

Mormon Scripture—The Articles of Faith, Part XIV

By Marvin W. Cowan

The seventh LDS Article of Faith declares, “We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.” In explaining this Article, LDS Apostle James Talmage said that men who are commissioned by the authority of heaven “will not be lacking in *proofs* of their divine commission.... These [spiritual gifts] are *oftentimes exhibited* in a manner so different from the usual order of things as to be called *miraculous and supernatural*.... We may safely regard the existence of these spiritual powers as one of the *essential characteristics of the Church*; where they are not, the Priesthood of God does not operate” (*Articles of Faith*, p. 217). Talmage also said,

The gift of healing was exercised extensively in the times of the Savior and the apostles; indeed, healing constituted by far the greater part of the recorded miracles wrought in that period. By authoritative ministrations the eyes of the blind were opened, the dumb were made to speak, the deaf to hear, the lame to leap for joy; afflicted mortals, bowed with infirmity, were lifted erect and enjoyed the vigor of youth; the palsied were made well; lepers were cleansed; impotence was banished, and fevers were assuaged. **In the present day**, the dispensation of the fulness of times, **this power** is possessed in the [LDS] Church and its manifestation is of frequent occurrence among the Latter-day Saints. Thousand of recipients can testify to the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise, that if His servants lay hands on the sick they shall recover. The usual method of administering to the afflicted is by the imposition of hands of those who possess the requisite authority of the Priesthood, this being agreeable to the **Savior’s instructions** in former days and according to divine revelation in the present day. This part of the ordinance is usually preceded by an anointing with oil previously consecrated. (*Articles of Faith*, p. 225)

In the above quotation, Talmage said the Savior and the apostles healed the sick by “*authoritative ministrations*.” He explained, “The usual method of administering to the afflicted is by the imposition of hands of those who possess the requisite *authority of the Priesthood*, this being agreeable to the **Savior’s instructions** in former days....” That is why Mormon men in the Priesthood anoint the sick with “consecrated oil,” lay hands on them and pray for healing “by the power of the holy Melchizedek Priesthood.”

There is no Biblical record of Jesus giving *instructions* to anoint sick people with oil and lay hands on them and pray for their recovery by the power of the Priesthood, nor is there even *one* Biblical example where He or his Apostles healed that way! Jesus declared, “*All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*” (Matt. 28:18), so He didn’t need “Priesthood” to authorize anything He did. And Jesus never even mentioned the Melchizedek Priesthood during His entire earthly ministry! Of course, James 5:13-15 says, “Let [the sick] call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord,” but it does not say anything about laying hands on the sick or that “Priesthood” is necessary to pray for them.

When Mormons are asked why non-Mormons don’t see Mormons using the spiritual gifts mentioned above they often reply that non-Mormons can’t see the miracles because they don’t have the “Priesthood” or they don’t have the Spirit because they aren’t members of the true Church. But when someone is truly healed, both believers and unbelievers can see the results just as they did in the Bible. For example, in John 9, Jesus gave sight to a man

who was born blind and even those who opposed Him couldn't deny it. In John 11, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and many believed on Him as a result. But the unbelieving Jewish leaders wanted to put both Lazarus and Jesus to death in order to stop the influence of that miracle. Therefore, in the Bible, both believers and unbelievers witnessed the miracles of Jesus and His disciples.

If Christ's (healing) "power is possessed in the [LDS] Church" as Talmage claims, where is the evidence? There is no evidence that more Mormons are healed than those of other faiths whom Mormons call "apostates." Talmage said that these spiritual gifts would be *exhibited as proofs* (or seen as evidence) of the divine commission of men and are "characteristics of the (LDS) Church."

He also said where those gifts don't exist, neither does the "Priesthood of God." Most Mormons as well as non-Mormons who have lived among Mormons all of their lives have never seen a Mormon speak in tongues or interpret them. Why do Mormon missionaries who go to foreign countries spend time in language training before going on their mission if they have the gift of tongues? Mormons often claim that they or someone else had a vision or revelation, but those are so personal that they can't be verified by witnesses. We discussed revelation and prophecy in previous articles.

Why did Jesus perform miracles when everyone that He healed or raised from the dead later died? Jesus explained why He healed the sick in Matthew 9:1-7 when a paralyzed man was brought to Him. Jesus said to the man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." But the scribes present thought that was blasphemy. Jesus knew what they were thinking and said, "Which is easier: to say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee'; or to say, 'Arise and walk?' But that ye may know that the Son of man hath *power to forgive sins* (then He said to the paralyzed man), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose and departed to his house."

Jesus asked which is easier: to say, "thy sins are forgiven you" or "arise and walk." Obviously, it is easier to say "thy sins are forgiven you" because no one can see whether or not that actually happens. So, Jesus performed a physical healing, which was *seen* by everyone present, to demonstrate that He had power to forgive sins. Physical healing was certainly good for those who experienced it, but that was not the primary reason for the miracles Jesus performed. The greatest miracle of all is when a person's sins are forgiven for all eternity!

Next month we will discuss the eighth LDS Article of Faith regarding the accuracy of the Bible. Anyone who wants to read more on the LDS view of spiritual gifts can do so in the twelfth chapter of the *Articles of Faith* by LDS Apostle, James Talmage.