

# “THE HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN SHALL TURN TO THEIR FATHERS”

D&C LESSON #39

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**INTRODUCTION:** President Heber J. Grant told a wonderful story about work for the dead:

There was three young men who were as intimate, I think, as any three young men who ever lived could be. They were Heber J. Grant, Feramorz L. Young and Richard W. Young. Feramorz L. Young had been in the East and had been graduated with honors from the Troy Polytechnic Institute, then went on a mission to Mexico, where he died and was buried in the Gulf of Mexico. It always seemed to me a strange thing that a boy with all the education he had, who had made a wonderful success should be taken from us. . . He had to fight for the Church and its doctrines all the time he was in the East.

. . . I thought that with his faith and knowledge, and with all the information he had gained, it was too bad he had to lay down his life while in the Lord’s service.

. . . . I do not think that Fera Young in his life ever listened to an unclean story. If anyone started to tell such a story he would excuse himself and walk away. I never heard an unchaste word uttered by him. If there ever was a clean, sweet, absolutely pure young man upon the earth, he was that young man.

What he died his mother said she could not remember a word or thought or act of his life that would bring her the least sorrow or uneasiness. There is many a mother perhaps who might say such a thing of her son, but usually if the man who without exception was the most intimate friend of that son from his boyhood up to the time of his death should tell everything he knew of him the mother could not say that. My mother could not say that of me, if others told her what I did as a youngster, but I

could say it of Feramorz Young.

What in the providence of the Lord is the result? . . . A woman came to Sister Young, his mother, with photographs of one of this lady's near and dear friends, a very beautiful women, and said:

"Now, Mrs. Young, I do not believe a thing of what I m going to tell you. This girl friend of mine was one of the noblest, finest, choicest kind of girls and young women that ever lived. She has come to me in this city of Salt Lake on three separate occasions at night in dreams, and has given me this information: the date of her birth, the date of her death, and all this is necessary, she says, for a record in the temple: and she has told me that your son, Feramorz L. Young, has converted her, and that in addition to converting her he has proposed marriage to her. [She has said to me] 'I want you to go to Mrs. Young and give her this information and vouch for my honesty, virtue, integrity and upright life, and have the work done for me and have me married for eternity to her son, Feramorz L. Young.'"

This women who visited Mrs. Young said: "I do not believe a word of it, but the last time this friend of mine came—which was the third time—she said, 'There is nobody in Salt Lake City who knows me and can vouch for me except you. You are the only individual that I know in Salt Lake City.'" She said further to Mrs. Young: "I can furnish you any references you may wish regarding my character, from the place where I formerly lived. The last time this young woman came to me she said, 'You might just as well go to Mrs. Young and give her this information, because I am going to come, and come, and come, until you do it.'" And the woman continued, "I just cannot bear to have her come again; it is so uncanny, and I do not believe a thing of it.

This beautiful girl was sealed to Brother Young, and I am convinced that my dear friend lost nothing by dying in his youth. ("Comforting Manifestations:" Excerpts from Funeral Sermon

delivered by President Heber J. Grant, from the *Improvement Era* February 1931)

In this lesson we will discuss the work for the dead by referring to the work of four prophets: Elijah, Wilford Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith, and Gordon B. Hinckley.

## **1. ELIJAH: “THE KEYS OF THIS DISPENSATION ARE COMMITTED INTO YOUR HANDS.”**

The scriptural account of the coming of Elijah may be the most repeated passage in the Standard Works. The prophecy of his coming is recited in whole or in part in each of our volumes of scripture

1. D&C 2
2. Malachi 4:5,6
3. 3 Nephi 25: 5,6
4. JS—H: 1:38,39
5. D&C 110:13-15
6. D&C 128:17

The frequency of scriptural references to this event must be evidence of its supernal importance. And of course it is important. Neal A. Maxwell indicated

What we do here is so vital, but it is actually a preparation for our labors in paradise in the spirit world. The scope in that spirit world is ten times as large as the demographics of this world. (“Our Preparation for Work in the Spirit World,” excerpt from Neal A. Maxwell’s address to Religious Educators: Salt Lake Tabernacle, 2 February, 2001)

That the scope of the work in the spirit world is ten times greater than here perhaps gives some explanation of the reason for the continual and repeated emphasis on the mission of Elijah. This understanding also helps us comprehend the great need for temples and abundant temple work here. Prophets have predicted a time when temples—even hundreds or thousands of them—will dot the earth. Such a resource will be necessary to

provide sufficient opportunity to do the work for all of the dead

The fulfillment [of the promise of the coming of Elijah] came some twelve years later, on April 3, 1836. On this day Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple and there conferred upon them his priesthood, which is the power to bind, or seal, on earth and in heaven. The keys of this priesthood were held by Elijah, to whom the Lord gave power over the elements as well as over men, with the authority to seal for time and eternity on the righteous all the ordinances pertaining to the fullness of salvation. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of this priesthood; he was to come and restore this authority in the last dispensation in order that all the ordinances of the gospel may be attained to in righteousness, and without this authority, the ordinances would not be in righteousness.

Therefore, the restoration of this authority is the leaven that saves the earth from being utterly wasted at the coming of Jesus Christ. When we get this truth firmly and clearly fixed in our minds, it is easy to see that there would be only confusion and disaster should Christ come and the power of sealing not be here. The Lord does not recognize any ordinance or ceremony, even though it be made or performed in his name, unless it is in accordance with his will and done by one who is recognized as his authorized servant. It was for that reason that he sent from his presence holy messengers to Joseph Smith and others, to restore that which had been taken from the earth, even the fullness of the gospel, and the fullness and the keys of priesthood. In this day of restoration it was necessary not only for Elijah to come with the sealing power to make valid all the ordinances and ceremonies of the gospel, but it was also necessary that the ancient prophets who held keys of dispensations should come from the days of Adam to Peter, James, and John, and restore their authority in this the dispensation of the fulness of times. This is positively stated by Peter and Paul in their instructions to the saints of the church of

Jesus Christ of former days. But we have been considering here only the coming of Elijah with the keys of sealing, placing the stamp of approval on all that is done in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, so that it is recognized in the heavens and before the throne of God. (Joseph Fielding Smith, "The Coming of Elijah," *Ensign*, Jan. 1972, 5)

The prophet Malachi warned that in the destruction of the Second Coming, the wicked would be left with neither "root or branch." (Malachi 4:1) This phrase also teaches lessons about the mission of Elijah.

"But what is meant by the expression 'that it shall leave them neither root nor branch'? This expression simply means that wicked and indifferent persons who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ will have no family inheritance or patriarchal lineage -- neither root (ancestors or progenitors) nor branch (children or posterity). Such persons cannot be received into the celestial kingdom of glory of resurrected beings, but must be content with a lesser blessing." (Theodore M. Burton, CR, April 1965, p. 112.)

### **PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF: "SOMEBODY HAS GOT TO REDEEM THEM"**

President Woodruff served for a time as President of the St. George Temple. It was in this temple that endowments for the dead were performed for the first time in this dispensation.

Pres. Woodruff had a most remarkable experience while laboring in that temple:

In 1887, Elder Woodruff was appointed as the first president of the St. George Temple. Here he experienced some marvelous manifestations. It was in this temple that the signers of the Declaration of Independence appeared to him and requested that their temple work be done. As they gathered around him, they wanted to know why he did not redeem them. "We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we never

apostatized from it, but we remain true to it and were faithful to God.” (JD 19:229.)

Elder Woodruff related that they waited on him for two days and two nights as he was baptized for the signers of the Declaration of Independence and 50 other prominent men, making 100 in all. They included John Wesley, Columbus and others. He was baptized for every president of the United States until that time except three. (Church News, May 1, 1993)

Perhaps in part because of this experience, and no doubt encouraged by the whisperings of the Spirit, President Woodruff had a great affection for this work. He received and recorded a remarkable revelation regarding Family History. President Woodruff said to church members:

“... you have now something more to do than you have done. We have not fully carried out those principles in fulfillment of the revelations of God to us, in the sealing of the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers.”

Then came the substance of the revelation in the simplicity of a single declarative sentence that has ushered in a most marvelous work in this dispensation: “*We want Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it.*” (Italics added.)

President Woodruff said, “... In my prayers the Lord revealed to me, that it was my duty to say to all Israel to carry this principle out, and in fulfillment of that revelation, I lay it before this people. I say to all men who are laboring in these temples, carry out this principle, and then we shall make one step in advance of what we have had before. Myself and counselors conversed upon this and we were agreed upon it, and afterwards we laid it before all the Apostles who were here ... the Lord revealed to every one of these men—and they would bear testimony to it if they were to speak—that that was the word of the Lord to them. I never met

with anything in my life in this Church that there was more unity upon than there was upon that principle. They all feel right about it, and that it is our duty.” (Deseret Evening News, May 19, 1894.) [Boyd K. Packer, “The Family and Eternity,” Ensign, Feb. 1971, 8]

## **PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH: “THE EYES OF MY UNDERSTANDING WERE OPENED”**

At the beginning of the Friday Morning session of the October 1918 General Conference, President Joseph F. Smith said,

As most of you, I suppose, are aware, I have been undergoing a siege of very serious illness for the last five months . . . . I have not lived alone these five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously . .

The day before this sermon, Pres. Smith had received the revelation now contained in the Doctrine and Covenants as section 138.

What is the significance of the words in 138:1,2 that describe what Pres. Smith was doing with the scriptures? How can *pondering* and *reflecting* prepare us to receive revelation? Pres. Smith does tell us that he *read* 1 Peter 3,4 (see 138:6), but notice what he did when he had finished reading. “As I pondered over these things which are written . . .” (138:11)

In the revelation that then came to him, the Lord opened the curtain on the spirit world wider than it had ever been opened before. Read this revelation carefully, and then *reflect and ponder* on what we have been taught. What was the nature of the people who actually saw the Savior during his visit to the spirit world? (138:12-14) The following verses use words like *deliverance, redemption from the bands of death, restored, liberty to the captives*. What do these phrases suggest about the feelings we will have when we are separated from our bodies. The prospect of deliverance from the bands and chains of that separation filled them with joy and rejoicing

(see 138:15,16,18).

What words in 138:20,21 describe those whom he did not visit?

It was on this occasion that the most enduring and comprehensive mission in the history of this planet was organized.

. . . 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; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead. (138:30)

I am not particularly excited to be assigned to work in this mission. The transfer process is tough. But the thought of being assigned to work in a district with Ammon or Paul or Wilford is intriguing. Section 138 does specify that elders who leave this life become a part of that mission.

I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead. (138:57)

### **PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY: “WE ARE DETERMINED . . . TO TAKE THESE TEMPLES TO THE PEOPLE”**

The proliferation to temple building around the world is powerful evidence of the need for this work to be done. President Hinckley’s desire to make temple blessings available to members in every part of the world is a quiet affirmation of the concurrent need to make those blessings available to those who hear the good news of the gospel in every part of the spirit world. Temples offer incomparable blessings to those who receive their own endowments. Then the blessings double. Those whose work is performed by proxy become heirs to those same blessings, and those who perform the work are continually blessed by their presence in the temple and by the



instruction and the spirit that occur in the temples.

In this regard the Prophet said:

I have a burning desire that a temple be located within reasonable access to Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We can proceed only so fast. We try to see that each temple will be in an excellent location, where there will be good neighbors over a long period of time. Real estate prices in such areas are usually high. A temple is a much more complex structure to build than an ordinary meetinghouse or stake center. It is built to a higher standard of architecture. It takes longer and costs more. The work is moving about as fast as we can go. It is my constant prayer that somehow it might be speeded up so that more of our people might have easier access to a sacred house of the Lord. (C.R., Oct. 1995, p. 77)

A short time later, President Hinckley proposed a solution to some of the problems he had mentioned in October of 1995:

. . . 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)

**CONCLUSION:** As we consider the scope of this work on both sides of the veil, we begin to see the cause behind some of the events we might have called tragedies.

We cannot control what I call “the great transfer board in the sky.” It’s out of our control. And the inconveniences that are sometimes associated with releases from labors here are necessary in order to accelerate the work there. Heavenly Father can’t do His work with ten times more people that we have on this planet except He will on occasion take some of the very best sisters and brothers. And the conditions of termination here, painful though they are, are part of the conditions of acceleration there. And we’re back to faith and the timing of God. And to be able to say, “Thy will be done” (and I would paraphrase it, “thy timing be done”) is part of letting Him know we will be submissive in that situation too, even when we do not fully understand it. (“Our Preparation for Work in the Spirit World,” excerpt from Neal A. Maxwell’s address to Religious Educators: Salt Lake Tabernacle, 2 February, 2001)

There is such a great work to be done among our departed sisters and brothers. And we have only begun to get it done. President Kimball said of this work,

The day is coming not too far ahead of us when all temples on this earth will be going day and night. There will be shifts and people will be coming in the morning hours and in the night hours and in the day hours . . . day and night almost to exhaustion, because of the importance of the work and the great number of people who lie asleep in eternity . . .” (*From You to Your Ancestors*, Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, p. 2.)

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