

GOSPEL TOPICS

ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY

Aaronic Priesthood

As the Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, he found mention of baptism for the remission of sins. On May 15, 1829, he and his scribe Oliver Cowdery went into the woods to inquire of the Lord concerning baptism. As they prayed, “a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light.” This messenger was John the Baptist, the prophet who had baptized Jesus Christ centuries earlier. John the Baptist, now a resurrected being, laid his hands on Joseph and on Oliver and conferred upon each of them the Aaronic Priesthood, which had been taken from the earth during the Great Apostasy. With this authority, Joseph and Oliver were able to baptize one another. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72.)

In the Church today, worthy male members may receive the Aaronic Priesthood beginning at age 12. They receive many opportunities to participate in sacred priesthood ordinances and give service. As they worthily fulfill their duties, they act in the name of the Lord to help others receive the blessings of the gospel.

The offices of the Aaronic Priesthood are bishop, priest, teacher, and deacon. With the authorization of the presiding priesthood leader (usually the bishop or branch president), deacons pass the sacrament. They help the bishop or branch president watch over Church members by giving service and assisting with temporal matters such as gathering fast offerings. Teachers may perform all the duties of deacons, and they also receive other opportunities to serve. They prepare the sacramental bread and water and serve as home teachers. Priests may perform all the duties of deacons and teachers. With the authorization of the presiding priesthood leader,

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they may also bless the sacrament, baptize, and ordain others to the offices of priest, teacher, and deacon.

The Aaronic Priesthood is “an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood” (D&C 107:14). It is often called the preparatory priesthood. As a priesthood holder serves in the Aaronic Priesthood, he prepares to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to receive the blessings of the temple, to serve a full-time mission, to be a loving husband and father, and to continue in lifelong service to the Lord.

See also Melchizedek Priesthood; Priesthood

Abortion

In today’s society, abortion has become a common practice, defended by deceptive arguments. If you face questions about this matter, you can be secure in following the revealed will of the Lord. Latter-day prophets have denounced abortion, referring to the Lord’s declaration, “Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6). Their counsel on the matter is clear: Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints must not submit to, perform, encourage, pay for, or arrange for an abortion. If you encourage an abortion in any way, you may be subject to Church discipline.

Church leaders have said that some exceptional circumstances may justify an abortion, such as when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth. But even these circumstances do not automatically justify an abortion. Those who face such circumstances should consider abortion only after consulting with their local Church leaders and receiving a confirmation through earnest prayer.

When a child is conceived out of wedlock, the best option is for the mother and father of the child to marry and work