

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 18: "Establish ... a House of God"

(D&C 95, 109, 110)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand the significance of temples and encourage us to seek the blessings of the temples in our own lives.

D&C 95:1: Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you—

Richard J. Allen: "A careful study of the scriptures teaches that the pinnacle of the Lord's design for His children is the holy temple with its sealing ordinances, its washings and anointings, and its sacred endowments. **In the temple, we find the culmination of the plan of salvation; there we make covenants to return us to God.** The Kirtland Temple, first in the dispensation of the fullness of times, holds a singularly important place in the history of the Restoration. **It inaugurated the unfolding of the temple work in the latter days**" (*Teachings and Commentaries on D&C*, 224).

Brigham Young: "I have determined, by the help of the Lord and this people, to build Him a house. You may ask, "Will He dwell in it?" He may do just as He pleases; it is not my prerogative to dictate to the Lord. **But we will build Him a house**, that if He pleases to pay us a visit, He may have a place to dwell in, or if He should send any of His servants, we may have a suitable accommodation for them. I have built myself a house, and the most of you have done the same, and now shall we not build the Lord a house?" (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, 376, December 16, 1851).

1. The Lord commanded the Saints to build the Kirtland Temple.

A. On **December 27, 1832**, Joseph Smith received the revelation Among other things, commanding the Saints to:

D&C 88:119: Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even 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.

At the time this commandment was given there were only about 100 members of the Church living in Kirtland township. Over the next three years the membership in Kirtland increased to about 1300.

B. On **June 1, 1833**, the Prophet received a revelation from the Lord chastising him and the Saints for not building the House of the Lord as previously commanded.

D&C 95:2-3, 11-12: Wherefore, ye must needs be chastened and stand rebuked before my face; For ye have sinned against me a very grievous sin, in that ye have not considered the great commandment in all things, that I have given unto you concerning the building of mine house . . . Verily I say unto you, **it is my will that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it. If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness.**

Joseph was told that great blessings depended upon the completion of the temple.

C. **July 1833** - The foundation stone laid and construction commenced.

The Lord revealed His plans for the Kirtland Temple in a vision to the First Presidency--Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams.

Frederick G. Williams related the following: "Joseph [Smith] received the word of the Lord for him to take his two counselors, Williams and Rigdon, and come before the Lord, and He would show them the plan or model of the house to be built. **We went upon our knees, called on the Lord, and the building appeared within viewing distance**, I being the first to discover it. **Then we all viewed it together. After we had taken a good look at the exterior, the building seemed to come right over us, and the makeup of the Hall seemed to coincide with that I there saw to a minutiae**" (reported by Truman O. Angell, "Journal", cited in Elwin C. Robison's *The First Mormon Temple: Design, Construction, and Historic Context of the Kirtland Temple*, Brigham Young University Press: Provo, UT, 1997, 8).

D. From **January 21 through May 1, 1836**, it is likely that more Latter-day Saints beheld visions and received gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy than during any other period in the history of the Church.

Orson Pratt: "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 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 . . . **In that Temple, set apart by the servants of God, and dedicated by a prayer that was written by inspiration, the people were blessed as they never had been blessed for generations**" (JD, 18:131-132).

2. The Saints were blessed for their great sacrifices in building the temple.

"The remarkable efforts put forth by the Kirtland Saints are **examples of sacrifice and consecration of time, talents, and means**. For three years, they labored on the building . . . Construction was made more difficult by mob threats to destroy the temple, and those who worked by day guarded the temple by night. But after the Saints' immense sacrifices of time and resources, the temple was finally completed in the spring of 1836" (*Our Heritage*, 34).

Lisa O. Tait and Brent Rogers: "The spring and summer of 1834 were difficult seasons for construction on the temple because most of the men in the community went with Joseph Smith to Missouri in the Camp of Israel, hoping to aid the Saints threatened by mob violence. With the men gone, **women carried on the labor**. Some did masonry, others drove cattle and hauled rock, and still others sewed, spun, and knit to make clothing for workers. . . Women worked on the veils that would be hung from the ceiling to subdivide the lower hall and made other furnishings for the temple. . **Children even helped by gathering broken dishes and glassware**, which were added to the stucco to help it glisten in the sun." (*Revelations in Context*, 170-171).

3. Joseph Smith dedicated the Kirtland Temple.

Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr.: "When we dedicate a house to the Lord, what we really do is **dedicate ourselves to the Lord's service**, with a covenant that we shall use the house in the way he intends that it shall be used. . . Dedicatory prayers for temples, however, are formal and long and cover many matters of doctrine and petition. This pattern was set by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. **The prayer given on that occasion was revealed to him by the Lord**; all prayers used since then have been written by the spirit of inspiration and have been read by such of the Brethren as have been appointed to do so. The prayer I have prepared for dedication of this Provo Temple is no exception" (*Church News*, February 12, 1972).

The dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, found in D&C 109, can be organized in the following manner:

- Why the Temple was built (109:1-5)
- Purpose of the Temple (109:6-23)
- Blessings for the Saints (109:24-49)
- Blessings for the people of the world (109:50-57)
- Blessings for the House of Israel (109:58-67)
- Destiny of the Church (109:71-80)

The dedicatory services lasted seven hours—hours filled with manifestations of the glory and approval of God. In the dedicatory prayer, the Prophet prayed for many great blessings that are suggested below:

1. (109:12) That the **glory of the Lord** might rest upon His people
2. (109:12) That **His presence might be continually among His people**
3. (109:13) That **people** who come to the temple can feel the **Lord's power**
4. (109:14) That we would be **taught from on high**
5. (109:15) That we might **grow up in Him**
6. (109:15) That the Lord's people would receive a **fulness of the Holy Ghost**
7. (109:15) That we might be **organized according to the laws of God**
8. (109:15) That we might be **prepared to obtain every needful thing needed for exaltation**
9. (109:17-19) That we might be **enabled to do everything in the name of the Lord**
10. (109:20) That we might have **refuge in a place of absolute cleanliness**
11. (109:21) That we might have **encouragement to speedily repent**
12. (109:22) That the Lord's people would **go forth from the temple armed with power** and watched over by angels
13. (109:23) That **missionaries might be empowered for spreading the gospel**
14. (109:25–26) That **no weapon or wickedness would prevail against the Lord's people**
15. (109:32–33) That the Lord would **break off the yoke of affliction from His people**
16. (109:36–37) That there would be an **outpouring of the Spirit**, as on the day of Pentecost
17. (109:38) That we might **receive the testimony of the covenant**
18. (109:38) That we might **not faint in the day of trouble**
19. (109:54-58) That the Lord would **have mercy on the nations**, softening the hearts of the people to receive the gospel
20. (109:61–64, 67) That the scattered **children of Israel would begin to be gathered** and redeemed
21. (109:72–74) That the **Lord's Church would fill the whole earth**
22. (109:76) That we might **receive celestial exaltation and ultimately receive eternal joy**

4. The Lord accepted the Kirtland Temple, and ancient prophets restored priesthood keys.

The Lord fulfilled His promise to endow His servants with power from on high when the Kirtland Temple was completed. This endowment of power included an appearance of the Savior in the temple, an outpouring of the Spirit, many revelations, and the restoration of priesthood keys by Moses, Elias, and Elijah. With these sacred experiences and keys, the Lord's servants were able to move His work forward with greater power and authority.

PERSON	KEYS RESTORED	BLESSINGS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TODAY
Moses	Gathering of Israel	The authority to preach the gospel to gather Israel (missionary work).
Elias	The dispensation of the gospel of Abraham	The blessings of the Abrahamic covenant and the responsibilities associated with that covenant (see Abraham 2:9–11 for a review of these blessings and responsibilities).
Elijah	Sealing power	The power that makes priesthood ordinances valid in heaven. The sealing power makes possible temple marriage, sealings to children and ancestors, eternal families, and temple ordinance work for the dead.

After the appearance of the Savior, these three messengers appeared with the keys for the three-fold mission of the Church: to proclaim the gospel (Moses), to perfect the Saints (Elias), and to redeem the dead (Elijah).

D&C 110:1-5: The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.
2 We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.
3 His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:
4 I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.
5 Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice.

D&C 110:11-16: After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.
12 After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.
13 After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:
14 Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—
15 To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—
16 Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.

Malachi 4:5-6: ¶ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:
6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

On April 3, 1836, the Savior, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared in the Kirtland Temple on that Sunday. The Lord had chosen that day because:

- It was Easter Sunday
- It was Passover
- It was EXACTLY 1803 years since the Savior's resurrection: Sunday, 3 April A.D. 33
- The date was chosen by the Lord for its symbolic significance.

How often does Easter Sunday occur on both April 3 and Passover, as it did in A.D. 33? It happens less than once every century, on the average. The year 1836 was the only such occurrence in the nineteenth century.

5. Temple building and temple work accelerate in our day.

Temples in 2017: 155 Operating, 3 Under Renovation, 13 Under Construction, 14 Announced = 185 temples

Gordon B. Hinckley: "Our people cannot partake of all of the blessings of the gospel unless they can receive their own temple ordinances and then make these ordinances available to those of their kindred dead and others. If this is to happen, temples must be available to them. I feel very strongly about this.... I have a burning desire that a temple be located within reasonable access to Latter-day Saints throughout the world" (General Conference, October 1995).

Questions to ask ourselves:

- What kind of sacrifices ought you be willing to make to have the blessings of the temple in your life?
- Wherever you are, ask yourself what sacrifices the Lord expects of you with regard to his temple?
- Should you be doing more than you have done in the past or are doing in the present? What?

The following quotes from general authorities and spiritual leaders in the Church address several aspects of the temple. Read through them, look at the categories that apply to the temple, listen to the counsel, and choose quotes to ponder that apply to your own personal situation:

1) Ponder how you prepare for the temple.

David O. McKay: "Do you remember when you first went through the House of the Lord? I do. And I went out disappointed. Just a young man, out of college, anticipating great things when I went to the Temple. I was disappointed and grieved, and I have met hundreds of young men and young women since who had that experience. I have now found out why. **There are two things in every Temple: mechanics, to set forth certain ideals, and symbolism, what those mechanics symbolize. I saw only the mechanics when I first went through the Temple.** I did not see the spiritual. I did not see the symbolism of spirituality... I was blind to the great lesson of purity behind the mechanics. **I did not hear the message of the of the Lord...** How many of us young men saw that? We thought we were big enough and with intelligence sufficient to criticize the mechanics of it and we were blind to the symbolism, the message of the spirit. And then that great ordinance, the endowment. The whole thing is simple in the mechanical part of it, but sublime and eternal in its significance" (From Gregory Prince and Wm. Robert Wright. *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005): 277).

Richard G. Scott: "I encourage you to establish your own goal of how frequently you will avail yourself of the ordinances offered in our operating temples. What is there that is more important than attending and participating in the ordinances of the temple? What activity could have a greater impact and provide more joy and profound happiness for a couple than worshipping together in the temple?"

Richard G. Scott shares some additional suggestions of how to gain more benefit from temple attendance.

- **Understand** the doctrine behind ordinances, especially the **significance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.**
- **While participating in temple ordinances, consider your relationship to Jesus Christ** and His relationship to our Heavenly Father. This simple act will lead to greater understanding of the nature of the temple ordinances.
- Always **prayerfully express gratitude** for the incomparable blessings that flow from temple ordinances. Live each day as evidence to Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son of **how much those blessings mean to you.**
- **Schedule regular visits to the temple.**
- **Leave sufficient time to be unhurried** within the temple walls.
- Rotate activities so that you can **participate in all of the ordinances of the temple.**
- **Remove your watch** when you enter a house of the Lord.
- **Listen carefully to the presentation** of each element of the ordinance **with an open mind and heart.**
- **Be mindful of the individual for whom you are performing the vicarious ordinance.** Pray that he or she will recognize the vital importance of the ordinances and be worthy or prepare to be worthy to benefit from them.
- **Recognize** that much of the majesty of the **sealing ordinance cannot be understood and remembered with one live experience.** Substantial vicarious work permits one to understand much more of live ordinances.

(CR, "Temple Worship: The Source of Strength and Power in Times of Need," April 2009).

Jeffrey R. Holland and Patricia T. Holland: "On those days when I feel off center, out of focus, or off balance, when I feel that I don't have enough time, insight, or strength to solve my problems, I know that comfort is as close as the temple. Before I go to the temple, I retreat to a private room in my home, one where, from frequent prayer, I feel I have come closest to my Father in heaven. There I kneel and express my deepest feelings of love and gratitude. I also pour out my troubles to him one by one by one, laying every burden and placing every decision at the Lord's feet. Thus prepared, I then take myself out of this world of fashion, frenzy, and occasional phoniness and go to the House of the Lord. There, dressed like my neighbor, and with no windows and no clocks to distract me, I am able to see this world objectively. There I remember that the whole of this life is a journey of the spirit to a higher and holier sphere. I remember that the success of my journey depends on my adherence to the sequential steps God has put on my individual road map" (*On Earth As It Is in Heaven*, 78).

2) Be involved in temple work for the living and the dead.

Dean L. Larsen: "So often we relate the temples to the **vicarious ordinances** that are performed there **for those who are deceased.** Certainly, this is a vital part of temple work. But there is another aspect of temple activity that has great importance for living members. I refer not only to the ordinances performed for the living but as **well to the spiritually uplifting, strengthening influence in individual lives** that results from regular temple attendance" ("The Importance of the Temple for Living Members," *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, 10, 12).

Howard W. Hunter: "Let us be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow. Let us go not only **for our kindred dead**, but **let us also go for the personal blessing of temple worship**, for the sanctity and safety which is provided within those hallowed and consecrated walls. The temple is a place of beauty, it is a place of revelation, it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. **It is holy unto the Lord. It should be holy unto us**" (Ensign, Oct. 1994, 5).

H. David Burton: "The season of opportunity that awaits us today, in temple service, is different from that of the past. We are not expected to pound nails, carve stone, mill lumber, pour concrete, or physically participate in the construction of temples. We are, however, extended a marvelous opportunity to faithfully pay our **tithes so temple construction and the work of the Lord may go forward**. We are also **challenged to be worthy to offer ourselves in the service of providing sacred saving ordinances for those who have preceded us**. Very simply stated, the great opportunity of Latter-day Saint families is to see that the lights of our temples burn early and late in the day." ("A Season of Opportunity," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 11).

3) Learn about and focus on the Savior and the purpose of life.

Howard W. Hunter: "We again emphasize the personal blessings of temple worship and the sanctity and safety that are provided within those hallowed walls. It is the house of the Lord, **a place of revelation and of peace**. As we attend the temple, we learn more richly and deeply **the purpose of life and the significance of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Let us make the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience" (General Conference, October 1994).

Victor L. Brown: "When we go to the temple because we want to go and not because it is an obligation; when we go with an **attitude of worship** and a reverence for God and for His son Jesus Christ, and with gratitude for the Savior's sacrifice; when we spend sufficient time to **leave the cares of the world outside**, wonderful things happen which cannot be described. The Spirit of the Lord distills upon one's soul in these holy houses, truly the most sacred places on earth. **A new perception comes into focus of who we are, of what this life is really about, of the opportunities of eternal life, and of our relationship with the Savior**" (General Conference, October 1989).

John A. Widtsoe: The holy endowment is deeply symbolic. "Going through the temple" is not a very good phrase; **for temple worship implies a great effort of mind and concentration** if we are to understand the mighty symbols that pass in review before us. **Everything must be arranged to attune our hearts, our minds, and our souls to the work**. Everything about us must contribute to the peace of mind that enables us to study and to understand the mysteries, if you choose, that are unfolded before us" (Symbolism in the Temples).

D. Kelly Ogden: "The temple is absolutely essential to our exaltation. There we learn about the Father and the Son, and **what we must know and do to become as they now are**. Despite the importance and centrality of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon in the restored gospel, they are not even mentioned in the temple endowment. **Temple teachings, covenants, and ordinances are very focused on what our Father and his Son are doing with us here, and how we can become as they are**" ("Come Unto Jesus through Temple Worthiness and Temple Worship," *Meridian Magazine*, April 5, 2013).

4) Gain a deep eternal perspective.

Edward L. Clissold: "As we contemplate this work, my brethren, we can begin to understand why it is the greatest work. **When we think of the mission of the Savior—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man—we can understand why Joseph Smith said that this is the greatest responsibility that God has laid upon us in the world; that we neglect this temple work at the peril of losing our own salvation; that our dead can't be made perfect without us, nor we without them**. Temple work transcends more space, more time and more people than any other work in the Church. The other organizations—particularly the auxiliaries—have to do with here and now. **Temple work has to do with eternity**. Through genealogical research we reach back into the dark ages of the past to get our records. Through temple work we enjoy the endowments today for ourselves and our families. Through temple work we project our hopes and our dreams into the future. We have sealed upon ourselves the promise that we will enjoy glory, immortality, an eternal life. And since the Savior's work is to save all mankind—not only those who live now but all who have lived and will live—surely, he needs the help that we can give. **He needs our aid and our support in this great and important mission**" (Conference Report, April 1959, General Priesthood Meeting, 43).

John A. Widtsoe: "Temple work ... gives a wonderful opportunity for keeping alive our spiritual knowledge and strength. ... **The mighty perspective of eternity is unraveled before us in the holy temples; we see time from its infinite beginning to its endless end; and the drama of eternal life is unfolded before us.** Then I see more clearly my place amidst the things of the universe, my place among the purposes of God; I am better able to place myself where I belong, and I am better able to value and to weigh, to separate and to organize the common, ordinary duties of my life so that the little things shall not oppress me or take away my vision of the greater things that God has given us' (Conference Report, Apr. 1922, 97-98).

5) The ability to solve problems and understand Satan

John A. Widtsoe: "I believe that the busy person on the farm, in the shop, in the office, or in the household, who has his worries and troubles, **can solve his problems better and more quickly in the house of the Lord** than anywhere else. If he will ... [do] the temple work for himself and for his dead, he will confer a mighty blessing upon those who have gone before, and ... **a blessing will come to him,** for at the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to him, as a revelation, **the solution of the problems that vex his life. That is the gift that comes to those who enter the temple properly**" ("Temple Worship," *The-Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 63-64).

David A. Bednar: "We should not be surprised by Satan's efforts to thwart or discredit temple worship and work. The devil despises the **purity** in and the **power** of the Lord's house. **And the protection available to each of us in and through temple ordinances and covenants stands as a great obstacle to the evil designs of Lucifer**" ("Honorably Hold a Name and Standing," *Ensign* (CR) April 2009).

S. Michael Wilcox: "Occasionally I have been asked if I can recommend a good book or article to help people understand the temple ordinances. I have always answered, **'Yes! There is a wonderful manual written to explain even the most subtle meanings of the endowment, and it is readily available to you.'** Excitedly the person takes out pencil and paper to write down the title. **'The manual is the holy scriptures,'** I say. Disappointed, the person puts down the pencil and says, 'No, really. Is there any other book you would recommend?' " *House of Glory: Finding Personal Meaning in the Temple*, 19).

6) The explanation and blessings of the endowment

President Ezra Taft Benson: "When you attend the temple and perform the ordinances that pertain to the House of the Lord, certain blessings will come to you:

- "You will receive the **spirit of Elijah**, which will turn your hearts to your spouse, your children, and your forebears.
- "You will **love your family** with a deeper love than you have loved before.
- "You will be **endowed with power from on high** as the Lord has promised.
- "You will receive the **key of the knowledge of God.** (D&C 84:19)
- "You will learn **how you can be like Him.** Even the power of godliness will be manifest to you. (D&C 84:20)
- "You will be doing a **great service to those who have passed** to the other side of the veil in order that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.' (D&C 138:34)
- "**Such are the blessings of the temple** and the blessings of frequently attending the temple." (*Ensign*, Aug 1985, 10).

Milton V. Backman: "Joseph Smith taught that **the endowment was a gift of knowledge** derived from revelation, a **gift of power emitting from God.** This gift consisted of instructions relating to the laws of God, including the principle of obedience, and was partially designed to help missionaries to serve with greater power and to give them greater protection" (*The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838*, Deseret Book 1983).

Brigham Young: "**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" (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 2: 31 - 32).

7) Final challenge to remember:

President Gordon B. Hinckley: "Now, I'd like to submit to you that when all is said and done, **the work and the mission of this Church is to save.** It's just that simple and just that profound . . . **to save people.** That's the whole purpose of what we are doing. That's why we have home teachers. That's why we have visiting teachers. That's why we have classes. That's why we have sacrament meeting. **That's why we build temples, to save the living and the dead. That's our work**" [TGBH, 119].