



Dr. Marcus H. Martins

“To Be Learned is Good”: A Meditation on Priesthood and Time

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Among countless prophetic insights contained in the Book of Mormon, I begin this “meditation” with the Prophet Jacob’s words “But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.” (Book of Mormon - 2 Nephi 9:29) But rather than focus on the obvious topics of faith and obedience, I would like to use Jacob’s words slightly out of context and apply them to another aspect of our religious life—seeking “... out of the best books words of wisdom ... by study and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118), blending earthly truths with heavenly truths.

How good it is blend truths coming from a variety of disciplines, and to see how indeed “intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth ... light cleaveth unto light” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:40), and find, as the Prophet Joseph Smith once stated: “This is good doctrine. It tastes good. I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 355)

So, in my moments of quiet meditation I engage in the intellectual exercise of blending information coming from a variety of fields. A few months ago, in one of those meditations, I gave wings to my imagination and went “way out there” in thinking about the power of the priesthood and physical time.

I share these thoughts with you, not as gospel teaching, but as a mere intellectual exercise—perhaps to some, an exercise gone haywire.

We conceive “eternity” to be a perfect and glorified realm of consistency and light, while the current mortal environment is imperfect, fallen, mutable, ambiguous, and dark.

Priesthood is a power emanating from that perfect, infinite, eternal realm, acting on imperfect, finite mortal matter. When a glorified being from eternity possessing the fullness of the priesthood and clothed with robes of light and virtue, acts on the earth, what effect, if any, does he cause in the mortal environment?



What effects might the priesthood cause on earthly matter? Or, more specific to my meditation, would the

priesthood distort a hypothetical “time signature” of mortal compounds? Could it be that, when applied to mortal matter, the power of the priesthood imparts some of its eternal nature to that mortal matter, thus making it appear far “older”? If so, that might account for measurements of geological time, and our current scientific instruments would be accurately measuring the age of fossils, but that measurement would reflect an age distorted by the ever-present power of the priesthood, and not the actual age, as measure by eternal beings.

Could it be that in other instances the power of the priesthood might reverse the effects of time on mortal matter, restoring it to its pristine state—erasing the damage caused by human diseases and even reversing the process of death?

Would that be a potential explanation of how the prophet-warrior Joshua extended the hours of the day to achieve victory in a crucial battle? (Joshua 10:12-14) And how the Lord turned back the movement of a sundial during the ministry of the prophet Isaiah? (Isaiah 38:5-8)

We understand that the power of the priesthood emanates from a realm where perfection is the norm. Following this line of reasoning, once the power is applied to imperfect matter would it impart some measure of its inherent quality of perfection, and make something imperfect become a little more refined than its natural mortal state? If so, that might explain how the Savior Jesus Christ restored the bodies of those who were blind, lame, halt, maimed, leprous, withered, and deaf, to their proper fully functional state (3 Nephi 17:7-8), and even reversed the effects of death itself and brought back to mortal life a widow’s son, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus (Luke 7:11-15; 8:41-42, 49-56; John 11:38-44).

Similarly, the power of the priesthood might cause other effects on mortal nature, overcoming the effects of gravity, inertia, and electromagnetism. Nephi seems to have been miraculously transported to “an exceedingly high mountain” (1 Nephi 11:1). Moroni stood for hours in the air above the floor of young Joseph Smith’s bedroom, lecturing the young Joseph by word and by “mental images,” in such a way that the young man appeared to not notice the passage of time. Moroni also seemed to manipulate the light emanating from his body in a way that would require a magnetic field of stellar intensity, and at the end of his visits passed through the roof of the house and went back to the glorious realm where he resides. (Joseph Smith-History 1:30-31, 42-43; Doctrine and Covenants 130:5-7)



So many inquiries, and so few certainties. But it is wonderful to live in the era when we will see the fulfillment of great promises:

“God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now ...

“All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest.” (Doctrine & Covenants 121:26, 29-32)

Indeed, as this brief superficial meditation shows, “to be learned is good” when we employ our intellect to see possible connections between the ever-increasing body of scientific knowledge and refined insights from the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. And as we envision these truths converging, ever so closely into one great whole, we come to agree with William Shakespeare’s words written four centuries ago: “There are more things in heaven and earth ... Than are dreamt of in [our] philosophy.” (*Hamlet*, act 1, scene 5, 167-8; brackets added)

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