

Chapter 20

LDS Temple Endowment Symbolism

The LDS temple endowment ceremony is not about a temple of brick and mortar [scripturally that is called “The House of the Lord” (Exodus 23:19; 1 Kings 6:1; D&C 58:9; 84:31; 88:137; 109)] with all its ordinances and ceremonies created for the living and the dead. The LDS temple endowment is about our body temple, whether in mortality or the world of spirits. If we are spiritually awake then we will see the symbolism found in “The House of the Lord,” [temple of brick and mortar]; which is to remind us where the true temple of God really is, which is you and complete the construction of our own body temple!

A temple of brick and mortar [“The House of the Lord”] is important in a telestial and terrestrial (millennial) era where initiates come to learn and gain a knowledge from the Spirit about true temple worship. The point of a temple of brick and mortar [called “The House of the Lord”] is to help each individual awaken from formalism and idolatry and realize that they “are the temple of the living God” [2 Corinthians 6:16]. The “living temple” is the true temple we are each responsible to create for ourselves! Our “body temple” is the only one needing a conversion into godliness and holiness and every other divine and holy attribute until all our “dead works” [our fallen and carnal nature] are rooted out and our true temple is then manifest through our thoughts, words, and deeds via holiness of character!

There are beautiful symbols pointing to our **living body temple** **“made without hands,”** in the LDS temple endowment.

One day soon the Jews will build their 3rd Temple of brick and mortar and will come to understand the symbolism and where that temple of brick and mortar will be built.

Christ taught through Isaiah that the temple in his day was “a house of prayer for all people.” And Christ said the same thing in his day.

“for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”
(Old Testament | Isaiah 56:7)

“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”
(New Testament | Matthew 21:12 - 13)

We should pray for those who teach the incorrect location of the spiritual temple to repent and study their Bibles – which very clearly identifies the true location. And pray for those who are Jewish or non-believers to abandon tradition and man-made “legend” and trust in the true God of the Bible and His divinely inspired Word. By God’s grace more people will stop looking to the site of the 3rd Temple building of brick and mortar, which eventually will be built; but believe the Gospel, receive the Holy Spirit and *let their own bodies be the temple of the Great and Mighty God until His triumphant return to the Mount Olives.*¹

There is a phrase on the East side of every LDS Temple, that says: “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” and “THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.” Our own LDS Bible Dictionary defines “HOLINESS” as: [brackets added for clarity]

“According to the Old Testament, things or places were holy that were set apart for a sacred purpose; the opposite of holy is therefore common or profane ([1 Sam. 21:5](#); [Ezek. 22:26](#); [42:20](#); [44:23](#); [48:13–15](#)). Similarly, a holy person meant one who held a sacred office. The Israelites were a holy people because they stood in a special relationship to Jehovah. Under the guidance of the Prophets it was seen that what distinguished Jehovah from the gods of the heathen was His **personal character**. *The word holy therefore came to refer to moral character* ([Lev. 11:44](#); [19:2](#); [21:8](#); [Isa. 6:3–8](#)). *Israel must be holy in character because the God of Israel was holy* ([Jer. 7:4–7](#); see also [Matt. 5:48](#)). The Law of Holiness ([Lev. 17–26](#)) shows how **the attempt was made by means of ceremonial observances to secure this holiness of character**. The attempt failed [*it will always fail*] because the later Jews observed the letter and neglected the spirit; they attached more importance to the ceremonial than to the moral; and the result was a lapse into formalism [*a type of idolatry; is modern day Israel doing the same?*]. In the writings of the Prophets, it is clearly laid down that **the value of worship in the eyes of God depends upon the personal character of the worshipper.**”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/holiness?lang=eng>

Character building temples, on both sides of the veil, is what temple work is really all about and this kind of worship will never fail because it is the only true temple defined by God, in the scriptures, **“made without hands”**

that can and will **“turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers”** ...to **“turn our hearts”** is to become honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, moral, pure, and holy in our character; this is the true “spirit of Elijah/Elias” (2 King 2: 15; Malachi 4: 5-6; D&C 27: 6-7; Article of Faith 13).

The point of this brief essay about the LDS temple endowment and “THE HOUSE OF THE LORD,” [the brick-and-mortar temple] with all its symbolic ordinances is to direct our minds and hearts to our own spiritual body temple so that we might become a sanctified people on both sides of the veil. Moses had a moveable temple which is more symbolic of our own moveable body temple and he sought diligently to **“sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God”** and have a personal experience with Him, face to face... “but they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence” [D&C 84: 23-24].

What happened in Moses’s time could happen today if our hearts become “hardened” by our own fallen and carnal nature and we don’t see the spiritual message being shared in “The House of the Lord;” and we look to that temple “made with hands” for our salvation. The Lord has warned us about this: **“Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands: as saith the prophet”** [Acts 7:48, 17:24; 2 Cor. 2:1; Hebrews 9:24]. Again, the scriptures point out:

“Now if any man build upon this foundation (of) gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. **Know ye not that ye are the temple of God**, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. **Let no man deceive himself**. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. **For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”** (1 Corinthians 3:12 - 19).

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? **for ye are the temple of the living God**; as God hath said, I will dwell **in them**, and walk **in them**; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (New Testament | 2 Corinthians 6:16 - 18).

“What? **know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost** which is in you, which ye have of God,” (New Testament | 1 Corinthians 6:19).

“FOR we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house **not made with hands**, eternal in the heavens” (New Testament | 2 Corinthians 5:1).

“Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

21 But **he spake of the temple of his body.**” (New Testament | John 2:18 - 21)

Those who want a "temple" of brick and mortar [“THE HOUSE OF THE LORD”] will have it in a Telestial and Terrestrial existence. But to experience true temple worship and be sealed to the living God we must begin by cleansing our own body temple mind and heart through holiness of character. Everyone can learn to transcend the "brick and mortar temple" ... by immersing oneself into the “spirit of the law” for a much more exceeding weight of glory. [Transcend means to see and understand the spiritual symbolism of all forms and structures “made with hands,” without judgement of the form and structure, or judgement of those who believe the form and structure actually saves them].

“Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I [Christ] promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John [John 17].

4 This Comforter is the promise which I [Christ, face to face] give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;

5 Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—” (Doctrine and Covenants | Section 88:3 - 5).

In the Celestial realm the apostle John saw no temple made with hands there, but only the living temple made without hands:

“And I saw no temple therein (that means a physical temple of brick and mortar “made with hands”): for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, *or maketh a lie*: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life” (New Testament | Revelation 21:22 - 27).

"Keeping the commandments of God" is not about “keeping” the "letter of the law"... it's about “keeping” the "spirit of the law" within us! “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (New Testament | 2 Corinthians 3:6).

True temple worship and the true LDS endowment is about making our hearts pure and holy; which is the meaning of "Zion" where the "pure in heart" dwell. Hence, by understanding the character and attributes of God we learn what is vital to our becoming like Him! It is consoling to know that He, God is "no respecter of persons: but in every nation that...worketh righteousness (which is the “spirit of the law”) is accepted with him;" (Acts 10: 34-35) this means taking upon ourselves that same righteous character. "Righteousness" is an act of faith that only comes by becoming holy and virtuous in our character... this is true atonement, at-one-ment with godliness in thought, word, and deed! Christ fulfilled his own personal atonement as an example to all, that we might fulfil atonement also and be one with Him. He said he didn't “come to destroy the law, or the prophets: but to fulfil” [Matthew 5:17]. It is a fallen people who keep looking for a physical form or structure, ceremony or ordinance to save them... all these forms and structures are purely symbolic, and they have their place in a telestial and terrestrial world, and that is to “awaken” within us, our potential to become a holy and virtuous people; that is how one “fulfils” the law (by becoming within, a holy and virtuous

person) and why it is called the “mystery of godliness!” [1 Timothy 3:16; D&C 19: 9-10].

Godliness is the act of becoming "holy." Hence Enoch created a "City of Holiness," of likeminded people who understood, that they, were to "become" that City of Holiness themselves! God himself lives in holiness... His habitation is holiness and virtue, and it is the creation of holiness and virtue within himself that allows Him to see and be a part of all His Creations; whereas those who only accept the wisdom of a telestial world, will only see that glory, and likewise, those who only see terrestrial wisdom will see only that as well [D&C 88: 29-31]. **Any temple of brick and mortar only has the power to save a person in their dead works** [Hebrews 6:1-20; Colossians 2; Moroni 8: 22-26]. **To be a “temple of the living God” we must transcendⁱⁱ the “letter of the law,” and embrace the “spirit of the law,” “made without hands.”**

The “temple of the living God” is where God and those like-minded “live” and dwell; and all this is available to anyone who becomes "holy in character," by letting go of false beliefs and carnal natures. Everyone has “**Potential Holiness**” in them, and it cannot ever be destroyed or diluted by the "ego" of disbelief or false doctrines, it can be ignored but never destroyed, hence the “gift” that must be opened personally [example: the “gift of the Holy Ghost” is a “gift” that we must personally open and immerse ourselves into]. That is because the “gift” symbolizes the “light” of holiness, which “shineth in” the darkness but the darkness does not comprehend it [John 1:5] unless repentance and forgiveness is sought for and embraced!

“...Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not **made with hands**, that is to say, not of this building; **12** Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood [blood symbolizes “sin” and Christ’s integrity to forgive those who repent of their “sins”] he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us* [If we repent, see D&C 19].

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: [As Paul says “**if**” the blood of bulls and goats ...sanctifieth, which it can’t [it’s symbolism] only the “spirit of the law” can sanctify and restore life]

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, ***purge your conscience from dead works*** [**“if” we wake up and repent**] to serve the living God?” (New Testament | Hebrews 9:11 - 14). If we don’t understand symbolism, we won’t understand Paul and what he means by “dead works.”

"Tithing," "taxes, and offerings is also part of the "form and structure" created here in mortality to help in blessing of the poor who are in need and have not sufficient for their needs. Another word for “tithe” is “alms;” and the point is, anything given gratuitously is following the principles of godliness, the “spirit of the law.” If churches and governments misuse these funds, they are accountable. The best way to help the poor is to “bless” the poor, and there are many ways to do that. There are poor all around who have not the ability to pay a temporal "tithe" but they can offer a spiritual “tithe,” or “alms” which can be the “gift” of gratitude, prayer, or giving a kind word to someone in need of divine love; and in the eyes of God these are not condemned or withheld from true temple worship “made without hands”!

If a poor person came to the poor who was eating a crust of bread, I am sure the poor could share with the poor and that is the point of tithing/alms... sharing what little or much that you have with those who have not, even if it is just a prayer or blessing you give to another, embracing the “spirit of the law.” Christ turned over the moneychangers at the temple of brick and mortar; to show there is a need here in mortality to bless all who have a broken heart and contrite spirit, to come to “The House of the Lord” and learn how to become godly in character and attribute. [Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11: 15-17; Luke 19: 45-48]. God’s true temple [you!] can always be a house of learning, prayer and becoming like Him in holiness of character, if we choose it; and there is no monetary charge to enter that temple “made without hands.”

How does a man rob God? Perhaps it is when we choose not to help care for the physically poor or spiritually poor and needy amongst us. Perhaps the concept of robbing "God" is metaphorical, and has a deeper spiritual meaning ... What does "God," the exalted person need with money? It's not about money, it's about where our “heart” is! The journey into godliness and holiness can begin by caring for the spiritually poor among us in this temporal world, even if all we can offer is our prayers and unconditional love. Who do we really rob when we fail to love our

neighbor as ourselves? It is our own potential “god” within ourselves that we rob when we don’t act godly with others.

These scriptures (Malachi 3: 8-12, Mark 12: 38-44, Mark 13: 1-2, Luke 20: 45-47, Luke 21: 1-6; Matthew 6:1-4) Are about tithes, alms and offering the widow’s mite. I will put this in perspective, spiritually speaking. We are all connected to the “truth,” to each other through the “spirit of truth,” which is the “spirit of the law.” As beings of light, truth, and intelligence (God included) when we "rob God" we are more directly "robbing ourselves" of an opportunity to bless ourselves and others by building a temple to his name, “**made without hands**.” It is in this perspective, [our potential] to become as God is, that we "seal" ourselves to God through “holiness of character;” as "one nation under God” ...a people living under the mantle of godliness (god/God).

Eventually all the degrees of glory will bow the knee and every tongue confess that the umbrella of godliness and holiness will eradicate "death" in all its forms, for God is a God of “life;” this is turning the hearts [divine nature] of the Fathers to the children and the hearts [divine nature] of the children to the Fathers...this is true "temple work" and the true “temple endowment!” I find joy in this symbolism just as Paul gloried in the symbolism of the cross [Galatians 6: 13-18]. Building a character of godliness, “**made without hands**” is the only true living temple “**made without hands**,” spoken of in the scriptures! [1 Cor. 3:16-18; 2 Cor. 5:1].

The purpose of the temple made of brick and mortar (“made with hands”) called [THE HOUSE OF THE LORD] is here to awaken our spiritual understanding so that we see, hear, and **understand** this symbolism. The veil in the temple symbolizes our spiritual preparation [developing a character and attributes of godliness] that is absolutely necessary for one to see and speak with the Lord “face to face” [as symbolized in parting the veil in the temple made with hands] beholding Christ “face to face.” So, the deeper question is:

How do we prepare ourselves to see God? That is what the “temple” is about! The Prophet Joseph Smith taught this early in the *spiritual restoration* process, when he included in the Doctrine and Covenants, Lectures on Faith 1-7 and called it “The Doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ.” He said we must “**first**” understand the true nature and character of God! [The Words of Joseph Smith pgs. 340, 343,

348, 356] If man does not comprehend his own divine character [the little “god” inside himself] he will never fully comprehend that being who has become “God,” or “Christ.” This “mystery of godliness” is revealed inside you! Hence the “mystery” that only you can experience! These are the only ones who will become members of “the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn” (Hebrews 12: 23-24; D&C 76: 66-68; D&C 107:19).

If we could learn to view and understand the words, "God" and “Christ” in the scriptures with the idea that they are describing "godliness, virtue and holiness of character;" what a beautiful vision that would be! We would then know how to follow God and Christ, for to be like them is to be one with them. It boils down to recognizing the little “god” inside ourselves and others, as Christ taught in [John 10: 34; Psalms 82:6].

"God" has arrived at that place called "godliness, virtue and holiness of character" within Himself! Therefore, it should be obvious that the little "god" within us is seeking that same fulfillment; and that can only take place through experiences here in mortality or the world of spirits that will test our character! For it is a godly “character” that defines God and Christ... and so it is for mankind.

If we choose evil or to be angry, mad, or frustrated who are we hurting? Only ourselves...however on a larger plain of reality we can affect others as well, who haven't arrived at the place where "god" is found. We “rob god” by not developing godly attributes. Before “God” became the capital “God” he started out awakening to the little "god” inside himself, who eventually became, “God;” he did so by overcoming the "flesh," the "carnal nature" and all false beliefs. It is His work and glory to help us come out of our fallen, carnal places by encouraging us to become "holy" as He is "holy." God has not the power to give us "holiness," but He can give us commandments [forms and structures made with hands] that will teach us how to be "holy" *if* we seek to understand where true holiness is found; by becoming one with the “spirit of the law” and desire it more than anything else!

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (New Testament | 1 Timothy 3:16).

And all he asks, is that we become a living temple, like Him in character and attribute, “**made without hands;**” and judge not those who do not see, hear or understand their very own divine potential, which is the only true and living temple on earth or heaven!

ⁱ ¶ And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.
6 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark:
7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light.
8 And it shall be in that day, *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.
9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.
11 And *men* shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

(Old Testament | Zechariah 14:4 - 11)

ⁱⁱ Transcend means to see and understand the spiritual symbolism of all forms and structures “made with hands,” without judgement of the form and structure, or judgement of those who believe the form and structure actually saves them.

Essay by Ken Card / Last edited 9/13/2021

For more insight on the LDS Temple Endowment Symbolism see:

The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri by Hugh Nibley
Appendix 2 (From the Odes of Solomon), Appendix 3 (The Pearl),
Appendix 4 (From the Pistis Sophia), Appendix 5 & 6

See also: <https://www.ldsendowment.com/index.html>

For more essays on gospel truths see
www.MarriageAndPolygamy.com