

# **The Veil O'er the Earth is Beginning to Burst**

*The Restoration and the Coming forth of Latter-day Temples*

*By Michael L. King*

With the coming forth of temples as a part of the latter-day restoration, the Lord of Hosts began the work which he had foretold through the prophet Isaiah<sup>1</sup>; "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil of darkness spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces" ([Isaiah 25:7-8](#)). Temples of the latter-days continue to come forth in every nation, destroying the veil of darkness among every kindred, tongue, and people; allowing all of God's children access to the fullest blessings of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the ordinances which bind families beyond the grave, and entrance into the holy presence of God. Through foundational truths revealed in temples, the veil which had covered the earth for more than a millennia is truly beginning to burst.

On the eve before his crucifixion, Jesus, acting in his office as the Great High Priest, took his disciples to the upper room where he celebrated with them the Passover. He taught them the necessity of being washed, taught them about and promised to them the Holy Ghost, instituted the sacrament, and offered the great highly priestly prayer of intercession so that they might know the order of prayer necessary to be at one with God and to enable them to enter his presence (see [John 13-17](#)). Echoing the pattern of the journey of the House of Israel to the Promised Land, which pattern was reiterated in the tabernacle, Jesus fulfilled all points of the law, and put the ordinances into the minds and hearts of his disciples in preparing the way, not only for them, but for all mankind to pass through the veil. He himself became the way, the truth, and the life ([John 14:6](#); see also [Hebrews 10:16-22](#)).

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed three times – knocking as it were at the door of heaven – pleading to be at one with the Father and his divine will. Granted strength from above, he took upon him all of

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<sup>1</sup> It appears that the writings of the prophet Isaiah were to have a significant influence upon the prophet Joseph throughout the restoration process, particularly as it relates to temples. Whether this influence from Isaiah was sparked by the passages Joseph encountered while translating the Book of Mormon, or whether it was from his translation of the Bible, or from another source or experience is uncertain. However, the similar imagery and language used by Isaiah is often echoed in the revelations to Joseph, particularly as it relates to temples. Many of these similarities will be elucidated throughout this paper.

the ills which ever had and would separate man from God ([Alma 7:11-13](#)). Having taken all according to the flesh, it was that very flesh which had to be torn in order to part the veil to allow men to enter into the presence of God. According to the 2014 New Testament Student manual,

“When the veil of the temple was ‘rent in twain’ (torn in two) at the death of Jesus Christ ([Matthew 27:51](#)), it was a dramatic symbol that the Savior, the Great High Priest, had passed through the veil of death and would shortly enter into the presence of God. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, ‘... the Holy of Holies is now open to all, and all, through the atoning blood of the Lamb, can now enter into the highest and holiest of all places, that kingdom where eternal life is found. Paul, in expressive language ([Hebrews 9 & 10](#)), shows how the ordinances performed through the veil of the ancient temple were in similitude of what Christ was to do, which he now having done, all men become eligible to pass through the veil into the presence of the Lord to inherit full exaltation’ (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:830). The Apostle Paul taught that just as the torn veil of the temple allowed symbolic entrance into the Holy of Holies, it is the torn flesh of Jesus Christ that opens the way for us into the presence of the Father (see [Hebrews 10:12, 19-20](#))<sup>2</sup>.”

## The Dark Ages

Not many years after Christ had parted the veil, however, Satan and the powers of darkness began to prevail over the earth. The dark ages represented the great day in which the devil would have power to blind, bind, and captivate mankind; keeping them from being able to receive all of the blessings which the life, mission, and atoning sacrifice of Christ provided. As Isaiah had prophesied, “darkness [had] covered the earth” and “gross darkness the people” ([Isaiah 60:2](#)). The prophetic mantle and attendant priesthood keys which were given by Christ to his apostles were lost to all mankind.

This veil of darkness covered the whole earth, leaving man to grope about, searching for a way to return to God. While man could still be resurrected and live again through the resurrection of Christ, without the priesthood and the ordinances of salvation, the power of godliness could not be manifested unto men in the flesh, and they would be unable to pass through the veil into the holy presence of God, receive of his fullness, and dwell with him forever (see [D&C 84:19-23](#)).

One of the great missions of the restoration is to establish a way for all the children of God to be able to pass through that veil which Christ had parted; opening the way for all to enter into the holy

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<sup>2</sup> **New Testament Student Manual**, Chapter 10: Matthew 27-28.

presence of God. The first vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1820 began to pierce this veil which had enveloped mankind for more than 1500 years. Like a single note in a forthcoming symphony, this singular event parted the veil and once again opened the door of revelation upon the earth. Joseph Smith's initial experience was but the first note in what was to become an all-encompassing masterpiece of transcendent harmony with God which would bring forth glad tidings of great joy to the entire world, living and dead.

### **An Angel Flying in the Midst of Heaven**

When Moroni first visited the boy prophet, he spoke not only of a book written upon golden plates, but also quoted many Old Testament prophecies, foretelling some of the important events that were to come forth as a part of the restoration of the gospel, including entire chapters from the prophets Isaiah and Malachi. In quoting from Malachi, Moroni spoke of promises that would turn the hearts of the children to their fathers. This allusion to temple work was to become significantly important to the work which Joseph was to accomplish during his ministry on earth. John A. Widtsoe taught,

“It is sufficient for us to remember that temple work for the living and for the dead was the burden of the thought and labors of the Prophet Joseph Smith from the day when the Angel Moroni first stood before him and told him of the things that were to be up to the last day of the Prophet's life<sup>3</sup>.”

With so much yet to be accomplished – the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood, the establishment of the Church, the gathering of converts, and so much more – one may wonder why Joseph's mind would be burdened with the thought and labor of establishing temple work for the living and the dead. Yet when one considers the ramifications of such a work – the opening of the way for all God's children to enter through the veil to return to live with God eternally – only then can one begin to see the central importance of temples in the foundation of the restoration of the gospel. Elder David A. Bednar stated,

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<sup>3</sup> **Elder John A. Widtsoe**, *Fundamentals of Temple Doctrine*, p 129, Address delivered at the Liberty Stake Genealogical Convention, May 24, 1922

“As we study, learn, and live the gospel of Jesus Christ, sequence often is instructive. Consider, for example, the lessons we learn about spiritual priorities from the order of the major events that occurred as the fullness of the Savior’s gospel was restored in these latter days.... Moroni’s instructions to the young prophet ultimately included two primary themes: (1) the Book of Mormon and (2) the words of Malachi foretelling the role of Elijah in the Restoration “of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” ([Acts 3:21](#)). Thus, the introductory events of the Restoration revealed a correct understanding of the Godhead, emphasized the importance of the Book of Mormon, and anticipated the work of salvation and exaltation for both the living and the dead. This inspiring sequence is instructive about the spiritual matters of highest priority to Deity<sup>4</sup>.”

## Foreshadowing Revelations

When Moroni quoted two of the verses from Malachi, he cited the passages significantly different from the way in which they had been recorded in the Old Testament (compare [Malachi 4:5-6](#) and [JS-H 1:36-39](#)). This change was of such importance that these verses were placed as the first revelation recorded in the Book of Commandments. Their placement as the beginning revelation of the restoration would seem to speak to the central role which temples and the work for the dead were to play in the restoration.

As quoted by Moroni, this passage of scripture makes clear that it is the priesthood which was to be restored at the hand of Elijah the prophet before the coming of the Lord to the earth. Elijah was the last prophet to hold the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood in the days of the Old Testament. In his translated state, he appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration to restore these keys to Peter, James, and John. With these and other keys given on the Mount by other heavenly ministrants<sup>5</sup>, Peter, James, and John received the power and ordinances of the priesthood<sup>6</sup>. The sealing keys were the same keys

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<sup>4</sup> **Elder David A. Bednar**, “Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign*, November 2011

<sup>5</sup> See **Bible Dictionary** under “Elias,” Elijah,” and JST Mark 9:2. These passages indicate that with Elijah, Moses and John the Baptist were also present. Exactly what keys they held and ordained upon Peter, James, and John are unclear, but it seems to be inferred that John the Baptist acted in his office of “Elias” and was a significant participant in the events that took place on the Mount

<sup>6</sup> **President Joseph Fielding Smith** stated, “Now under these conditions, when there is no house of the Lord and the work is urgent, the Lord makes it possible that not only baptism for the dead but also the ordinances that pertain to the house of the Lord may be performed in the wilderness, on mountain top, or in a lake or a stream of water. I am convinced in my own mind that when the Savior took the three disciples up on the mount which is spoken of as the “Mount of Transfiguration,” he there gave unto them the ordinances that pertain to the house of the Lord and that they were endowed. That was the only place they could go. That place became holy and sacred for the rites of salvation which were performed on that occasion.” **Joseph Fielding Smith**, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:170. *Genealogical & History Magazine*, 31:193-194; *Documented History of the Church*, 4:426, 466

which the Savior had promised to Peter when he stated, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever that shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” ([Matthew 16:19](#)). It is only with the sealing keys that the Lord could accomplish his work to unite families for eternity. Elijah would later bring those same keys to Joseph Smith after the dedication of the first temple in the latter days. “The fathers” mentioned in the verses quoted by Moroni refer at least in part to “Joseph, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain” ([D&C 27:10](#)) as well as to “all the holy fathers” ([D&C 27:11](#); see also [Alma 7:25](#)), reaching back to Adam and all those to whom the Lord promised posterity and an eternal inheritance in celestial glory. Only through these sealing keys could the promises made to these fathers be realized; that their posterity would be bound to them through the eternities. Paul told the Hebrews, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, *but having seen them afar off*, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” ([Hebrews 11:13](#), emphasis added).

The “far off” time foreseen by the fathers had finally come in the days of the restoration. The prophecy given as section two in the Doctrine and Covenants was but a foreshadowing of things that were yet to occur in the dispensation of the fullness of times. Moroni’s visits put the emphasis into Joseph’s heart and mind that there was indeed a great work to be done before these promises would be planted in the hearts of the children and the hearts of the children would finally turn to their fathers.

A second foreshadowing of the temple work yet to be accomplished came in the words of John the Baptist as he restored the Aaronic priesthood in May of 1829. Most Latter-day Saints are familiar with the events that led to the heavenly visitation to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as they sought answers regarding baptism. After stating the keys that accompanied the Aaronic Priesthood, John added a prophecy, stating, “... and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” ([D&C 13:1](#)).

While every young man in the Church is at least familiar with the keys of the Aaronic priesthood which they hold, many are unaware of their role as “sons of Levi” to make an offering in righteousness before the Lord. The saints were told in a later revelation that “the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord.... And ... shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, upon Mount Zion in the Lord’s house, whose sons are ye, and also many whom I have called and sent forth to build up my church” (D&C 84:31-32).

As members of the tribe of Levi who were given the priesthood anciently (see Exodus 32:29; Joshua 18:7), Moses and Aaron stand as symbols in this revelation of the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods going forth into the house of the Lord to perform an offering which will be acceptable to God. Before being able to make an acceptable offering, however, these sons of Levi must first be purified and purged so that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness (see Malachi 3:1-3; D&C 128:24). Speaking about this offering, Elder John A. Widtsoe taught,

“The ‘offering in righteousness’ is here [in D&C 128:24] identified with temple work for the dead, which encompasses all the principles of the plan of salvation. When, therefore, the sons of Levi accept Christ and His gospel, subject themselves to the ordinances of the Church, and become active in the gospel requirements, they will offer the offering in righteousness of which has been spoken<sup>7</sup>.”

This offering was to be made in the house of the Lord, and would include a record of all their ancestor who had departed this life. It was this offering which John foreshadowed as he pronounced the blessings of the priesthood upon the heads of Joseph and Oliver.

### **A Call to Gather**

In the same year as John's visit, the Lord sent Peter, James, and John to restore the higher or Melchizedek priesthood to Joseph and Oliver. The Lord revealed unto Joseph that he had committed to him “the keys of the kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fullness of times, in the which I will *gather together in one all things*, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth” (D&C 27:13 emphasis added).

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<sup>7</sup> Elder John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliation* 1:196, 1943

Before the offerings foretold could be made; indeed before temples could be built in which to make the offerings, a gathering had to take place; both a spiritual and physical gathering of the people. Less than a month after section 27, the Lord told Joseph, “ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts; Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked” (D&C 29:8).

Shortly after this revelation, the saints were commanded to “go to the Ohio” (D&C 37:1) where the Lord would gather unto himself a righteous people. The Lord told them that they should “go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high... and when men are endowed with power from on high and sent forth, all these things shall be gathered unto the bosom of the church” (D&C 38:31-32, 38). One of primary reasons for gathering the saints was to enable them to build a place where they could receive power from on high. The prophet Joseph Smith taught,

What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world? The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose. It was the design of the councils of heaven before the world was, that the principles and laws of the priesthood should be predicated upon gathering of the people in every age of the world... It is for the same purpose that God gathers together His people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and annointings, etc.<sup>8</sup>

As the Church began to grow in Kirtland, Ohio, the Lord issued his law (D&C 42) which included the law of consecration, providing a means for the struggling Church to build the house which the Lord had commanded them to build. While the saints in Kirtland struggled to fully live the law of consecration (see D&C 56), the Lord revealed that Missouri would also become a gathering place in

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, 5:423-24.

which a city of Zion would be built. It was to be a center place, with the temple occupying the prominent place in the center of the city (see [D&C 57:1-3](#)).

The Lord later told the saints that the city would be built, “beginning at the temple lot” ([D&C 84:3](#)). This “New Jerusalem was to be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation ... [which generation] shall not pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house” ([D&C 84:4-5](#)). In each place to which the Lord had commanded his saints to gather, they were to make the temple the center place.

The idea of having the temple as the center point of their gatherings, calls to the mind the imagery of the raising of a large tent. First the canvass is rolled out upon the ground, then the attached cords are stretched out and stakes are placed to hold the canvass in position. Once several stakes are in place, the center post is placed in order to raise the tent. Once the center post is raised, more stakes are added in order to hold the tent firmly in place.

In the days of Moses, the temple was actually a tabernacle or tent, which could be raised and taken down to accommodate the travels of the House of Israel to the Promised Land. Isaiah, familiar with the process of raising and lowering the tabernacle, prophesied of the day when the “tabernacle shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes there of shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken” ([Isaiah 33:20](#)). Isaiah later prophesied, “Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes” ([Isaiah 54:2](#)).

As the early Church began to canvass the earth and call converts to gather, they were to build up and establish stakes of Zion so that the Saints could build up temples to the Lord. Their “gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes,” was to provide a refuge from the storm, and to build a house unto the Lord (see [D&C 115:6-8](#)). Temples as a place of refuge were also foretold by the prophet Isaiah when he prophesied, “And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from



the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and from rain” ([Isaiah 4:6](#)). Unaware of the storm which was ahead, the saints did not fully realize the need for such a refuge.

### **Laying the Foundation**

As the Saints began to spread west to establish the Lord’s kingdom and build temples in the frontier, the storm of persecution, trials, and challenges hindered the work of building a temple. The Lord told them that “after much tribulation” would come the blessings ([D&C 58:4](#)). He also told them that they had been sent so that they might be “honored in laying the foundation” for things to come, including a “feast of fat things.” This was to be the “supper of the house of the Lord to which all nations would be invited,” indeed; it would be the supper of the Lord which was to be provided at the “marriage of the Lamb” ([D&C 58:7-10](#)).

One imagery of this feast is that it provides the very best which the Lord can offer his children on the earth. Thus, the richest of all of God’s blessings were to come to his saints after they had endured persecution and built a temple to his name. While this feast was to be prepared by the saints, the entire world was to be invited to come and partake of this supper, which is part of the marriage of the Lamb. Marriage is a representation of a sealing covenant. It is to be in the “house of the Lord” that all people will be invited to partake of the Lord’s sweetest and richest blessings, and be sealed to him as his people, and to each other as families for eternity. Isaiah prophesied that this feast would be made for all people in a “mountain,” an ancient metaphor for temples. He also witnessed that in this mountain, God would remove the veil that had been spread over all people (see [Isaiah 25:6-10](#)).

Unable to see the value of such an incredible feast, the saints in Missouri, struggling through incredible challenges and opposition, found it difficult to live the law of consecration which would have made possible the purchase of the lands necessary to build the temple<sup>9</sup>. The Lord told them later in a

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<sup>9</sup> In a conference address given years later in Salt Lake City, **Lorenzo Snow** stated, “The Lord provided a way whereby [the saints] could secure the means to purchase that country, namely by the law of consecration. There was no one man in the Church that could have bought it. The people as a general thing were poor. There were no rich men that received the Gospel in those early days. But by combination and union they could have secured the means to carry out the purposes of the Almighty in regard to the purchase of that country. They failed because of their love for money.... the people in Jackson

parable that they had failed to build the tower which he had commanded them, and so their enemy had broken through and destroyed their works (see [D&C 101:44-54](#)). He then instructed them that if they would be obedient, “the work of gathering together of my saints [would] continue that I may build them up unto my name upon holy places” ([D&C 101:63-64](#)). He then repeated his command to continue to gather all things, including money, that they may purchase the lands necessary to fulfill His work (see [D&C 101:65-74](#)).

Amid the set-backs and challenges which the saints continued to face, the Lord offered them a message of peace which the prophet Joseph designated as the “olive leaf ... plucked from the Tree of Paradise.”<sup>10</sup> In this extensive revelation, the Lord lifted the vision of the saints to the light which he had sent forth to cover the earth (see [D&C 88:11-14](#)). He promised them that if they would “sanctify [themselves] that their minds become single to [Him],” he would unveil his face to them, but it would be in his own time and his own way ([D&C 88:68](#)). The unveiling of his face to them was to take place in “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;” ([D&C 88:119](#)). It was to be built to his name, where the Lord could instruct them in the work of the ministry and in theory, principle, and doctrine. He promised them that if they did not suffer any unclean thing to come into this house, then his presence would be there and the pure in heart who would come into it would see God (see [D&C 97:13-16](#)).

### **The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning**

The challenges and difficulties being experienced by the saints in the western frontier of Missouri prevented the building of a temple, but the work to build the temple in Kirtland moved steadily forward. The saints sacrificed time, money, and labor to erect a house to which the Lord would manifest himself. The sacrifice and service brought great blessings; indeed, a feast of fat things that even the

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County were required to observe the law of consecration. But they failed to do it, and therefore the lands were not secured. The Lord could have sustained the people against the encroachments of their enemies had they placed themselves in a condition where he would have been justified in doing so. But inasmuch as they would not comply with His requirements, the Lord could not sustain them against their enemies. (*Conference Report*, October 1899, 23-24)

<sup>10</sup> See Section heading for **Doctrine and Covenants 88**.

most faithful saint could not have anticipated. On March 27, 1836, the temple was dedicated by the Prophet Joseph Smith with a prayer which by itself could be a topic for a paper such as this. Two of the prophet's petitions in behalf of the saints will have to suffice for this paper.

The first of note is the importuning for the Lord to arm his people with power that His name might be upon them ([D&C 109:22](#)). In the temple of God, saints go beyond being *willing* to take upon them his name as they promise to do in partaking of the sacrament. In the House of the Lord, they actually take upon themselves his name. In our modern day, Elder David A. Bednar taught,

“... the process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ that is commenced in the waters of baptism is continued and enlarged in the house of the Lord. As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple. As we partake of the sacrament, we look to the temple. We pledge to always remember the Savior and to keep His commandments as preparation to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple and receive the highest blessings available through the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the ordinances of the holy temple we more completely and fully take upon us the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup>

As saints take the Savior's name upon them in the holy temple, they receive his power, his glory is round about them, and the angels have charge over them. ([D&C 109:22](#)).

Later in this dedicatory prayer, Joseph asks the Father, “that our garments may be pure, that we may be clothed upon with robes of righteousness, with palms in our hands, and crowns of glory upon our heads, and reap eternal joy for all our sufferings” ([D&C 109:76](#)). When we as saints can come to the house of the Lord with clean hands and a pure heart, God can clothe us with the protective garment of the Savior's atoning sacrifice and allow us to pass through the veil of his flesh (see [Hebrews 10:19-20](#)) in order to enter celestial realms of light, power, and understanding.

Following the dedicatory service of the temple in Kirtland, the heavens were opened, angels did appear, and many were caught up to heavenly visions. Joseph Smith, Jr. recorded,

"Brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an

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<sup>11</sup> **Elder David A. Bednar**, “Honorably Hold a Name and a Standing,” *Ensign*, May 2009

unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place<sup>12</sup>.”

Years later, Elder Orson Pratt, a member of the Twelve Apostles recalled his experience at the Kirtland Temple;

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 off 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... The Lord commanded his people to build unto him a house [Kirtland Temple], promising that if they built a house unto his name, according to the commandment and pattern which should be given, and providing they suffered no unclean thing to enter it, so that it should not be defiled, the Lord himself would appear in it; his presence would be there; his glory would be there; and all that should go into that house, who were pure in heart, should see him ... He has said that his people are always to build unto his name a house. What for? That his name might be there; that his angels might be there; that his presence might be there; and that there the fullness of the holy priesthood might be more fully revealed; and that there all the ordinances might be performed, that were ordained from before the foundation of the world. This is the object of temples. It is to connect the children to the fathers; it is to bring about an organization between the living and the dead.<sup>13</sup>

It was here at this magnificent manifestation of the Lord’s Spirit that the hymn, “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning” became the outward expression of the spiritual yearning of every heart who attended the dedication. Since that time, this song has been sung in connection with every temple dedication of the latter-days. Surely it is through the temple that the “visions and blessings of old are returning, and angels are coming to visit the earth.... the knowledge and power of God are expanding; the veil o’er the earth is beginning to burst.” Should we not then “sing and shout with the armies of heaven? Hosanna, Hosanna, to God and the Lamb!<sup>14</sup>”

### **The Veil is Parted**

Just one week following the dedication of the Kirtland temple, the Lord himself did come to visit his house. In one of the most profound revelations of the restoration, Joseph records, “The veil was taken from our minds and the eyes of our understanding were opened. We saw the Lord standing on the

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<sup>12</sup> **Joseph Smith, Jr.**, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 2:428.

<sup>13</sup> **Orson Pratt**, JD 18:132; Quoted in part by **Gordon B. Hinckley**, August 1986 *Ensign*, First presidency message.

<sup>14</sup> “**The Spirit of God**,” *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, #2.

breastwork of the pulpit before us.” Joseph goes on to describe the appearance, countenance, and voice of the great Jehovah who had come to accept his house and the gift offered him through the sacrifice and commitment of his people. Jehovah speaks; “You are clean before me; therefore lift up your heads and rejoice” (D&C 110:5). He then tells them that he has accepted his house and promises that he will manifest himself unto his people in mercy, pour out blessings, and endow his people as he had promised when he commanded them to come to the Ohio (see D&C 110:7-9). Certainly, this parting of the veil in the house of the Lord opened the way for the servants of the Lord to taste the richness of the blessings which God offers to those who come into his house.

Following the appearance of the Lord, other visions came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in which Moses, Elias, and Elijah came to restore keys necessary for the work of the Lord to go forward. Moses committed the keys of the gathering of Israel in order that the ten tribes might be brought in from their scattered condition. Elias imparted the keys of the gospel of Abraham, under whose attendant blessings all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Finally, the promised day spoken of by Malachi came to pass as Elijah appeared, restoring the sealing keys; providing the means whereby the hearts of the children and the fathers could be knit together, bringing all generations together as one great family of God.

As Jewish people around the world celebrated the Passover during the first week in April in 1836 – setting a place for the awaited Elijah and opening their doors in hopes that he may come to their home – Elijah did indeed come. He appeared, however, on the Lord’s Sabbath, in a house now dedicated to God; a place where the Savior himself had come to usher in the beginning of the restoration of keys which would enable his servants to prepare the world so that it would not be utterly wasted at his coming.

The Apostle Matthew recorded that these same four personages; Moses, Elias, Elijah, and Christ, had also been present many years ago upon a mount, now known as the Mount of Transfiguration<sup>15</sup>. It is not likely that it is simply coincidence these same individuals are at both of these significant events. In the Kirtland Temple, the Savior had indicated that his servants had been endowed within this holy house (D&C 110:9). Of the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, President Joseph Fielding Smith said,

“Now under these conditions, when there is no house of the Lord and the work is urgent, the Lord makes it possible that not only baptism for the dead but also the ordinances that pertain to the house of the Lord may be performed in the wilderness, on mountain top, or in a lake or a stream of water. I am convinced in my own mind that when the Savior took the three disciples up on the mount which is spoken of as the "Mount of Transfiguration," *he there gave unto them the ordinances that pertain to the house of the Lord and that they were endowed.* That was the only place they could go. That place became holy and sacred for the rites of salvation which were performed on that occasion<sup>16</sup>.” (Emphasis added)

The restoration of the keys of the “endowment” was foundational to the work that was to come. The Kirtland Temple was the place where the Lord chose to restore those keys which had been given anciently to Peter, James, and John. Indeed, it was here that the fullness of priesthood keys was given to his servants of the latter days so that they could now be endowed with the power and go forth to bring all unto Christ through the ordinances of the temple. While the full endowment was not yet given in Kirtland, certainly the keys pertaining to the priesthood of the endowment were now in the hands of the latter day prophet.

Moses, Elias, and Elijah provided not only those keys necessary for the endowment, but also pointed the way to the fulfillment of the mission of the Lord’s Church in the Latter-days. The keys for the proclaiming of the gospel, providing for the perfecting of the saints through the covenant of Abraham, and of doing work for our dead in order to redeem them out of prison were now entrusted to the Lord’s anointed.

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<sup>15</sup> See Matthew 17 and the **Bible Dictionary** entries for “Elijah,” and “Elias,” as well as the Joseph Smith translation for Mark 9:2. These references indicate that while Elijah, the Hebrew form of Elias, was indeed present, so also was John the Baptist in his role and office of an Elias, or forerunner.

<sup>16</sup> **Joseph Fielding Smith**, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:170. *Genealogical & History Magazine*, 31:193-194; *Documented History of the Church*, 4:426, 466

## Work Yet to be Done

Incredible and inspiring as the events of the Kirtland Temple were, there was still a great work to be done. A preparatory endowment was now available to the saints,<sup>17</sup> but the full purpose of temples was yet to be realized. Entrance through the veil was yet to be realized. The full endowment was yet to come forth, allowing the saints access to the fullness of God's presence. Brigham Young stated,

Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.<sup>18</sup>

Another work yet to be realized in the preparatory temple in Kirtland was the work for deceased ancestors. When the saints settled in Nauvoo, the Lord warned the saints,

“... there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood. For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead --- For this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me .... But I command you... to build a house unto me; and I grant unto you sufficient time to build a house unto me .... But behold, at the end of this appointment your baptisms for your dead shall not be acceptable unto me; and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God.” (D&C 124:28).

With all that had already taken place in regard to the restoration – the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood, the restoration and organization of the Church, the coming forth of the laws of the kingdom, including consecration – still the Lord tells his people that they will be rejected as a people if they do not now go forth and complete a temple in which work for the dead can be accomplished. The Lord further instructs his saints,

Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of

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<sup>17</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this work to go into detail about the progression of the endowment ceremony, it appears that the endowment given in Kirtland differed significantly from that of the endowment experienced in the Nauvoo temple (Brigham Young stated, The preparatory ordinances ... administered [in the Kirtland Temple], though accompanied by the ministrations of angels, and the presence of the Lord Jesus, were but a faint similitude of the ordinances of the house of the Lord in their fulness; yet many, through the instigation of the Devil, thought they had received all, and knew as much as God; they have apostatized, and gone to hell. But be assured, brethren, there are but few, very few of the Elders of Israel, now on earth, who know the meaning of the word endowment. To know, they must experience; and to experience, a temple must be built (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 415–16).

<sup>18</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 2:31

Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipalities, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people; For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times (D&C 124:39-41).

With all the persecution and adversity, the intervening years between Kirtland and Nauvoo had been extremely difficult and challenging. Now “settled” in the seemingly quiet confines of Nauvoo, the Lord expected the Saints to go to work to build his house before their relative tranquility would again be destroyed. It is here in Nauvoo that the Lord intended to bring to fruition the work of Joseph Smith which had been foreshadowed by the angel Moroni so many years ago. The hearts of the children yet needed to be turned to their fathers that the dead might be redeemed, and God’s work to bring to pass the eternal life of all his children could be accomplished.

Ever occupying the mind and pressing upon the heart of Joseph Smith, the work for the dead became the topic of his letters and revelations, in spite of the many other matters which demanded his attention; including his constant battle against those who sought to destroy him and stop the work of the Lord. In perhaps the most sublime language ever penned by the prophet, he wrote a letter to the Church dated September 6, 1842, which later became the 128<sup>th</sup> section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In this wondrous revelation, Joseph taught,

“Now the great and grand secret of the whole matter, and the *summum bonum* of the whole subject that is lying before us, consists in obtaining the powers of the Holy Priesthood. For him to whom these keys are given there is no difficulty in obtaining a knowledge of facts in relation to the salvation of the children of men, both as well for the dead as for the living. Herein is glory and honor, and immortality and eternal life—The ordinance of baptism by water, to be immersed therein in order to answer to the likeness of the dead, that one principle might accord with the other; to be immersed in the water and come forth out of the water is in the likeness of the resurrection of the dead in coming forth out of their graves; hence, this ordinance was instituted to form a relationship with the ordinance of baptism for the dead, being in likeness of the dead” (D&C 128:11).



The Prophet cites the apostle Paul in assuring the saints that “[the dead] without us cannot be made perfect; neither can we without our dead be made perfect.” He goes on to indicate that this work for the dead would create a welding link of the generations; uniting the family of God “from the days of Adam even to the present” (see [D&C 128:15-18](#))

In the final verses of this revelation, we hear the crescendo of voices joining the symphony; a symphony begun with the single voice of the boy in a grove of trees. We hear the voices of gladness, mercy, and truth coming out of the earth; indeed “glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead.” We hear the voices of angels having visited the earth with truth and the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times – voices of angels stretching from Adam to the current day with “their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood ... giving forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!” ([D&C 128:19-21](#)). Then, as if sounding the encouragement of a general to his soldiers heading into the battle, the prophet Joseph declares,

“Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free. Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever! And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers! Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand; and who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance ([D&C 128:22-24](#)).

In the Nauvoo Temple – a temple which Joseph would not see to completion – the work for the dead began to move forward, destroying the veil which death had cast over the people. Indeed, with the ability to now perform ordinances for those who had passed beyond the grave, the sting of death was taken away and the victory

over the grave which had been claimed by Christ could now be offered to all people. President James E. Faust taught, “All of these exquisite holy edifices are a testimony of our belief that the Savior broke the bonds of death and opened up the way for us to enter into covenants which will be binding in another world.”<sup>19</sup>

Following the expulsion from Nauvoo, the mountain of the Lord’s house would next be established in the “top of the mountains” where “all nations [would] flow unto it” ([Isaiah 2:2-3](#)). Literally cut from the stone of the Granite Mountains of Utah, the Salt Lake Temple stands as a symbol of the stone “cut out of the mountain” spoken of by Daniel ([Daniel 2:45](#)). From thence, temples are now rolling forth as the stone which Daniel saw to fill the entire world. Temples dot the earth in places that one could have scarcely imagined even 30 years ago. Places virtually unknown to the early saints; such as Africa, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Brazil, and Thailand, along with many other lands, do now or yet will enjoy the shadow of the temple providing a covert from the storm of evil in today’s world.

These temples will also provide the peoples of the world access to the ordinances which will bind their families for all eternity. Their work will go forward for their ancestors as their hearts are turned to their fathers before the second coming of the Lord to the earth. According to Brigham Young, “To accomplish this work there will have to be not only one temple, but thousands of them, and thousands and tens of thousands of men and women will go into those temples and officiate for people who have lived as far back as the Lord shall reveal.”<sup>20</sup>

The veil has now been parted for the last and final time and an ever-widening entrance is opening to all God’s children across the earth. Each temple now built opens wider the way for all to come to perform the work for their fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, indeed for the entire family of God. Now all peoples of the earth will sing, and we will shout, and we will proclaim with the armies of heaven, “the veil o’er the earth is beginning to burst!”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> **James E. Faust**, *Ensign*, November 2000, 59

<sup>20</sup> **Brigham Young**, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:372

<sup>21</sup> “**The Spirit of God**,” *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, #2.