

D&C LESSON 18

“ESTABLISH A HOUSE OF GOD”

By Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: On the 22nd of April, 2001, I witnessed the dedication of the Winter Quarters, Nebraska Temple. I suspect that many of you did also. Our wonder and awe were renewed at what is happening in the world. When my oldest child was four, he could name by sight every temple built in this dispensation, including the Nauvoo and Kirtland Temples. Now there are probably less than five people in the church who could accomplish such a feat. I have a painting in my office that shows fifty-five temples! And we are not done yet. Brigham Young expressed an interesting insight about this in a talk given many years ago.

“I have determined, by the help of the Lord and this people, to build Him a house. You may ask, “Will He dwell in it?” He may do just as He pleases; it is not my prerogative to dictate to the Lord. But we will build Him a house, that if He pleases to pay us a visit, He may have a place to dwell in, or if He should send any of His servants, we may have suitable accommodations for them. I have built myself a house, and the most of you have done the same, and now shall we not build the Lord a house?” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol.1, p.376, Brigham Young, December 16, 1851)

My son sent a photo from his mission in California. He was standing on a hill in his assigned area with his finger pointing to the roof of a huge and beautiful home below. The caption said: “Meg Ryan’s house.” The implication was pretty clear: *Look who has a house in my neighborhood!* It must be interesting to live and work near the home of a movie star. I might have sent him in return a photo of the Provo or the Timpanogos Temple (I live an equal distance from both) with the caption: “God’s house.” It is a remarkable thing to live in any kind of proximity to a House of the Lord. In this lesson we will discuss The Lord’s instructions to his Saints to make a place where he could dwell among them, and some of his reasons for those instructions.

1. THE LORD COMMANDED THE SAINTS TO BUILD THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE.

In D&C 88:118 the Lord commanded his people,

“Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.”

That revelation was given in December of 1832. In June of the following year, just six months later, the Lord said,

“For ye have sinned against me a very grievous sin, in that ye have not considered the great commandment in all things, that I have given unto you concerning the building of mine house . . .” (D&C 95:3)

Consider the implications of this rebuke. *If you wait six months to start this house, it will take six months longer to finish.* Clearly, six additional months without the blessings of a temple would be costly to the saints—and their delay in preparing for these blessings was a “grievous sin.” Reflect on the longest time you have gone without a visit to the temple when there was a temple available. How many blessings have we missed because of our delays in seeking the blessings that come from being in the Lord’s House?

Read D&C 95 carefully and mark the purposes of this temple. Remember that this temple did not fill all of the functions of today’s temples. The modern blessings of temple participation and activity were not restored until the erection and dedication of the Nauvoo Temple.

2. THE SAINTS WERE BLESSED FOR THEIR GREAT SACRIFICES IN BUILDING THE TEMPLE.

When Joseph Smith dedicated the Kirtland Temple, he reminded the Lord of what it had cost the church to build this temple:

“For thou knowest that we have done this work through great tribulation; and out of our poverty we have given of our substance to build a house to thy name, that the Son of Man might have a place to

manifest himself to his people." (D&C 109:5)

Our literature abounds with accounts of the sacrifice and suffering associated with the building of the Kirtland Temple.

"There are many causes of embarrassment, of a pecuniary nature, now pressing upon the heads of the Church. They began poor; were needy, destitute, and were truly afflicted by their enemies; yet the Lord commanded them to go forth and preach the Gospel, to sacrifice their time, their talents, their good name, and jeopardize their lives; and in addition to this, they were to build a house for the Lord, and prepare for the gathering of the Saints." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Two 1834–37, p.113)

"After these things had been introduced, the people in Kirtland, Ohio, by the command of God, through Joseph Smith, the Prophet, some 49 years ago, (without being particular as to dates) commenced to build a house unto the Lord wherein certain preliminary ordinances were introduced, and that house was built under very trying circumstances to the Saints, but they accomplished it. Most of the Saints then devoted all the time they could possibly spare for the accomplishment of that object; it was not in little donations, but they had to exert their undivided energies and means to its accomplishment. When they had finished it, it was dedicated to the Lord, God accepted their sacrifice, and Jesus appeared in that Temple, of which appearance you will find a description in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. (Section 110)". (Journal of Discourses, Vol.25, p.179, John Taylor, May 18th, 1884)

Once again these historical experiences suggest significant lessons for us. What kind of sacrifices ought we be willing to make to have the blessings of the temple in our lives? The proximity of these buildings to many of us might give us a sense of passiveness about participation in temple ceremonies and family history work. After all, the building is in our neighborhood. We can do it anytime. But the women of Kirtland grinding up their china to make temple walls sparkle; the Kirtland men leaving farms and businesses to drive nails and erect walls; the

youth carrying mortar and clearing brush—all suggest to us that we too ought to be sacrificing in order to obtain temple blessings. Brigham Young spoke of this:

“There is not a young man in our community who would not be willing to travel from here to England to be married right, if he understood things as they are; there is not a young woman in our community, who loves the gospel and wishes its blessings, that would be married in any other way; they would live unmarried until they. . . were as old as Sarah before she had Isaac born to her.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, pp. 195, 196, 1934 edition.)

Wherever you are, ask yourself what sacrifices the Lord expects of you with regard to his Houses. Are you satisfied that he is satisfied? Should you be doing more than you have done or are doing? All of our lives need balance and there are things other than temple service that require our best efforts, to which we must attention and time, but temple activity is one thing we must not neglect. And the increase in the number of temples in the world increases our responsibility.

3. JOSEPH SMITH DEDICATED THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE.

D&C 109 is the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple. It was given by revelation to Joseph, and offered by him on March 27, 1836. Reflect on the following from Pres. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr.

“When we dedicate a house to the Lord, what we really do is dedicate ourselves to the Lord's service, with a covenant that we shall use the house in the way He intends that it shall be used... Dedicatory prayers for temples, however, are formal and long and cover many matters of doctrine and petition. This pattern was set by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The prayer given on that occasion was revealed to him by the Lord; all prayers used since then have been written by the spirit of inspiration and have been read by such of the Brethren as have been appointed to do so. The prayer I have prepared for dedication of this Provo Temple is no exception.” (*Church News*, Feb. 12, 1972)

The dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple can be organized in the following manner:

- Why the Temple was built (109:1-5)
- Purpose of the Temple (109:6-23)
- Blessings for the Saints (109:24-49)
- Blessings for the people of the world (109:50-57)
- Blessings for the House of Israel (109:58-67)
- Destiny of the Church (109:71-80)

Even though section C above focuses on blessings that can come to the Saints, a review of section 109 suggests and implies other blessings as well. Below are 15 of them. You will probably find others as you study this section.

1. (109:11) For a fulfillment of the promises made to us in the revelations
2. (109:12) That the glory of the Lord might rest upon his people
3. (109:12) That his presence might be continually among his people
4. (109:13) That people who come to the temple can feel the Lord's power
5. (109:15) That we might grow up in him
6. (109:15) That we might receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost
7. (109:15) That we might be organized according to the laws of God
8. (109:15) That we might be prepared to obtain every needful thing
9. (109:17-19) That we might be enabled to do everything in the name of the Lord
10. (109:20) That we might have refuge in a place of absolute cleanliness
11. (109:21) That we might have encouragement to speedily repent
12. (109:22-23) That missionaries might be empowered
13. (109:25) That weapons formed against us will not prosper
14. (109:38) That we might receive the testimony of the covenant
15. (109:38) That we might not faint in the day of trouble

The dedicatory services lasted seven hours—hours filled with manifestations of the glory and approval of God. In these manifestations we see continuing evidence of the purpose and power of temple work, and of the Lord's approval of our efforts to build and utilize his House.

God was there, his angels were there, the Holy Ghost was in the midst of the people, the visions of the Almighty were opened to the minds of the servants of the living God; the veil was taken from the minds of many; they saw the heavens opened; they beheld the angels of God; they heard the voice of the Lord; and they were filled from the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet with the power and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. ... In that Temple, set apart by the servants of God, and dedicated by a prayer that was written by inspiration, the people were blessed as they never had been blessed for generations and generations. (Orson Pratt: JD, vol. 18, p. 132)

4. THE LORD ACCEPTED THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE, AND ANCIENT PROPHETS RESTORED PRIESTHOOD KEYS,

In D&C 95:8 the Lord promised that he would endow his chosen people with power in the new temple.

“Yea, verily I say unto you, I gave unto you a commandment that you should build a house, in the which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high . . .”

D&C 110 is the revelatory record of the fulfillment of that promise. Review the description of the Lord given in 110:2,3. Then ponder the things he said to Joseph and Oliver at this time (see 110:5-10) In verse 5 the Lord forgives sins. Did you know that he forgives sins 22 times in the Doctrine and Covenants? What does that teach you about his character? What does the Lord promise to do in the temple? (see 110:7,8) Compare this promise with D&C 97:16.

Following the appearance of the Savior, three other messengers appeared with keys. They are in fact the keys to the three-fold mission of the Church:—to proclaim the gospel, to perfect the Saints, and to redeem those that have passed on.

Which of those keys did Moses bring? We have often talked about the return of the ten tribes. Who has the keys to lead them? The President of the Church. Those keys came with the keys for missionary work—the gathering of Israel.

Elias brought the “dispensation of the gospel of Abraham.” Read D&C 27:6 and the information under the heading **ELIAS** in the Bible Dictionary. These are the keys for the perfecting of the saints, the well-being of the saints, the blessing of the saints.

The prediction of the coming of Elijah as a part of the restoration appears in each of the standard works—D&C 2:1; JSH-1:38,39; Malachi 4:5,6; 3 Nephi 25:5,6. I found an interesting article in the Ensign about his coming. If you have a few minutes you might want to read it:

The 15th of Nisan

By William James Adams, Jr.

When the sun set on Saturday, April 2, 1836, Jewish families began a new day, which to them was the 15th of the month Nisan. This was a special day, for on that day they began to celebrate the Passover, commemorating God’s deliverance of their Israelite forefathers from Egypt. After the sun set and the new day commenced, they ate their Passover meal, beginning with a cup of wine. Celery (or another bitter herb) was dipped twice in vinegar as a reminder that the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed. But to remind everyone of God’s loving kindness, a hard-boiled egg was eaten next. This was followed by the recitation of prayers.

They drank a second cup of wine then, and the youngest child in each family who could speak asked four questions: (1) “Why does this night differ from all other nights?” (2) “Why on this night do we eat only unleavened bread?” (3) “Why on this night are only bitter herbs eaten? Why do we dip our herbs twice?” (4) “Why on this night do we all eat reclining?” The answers to these questions were chanted in unison by the rest of the family.

At this point the unleavened bread was eaten, commemorating God’s commandment to Moses that the children of Israel eat only unleavened bread in preparation to leave Egypt. Along with the unleavened bread, they ate bitter herbs dipped in a mixture of sweet fruits and wines, symbolizing that spiritual progress is the reward of suffering.

All of these ceremonies were preparation for the main meal. For this meal tables were spread with the finest linen, dishes, and silverware—utensils used only for the Passover meal.

To express thanks for the meal, they drank a third cup of wine and recited the Psalms of Praise (Ps. 113–118). This recitation was followed by a fourth cup of wine to acknowledge God’s loving providence.

For some Jews this ended the Passover meal, but for most, a fifth cup of wine was poured and never drunk. This cup was for Elijah, whom Malachi had promised would come before “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” (Mal. 4:5.) The Jews, denied of a temple and dispersed from

Palestine, their promised land, were looking for the Lord to come and restore to them the temple and their homeland. And it would be Elijah's coming that would assure them that the Lord and the restoration were near at hand. So, on that night of April 2, 1836, most Jews, in their longing for a better life, poured a cup of wine in the hope that Elijah would come and drink with them. Some left a vacant chair at the dinner table, and others left the door of their homes open, so he could enter.

But on the 15th of Nisan in 1836, Elijah did not come to any of the tribe of Judah. However, only a few hours later and within the limits of the day of the Passover meal, Elijah did come—not to a descendant of Judah, but to a descendant of Joseph. For during the daylight hours before the sunset that would mark the end of the 15th of Nisan, 1836, Elijah came to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple, fulfilling Malachi's promise and realizing Judah's two-millennia hope for a restoration. And so part of our great message to a longing, hoping Judah is that Elijah has come; he came, in fact, when they were looking for him to come: on the first day of Passover, 1836. (William James Adams Jr., "The 15th of Nisan," *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 45)

5. TEMPLE BUILDING AND TEMPLE WORK ACCELERATE IN OUR DAY.

The church has made temple blessings more easily available with the passing years. In 1995, President Hinckley said:

"I have a burning desire that a temple be located within reasonable access to Latter-day Saints throughout the world." (Gordon B. Hinckley, "Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 52–53)

A short time later, while prayerfully pondering this matter, he learned a way to make such "reasonable access" possible.

"But there are many areas of the Church that are remote, where the membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the near future. Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of the temple ordinances? While visiting such an area a few months ago, we prayerfully pondered this question. The answer, we believe, came bright and clear.

"We will construct small temples in some of these areas, buildings with all of the facilities to administer all of the ordinances. They would

be built to temple standards, which are much higher than meetinghouse standards. They would accommodate baptisms for the dead, the endowment service, sealings, and all other ordinances to be had in the Lord's house for both the living and the dead." (Gordon B. Hinckley, "Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 49)

President Hinckley's prophetic emphasis on the building of temples across the world reminds me of a prophecy from President Kimball in 1973, when there were only 15 functioning temples in the world.

The day is coming soon when no one will need to die without a temple marriage . . . The day will come when there will be hundreds of temples all over this world, when there will not be one soul in the world, probably, who is more than a thousand miles away; and for a one-time experience in all one's life, a thousand miles is not far to go. It wouldn't be far to crawl if one knew what he was getting and what he was missing if he didn't go. ("Marriage is Honorable," *BYU Speeches of the Year, 1973*; p. 269)

Look at D&C 138:53-56.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, and my father, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice spirits who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work, *Including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein for the redemption of the dead, were also in the spirit world.* (Emphasis added)

CONCLUSION: Brigham Young was teaching the Saints on March 3, 1861. The foundation of the Salt Lake Temple had been buried at the approach of Johnston's Army, but it was now time to uncover it and renew efforts to build that Temple. But Brother Brigham warned what would happen:

"If you wish this Temple built, go to work and do all you can this

season. Some say, "I do not like to do it, for we never began to build a Temple without the bells of hell beginning to ring." I want to hear them ring again. All the tribes of hell will be on the move, if we uncover the walls of this Temple . . . We completed a temple in Kirtland and in Nauvoo; and did not the bells of hell toll all the time we were building them? They did, every week and every day." (JD, Vol. VIII, pp. 355-356)

What a glorious cacophony of bells must be ringing now! Perhaps it is the most beautiful sound in all creation.

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