We read the Old Testament and wonder at the amazing miracles performed by the prophets. When Elijah was caught up in a whirlwind into heaven, his physical mantle, the cloth he wore by which everyone recognized him as the prophet, dropped to the ground. It was picked up by Elisha, who was promised that if he saw Elijah taken away in the whirlwind that the Lord would grant him a double portion of His spirit. I'm not exactly sure what receiving a double portion of the Lord's Spirit entails, but Elisha got it, because he saw the prophet taken up into heaven.

Other prophets were off at a distance watching. They did not see Elijah caught up, but they saw him disappear and watched as Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle. The office of prophet had been passed from one priesthood holder to the next. In the days of the Restoration of all things, the Lord still has the office of prophet pass from one man to the next, but a precedent has been set so we always know who the next prophet will be. This method was established with the passing of the mantle of prophet from Joseph Smith to Brigham Young. In the early days of the Church it did not happen as smoothly as it does today, but the pattern has been there and is still followed today. The senior apostle, the one who has the most seniority as an apostle becomes the next prophet.

The functioning of the Church never misses a beat. There is not even so much as a hiccup as the authority is passed from the deceased senior apostle (prophet) to the new senior apostle. The President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is always the next prophet. The Lord controls who the next prophet is through life and death. All the apostles know that once called, they are in their capacity as witnesses for Christ until Christ, himself, calls them home through death.

The mantle

In the Old Testament story of Elijah and Elisha the office or mantle of prophet is represented by a piece of cloth. Today we do not see a physical representation of the authority of the prophet. Each of the apostles holds all the keys to the kingdom separately. But only the senior apostle, the one filling the position of Prophet has the right to exercise or control the use of those keys, the rights of presidency. This gives the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles the right to ordain and set apart their senior member as the new prophet, because as a quorum, in the absence of a functioning prophet, they govern the Church through their shared keys or rights of presidency. Once they have ordained the new senior apostle as the prophet, he reorganizes the Quorum of the First Presidency, drawing his counselors from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I strongly urge you to read the talk located at the bottom of this article about Succession in the Presidency, given by Bruce R. McConkie, January 8, 1974 at BYU-Provo in a devotional.

Since I have pointed you to a long talk by Elder McConkie, I will shorten this article and just make one other observation about the mantle of the Prophet. In 2 Kings 6:16-17, Elisha is not worried about the fact that an entire army has surrounded the city because they came to capture him and take him to their king. Elisha's servant is worried, so Elisha asks the Lord to open the servant's eyes so he can see what Elisha sees. "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

Our first reaction is probably to inwardly gasp and say, "Whoa!" Note that Elisha was not surprised. Elisha had a broader view of the workings of the Lord than the servant had. Elisha had had many revelations, and had performed many miraculous things for the Lord. It was business as usual for him. He calmly asked the Lord to blind the whole army, and the Lord did, for the sake of His servant. Who knows what a prophet is privileged in his calling to see and witness?

Conclusion

Here is my question I would like you to take away with you as you study this lesson. When we think of our current prophet do we think of him in the same way we look in awe at Elisha and Moses, or Adam and Abraham? Our prophet has all the keys of the kingdom that any prophet since the days of Adam have held. He is currently directing the Lord's work on earth. He is not just the spokesman for the Lord's Church, he is the Lord's mouthpiece to all of humanity, to the whole world. He sees, as the scriptures say,

"afar off." He understands things and has learned things about the purpose and vision of the Church we may never learn in our lifetime. Our prophet has all the priesthood authority of any of the great prophets throughout history, and is able and ready to perform whatever work is needed by the Lord to move the Lord's kingdom forward.

Brothers and sisters, we stand in the presence of greatness when we stand in the company of our prophet and the apostles. These are truly the Lord's anointed servants whose callings are to guide us in building the Lord's kingdom and in directing us in the efforts of taking the truth to all the earth. We need to be faithful to their counsel. We need to listen with all our might and souls to the direction and commandments that the prophet gives us from the Lord, for the prophet's words really are from the Lord of Hosts himself.

Succession in the Presidency
Bruce R. McConkie

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The Mantle of Elijah

OT Week 29