

# The Fulness of the Blessings of the Priesthood

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*"And 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).*

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*We can bring the fulness of the blessings of the priesthood into our families.*

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## Elijah Restored the Fulness of the Power of the Priesthood

When the angel Moroni first visited Joseph Smith in 1823, he promised that Elijah would come (see Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39). Elijah did come—to the Kirtland Temple in 1836 (see D&C 110:13–16). At this time he restored the keys that priesthood holders had to have before they could use the full power of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had received the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1829, but until the coming of Elijah, they could not make its full blessings available to mankind. In the following statement, President Joseph Fielding Smith explained the authority that Elijah restored to the earth:

*"Elijah came to restore to the earth, by conferring on mortal prophets duly commissioned of the Lord, the fulness of the power of priesthood. This priesthood holds the keys of binding and sealing on earth and in heaven of all the ordinances and principles pertaining to the salvation of man, that they may thus become valid in the celestial kingdom of God. . . ."*

*"It is by virtue of this authority that ordinances are performed in the temples for both the living and the dead. It is the power which unites for eternity husbands and wives, when they enter into marriage according to the eternal plan. It is the authority by which parents obtain the claim of parenthood, concerning their children, through all eternity and not only for time, which makes eternal the family in the kingdom of God" (Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 2:117).*

The power to unite families for eternity was one of the greatest blessings that the power restored by Elijah made possible. Through this power, worthy and authorized priesthood bearers can perform temple marriages and seal families together through all generations.

## Temple Marriage Opens the Way to Receiving a Fulness of Priesthood Blessings

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that a person obtains the fulness of the priesthood "by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 308).

As a man and a woman kneel together at the altar of the temple and enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, they are complying with a necessary step in receiving the fulness of the priesthood. They initiate a new organization—an eternal family—within the family of God.

Marriage in the temple is so important that those who do not receive this ordinance cannot enter the highest degree of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 131:1–4). Properly viewed, the family is an eternal entity presided over by a righteous bearer of the Melchizedek Priesthood, assisted by a wife who has been sealed to him for time and eternity and who is responsible with him for the home and family. This family fits into a plan for eternal families within the family of God. It unites a husband and a wife with their children and grandchildren to the latest generation and with their parents and grandparents to the earliest generation.

Through our families—eternally sealed together—we may partake of the fulness of the priesthood. Unless our families are united by the power of the priesthood, we will be separate, single individuals in the eternal worlds.

How does the commandment to marry for all eternity apply to those who, through no fault of their own, do not marry in this life? President Joseph Fielding Smith explained the responsibility of sisters in this manner:

"You good sisters, who are single and alone, do not fear, do not feel that blessings are going to be withheld from you. You are not under any obligation or necessity of accepting some proposal that comes to you which is distasteful for fear you will come under condemnation. If in your hearts you feel that the gospel is true, and would under proper conditions receive these ordinances and sealing blessings in the temple of the Lord; and that is your faith and your hope and your desire, and that does not come to you now; the Lord will make it up, and you shall be blessed—for *no blessing shall be withheld*.

"The Lord will judge you according to the desires of your hearts when blessings are withheld in this life, and he is not going to condemn you for that which you cannot help. . . .

"No woman will be condemned by the Lord for refusing to accept a proposal which she feels she could not properly accept. In my judgment it is far better for our good girls to refuse an offer of marriage when they think that the companionship of the man would be disagreeable, or if he is one they do not and believe they cannot learn to love.

"If in her heart the young woman accepts fully the word of the Lord, and under proper conditions would abide by the law, but refuses an offer when she fully believes that the conditions would not justify her in entering a marriage contract, which would bind her forever to one she does not love, she shall not lose her reward. The Lord will judge her by the desires of the heart, and the day will come when the blessings withheld shall be given, though it be postponed until the life to come" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:76-77).

### **We Should Encourage Our Families to Seek the Fulness of Priesthood Blessings**

The angel Moroni told Joseph Smith that Elijah would "plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (D&C 2:2; compare Malachi 4:6).

Who are the fathers to whom these promises were made, and what are the promises? The Lord has made great promises to all of his prophets, beginning with Adam. But the promises that most concern us are the ones he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As members of the Church, we are literally or by adoption the seed of Abraham and members of the house of Israel. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

"Abraham did what every righteous man ought to do. He received the gospel, he got the priesthood, he had the power of God in his hand, and with that established in his hands and in his family, he sought for righteousness. He sought the blessings of the fathers. He sought for the patriarchal order. He sought for the rights that came down from Adam, the first man, so that he could receive, possess, and inherit everything that God had promised Adam, and thereafter had promised Noah. And Abraham received these things. And then Isaac and Jacob received them in turn. So for our purposes, when we talk about the promises made to the fathers, we are talking about the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. . . . What I want to receive and possess is everything that God promised Abraham" ("President Joseph Fielding Smith Memorial Address," *Syllabus for the Eleventh Annual Priesthood Genealogy Seminar* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976], 1:291).

In Abraham 2:9–11, we learn that God made great promises to Abraham. God said that Abraham's seed would be a great nation, that they would receive the full blessings of the priesthood, and that they would have the responsibility of sharing these blessings with all the families who had lived or would live on earth.

President Ezra Taft Benson explained that we should teach our children about the full blessings of the priesthood. "This understanding, I believe, will foster within them a desire to seek their priesthood blessings just as Abraham sought his. . . .

"When our children obey the Lord and go to the temple to receive their blessings and enter into the marriage covenant, they enter into the same *order of the priesthood* that God instituted in the very beginning with father Adam.

"This order entitles them to the same blessings of Abraham, of whom the Lord said that he 'hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne.' (D&C 132:29.)

"Then He significantly added: 'This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham.' (D&C 132:31.)

"So again I emphasize: This order of priesthood can only be entered into when we comply with all the commandments of God and seek the blessings of the fathers as did Abraham by going to our Father's house. They are received in no other place on this earth! . . .

"Now let me say something else to all who can worthily go to the House of the Lord. When you attend the temple and perform the ordinances that pertain to the House of the Lord, certain blessings will come to you:

- You will receive the spirit of Elijah, which will turn your hearts to your spouse, to your children, and to your forebears.
- You will love your family with a deeper love than you have loved before.
- Your hearts will be turned to your fathers and theirs to you.
- You will be endowed with power from on high as the Lord has promised.
- You will receive the key of the knowledge of God. (See D&C 84:19.) You will learn how you can be like Him. Even the power of godliness will be manifest to you. (See D&C 84:20.)
- You will be doing a great service to those who have passed to the other side of the veil in order that they might be 'judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.' (D&C 138:34.)" ("What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple," *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, pp. 8, 10).

## **Conclusion**

Surely it is true that the message revealed by the Lord through Elijah is a message of salvation for the family. If we truly understood that message, we would not rest until both our fathers and our children had been saved. We can do this work of salvation by marrying in the temple and living up to all our covenants and by offering the blessings of the priesthood to our families.

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## **Suggestions for Teachers**

1. Summarize the information given in the heading to Doctrine and Covenants section 110. Read verses 13 through 16, which tell about the visit of Elijah to the Kirtland Temple. Ask: What priesthood blessings do we have because Elijah restored the keys of the sealing power? (Temple marriage, sealings to children and ancestors, eternal families.)
2. Ask: To receive the full blessings of the priesthood, what must we do besides be married in the temple and honor our own covenants? (The Lord has commanded us to turn our hearts to our fathers and make gospel blessings available to them. As we do, we allow them to be sealed into eternal families as well.)
3. Explain that Elijah restored the keys that priesthood holders had to have before they could use the full power of the Melchizedek Priesthood. We can bring this power into our lives and our families' lives by marrying in the temple and by turning our hearts to our fathers. Challenge the sisters to increase their desire to have all the blessings that the Lord offers to his children.