

President Joseph Fielding Smith

Of the First Presidency and President of the Council of the Twelve

Dear Brethren:

I am very happy to be here with you this evening. I hope what I say may be beneficial to one and all, and I pray that the Lord will bless me with his Spirit. I am sure that we all know the fifth Article of Faith, that a man must be called of God, by prophecy. I need not quote it, but invite you to read it.

The revelation on priesthood

In the month of February 1835, the twelve apostles in this dispensation were called. As early as June 1829, it was made known to Joseph Smith by revelation that twelve apostles would be chosen. This information came before the organization of the Church, and Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were then appointed to "search out the Twelve" (D&C 18:37) when the time should come for them to be chosen. One month after the apostles had been chosen, the twelve in council sought information by revelation, that they might have a better understanding of their calling. In their behalf Joseph Smith sought the Lord and received the revelation on priesthood. This revelation is in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107.

This revelation gives us light in relation to the priesthood and the various offices that grow out of it, which the Church did not have previous to that time. It was made known that there were in the Church two priesthoods, or grand divisions of priesthood: the Melchizedek and the Aaronic, including the Levitical. "Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest.

"Before his day it was called the *Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God*.

"But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient

days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood." (D&C 107:2-4.)

Priesthood administers the gospel

This information was all new, only general statements pertaining to this truth having been revealed before that time, and the world knew nothing of it. There are some further phases of the priesthood, however, that we should clearly understand.

Every man who is ordained to the priesthood has authority to officiate in some capacity in the Church. Without priesthood there could be no church, and if there were no priesthood, no official act could be performed in the name of the Lord. Men would be left in darkness without an understanding of the truth, for the power of God could not be made manifest. ". . . this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

"Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

"And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh." (D&C 84:19-21.) So the Lord taught us through Joseph Smith.

Prevails in all the universe

This Holy Priesthood, which is eternal, is the authority which prevails in all the universe. The ordinances of the gospel are made valid through its power, and without it the knowledge of God could not be made manifest. It is by this authority and through the ordinances that man is able to know of God. Without the priesthood it would be impossible for man to gain the knowledge which would bring him into the presence of the Father. Is there any wonder, then, that the world, deprived of the priesthood, is in such spiritual darkness and confusion?

Key to spiritual knowledge

Men may search and they may study, but they will never come to a knowledge of God until they receive the gospel and obtain light through the power of the priesthood and the ordinances of the gospel. See the sad condition of those who once belonged to the Church but have fallen away—how they have lost the key to spiritual knowledge! Certain organizations have been formed from time to time by those who have gone out of the Church, but the light which they formerly had has left them. They are soon left to grope in spiritual darkness, because the “power of godliness” ceases to be with them. When the light goes out, then darkness of the worst kind enters in. As Alma said, they are bound by the chains of hell. (See Al. 5:7-9.)

Keys of priesthood

There is a difference between receiving an office in the priesthood and receiving the keys of the priesthood. This we should clearly understand. Peter, James, and John conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood. Before that time John the Baptist came and conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood. But it was necessary for Elias, who lived in the days of Abraham, to come and restore the keys of his dispensation; for Moses to come and restore the keys of the gathering of Israel; and for Elijah to come and restore the keys of the sealing power, by which the hearts of the fathers and the children are turned to each other. In fact, it was necessary that the keys of all the dispensations should be restored in this dispensation of the fullness of times, and so the Prophet Joseph Smith has recorded it, as found in Doctrine and Covenants 128:20-21. Please read it.

From this description we discover that all who held keys of authority in dispensations from the days of Adam down came in this dispensation and declared their keys, their honors and priesthood. All of this had to be done, for this is the dispensation of restoration.

President Joseph F. Smith has given

us a very clear understanding of what is meant by keys of the priesthood in the book *Gospel Doctrine*, page 136.

So we learn that while all men hold the priesthood who are ordained to any office, yet there are special, or directing, authorities, bestowed upon those who are called to preside. These authorities are called keys. The bishop of a ward has the power to direct the members of his ward, for he holds the keys of presidency there, and he acts both as bishop and as the president of the ward by virtue of his high priesthood. Now, in his ward may live an apostle, but as a member of the ward the apostle is under the jurisdiction of his bishop. For instance, should the apostle desire to baptize one of his children, it would be his duty to obtain the permission of his bishop, for that is the order of the Church. The bishop holds the keys for the performance of all ordinances in his ward, but he may delegate authority for administering these to others.

The President holds the keys over the Church

The President of the Church, the Prophet Joseph Smith has clearly stated, holds the keys over all the Church, or the keys of the priesthood. There is only one at a time on earth who has this power. (D&C 132:7.) No man can officiate in and confer the blessings of the temple without the authority to do so being delegated to him by the President of the Church. No man can officiate in any capacity in this Church without the virtue accompanying him in that act, as it is obtained through the power and keys held by the President of the Church. The President has power, if the Lord should direct him to do so, to call home all the missionaries in the world. He could say that there shall be no more preaching of the gospel to the nations. He could forbid the official act of baptizing or of ordaining to the priesthood, anywhere in the world, if the Lord should so direct. This authority is vested in him, for he holds all the keys of the priesthood. If by virtue of his keys he should say that certain privileges should be withdrawn

from the people, then no man would have authority to officiate in conferring those particular privileges. Should anyone attempt to do so, the act would be invalid, and the one so attempting to officiate would have to answer before the bar of God, if not before the Church, and would be found in transgression. Let it be understood that no man has authority to perform sealings of wives to husbands, for time and eternity, outside a temple, because all such ordinances pertain to the house of the Lord, and the privilege of performing this ordinance elsewhere has been withdrawn by the one holding these keys. Neither can any man officiate in these or other sealings, unless he has been called and set apart and had that authority given him by the President of the Church, in whom those keys are vested. (D&C 132:7.)

When men are commissioned by the one who holds these keys, then their acts are valid. That which they do is sealed and ratified in the Church both on earth and in the heavens. When the apostles or other brethren visit the stakes of Zion and are appointed to set in order anything requiring attention there, they do it by virtue of the commission, or authority, delegated to them by the President of the Church.

This same principle applies in the lesser degree in stakes and in wards.

I hope and pray that what I have said to you good brethren will be of assistance to you, and may the blessings of the Lord be with you, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

I am sure that most of you recognize the name of Don Lind. I have asked him to come up here, and now I am going to ask him to bear his testimony to you. He is a man who has had a different experience to any other priesthood holder, and I am sure the young people throughout the Church, the young men holding the Aaronic Priesthood, and those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, would like to hear the testimony of an astronaut. This man has filled a mission in New England, was a Navy jet pilot; he is a scientist with a doctor of philosophy in Physics; he has been active in the Church wherever he has gone. He is an astronaut in the Apollo program, and I understand he flew his own jet here to be with us. We would appreciate it, Brother Lind, if you would bear your testimony to the priesthood.

Elder Don Lind

. . . Mormon astronaut

(Dr. Don Lind, LDS astronaut, missionary, jet pilot, scientist, was called on and spoke extemporaneously at the priesthood meeting at general conference, April 1967. These are his remarks.)

Brethren, it is an honor to be with you this evening.

It is amazing what irrelevant ideas come to your mind as you are walking up that flight of stairs. The thing I was thinking about was the fact that a great amount of our training is involved in such things as riding centrifuges, when you have a great variety of sensors attached rather painfully to your body to give the doctor a monitor of your pulse rate, heart

beat, and general physical condition. As I was climbing the stairs I was grateful that I wasn't being monitored, because I think I exceeded a number of limits. If lying on an Apollo couch is as disturbing as sitting in that little green chair, we may have to postpone a launch.

Brethren, it is a pleasure to be with you. I enjoyed greatly the first half of this meeting, as well as the afternoon session. I was grateful for the opportunity to come and be with you for conference. It has been inspiring.

When I was in grade school, a number of movies were made about great square-rigged whaling vessels. I always felt at that age in my life that I had been born at the wrong time, that I