





**By President
Henry B. Eyring**
First Counselor in
the First Presidency

The RESTORATION *of* PRIESTHOOD KEYS

The Savior built His Church on a foundation of apostles and prophets, who hold all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time.

Many years ago I spoke in an ancient theater in Ephesus. Bright sunlight flooded the ground where the Apostle Paul had stood to preach. My topic was Paul, the Apostle called of God.

The audience was hundreds of Latter-day Saints. They were arranged on the rows of stone benches the Ephesians had sat upon more than a millennium before. Among them were two living Apostles, Elder Mark E. Petersen and Elder James E. Faust.

As you can imagine, I had prepared carefully. I had read the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles, both those of Paul and his fellow Apostles. I had read and pondered Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

I tried my best to honor Paul and his office. After the talk a number of people said kind things. Both of the living Apostles were generous in their comments. But later Elder Faust took me aside and, with a smile and with softness in his voice, said, "That was a good talk. But you left out the most important thing you could have said."

I asked him what that was. Weeks later he consented to tell me. His answer has been teaching me ever since.

He said that I could have told the people that if the Saints who heard Paul had possessed a testimony of the value and the power of the keys he held, perhaps the Apostles would not have had to be taken from the earth.

That sent me back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. I could see that Paul wanted



the people to feel the value of the chain of priesthood keys reaching from the Lord through His Apostles to them, the members of the Lord's Church. Paul was trying to build a testimony of those keys.

Paul testified to the Ephesians that Christ was at the head of His Church. And he taught that the Savior built His Church on a foundation of apostles and prophets, who hold all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time (see Ephesians 2:19–20).

The Priesthood Has Been Restored

Despite the clarity and the power of his teaching and his example, Paul knew that an apostasy would come

(see Acts 20:29–30; 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3). He knew that apostles and prophets would be taken from the earth. And he knew that they would, in some great, future day, be restored. He wrote of that time to the Ephesians, speaking of what the Lord would do: “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10).

Paul looked forward to the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith, when the heavens would be opened again. It happened. John the Baptist came and conferred on mortals the Priesthood of Aaron and the keys of the ministering of angels and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins (see D&C 13).

Ancient apostles and prophets returned and conferred upon Joseph the keys they held in mortality (see D&C 110). Mortal men were ordained to the holy apostleship in February of 1835. Priesthood keys were given to the Twelve Apostles in the latter part of March 1844.

Every prophet who followed Joseph, from Brigham Young to President Monson, has held and exercised those keys and has held the sacred apostleship.

Faith and Priesthood Keys

But just as in the time of Paul, the power of those priesthood keys for us requires our faith. We have to know by inspiration that the priesthood keys are held by those who lead and serve us. That requires the witness of the Spirit.

And that depends upon our testimony that Jesus is the Christ and that He lives and leads His Church. We must also know for ourselves that the Lord restored His Church and the priesthood keys through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

And we must have an assurance through the Holy Ghost, refreshed often, that those keys have been passed without interruption to the living prophet and that the Lord blesses and directs His people through the line of priesthood keys which reaches down through presidents of stakes and of districts and through bishops and branch presidents to us, wherever we are and no matter how far from the prophet and the apostles.

Trust the Lord's Chosen Servants

To keep ourselves grounded in the Lord's Church, we can and must train our eyes to recognize the power of the Lord in the service of those He has called. We must be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. And we need to pray for the Holy Ghost to help us know that men who lead us hold this power. For me, such prayers are most often answered when I am fully engaged in the Lord's service myself.

We can act to qualify for the revelation that allows us to know that the keys are being passed by God from one person to another. We can seek to have that experience again and again. And we must, in order to receive the blessings God has for us and wants us to offer to others.

The answer to your prayer is not likely to be as dramatic as it was when some saw Brigham Young, as he spoke, take on the appearance of the martyred Prophet Joseph.¹ But it can be as sure. And with that spiritual assurance will come peace and power. You will know again that this is the Lord's true and living Church, that He leads it through His ordained servants, and that He cares about us.

If enough of us exercise that faith and receive those assurances, God will lift up those who lead us and so bless

our lives and our families. We will become what Paul so wanted for those he served: "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). ■

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NOTE

1. See *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Seminary Student Study Guide* (2001), 158.

