

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 13: "I Will Give unto Thee the Keys of the Kingdom" (Matthew 15:21 - 17:9)

- Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile and feeds more than 4,000 people.
- Peter is promised the keys of the kingdom.
- Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John.

A study of this lesson will help us strengthen our testimonies that Jesus is the Christ and that the priesthood keys bestowed on the Mount of Transfiguration have been restored.

Introduction

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'*" (Ensign, Nov. 1976, 69).

This lesson discusses priesthood keys and how Peter received them on the Mount of Transfiguration.



Note: Take a moment to turn to the maps in the scriptures to the map of Palestine. The events discussed in this lesson occurred in Tyre, Sidon, Decapolis, and Caesarea Philippi. Jesus' travels in this area brought him into contact with many Gentiles (non-Israelites).

NEXT WEEK:

#14 "Who Is My Neighbour" (Matthew 18; Luke 10)

Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile and feeds more than 4,000 people. (Matthew 15:21-39)

Matt. 15:22 The woman from Canaan asked Jesus to help her daughter.

Matt. 15:24 Jesus did not grant her request immediately because she was not a Jew, and the blessings of the gospel were to be offered to the Jews before the Gentiles.

Matt. 15:28 Jesus finally healed the woman's daughter. From this woman we can learn that those who do not have the gospel fullness may nevertheless have great faith, and that we should not lose faith when blessings are not granted as quickly as we wish.

Mark 7:31 The Savior departed for the Sea of Galilee, traveling through Decapolis. Decapolis was an area east of the Sea of Galilee where many Gentiles lived.

Matt. 15:29-31 The Lord showed compassion for the people there who needed healing.

Matt. 15:31 records the multitude's reaction as they glorified God. (Miracles in our day should cause us 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.

Matt. 15:32-38 records the miracle he performed for them.

This miracle was different from the earlier feeding of the 5,000 (Matt. 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). 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.)

Peter is promised the keys of the kingdom. (Matthew 16:13-19)

Matt. 16:15 Jesus left Decapolis and went to the area of Caesarea Philippi, where he asked his disciples an important question.

Matt. 16:16 Peter's response testified of Christ's mission.

Matt. 16:17 indicates the source of Peter's testimony. We learn from this account that our testimonies are given to us by personal revelation.

Matt. 16:18 Jesus said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church". 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). Revela-

tion is the foundation of the Lord's Church today as the work is guided by his apostles who are called to lead the Church in our day.

Matt. 16:19 The Savior promised to give Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven".

D&C 128:9-10; D&C 132:46 tell us what these keys are and why they are necessary.

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).

A conviction that the prophet holds these keys today is an essential part of our testimonies.

Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John. (Matthew 17:1-9)

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.

Transfiguration means 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 **Matt. 17:1-5**, when Jesus, Peter, James, and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration, the

following events happened:

- Jesus' face shone like the sun, and his clothing became brilliantly white.
- Moses and Elias (Elijah; see footnote 3b) appeared.
- "A bright cloud overshadowed them," and they heard the voice of the Father bear witness of his Son.

The name Elias is used several ways in the scriptures:

- In **Matt. 17:3-4** it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Elijah.
- In other places such as **Matt. 17:10-13**, it is used as a title describing a forerunner, or preparer.

Latter-day prophets have taught more about what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration:

- **D&C 63:20-21** Peter, James, and John saw a vision of the transfiguration of the earth at the Savior's Second Coming.
- They were "transfigured before [Christ]" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 158).
- **Luke 9:31 JST** - They were taught about the Savior's death and resurrection.
- 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:

- **D&C 110:11** Moses restored the keys of the gathering of Israel.
- **D&C 110:13-16** Elijah restored the keys of the sealing power. These keys are used today in missionary work and temple work—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*" (Ensign, May 1977, 7).

Elder Haight presented the following ideas about what we can learn from the Transfiguration to help us when we need spiritual strength (Ensign, May 1977, 7-9):

- 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."

- 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.*"

We can be strengthened by testimony of the Savior (Matt. 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

As Latter-day Saints we have information to help us understand what took place on the Mount of Transfiguration. We are truly blessed to have revelation in the Church today that is made available through the priesthood keys held by the appointed apostles and leaders who have been called to serve us. As saints, we, like Peter, can know through the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

- Why is a conviction that the prophet holds all the keys of the Priesthood an essential part of our testimonies?
- What is the significance of each of the four instances in scriptures where the Father testifies of the Son?