

## #40: Temple and Family History Work

Monte F. Shelley, 22 Nov 2009

**Boyd K. Packer:** “The ultimate purpose of every teaching, every activity in the Church is that parents and their children are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, and linked to their generations” (*Ensign*, May 1994, 19)

Timeline of Events Related to Temple Work	
1823	Sept 21. D&C 2. Moroni appeared to Joseph the first time and quoted Malachi 4:5–6 about Elijah. Nov 19. Alvin Smith died at age 25.
1829	May 15. D&C 13. John the Baptist restores Aaronic Priesthood. Joseph and Oliver baptize each other.
1830	Mar 26. Book of Mormon (account of Jesus and temple) Jun–Feb 1831. Book of Moses (JST of Gen 1–6)
1831	Feb 16. D&C 76. Three kingdoms.
1835	Jul 6. Joseph bought Egyptian papyri (book of Abraham)
1836	Jan 21. D&C 137. Joseph saw Alvin in celestial kingdom Jan. 21–Mar. 30: Washings and anointings in the temple Mar 27. D&C 109. Solemn Assembly, temple dedication Apr 3. The Lord, Moses, Elias, and Elijah restore keys.
1837	Great Britain passed laws to preserve records of dead. <b>Martin Van Buren</b> , US President (1837–1841).
1838	Missouri governor issues Mormon extermination order.
1839	Van Buren “Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you”
1840	Aug 15. Joseph mentioned B4D in funeral sermon for Seymour Brunson. He referred to 1 Cor 15 and 15:29. Sept. First Presidency said time to build temple (HC 4:186) Sept 12. First documented baptism. Mother for son in river. Sept. Hyrum was baptized for Alvin (TPC:JS 403) Oct. Conference. Joseph taught B4D and need for temple.
1841	Jan 19. D&C 124. Baptism for dead to be done in Temples Apr 6. Cornerstones of Nauvoo temple laid. Oct 3. Joseph: no B4D out of temple. Saviors of Mt. Zion Nov 8. Basement rooms and wooden font were dedicated. Nov 21. First B4D were performed in the temple.
1842	May 4. First endowments in Red Brick Store (HC 5:1–3) Jul–Aug. Book of Abraham published. Sept 1. D&C 127. Keep records of baptisms in archives Sept 6. D&C 128. Temple recorders, B4D symbolism. Referred to visits from Moroni, Michael/Adam, & others
1843	May 16–17. D&C 131. Need for temple marriage Jun 11. Joseph: Saints gather to receive ordinances Jul 12. D&C 132. New and everlasting covenant, marriage.
1844	Jan 21. Joseph said saviors on Mt. Zion build temples with fonts and receive “ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointing, ordinations, and sealing” for selves and dead. (HC 6:184) Apr. Joseph: When the temple is done and “the worthy are washed, anointed, endowed and ordained,” you must do “all the ordinances for” your dead friends also. “I expect it will take at least a thousand years.” Jun 27. Joseph murdered in Carthage Jail. New England Genealogical Society organized in Boston.
1845	Dec 10– Feb 7. Brigham gives 5634 endowments.
1846	Feb–Sept. Saints leave Nauvoo
1847	Jul 24. Brigham arrives in Salt Lake Valley. Jul 28. Brigham said, “Right here will stand the temple.”
1848	Apr 4. B4D and sealings at Winter Quarters
1851	Apr 16–1854. Endowments (2,200) in Council House
1853	Apr 6. Salt Lake Temple cornerstones laid.
1854	Aug 4. Foundation laid for Endowment House.

1855	May 5–1889. Endowment House used for B4D, living endowments and sealings, sealings of living to dead. 134,053 B4D; 68,767 sealings; 54,170 living endowments
1856	Jul 22. <b>Brigham:</b> “To accomplish this work there will have to be not only one temple but thousands of them, and thousands and tens of thousands of men and women will go into those temples and officiate for people who have lived as far back as the Lord shall reveal.” (DBY, 394; JD 3:372)
1857	<b>James Buchanan</b> , US president during “Utah War”
1869	New York Genealogical Society (Many others followed.) <b>Ulysses S. Grant</b> (US President 1869–1877) sent federal marshals to Utah in 1870s to arrest polygamist Mormons.
1871	St. George Temple construction began
1876	Jun 20. Wilford Woodruff: My family and I were baptized for 949 dead relatives in the Endowment House.
1877	Jan 1. Wilford Woodruff dedicated part of the St. George Temple and became the first temple president. Jan 9. Susa Young Gates did first B4D. Jan 11. First endowments for the dead and sealings of dead women to dead men. “Not long before, [Brigham] had told some temple workers that he had just learned by revelation ‘that it takes as full and complete a set of ordinances for the dead as for the living.’” Brigham supervised temple work almost daily and instructed Wilford Woodruff and others to write out the revised temple ceremony from beginning to end. Wilford Woodruff presided over most sessions, instructing ... on topics from wording to clothing. Feb 1. Woodruff “arrived dressing in pure white” (1 <sup>st</sup> time) Mar 1. Wilford Woodruff received a revelation that non-family members could act as proxies. Apr 6. St George Temple dedication & General Conference Apr 16. Brigham left St. George for Salt Lake City. Brigham broke ground for the Manti and Logan temples. Aug 21–24. Woodruff vision of founders. Baptisms and endowments for them and other eminent men & women. Before vision, Woodruff said temple work focused on “our immediate friends and relatives.” (JD 19:229) Aug 29. Brigham died. Twelve led Church for 3 years. By end of 1877, 30384 B4D, 1166 living endowments, 13,160 endowments for the dead,
1884	May 17. Logan Temple dedication
1888	May 21. Manti Temple dedication
1889	Apr – Sept 1898. <b>Wilford Woodruff</b> , president
1893	Apr 6. Salt Lake Temple dedicated. (40 years)
1894	Apr. Woodruff tells of revelation about the law of adoption Nov 13. Genealogical Society of Utah established.
1901	Oct – Nov 1918. <b>Joseph F. Smith</b> , president
1918	Jan 20. Death of Joseph F. Smith’s oldest son. Oct 3. D&C 138. Missionary work in spirit world Nov – May 1945. <b>Heber J. Grant</b> , president
1953	GBH chaired endowment film committee (Swiss temple).
1966	Second endowment film produced and used in Oakland.
1971	Nov. Third film was used in new Provo and Ogden temples
1988	Aug. Over 100,000,000 endowments for the dead
1990	Current temple films made in 1990 and 1991. Some changes made in endowment.
1995	Mar – Jan 2008. <b>Gordon B. Hinckley</b> , president
1997	Oct. GB Hinckley announced building of small temples.
2005	Jan 18. Initiatory changes made.
2009	130 temples operating

## 1. The Law of Adoption

Saints were eager to do endowments and sealings for the dead. Also, many “adoptions” were performed. Men, women, and children were “sealed not to their own ancestral families—for fear that they had rejected the gospel—but to leading General Authorities, living or dead. ... Between 1877 and 1894, [over 13,000] ... chose to be adopted into the families of general authorities or temple presidents, living or dead. Many sought adoption into Joseph Smith’s family.

**Wilford Woodruff** (Apr 1894 conference): “Revelations were given to us in the St. George Temple. ... Changes were made there, and we still have more changes to make. ... One of them is the principle of adoption. Now, what are the feelings of Israel? They have felt that they wanted to be adopted to somebody. ... When I went before the Lord to know who I should be adopted to (we were then being adopted to prophets and apostles), the Spirit of God said to me, 'Have you not a father, who begot you?' 'Yes, I have.' 'Then why not honor him? Why not be adopted to him?' 'Yes,' says I, 'that is right.' I was adopted to my father, and should have had my father sealed to his father, and so on back; and the duty that I want every man who presides over a Temple to see performed from this day henceforth and forever, unless the Lord Almighty commands otherwise, is, let every man be adopted to his father. When a man receives the endowment, adopt him to his father; not to Wilford Woodruff, nor to any other man outside the lineage of his fathers. That is the will of God to this people. ... We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it. This is the will of the Lord to his people, and I think when you come to reflect upon it you will find it to be true.” (*Messages of the First Presidency*, 255)

## 2. Prophecy about Elijah

I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: 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. (Mal. 4:5–6)

**Angel Gabriel to Zacharias**: “And [John the Baptist] shall go before [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.” (Lk 1:17)

**Moroni to Joseph** (Sept. 21, 1823)

Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall *plant* in the hearts of the children *the promises made to the fathers*, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming. (D&C 2:1–3; JS—H 1:38–39)

**Aug. 1830**: And also Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, that the whole earth may not be smitten with a curse;<sup>10</sup> And also with *Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain*; (D&C 27:9–10)

**Aug. 1833**: Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children; And again, the *hearts of the Jews unto the prophets*, and the *prophets unto the Jews*; lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse, and all flesh be consumed before me. (D&C 98:16–17)

**Apr. 1836**: Elijah commits “the keys of this dispensation.”

## 3. Redeeming the dead

**Dallin H. Oaks**: I will suggest some general principles that should encourage all Latter-day Saints to receive their own ordinances and provide the ordinances of eternity for their ancestors. ...

The **first** principle is that our efforts to promote temple and family history work should be such as to accomplish the work of the Lord, not to impose guilt on his children. Members of this church have many individual circumstances—age, health, education, place of residence, family responsibilities, financial circumstances, accessibility to sources for individual or library research, and many others. If we encourage members in this work without taking these individual circumstances into account, we may do more to impose guilt than to further the work.

The **second** principle is that ... in the work of redeeming the dead there are many tasks to be performed, and that all members should participate by prayerfully selecting those ways that fit their personal circumstances at a particular time. ... Our effort is not to compel everyone to do everything, but to encourage everyone to do something.

There are many different things our members can do to help in the redeeming of the dead, in temple and family history work. ... We think first of submitting names and going to the temple to perform proxy ordinances for those who are dead. But there is much more to this work. There are ward family history consultants, missionaries in records centers, and workers in microfilming, libraries, data entry, and name extraction. There are temple missionaries, ordinance workers, clerks, and receptionists. ... Some of the most important temple and family history work is done at home. I do not refer just to the important work of keeping family genealogies up-to-date and the much-needed verifying that all sealings have been performed. At home we can keep our journals and gather pictures and data for the books of remembrances of our family members. We can gather and record information available through living relatives. We can write family histories and share their great lessons with our children. ... In mapping out our personal efforts in temple and family history work, we need to take a view that is not only broad in scope but at least lifetime in duration. The total amount of time and resources we can spend on the mission of the Church—what we can and should do at a particular time of our life—will change with time as our circumstances change. The relative amount of time we will spend in each of the three areas will also change. (*Ensign*, Jun 1989, 6)

### Quotes

**Howard W. Hunter**: It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.... 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. (*Ensign*, Jul 1994)

**John A. Widtsoe**: Labor in the temples brings much joy. The temple endowment if properly understood is a great blessing to him who receives it. It becomes an interpreter and protector of life. The temple endowment may be received by every faithful member of the Church. It may be taken also for the dead. Thereby an opportunity is given to keep the meaning of the endowment fresh in our minds. Temple service for the dead is wholly unselfish and consequently has a marvelous refining influence upon those who engage in it. To approach a fulness of spiritual joy, the privileges of the temple must be used as often as possible.