

THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD.

Its Powers and Authority, Together with its Rights and Privileges.

LECTURE SECOND.

The following lecture was prepared by Elder Joseph E. Taylor and was read before the members of the School of Science, in the Logan Temple, Saturday afternoon, December 3rd, 1887:

In continuing the subject of Priesthood we wish now to consider the question of the right to revelation and how far this right extends.

Some there are, who seem desirous to have all the revelations of God pre-acted with "Thus saith the Lord," and they consider that every important counsel given should commence with these words also; anything short of this being questioned by them as to its validity. Such persons comprehend very little of the true sources of revelation, or the rights and privileges of the Priesthood in relation thereto. President Young said that the Lord was merciful to the people in speaking to them by way of counsel and not by way of commandment; and we are told in the revelations that the Lord is not pleased with those who wait to be commanded in all things.

In view of our entire ignorance of everything pertaining to heavenly things in the opening up of this last dispensation, it was very necessary that God should reveal, not only the Gospel with its laws and ordinances, but the Priesthood also, with its various offices and authority thereof, and what it was ordained to accomplish.

To the extent that this has been made known, what need is there to have repeated any of the subjects that have been revealed? There is none unless we depart from the true order of God, so far as to lose our knowledge of them. Let us illustrate. There is no need that God should repeat to us the necessity of building Temples, in which certain ordinances may be administered, and why? Because that has already been revealed, as the following will show: "For it is ordained that in Zion and in her stakes and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead." See Doc. and Cov. Sec. 124; v. 36.

THE REVELATION EXPLAINS

where this ordinance must be administered, to be acceptable to the Lord, and says further: "There is not a place found on earth that He may come and restore that which was lost unto you, or that which He hath taken away, even the fullness of the Priesthood. For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth that they, my Saints, may be baptized for those who are dead. For this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me only in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me.

For therein are the keys of the Holy Priesthood ordained that you may receive honor and glory."

"And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house and the Priesthood thereof." It is further said, "That your anointings and your washings and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places, wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor and endowment of all her municipalities, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name."

President Willford Woodruff, in his testimony which formed a part of the Epistle of the Twelve Apostles that was read at the semi-annual Conference in Salt Lake City, October 8, 1887, said that Joseph had received all the keys of Priesthood that were necessary for the salvation of the living and the dead, and that he had conferred these keys, together with all the sacred ordinances pertaining thereto, upon the Twelve Apostles, he being one of the number who received the same at his hands. President Woodruff, gives the date also when

THE BLESSINGS

were bestowed by Joseph upon the Twelve; namely during the winter of 1843 and 1844.

Seeing then that the pattern of Temples has been revealed, what need is there every time that one is built for the Lord to give a revelation as to the length, breadth and height thereof, as well as to its internal arrangements; the number of rooms necessary and their dimensions; the entrance thereto and the places of exit therefrom; or to designate the what purpose each room shall be applied from the lowest to the highest one in the building? There is none whatever; for the size of a temple will be determined mainly according to the locality in which it is built, and the purposes for which it is to be used, seeing that the number of Temples is not limited to merely one or two, but they belong to the stakes of Zion as well as Zion herself and Jerusalem. Neither is there any particular necessity to enquire of the Lord as to the number of towers each Temple should have, whether it be one, two, six or twelve.

President B. Young, when delivering his oration previous to laying the corner stones of the Salt Lake Temple, said: "At Nanyoo Joseph dedicated

another Temple, the third on record (in our time.) He knew what was wanting for he had previously given most of the prominent individuals then before him their endowments. He needed no revelation then of a thing he had long experienced any more than those now do who have experienced the same things. It is only when experience fails that revelation is needed."

In a sermon preached by him in the afternoon of the same day he said: "Five years ago last July I was here and saw in the Spirit the Temple not ten feet from where we have laid the chief corner stone. I have not enquired what kind of a Temple we should build. I have never looked upon the ground but

THE VISION

of it was there. I see it as plainly as if it was in reality before me. Wait until it is done. I will say, however, that it will have six towers and Joseph only built one. It is easier for us to build sixteen than it was for him to build one. The time will come when there will be one in the centre of Temples we shall build, and on the top, groves and fish ponds, but we shall not see them here at present."

The Lord accepted the Kirtland Temple, small as it was (sixty-five by fifty-five feet); that was built by the people in the days of their poverty, and holy messengers appeared and ministered therein, yet the dimensions of that Temple were not followed in the building of the one in Nauvoo, which was thirty-three feet longer and thirty-three feet wider than the Kirtland Temple; while the Salt Lake Temple is seventy-six and one-half feet longer and nineteen feet wider than the Temple at Far West will be if built according to the original design given by Joseph, the corner stone of which was laid July 4, 1838. The first ground dedicated for a Temple in this dispensation, was at Independence Jackson Co., Missouri, Aug. 3, 1831. Seven persons were present beside the Prophet Joseph. The dimensions of the Temple for the Presidency, called the House of the Lord, it being one of the Temples that will be built there according to the pattern of Joseph, Jan. 25, 1833, will vary from all the other Temples, it being eighty-seven feet long by sixty-one feet wide. (See History of Joseph Smith, June 25th, 1833.) The Temple at St. George varies in size from the Logan and Mantle Temples, both of which are nearly of the same dimensions except in height.

In reference to ordinances which are to be administered in Temples, is there any necessity of their being revealed more than once? None whatever; no more than the ordinance of baptism or ordination to Priesthood. Adam held the Priesthood and he conferred it upon those who came immediately after him; and Noah those who immediately succeeded him; and thus was perpetuated the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood

IN THEIR DAY,

which Priesthood administered the same ordinances that are being conferred upon us; and as we have shown, Joseph did not depart to another sphere, until he had bestowed upon his brethren all that was then essential as pertaining to these holy ordinances, and this knowledge remains and will continue with us unless we lose it through transgression. As we advance, the Lord will reveal more to us and thus we will continue to receive line upon line until we are prepared to enter into His presence; but we have no claim upon God for further revelation until we have observed that which has already been given.

In regard to special revelation Joseph said, April 17, 1833. (See *Millennial Star*, Vol. 14, page 413). "We never enquire at the hand of the Lord for special revelation only in case of there being no previous revelation to suit the case and that in a Council of High Priests. It is a great thing to enquire at the hand of God or to come into His presence, and we feel fearful to approach Him with subjects that are of little or no importance to satisfy the queries of individuals, especially about things, the knowledge of which men ought to obtain in all sincerity before God for themselves in humility by the prayer of faith, etc."

At the time of the organization of the High Council in Kirtland, Feb. 17, 1834, the following is recorded: "In cases of difficulty respecting doctrine or principle; if there is not a sufficiency written to make the case clear to the minds of the Council, the President may enquire and obtain the mind of the Lord by revelation." To prove that there is no necessity for repetition I will quote from Joseph's words, which he delivered to the Twelve, February 27, 1835, who had been chosen thirteen days previous:

"It is a fact, if I now had in my possession every decision which has been had upon important

ITEMS OF DOCTRINE

and duties since the commencement of this work, I would not part with them for any sum of money; but we have neglected to take minutes of such things, thinking perhaps that they would never benefit us hereafter; which, had we now, would decide almost every point of doctrine which might be agitated. But this has been neglected, and now we cannot bear record to the Church and to the world of the great and glorious manifestations which have been made to us with that degree of power and authority we otherwise could if we now had these things to publish abroad.

Since the Twelve are now chosen, I wish to tell them a course which they may pursue and be benefited hereafter, in a point of light of which they are not now aware. If they will, on every time they assemble, ap-

point a person to preside over them during the meeting, and one or more to keep a record of their proceedings, and on the decision of every question or item, let it what it may, let such decision be written and such decision will forever remain upon record and appear an item of covenant or doctrine. As items thus decided may appear at the time of little or no worth, but should it be published, and one of you lay your hands on it after, you will find it of infinite worth not only to your brethren, but it will be a feast to your own souls.

Here is another important item: If you assemble from time to time and proceed to discuss important questions and pass decisions upon the same, and fail to note them down, by and by you will be driven to straits from which you will not be able to extricate yourselves, because you may be in a situation not to bring your faith to bear with sufficient perfection or power to obtain the desired information; or perhaps, for neglecting to write these things when God revealed them,

NOT ESTEEMING

them of sufficient worth, the Spirit may withdraw and God may be angry, and here is or was a vast knowledge of infinite importance which is now lost. Now if you will be careful to keep minutes of these things as I have said, it will be one of the most important records ever seen, for every such decision will forever after remain as items of doctrine and covenants.

We are constantly referring to the book of Doctrine and Covenants especially, for items to prove the correctness of our position in reference to the principles of our faith, or the order as well as the authority of the Priesthood. And no matter to what extent we elaborate any principle we generally refer to the written word for proof. The ministrations of the Priesthood in their public utterances are in the main simply reminders of some part of the written law, and some revelations also partake of this character. A notable instance of this can be found in the revelation given to President Taylor October 13, 1882. Except the designating certain men for positions in the Priesthood and directing others to labor among the Lamanites, this revelation is a reminder of duties revealed long ago culminating in the words "For my Priesthood whom I have called and whom I have sustained and honored, shall honor me and obey my laws and the laws of my Holy Priesthood, or they shall not be considered worthy to hold my Priesthood saith the Lord." The revelation closes with a glorious promise to those who are obedient to God's law.

The Prophet Joseph's right to receive revelation for the whole Church is thus defined in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 43, verses 1, 7:

"For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye have received a commandment for a law unto my Church through him whom I have appointed to receive commandments and revelations from my hand.

And this shall ye know assuredly that there is no other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations until he be taken, if he abide in me.

But verily, verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him; for if it be taken from him, he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead.

And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments.

And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me.

For verily, verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained, as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed.

IN REFERENCE TO THE

SEALING POWER

It is said:

"I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this Priesthood are conferred." (Doc. and Cov., sec. 132, ver. 7.)

Thus it will be seen that this right as well as that to receive revelations for the whole Church belongs to the President of the High Priesthood; and any other man attempting to act in either capacity would soon find himself altogether out of place. Every Apostle is eligible to this position; for as we have shown in our former lecture, "All there is of Priesthood or right of Presidency is comprehended in the apostleship." Yet the Lord has limited the right to the exercise of this power upon the earth to one man at a time. When we vote to sustain the Twelve as prophets, seers and revelators, this does not imply that each member of the Council of Twelve individually will assume to give revelations to the whole Church. For, seeing that only one man at a time can exercise this power, it would naturally devolve upon the President of the Quorum of Twelve in the absence of a First Presidency. Yet every revelation thus received would undoubtedly be submitted to the entire quorum before being given to the people, for they (the entire council) would then constitute the Presidency of the Church.

In the quorum of the first Twelve we find that the right of seniority, and consequently presidency, was determined first by age and afterwards by ordination, which I believe has never been varied from except for cause. I will quote from the Prophet Joseph's history. Lyman E. Johnson was the first one of the Twelve who was ordained in this dispensation, which was on the fourteenth day of February, 1835; but on the second day of May of that same year, Joseph said:

"It would be the duty of the Twelve when in council to take their seats together

ACCORDING TO AGE,

the oldest to be seated at the head, and preside in the first council; the next oldest in the second, and so on, until the youngest had presided, and then begin at the oldest again."

Consequently Lyman E. Johnson being the youngest of the entire body, took his seat the last, and retained the position of junior member of the Council until he was cut off April 13, 1838.

Brigham Young stood the third in the Council according to age at the date above mentioned (May 2, 1838), but Thomas B. Marsh, the senior member, having previously apostatized, he was cut off March 17th, 1839, and David Patten, who came next, having been killed, October 25, 1838, Brother Young became the senior member and retained this position until his appointment to the First Presidency in 1847. The Lord confirmed this right by naming him as the President of the Twelve in January, 1841, at the same time that he named the other authorities of the Church; nearly all of whom were then occupying the places named. (See Doc. and Cov. Sec. 124.)

John E. Page was ordained an Apostle the same day that our late President John Taylor was ordained to that office, namely, December 19, 1838, and though nearly ten years the senior of John Taylor according to his age and more than two years the senior of Brigham Young, yet his numerical position in the quorum was determined by his ordination and not by his age; as was also Apostles Woodruff, Richards, Lyman Wight and all others succeeding them up to the present time.

AS WE HAVE ALREADY QUOTED,

EVERY RECORDED DECISION

of the Twelve will for ever "remain as items of doctrine and covenants," although this might relate exclusively to those decisions that were made abroad. That the Prophet had in view their absence from the body of the Church at the time he thus spoke is evident for he immediately afterwards and in the same council propounded the following question:

What importance is there attached to the calling of the Twelve Apostles different from the other callings or offices of the Church?

After the question had been discussed by Brothers Young, Patten, Smith and McLellan, President Joseph Smith, Jun., gave the following decision:

"They are the Twelve Apostles who are called to the office of traveling High Council, who are to preside over all the churches of the Saints among the Gentiles, and they are to travel and preach among the Gentiles until the Lord shall command them to go to the Jews. They are to hold the keys of this ministry to unlock the door of the kingdom of heaven unto all nations, and to preach the Gospel in every creature. This is the power, authority and virtue of their apostleship."

In regard to the decisions of other quorums or councils, we may say that every decision made in righteousness by a High Council in a Stake of Zion; especially if it is a decision upon doctrine, is entitled to be recorded and should be as a guide hereafter; and it may be used as a precedent when a like question is considered by them. Every decision made in righteousness by a Bishop's court is worthy of all acceptance; but unlike questions upon doctrinal matter, the cases that are generally considered by the Bishops' courts have each of them features peculiar to themselves and distinct from all others, that should have weight in the minds of the Bishopric when rendering a decision; consequently, precedents followed too closely by Bishops, although established by themselves, might work an injustice at times. According to the revelation, every decision should be made "in righteousness, in holiness and lowliness of heart; meekness and long-suffering and in faith and virtue and knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness and charity," and outside of decisions upon doctrine, we will say, always in accordance with the evidence.

We have shown that when

AN EMERGENCY

arises, such as there being no First Presidency, the burden then falls upon the Twelve Apostles and that they have authority equal to a Quorum of three First Presidency, and can legitimately exercise this power over the Priesthood and people. They also have the right to place in nomination a Presidency of three to be sustained by the people in order that there may exist a completeness of organization so necessary to a fullness of strength and power.

Joseph, previous to his death, placed the responsibility of Presidency upon the Twelve, and the precedent not only of presiding as a quorum, but of creating a First Presidency, has been twice established since his death, and has worked most harmoniously in both instances, not a single jar occurring; and now for the third time in our history we are without a Quorum of Three, and the Twelve are again presiding.

In view of another supposed emergency arising, namely, that there was no longer a quorum of Twelve Apostles nor First Presidency, we would then have to look elsewhere for an authority to preside. The Seventies are quoted as ranking next in authority to the Twelve. All reliable data that I have found upon this subject (although a great deal more is claimed to have been said by Joseph Smith and others) is in the Doc. and Cov., sec. 10, verses 25-29:

"The Seventy are also called to preach the Gospel and to be special witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world; thus differing from other officers in the Church in the duties of their calling. And they form a quorum equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named. And every decision made by either of

these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same, that is every member in each quorum must be agreed in its decisions in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other.

Unless this is the case their decisions are not entitled to the same blessings, which a decision of a quorum of three Presidents were anciently, who were ordained after the order of Melchisedek and were righteous and holy men.

IF SUCH AN EMERGENCY

should arise that there was no longer a First Presidency, nor a quorum of Twelve Apostles to lead the Church (which God forbid) I have no doubt, but the Lord would make the matter plain to His people as he did in regard to the Twelve after Joseph was taken, although the Twelve themselves might not place the responsibility upon seventy men as Joseph did upon them previous to his death. There is quite a diversity of sentiment also in relation to what portion of this vast body of Seventies should constitute this especial seventy, for there is now bordering upon one hundred organized quorums of Seventies, all claiming equal authority and power. Our best course would be, instead of indulging in wild speculations upon any one of more possible emergencies that may arise, to leave such matters in the hands of God and the proper authority, to make plain and for us to try and learn our duties and the responsibilities we are under to those organizations of Priesthood we have now operating in our midst. For the word of the Lord is for "every man to learn his duty and to act in the office to which he is appointed in all diligence."

In reference to emergencies: Many have arisen in the past, some exist now, and others, not yet thought of, may arise in the future, all of which either have been or can again be easily provided for, as they may appear from time to time. The business of a Stake of Zion for instance may be conducted during the temporary absence of its Presidency, without deposing them, and making vacant their places. And who will say that the appointment of a High Priest to fill the position of President in the interim is not valid, although there is no written revelation upon the subject? Twelve High Councilors chosen after a certain manner constitute a regularly appointed High Council in a Stake of Zion, but because of the enforced absence of many of the quorum for either a long or short period, who would dispute the right of the proper authority to fill their places by appointment for the time being, or the validity of their acts under that appointment? Or because of the enforced absence of the Bishopric of a ward where a transgression needs to be dealt with, that another Bishopric appointed to try the case would be an illegal proceeding? Where an organization

IS RENDERED INCOMPLETE

through the force of circumstances, I hold that there is all the virtue and power in the person or persons appointed to fill any vacancy that may exist, that is necessary for the time being, without disturbing or changing the organization in the least.

But to return again to our subject of revelation: We may say that the fountain of revelation is open to all according to their calling, but the Spirit of Revelation will always make itself manifest through the head. Hence the President of the High Priesthood has the right to receive revelation for the whole Church, because this is according to his calling, and he may receive the same either by the voice of the Holy One, by the ministrations of angels, by the Urim and Thummim, or by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, all of which would be the word of the Lord to His people, and should be received as such, and that too without its being prefaced with "Thus saith the Lord." The Twelve, also, have the right to receive revelation in regard to every matter within the scope of their jurisdiction. Presidents of Stakes have a right to the Spirit of Revelation in regard to all matters pertaining to their Stakes; and Bishops also, in regard to the wards over which they preside. But Bishops who are in doubt upon any matters of importance ought to seek the counsel of their President; and the Presidents of Stakes also, when they need instruction, should seek for it through the Presidency of the Church, for these are the legitimate channels of revelation; and if the President of the Church is lacking it is his privilege to inquire of the Lord and obtain what is needed.

The channel of communication is open between us and the heavens, and every individual person in the Church has the right to receive his or her supply from this source. To illustrate my position upon this point, I will say: When an Elder abroad finds himself in urgent need of some important information, and cannot reach another Elder with whom to counsel, nor his President, neither an Apostle, and has not time to communicate by letter, it is then his privilege to call upon the Lord and receive an answer, either by vision or by dream, or by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as the Lord shall see fit. And how many thousands of Elders can testify that they have been thus favored?

TO CIRCUMSCRIBE

the latter-day Saints or limit them to the written word, would be to "place us upon the same plane which the sectarian world occupies today, and if there is any one thing more than another wherein our superiority is marked, it is in having a living Priesthood to minister to us. Our late