

Doctrine and Covenants Institute Student Manual

What Is “the More Sure Word of Prophecy”?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “Those members of the Church who devote themselves wholly to righteousness, living by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God, make their calling and election sure. That is, they receive the more sure word of prophecy, which means that the Lord seals their exaltation upon them while they are yet in this life. Peter summarized the course of righteousness which the saints must pursue to make their calling and election sure and then (referring to his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration with James and John) said that those three had received this more sure word of prophecy. (2 Pet. 1.) ... “Those so favored of the Lord are sealed up against all manner of sin and blasphemy except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and the shedding of innocent blood. That is, their exaltation is assured; their calling and election is made sure, because they have obeyed the fulness of God’s laws and have overcome the world.” (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 109–10; see also D&C 132:17, 26; Notes and Commentary for D&C 76:53.)

What Does It Mean to Be “Sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise”?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented on this verse as follows: “The Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit; he is the Holy Spirit promised the saints at baptism, or in other words the Holy Spirit of Promise, this exalted name-title signifying that the promised receipt of the Holy Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost, is the greatest gift man can receive in mortality. “The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead based on faithfulness; it is bestowed with a promise that we shall receive revelation and be sanctified if we are true and faithful and so live as to qualify for the companionship of that Holy Spirit who will not dwell in an unclean temple. (1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:19; Mosiah 2:37; Hela. 4:24.) The receipt of the promise is conditional! If after we receive the promise, we then keep the commandment, we gain the companionship of this member of the Godhead, and not otherwise.

“One of the functions assigned and delegated to the Holy Spirit is to seal, and the following expressions are identical in thought content:

“To be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise; “To be justified by the Spirit; “To be approved by the Lord; and

“To be ratified by the Holy Ghost. “Accordingly, any act which is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise is one which is justified by the Spirit, one which is approved by the Lord, one which is ratified by the Holy Ghost. ... “As revealed to Joseph Smith, the Lord’s law in this respect is: [D&C 132:7].

“By way of illustration this means that baptism, partaking of the sacrament, administering to the sick, marriage, and every covenant that man ever makes with the Lord—plus all other ‘contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, associations, or expectations’—must be performed in righteousness by and for people who are worthy to receive whatever blessing is involved, otherwise whatever is done has no binding and sealing effect in eternity.

“Since ‘the Comforter knoweth all things’ (D. & C. 42:17), it follows that it is not possible ‘to lie to the Holy Ghost’ and thereby gain an unearned or undeserved blessing, as Ananias and Sapphira found out to their sorrow. (Acts 5:1–11.) And so this provision that all things must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, if they are to have ‘efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead’ (D. & C. 132:7), is the Lord’s system for dealing with absolute impartiality with all men, and for giving all men exactly what they merit, neither adding to nor diminishing from.” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3:333–35; see also Notes and Commentary for D&C 76:53; 131:5.)

New Testament Institute Student Manual 2 Peter 1

Elder McConkie says of chapter one, “Nowhere else in ancient writ do we find the door so frankly opened to a knowledge of the course men must pursue to have their calling and election made sure.” (DNTEC, 3:323.) It is clear from what Peter teaches that knowing about God and knowing God are not the same, and that a true knowledge of God requires that we become like him. Thus, the saints are challenged to become “partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Peter 1:4.)

“There are three grand secrets lying in this chapter, ... which no man can dig out, unless by the light of revelation, and which unlocks the whole chapter. ...

“1st key: Knowledge is the power of salvation. 2nd key: Make your calling and election sure. 3rd key: It is one thing to be on the mount and hear the excellent voice, etc., and another to hear the voice declare to you, You have a part and lot in that kingdom.” (Smith, Teachings, pp. 304, 306.)

Concerning the three grand keys to the knowledge of God, we learn three concepts:

1. The knowledge of Christ which brings salvation is obtained a little at a time.

“It is not wisdom that we should have all knowledge at once presented before us; but that we should have a little at a time; then we can comprehend it. ... The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation. This principle can be comprehended by the faithful and diligent; and every one that does not obtain knowledge sufficient to be saved will be condemned. The principle of salvation is given us through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.” (Smith, Teachings, p. 297. Italics added.)

2. As one acquires knowledge of Christ’s divine attributes and incorporates them into his own life, he makes his calling and election sure. “None can comprehend the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the gospel unless he himself possesses the attributes of godliness, for the knowledge of spiritual things comes only by revelation, and until a person gains godly attributes he cannot receive the Spirit from whom revelation comes.” (McConkie, DNTC, 3:354.) (The process of having one’s calling and election made sure is discussed in the Interpretive Commentary for 2 Peter 1:10.)

3. The more sure word of prophecy—the Lord’s promise that a person will be exalted and come to know God fully (John 17:3)—comes as a result of making one’s calling and election sure.

“Now for the secret and grand key. Though they might hear the voice of God and know that Jesus was the Son of God, this would be no evidence that their election and calling was made sure, that they had part with Christ, and were joint-heirs with him. They then would want that more sure word of prophecy, that they were sealed in the heavens and had the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Then, having this promise sealed unto them, it was an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Though the thunders might roll and lightnings flash, and earthquakes bellow, and war gather thick around, yet this hope and knowledge would support the soul in every hour of trial, trouble and tribulation. Then knowledge through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” (Smith, Teachings, p. 298.)

Must an Individual Be Married for Eternity to Have His Calling and Election Made Sure?

“... making one’s calling and election sure comes after and grows out of celestial marriage. Eternal life does not and cannot exist for a man or a woman alone, because in its very nature it consists of the continuation of the family unit in eternity.” (McConkie, DNTC, 3:343.)

Eternal Marriage Institute Student Manual

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“The Holy Spirit of Promise is the Holy Spirit promised the saints, or in other words the Holy Ghost. This name-title is used in connection with the sealing and ratifying power of the Holy Ghost, that is, the power given him to ratify and approve the righteous acts of men so that those acts will be binding on earth and in heaven. ‘All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations,’ must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, if they are to have ‘efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.’ (D. & C. 132:7.)

“To seal is to ratify, to justify, or to approve. Thus an act which is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise is one which is ratified by the Holy Ghost; it is one which is approved by the Lord; and the person who has taken the obligation upon himself is justified by the Spirit in the thing he has done.

“The ratifying seal of approval is put upon an act only if those entering the contract are worthy as a result of personal righteousness to receive the divine approbation. They ‘are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.’ (D. & C. 76:53.) If they are not just and true and worthy the ratifying seal is withheld.

“When any ordinance or contract is sealed by the Spirit, it is approved with a promise of reward, provided unrighteousness does not thereafter break the seal, remove the ratifying approval, and cause loss of the promised blessing. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, p. 55; vol. 2, pp. 94–99.) Seals are placed on contracts through righteousness.

“The operation and power of the Holy Spirit of Promise is best illustrated by the ordinance and contract of baptism. An unworthy candidate for baptism might deceive the elders and get the ordinance performed, but no one can lie to the Holy Ghost and get by undetected. Accordingly, the baptism of an unworthy and unrepentant person would not be sealed by the Spirit; it would not be ratified by the Holy Ghost; the unworthy person would not be justified by the Spirit in his actions. If thereafter he became worthy through repentance and obedience, the seal would then be put in force. Similarly, if a worthy person is baptized, with the ratifying approval of the Holy Ghost attending the performance, yet the seal may be broken by subsequent sin.

“These principles also apply to every other ordinance and performance in the Church. Thus if both parties are ‘just and true,’ if they are worthy, a ratifying seal is placed on their temple marriage; if they are unworthy, they are not justified by the Spirit and the ratification of the Holy Ghost is withheld. Subsequent worthiness will put the seal in force, and unrighteousness will break any seal.

“Even if a person progresses to that state of near-perfection in which his calling and election is made sure, in which he is ‘sealed up unto eternal life’ (D. & C. 131:5; 132:18–26), in which he receives ‘the promise ... of eternal life’ (D. & C. 88:3–4), in which he is ‘sealed up unto the day of redemption’ (D. & C. 124:124; Eph. 1:13)—yet with it all, these great promises are secured only if the ‘performances’ are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise” (Mormon Doctrine, 361–62).