

“I Will Give unto Thee the Keys of the Kingdom”

Lesson
13

Matthew 15:21–17:9

Purpose To strengthen class members’ testimonies that Jesus is the Christ and that the priesthood keys bestowed on the Mount of Transfiguration have been restored.

- Preparation**
1. Read, ponder, and pray about the following scriptures:
 - a. Matthew 15:21–39. Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile woman and miraculously feeds more than 4,000 people, many of them Gentiles.
 - b. Matthew 16:13–19. Peter testifies that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus teaches that his Church is built upon the rock of revelation and promises to give Peter the keys of the kingdom.
 - c. Matthew 17:1–9. Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John.
 2. Additional reading: Mark 7:24–9:10; Luke 9:18–36; 12:54–57; Bible Dictionary, “Revelation,” 762; “Transfiguration, Mount of,” 786.
 3. If a map of Palestine in New Testament times is available (map 14 in the LDS edition of the King James Bible), use it during the lesson. You may want to make an enlarged copy so class members can see it better.
 4. Suggestion for teaching: The LDS edition of the King James Bible contains many scripture study aids, including footnotes, chapter headings, maps, the Topical Guide, the Bible Dictionary, and excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Use these resources in preparing and teaching your lessons, and help class members learn to use them in their personal scripture study.
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Suggested Lesson Development

Attention Activity As appropriate, use the following activity or one of your own to begin the lesson. Share the following story:

Many years ago President Spencer W. Kimball and several other Church leaders visited the small cathedral in Copenhagen, Denmark, that houses Bertel Thorvaldsen’s famous statues of Jesus Christ and the Twelve Apostles. Speaking of this experience, Elder Rex D. Pinegar said: “As we looked at those beautiful works of art we noted that Peter was sculptured with large keys in his hands. . . . As we were ready to leave the cathedral, the Danish caretaker . . . was standing near the door awaiting our departure. President Kimball shook his hand [and] thanked him for his kindness in letting us visit the cathedral. Then the president began an explanation of the church established by Jesus Christ and of its importance to us. . . . Gathering President Tanner, Elder Monson, and Elder Packer closer to him, the president continued, ‘We are *living* apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are Twelve Apostles and three others who are the presidency of the Church. We hold the real keys, as Peter did, and we use them every day. They are in use constantly’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 104; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 69).

Explain that this lesson will discuss priesthood keys and how Peter received them on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Scripture Discussion and Application

Have class members turn in their scriptures to the map of Palestine, or display the enlarged copy you have made (see the “Preparation” section). Point out that the events discussed in this lesson occurred in Tyre, Sidon, Decapolis, and Caesarea Philippi. Help class members find these places on the map. Explain that Jesus’ travels in this area brought him into contact with many Gentiles (non-Israelites).

1. Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile and feeds more than 4,000 people.

Discuss Matthew 15:21–39. Invite class members to read selected verses aloud.

- What did the woman from Canaan ask Jesus to do? (See Matthew 15:22.) Why didn’t Jesus grant her request immediately? (See Matthew 15:24. She was not a Jew, and the blessings of the gospel were to be offered to the Jews before the Gentiles.) Why did Jesus finally heal the woman’s daughter? (See Matthew 15:28.) What can we learn from this woman? (Answers may include that those who do not have the gospel fulness may nevertheless have great faith, and that we should not lose faith when blessings are not granted as quickly as we wish.)
- The Savior departed for the Sea of Galilee, traveling through Decapolis (Mark 7:31). Decapolis was an area east of the Sea of Galilee where many Gentiles lived. How did the Lord show compassion for the people there? (See Matthew 15:29–31.) How did the multitude react? (See Matthew 15:31.) What miracles in our day have caused you to glorify God?
- The multitude stayed with Jesus for three days, and when it was time for them to leave, Jesus did not want to send them away hungry. What miracle did he perform for them? (See Matthew 15:32–38.)

Explain that this miracle was different from the earlier feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:15–21) in that many of these people were Gentiles. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that with the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus “was laying the foundation for his incomparable sermon on the Bread of Life” (John 6:22–69; see lesson 12). With the later feeding of the 4,000, Jesus was symbolically teaching that in the future, living bread would be offered to the Gentile nations. (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 1:375.)

2. Peter is promised the keys of the kingdom.

Read and discuss Matthew 16:13–19.

- Jesus left Decapolis and went to the area of Caesarea Philippi, where he asked his disciples, “Whom say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). What was Peter’s response? (See Matthew 16:16.) What was the source of Peter’s testimony? (See Matthew 16:17.) What can we learn from this account about our testimonies?
- Jesus said to Peter, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the rock Jesus referred to is revelation (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 274). In what way is revelation the foundation of the Lord’s Church?
- The Savior promised to give Peter the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19). What are these keys? Why are they necessary? (See D&C 128:9–10; 132:46.) Who holds them today?

President Joseph F. Smith taught:

“The Priesthood in general is the authority given to man to act for God. Every man ordained to any degree of the Priesthood, has this authority delegated to him.

“But it is necessary that every act performed under this authority shall be done at the proper time and place, in the proper way, and after the proper order. The power of directing these labors constitutes the *keys* of the Priesthood. In their fulness, the keys are held by only one person at a time, the prophet and president of the Church. He may delegate any portion of this power to another, in which case that person holds the keys of that particular labor” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 136).

- Why is a conviction that the prophet holds these keys an essential part of our testimonies?

3. Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John.

Read and discuss Matthew 17:1–9. Explain that about a week after Peter was promised the keys of the kingdom, he, James, and John witnessed the Transfiguration of the Savior and received important knowledge and keys. This was one of the most significant events in the New Testament. It helped prepare Jesus for his Atonement and fortified the three Apostles for the additional responsibilities they would soon have as leaders of the Church.

- What does *transfiguration* mean? (A temporary change in a person’s appearance and nature; a transformation to a more glorified state. It is brought about by the power of God. See D&C 67:11; Moses 1:11.)
- According to Matthew 17:1–5, what happened when Jesus, Peter, James, and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration? (You may want to list class members’ responses on the chalkboard.)
 - a. Jesus’ face shone like the sun, and his clothing became brilliantly white.
 - b. Moses and Elias (Elijah; see footnote 3*b*) appeared.
 - c. “A bright cloud overshadowed them,” and they heard the voice of the Father bearing witness of his Son.

You may want to explain that the name *Elias* is used several ways in the scriptures. In Matthew 17:3–4 it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name *Elijah*. In other places (such as Matthew 17:10–13), it is a title describing someone as a forerunner, or preparer.

Explain that latter-day prophets have taught more about what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration. Review the following teachings with class members and, if desired, summarize them on the chalkboard:

- a. Peter, James, and John saw a vision of the transfiguration of the earth at the Savior’s Second Coming (D&C 63:20–21).
- b. They were “transfigured before [Christ]” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 158).
- c. They were taught about the Savior’s death and resurrection (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 9:31).
- d. They received from Jesus, Moses, and Elijah the priesthood keys they would need to govern the Church after the Savior’s death (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 158; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:110).

- In 1836 Moses and Elijah returned again to the earth. They laid their hands on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to restore the same keys given to Peter, James, and John. Which keys did Moses restore? (See D&C 110:11. The keys of the gathering of Israel.) Which keys did Elijah restore? (See D&C 110:13–16. The keys of the sealing power.) How are these keys used today? (In missionary work and temple work, which are conducted under the direction of the President of the Church.)
- Elder David B. Haight taught that Jesus’ Transfiguration “was meant for our spiritual enlightenment as well as for those who were personal witnesses” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 7). What can we learn from the Transfiguration to help us when we need spiritual strength? You may want to review the following ideas presented by Elder Haight (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 9–10; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 7–9):
 - a. We should follow the Savior’s example by praying fervently when we need spiritual strength (Luke 9:28). Speaking of the Transfiguration, Elder Haight said: “Perhaps Jesus felt not only a sense of the heavenly calm which that solitary opportunity for communion with His Father would bring, but even more, a sense that He would be supported in the coming hour by ministrations not of this earth. . . . As He prayed to His Father, He was elevated far above the doubt and wickedness of the world which had rejected Him.”
 - b. We can have the assurance that Jesus will strengthen us as he did Peter, James, and John. Elder Haight said, “He took His three apostles with Him in the belief that they, after having seen His glory . . . might be fortified, that their faith might be strengthened to prepare them for the insults and humiliating events which were to follow.”
 - c. We can be strengthened by testimony of the Savior (Matthew 17:5) and by the doctrines of the gospel. Elder Haight said, “The three chosen apostles were taught of [the Savior’s] coming death and also His resurrection, teachings that would strengthen each of them in the eventful days ahead.”

Conclusion

Emphasize that as Latter-day Saints we have information to help us understand what took place on the Mount of Transfiguration. Testify of the importance of revelation in the Church today and the necessity of priesthood keys. Assure class members that we, like Peter, can know through the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Additional Teaching Idea

The following material supplements the suggested lesson outline. You may want to use this idea as part of the lesson.

Instances when the Father testified of the Son

There are four instances recorded in the scriptures when the Father introduced and testified of his Son. One of them is discussed in this lesson. Invite class members to recall the other three.

1. Jesus’ baptism (Matthew 3:13–17)
2. The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–9)
3. Jesus’ appearance to the Nephites (3 Nephi 11:1–7)
4. Joseph Smith’s First Vision (Joseph Smith—History 1:13–17)