

The Message of the Restoration

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We declare to the world that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth.

sick. As James declared in the New Testament: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14).

Now finally, I mention the blessings of the house of the Lord, which have come of the Restoration of the ancient gospel.

These temples, which we have greatly multiplied in recent years, offer blessings that are had nowhere else. All that occurs in these sacred houses has to do with the eternal nature of man. Here, husbands and wives and children are sealed together as families for all eternity. Marriage is not "until death do ye part." It is forever, if the parties live worthy of the blessing. Most remarkable of all is the authority to do vicarious work in the house of the Lord. Here, ordinances are performed in behalf of the dead who did not have opportunity to receive them while in life.

I was recently told of a woman in Idaho Falls, a widow. Over a period of 15 years she acted as proxy in giving the temple endowment to 20,000 individuals in the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple. She completed her 20,000th endowment on a Friday and returned on Saturday to do five more. She passed away the following week.

Just think of what this one little woman did. She performed these vicarious endowments for as many people as are assembled in this Conference Center this morning. Think of the reception she must have received on the other side.

Now, my brothers and sisters, this is my testimony, which I solemnly bear before you.

God bless you, every one, you faithful Latter-day Saints. May there be peace and love in your homes and faith and prayer to guide you in all that you undertake is my humble prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



In one of my stake conference assignments in the Salt Lake Valley, I invited a young deacons quorum president to join me to talk about the keys of the priesthood. I wanted him to understand that he held a very special office that included the keys to preside over a quorum of the priesthood. We talked about the great responsibility it is to hold keys and how special it is to belong to a quorum. At the conclusion of the little presentation, I asked him how many members he had in his quorum. His answer was 14.

Then the question: "How many are active?"

The answer: "12."

Then I asked: "What about the other two?"

His response was: "I need to get to work and make them an active part of our quorum."

I asked him how long that would take. He thought maybe three months. I encouraged him in his efforts.

Three months later, almost to the day, I received a letter from him informing me that all the members of his quorum were now active. He said he had befriended them, and one was now attending deacons quorum meetings, and the other had been ordained a teacher by the bishop. I was overwhelmed with his response. What an example of one honoring his priesthood and using priesthood keys to carry out an assignment the Lord has given him to fulfill. I could not help but marvel at the design the Lord has established for the administration of His work here on earth using the powers of the priesthood.

This young man, not yet 14 years of age, is receiving valuable training to prepare him for a lifetime of service. Can you see him in the next five or six years continuing this service with a badge on his suit coat indicating that he is giving two years of his life as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?



Sister missionaries from the Utah Salt Lake City Temple Square Mission greet conference visitors.

In addition to the experience he is gaining exercising his priesthood in service to others, this young man's preparation must also include a solid understanding of the message of the Restoration—the message that thousands of missionaries today are declaring to the world. It is the message that in our day, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the gospel has been restored for the blessing of all who will listen and obey.

The First Vision

The dispensation of the fulness of times was ushered in by a very special vision to another young man not quite 15 years of age who went to the woods to pray for answers to the questions he had in his mind concerning religion. Joseph Smith describes the glorious vision that was unfolded to his view, in these words:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose

brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

This vision revealed unto us that God our Father and Jesus Christ, His Beloved Son, are two separate personages. Each has a body of flesh and bones that is glorified and perfected, thus clearing up the misconception that had been in existence for many centuries concerning the concept of God. Is it any wonder that when Joseph Smith wrote the Articles of Faith, in the first one he declared, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost?” (Articles of Faith 1:1).

The Book of Mormon

Knowing that doubt, disbelief, and misinformation would immediately follow the Prophet as he recounted the First Vision, the Lord brought forth the Book of Mormon, another

testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. This ancient volume of holy scriptures is a sacred companion to the Bible, containing the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. It also provides convincing evidence to the world that Joseph Smith is truly a prophet of God. The Doctrine and Covenants contains the following declaration about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon:

“[God] gave unto [Joseph Smith] commandments which inspired him;

“And gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon;

“Which contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also;

“Which was given by inspiration, and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and is declared unto the world by them—

“Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation,

as well as in generations of old” (D&C 20:7–11).

The translation of the Book of Mormon is a miracle in itself and gives further proof of the book’s divine origin. When Oliver Cowdery arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, on April 5, 1829, to serve as the Prophet’s scribe, only a few pages of the final text had been translated. That evening Joseph and Oliver sat down together and discussed the Prophet’s experiences long into the night. Two days later, on April 7, they commenced the translation of the work. Over the next three months, Joseph translated at an amazing rate—approximately 500 printed pages in about 60 working days.

Oliver wrote of this remarkable experience: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the *inspiration* of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the *Urim and Thummim* . . . the history, or record, called “The book of Mormon”” (*Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, 14; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

The Priesthood

As they proceeded, Joseph and Oliver were thrilled with the doctrines contained in this book. They were particularly impressed with the doctrine of baptism as taught by the resurrected Savior during His visit to the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere. The importance of the doctrine of baptism was clearly unfolded to their minds. They determined that they must seek the Lord in mighty prayer that they might learn how they could obtain the blessing of being baptized themselves.

On May 15, 1829, they went to the woods near the Susquehanna River and knelt in prayer. Oliver describes what happened next: “On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of



the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the vail was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the gospel of repentance!—What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world [was] racked and distracted—while millions were [groping] as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld—our ears heard” (*Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, 15; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

The angel introduced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. He laid his hands upon the heads of Joseph and Oliver and said:

“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; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”

“He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go

and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

“Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded” (Joseph Smith—History 1:69–71).

A short time later, the Apostles Peter, James, and John appeared, placed their hands on the heads of these two fellow servants, and conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The Church of Jesus Christ

Now that the power to act in the name of the Lord was again on the earth, Joseph was commanded to formally organize the Church. On April 6, 1830, at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, six men who had previously been baptized voted unanimously to organize, according to the commandments of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. At this meeting a revelation was received:

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou [Joseph Smith] shalt be called a seer,



a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

“Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith.

“Which church was organized and established in the year of your Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April.

“Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith” (D&C 21:1–5).

Thus the Church of Jesus Christ was again in existence on the earth to

bless mankind with the doctrines and teachings of the Savior. This Church was organized according to the plan the Lord had established anciently.

In the Bible, in the book of Ephesians, Paul declared:

“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–15).

President Hinckley has said concerning the Restoration: “After many generations had walked the earth—so many of them in conflict, hatred, darkness, and evil—there arrived the great, new day of the Restoration. This glorious gospel was ushered in with the appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph. The dawn of the dispensation of the fulness of times rose upon the world. All of the good, the beautiful, the divine of all previous dispensations was restored in this most remarkable season” (“The Dawning of a Brighter Day,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2004, 83).

Our message is unique. We declare to the world that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth. We declare with boldness that the keys of the priesthood have been restored to man, with the power to seal on earth and in the heavens. The saving ordinances pronounced by the Lord as requirements for entering into eternal life with Him can now be performed with binding authority by those who worthily exercise the power of His holy priesthood. We declare to the world that this is the day referred to by biblical prophets as the latter days. It is the final time, before the coming of Jesus Christ to rule and reign over the earth.

We invite all to listen to the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from us. Then you can compare the glorious message with what you may hear from others, and you can determine which is from God and which is from man.

My witness to you is that this is the Church of Jesus Christ, established in the latter days. In the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■