

# Monday, October 24, 2011

## History of Elijah Doctrine

The talk on Elijah given in Spanish Fork and posted on this blog last week is a continuation of the development of information found in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. The foundation for why the Elijah issue required further discussion is found in the book. Some people have listened to the talk without first reading the book. Therefore they are unacquainted with the background information which shows the importance of re-examining the Elijah tradition inside the church. I will give a brief explanation here, although you won't really understand the reason for the talk unless you read the book.

Briefly, and without repeating all the historic records, journals and sources from which the history is explained in the book, this is what happened: Elijah came to visit the Kirtland Temple in 1836 according to the third person account written by Warren Cowdery in the back of the 3rd volume of revelations in Kirtland. It is the last entry made, and the source of all the later claims made about Elijah, his purpose and appearance. The account is third-person, (i.e., The Lord appeared to them... said to them..., etc.) but when it was later discovered it was reworded to the first person (i.e., The Lord appeared to us.... said to us..., etc.). You can read the original document, actually see a photostatic reproduction of the original, in the *Joseph Smith Papers*. I give the cite in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

The record Joseph Smith left makes no mention of Elijah's appearance. The record Oliver Cowdery left makes no mention of Elijah's appearance. Joseph died without every explaining anything about the event, or making any mention of it. Oliver also. Both of them testified about visitations they received, and wrote about who had come to empower them, but neither of them ever mention Elijah.

In talks in Nauvoo, Joseph refers on every occasion he mentions Elijah as a future event. Not as a past event. He explains Elijah "will return," not that he has returned.

Joseph Smith received the sealing power in a revelation given sometime in the early 1830's, which was recorded in 1843. I take some effort to lay out the chronology in the book, and the information can be reviewed there.

When Joseph Smith died, there is no contemporaneous source to verify the appearance of Elijah in 1836, and the appearance was not known at that time.

There is no mention of the Elijah appearance in 1836, nor 1837, nor 1838 nor '39, '40, '41, '42, '43 nor in 1844, though Joseph does say there will be a future return. After Joseph Smith's death, there was nothing said or known in 1844, '45, '46, '47, '48, '49, '50 nor for years thereafter. When the Kirtland Revelation Book was reviewed in the 1850's the first notice resulted in the revelation being published for the first time in November of the year it was found. Along with the publication was an explanation given by Orson Pratt explaining it was quite significant. He garbles the chronology in that article, and the chronology ever since was taken from his first editorial. Since then the chronology has remained the same as Orson declared, even though he erred in attributing the revelation recorded on July 12, 1843 to having been given on that date. The revelation was received much earlier, the first part in 1829. I also walk through that in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

Since the 1850's when the revelation was found (which is now Section 110) about the Kirtland Temple

appearance of Elijah, and then published for the first time in the Deseret News, there have been hundreds of statements which rely upon Orson Pratt's original analysis accompanying the announcement of finding the record.

By the time the words were discovered, Warren Cowdery who wrote it down was dead. He could not explain where it came from because we couldn't ask him. Oliver died shortly before Warren, and he also could not be asked. And, of course, Joseph died before either of them, and so he could not be asked either. Therefore the two witnesses left nothing about it, could not be asked, and the scribe who recorded it could not be asked either.

I walk through all these events using the historical records, scriptures and lengthy explanations. It is a topic which takes a lot of material to set out in full, but has been done in the book.

The talk on Elijah's mission posted on this blog was taking the topic and discussing what the still future mission of Elijah would necessarily involve. Since Joseph expected it to happen in the future when he spoke about it in January and March, 1844, there must be a future mission for him. Because if Joseph, who was present in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 when the Warren Cowdery recorded event took place thought there was still a future mission for Elijah, then it would be important to notice that and give some thought to what it could involve. I've done that. Hence the contents of the talk.

Now, if you disagree with history and you are perfectly content with what Orson Pratt bequeathed us as the accompanying commentary when the account was discovered, then you needn't give this one further thought. There have been generations come and go with that explanation regarded as the absolute truth and the basis for our Temple work. So you'll be in good company. But there are those serious minded individuals who are trying to sort this out right now at high levels of the Church who know these are important issues which are NOT as settled as the past pronouncements make it appear. In fact, I doubt the current explanations will last much longer because the record simply does not support the conclusions we have urged. The place to start is not after the 1850's discovery, when there were conclusions leaped to by Orson Pratt which then became the operative explanation thereafter. The place to start is instead from 1836 to 1844 in the records of that time. What was Joseph saying? What was Oliver saying? Why did both of them leave out mention of Elijah in their testimonies of who had come to visit with them? Where did Section 110 come from? That is, who did Warren Cowdery consult with to learn the material he wrote into the book? I work on that in both the book and the talk.

I think Elijah has a ministry still future. I think it is connected to the very things Joseph Smith was speaking about in January and March, 1844. And I explain what that is in the talk linked on this blog.