

8: Temple Blessings for Ourselves and Our Ancestors

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1. Elijah restored keys (GAS Idaho Temple Dedication)

We thank thee, O God, for sending Elijah ... to thy servant, Joseph Smith, to confer the keys and authority of the work for the dead, and to reveal that the plan of salvation embraces the whole of the human family, that the gospel is universal in scope, and that thou art no respecter of persons, having provided for the preaching of the gospel of salvation to both the living and the dead. We are most grateful unto thee that salvation is provided for all who desire to be saved in thy kingdom.

May it be pleasing to thy people to search out the genealogy of their forebears that they may become saviors on Mt. Zion by officiating in thy temples for their kindred dead. We pray also that the spirit of Elijah may rest mightily upon all peoples everywhere that they may be moved upon to gather and make available the genealogy of their ancestors; and that thy faithful children may utilize thy holy temples in which to perform on behalf of the dead all ordinances pertaining to their eternal exaltation.

2. Temple is a house of God (GAS Idaho Temple)

Today we ... dedicate this Temple unto thee ... that it may be holy in thy sight; that it may be a house of prayer, ... of praise and of worship, that thy glory may rest upon it and thy holy presence be continually in it; and that it may be an acceptable abode for thy Well-Beloved Son, Jesus Christ ...; that it may be both sanctified and consecrated ... unto thee, and we pray that all those who may cross the threshold of this thine House may be impressed with the holiness of it. ... Wilt thou, our Heavenly Father, let thy presence be felt here always, that all who assemble here may realize that they are thy guests and that this is thy House.

3. Agency, America, Constitution (Idaho Temple Dedication)

We thank thee, O God, for the choice land upon which we reside, and for the marvelous promises thou hast made concerning America, that it should be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven so long as the inhabitants of the land should worship the God of the land who is Jesus Christ. Thou hast revealed unto us that in the great controversy which took place in heaven that the cornerstone of thy plan of salvation was the free agency of man, and ... that Lucifer's plan was rejected because ... [it] would ... deprive thy children of their free agency. ... We thank thee that thou hast warned us ... that Satan would deceive the nations in our time. ... As we look about in the world among the various countries, we find philosophies and forms of government the effect of which is to deprive men of their free agency, but by reason of thy timely warning to us, we know that they are not approved of thee. ... Free agency should prevail here. Thou didst amply demonstrate this great principle to us by raising up wise men for the very purpose of giving us our constitutional form of government ... (D. & C. 101:77-80.)

There are those ... both within and without our borders, who would destroy the constitutional form of government ... and would replace it with a form that would curtail, if not altogether deprive, man of his free agency. ... We pray thee that thou wilt inspire good and just men everywhere to be willing to sacrifice for, support, and uphold the Constitution and the government set up under it and thereby preserve for man his agency. ...

We pray that kings and rulers and the peoples of all nations under heaven may be persuaded of the blessings enjoyed by the people of this land by reason of their freedom under thy guidance and be constrained to adopt similar governmental systems, thus to

fulfil the ancient prophecy of Isaiah that "... out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

4. What is the purpose of temples (GAS)

In order that we might be prepared for [the celestial] kingdom, the Lord ... restored the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and placed in it divine authority, and then gave understanding to His children that certain ordinances may be received and performed. For this purpose temples were built and into those temples those who desire a place in the Celestial Kingdom have the opportunity to go and receive their blessings, to enrich their lives and prepare them for that kingdom.

We are the only people in the world who know what temples are for. ... Each [temple] has been built to one great eternal purpose: to serve as a House of the Lord, to provide a place sacred and suitable for the performing of holy ordinances that bind on earth as in heaven—ordinances for the dead and for the living that assure those who receive them and who are faithful to their covenants, the possession and association of their families, worlds without end, and exaltation with them in the celestial kingdom.

5. Temple Marriage (GAS)

There are many, many millions of our Father's children who do not know that by partaking of certain ordinances prescribed by our Heavenly Father, husbands and wives may be united for time and eternity and enjoy the companionship of their children forever. How thankful we should be for that knowledge.⁷

There are only a few places ... where we can be married for eternity, and that is in the temples of God. ... There are also many of our brothers and sisters, all children of our Heavenly Father, who are denied this privilege because of ... unavoidable reasons. But if they live worthily and if they would have availed themselves of the privilege if they had been able to do so, they will lose nothing by these temporarily unfavorable circumstances. But think then how much greater is the responsibility of those who live where men and women can be united for eternity, and where they can go and do the work for their dead! The people of the world do not have this blessing. I wonder if we appreciate it.

6. Genealogy and temple work for the dead (GAS)

The genealogical society has spent years of time collecting [family history] information, and others spend years of time going into the House of the Lord to be baptized for those who are dead, to have husbands and wives and children sealed to one another, to unite the family as our Heavenly Father has instructed that we should do. ... Our Heavenly Father told the people through Joseph Smith that, unless we performed the work for our dead, we would lose our own blessings, and we would be cut off, and one of the very last things that the Prophet tried to do was to complete a temple in which the people could go and perform work for their dead. That is how important it is. It has to be done by someone.

The Lord is helping us; it is marvelous how the way is opened and how other people frequently are prompted to prepare their genealogies. But sometimes we fail to take advantage of our opportunities to prepare our genealogies, notwithstanding the Lord has ... said that unless we take care of our temple work we will be rejected with our dead [D&C 124:32]. ... If we have wasted our opportunities until life passes. ... We cannot expect others to do this work for us. So, the Lord ... encourages, advises, and counsels us to do our work. Some families who can't do the work themselves have someone else working all the time on their temple genealogy, and records. If we do our part, our genealogies will be unfolded to us. ... Let us do our part.

7. When were first endowments for the dead?

Priesthood restored (1829); washings, anointing, Elijah (1836), baptism for dead (1840), living endowments (1842), sealings of living to dead (1855), endowments for dead (1877), sealed to parents not others (1894). (see my D&C #40 lesson)

8. Temples and unrighteous dominion?

³⁹ We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. (D&C 121:39)

9. How do ancient and modern temples compare?

- Purpose
- Atonement of Christ/Messiah
- Faith in Christ/Jehovah
- Washings and anointings
- Clothing (uniform)
- Altars
- Creation story and symbols
- Story and symbols of the fall of Adam
- Prayers before the veil
- Entering into the presence of God

10. Covenants (ABCDER)

Author: (Deut 1–4)

1. **Preamble:** *introducing the suzerain of the treaty*

“The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb” (Deut 1:6)

2. **Historical Prologue,** *describing past deeds performed for the vassal:* Moses reviews deliverance and wanderings

Blessings: (Deut 27–28) “All these blessings shall come on thee, ... if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.”: (a) agricultural prosperity, (b) you shall lend to many nations and not borrow, (c) peace in the land, (d) no evil beasts in the land, (e) victory in war, (f) fruitful and multiply, (g) “The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself.” (Deut 28:1–14)

Curses: (Deut 27–28) famine, drought; disease, pestilence; wild beasts; anarchy and social lawlessness; wives will be violated; children enslaved; many killed in war; in bondage to enemies; plunder and pillage; birds will eat unburied bodies; in debt to other nations; cannibalism; enemies will destroy cities.

Duties: (Deut 5–26) Moses reviews many of the laws

Enter Covenant: (Deut 29–30)

1. **Covenant Ceremony:** Referred to but details are not given

2. **Witnesses:** “heaven and earth” (30:19; 31:28)

Remember: An OT term for breaking one’s covenant with God was to “forget the Lord.” Similarly, to “remember” the covenant, the Lord, or his commandments meant to keep one’s covenant.

1. **Song:** Write ye this song ... and teach it ... that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. (31:19)

2. **Covenant Curses:** When many evils and troubles are befallen them, ... this song shall testify against them as a witness (31:21)

3. **Recording the Covenant:** Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. (31:26)

4. **Reading the Covenant Publically:** “every seven years ... read this law before all Israel in their hearing.” (31:10–12)

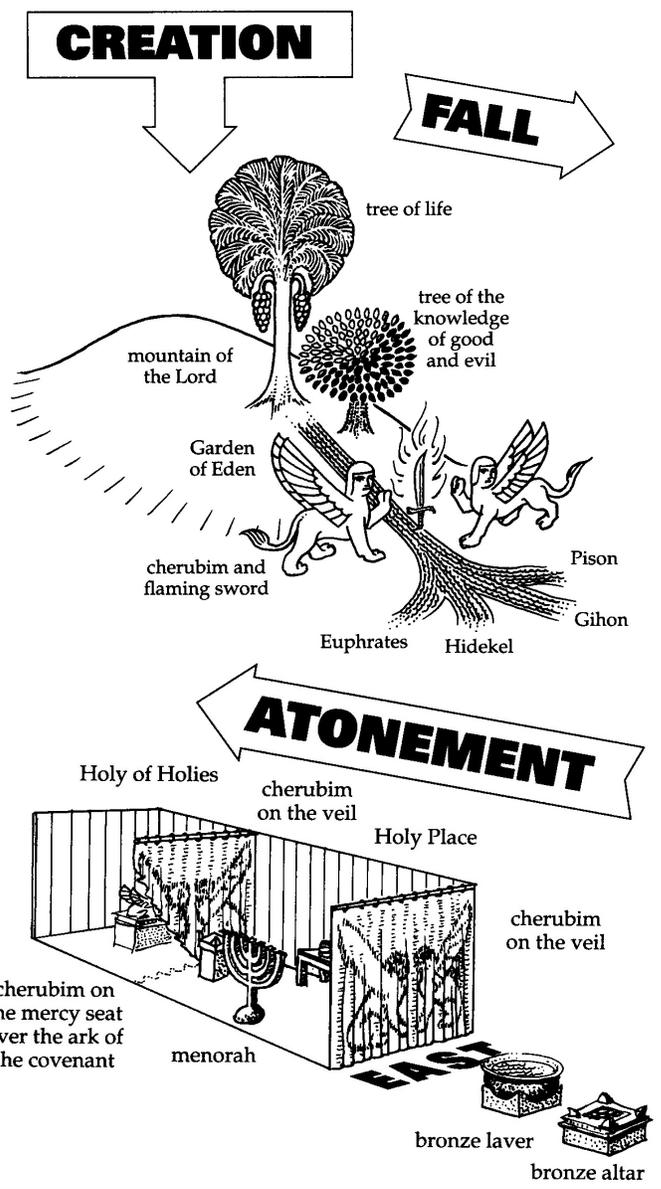
5. **Moses warns all of apostasy:** After my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you (31:29)

11. How do we renew our temple covenants?

12. Tabernacle: A Visual Testament

^{25:1} The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ... ⁸ let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I shew thee, *after* the pattern of the tabernacle, and ... ²² There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony.

²³ Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; ²⁴ But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath ... swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory. ²⁵ Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also; (D&C 84:23–25)



Sources:

- GAS = George Albert Smith, chapter 8 of lesson manual
- Alonzo L. Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols: Finding Meaning in Rites, Rituals, & Ordinances*, 2011
- For more on ancient temples, see my Old Testament lessons (14, 18, 26) and New Testament lesson #46. (www.sviewp.com)