

# Temple Blessings

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**I**t is a joy to be here at the Brigham Young University devotional. As you know, this is a very special place of learning. While you are at Brigham Young University, you are learning and preparing for your future—to support yourselves spiritually and temporally; to establish a means for providing for your families; and to use your time, talents, and other resources to serve the Lord and lift and strengthen His children.

I have pondered many subjects to teach during this devotional and have been impressed to talk about the importance of temple preparation and of having an eternal perspective during our mortal probation here on earth. The temple endowment blessings are as essential for each of us as was our baptism. For this reason we are to prepare ourselves that we may be clean to enter into the temple of God. Temple work is an opportunity to perform our personal endowments and covenants for the living and also perform these same ordinances for the redemption for the dead. It is for this reason we are instructed in the scriptures to build temples and prepare our lives to be worthy to partake of the sacred temple ordinances and covenants.

We have been taught in the scriptures that the personal worthiness required of us by the Lord to enter the temple and to take upon us

the sacred covenants therein is one of the greatest blessings available to us in mortality. Then, after taking upon us the covenants in the temple, our obedience in living the covenants daily is a demonstration of our faith, love, devotion, and spiritual commitment to honor our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ and prepares us to live with Them in the eternities. The temple's saving ordinances are essential to—and even the central focus of—the eternal plan of happiness.

Today I want to discuss the doctrine of the temple, the effects of the temple doctrine in your life, and the ways that you can prepare yourselves—and, we hope, your eternal companions can prepare themselves—to partake of the full blessings of the holy temple in mortality and in eternal life.

## **The Temple Doctrine**

We need to acquire a testimony and a reverent feeling of the temple being the house of the Lord. The temple is truly a place where you are “in the world and not of the world.” When you are troubled and when you have crucial

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decisions that weigh heavily on your mind and soul, you can take your cares to the temple and receive spiritual guidance.

To preserve the sanctity of the temple so that the temple may be kept pure and to invite the Spirit to bless those who enter the holy temple for their ordinances and covenants, we are taught that no unclean thing should enter the temple. Reverence in the temple is a vital element in inviting the Spirit to reside within it every hour of every day.

When I was a boy my father brought me from Long Island, New York, to walk on the Salt Lake Temple grounds in Salt Lake City, to touch the temple, and to discuss the importance of the temple in my life. It was on that occasion that I made up my mind that someday I would return to enter the temple and receive the ordinances of the temple.

When your dating relationship is getting serious and you are contemplating marriage, going to the temple grounds is a great place for a date with your future eternal companion to discuss your plans together. It is very important to know the heart and mind of your future eternal companion's desire to be worthy to go to the temple and always keep their temple covenants—enduring to the end.

The temple is a sacred edifice, a holy place where essential saving ceremonies and ordinances are performed to prepare us for exaltation. It is important that we gain a sure knowledge that our preparation to enter the holy house and our participation in these ceremonies and covenants are some of the most significant events we will experience in our mortal lives.

Throughout history, in every dispensation of time, the Lord has commanded prophets that temples should be built so that His people could receive temple ordinances.

The Bible records that while Moses and the Israelite people wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, they were blessed with a portable temple or tabernacle where sacred ordinance work

was performed—and, on occasion, the Lord came to converse with Moses. When Moses reached the promised land, a tabernacle was used to bring these blessings to the children of Israel. King David began preparations for building a temple, but because King David had been disobedient, he was told that he was not worthy and would not be permitted to build the temple. His son Solomon completed a beautiful temple in Jerusalem when he became the Israelite king. Then, during Christ's ministry, another temple in Jerusalem was being built.

We learn from the Book of Mormon about a temple built in the New World around 588 B.C.:

*And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land. . . . But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine. [2 Nephi 5:16]*

Jacob, in about 544 B.C., recorded:

*Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord. [Jacob 1:17]*

More than 400 years later, in 124 B.C., Mosiah

*proclaimed unto all the people who were in the land of Zarahemla that thereby they might gather themselves together, to go up to the temple to hear the words which his father [King Benjamin] should speak unto them. [Mosiah 1:18]*

In the second chapter of Mosiah, King Benjamin addressed his people, who had gathered at the temple. He gave his testimony in a mighty spiritual discourse that changed the hearts of the people to worship the Lord. About 150 years later, in A.D. 34, the resurrected Lord appeared at the temple as recorded in 3 Nephi 11:1–11:

*A great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful. . . .*

*. . . They heard a voice as if it came out of heaven. . . .*

*. . . And it said unto them:*

*Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.*

*And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.*

*And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:*

*Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.*

*And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. [3 Nephi 11:1, 3, 6–11]*

The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

*The Church is not fully organized, in its proper order, and cannot be, until the Temple is completed, where places will be provided for the administration of the ordinances of the Priesthood. [HC 4:603]*

Joseph Smith also said:

*If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord. [HC 5:424]*

Joseph Smith, as a result of a prayer, was visited by Jesus in the Kirtland Temple on a very special date, April 3, 1836, as recorded in section 110 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Kirtland Temple was the first temple in these latter days, and it played an important role in the restoration of priesthood keys. The Savior, introduced by His Father, our Father in Heaven, appeared in glory and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house. On that occasion Moses, Elias, and Elijah each appeared to commit the keys held from their dispensations. Elijah restored the keys of his dispensation as promised by Malachi so that we could enjoy the blessings of the temple in our lives.

The Nauvoo Temple was the first temple in which endowments and sealings were performed, which proved a great strength to the pioneers as they endured the hardships crossing the plains to Zion in the Salt Lake Valley. Many of us have ancestors who made that crossing.

When Joseph Smith was taken to Carthage, it was clear why the completion of the temple had meant so much to him. He knew what was going to be required of the Saints and that to have the strength to endure what was ahead of them they had to be endowed with power—the power of the priesthood. He looked across the Mississippi River to the west and said he did not know if he wanted to tell the Saints what was ahead of them. He said, “Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood” (HC 5:555).

Sarah Rich, the wife of Charles C. Rich, wrote in her journal how important the temple endowment was in helping them endure the hardships on the pioneer trek. “If it had not been for the faith and knowledge that was bestowed upon us in that temple . . . , our journey would have been like . . . taking a leap in the dark” (Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich, “Autobiography, 1885–1893,” Family and

Church History Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 66).

Our pioneer ancestors were sealed together as families in Nauvoo. In 56 days, more than 100 endowments were performed each day—more than 5,600 endowments in all. Their covenants with the Lord in the Nauvoo Temple were a protection for them during their journey westward, as it is for each of us today and throughout our lives. The ordinances and covenants of the temple are the protection for us in our trials and tribulations in our day and for what we will face in the future. It is our heritage. It is who we are.

For these early Saints, their participation in the ordinances of the temple was essential to their testimonies as they faced the hardships, the angry mobs, being driven from comfortable homes in Nauvoo, and the long and difficult journey ahead. They had been endowed with power in the holy temple. Husband and wife were sealed to each other. Children were sealed to their parents. Many lost family members to death along the way, but they knew that wasn't the end for them. They had been sealed in the temple for all eternity.

Upon reaching the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young embarked on building the Lord's house. The construction took 40 years before the temple was dedicated in 1892. Today President Hinckley, our prophet, has been moved upon by the Lord to build temples throughout the world. There are now 122 functioning temples, allowing faithful members of the Church in many nations around the earth to go to the house of the Lord to receive their temple ordinances and covenant with the Lord in His house.

### **The Temple Ordinances—Endowments and Sealings**

Temples are the greatest university of learning known to man, giving us knowledge and wisdom about the creation of the world. Washings and anointings tell us who we are. Endowment instructions give guidance

as to how we should conduct our lives here in mortality.

We are taught in the scriptures that temples are

*a place of instruction for all those who are called to the work of the ministry . . . ;*

*That they may be perfected in [their] understanding . . . in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth. [D&C 97:13–14]*

The primary purpose of the temple is to provide the ordinances necessary for our exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Temple ordinances guide us to our Savior and give us the blessings that come to us through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The meaning of the word *endowment* is “gift.” The ordinance consists of a series of instructions on how we should live and covenants we make to live righteously by following our Savior.

Another important ordinance is being sealed for eternity in celestial marriage. This covenant allows children to be sealed to their parents and children born in the covenant to become part of an eternal family.

The Doctrine and Covenants teaches us:

*And verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven. [D&C 132:46]*

When a couple is kneeling at the altar, as a sealer I am aware of my role as a representative of the Lord. I know that what is sealed on earth is literally sealed in heaven—never to be broken if those being sealed remain faithful and endure to the end.

The mirrors on opposite walls in the temple sealing room are canted to create the

visual impression of endless images. Looking into these mirrors on one side of the room represents the eternities of time that we have traveled to come to earth. As we turn to the opposite side of the room, we look into the seemingly endless images symbolizing the eternities after we leave this frail existence on earth. The sealing room itself represents our mortal probation here on earth. The lesson to be learned from this temple experience is that we have made the right choices to come to earth and experience mortality and that how we live our life in this brief period will determine how we will live in all the eternities to come! Just think of it again: when you are kneeling at the altar to be sealed, on one side are all the images symbolizing our premortal life; on the other side are the representations of all the eternities before us.

#### **How Do We Make Sure We Never Break Eternal Covenants Made in the Temple?**

Knowing of the existence of temples in many dispensations—as recorded in the scriptures—and the necessity of temple ordinances and covenants required to enter into the celestial kingdom, I have often pondered why one who has taken upon them the sacred ordinances and covenants of the temple and has covenanted with their eternal companion as they were sealed for time and eternity in the temple—literally in the presence of God, angels, and witnesses—would ever allow themselves to be unfaithful, thus breaking their covenants and in turn breaking the hearts of their companions and children, who were desirous of being an eternal family.

I have also observed over the years couples who have been able to maintain strong and vital marriages as they remain true to the covenants they take upon themselves in the temple. For those who are not now married, as you prepare for a temple marriage, there is great value in thinking about what makes a good marriage and the kind of person who will

be able to make and keep temple covenants. Thinking ahead this way is why successful couples have been able to date and learn to know each other and come to know where the heart of that future companion will be for time and all eternity.

**First**, these successful couples know individually who they are—a son or daughter of God. They set eternal goals to once again live with our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. They strive to leave the ways of the natural man behind.

**Second**, they know the doctrine and the importance of the saving temple ordinances and temple covenants and their necessity in achieving eternal goals.

**Third**, they choose to obtain the eternal blessings of the kingdom of God rather than the temporal or temporary possessions of the world.

**Fourth**, couples realize that when they are sealed for time and all eternity, they have chosen an eternal companion—their courting days are over! There is no need to look any further!

**Fifth**, couples think of one another before self. Selfishness suffocates spiritual senses. Remember that. Communicating with the Lord in prayer, they grow together and not apart. They converse with each another, thereby never letting little things become big things. They talk early about the “little hurts” with little fear of offending. In this way, when the pressure in the tea kettle builds and the whistle goes off, there is no explosion of bitter feelings. It is so much better to let off a little steam before the top blows off the pressure cooker. They are willing to apologize and ask forgiveness if they have hurt the one they love. They express their love for each other and become closer. Remember, “There is no fear in love.” They lift and strengthen one another.

#### **Closing Summary and Testimony**

If you will live by these observations we have just discussed, it will strengthen your

relationship in marriage and allow you to be faithful to your covenants. Might I just share two things that describe a good friend:

1. A good friend is a good companion.

A good friend will never have you choose between their way and the Lord's way.

2. With a true friend it will be easier to live the laws, ordinances, and covenants we have discussed this day. Such a person is truly a good friend and an eternal companion.

You are preparing to meet the tests of mortal life. We voluntarily came from the presence of God the Father to this mortal probation with agency, knowing we would have "opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). Our objective (see 1 Nephi 15:14) is to take upon us the whole armor of God and withstand "the fiery darts of the adversary" (D&C 3:8) with our sword of the Spirit and shield of faith (see D&C 27:15–18), to endure to the end, and to be worthy to stand and live in the presence of

God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ for all eternity—to achieve what is called eternal life.

I give you my testimony that God lives; that Jesus is the Christ; and that Joseph Smith, the prophet of our dispensation, restored the priesthood blessings that allow us to partake of the temple blessings we have discussed. Let me remind you that you are living in the last dispensation of the fulness of times. It is an incredible time to be on the earth. May the Lord's blessings be with you that you may find that special, eternal companion, remaining worthy until that day may come because the promise has been given that in this life or the next, blessings will come to those who remain true and faithful to the laws, ordinances, and covenants we have discussed today. I ask the blessings of the Lord to be with you in all that you do, in all that you say, and in your interactions with those you love and care for. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.