kindness.<sup>2</sup>

He was under the guiding, protecting power of his Aaronic Priesthood. The same power can be with you as well.

Let me teach you some very basic things about the Aaronic Priesthood.

It “is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations” (D&C 107:13).

The Aaronic Priesthood goes by other names as well. Let me list them and tell you what they mean.

### **The Lesser Priesthood**

First, the Aaronic Priesthood is sometimes called the lesser priesthood.

“Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances” (D&C 107:14).

This means that the higher priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood, always presides over the Aaronic, or the lesser, Priesthood. Aaron was the high priest, or the presiding priest, of the Aaronic Priesthood. But Moses presided over Aaron because Moses held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The fact that it is called the lesser priesthood does not diminish at all the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood. The Lord said it is necessary to the Melchizedek Priesthood. (See D&C 84:29.) The ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood have great spiritual importance.

I have, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, passed the sacrament. I assure you I have felt honored and humbled beyond expression to do what some might consider a routine task.

### **The Levitical Priesthood**

The Aaronic Priesthood is also called the Levitical Priesthood. The word *Levitical* comes from the name Levi, one of the 12 sons of Israel. Moses and Aaron, who were brothers, were Levites.

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. It is no wonder that we feel so humble when we participate in the ordinances assigned to the Aaronic Priesthood.

### **The Preparatory Priesthood**

Finally, the Aaronic Priesthood is referred to as the preparatory priesthood. This, too, is a proper title because the Aaronic Priesthood prepares young men to hold the higher priesthood, for missions, and for temple marriage.

I have thought it very symbolic that John the Baptist, a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, prepared the way for the coming of the Lord in ancient times. He came also to restore the Aaronic Priesthood to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to prepare for the coming of the higher priesthood. The Lord Himself said that there “hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11).

You would do well to watch your fathers and your leaders, to study how the Melchizedek Priesthood works. You are preparing to join the elders, high priests, and patriarchs and to serve as missionaries, quorum leaders, bishops, stake leaders, and as fathers of families.

A few of you deacons, teachers, and priests will one day preside over the Church as seventies, apostles, and prophets. You must be prepared.

### **Priesthood Principles**

Let me teach you some important principles of the priesthood. When you receive the Aaronic Priesthood, you receive all of it. There are three kinds of authority relating to your priesthood. You should understand them.

1. There is the priesthood itself. The ordination you received carries with it the overall authority to perform the ordinances and to possess the power of the Aaronic Priesthood.

2. There are offices within the priesthood. Each has different privileges. Three of them—deacon, teacher, and priest—may be conferred upon you when you are in your teenage years. The fourth office, that of bishop, may come to you when you are mature and worthy to become a high priest as well.

The deacon is to watch over the Church as a standing minister (see D&C 84:111; D&C 20:57–59).

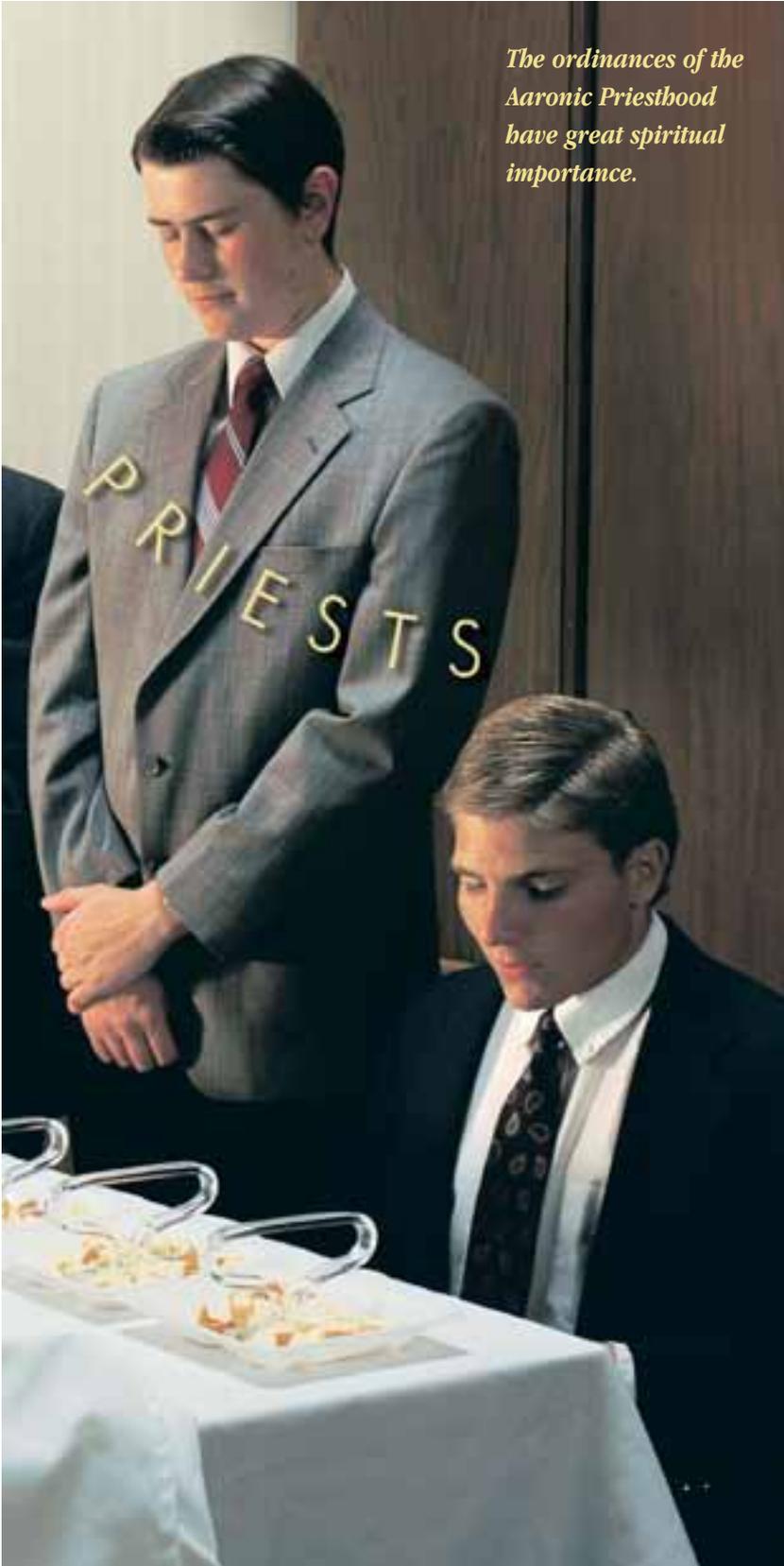
The teacher is to “watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them” (D&C 20:53).

The priest is to “preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament, and visit the house of each member” (D&C 20:46–47). The bishop is the president of the priests quorum (see D&C 107:87–88).

You always hold one of these offices. When you receive the next higher office, you still retain the authority of the first. For instance, when you become a priest, you still have authority to do all that you did as a deacon and teacher. Even when you receive the higher priesthood, you keep all of the authority of, and, with proper authorization, can act in the offices of, the lesser priesthood.

The offices are a part of the priesthood, but the priesthood is greater than any of the offices within it.

The priesthood is yours forever unless you disqualify



*The ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood have great spiritual importance.*

yourself through transgression. When you are active and faithful, you begin to understand the power of the priesthood.

3. There is one other kind of authority that comes to you if you are set apart as a quorum president. You then are given the keys of authority for that presidency.

You receive the priesthood, and the office you hold within the priesthood (deacon, teacher, and priest), by ordination. You receive the keys of presidency by setting apart.

When you become a deacon, your father may, and generally should, ordain you; or another who holds the proper priesthood could do it.

If you are called as president of your quorum, your bishopric would set you apart. You can receive the keys of presidency only from those who have received them. Unless your father is the bishop, he would not have those keys.

These keys of presidency are temporary. The priesthood, and the offices within it, are permanent.

One more thing: You can receive the priesthood only from one who has the authority and “it is known to the church that he has authority” (D&C 42:11).

The priesthood cannot be conferred like a diploma. It cannot be handed to you as a certificate. It cannot be delivered to you as a message or sent to you in a letter. It comes only by proper ordination. An authorized holder of the priesthood has to be there. He must place his hands upon your head and ordain you.

That is one reason why the General Authorities travel so much—to convey the keys of priesthood authority. Every stake president everywhere in the world has received his authority under the hands of

one of the presiding brethren of the Church. There has never been one exception.

Remember these things. The priesthood is very, very precious to the Lord. He is very careful about how it is conferred and by whom. It is never done in secret.

I have told you how the authority is given to you. The power you receive will depend on what you do with this sacred, unseen gift.

Your authority comes through your ordination; your power comes through obedience and worthiness.

Power in the priesthood comes from doing your duty in ordinary things: attending meetings, accepting assignments, reading the scriptures, keeping the Word of Wisdom.

President Woodruff said: “I traveled thousands of miles and preached the Gospel as a Priest, and, as I have said to congregations before, the Lord sustained me and made manifest His power in the defense of my life as much while I held that office as He has done while I have held the office of an Apostle. The Lord sustains any man that holds a portion of the Priesthood, whether he is a Priest, an Elder, a Seventy, or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling and does his duty.”<sup>3</sup>

John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood with these words:

“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” (D&C 13).

You—our deacons, teachers, and priests—have been given sacred authority. May the angels minister unto you. May the power of the priesthood be upon you, our beloved young brethren, and upon your sons throughout the generations ahead. I bear witness that the gospel is true, that the priesthood holds great power, a guiding, protecting power for those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. **NE**

*From an October 1981 general conference address.*

#### NOTES

1. *Leaves from My Journal* (1882), 8.
2. See *Leaves from My Journal*, 16–18.
3. *Millennial Star*, Sept. 28, 1905, 610.

For more on this topic, look up “Aaronic Priesthood” in the Bible Dictionary.

## WORTH CELEBRATING

Many occasions are important to remember, and one of special significance to Latter-day Saint teenagers is May 15, 1829. On that day, near Harmony, Pennsylvania, John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and bestowed on them the Aaronic Priesthood.

Today, all over the world, thousands of deacons, teachers, and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood and thousands of Beehives, Mia Maids, and Laurels in Young Women are still blessed by the restoration of that priesthood.

The Aaronic Priesthood trains young men in leadership, gospel knowledge, and priesthood responsibilities. Young Women receive similar opportunities to learn and grow and to meet with and work with the Young Men. Service given by both organizations blesses the lives of thousands more.

The restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood came in response to prayer. Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon when they read a passage in 3 Nephi on the subject of baptism. They went out into the woods and knelt down, asking Heavenly Father for greater understanding. Oliver describes what happened: “On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance” (JS—H 1:71, note).

He 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” (JS—H 1:69; see also D&C 13).

This May, take time to share with us what the Aaronic Priesthood means to you. You could tell us what you do to honor the priesthood, what you did to commemorate its restoration, or how Young Men and Young Women give service to others where you live. Write to us at

[newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org).