

D&C Lesson # 36
The Desert Shall Rejoice, and Blossom as the Rose
(Our Heritage, pp. 81-96, D&C 58:2-4; 64:33-34; 82:10; 93:1; 130:19-21)
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(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. The great hunger for a Holy Temple was shown by those who labored in and for the temple in Nauvoo, even as they knew they must soon abandon it.

A. As a result of that hunger, many labored there day and night.

II. The **great drive to fill that same hunger was shown by Brigham Young when he so quickly chose a place for a new temple in the Salt Lake Valley.**

A. Within four days of arriving, he had selected the place.

B. Further, he deliberately set it **to be in the center of the saints' dwellings**, thus manifesting that it should be the "Center" of their lives.

C. This fit the pattern of ancient Israel: The Wilderness Tabernacle was set squarely in the center with three tribes settling on each of its four sides.

D. Jerusalem, and thus its holy temple, was also set in the center of that land. (See Map 7 of LDSKJ version of Bible).

III. President Young's vision was far-reaching, however. He prophesied this temple would be followed by hundreds of temples dotting the world, which is even now coming to pass.

A. Furthermore, the Lord blessed him to see the exact pattern of the Salt Lake Temple so we know that this initiative truly came from the Lord.

IV. While there was a great hunger for a temple, it was not going to be built in a hasty manner.

A. Though much labor was required to settle the wilderness, saints divided their time, laboring over forty years to complete the temple and make it a place of glory for the Lord.

1. President Young said, "I want this temple that we are now building to the name of our God, to stand for all time to come as a monument of the industry, faithfulness, faith and integrity of the Latter-day Saints who were driven into the mountains (Discourses: 11:372).

B. In the meantime, other alternatives for temple work were prepared.

1. An endowment house was built so that temple ordinances could still be administered before the temple was completed.

2. And a full temple was completed in St. George first. Brigham Young said of it: "I am so thankful we have completed our temple, it is the greatest blessing that could be bestowed upon us.... **But we are not satisfied with this one, we must hurry the building of another one, and thus another one and so on, and perform the great work therein that is required at our hands**" (Discourses 19:222). (Emphasis added)

V. The temple was a great influence in causing the Wilderness to Blossom as a Rose.

A. It was not only a place for the salvation of the dead, but a place to bless the lives of the members themselves.

B. It was a place where the people would receive refuge, revelation, and gifts of personal protection.

C. By receiving temple blessings, the saints remembered their place in God's plans, and their lives and their works usually reflected the beauties of His Eternal causes.

VI. How can the Temple today continue to make our lives Blossom as the Rose?

A. **There are certain things we need to understand:**

1. Unfortunately some people are disturbed by the highly symbolic nature of the temple service. So some do not return after attending the first time.

2. I was one of those once disturbed, because a teacher once told me that Latter-day Saints didn't believe in usage of symbols. So the temple's symbolism confused me.

B. **I did not understand the distinction between our plain, symbol-free worship service in chapels and the highly symbolic ritual of the temples.**

Since then I've learned:

1. The Chapel is where we worship. So **it is important we do not allow ourselves to worship symbols there.**

2. In fact, in Judges 8:27, Gideon's people began to worship the ephod, which was meant only as a symbol pointing to Christ. And that greatly displeased the Lord.

3. Therefore, our chapels are void of all symbols, including the cross.

4. The only emblems are the sacrament, reminding us of the Savior's shed blood and water, which are used to allow us to renew our covenants with Him. The sacrament is not used in any way as a thing to be worshipped in and of itself. And the sacrament prayers remind us they are emblems of Jesus Christ, whom we do worship

VIII. The Temple, on the other hand, **is a place of instruction**, although people do find private places to ponder, study scripture, and pray to the Lord in private.

A. But the ritual of the Temple itself is an experiential, symbolic journey.

B. Symbols are used along that journey as a means to teach us of our place in the universe and how to return to God, who created us. While symbols are used there to **teach** us of The Way, they are not used in any case where they could become objects of worship.

IX. So what is the best way to come to understand the meaning of temple symbols?

1. While more and more people are publishing and lecturing on their interpretation of temple symbols, **the best way to understand is through the Spirit, as counseled. Learning through the Spirit will make the symbolism more meaningful to you.**

2. Also, use the scriptures! My own understanding of temple symbols began **as I studied the scriptures**. As I began reading the Old Testament and beyond, I saw that the Lord used the same symbols from the beginning to teach us. So it was the **scriptures which first helped me understand the meaning of the Temple's symbols**. And seeing them used in the temple in an "instructional" way now brings great enrichment to my life, especially as the Spirit confirms their meaning.

X. While the Temple was a vital first step, it was just a first step in fulfilling the prophecy of "Making the desert blossom as a rose" (Isaiah 35:1).

A. The industry of the saints was soon shown as they turned a barren dessert (**by-passed by others as worthless**) **into productive lands**.

B. Not only was the Salt Lake Valley desert turned to blossom, but so were other desert regions of the West, as President Young sent colonizers beyond Utah.

C. President Young briefly evaluated what he had been able to accomplish for the Lord.
“The result of my labors for the past 26 years... are: The peopling of this Territory by the Latter-day Saints of about 100,000 souls; the founding of over 200 cities, towns and villages inhabited by our people,... and the establishment of schools, factories, mills and other institutions calculated to improve and benefit our communities.”

And why did he do all this?

“My whole life is devoted to the Almighty’s service.”

So the main purpose was to help a people blossom as they worshipped God.

XI. **The Wilderness Blossoming included blessing the Native Americans who first lived there.**

A. From the beginning President Young counseled the saints to be friendly and kind to the Indians, though there were still some unfortunate problems.

B. Their positive efforts included lifting them up through the Gospel.

1. Missionary efforts brought over 300 Shoshones, and 100 Zunis into Christ’s Tent.

Work was also done in many other tribes.

C. Missionary work was also undertaken in Mexico among the natives there.

X. We must recognize “The Blossoming” was not just physical, but spiritual.

A. That “blossoming” soon extended to people of many different nations.

B. Missionary work is still causing a “blossoming” in other lands which were previously **spiritual wildernesses.**

The whole earth, once spiritually barren due to apostasy, is beginning to blossom with greater spiritual knowledge and more marvelous works of salvation.