

Ir-ot-30
Come to the House of the Lord
(2 Kings 17; 2 Chronicles 29-30; 32; 34)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Apostasy came to ancient Israel, then a Restoration. **Those ancient events bore witness of the Greater Apostasy and the Greater Restoration which have occurred in Our Days**)

- I. The Ten Tribes of Israel were the first to fall into apostasy, worshipping idols and living wickedly. Thus they were taken into captivity by Assyria, as prophesied.
- A. "... the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight..." (2 Kings 17:18).
 - B. Since then they have disappeared from the knowledge of the world, although through latter-day prophets we know many things about them.
 - C. In fact, **We are a part of them, and are now being re-gathered, as promised, with the responsibility of gathering all others!**
 - D. Judah followed Israel into apostasy (2 Chron. 28:24-25).

II. . Hezekiah helped overcome apostasy in his day by renewing the temple for worship (2 Chron. 29-30).

A. Hezekiah then invited *all Israel* to come to that temple (2 Chron. 30:5-9), including those of the ten tribes still left in the land. But many mocked the invitation (2 Chron. 30:10).

- B. In our day, prophets are again calling to Israel, "Come to the Temple!"
- 1. President Boyd K. Packer gives such an invitation in his book *The Holy Temple*. Everyone should read its beautiful chapter with that very title.

III. Hezekiah's works bore witness of the importance of temple worship in our day.

- A. The temple has blessed the lives of multitudes of church members. Even in India, where its blessings have greatly strengthened God's people, who often have so little.

"You notice it most when you look in their eyes. There is joy there, hope and belief, an optimism that ignites a smile when you say, "Tell me how you feel about the temple."

"For Latter-day Saints in India, temple marriage brings a depth of understanding, a sense of fulfillment, and a commitment to keep covenants forever as they cherish the promises of eternity. **Although the nearest temple is thousands of miles away in Hong Kong, increasing numbers are finding their way to the house of the Lord.** Guided by prayer, faith, and the Spirit, they are choosing to be sealed in the temple" ["Choose the Temple," July 2010 *Ensign*, pp. 18-23). (Emphasis added). [And now there is the wonderful news that a temple is to be built in India!]

- B. I have a firm testimony of the power obtained from Temple worship. Throughout my adult life, I have found great blessings by attending our temples. There I find a renewal of the Spirit, and refuge from the wickedness of the world. From Nov. of 2013 to Nov. of 2014, I served in the Palmyra Temple as a Temple Missionary This greater access to the temple multiplied temple blessings.

Living in Palmyra, we also had opportunities to visit the Sacred Grove, where God the Father and Jesus the Christ revealed themselves to Joseph Smith, the one foreordained to restore Christ's Church after Apostasy. When I visited, I felt the wonders of the revelatory experience that occurred in this Grove. I also learned that many people have begun to be converted due to the Spirit they feel while visiting the Sacred Grove.

But I also came to feel, while inside the temple where trees of the Sacred Grove are memorialized in its stained glass windows, that **the temple is in essence the new Sacred Grove!** What occurred out there was something which happened on one marvelous occasion. But **on a regular basis, revelatory experiences are available to every patron inside who seeks them,** and who is worthy and prepared to receive them. What a marvelous blessing!

This means that not only this, but all temples which exist throughout the world are also now "True Sacred Groves" --- places where men can enter, be cut off from the wickedness of the world, renew their covenants, receive revelation, and go forth again to serve the Lord and mankind with strengthened faith, insight, testimony and commitment. This is indeed a great weapon against apostasy.

C. While Hezekiah's work was to renew the temple, **the work of today's prophets has been to take the temple to the people.** How wonderful that the brethren have worked to see that over 85% of the members now live within 200 miles of a temple, as recently announced by Elder Quentin L. Cook in General Conference. And they continue to diminish accessibility even further.

III. Undoubtedly Israel's renewed temple attendance brought humility and closeness to the Lord, and these things were a factor in helping save them from the Assyrians.

A. The saving of Judah from the Assyrians was a great and miraculous event (Ch. 32).

1. That miracle should inspire us to have more faith in the Lord's power to protect us.

2. And the truth is **Temple attendance does increase our protection.**

a. **Those who attend the temple should recognize promises given pertaining to protection. While many mock, I can personally testify those promises are real. For I have seen them fulfilled in the lives of members of my family on more than one occasion, and in very miraculous ways.**

IV. Judah was also led back from apostasy **through renewed access to the scriptures.**

A. When a later king, Josiah, undertook another repair of the temple, they found lost scriptures, which added even greater spiritual strength to the people.

B. This event was also a witness of a future time --- when the return of scriptures would lead to the Restoration.

C. The true impact of obtaining lost scriptures came in **a two-step process:**

1. The translating of the Bible into the languages of the people,

2. And the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures.

In England in the late 1500's, the scriptures were essentially lost to the people because they were not in their own languages. Having a readable Bible was an **essential step in the final Restoration. For it was a Bible in the English language, read by Joseph Smith, which led him to seek God, and thus to usher in the Restoration.**

- D. But this was only the first step. The final step came when the Lord poured out access to new scripture in the latter-days: *The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price*.
- E. These latter-day scriptures not only gave God's word in plainness, but they have helped the saints understand the "veiled" prophecies of the Bible.

V. Isaiah's writings show that Hezekiah's life was prophetic of the future --- first of the Messiah.

A. In writing about Hezekiah's birth, he was also prophesying of Jesus' birth. We can readily see that while Judah should rejoice in Hezekiah's birth as a great leader for reform, **the deepest praises could only be fulfilled by a greater and future King, Jesus the Christ.** [Note the following references to the darkness of apostasy and to the light at Christ's coming].

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined...."

"For unto us child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor,* the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7)."

1. Note the parallels: both Hezekiah and Jesus were born in times of the darkness of apostasy. Both brought light back into the lives of the people.
2. Both cleansed the temple (Luke 19:45-6; John 2:13-17).
3. But the reign of Jesus Christ would be far more marvelous than Hezekiah's.
3. Hezekiah was a pattern for Joseph Smith too, who was a reformer after apostasy. In particular, Joseph also restored temple worship!
4. These parallels show Joseph was a true prophet and his work, a true Restoration.

B. In summary, the restoration of the temple and the scriptures in ancient times, pointed to Christ's coming as well as the Latter-day Restoration.

1. Jesus' coming fulfilled events symbolized by Hezekiah and Josiah. This includes **His giving clearer understanding to the scriptures.** And through His life, atonement and teachings, He actually brought forth *new* scriptures: The New Testament.

2. When Joseph Smith came, he restored a better translation of the *Bible*; brought back scriptures lost from the *Bible*; brought forth the *Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants* and the *Pearl of Great Price*.

We learn from these patterns about the darkness of apostasy --- when both the scriptures and the temple were lost to the people. The return of lost scriptures and the rebuilding of the temple pointed to future times, when true temple worship and true understanding of scriptures would usher in great light. Such patterns pointed both to Christ's time and to our day --- the Time of The Restoration, which precedes the return of Jesus Christ and the fullness of His Light!

*Some scholars say there are actually four Titles of Christ here: "Wonderful Counselor" is one of those titles, making that title a parallelism to the other three titles. **Hebrew**

scriptures did not use punctuation, so the comma was inserted by later translators. And because translators did not understand Jesus served as a cherished Counselor in the pre-mortal existence to His Father, they missed the full meaning of this title.