

Is Joseph Smith's Aaronic Priesthood really Biblical? Is it Christian?

The short answer is: Neither — it is a scriptural and doctrinal heresy.

Old Testament

The Biblical priesthood of Aaron consisted of the offices of priest and high priest. These were set in place through Moses, along with the Law and the earthly tabernacle while the children of Israel lived at Mt. Sinai. The Lord specified only Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, *and his sons* to be Israel's priests (Ex. 28:1). The other Levites were set apart as assistants to help in the work of the tabernacle and to care for its furnishings (Num. 3:5-10).

- When the Bible speaks of the "Levitical priesthood," it is actually referring to the narrower lineage of Aaron and his sons within the tribe of Levi, the rest of the Levites being designated as assistants.
- Only one of these priests at a time was designated the great, or high, priest. He alone offered a "most holy" sacrifice once a year to atone for the sins of all Israel (Lev. 16:34). This took place on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26-32). Aaron was the first high priest, followed by his son, Eleazar (Num. 20:25-29). This high priest foreshadowed Christ's perfect and final sacrifice.
- The other Aaronic priests performed daily sacrifices and other duties in the tabernacle (later, the temple), assisted by non-Aaronic Levites. This practice was still in effect at the birth of Christ (Luke 1:5-9).
- When men outside of Aaron's lineage were appointed as priests, it led to God's wrath and destruction (1 Kings 12:31-32; 13:33-34; 2 Chronicles 11:5, 13-17).

New Testament – The Aaronic Priesthood in the Light of Christ

- The Levitical priesthood is an integral part of the Mosaic Law. Hebrews 7:11-12 makes this clear: *"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest [Christ] should rise after the order [manner] of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."* The law's Aaronic priesthood was abolished by Christ's own unique priesthood as He made the perfect and final sacrifice. *"And every priest [Aaronic] standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But **this man** [Christ], after he had offered*

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one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on [at] the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting [waiting] till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified [being made holy]. (Heb. 10:11-14, emphasis added.) See also Hebrews 7:18, 8:13, 10:1-10; Romans 10:4; Col. 2:14; Gal. 5:2-4 all referring to Christ's completed work, abolishing the law. Any attempt to return to the law's Aaronic priesthood holds Christ in contempt.

- New Testament Priests? Acts 6:7 – “*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*” The original Greek tense here is more accurately translated “*were becoming obedient*” (NASB) making it quite clear that these are not Christian ‘priests,’ but former *Levitical* priests who accepted Christ as the Messiah.

The Heresies of Joseph Smith's Aaronic Priesthood

- ***Priesthood not in Aaron's lineage.*** Every priest and high priest within Israel was to be a male descendent of Aaron and his sons, with only the exception of those with physical deformities (Lev. 21:16-23). Since the main people of the Book of Mormon claimed descent from Joseph, it ignores this single God-given requirement for priesthood and holds faith, repentance and good works as the qualifying criteria for high priests (Alma 9:65, 67; 10:2). The D&C also teaches that this priesthood can and should be obtained by an individual's own initiative (D&C 83:6c).
- ***Origin of the High Priesthood.*** High priesthood originated with Aaron at Mt. Sinai under the law of Moses. This fact invalidates Adam or Melchizedek being portrayed as high priests in the Book of Mormon, D&C or Inspired Version. (See related article on Joseph Smith's Melchizedek Priesthood.)
- ***An Aaronic Priesthood in the Christian Church.*** The perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross forever eliminated the need for a Levitical, or Aaronic, priesthood to administer the sacrificial system of the Mosaic law. This includes the offices of High Priest and Priest. Attempting to revert to the Levitical priesthood shows contempt for the perfect and completed work of Jesus Christ. 🌸

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For a more thorough and detailed analysis, see Paul Trask's book, **Part Way to Utah: the Forgotten Mormons** at www.help4rlds.com.

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