

Keys of Salvation from Kirtland Temple

Quinton L. Cook

The Kirtland Temple, both in location and size, was relatively obscure. But in terms of its enormous significance to mankind, it was *eternity-shaping*. **Ancient prophets restored priesthood keys for the eternal saving ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ.** This resulted in overwhelming joy for faithful members.

These keys provide the “power from on high”⁷ for divinely appointed responsibilities that constitute the primary purpose of the Church.⁸ On that wonderful Easter day in the Kirtland Temple, three keys were restored:

Key of Moses

Bruce R. McConkie

Moses, who in the majesty of the Melchizedek Priesthood led enslaved Israel out of Egyptian bondage into their promised Palestine, brings back those very keys....

These keys empower those who hold them to lead all Israel, the ten tribes included, from all the nations of the earth ... to the mountains of the Lord's houses, there to be endowed with power from on high. ("The Keys of the Kingdom," *Ensign* May, 1983, p. 21-23)

Joseph Smith

What was the object of gathering ... the people of God in any age of the world?... The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation [see D&C 124:38]....

It is for the same purpose that God gathers together His people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and anointings, etc....

God ordained that He would save the dead, and would do it by gathering His people together....

Why gather the people together in this place?... To receive the ordinances, the blessings, and glories that God has in store for His Saints. ("[The Purpose of the Gathering of Israel](#)," *History of The Church*, 5:422-427)

David A. Bednar

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that in all ages the divine purpose of gathering the people of God is to build temples so His children can receive the highest ordinances and thereby gain eternal life (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [Melchizedek Priesthood

and Relief Society course of study, 2007], 415–17). This essential relationship between the principle of gathering and the building of temples is highlighted in the Book of Mormon:

“Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted” ([Alma 26:5](#)).

The sheaves in this analogy represent newly baptized members of the Church. The garners are the holy temples. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained: “Clearly, when we baptize, our eyes should gaze beyond the baptismal font to the holy temple. The great garner into which the sheaves should be gathered is the holy temple” (in John L. Hart, “Make Calling Focus of Your Mission,” *Church News*, Sept. 17, 1994, 4). This instruction clarifies and emphasizes the importance of sacred temple ordinances and covenants—that the sheaves may not be wasted.

“Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them” ([Alma 26:6](#)).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has explained that in renewing our baptismal covenants by partaking of the emblems of the sacrament, “we do not witness that we *take upon us* the name of Jesus Christ. [Rather], we witness that we are *willing* to do so. (See [D&C 20:77](#).) The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the [ultimate and] most important sense” (“Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 81). The baptismal covenant clearly contemplates a future event or events and looks forward to the temple.

In modern revelations the Lord refers to temples as houses “built unto my name” ([D&C 105:33](#); see also [D&C 109:2–5](#); [124:39](#)). In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith petitioned the Father “that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them” ([D&C 109:22](#)). He also asked for a blessing “over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house” ([v. 26](#)). And as the Lord appeared in and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house, He declared, “For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house” ([D&C 110:7](#)).

These scriptures help us understand that the process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ that is commenced in the waters of baptism is continued and enlarged in the house of the Lord. As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple. As we partake of the sacrament, we look to the temple. We pledge to always remember the Savior and to keep His commandments as preparation to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple and receive the highest blessings available through the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the ordinances of the holy temple we more completely and fully take upon us the name of Jesus Christ. (Honorably Hold a Name and a Standing, CR April 2009)

Key of Elias

Bruce R. McConkie

After Moses, came Elias. We know not who he was in mortality. There were many prophets who bore that name and title. One was Noah. Apparently this Elias lived in the day of Abraham, and may even have been Abraham himself. In any event he “committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” ([D&C 110:12](#))—not, be it noted, the gospel of Christ, for that had already been received, but the gospel of Abraham, meaning the great commission which God gave Abraham in his day. That commission dealt with families, those of Abraham and his seed, who were and are promised continuance “in the world and out of the world . . . as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them” ([D&C 132:30](#)).

As Joseph Smith records it, what Elias actually said to him and Oliver Cowdery was that “in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed” ([D&C 110:12](#)). And so, the Lord be praised, the marriage discipline of Abraham was restored; it is the system that enables a family unit to continue in eternity; it is the system out of which eternal life grows. The laws and conditions pertaining to this holy order of matrimony in the new and everlasting covenant constitute “the promises made to the fathers,” which, as Moroni said (quoting Malachi), were to be planted “in the hearts of the children” ([D&C 2:2](#)). (“[This Final Glorious Gospel Dispensation](#),” *Ensign*, April 1980, 21)

The man Elias brings back “the gospel of Abraham,” the great Abrahamic covenant whereby the faithful receive promises of eternal increase, promises that through celestial marriage their eternal posterity shall be as numerous as the sands upon the seashore or as the stars in heaven for multitude. Elias gives the promise—received of old by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—that in modern men and in their seed all generations shall be blessed. And we are now offering the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to all who will receive them. (“The Keys of the Kingdom,” *Ensign* May, 1983, p. 21-23)

[T]he Lord sent Elias and he sent Elijah. And when Elias came, he brought the gospel of Abraham, the divine commission that God gave Abraham, the marriage discipline that God gave Abraham. Elias restored celestial marriage, and Elijah came and brought the sealing power so the ordinance would be binding on earth and sealed in heaven; and it takes the ministry of both of them to accomplish the purposes of the Lord. (“[The Promises Made to the Fathers](#),” From *Studies in Scripture Vol 3: Genesis to 2 Samuel*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet [Salt Lake City, UT: Randall Book Co., 1985], p. 61)

Key of Elijah

Joseph Smith (President)

[I]n the end, [the earth] shall be burned and few men left—but before that, God shall send unto them Elijah the prophet, and he shall reveal unto them the covenants of the fathers with relation to the children, and the covenants of the children in relation to the Fathers, that they may have

the privilege of entering into the same in order to effect their mutual salvation. (*Words of Joseph Smith*, 13 August 1843, p.240; punctuation modernized; see also *History of the Church*, 5:530)

How shall God come to the rescue of this generation? He will send Elijah the prophet....

Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. (*History of the Church*, 5:555; see also "[Three Orders of the Priesthood](#)")

The Bible says, "I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Now, the word *turn* here should be translated *bind*, or *seal*. But what is the object of this important mission? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion.

But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah. And I would to God that this temple was now done, that we might go into it, and go to work and improve our time, and make use of the seals while they are on earth. ("[The Sealing Power in the Priesthood](#)," *The History of the Church*, 6:183-185)

Bruce R. McConkie (*Quorum of the Twelve*)

That these promises—made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others of the fathers—might dwell in our hearts (for we are the children of the prophets), Elijah came and conferred the sealing power upon his mortal fellow servants. By virtue of this sealing power all ordinances, both for the living and the dead, may be binding on earth and in heaven (see [D&C 110:13–16](#)). ("[This Final Glorious Gospel Dispensation](#)," *Ensign*, April 1980, 21)

What does it mean to say: "Reveal unto you the Priesthood" [see D&C 2:1]? Peter, James, and John came either in May or June of 1829 and gave Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood, all of it, every whit, all of it in total. They gave them also the keys of the kingdom, the keys of the dispensation, and the holy apostleship.

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had it all from that standpoint in 1829. Elijah did not come until the third day of April in 1836. He came approximately seven years after the Prophet and his associate had received the priesthood. Yet, the Lord revealed by Elijah the priesthood, in that

Elijah brought the keys of the sealing power, and the Lord thus revealed the total and complete use of the priesthood.

He authorized the priesthood to be used to bind on earth and to seal everlastingly in the heavens. It takes both keys and priesthood. Priesthood is power and authority. Keys are the right of presidency. ("[The Promises Made to the Fathers](#)," From *Studies in Scripture Vol 3: Genesis to 2 Samuel*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet [Salt Lake City, UT: Randall Book Co., 1985], pp. 47-62)

[T]he Lord sent Elias and he sent Elijah. And when Elias came, he brought the gospel of Abraham, the divine commission that God gave Abraham, the marriage discipline that God gave Abraham. Elias restored celestial marriage, and Elijah came and brought the sealing power so the ordinance would be binding on earth and sealed in heaven; and it takes the ministry of both of them to accomplish the purposes of the Lord. ("[The Promises Made to the Fathers](#)," From *Studies in Scripture Vol 3: Genesis to 2 Samuel*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet [Salt Lake City, UT: Randall Book Co., 1985], p. 61)

Elijah brings back the keys of the sealing power, the power that enables men now living, as it was with Peter of old, to bind on the earth below and have their acts sealed everlastingly in the heavens above. (See D&C 110:11-16.)

Because Elijah came, the baptisms we perform on earth will have efficacy, virtue, and force in eternity. In literal reality they give us membership in the earthly kingdom which is the Church, and in the heavenly kingdom which is the celestial realm where God and Christ are.

And so, in process of time, there is "a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories ... from the days of Adam even to the present time." (D&C 128:18.) ("The Keys of the Kingdom," *Ensign* May, 1983, p. 21-23)

Joseph Fielding Smith (*Quorum of the Twelve*)

Why was Elijah reserved? What keys did he hold? What keys did he bestow on Peter, James and John? Exactly the same keys that he bestowed upon the head of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. And what were they? Some of you may be saying the keys of baptism for the dead. No, it was not that. Some of you may be thinking it was the keys of the salvation of the dead. No, it was not that. That was only a portion of it. The keys that Elijah held were the keys of the everlasting priesthood, the keys of the sealing power, which the Lord gave unto him. And that is what he came and bestowed upon the head of Peter, James and John, and that is what he gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith; and that included a ministry of sealing for the living as well as the dead—and it is not confined to the living and it is not confined to the dead, but includes them both. ([Elijah the Prophet and His Mission](#), p. 1-25)

Elijah restored to this Church ... the keys of the sealing power; and that sealing power puts the stamp of approval upon every ordinance that is done in this Church and more particularly those that are performed in the temples of the Lord. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:112–13)

