

Some of the Keys Restored in Our Dispensation to Joseph Smith

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“It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in,” the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote in 1842 “that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time.” Then he named those who had restored keys and powers: Moroni, Peter, James, and John, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and “divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present” (D&C 128:18–21). The “divers angels” included—among others, perhaps, of whom we are not aware—John the Baptist, Moses, Elijah, and Elias. We do not know the order in which these ancient ones came to bring their rights and powers, but suppose it may have been somewhat as follows:

1. Moroni. This ancient Nephite came first on the night of 21 September 1823, when he spent the whole night teaching and counseling Joseph Smith relative to the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the gospel, and what was to be in the latter days. Thereafter he placed the plates in the prophetic hands and gave the youthful Joseph “the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim” (D&C 27:5; see also JS—H 1:29–60).

Then Joseph Smith, by the gift and power of God, translated and published to the world the Book of Mormon. That volume of holy scripture contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel, stands as a witness of the divine Sonship of Christ, bears record of the prophetic call of Joseph Smith, and proves the truth of the Bible.

2. John the Baptist. On 15 May 1829, this son of Zacharias conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the Aaronic Priesthood and the keys thereof. This gave them “the gospel of repentance, and of baptism of immersion for the remission of sins” which is the preparatory gospel. They were also empowered to make offerings unto the Lord as the sons of Levi had done anciently. (See D&C 13.) Thus the processes began to prepare a people for the Second Coming of the Son of Man as John, in mortality, had prepared repentant persons for the first coming of Christ.

3. Peter, James, and John. Shortly thereafter, these three brethren, who were the First Presidency in their day, brought back the Melchizedek Priesthood including the holy apostleship; they restored the keys of the kingdom; and they conferred the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times (see D&C 27:12; D&C 81:2; D&C 128:20).

The keys of the kingdom of God on earth (which is the Church) are the rights and powers to direct all of the Lord’s affairs on earth. Because Peter, James, and John came in our day we have again the kingdom, which is the Church, and we have been given the missionary commission commanding and empowering us to preach the gospel to all people in this day.

4. Moses. Israel’s great lawgiver, the prophet whose life was in similitude of the Messiah himself, the one who delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and led them to their land of promise, came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on 3 April 1836, in the Kirtland Temple. He gave them: (1) “the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth,” and (2) the keys of “the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north” (D&C 110:11).

Since then, with increasing power and in great glory, we have gathered, from their Egyptian bondage as it were, the dispersed of Ephraim and a few others, initially to the mountains of America, but now into the stakes of Zion in the various nations of the earth. The gathering of Israel is a reality. When the ten tribes return they will come at the direction of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for he now holds and will then hold the keys of presidency and direction for this mighty work.

5. Elias. 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).

6. *Elijah.* 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).

7. *Michael or Adam.* Our first father—Michael, our prince—who stands next to the Lord Jesus Christ in power, glory, and greatness, was “the first man of all men” (Moses 1:34), the first mortal on earth. He stands as the presiding high priest over all his posterity and holds priesthood governance over all things pertaining to this earth.

What keys and powers did he restore? We can only suppose that he brought back the presidency over an earth whose kingdoms will soon become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ; that because he came, men again by the power of the priesthood shall “put at defiance the armies of nations” (JST, Gen. 14:31); and that the earth for the Millennial era shall be renewed and receive again its Edenic state, a state where death and sorrow are swallowed up in gospel glory.

8. *Gabriel or Noah.* Noah preached the gospel to a wicked world and saved eight souls from a watery grave. He brought both temporal and spiritual salvation to those who heeded his word.

Whatever keys he possessed are again vested in the Lord’s earthly prophet. We are not able with finality to say what these keys were, but surely once again the power is here to preach the gospel and bring a temporal and a spiritual salvation to those who are prepared to abide the day. As the waters of Noah once drowned the wicked so will the coming fires burn those “that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thes. 1:8).

9. *Raphael.* Who Raphael was we do not know. But we do know that someone came from all the dispensations having distinctive keys and powers. No one else is named as having come from the dispensation of Enoch, and we suppose Raphael is either Enoch or someone else from that day of grace.

Enoch’s day was one in which Zion was built up and her people were translated and taken up into heaven. Could it be that the keys from his dispensation are the ones that will bring to pass a Millennial quickening of the earth? We do know, of course, that the city of Enoch will return in the Millennial day to join with the earthly zion then built up by mortals.

10. “*Divers angels.*” Whether there may have been other angelic ministrants who restored keys and powers, we do not know. But this we do know: Every key, power, and priesthood ever held by a mortal on earth has been restored. All such came to Joseph Smith and his associates and these keys are now vested in the First Presidency and the Twelve. They lie dormant, in a sense, in all but the senior Apostle of God on earth. Since keys are the right of presidency, only one man—the President of the Church—can exercise them in their fulness at one time.

It is of these keys and these brethren that the Lord says: “For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given, for the last days and for the last time, in the which is the dispensation of the fulness of times. ...

“Verily I say unto you, behold how great is your calling” (D&C 112:30–33). (*Ensign*, April 1980, 21)