

Temple Ordinances Essential

A compilation of reasons why members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should receive temple ordinances in their own behalf, and perform the same in behalf of their kindred dead, is here submitted as worthy of serious consideration.

The statements quoted are taken exclusively from revelations imparted to the Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, or from his inspired teachings, consequently all members of that Church, who have not yet availed themselves of the sacredly important privileges, blessings and obligations associated with temple ordinances, should unhesitatingly accept the statements as divine truths, and conform thereto when possible.

All faithful members of the Church of proper age may participate in the ordinances for which they are eligible, in the House of the Lord; and the Church authorities are desirous and pleased to issue recommends for that purpose to all who are worthy.

The four temples already erected in Utah provide opportunity for the members of the Church gathered here to engage in the sacred ceremonies for which they have been built. The presiding authorities are mindful also of the interests of the Saints in other states and countries in this very important matter, and have commenced the erection of temples outside of Utah, so that those who can not, conveniently, come here may not be without opportunity to receive the blessings and privileges obtainable in such consecrated edifices.

Provision has been made by which faithful members of the Church who have died, or may yet die, without having received the temple ordinances in life, can have that sacred work done for them vicariously, when application is made therefor by the presidents of the missions where they resided. So, also, the Saints residing in missions, or at a long distance from any of the temples, whose circumstances are such that they can not personally engage in performing ordinances in behalf of their kindred dead, may now, under arrangements that presidents of missions are authorized to make for them, have that work done by proxies engaged for the purpose, in St. George temple, or in the Temple at Laie for the Pacific Islanders.

The presiding authorities of the Church have thus, as far as possible, provided means for all the Saints to accomplish this

great and important duty of temple work, therefore none may be excused for neglecting it.

In a discourse delivered by the Prophet Joseph Smith a short time before his martyrdom, he said:

“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 to 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 is for the same purpose that God gathers his people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and anointings, etc. * * * and it was the reason why Jesus said unto the Jews, ‘How oft would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.’”

The essentiality of temple ordinances for the living and the dead is further forcibly stated in the following words of the Prophet:

“All men who become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ will have to receive the fulness of the ordinances of his kingdom; and those who will not receive all the ordinances will come short of the fulness of that glory, if they do not lose the whole.”

The Saints will understand that the *fulness* of the ordinances necessarily includes the temple ordinances.

Here is a wonderful statement, by the same authority, which conclusively demonstrates the need for all men to receive the temple ordinances:

“If a man gets a fulness of the Priesthood of God, he has got to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord.”

Only a true prophet of God could make known such a great and important fact as that. The New Testament history relates the obedience of Messiah to the ordinance of baptism, but makes no mention of his having received all the other ordinances which were essential, even to *his* complete attainment of divine authority. But, the forty days of his sojourn in the wilderness, when he was ministered unto by heavenly beings, or the time when Moses and Elijah were with him on the mount, would provide ample opportunity for the performance of all essential ceremonies in his behalf.

The 128th section of the Doctrine and Covenants should be familiarly known to all Latter-day Saints, affecting as it does their eternal welfare. It makes absolutely clear to our understanding that the dead “without us can not be made perfect; neither can we without our dead be made perfect.” The perfect condition referred to is thus described:

“A whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time; and not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this the dispensation of the fulness of times.”

This divine and glorious purpose is to be accomplished by performance of the prescribed ordinances in God's temple, “My Holy House which my people are always commanded to build unto my Holy Name.”

The most sacred relationship of husband, wife, and children is made perpetual and eternal, as God designed it should be (not limited to the earthly life only, as man decrees), and is made possible only in the celestial order of marriage as performed, by divine authority, in God's Holy Temple. That heavenly truth is revealed in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and its infinite scope depicted in paragraphs 20 and 21, which all should read.

Another statement made by the Prophet, in this connection was, “When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of the father and mother.” This sealing and covenant is a part of the temple ordinance.

“The question is frequently asked, ‘Can we not be saved without going through with all these ordinances, etc.?’ I would answer, No, not the fulness of salvation. Jesus said, ‘There are many mansions in my Father's house, and I will go and prepare a place for you.’ ‘House’ here named should have been translated kingdom; and any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law, too.”

Concerning the vitally important duty of the Saints to perform temple ordinances in behalf of their dead kindred, there are a great many revelations, and sayings of the Prophet that might be quoted. A few selections follow:

“The greatest responsibility in this world that God has placed upon us is to seek after our dead.”

“Every man that has been baptized and belongs to the kingdom has a right to be baptized for those who have gone before; and as soon as the law of the gospel is obeyed here by their friends who act as proxy for them, the Lord has administrators there to set them free.”

“This doctrine presents in a clear light the wisdom and mercy of God in preparing an ordinance for the salvation of the dead, being baptized by proxy, their names recorded in heaven, and they judged according to the deeds done in the body. This doctrine was the burden of the scriptures. Those Saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation.”

“It is not only necessary that you should be baptized for your dead, but you will have to go through all the ordinances for them, the same as you have gone through for yourselves. There will be 144,000 Saviors on Mount Zion, and with them an innumerable host that no man can number. Oh, I beseech you to go forward, go forward and make your calling and election sure.”

"But how are they to become Saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations, and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and then redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection, and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfils the mission of Elijah."

"What is this office and work of Elijah? It is one of the greatest and most important subjects that God has revealed. He should send Elijah to seal the children to the fathers, and the fathers to the children. I wish you to understand this subject, for it is important; and if you will receive it, this is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead, and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven, and seal up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection; and here we want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those who dwell in heaven. This is the power of Elijah and the keys of the kingdom of Jehovah."

"The Saints have not too much time to save and redeem their dead, and gather together their living relatives, that they may be saved also, before the earth will be smitten, and the consumption decreed falls upon the world."

A highly important matter, in connection with this duty of attending to temple ordinances is that each one thus officiated for should be properly indented by the record. Each must be singled out from all other individuals bearing the same name; that can best be done in the method prescribed by the temple authorities. The great importance of the record is fully explained in section 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein it is stated that, "Whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven; and whatsoever you do not record on earth, shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged." Also, "And as are the records on earth in relation to your dead, which are truly made out, so also are the records in heaven."

The Saints should make themselves familiar with the printed instructions issued by the temple authorities, relating to the proper preparation of those records, etc.

The Genealogical Society of Utah has been organized under direction of the First Presidency of the Church, to assist the members in procuring information concerning their ancestors and relatives, and to properly arrange that information for temple work. The offices and library of this Society are in the L. D. S. Church Offices building, 47 E. South Temple St., Salt Lake City.

"Brethern, 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 exceeding 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 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 a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance.

Publication authorized by the Presidency of the Church.