

ELIJAH: THE PROPHET AND HIS MISSION

By ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH.

THIS is a very important subject which we are here to consider tonight. Malachi, the last of the prophetic writers of the Old Testament, closed his volume with these familiar words:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

It is very fitting that the final writer of the Old Testament should close his words with a promise to future generations and in that promise give us to understand that there shall be a linking together of the dispensations through the coming of this great prophet of the Lord in the latter times.

You will notice that in referring to him Malachi speaks of him as "Elijah *the prophet*." I want to put a little emphasis upon that expression.

WHAT IS A PROPHET?

What is a prophet? I suppose our idea is that a prophet is one who foretells events, and that is true; but that is not all that a prophet does. In fact, there are many things—and some things greater than the foretelling of events—by which a man may be designated a prophet of the Lord. We have no great predictions concerning the future on record coming from Elijah. We have them in the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Malachi, the last of the old prophets. Elijah's prophesying was more or less of a local character, dealing with his times and the individuals with whom he came in contact; but yet among prophets, there have been few greater than Elijah.

Melchizedek was a prophet, one of the greatest; however, we have no prediction or record from him. I have no doubt, so far as I am concerned, that he did speak of the future, but his writings have not come to us. Nevertheless so great was he that the priesthood was called after his name. Why? Because he greatly magnified his calling, so did Elijah, and, therefore, the Lord bestowed upon him greater power than it has been the privilege of most other prophets to receive.

In the 19th Chapter and 10th verse of John's revelation, we are informed that an angel appeared unto him, and John falling at his feet was about to worship him; but the messenger forbade him, saying: "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Every man who can say knowingly that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the world and the Only Begotten Son of God, is a prophet. Every man that holds the priesthood, and magnifies his calling, is a prophet; and he has a right to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so far as he is concerned—but not to receive revelation for the Church. There is one who is appointed to that office. A president of a stake has a right to revelation in his stake, and for guidance of it; a bishop, in his ward; and likewise a missionary in his mission field. Every other member of the Church who is called to an office has the right to the inspiration and the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord in that which is given him to do. If he is so inspired, he is a prophet.

ELIJAH IN LEGEND

As we proceed we will discover the greatness of Elijah's calling. Elijah occupies a place in the legends of many peoples. We are informed that among the Greeks he is the patron saint of the mountains; and many of the mountains in Greece are named for him. In the Roman Catholic Church he is regarded as the founder of the order known as the barefooted Carmelites.

The Mohammedans likewise have honored him in their traditions, and he is often confounded with the great and mysterious El-Khudr, the eternal wanderer, who having drunk the waters of life, remains in everlasting youth and appears from time to time to correct the wrongs of men. Of course this comes from the fact of Elijah's translation.

Among the Jews he finds a place of honor in their history second to none of the prophets. He is mentioned on many occasions in the New Testament, some of the time in reference to his labors and ministry in Israel when he dwelt among men, and at other times, in reference to his future mission. We will have occasion to refer to some of these as we proceed.

I would like to spend just a little time dealing with the history, brief as it is, of Elijah's ministry.

HISTORY OF ELIJAH

He lived about 900 years B. C., in the reign of King Ahab of Israel—of whom it is recorded that he did more to cause Israel to sin than all the kings who were before him. Elijah appeared rather suddenly, so far as the history states. He is known as Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead; and that is about all we know of him so far as his place of birth and residence were concerned.

The fact that he appeared rather suddenly, and departed in a manner shrouded in mystery, and seemingly only mingled with the people on occasions when the Lord sent him with some instruction or command, has caused many people to look upon Elijah as being like Melchizedek—and in that, of course, they are wrong, for they misunderstand the scriptures. You know in the book of Hebrews, Melchizedek is spoken of in this wise, that he was King of Salem, which is King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now, the world has commented upon that very greatly, and they have concluded because of this reading, that Melchizedek was not born in the world like other men, that he had no father or mother. But that is not the proper reading. And they have applied the same thing to

Elijah, due to the fact that his was somewhat a mysterious nature. The proper reading of that passage of scripture would be as follows: "For this Melchizedek was ordained a priest after the order of the Son of God, which order was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; and all those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God, abiding a priest continually."

ELIJAH AND KING AHAB

The first appearance of Elijah we read of in the 17th Chapter of I Kings, when he came before the king and said, "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."

There is something very significant in that edict. I want you to get it. Follow me again closely: "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*. 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.

After Elijah had made that prediction, he suddenly departed, and made his abode upon the banks of the brook Cherith, where ravens fed him.

After the brook dried up because of the drought, the Lord directed him to go into a foreign land, so he departed and went to the city of Zarephath of Zidon, as it reads, where a widow woman had been appointed by the Lord to feed him; and when he arrived he found her picking up sticks to make a fire. He asked for something to eat, and in her distress and anguish she said that she barely had enough meal and oil to make a cake, she was gathering sticks in order to make that cake for herself and her son and then they would die. But Elijah commanded her to go and prepare for him first. Do you think that selfish? No, not when you know the circumstances. The woman recognized him as a man of authority, so in faith she went and did as he had commanded her. The result was that during the time of the famine that woman's cruse of oil failed her not, and her barrel of meal was not diminished.

It was while on this sojourn that Elijah raised her son from the dead and restored him to her again.

Three years passed, and then the word of the Lord came to him to return to the land of Israel to Ahab the king, with a message. So Elijah returned, and on his way met Obediah, the king's chamberlain, or governor of his house, when Obediah saw Elijah, he was startled and said to him. Do you not know that my master has been searching for you everywhere, that he might put you to death? But Elijah commanded him to go to the king with a message. I would like to read a little of this. Obediah said:

"As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, he is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

"And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold Elijah is here.

"And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee." (I want you to mark this also carefully): "That the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me; but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?"

"And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me."—That is the way he felt about it.

Let me pause here to say a word about wicked Ahab. He had married the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and of course she was idolatrous in her worship and led Ahab to follow after her gods Baal and Aseroth. When Elijah came with his message to the king and closed the heavens that it should not rain, she became angry and searched out the prophets of the Lord to put them to death, and Obediah, being a righteous man, took one hundred of them and hid them that they could not be found. And so he relates this to Elijah, I suppose to gain his sympathy and have him change his request that he should carry this message to the king.

But Elijah answered him as follows: "As the Lord of hosts liveth *before whom I stand*. I will surely show myself unto him today."

TEST OF FALSE PROPHETS

When Obediah understood that he was going to show himself to the king, he was ready to take the message, but Elijah went himself and confronted Ahab. When they met, Ahab said to him, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And Elijah rebuked him, saying: he (Ahab) was the man that troubled Israel. And then he commanded Ahab to go and gather the priests and false prophets of Baal and bring them to a certain place, that he might meet them there. And the king harkened to him and it was done. When all the people assembled and the prophets of the false gods, Elijah made a proposal to them. Said he, we will take two bullocks—you take one and I will take one. You offer yours and sacrifice it unto Baal, and I will offer mine a sacrifice unto the God of Israel; and we will put no fire under it, but you pray to your gods and I will pray to the Lord, and if fire comes down and consumes your sacrifice, then we will worship Baal, but if fire comes down and consumes my sacrifice, then we will serve the Lord. It is not necessary for me to go into details.

The challenge Elijah gave to the priests was a challenge to the Phoenician god of fire—Baal the "sun-god." If he was the god of fire, then why should he not call down fire to consume the sacrifice offered in his name and thus prove in the eyes of Israel that he was in very deed all that his followers claimed for him? If he could not do such a thing, and the God of Israel who had been forsaken, could, was it not evidence that the children of Israel had broken the very first commandment given them by the Lord through Moses? "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them."

The priests gathered and built their altar and prayed, beginning in the morning, and prayed until noon time, and then until the time of evening sacrifice. And Elijah mocked them when there was no answer, and called upon them to cry louder, for perhaps their god was asleep, perhaps he was on a journey, perhaps he was hunting—they were to call louder that they might get his attention. Then they began to cut themselves, according to their custom. When the day had passed and no answer came, then Elijah rebuilt an old, broken down altar. He took twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel, placed his sacrifice upon it, built a trench around it, and had his servants pour water upon it until the trench was full; then he knelt down and prayed, and fire came down and consumed his offering.

The result was that the priests of Baal were put to death which angered Jezebel and again Elijah was forced to flee. This time he went into the south country near to Beersheba—where he became discouraged and desired that the Lord would put an end to his life, but he was comforted by an angel, who brought him food and drink; he ate and was filled and went forty days on the strength of it, and departed from that place unto Mount Horeb. When he was there, the Lord called upon him and asked him what he was doing there, and in his sorrow, because of the hardness of the hearts of the people, he told the Lord the condition, and that he alone remained, that they sought his life to take it away. But the Lord showed him that there were others who had remained true unto him, even seven thousand.

Then the Lord gave him a mission that he was to return to Israel. He was to anoint Hazael to be king of Syria, Jehu to be king of Israel in the place of Ahab, and Elisha to be prophet in his stead. So he returned on his mission and called Elisha to follow him.

In the meantime Ahab had murdered a man through covetousness. Naboth had a vineyard Ahab wanted, and so Ahab had him put to death. And Elijah met him again suddenly and told him of his crime, predicting the wicked king's death also the death of his wicked wife. And thus it came to pass, though after Elijah had spoken to the king he did repent and the Lord turned away a portion of his wrath. However the judgments of the Lord followed Ahab's sons who walked in the unrighteous course set them by their father.

I have referred to these things because there may be some here who are not acquainted with this history. I have gone over it but briefly. I desire that you should know something in regard to it, that you may better understand that which is to follow.

TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH

Elijah called Elisha to follow him, and finally, when Elijah was taken into heaven in a chariot of fire, Elisha became the prophet in Israel in the stead of Elijah.

Now, there was a reason for the translation of Elijah. Men are not preserved in that manner unless there is a reason for it. I believe that Moses was likewise taken up—though the scriptures say that the Lord buried him upon the mountain. Of course the writer of that wrote according to his understanding; but we have reason to believe that Moses, like Elijah, was taken up without tasting death, because he had a mission to perform. We will refer to that as we pass along.

I made the statement in the beginning that the Jews in later generations had great respect for Elijah. They had some understanding regarding his mission. I have here a statement that I have copied from Ecclesiastics, the writings of the son of Sirach. He was not one of the inspired writers, and this book is one of the books of the Apocrypha, but he gives us an idea of the feeling that existed among the Jews at his day in regard to Elijah. I will read it:

"Then stood up Elias the prophet as fire, and his word burneth as a lamp."

Now, let me say this interpretation "Elias" ought not to be Elias—it should be Elijah. The references to Elijah in the New Testament, where it is interpreted however, Elias, should be Elijah. In the modern version, it is so. Elias is the Greek form of the Hebrew name, Elijah. There is a big difference between the calling of Elias and Elijah, but I shall not refer to that right now.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN ELIAS AND ELIJAH

"Then stood up Elias the prophet as fire, and his word burneth as a lamp.

"He brought a sore famine upon them, and by his zeal he diminished their number.

"By the word of the Lord he shut up the heaven, and also three times brought down fire.

"O Elias, how wast thou honored in thy wondrous deeds! and who may glory like unto thee!

"Who didst raise up a dead man from death, and his soul from the place of the dead, by the word of the Most High!

"Who broughtest kings to destruction and honorable men from their bed.

"Who heardest the rebuke of the Lord in Sinai, and in Horeb the judgment of vengeance;

"Who anointest kings to take revenge, and prophets to succeed after him.

"Who was taken up in a whirlwind of fire, and in a chariot of fiery horses:

"Who was ordained for reproof in their times to pacify the wrath of the Lord's judgment, before it break forth into fury, and to turn the heart of the father unto the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob.

"Blessed are they that saw thee, and slept in love; for we shall surely live."

When John the Baptist came out of the wilderness preaching—and he was a character that had more or less mystery about him—the Jews wondered and the Pharisees sent messengers unto John to question him as follows:

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?"

"And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

"And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

"Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?"

"He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

"And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

"And they asked him and said unto him. Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?"

"John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

"He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

"These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."

They wondered who John was. He came as one with authority, and they knew that the prophets of old had testified that Elijah was to come again. And so they wondered if John were Elijah.—It is written Elias here, but in the modern version I say it is written Elijah, as it should be. And so they asked him, Art you the Christ?—because they knew the Christ would have that power. He said, "I am not."

"Are you Elias?" "No, I am not."

"Well then, why do you do these things—don't you know that these things were reserved for Elias, who was to be the forerunner of the Christ?—and then, if you are not that prophet, why do you do these things?" That was their query regarding John. What John was we will refer to later.

Again, after the Savior came down off the Mount, his disciples began to question him:

"And as they came down from the Mount, Jesus charged them saying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?"

You see, these three, Peter, James and John, who had been on the Mount, where Moses and Elijah had appeared to them, began to inquire of the Savior the meaning of it all. So they asked:

"Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?"

"Jesus answered and said, Elias truly shall first come, *and restore all things*. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

"Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

Now, this passage of scripture has caused a great deal of confusion in the minds of many people; and because the Lord said Elias had already come, the world has interpreted that to mean that John the Baptist was the Elias, or the fulfillment of the predicted coming of Elijah, and they refer to this passage as their evidence. The Lord had two thoughts in mind: Elijah must first come and restore all things, but Elias has already come.

ELIJAH AND MOSES

When Moses and Elijah came to the Savior and to Peter, James and John upon the Mount, what was their coming for? Was it just some spiritual manifestation to strengthen these three apostles? Or did they come merely to give comfort unto the Son of God in his ministry and to prepare him for his crucifixion? No! That was not the purpose. I will read it to you. The Prophet Joseph Smith has explained it in the Church History, Vol. 3, 387, as follows:

"The priesthood is everlasting. The Savior, Moses, and Elias gave the keys to Peter, James and John, on the Mount when they were transfigured before him. The priesthood is everlasting—without beginning of days or end of years; without father, mother, etc.

"If there is no change of ordinances, there is no change of priesthood. Wherever the ordinances of the gospel are administered, there is the priesthood. * * *

"Christ is the Great High Priest; Adam next."

From that we understand why Elijah and Moses were preserved from death,—because they had a mission to perform and it had to be performed before the crucifixion of the Son of God. Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection; therefore if any former prophet had a work to perform preparatory to the mission of the Son of God, or to the dispensation of the meridian of times, it appears that it was essential that he be preserved to fulfill that mission in the flesh. For that reason Moses disappeared from among the people and was taken up into the mountain and the people thought he was buried by the Lord; the Lord preserved him, so that he could come at the proper time and restore his keys, on the heads of Peter, James and John, who stood at the head of the dispensation of the meridian of time. He reserved Elijah from death that he might also come and bestow his keys upon the heads of Peter, James and John and prepare them for their ministry.

But, one says, the Lord could have waited until after his resurrection and then they could have done it. It is quite evident, due to the fact that it did so occur, that it had to be done before; and there was a reason. There may have been other reasons, but that is one reason why Moses and Elijah did not suffer death in the flesh, like other men do.

After the resurrection of Christ, of course they did pass through death and the resurrection, and then as resurrected beings came to fulfill a mission of like import in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

Why was Elijah reserved? What keys did he hold? What keys did he bestow on Peter, James and John? Exactly the same keys that he bestowed upon the head of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. And what were they? Some of you may be saying the keys of baptism for the dead. No, it was not that. Some of you may be thinking it was the keys of the salvation of the dead. No, it was not that. That was only a portion of it. The keys that Elijah held were the keys of the everlasting priesthood, the keys of the sealing power, which the Lord gave unto him. And that is what he came and bestowed upon the head of Peter, James and John, and that is what he gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith; and that included a ministry of sealing for the living as well as the dead—and it is not confined to the living and it is not confined to the dead, but includes them both.

PRIESTHOOD AND KEYS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

I want to read to you what the Prophet said in regard to this thing, so that you will know just what authority Elijah had. You know when the Lord took Moses out of the midst of the children of Israel, he took the higher priesthood also, and he left the Aaronic Priesthood and the Levitical Priesthood, and added unto that the law of Moses. But down through the ages from the days of Moses, whenever the Lord had a special mission for a prophet, that prophet held the Melchizedek Priesthood. But it was not conferred upon many—it was confined to certain of the prophets, whose mission required it. Joseph Smith the Prophet said:

"Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of the priesthood, and who will, before the last dispensation, restore the authority and deliver the keys of the priesthood, in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness. It is true that the Savior had authority and power to bestow this blessing; but the sons of Levi were too prejudiced. 'And I will send Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord,' etc. 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." History of Church, Vol. 4:207.

"Why send Elijah?" Now mark this. "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."

Now, that is significant, and I am going to spend a little time on that passage. I hold the priesthood, you brethren here hold the priesthood; we have received the Melchizedek Priesthood—which was held by Elijah and by other prophets and by Peter, James and John. But

while we have authority to baptize, while we have authority to lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost and to ordain others and do all these things. without the sealing power we could do nothing, for there would be no validity to that which we did. Of course an elder can baptize, and they did baptize before Elijah came, and that was valid, and the ordinance work that was done then was valid; but the higher ordinances, the greater blessings which are essential to exaltation in the kingdom of God, and which can only be obtained in certain places, no man has a right to perform except as he receives the authority to do it from the one who holds the keys. It makes no difference how great an office you have, what position in the Church you hold, you cannot officiate unless the keys, the sealing power, is there back of it. That is the thing that counts; and that is why Elijah came, that is why Moses came—for he also held keys of the priesthood—and that is why they conferred upon the head of Peter, James and John in that dispensation these privileges or these powers, these keys, that they might go forth and perform this labor; and that is why they came to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I want to read from one of the revelations what the Lord said on the subject of the new and everlasting covenant. But before I read this, I think it would be well if I say something about that new and everlasting covenant. It is something that is misunderstood by many. The new and everlasting covenant is not marriage. I want you to understand that. Marriage is *a* new and everlasting covenant—when performed in the temple for eternity—but it is not *the* new and everlasting covenant. I want to prove it to you.

In Section 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which revelation was given just after the organization of the Church, the Lord says this:

"Revelation to the Church of Christ, which was established in these last days, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty, given through Joseph, the Seer, in Manchester, New York, April, 1830, in consequence of some desiring to unite with the Church without rebaptism, who had previously been baptized."

"Behold, I say unto you, that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning.

"Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times, it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works;

"For it is because of your dead works, that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in the days of old."

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

What is this new and everlasting covenant? In another section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we have that explained. I read from Section 66:

"Verily I say unto you, blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, referred to in a number of these revelations unto the children of men, that they might have life and be made

partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days, as it was written by the prophets and apostles in days of old."

And so, you see the everlasting covenant, the new and everlasting covenant referred to in a number of these revelations before the Lord revealed marriage for eternity has reference to the everlasting gospel, with the essential power back of it, the priesthood of God.

I will now read what I had in mind. The Lord, speaking of the new and everlasting covenant, describes it, tells us what it is, in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants. I am going to read the seventh verse, because I will get my point better from this than from some other.

"And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these:—All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made, and entered into and sealed, by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power, (and 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, are of no efficacy, virtue or force, in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end, have an end when men are dead."

Then all contracts and obligations that are so sealed by his authority are binding; and that is the new and everlasting covenant—everything pertaining to the gospel must be sealed, and the only one that has that sealing power is the one who stands at the head. Elijah was the last of the old prophets who held the fullness of the priesthood, the sealing power of the priesthood; and being the last of the prophets, it was his place to come in the dispensation of the meridian of time and confer those keys upon those who stood at the head in that dispensation; and you know from your reading that the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom to Peter, James and John; and he gave to Peter, who stood at the head, the power to bind on earth and it should be bound in heaven and to loose on earth and it should be loosed in heaven—the same authority which Elijah had when he shut the heavens that it should not rain and by which he called down fire on different occasions. Joseph Smith was ordained under the hands of Peter, James and John, receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, and he went forth and built the church in this dispensation. All that he did was valid, all those ordinances were valid, but in order that the binding power should come which is recognized in the heavens, and by which we pass by the angels and the Gods to exaltation, had to come from Elijah, who held that power upon the face of the earth, for the Lord had given it to him, and so he came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on the 3rd day of April, 1836, and bestowed upon them the keys of his priesthood.

This passage that I read in the beginning says this: "He shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers." The Prophet says that that is not the correct translation—the word *plant* should be translated *seal* or *bind*. Now you get a glimpse of what is meant in that concluding paragraph, where it says that the whole earth would be smitten with a curse if Elijah did not first come. Why would it be smitten? Because there could be no sealing up against the day of destruction, no sealing of parents to each other, no sealing of children to parents, no contracts, bonds, obligations entered into that would be valid on the other side—because the

clinging power was not there, and it was necessary that Elijah should come and bestow those things spoken of as *all* things in the scriptures.

I want to read to you a little more. I want to explain to you the difference between the calling of Elias and the calling of Elijah. John the Baptist was an Elias—and that is what the Lord meant when he said Elias had already come—but he was not an Elijah, and the mission of the two were very different.

An Elias is a forerunner, one who comes to prepare the way; and John was sent to prepare the way for the second advent of the Lord when he bestowed his keys and power and his priesthood, the Aaronic Priesthood, upon the head of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. That was his mission. Then after that there had to be a more complete manifestation of power and someone else had to come; so the Lord sent Peter, James and John and later Elijah with his keys to make all things valid that had been restored.

Before I treat this further, there is a thought that I must not lose. I have no right, there is no man upon the face of this earth who has the right to go forth and administer in any of the ordinances of this gospel unless the president of the church, who holds the keys, sanctions it. He has given us authority, he has put the sealing power in our priesthood, because he holds those keys; and if the president of the church should say to us, "You shall not baptize in this state or in that state, or in this nation," any man that would go forth to baptize contrary to that command would be violating a command of God and going contrary to authority and power; and that which he did would not be sealed. O, I wish we could understand that. We would not have some going around as they have been doing in the past, claiming that they have authority to do certain things when they have no authority. They do not understand this thing. The man who holds the keys can bestow and he can withdraw; he can give the power and he may take it again; and if he takes it, that ends our right to officiate. That has been done; it may be done again.

MISSION OF ELIJAH

Now to return. I want to refer to the mission of Elias and also of Elijah. These are the words of the Prophet:

"There is a difference between the spirit and office of Elias and Elijah. It is the spirit of Elias I wish first to speak of; and in order to come at the subject, I will bring some of the testimony from the scripture and give my own.

"In the first place, suffice it to say, I went into the woods to inquire of the Lord, by prayer, his will concerning me, and I saw an angel, and he laid his hands upon my head, and ordained me to a priest [*i. e.*, to the office and calling of a priest] after the order of Aaron, and to hold the keys of the priesthood, which office was to preach repentance and baptism for the remission of sin, and also to baptize. But I was informed that this office did not extend to the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost; that that office was a greater work, and so to be given afterward; but that my ordination was the spirit of Elias; for the spirit of Elias was a going before to prepare the way for the greater, which was the case with John the Baptist."

I suppose that is all I need to read on that. There is a great deal more of it. All would be interesting, but that covers the point. Again the Prophet said:

"Now for Elijah. The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that he have power to hold the keys of the revelation, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth."

That is Elijah's mission, to bestow this power. The mission of Elias comes before, and to prepare the way, in this dispensation just as he did before the days of Christ; and then it was necessary that the fuller light should come. For that reason Elijah was reserved to come in the dispensation of the fullness of times and bestow all things or in other words the fullness of the power of the priesthood, or the sealing power.

Now, I ought to have finished this quotation before I interrupted myself.

"And to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, even those who are in heaven.

"Malachi says, 'I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.'

"Now what I am after is the knowledge of God, and I take my own course to obtain it. What are we to understand by this in the last days?

"In the days of Noah, God destroyed the world by a flood, and he has promised to destroy it by fire in the last days; but before it should take place, Elijah should first come and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, etc.

"Now comes the point. What is the office and work of Elijah? It is one of the greatest and most important subjects that God has revealed. He should send Elijah to seal the children to the fathers, and the fathers to children.

"Now, was this merely confined to the living, to settle difficulties with families on earth? By no means. It was a far greater work. Elijah! What would you do if you were here? Would you confine your work to the living alone? No; I would refer you to the scriptures, where the subject is manifest; that is, without us, they could not be made perfect, nor we without them; the fathers without the children, nor the children without the fathers."

And would he confine his work to the dead? No; because you people who are living require these sealing powers bestowed upon you. They are just as essential for you as they are for those who are dead; and don't get the idea that Elijah's mission was a mission confined to or for the dead. His mission was universal.

The Prophet Joseph continues:

THE POWER OF ELIJAH

"I wish you to understand this subject, for it is important; and if you will receive it, this is the spirit of Elijah that we redeem our dead, and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven, and seal up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection; and here we want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those who dwell in heaven. This is the power of Elijah and the keys of the kingdom of Jehovah.

"Let us suppose a case. Suppose the great God who dwells in heaven should reveal himself to Father Cutler here [Father Cutler was a man present in the congregation when the Prophet was delivering this discourse] by the opening heavens, and tell him, 'I offer up a decree that whatsoever you seal on earth with your decree I will seal it in heaven; you have the power then; can it be taken off? No. Then what you seal on earth, by the keys of Elijah, is sealed in heaven; and this is the power of Elijah, and this is the difference between the spirit and power of Elias and Elijah; for while the spirit of Elias is a forerunner, the power of Elijah is sufficient to make our calling and election sure; and the same doctrine, where we are exhorted to go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, etc'."

Now a little more:

"Again: the doctrine or sealing power of Elijah is as follows:—If you have power to seal on earth and in heaven, then we should be wise. The first thing you do, go and seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, and yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory. * * * I will walk through the gate of heaven and claim what I seal, and those that follow me and my counsel. * * *

"The spirit of Elias is first, Elijah second, and Messiah last. Elias is a forerunner to prepare the way, and the spirit and power of Elijah is to come after, holding the keys of power, building the temple to the capstone, placing the seals of the Melchizedek Priesthood upon the house of Israel and making all things ready; then the Messiah comes to his Temple, which is last of all.

"Messiah is above the spirit and power of Elijah, for he made the world, and was that spiritual rock unto Moses in the wilderness. Elijah was to come and prepare the way and build up the kingdom before the coming of the great day of the Lord, although the spirit of Elias might begin it."

I have read from the History of the Church, Vol. 6, pp. 249-54.

Now I am about through. There is another reference that I want to call to your attention. Joseph Smith said further:

THE FULLNESS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

"If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord."

I hope we understand that. If we want to receive the fullness of the priesthood of God, then we must receive the fullness of the ordinances of the house of the Lord and keep his commandments. This idea that we can put off our salvation because of some weaknesses of the flesh until the end, and then our children will go and do this work for us in the temple of the Lord when we are dead will get us nowhere. Salvation for the dead is for those who died without a knowledge of the gospel so far as celestial glory is concerned. And those who have rejected the truth and who have fought the truth, who would not have it, are not destined to receive celestial glory. Now, the Lord says that—it is not my saying, I am glad to say, although I fully believe it.

Let me put this in a little different way. I do not care what office you hold in this Church, you may be an apostle, you may be a patriarch, a high priest, or anything else, and you cannot receive the fullness of the priesthood unless you go into the temple of the Lord and receive these ordinances of which the prophet speaks. No man can get the fullness of the priesthood outside of the temple of the Lord. There was a time when that could be done, for the Lord could give these things on the mountain tops—no doubt that is where Moses got it, that is no doubt where Elijah got it—and the Lord said that in the days of poverty, when there was no house prepared in which to receive these things, that they can be received on the mountain tops. But now we have temples, and you cannot get these blessings on the mountain tops, you will have to go into the house of the Lord, and you cannot get the fullness of the priesthood unless you go there. Do not think because anybody has a higher office in this Church than you have, that you are barred from blessings, because you can go into the temple of the Lord and get all the blessings there are that have been revealed, if you are faithful, have them sealed upon you as an elder of this Church, and then you have all that any man can get. There have to be offices in the Church, and we are not all called to the same calling, but you can get the fullness of the priesthood in the temple of the Lord by obeying this which I have read to you. I want to make this emphatic.

Just a word or two in conclusion. Elijah came and fulfilled his mission on the 3rd day of April, 1836, as already stated—planted in the hearts of the children the desires that were promised, that their hearts should turn to their fathers. That spirit has not been confined to the Latter-day Saints. It has spread forth into the world. In the year 1836, no one was working along this line. It was sometime after that when the first organization was formed for the gathering of the records of the dead.

In the year 1837, Great Britain caused that there should be duplicate records kept and filed away in the archives over there. That was a step.

In the year 1844, the year of the martyrdom, the first organization in this world for the gathering of the records of the dead was organized in the city of Boston, and now we find them all over the earth.

"Thirty-five years ago the interest in such matters was mainly antiquarian." I am quoting a man who wrote to me from Massachusetts in 1903, so we must add seventeen years to the time to bring it to date. He said:

"Thirty-five years ago the interest in such matters was mainly antiquarian, and the few examples in print in this line had been inspired from that standpoint. Genealogical research was not the powerful factor it is today."

I did not ask him to write that. That is his testimony. That shows you how the mission of Elijah has gone forth and taken hold of the hearts of the children of men.

Now, there is one point that I have overlooked, and I think it is rather important, and I must not forget it, although it does not fit in right here. I passed it, but having so many things in mind, I cannot think of them all as I should. I spoke of Jewish customs, and how the Jews looked forward to the coming of Elijah in the days of the Savior, and how they questioned John and wanted to know if he was Elijah, if he was that prophet. And when the three came down off the Mount, they questioned the Lord in regard to the coming of Elijah, and he told them he must come and restore all things. Do you know that the Jews today are looking forward to that event? Do you know that when they meet to eat the supper of the Passover, as they are engaged in that feast, girded and with staff in hand, when the time comes for them to drink as they call it the third cup, they open the door for Elijah to enter; and they have a place prepared for him. They are looking forward to the time when Elijah shall come as the forerunner of the Christ to restore all things.

Now there is another thought that is rather interesting in regard to this. I am informed that the feast of the Passover was being celebrated in April, 1836, in the old world about the time as it would be here in America, when Elijah came to Joseph Smith. It may be a stretch of the imagination, but may we not suppose, figuring the difference in time, that when the Jews raised their cups and opened the door for the entrance of Elijah into their homes to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord, that he was appearing to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple and bestowing his keys not only for the salvation of the dead, but for the salvation of that ancient people.

Now, brethren and sisters (and this is my conclusion) remember there is only one on the face of the earth who holds the sealing power of the priesthood, and he can delegate that power unto others, that they may act and they may seal on earth and it is valid, it is binding, so long as he sanctions it; if he withdraws it, no man can exercise that power. Furthermore, if you want salvation in the fullest, that is exaltation in the kingdom of God, so that you may become his sons and his daughters, you have got to go into the temple of the Lord and receive these holy ordinances which belong to that house, which cannot be had elsewhere. No man shall receive the fullness of eternity, of exaltation alone; no woman shall receive that blessing alone; but man and wife, when they receive the sealing power in the temple of the Lord, shall pass on to exaltation, and shall continue and become like the Lord. And that is the destiny of men, that is what the Lord desires for his children. But only a few, comparatively a few, shall receive it, because "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there

be that find it"—few there be that are willing to find it. And this great blessing is reserved for those who are willing to keep the commandments of the Lord, not for those who are rebellious. And that is your privilege, and you can receive these blessings in the temple of the Lord.

Now, just one more thought. You good sisters, who are single and alone, do not fear, do not feel that blessings are going to be withheld from you. You are not under any obligation or necessity of accepting some proposal that comes to you which is distasteful for fear you will come under condemnation. If in your hearts you feel that the gospel is true, and would under proper conditions receive these ordinances and sealing blessings in the temple of the Lord, and that is your faith and your hope and your desire, and that does not come to you now, the Lord will make it up, and you shall be blessed—for no blessing shall be withheld.

The Lord will judge you according to the desires of your hearts when blessings are withheld, and he is not going to condemn you for that which you cannot help.

I have left unsaid as many things as I have said, and I had a great many thoughts in mind that I have not given you, for this is a great subject. But reflect upon these things and remember that there is power in the Church for salvation and exaltation, and the Lord, when he comes, will not find it necessary to smite this earth with a curse, because that sealing power is here and the leaven is at work, so that all men who will may receive salvation and exaltation and the sealing powers. Thanks be unto God that he sent Elijah into the world to bestow these blessings.

The Lord bless you is my prayer. Amen.

SALVATION FOR THE DEAD.—There is never a time when the spirit is too old to approach God. All are within reach of the pardoning mercy, who have not committed the unpardonable sin, which hath no forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. There is a way to release the spirits of the dead; that is by the power and authority of the priesthood—by binding and loosing on earth.—*Joseph Smith.*

(Joseph Fielding Smith, *Elijah the Prophet and His Mission* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957], .)