

LESSON #31

“SEALED . . . FOR TIME AND FOR ALL ETERNITY”

by Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: Talk about an extended warranty! When we pay the price to have a marriage performed in the temple of the Lord, we come face to face and soul to soul with the actual meaning of the word *endless*. When I bought my printer from Office Max, I also purchased a plan to give me two years of protection in case the thing went south on me. Any significant investment of money creates a desire in us to enjoy some permanence. We are often willing to spend a little more to insure that what we have labored and paid for will last a while.

Think about the investment for and the return from a temple marriage. There is no guarantee like it on the planet—and it is self-replicating. As children come to bless the union and multiply the joy, they also, simply by right of birth, are given a part of the extended protection plan. Participation is something they must conscientiously and willfully reject.

1. ETERNAL MARRIAGE IS ESSENTIAL IN HEAVENLY FATHER’S PLAN.

Godhood and parenthood share some essential characteristics. While it is possible to be a parent without being a god, the reverse is not true. Gods are parents. Thus marriage is required for entrance into the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom:

IN the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase. (D&C 31:1-4)

It pleases me that the power of procreation is so closely guarded in the eternal

worlds. Only those who have demonstrated in the midst of a mortal experience that they can be trusted implicitly to keep covenants and commandments will be allowed to replicate their species.

Of course, it is not simply a matter of procreation. What we are considering here is the eternalization of love. God has provided a way for our deepest and purest feelings to endure through endless ages of time.

Are you willing to jeopardize your eternities, your great continuing happiness, your privilege to see God and dwell in his presence? For the want of investigation and study and contemplation; because of prejudice, misunderstanding, or lack of knowledge, are you willing to forego these great blessings and privileges? Are you willing to make yourself a widow for eternity or a widower for endless ages—a single, separate individual to live alone and serve others? Are you willing to give up your children when they die or when you expire, and make them orphans? Are you willing to go through eternity alone and solitary when all of the greatest joys you have ever experienced in life could be “added upon” and accentuated, multiplied, and eternalized? Are you willing, with the Sadducees, to ignore and reject these great truths? I sincerely pray you stop today and weigh and measure and then prayerfully proceed to make your happy marriage an eternal one. Our friends, please do not ignore this call. I beg of you, open your eyes and see; unstop your ears and hear.

An eternal marriage plus a worthy continuing consecrated life will bring limitless happiness and exaltation.

May I conclude with the words of the Lord of Hosts:

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” (Rev. 3:18.) [Spencer W. Kimball, “Temples and Eternal Marriage,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1974, 6]

For those who qualify the promised blessings are staggering. A husband and a wife, sealed together, righteous, and worthy in every way of the blessings of an eternal

union, will have “glory and exaltation in all things . . . which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.” (D&C 132:19)

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. (D&C 132:20)

YOUTH SHOULD PREPARE NOW FOR ETERNAL MARRIAGE.

Since most of you who are reading this are adults (I have never received an email from a teenager about these lessons), let me suggest s thought about the concept of preparation and then continue on with other points in the lesson.

When the Lord taught his first lesson about eternal marriage, the youth to be married (OK. Isaac was 40, but compared to Abraham he was a youth) was not even consulted in the matter. Abraham sent a servant with one simple instruction. Find a woman who is of the covenant lineage (Gen. 24:3,4). The message here is simple enough. The most important thing about marriage is the covenant. Marry in the covenant, this story seems to be teaching. Nothing else comes close to being this important.

Rebekah was a wonderful woman. She was hard working and obedient and beautiful. But none of these things entered into the instructions given by Abraham. The reason was (and is) that without the covenant, none of those other things would (or will) matter past the portal of the grave.

This is the message of D&C 132, which, like Genesis 24, has nothing to say about any qualities or attributes beyond the covenant (see D&C 132:18,19).

Anyone who loves another enough to risk eternity and exaltation for the excitement of a mortal and transitory relationship ought not to risk it. If someone loves a man or woman who is unworthy or unprepared for the covenant with that kind of anticipation and commitment, he or she ought to make any sacrifice to find the way to make that love last.

3. AFTER A HUSBAND AND WIFE ARE SEALED IN THE TEMPLE, THEY MUST ABIDE IN THE COVENANT TO RECEIVE THE PROMISED BLESSINGS.

My wife and I have 12 children (2 adopted) At last count we had changed somewhere in the neighborhood of 60,000 dirty diapers, fixed 37,000 meals, owned 21 cars, lived in 13 homes, and reviewed 478 report cards. We prepared for this by going to dances and movies and restaurants.

Through all of the years of marriage, something has happened in our relationship. I loved her then and I love her now. But then the love was a puddle. Now it is the Pacific. We have learned what all of you have learned. What happened at the altar in Logan in 1968 did not transform us into eternal godlike beings worthy of an inheritance in the presence of God. We left the building with the promise and the potential and the power: with an everlasting warranty. But we soon learned that even if we could call the Manufacturer when there were problems with the marriage, and receive helpful instruction, we were expected to make most of the repairs by ourselves. We were required to seek divine assistance in becoming what we had been promised we could become.

This the Lord said,

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

“For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

“But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.” (D&C 132:21-23)

The great and constant joy of our lives has been to labor with each other and our children to learn to receive him.

CONCLUSION: (79,pp. 3-6) In October 1979, the Ensign printed a talk given by President Kimball at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion and at Ricks College,

Rexburg, Idaho. The sermon was called, “The Importance of Celestial Marriage.”

[From addresses delivered 22 October 1976 at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion and 5 February 1978 at Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho]

Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but also their families, particularly their children and their children’s children, down through the latest generations.

The question “whom shall I marry?” is an important one to ask, for the proper answer to this question brings a proper answer to many others. If you marry the proper “whom” and if you marry in the proper “where,” then you will have an infinitely better chance of happiness throughout all eternity.

Therefore, the decision is not made on the spur of the moment. It is something you plan all your life. Certainly the most careful planning and thinking and praying and fasting should be done to be sure that of all decisions, this one is not wrong.

In true marriage there must be a union of minds as well as of hearts. Emotions must not wholly determine decisions, but the mind and the heart, strengthened by fasting and prayer and serious consideration, will give one a maximum chance of marital happiness.

Interfaith marriages

I have warned youth about the hazards of interfaith marriages—the sorrows and disillusionments which come from marrying out of the Church. But there seems to be a tendency on the part of many young people today to form their own opinions and their own conclusions to determine the right and the wrong of everything.

We are concerned and disturbed that many of the people are married by justices of the peace or bishops or ministers, when there are temples of God which guarantee that if there is righteousness there will be happiness forever and eternally.

It is very shortsighted for any girl to choose someone who cannot take her to the temple, or for any boy to go with a girl who cannot go to the temple with him. You cannot afford to take a chance on falling in love with someone who may never accept the gospel.

Yes, a small minority are finally baptized. Some good men and women have joined the Church after the interfaith marriage and have remained most devout and active. God bless them! We are proud of them and grateful for them. These are our blessed minority.

Others who do not join the Church are still kind, considerate, and cooperative, and permit the member spouse to worship and serve according to the Church pattern. God bless them also!

Many others join the Church ostensibly for the marriage, then fail to live the commandments. Many of them are later divorced. Others, though not divorced, continue to have friction, particularly in religious matters in the home.

The majority, however, do not join the Church. Surveys have indicated that only one of seven finally join the Church—the odds are against the others. And nearly half of those who marry out of the Church become inactive. As parents give up their religion, an increasing number of their children are brought up without any religion.

So you are taking a desperate chance if you say, “Well, maybe he will join after we are married. We will go ahead and try it and see.” It is a pretty serious thing to take a chance on.

Frequently young people think, “Oh, that doesn’t matter. We’ll get along all right. We’ll adjust ourselves. My spouse will permit me to do as I please or I will make adjustments. We’ll both live and worship according to our own pattern.” This is not broad-mindedness, but even if it were, to be broad-minded with the Lord’s eternal program is somewhat like being generous with other people’s money.

Over the years many times women have come to me in tears. How they would love to train their children in the Church, in the gospel of Jesus

Christ! But they were unable to do so. How they would like to accept positions of responsibility in the Church! How they would like to pay their tithing! How they would love to go to the temple and do the work for the dead, to do work for themselves, to be sealed for eternity, and to have their own flesh and blood, their children, sealed to them for eternity!

But the doors are locked! They themselves have locked them, and the doors have often rusted on their hinges. Someone did not teach these individuals sufficiently, or they did not study the scriptures and they did not understand, or they ignored the warnings which came to them. They married out of the Church. Perhaps he was a good man. Maybe he was handsome. He may have been cultured and well trained; but he did not have the qualification that he needed most and which they overlooked. He did not have membership in the kingdom; he did not have the priesthood, the ordinances, and the righteousness that would carry them to exaltation.

No implication is here made that all members of the Church are worthy and that all nonmembers are unworthy, but eternal marriage cannot be had outside of the temple, and nonmembers are not permitted to go into the temple. Of course, they can become members if they are interested enough and prove that interest.

Without common faith, trouble lies ahead. When two people marry who have different standards, different approaches, and different backgrounds, it is a very difficult thing. There are exceptions, but the rule is a harsh and unhappy one. Religious differences imply wider areas of conflict. Church loyalties clash, and family loyalties clash.

Paul said: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14). Perhaps Paul wanted them to see that religious differences are fundamental differences.

Divorce

For marriages performed outside the temples, the threat of divorce is much greater. In a study of our own groups, we found that there was only one divorce in every 16 marriages of those who were sealed in the temple, while

there was one divorce in every 5.7 marriages of those who were not. This means that the temple-sealed person has about two and one half times better chance of having a happy marriage than one who is not. (Personally, I think the likelihood is much greater than that!) The happiness that comes to those people affords them joy and peace and gives them and their children a start, in the spiritual way, toward exaltation.

Not only the ordinance itself, but also the preparation for the ordinance and the deep appreciation of it achieve this end. The righteousness of your life, the feeling of responsibility in preparation for temple marriage, as well as the sacred sealing ordinance, combine to solemnize marriage vows, make holy family relationships, and cement ties, resulting in continuous and blissful marriage.

For time or eternity?

Now, since life is eternal—and that is absolutely certain—true marriage must also be eternal. It is a most important event and a most necessary one. Marriage by civil officers or local leaders is “till death do you part,” and terminates with death. Only celestial marriage extends beyond the grave. Celestial marriage is performed in holy temples erected and dedicated for that special purpose. Only such marriage transcends the grave and perpetuates the husband/wife and parent/child relationships.

Civil marriages are definitely ended when death comes. That is absolute. The Lord has so declared it. I have heard women say, “But my husband was a good man. I know we’ll be husband and wife in eternity.” Even though sincere, they are wrong! They have had their opportunity, for God has spoken! He has given them the program through his servants. Now if they have never heard the gospel, nor had an opportunity to accept it, that is something different. They may hear it in the spirit world and the work may be done vicariously for them on earth, and they may be united. But for us who have heard the word of the Lord, who have the scriptures with us, who have had many witnesses and many testimonies, who have been informed—tomorrow is too late! We may be angels, if we are righteous enough. Even unmarried, we may reach the celestial kingdom, but we will be ministering angels only.

You see, it is not a matter of righteousness only. That is one of the two

important elements, but righteousness alone is not sufficient. There must be both the righteousness and the ordinances.

Any of you would go around the world for the sealing ordinance if you knew its importance, if you [page 5] realized how great it is. No distance, no shortage of funds, no situation would ever keep you from being married in the holy temple of the Lord.

There is no bias nor prejudice in this doctrine. It is a matter of following a certain program to reach a definite goal. If you fail in following a program, you fail in attaining the goal. Even in college work, if you never registered properly, never attended your classes, never did the things which are required by the college, you would never receive your degree. Certainly you cannot expect the eternal program to be less exacting.

Unmarried young men and women

I am aware of some young men and women who seemingly have not been successful in total fulfillment. Some have been on missions; some have completed their education. And yet they have passed the period of their greatest opportunity for marriage. The time has passed, and while still attractive and desirable and efficient, they find themselves alone.

To you we say this: You are making a great contribution to the world as you serve your families and the Church and the world. You must remember that the Lord loves you and the Church loves you. To you women, we can only say we have no control over the heartbeats or the affections of men, but pray that you may find fulfillment. And in the meantime, we promise you that insofar as eternity is concerned, no soul will be deprived of rich and high and eternal blessings for anything which that person could not help, that the Lord never fails in his promises, and that every righteous person will receive eventually all to which the person is entitled and which he or she has not forfeited through any fault of his or her own. We encourage both men and women to keep themselves well-groomed, well-dressed, abreast of the times, attractive mentally, spiritually, physically, and especially morally, and then they can lean heavily upon the Lord's promises for these heavenly blessings.

The importance of marriage

Honorable, happy, and successful marriage is surely the principal goal of every normal person. Marriage is designed of the Lord to make strong and happy homes and posterity. Anyone who would purposely avoid marriage is not only not normal, but is frustrating his own program.

I defend the term normal because the Lord set the norm himself by bringing together Adam and Eve, his first male and first female on this earth, and performing a holy marriage ceremony to make them husband and wife. They were quite different in their makeup, with different roles to play. Hardly had he performed the ceremony than he said to them: “Multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion” (Gen. 1:28).

It is normal to marry and normal and proper to bear children. Every person should want and plan to be married because that is what God in heaven planned for us. That is the way he worked it out.

If there is anyone who does not want to be married, who does not want a family, who says, “Oh, I am not going to get married; I do not believe it is necessary,” that is very, very shortsighted indeed.

It is disturbing to note how easily many people pass off this responsibility of marriage. Numerous people these days, as recorded in the magazines and newspapers, have sworn never to marry. They have found it much simpler and easier to live alone and have no responsibilities. That is why they will not ever grow big enough to become gods in eternity.

One young woman wrote us saying that the young man she occasionally dated was not interested in marriage. It seems to me that in our society young men have not much excuse for not finding a proper marriage partner. They have the option. They have the choice.

One young man, the president of an elders’ quorum, said he was too busy to marry. We are glad he is busy. But no man is too busy to take care of his marriage responsibilities—no man, whether he is an elders’ quorum president or anyone else.

Another young man had been promised in a patriarchal blessing that marriage would soon come, so he had let up in his efforts to get married. I

would like to say that all the patriarchal blessings that you might get will never come to pass unless you do something about them yourselves.

One young man stated that he must get his education first. But it is not necessary for one to wait until he has completed his secular education before he marries. Many men have finished their education after their marriage, and their wives have been a great help to them.

One young man said that he expected to reach exaltation in the celestial kingdom as one of the Lord's messengers, without having to marry. He does not understand. No one who rejects the covenant of celestial marriage can reach exaltation in the eternal kingdom of God.

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

“And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

“He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.” (D&C 131:1–4.)

He cannot have an increase! He cannot have exaltation!

The Lord says further in the 132nd section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“No one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory” (D&C 132:4).

No one! It matters not how righteous they may have been, how intelligent or how well trained they are. No one will enter this highest glory unless he enters into the covenant, and this means the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

These are the words of the Lord. They were said directly to us.

“And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for

the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law. ...

“Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants [they may be worthy and righteous, but they are ministering servants], to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

“For these angels did not abide by law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever.” (D&C 132:6, 16–17.)

Some might say, “Well, I’d be satisfied to just become an angel,” but you would not. One never would be satisfied just to be a ministering angel to wait upon other people when he could be the king himself.

And so we repeat: It is the normal thing to marry. It was arranged by God in the beginning, long before this world’s mountains were ever formed. Remember: “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man” (1 Cor. 11:11).

President Lorenzo Snow gives us a picture of the importance of celestial marriage: “When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring worlds without end. And what offspring they do not have here, undoubtedly there will be opportunities to have them hereafter. What else could man wish? A man and a woman in the other life, having celestial bodies, free from sickness and disease, glorified and beautified beyond description, standing in the midst of their posterity, governing and controlling them, administering life, exaltation and glory worlds without end!” (Lorenzo Snow, *The Deseret Weekly*, 3 Apr. 1897, p. 481.)

Can you conceive of the vastness of this program? Can you begin to understand it? But remember this: exaltation is available only to those who

become righteous members of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, only to those who obtain their endowments and are sealed for eternity as well as time, and who then continue to live righteously. This is not man's interpretation. This is the program of our Heavenly Father and is made clear by the scriptures. It is not futile formality nor empty ritual. If we do not understand, it is an indication that we need to get close to our Heavenly Father so that we may fathom it, for the things of God are understood by the Spirit of God.

The Lord's program is unchangeable. His laws are immutable. They will not be modified. Your opinions or mine do not make any difference and do not alter the laws. Many of the world think that eventually the Lord will be merciful and give to them unearned blessings. Mercy cannot rob justice. College professors will not give you a doctorate degree for a few weeks of cursory work in the university, nor can the Lord be merciful at the expense of justice. In this program, which is infinitely greater, we will each receive what we merit. Do not take any chances whatever.

Be sure that your marriage is right. Be sure that your life is right. Be sure that your part of the marriage is carried forward properly.

I pray the Lord will bless all of our people as they face the normal decisions before and after their marriage. And I bear testimony that our Heavenly Father will be our greatest source of strength and help in all of these important decisions that touch so closely our happiness and fulfillment.

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