

D&C Lesson # 8
The Restoration of the Priesthood
(Readings from D&C 13; 20; 27; 84; 107; 110; 128).
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. Many churches claim to hold God's priesthood. How does one know which truly does?

A. The Lord Himself revealed that the **priesthood on the earth is manifest by the ordinances it performs and the actual power emanating from those ordinances** (D&C 84:19-21).

B. The plaza before St. Peter's Basilica in Rome contains a statue of Peter along with a large and prominent set of "keys." Obviously they are meant to proclaim that here are the keys the Savior bestowed upon Peter. Their purpose? "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and **whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven**" (Matthew 16:19). Thus, the Lord promised, "**the gates of hell should not prevail**" (v. 18). (Emphasis added)

C. But where are the promised "bindings" which those keys were meant to accomplish? And where are the evidences of the conquering of the very Gates of Hell?

D. Another representation of priesthood authority and keys bestowed stands on the banks of the Susquehanna River near Harmony, PA: a monument depicting John the Baptist laying his hands upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, giving them the Aaronic Priesthood.

1. "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" (D&C 13.)

E. Also, a witness of Peter, James and John's bestowing the Melchizedek Priesthood is there.

1. Joseph could not restrain his joy of what the bestowal of such keys meant to the deceased. "Now what do we hear...? a voice of mercy from heaven... glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead;... the voice of Peter, James and John in the wilderness,... declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom..." (D&C 128:20).

2. **The power and work of these keys are continually manifested. The deceased held in spirit prison are being freed. The Gates of Hell no longer prevail!** (D&C 20:26).

F. Increasing the joy, those who are freed from hell's prison rejoice with wives, children, parents, because those keys now "bind" them together as families for time and all eternity!

II. The priesthood on the earth is also manifest by usage in healing.

A. Joseph Smith showed the powers of the priesthood in healing on many occasions. Just one was Chloe Smith, who was ill with a fever. After prayer, the prophet stood before her, and holding her hand, commanded her in the name of Jesus Christ to arise and walk. She was immediately and completely returned to health. (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 51-2).

B. Those powers did not just reside in one man or even a few, but among the saints in general. And **this usage of priesthood for healing among the many has never ceased**

In 1920 Elder Reed Smoot reported at General Conference, "In our meeting the other day some of the presidents of the missions reported some remarkable healings of the sick. As I listened to them I thought to myself, are there any more remarkable manifestations of the power of God recorded in Holy Writ than those reported to us at that meeting."

I personally knew of healings in every condition mentioned in D&C 84:67-72, except that of "the poison of a serpent shall not have power to harm them". Then this happened.

My oldest brother Darrell and family were living in Lecanto, Florida when he received a call one Christmas Eve to help administer to a brother who had been bitten by a rattlesnake. He had put his open thermos down in a forest. A pygmy rattlesnake had slipped inside, and when he tried to drink again, it struck his tongue.

At the hospital Brother Campbell had tubes inserted in both arms delivering fluids. He couldn't talk because his swollen tongue filled his mouth. He could not turn his head; only his eyes followed. It was a very serious situation. The attendants said a surgeon was there to perform a tracheotomy in case his tongue swelled to where he could not breathe."

Humbled, the ministers anointed and gave a blessing, and very subdued, they left.

The next day was Christmas. Darrell called the hospital and was shocked to hear the patient was home. The following day was Sunday. Even more shocking, Brother Campbell and his family were at church. He was completely well. "I could not forget the condition of the man on Friday evening, the blessing, and his being able to return home to his family for Christmas Day."

To Darrell, there had undoubtedly been a miracle wrought by the powers of the priesthood.

III. The Priesthood is manifest **by its orderliness and by its availability to all** (D&C 107).

A. The Lord did not just restore the priesthood to Joseph Smith. **He carefully outlined its different offices and the duties of each office. So the priesthood began to function and continues to function in an orderly manner. In doing so, it brings universal blessings.**

B. This order and its universality were demonstrated by an experience of President Hugh B Brown while serving as coordinator for all LDS servicemen in England during World War II. As such he sent notice to a camp chaplain of his coming to visit at 10:00 a.m. the next morning.

When he arrived he was met by seventy-five men. Only one was absent --- because he was in the hospital. The chaplain wondered how he had gotten such a big response as he knew he could not have done so with those of his own faith. Elder Brown invited him to the meeting to find out.

As the meeting began, Elder Brown asked how many of the men had served missions. Fifty percent raised their hands. He asked six to come and prepare and then administer the sacrament. He also asked six to come to the stand and prepare to speak. The chaplain was shocked that he could and would dare to call such young, inexperienced men to assume ministerial roles.

Elder Brown asked what they would like to sing. Someone was selected to play the music and one to lead. Though without hymnbooks, they all sang with deep feeling. Then they blessed and distributed the sacrament in a reverent fashion.

The six young men chosen spoke, each doing so with the spirit and with firm testimony.

After two hours, it was noon and thus time to eat. Elder Brown planned to dismiss them. But someone said that they could eat any time. They wanted a testimony meeting. They were warned they would likely be there for another two hours. But this was their desire. The chaplain stayed.

All seventy-five young men bore touching testimonies.

When the meeting was over, the chaplain expressed his astonishment. "Sir, I have never witnessed anything like this in my life. Tell me how do you do it? How did you know which of these young men to call upon?" He was further amazed to learn Elder Brown had never met any of them before. (Edwin B. Firmage, *The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown*).

C. **Obviously this event was possible because The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was built upon a lay priesthood**, as established in the wisdom of God Himself. Each young man

had been trained in that priesthood to serve and to minister. And they were able to do so by the power of the Holy Ghost which is also a fruit of a priesthood ordinance.

D. Because *every worthy man* in the Church may hold the priesthood, its blessings extend to *all the household of faith*, to all women and children. Truly its blessings are universal.

IV. The Savior Himself came and prepared for restoration of specific priesthood keys needed for His final and prophesied work in the Last Days (D&C 110).

A. When the Savior appeared at the Kirtland Temple, He first spoke of temple blessings, then and future, due to priesthood keys, "Yea, the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house...and this is *the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people*. Even so. Amen."

B. After the Savior spoke of magnificent blessings, other essential keys were restored to accomplish all of those things of which ancient prophets had testified to occur in the Last Days.

1. Moses brought keys for the gathering of Israel from the four quarters of the earth and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north (v. 11).

2. Elias appeared with the "dispensation of the gospel of Abraham... [that] in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed" (v. 12). [Keys to take the gospel to all the world].

3. "Elijah the prophet... stood before us, and said: Behold the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi --- testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come --- to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse --- Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors" (D&C 110: 13-16).

V. Priesthood keys were restored so that members can do the works of the Lord.

A. Often criticized for our works, the works which Latter-day Saints are so anxiously engaged in are not works for our own salvation. *They are works for the salvation of others.*

C. *Further, they are the works which all the prophets testified would occur in the last days: The gathering of Israel, the spreading of Christ's true gospel throughout the world, the turning of the hearts of the children to those of the fathers. They are the works of preparing a world for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! We can do those works because we have been blessed with the priesthood keys which make them possible.*

VI. Members are blessed when they follow the priesthood.

A. Dorothea Condie lived in Dresden, Germany in World War II when the city was bombed. Her family survived, but their house caught fire. They knew they must run to the Elbe River, just four blocks away at the end of a wide, straight street. But the father turned to run down a narrow, winding street, where there were fires burning. The mother called him to come back to the wide street. Then an older daughter urged, "Mom, let's follow Dad; he holds the Priesthood."

The mother accepted the urging, and they ran down the winding narrow route, to safety.

Shortly after they arrived, they were joined by a distraught neighbor woman. She and her husband had started down the wide, straight street. Her husband was ahead. To the woman's horror, she saw her husband burst into flames. While no one could see it, liquid phosphorous from a bomb had spread across the street. As soon as anyone stepped upon this hidden treachery, the phosphorous ignited. The victims were burned to death. (Dorthea Speth Condie, "Let's

Follow Dad --- He Holds the Priesthood,” in Garold N. and Norma S. Davis, *Behind the Iron Curtain*, pp. 32-4).

B. The Priesthood is a great blessing and a great responsibility to the Church. Whatever role we have in our lives, we are challenged to live up to its responsibilities and to its blessings.