

Priesthood Study Series

Study #15 - Patriarchal Blessings

Antiquity of Patriarchal Ministry and Blessings

- ◆ **D&C 104:22-24b** Mahalaleel was four hundred and ninety-six years and seven days old when he was ordained by the hand of Adam, who also blessed him. Jared was two hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam, who also blessed him. Enoch was twenty-five years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam, and he was sixty-five and Adam blessed him--and he saw the Lord: and he walked with him, and was before his face continually: and he walked with God three hundred and sixty-five years: making him four hundred and thirty years old when he was translated.
- ◆ “A patriarch is rightly considered to be a spiritual father. People generally, having any biblical knowledge, at once think of the patriarchs of old. They were fathers of the Tribes of Israel. Yet there were patriarchs before the Tribes of Israel. Many do not recognize that Adam was a patriarch. Adam was a father in Enoch 's city. According to the Doctrine and Covenants 104:28C, "The Lord administered comfort to Adam and said unto him, I have set you to be at the head" - the patriarch, or father of them at the time. The same paragraph starts with the statement that three years before his death, Adam called certain individuals unto him and "bestowed upon them his last blessing." One of the great spiritual blessings God has provided for His covenant people is that of receiving blessings under the hands of His servants of whom He called to the office of patriarch in these last days. The first patriarch in the church was established by God in 1830 was Joseph Smith Sr., father of the seer.” (Source: *The Patriarchal Blessing*, Thelona Stevens)

Need of Patriarchal Ministry Now

- ◆ “There are those who think that the function of patriarchs is confined to antiquity...[M]an needs living patriarchs now. Does not man now need to be spiritually blessed? If so, who would justly deny God the right to bless man through divinely chosen channels? Does the church need reviving? Then there is need of divinely appointed revivalists.” (Source: *Saints Herald*, June 11, 1956, William Patterson)

The Nature of the Ministry of the Patriarch

- ◆ “The evangelist-patriarch is to be near to God and near the people. He is to be qualified for bringing the two together.” (Source: *Your Patriarchal Blessing – Paper – Date, Publisher and Author Unknown*)
- ◆ **D&C 125:3a-4e** “The patriarch is an evangelical minister. The duties of this office are to be an evangelical minister; to preach, teach, expound, exhort, to be a revivalist, and to visit branches and districts as wisdom may direct, invitation, request, or the Spirit of God determine and require;
 1. **to comfort the Saints; to be a father to the church; to give counsel and advice to individuals who may seek for such;**
 2. **to lay on hands for the conferment of spiritual blessing, and if so led, to point out the lineage of the one who is blessed.**He is to be free from responsibility--ministerial--as a traveling minister, and from the care of the local branch or church and district affairs...He is not to meddle with branch affairs or district affairs. He is not to listen to complaints made by individuals to him, but [is to request in writing the concerns] to present to the branch or district officers, as the case may require. He is not to be put in charge of either branch or district. These are the privileges which attach to the office of patriarch and evangelical minister.

- ◆ ***D&C 137:4b-c*** And let the church be admonished that the functioning and work of this order is of **great importance in the work of perfecting the Saints**, and the appointing authorities be reminded that the **members of the order so far as possible are to be relieved of administrative work and keep themselves in condition for better functioning as evangelists whose task is to build up faith in the gospel and the church and its work.**

And let those whose duty it is to select from the members of the priesthood those for setting apart as evangelists be admonished that the work of this class of ministers requires vigor, deep faith, and unreserved consecration, and men should be selected accordingly.

What the Patriarchal Blessing Is

- ◆ “The patriarchal blessing...[is] available to members of the Church of Jesus Christ, the latter under certain conditions which can be judged only by the participating evangelist-patriarch. **One patriarchal blessing is given in a lifetime**, unless there are unusual situations calling for a supplementary blessing, The evangelist-patriarch places his hands on the head of a person thereby expressing benediction. He offers a prayer which commends the person to God and opens channels for God's expression in counsel and confirmation. This blessing says to the one receiving, "Blessed shall you be, if.. It may be expected to set forth the counsels through which the person may experience the happiness or blessedness that can come to Saints who manage their total living in accordance with God's law. In general, it may be said that God provides guidance and inspiration to assist persons to plan the course of their lives and to make decisions. He does not take away the responsibility of qualifying to manage one's living.”

The pattern goes back unto early Hebrew history. Jacob or Israel called his sons to him and one by one they received the benediction of their father. Each had a calling, each received counsel in accordance with his nature and needs. This is what the patriarchal blessing seeks to do today.”

(Source: **Your Patriarchal Blessing – Paper – Date, Publisher and Author Unknown**)

Purpose of Blessing

- ◆ “...is to give an authoritative priestly blessing, invoked by a spiritual father representing God and the church. Other functions are to give comfort, admonition, counsel as to a godly way of life, rededication and reconstruction, and benediction.” (Elbert A. Smith – **Evangelists and Patriarchs; Their Work and Calling**, pg. 24)
- ◆ Considerations:
 - One blessing – meant to be applicable for life
 - Offer counsel rather than specific answers
 - Offer direction rather than a step by step map – not primarily prophetic, but may be
 - May Identify Lineage – 12 tribes of Israel
 - Offer comfort

What a Candidate Might Expect

- ◆ “The candidate approaches the blessing with the expectation of coming to God as an understanding Father who will do and say what is best for his son or daughter. This means that he or she shall be ready to listen.” God as our Father concerned with helping us with counsel and direction.

These things may be expected in part or in total in the patriarchal blessing:

- (1) Some confirmation of one's discipleship with Christ;
- (2) some expression of acceptance of one's commitment to God;
- (3) some guidelines about the general nature of one's stewardship;
- (4) some general counsel about carrying through one's life;
- (5) some promises of divine support in this stewardship;
- (6) some instruction about understanding God and his plan and purpose;

(7) some encouragement in developing Christian virtues which guarantees life's greatest joy out of response to those standards; and

(8) benedictory prayer upon the total life plan.

Some of this may be in commendation, some in warning, some in invitation.

There are some things the patriarchal blessing is not.

(1) It is not a forecast for the candidate of his future life. It is not fortune-telling.

(2) It is not answer to someone's immediate problems. Rather it deals with one's total life program. Any one problem or question is to be seen in the light of this total picture. Sometimes it is wise to straighten out some single pressing problem before receiving a blessing.

(3) It is not to save the recipient from the responsibility of making decisions. Rather it is to help and strengthen one in making them. God does not want to take away one's agency.

(4) It is not a report on one's genealogy. This is incidental. The person's membership or acceptance in a Hebrew tribe may or may not be given.

(Source: *Your Patriarchal Blessing – Paper – Date, Publisher and Author Unknown*)

Promises & Blessings of God are Conditional

- ◆ *D&C 58:6g-i* “Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments? Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and a man obeys not, I revoke and they receive not the blessing; then they say in their hearts, This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But woe unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above.”
- ◆ *D&C 81:3b* “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”

Who May Receive a Blessing?

- ◆ “A **patriarchal blessing** is always a benediction—blessing. It is made available to any member of the Church who is in good standing. Most patriarchs suggest a recipient be 16 years or older in order to assure understanding and maturity of purpose for receiving and using a patriarchal blessing. Each recipient should be honest and wholesome in the influence of their covenant. This does not mean they must be without weakness or mistakes, for the blessing is to help them achieve spiritual strength.” (Source: *Question Time: What is a Patriarchal Blessing/Benediction?*, Zion’s Path, Mike Ballantyne)
 - Any member of Christ’s Church
 - “in good standing” and that voluntarily requests it
 - that is 15 or 16 plus years old or above (not prescribed) - No upper limit
 - that is a “mature” member
 - Not newly baptized
 - Have functional understanding of the ordinance
 - Have some perspective of life
- ◆ “Those receiving blessings are to be persons of sound moral quality, that is, persons who are repentant to the extent of their understanding of God's laws as given in scriptures suggested for study. They are to be honest, clean and wholesome in influence. This does not mean that they are to be Saints without weakness or mistake. The blessing is to help them achieve spiritual strength. If candidates were required to be one hundred percent saintly, no blessings would ever be given.”

“Candidates ought to have a functioning idea of what the blessing is and what it is for, seeing the blessing as a part of the comprehensive ministry of the church, and associating it with their total life.”

(Source: *Your Patriarchal Blessing – Paper – Date, Publisher and Author Unknown*)

Candidate Preparation

- ◆ “In preparation for your patriarchal blessing you should consider what you want to do with your life. You should try to see your life with an extended or longtime perspective. Your primary concern will be with seeing things from God's viewpoint. This may seem difficult, but with an open mind you can be objective about yourself in your seeking to become aligned with God's plan. You will not be seeking to have God always to support your own ideas, but will be seeking the sense of direction which comes from the "still small voice" that speaks to you in many and varied ways. Doing this, you will want your life to become worthy of God's help as you try to work out and understand his purpose for your life. With this outlook you will not rush into receiving your patriarchal blessing.” (Source: **Your Patriarchal Blessing – Paper – Date, Publisher and Author Unknown**)
 - Prayer and Fasting
 - Meditation and self-reflection
 - Selected Scripture Reading
 - Prior Meeting(s) with Patriarch, if possible.

Selecting a Patriarch

- Total stranger vs. someone who knows candidate well?
- “As a rule, the candidate will consult the evangelist-patriarch of his home area, if one is living there. Sometimes persons want to go to some stranger. Occasionally this appears to be a kind of testing of God with the feeling that if the man who does not know them "comes through" the message will be genuine. This attitude shows a rather immature conception of inspiration. High inspiration comes to those who are searching. It supplements our efforts. The evangelist- patriarch who knows the candidate can seek the mind and heart of God on the areas involved. Here inspiration supplements his own efforts. It does not take its place.”

“Sometimes, however, persons may have good reason for obtaining the ministry of those who have special aptitudes and experience for meeting their peculiar needs. One evangelist-patriarch may be better equipped for ministering in specific fields than are others.”

(Source: **Your Patriarchal Blessing – Paper – Date, Publisher and Author Unknown**)

Setting

- Should be approached as a place of worship
- Private setting
- Place that is quiet
- Minimal chance for interruptions

Recording & Storing

- Generally taped
- Transcribed and shared with individual
- In past, stored centrally
- Currently, storing is the responsibility of each Patriarch – Some central storing is being considered or being done