



The Intersection of Priesthood, Faith and Language

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A few perspectives from the scriptures:

“And so great was the faith of Enoch that ... their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.” (Pearl of Great Price - Moses 7:13)

“And now behold, can ye dispute the power of God? For behold, doth not my voice shake the earth?” (Book of Mormon - Mosiah 27:15)

“And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did stand forth and began to speak unto them ... And behold, when they had said these words, the earth shook exceedingly, and the walls of the prison did shake as if they were about to tumble to the earth; but behold, they did not fall.” (Book of Mormon - Helaman 5:26-27)

“And it came to pass that there came a voice as if it were above the cloud of darkness ... And ... it was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul—And notwithstanding the mildness of the voice, behold the earth shook exceedingly, and the walls of the prison trembled again, as if it were about to tumble to the earth” (Book of Mormon - Helaman 5:29-31)

“[The] word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit.” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:30)

“And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth.” (Pearl of Great Price - Moses 1:32)

“[He] that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully ... Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Bible - Jeremiah 23:28-29)

“Behold, I am God; give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my word.” (Doctrine and Covenants 11:2)

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of

hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Bible - Haggai 2:6-9)

“And it came to pass that [Jesus] went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father; And tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed.

“And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man.” (Book of Mormon - 3 Nephi 19:31-34)

“And when [Jesus] had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him.

“And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.

“And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome.” (Book of Mormon - 3 Nephi 17:15-18)

“Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.” (Book of Mormon - Ether 12:24)

Possible alternatives to the verb “overpower”: *subdue; prevail; pacify; bring to their knees.*

“[For] the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.” (Bible - Isaiah 24:18)

“Jesus ... went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. ... As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.” (Bible - John 18:4-6)

A Few Personal Insights

At the time of his unjust and sinful arrest, it is conceivable that the Lord Jesus Christ may have used his divine power to pronounce in mortal language the words “I am he”. That might explain why those men fell to the ground—the earth beneath their feet may have literally shaken at the sound of those words. At that critical moment in the history

of this fallen world, the Lamb of God would not allow himself to be arrested as “a mere man”. His captors had to take him as who He really was—”the Lord ... God ... the Great I AM”. (Doctrine and Covenants 38:1)

As we consider the intersection of priesthood, faith and language, we may understand that the words of Christ, inspired by the Holy Ghost (2 Nephi 32:3; 33:1) spoken in the authority of His name, while carrying out the many duties for the salvation of the human family—preaching, expounding, exhorting, pronouncing approved words of ordinances of salvation and exaltation, prophesying, sealing—such words have physical effects in nature.

Despite our natural mortal imperfections and limitations, with the grace provided by the atonement of Christ we strive to serve God with all our “heart, might, mind and strength”, with “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God”, remembering “faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence” and “praying at the gates of heaven”, speaking “the thoughts that [the Lord] shall put into [our] hearts, and ... [declaring] whatsoever thing ... in [His] name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness, in all things”, as long as we are given power to utter them. (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2, 5-7; 100:5-7; 3 Nephi 28:14)

The exercise of priesthood authority is manifested through the medium of language. Although mortal languages are inherently imperfect and powerless (Ether 12:23-28), in the temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, divinely-appointed words are pronounced with exactness in sacred ordinances by men and women who received the gift of the Holy Ghost and the proper authority. Once accurately recorded (D&C 128:8-9), these words are acknowledged and validated in heaven.

In temples, men and women who serve as ordinance workers enjoy the honor of exercising the authority of the priesthood, officiating ordinances and ceremonies in which they pronounce divinely inspired words that traverse the veil of mortality and impact worlds without end.

Written under inspiration by prophets and apostles, the words of these ordinances are words of power that, when pronounced in faith and reverence by someone with the proper authority, can have a permanent effect on biology—whether of flesh and blood, or of spirit—on physics, chemistry, time, and even over death itself. (Moses 1:32-35; 7:13; Ether 12:30; Joshua 10:12-13; Mark 5:35-42; Luke 7:11-15; John 2:6-11; 6:9-13; 11:39-44; Doctrine and Covenants 88:6-13, 41-42)

A few additional perspectives from the scriptures:

“[Let] virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant** companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever. The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee; While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the

noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:45-46; 122:1-2)

**** Constant:** *invariable; unchanging; regular; ever present and available*

“Therefore, Helaman and his brethren went forth, and did declare the word of God with much power unto the convincing of many people of their wickedness, which did cause them to repent of their sins and to be baptized unto the Lord their God.” (Book of Mormon - Alma 62:45)

“And it shall come to pass, when the Lord seeth fit in his wisdom that [those who were never to taste of death] shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desire may be fulfilled, and also because of the convincing power of God which is in them.” (Book of Mormon - 3 Nephi 28:25, 29)

“[Then], if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.” (Doctrine and Covenants 11:21)

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