

8: Temple Blessings for Ourselves and Our Ancestors

Monte F. Shelley

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)

Abusive husband: After his temple marriage, a man believes his wife must obey him without question. When she does not, he feels that he can say and do very unkind things until she does obey. I feel his methods are spouse abuse. Somehow he denies that there is “anything in [his] conduct relating to members of [his] family that is not in harmony with the teachings of the Church.” With his current recommend in hand, he wants his wife to go to the temple to renew her vows to obey him.

Pay back tithing: A bishop refused to give a temple recommend to a convert so he could be sealed to his wife until he had paid his tithing even on earnings before he was baptized. (Snuffer, 320)

Missionary: A missionary told his mission president that required minimum street contacting hours were not working. The president dismissed his concerns, accused him of not ‘sustaining’ him as a leader, and demanded the elder return his temple recommend. (Snuffer, 320–321).

“The Church is destined to succeed through inviting, not through demanding. It is intended to prosper through love, not through intimidation. ... Well-intended Latter-day Saint bullies can never help the Church.” (Snuffer, 319)

Such methods drive people away from the church.

“You do have a responsibility to sustain and uphold the presiding authorities of the Church. We need them. They are entrusted with the management of the affairs of the Church. They are entitled to our support, our prayers and our listening ear. We tune them out at great risk, at the peril of our own salvation. They are given to us as gifts, even though they are frail mortals. We judge them with the standard by which we will be judged. Therefore, our standard for them should show such charity as to set a standard of judgment we could also pass. I would recommend, therefore, you view Church leaders with affection, tolerance and forgiveness.” (Snuffer, 326–327)

9. How do ancient and modern temples compare?

a. Purpose:

Ancient: Teach Christ’s role in the atonement to make return possible by breaking the bands of death and hell. (Fall → separation from God and physical death)

Modern: How to follow Christ and return to the presence of God. (In this life or the next?)

b. Atonement of Christ/Messiah

c. Faith in Christ/Jehovah

d. Washings and anointings

Mikveh/Baptism: tomb (death of natural man and desires, symbol of Christ’s death; ascend out of water → rebirth,

resurrection) and womb (born again spiritually, willing to submit as a child; water, blood, spirit).

Washing the body or clothes → cleansing the spirit

Anointing sense organs → blessing of the Holy Spirit on and through those organs (thoughts, words, perceptions, hearing) to protect and inspire. (Olive oil → Spirit, Gethsemane/atonement)

Anointing priests → setting apart to function in temple as a representative of Jehovah

New name → responsibilities by birth or covenant (parents provide, protect; child honor/respect); names given at birth, adoption, new ruler (king gave Daniel a new name), new status or person (Abram to Abraham)

Laying on of hands → transfer heart, might, mind, strength of God

I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon, and you shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom; (D&C 36:2)

e. Clothing (uniform)

Scout uniforms, sports uniforms, military uniforms

Temple uniforms (equality before God, team, work, authority, called to serve others as representatives of God). God is no respecter of persons.

Apron: (kitchen → work; fertility & work of multiplying)

Clothes symbolize soul (white → washed white in the blood of the Lamb). White clothes are an outer symbol for an inner purity made possible through Christ’s atonement. They represent worthiness to enter into the presence of God

²¹ At that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins. (Alma 5:21)

Change of clothing: change of status (street clothes to white → newness of person, preparation to serve; separated from old ways); Mt. of Transfiguration (change from fallen to exalted position; become like God). Priesthood robes → authority, power (becoming more Christlike until prepared to converse with the Lord through the veil and then enter His presence),

Initiation: put off the natural man and become a saint; separation from the world and worldly allegiances

f. Altars

Sacrifice in obedience (faith, baptism, washings) by priests representing Christ before entering the house of the Lord (temple)

Washings, anointing, garment (Aaron’s sons)

Sacrament (points back to Christ’s sacrifice) replaced sacrifice (pointed forward to Christ’s sacrifice)

All sacrifices made (as if) at the altar (place of sacrifice). Now we sacrifice the natural man as we offer the sacrifice of a **broken heart** (vs. hard heart; broken bread [body]; broken soil → seeds grow; humble/teachable; seek to know God’s

will) and a **contrite spirit** (crushed → Gethsemane; wine/water; willing to submit to Father as did Christ; willing to do God's will).

Altars → Christ's atoning sacrifice, Christ's presence, the throne of God. The incense altar before the veil represented prayers ascending to heaven for others by a priest representing Christ as a mediator. Praying for others at an altar → one saves oneself as we seek to help others by mourning with those that mourn and comforting those in need of comfort.

g. Creation story and symbols

LORD God = Jehovah (YaHWeH) Elohim = He who creates Gods.

Who and why we should worship

Beautify; sameness or variety, stars or teamwork; disunity or unity

Creation of earth is like creation of saint from a natural man (separate light and dark, water, spirit required to bear fruit, mountains or temples). The key of creation is obedience to God.

To become like God, we too must desire and create good and beauty. Evil came into the world through disobedience

h. Story and symbols of the fall of Adam

This story is primarily to teach us about ourselves for we are to consider ourselves as if we were Adam and Eve. We are children of God with the agency to obey or disobey his commandments. The consequences of disobedience is separation from God. Thus we need a Savior and others to invite, entice, and help us return.

Adam and Eve were not only to abstain from the forbidden fruit, but also not to touch it. They could not keep both commandments (avoid the forbidden fruit, multiply and replenish), but we can.

Satan entices us to disobey God's commandments which are portrayed as restrictions.

i. Prayers before the veil

Prayer circle → mourn with those that mourn (Gaskill)

Christ in Gethsemane prayed for us and took on our infirmities and sins so he could mourn with and comfort us.

Speaking with the Lord through the veil.

Brother of Jared

Prayer with Uplifted Hands: "In the setting of the ancient tabernacle and temple, the sacred gesture of lifting up the hands often accompanied the act of prayer. (1 Kgs 8:22–23; Ps. 28:2; 141:2). ... [It] is associated with the atonement ... [Those who] lift their hands to heaven ... show God that their hands are pure (Ps. 24:4), that is, made pure through the atonement, and they expect an answer to their prayers. (S&S 32) (OT #16)

¹⁹ Can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances? (Al 5:19)

Prayer with uplifted hands → look up showing hands, heart, countenance (face)

j. Entering into the presence of God

Which uniform? (all-white priest uniform)

Coming from Holy of Holies and putting on High Priest uniform → Christ coming from the presence of God as an immortal and putting on mortal body to become the Great High Priest.

Taking off High Priest uniform and putting on all-white priest uniform → becoming immortal like angels

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, (f) "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 Publicly: "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)

Making a covenant (consequences of breaking)

Cutting a covenant (this to me if I break covenant; BoM rent garment; childhood oath of truthfulness was to say cross my heart and hope to die)

Abraham promised: Life, Land, Rule/Power/Priesthood, Posterity.

Curses or Penalties (implied or symbolized) represented loss of these blessings (**head**=knowledge/truth, life/rule; **heart** =

wisdom/light; **loins**=posterity, compassion) by a spiritual death (separation from God)

If keep commandments → prosper (temporal and spiritual) or be cut off from God's presence (spiritual death)

²¹ When Moroni had proclaimed these words, behold, the people came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God; or, in other words, if they should transgress the commandments of God, or fall into transgression, and be ashamed to take upon them the name of Christ, the Lord should rend them even as they had rent their garments. ²² Now this was the covenant which they made, and they cast their garments at the feet of Moroni, saying: We covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression; yea, he may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression. ²³ Moroni said unto them: Behold, we are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; yea, we are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces; yea, and now behold, let us remember to keep the commandments of God, or our garments shall be rent by our brethren, and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain. (Alma 46:21–23)

11. How do we renew our temple covenants?

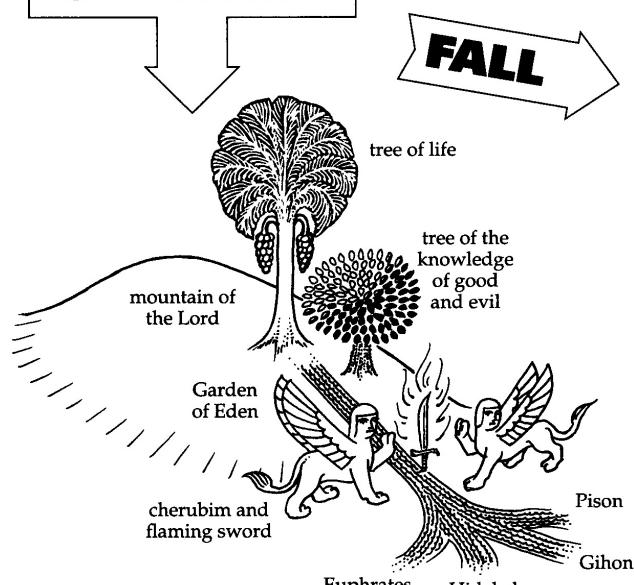
Make temple covenants and then to review our covenants.
Sacrament renews our covenants.

12. Tabernacle: A Visual Testament

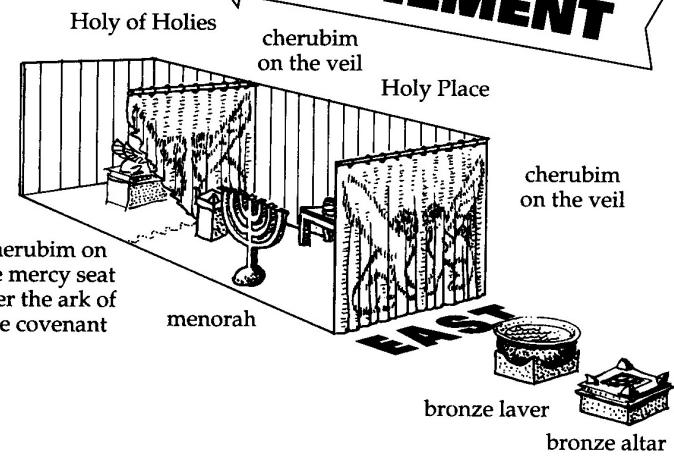
^{25:1} The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ... ⁸ let them make a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and ... ²² There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims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

CREATION



ATONEMENT



Conclusion

First and Second Comforter

Joseph: After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter. ... When any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the First Born. (TPJS 149–151)

Nephi: This is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do. (2 Ne 32:6)

Joseph like Moses seems to have “sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God.” The tabernacle and the temple teach us what we must know, experience and do to converse with the Lord through the veil like Ether, Moses, Joseph, and others, and then receive the second comforter by entering through the veil into the presence of the Lord like Moses, Nephi, Joseph, and others. The Book of Mormon appears to be the handbook filled with examples of others who have followed this path.

Quotes

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)
- Snuffer = Denver Snuffer, Jr., *18 Questions*.