

D&C Lesson # 39
The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn to Their Fathers
(D&C 2; 110:13-16; 138; JS-History 1:37-39)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. Martin Luther led a great leap forward when he showed people how wrong it was to think they could “buy” the dead out of hell.

A. But he left the basic dilemma unanswered.

B. How *could* the dead, many who had not heard of Jesus Christ or of His Gospel, be saved from Hell?

II. What most men failed to understand, or have faith in, was that **the loving Lord Himself had prepared the way.**

A. And **He had prepared “The Way” from the beginning.**

III. Malachi spoke of this way as the Old Testament closed. For soon the Savior would come, and the initial way to God’s Kingdom would be opened --- **for both the Living and the Dead.**

A. Malachi had closed the Old Testament with “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5-6).

IV. At Christ’s first coming, He did indeed open the way. And evidences show that the earliest Christians *did* understand how the Lord had prepared for them a way to redeem their dead.

A. The scriptures show they had been taught “baptism for their dead” (1 Corinthians 15:29).

B. The early Christian baptismal fonts, in octagonal form and in accompanying legends, show that they knew being baptized for the dead would allow their deceased to enter God’s Kingdom.*

C. It was later apostasy which caused a loss of this knowledge and the essential ordinances.

V. The Lord knew the apostasy would come, and that this precious ordinance would be lost.

A. So Malachi’s prophecy, while hinged upon Christ’s atonement, looked to the Last Days, when a Restoration of the knowledge and keys to do the work for the dead would occur before “The Great and Dreadful Day of the Lord.”

B. Because so many billions would die without a true knowledge of Jesus Christ and without opportunity to participate in His Saving Ordinances, truly the time of this earth would have been “wasted” --- for only a few would not have fallen under the curse of Death!

VI. While most of the world did not seem to care, the Lord did care about those who died who had not heard His word and received His ordinances. And now the second step was to come.

A. One of the first messages the Lord sent through Moroni was the quoting of Malachi’s promise, and the wonderful news that it would soon be fulfilled.

B. The importance of this promise was further shown when this became the first revelation of the Doctrine and Covenants, although a later, more general, revelation was put before it in time.

C. As promised, Elijah did actually appear. At his appearance he testified “The time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi ... to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse--- Therefore the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” (See D&C 110:14-16).

VII. The Lord sent many additional revelations to the Saints to help them know how to build temples, and to know how to perform the ordinances therein which would save their dead.

VIII. Finally He sent beautiful confirmation of the importance of this work in a revelation given to President Joseph F. Smith.

A. While pondering with deep gratitude on the love of the Savior who had atoned for the sins of men, President Joseph F. Smith was led to realize the plight of those who died without Christ’s saving works in their behalf. He was led to scriptures which showed that Jesus had not forgotten them. And that after His Crucifixion, He had personally visited many of them. Many of them had died “firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of the Father and His Son” (D&C 138:14).

B. President Smith saw that not only had Jesus personally visited many, but He sent messengers among the others: “From among the righteous he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men;” (v. 30).

C. **Thus the time of earth will not be wasted**, for the work among the dead not only occurred then but continues today. President Smith saw “the faithful elders of this dispensation continue in their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption... among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin... The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God.” (v. 57-8).

IX. That these are true revelations can be shown by the enormous expenditures of time and resources in building Temples today, in gathering the records of the peoples of the earth, in preserving those records, in making them available to all men. And then in actually doing the temple work.

A. While the work being done is amazing, it really should be expanded. And the brethren continually encourage we Saints to make this work a higher priority in our lives.

B. The more we become personally involved in doing a saving work for the deceased, the more we can feel the love of our Savior, who atoned not only for the living, but for every person who ever lived upon the earth.

The Lord said that one sparrow could not fall to the ground without His Father’s knowledge and concern (Matthew 10:29, 31). **So why would He would let billions of humans perish without a fair chance to hear His truths and be blessed by His saving ordinances?**

C. The Lord has shown repeatedly that He does care for every man, woman and child. And He has indeed prepared a full and just way for each one to be taught His truths and to partake of His saving ordinances. To this end have the prophets testified from the beginning.

See Grace Vlam, “The Mormon Doctrine of Baptism as Reflected in Early Christian Baptistries,” *Dialogue*, Spring, 1968, p. 144. Sister Vlam has personally visited many early Christians baptismal sites. She shows these baptismal fonts consistently carried the number eight

(a number understood by early Christians to pertain to salvation and to entrance into God's Kingdom), and were often built beneath the ground, as are our temple baptismal fonts today. This pattern shows that the baptisms done there are for those who have passed into the graves of the earth.