

## Elder James E. Faust

### The keys that never rust

A few months ago my beloved Ruth, Elder Holland and his sweet Patty, and I accompanied a group into the fascinating old city of Jerusalem to look for the door with the name of Hyde carved on it. The enchanting smells of the open containers of spices and the sounds of men selling their wares were exhilarating. As we entered St. Saviour's Monastery, looking for the door, we entered into old passageways surrounded by stone walls. We were told that some parts of the walls went back to the time of the Crusaders. On one wall hung an assortment of ancient rusted keys. Some of these keys were huge. All were larger than the keys we use today. Many of them were very ornate. Many of the doors the keys were made to open no longer exist, or if they do, the keys and the locks would be too rusty to open them.

Today I speak of keys other than those of metal. The keys I speak of never rust. These are the keys of life and salvation in the kingdom of God. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "I will give you a key that will never rust, if you will stay with the majority of the Twelve Apostles, and the records of the Church, you will never be led astray."<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet also stated: "The Priesthood is everlasting. The Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured before him."<sup>2</sup> Peter, James, and John conferred the keys of the kingdom of God upon the Prophet Joseph and ordained him to be an Apostle and a special witness of the name of the Savior and to bear the keys of his ministry.<sup>3</sup> Keys that pertain to the gathering of Israel, the dispensation of Abraham, and, indispensably, the sealing power were conferred upon the Prophet by Moses, Elias, and Elijah in 1836.<sup>4</sup>

### Joseph Smith gave keys to the Twelve

Prior to the martyrdom, no doubt with a sense of foreboding, the Prophet Joseph prepared for his death. President Joseph Fielding Smith states:

"The Prophet declared that he knew not why, but the Lord commanded him to endow the Twelve with these keys and priesthood, and after it was done, he rejoiced very much, saying in substance, 'Now, if they kill me, you have all the keys and all the ordinances and you can confer them upon others, and the powers of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom as fast as you will be able to build it up, and upon your shoulders will the responsibility of leading this people rest.'"<sup>5</sup>

After learning of the deaths of the Prophet Joseph and the Patriarch Hyrum, Wilford Woodruff reports his meeting with Brigham Young, who was then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as follows: "I met Brigham Young in the streets of Boston, he having just returned, opposite to Sister Voce's house. We reached out our hands, but neither of us was able to speak a word. . . . After we had done weeping we began to converse. . . . In the course of the conversation, he [Brigham Young] smote his hand upon his thigh and said, 'Thank God, the keys of the kingdom are here.'"<sup>6</sup>

### Choosing the successor to the President

When Brigham Young returned to Nauvoo, Sidney Rigdon, who had been a Counselor to Joseph Smith, challenged the leadership of Brigham Young and the Apostles. Said Brigham Young to the Saints in meeting assembled, "If the people want President Rigdon to lead them they may have him; but I say unto you that the Quorum of the Twelve have the keys of the kingdom of God in all the

world." He continued: "I know where the keys of the kingdom are, and where they will eternally be. You cannot call a man to be a prophet; you cannot take Elder Rigdon and place him above the Twelve; if so, he must be ordained by them."<sup>7</sup>

Brigham Young, as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, subsequently became the President of the Church, following the Prophet Joseph Smith. So it was with President Howard W. Hunter following the death of President Ezra Taft Benson. As President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

"There is no mystery about the choosing of the successor to the President of the Church. The Lord settled this a long time ago, and the *senior apostle automatically becomes the presiding officer of the Church*, and he is so sustained by the Council of the Twelve which becomes the presiding body of the Church when there is no First Presidency. The president is *not elected*, but he has to be *sustained* both by his brethren of the Council and by the members of the Church."<sup>8</sup>

#### Howard W. Hunter becomes President

On June 5, 1994, the Quorum of the Twelve, of which President Hunter was then President, collectively holding all of the keys of the kingdom, convened in the Salt Lake Temple. President Howard W. Hunter was then ordained and set apart by the Twelve, with President Gordon B. Hinckley as voice for the Twelve. President Hunter thus became the President and legal administrator of the Church and the only man authorized to dispense, oversee, and exercise all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. He also became the successor to the keys held by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, and Ezra Taft Benson.

The keys given by the Savior to Peter, James, and John, and given by them to the Prophet Joseph, have not rusted. They will open all spiritual doors of the dispensation of the fulness of times. They are now exercised by President Howard W. Hunter, his Counselors in the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve, who serve under the direction of the First Presidency.

#### Keys to remain until the Second Coming

How long will these keys last? President Wilford Woodruff stated:

"When the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of God, the keys of the Melchisedec Priesthood, of the apostleship, and sealed them upon the head of Joseph Smith, He sealed them upon his head to stay here upon the earth until the coming of the Son of Man. . . . They were with him to the day of his death. They then rested upon the head of another man. . . . He held those keys to the hour of his death. They then fell by turn, or in the providence of God, upon Wilford Woodruff.

"I say to the Latter-day Saints the keys of the kingdom of God are here, and they are going to stay here, too, until the coming of the Son of Man. Let all Israel understand that. They may not rest upon my head but a short time, but they will then rest on the head of another apostle, and another after him, and so continue until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven to 'reward every man according to the deeds done in the body.'"<sup>9</sup>

There is only one head of this church, and he is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the head of all. Under him stands President Howard W. Hunter, the man whom the Lord has selected to stand at the head of the Church, with his Counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. All other organizations in the Church are subordinate to those who have these keys.

### Importance of spiritual keys

Why are these spiritual keys so important? These spiritual keys hold "the right to enjoy the blessing of communication with the heavens, and the privilege and authority to administer in the ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to preach the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."<sup>10</sup> Keys of the ministering of angels are the right of the Aaronic Priesthood.<sup>11</sup> The higher Melchizedek Priesthood "holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God."<sup>12</sup> To be efficacious and valid, every act in the Church must be performed under the authority of the keys at the appropriate time and place and in the proper manner and order. The authority and power to direct all of the labors of the kingdom of God on earth constitute the keys of the priesthood. Those who possess them have the right to preside over and direct the affairs of the Church in their jurisdiction.

Why is it so necessary to follow those who have the keys of the priesthood? That principle has guided this church and its people since the beginning, and it is a principle of revelation. Among the members of the Church have been the living oracles of God, who have held the keys to direct this holy work. Without prophets, seers, and revelators, the Church and the kingdom of God cannot grow and prosper.

### Story of the Vaudois

Valdesius, a citizen of Lyons, France, recognized the need for apostolic direction in the year 1170. A rich man, he abandoned his wealth so that he could live the simple life of a follower of Christ's Apostles. He worked primarily among the poor in and around Lyons and had parts of the Bible translated into their language. He and his followers traveled two by two, teaching the simple

truths of the Bible. Some crossed the high mountains of the Alps to live in the Piedmont Valleys of Italy.<sup>13</sup>

This valiant band, who came to be known as Valdensians or Vaudois, were viewed by their contemporaries as dangerous dissenters. Over the centuries they were "burned at the stake, buried alive, stoned, . . . hanged, herded into . . . disease-laden dungeons, [and] pursued . . . over rocks and crags and icy mountains."<sup>14</sup> Yet they clung on tenaciously, turning back whole armies of tyrants to preserve their precious heritage of faith in the early Apostles, who held the keys that never rust.

In 1655 their overlord, the Duke of Savoy, issued an edict that they were to renounce or be massacred. The ensuing slaughter at last awakened the conscience of some of their neighbors, one of whom was John Milton, the great English poet. Repulsed by this evil deed, he penned his sonnet "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont":

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered  
Saints, whose bones  
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine moun-  
tains cold.<sup>15</sup>

In 1850, Elder Lorenzo Snow of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ascended a very high mountain near LaTour to visit the Vaudois of the Piedmont. He and his two companions stood on a bold projecting rock, where he proclaimed that Joseph Smith had seen the Father and the Son and had restored the gospel in its fulness and completeness. He testified that the keys of the holy apostleship had been restored. He further testified that there were indeed living Apostles and prophets upon the earth. Many believed his startling message and joined the Church. Moved by his experience with the Vaudois living in the Alpine mountain valleys, President Snow cited the stirring words:

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,  
 Our God, our fathers' God;  
 Thou hast made thy children mighty  
 By the touch of the mountain sod.<sup>16</sup>

John Daniel Malan was the first of the Vaudois to be baptized on October 27, 1850, followed by the families of the Cardons, Stalles, Beuses, Pons, Malans, Gaudins, Chatelains, and many others. Some were in the first handcart companies to come to the Salt Lake Valley in the early 1850s. These families intermarried into other well-known families in the western United States, including the Larsons, Maughans, Crocketts, Miners, Budge, Thatchers, Steeds, and Parkinsons.<sup>17</sup> Drawing from their roots in the Vaudois mountain sod, many of their descendants tended the vineyards of the newly restored church and today are making singular contributions to the worldwide church, believing, as did their forebears, that Apostles hold the keys that never rust.

### Following the prophet brings strength

I strongly counsel all who have membership in this church to follow the teachings and counsel of those who now have the keys as prophets, seers, and revelators. They are the ones who will inspire us to deal with the vicissitudes of our time. I plead with all not to try to selectively invoke gospel principles or scripture to wrongly justify spiritual disobedience or to separate themselves from the responsibilities of covenants and ordinances contrary to the counsel of those who have the prophetic voice in the Church. The scriptures and doctrines of the Church are not, as Peter warned, "of any private interpretation."<sup>18</sup>

Great temporal and spiritual strength flows from following those who have the keys of the kingdom of God in our time. Personal strength and power result

from obedience to eternal principles taught by the living legates of the Lord. May the Spirit of God rest upon us as we follow the living oracles.

As we conclude this historic conference, I am pleased to testify to the world of a very significant matter. As a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I verify that among those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth, there is complete unity and love and respect for each other. We totally sustain and uphold President Howard W. Hunter, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and President Thomas S. Monson as the First Presidency. This feeling of complete unity and support for the First Presidency was expressed last Thursday in the Salt Lake Temple in a proclamation by President Boyd K. Packer on behalf of the Twelve. This was joined in by President Rex D. Pinegar, representing the Seventies, and Bishop Merrill J. Bateman for the Presiding Bishopric. All of the General Authorities then voted to fully sustain the expressions of President Packer of full support for the First Presidency and for each other. In this unity, the gates of hell will not prevail against us. I so testify and witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Quoted in "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Woman's Journal*, Dec. 1906, p. 543; see also Don L. Searle, "A Disciple in Deed," *Ensign*, June 1994, p. 15.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 158; see also Matthew 17:1-3.
3. See D&C 27:12-13.
4. See D&C 110.
5. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:259.
6. "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Millennial Star*, 2 Sept. 1889, p. 546.

7. *History of the Church*, 7:233.
8. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:156.
9. *Millennial Star*, 2 Sept. 1889, p. 547.
10. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), p. 142.
11. See D&C 13; 107:20.
12. D&C 84:19.
13. See Giorgio Tourn, *The Waldensians: The First 800 Years*, trans. Camillo P. Merlino (Torino: Claudiana, 1980), pp. 3-4.
14. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Vaudois Revisited," *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1948, p. 12.
15. Lines 1-2.
16. "For the Strength of the Hills," *Hymns*, no. 35. Original text was a poem titled "Hymn of the Vaudois Mountaineers in Times of Persecution."
17. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Vaudois of the Alpine Valleys and Their Contribution to Utah and Latter-day Saint History" (student paper, Brigham Young University, 1960), pp. 8-9, 16; in Historical Department, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City.
18. 2 Peter 1:20.

### President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, also a member of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, who was sustained yesterday as the new general president of the Primary.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful for the opportunity to join with you during this general conference in sustaining President Howard W. Hunter as the fourteenth President of the Church in this dispensation. He is a man without guile. I sustain him with all of my heart and pray that I might serve faithfully under his inspired leadership, and also his marvelous Counselors.

### Extend deep roots into the gospel soil

Recently on the island of Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands, Sister Wirthlin and I passed by two very large trees that the wind had blown down and uprooted. These huge trees had extremely shallow roots. I wondered if they would have survived the winds and storms if their roots had been deeper. Relatively mild gusts of wind blow some trees down. Graceful palm trees, for example, are lovely to look at but will not stand up in

a heavy wind because they are not well anchored. Contrast this with giant oak trees that have deep root systems that can extend two-and-one-half times their height. Such trees rarely are blown down regardless of how violent the storms may be.

Faithful members of the Church should be like oak trees and should extend deep roots into the fertile soil of the fundamental principles of the gospel. We should understand and live by the simple, basic truths and not complicate them. Our foundations should be solid and deep-rooted so we can withstand the winds of temptation, false doctrine, adversity, and the onslaught of the adversary without being swayed or uprooted. Members whose roots are only at the surface of the gospel need to sink them deeper until they reach the bedrock below the soft topsoil.

Spiritual nourishment is just as important as a balanced diet to keep