

June 27–July 3: 1 Kings 17–19, “If the Lord Be God, Follow Him”

Power and Authority given to Elijah

Lets first recall the significant role Elijah has played in the establishment of the gospel. Recall that Elijah appeared with Moses on the mount of transfiguration just before Christ's death.

What act did Elijah perform on the mount of transfiguration?

"The Savior, Moses, and Elias [Elijah, in other words] gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the Mount when they were transfigured before him." (Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, 2:110)

During this dispensation he appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdrey in the Kirkland temple.

What act did Elijah perform in the Kirkland temple?

D&C 110:15 To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers,

Lets read about the keys that Elijah restored to the earth.

Knowing the authority that he holds helps to better understand his deeds.

Joseph Smith

“The word turn here [in Malachi 4:5–6] should be translated bind, or seal. But what is the object of this important mission? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion.

“But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah.”

(History of the Church, 6:184)

Joseph Smith

"Why send Elijah? Because he holds the keys of the authority to administer in all the ordinances of the priesthood; and without the authority is given, the ordinances could not be administered in righteousness....

"Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of the priesthood." (History of the Church, 4:211)

We do not get any information about this sealing power from the or any background on Elijah in the Old Testament. In fact the first we read about Elijah is chapter 17 where he is sealing up the heavens so there will be no rain.

But there is a prophet in the Book of Mormon, Nephi the son of Helaman, who also received this authority. By studying this we might get a better understanding of the authority held by Elijah and what kind of a man he must have been to have received it.

Helaman 10:3-5

3 And it came to pass as he was thus pondering—being much cast down because of the wickedness of the people of the Nephites, their secret works of darkness, and their murderings, and their plunderings, and all manner of iniquities—and it came to pass as he was thus pondering in his heart, behold, a voice came unto him saying:
4 Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unwearyingness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.
5 And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.

What had Nephi demonstrated to the Lord?

(thou hast with unwearyingness declared the word
thou hast not feared them
but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments)

Helaman 10:6-11

6 Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the

wickedness of this people.

7 Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people.

8 And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done.

9 And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done.

10 And behold, if ye shall say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass.

11 And now behold, I command you, that ye shall go and declare unto this people, that thus saith the Lord God, who is the Almighty: Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction.

What power and authority did the Lord give to Nephi?

(ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth
I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed
in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven)

Nephi performed many great works with this authority.

Elijah Exercises His Power and Authority

Elijah lived during the reign of King Ahab. Lets read how wicked Ahab was.

1Kgs 16:30-33

30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

What did Ahab do that made him evil “above all that were before him”?

He married the non-Israelite, Jezebel (who had most of the Priests of Israel killed).

Ahab worshiped Baal and built

a sanctuary, an alter, and groves to him. Made it state religion.

1Kgs17:1

1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

What would cause it to rain again?

(there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word)

Joseph Fielding Smith

"The reason I put emphasis upon this is to impress you with the sealing power by which Elijah was able to close the heavens that there should be no rain nor dew until he spoke." (Elijah the Prophet and His Mission, pg. 15)

Sending the drought made him a fugitive. He hid at a brook of the Jordan for 6 months where ravens brought him food. When the brook dried up the Lord sent him to a widow in Zarepheth.

1Kgs 17:8-16

8 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

How did this women demonstrate faith?

(but make me thereof a little cake first
And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah)

Lynn G. Robbins

"The story of the widow of Zarephath is an example of extreme poverty used to teach... [that] faith isn't tested so much when the cupboard is full as when it is bare. In these defining moments, the crisis doesn't create one's character—it reveals it. The crisis is the test....

"Her choice—does she eat, or does she sacrifice her last meal and hasten death? Perhaps she will sacrifice her own food, but could she sacrifice the food meant for her starving son?

"Elijah understood the doctrine that blessings come after the trial of our faith. He wasn't being selfish. As the Lord's servant, Elijah was there to give, not to take....

"One reason the Lord illustrates doctrines with the most extreme circumstances is to eliminate excuses. If the Lord expects even the poorest widow to pay her mite, where does that leave all others who find that it is not convenient or easy to sacrifice?" (CR, April 2005)

How was she rewarded after she had demonstrated her faith?

(she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.
And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah)

Christ referred to her as an example of faith

Luke 4:25-26 (Elias is Greek translation, Elijah)

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

Elijah performed another great miracle while with her

1Kgs 17:17-24

17 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.
18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?
19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.
20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?
21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.
22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.
23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.
24 ¶ And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth

After 3 1/2 years of drought the Lord told Elijah to meet King Ahab again. Elijah makes it clear why Israel is suffering.

1Kgs 18:17-18

17 ¶ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?
18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

Elijah told Ahab to gather all Israel to Mt. Carmel along with 450 priests of Baal. There he offered this admonition to Israel.

1Kgs 18:21

21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

What is he accusing the people of, and what did he tell them they must do?

(How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him)

John Taylor

"Let us feel as the prophet Elijah did on a certain occasion, 'If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.' There was a disposition in ancient Israel to have a part of God and a part of the devil or Baal—an idolatrous god which was worshipped by them. I sometimes think that in some respects we are a good deal like them. Do we believe our religion? Yes. Do we believe in the holy priesthood and that God has restored it to the earth? Yes. Do we believe that God has established his kingdom? Yes; but still we would like a good deal of our own way.... We often wish the Lord would not exact certain things of us; we would rather have our own way."
(JD, 21:53)

To show Israel the power of the Lord he set up a contest between Jehovah and Baal in such a way as to give every perceived advantage to Baal.

Two alters with wood and a bull on each. Whichever god started the wood with fire and burned the bull was THE God. Lets read the attempt of the 450 priests of Baal.

1Kgs 18:22,25-29

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Elijah dug a trench around his alter and drenched the alter with 12 barrels of water. Then...

1Kgs 18:36-39

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

What was Elijah's objective with this demonstration of God's power?

(that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again)

At this time Elijah caused the drought to end.

Still Small Voice

This did not cause Jezebel to repent. In fact, it made her even more angry. An again Elijah had to flee for his life. First to Beer-sheba where an angel came to him, comforted him (for he wished to die), and prepared him a meal that sustained him for 40 days. We then went to Mt. Sinai to seek the Lord. Lets read how the Lord spoke to him.

1Kgs 19:11-12

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

How did the Lord communicate with Elijah?

(a still small voice)

James J. Hamula

"Learn to hear the voice of the Lord. His is a still, small, and whisper-like voice. The voice of the Spirit is described as a still, small voice of perfect mildness, as if it were a whisper. It is one that is felt more than it is heard. It comes in the form of thoughts, feelings, and impressions. To hear such a voice, you must be still and quiet in your own soul, laying aside your excess laughter and light-mindedness. While it may not seem easy to so discipline your life, hearing the precious, loving voice of the Lord will sustain you in every circumstance and is therefore worth every effort." (CR, Oct. 2008)

A. Theodore Tuttle

"When one hears the still small voice of the Spirit testifying that Jesus is the Christ, this kind of knowledge, for that person, is as valid as a mountain of so-called 'scientific' evidence. That person really knows a truth. It affects his whole being. It affects all other kinds of knowledge that he may have.

"This kind of knowledge is not restricted to a special few. It is available to all who will receive it. It is our Father's desire that all his children shall come to a knowledge of his son." (CR, April 1966)

Elijah was told to pass his mantle of authority on to Elisha. Next week we will cover that and how Elijah was translated into heaven.