

## The Washington Temple

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November 22, 1974  
Friday A.M. Session

We are in process of dedicating the Washington Temple as a House of the Lord.

May I now invite all of you, in the true spirit of worship, to join with me in considering these three things:

1. What we mean by a temple;
2. What a house of the Lord really is; and
3. What we actually do when we dedicate a building to the Lord.

First, then, what is a temple? It is a holy sanctuary, apart from the world, where faithful saints are privileged to make those covenants and perform those ordinances which prepare the living and the dead for exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial kingdom.

There have been temples in all dispensations, in which holy ordinances have been performed for the living. Since that day when the Lord Jesus visited the spirits in prison and opened the door to the preaching of the gospel in that realm, the ordinances of salvation and exaltation have been performed vicariously for the dead also.

In a revelation to Joseph Smith the Lord says his “people are always commanded to build” temples unto his “holy name.” This has been true from the day of Adam to the present time. And there is a yet future day in which temples will dot the land and be found in many nations.

In this revelation, with reference to certain temple ordinances, the Lord asked this question: “... how shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name?” (D&C 124:37.)

By way of answer that same God who led Israel anciently said:

For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was. (D&C 124:38.)

As we all know, the crowning ordinance of the temple—an ordinance hid from the world but revealed to the faithful in all ages—is celestial marriage. This is the ordinance which

opens the door to the continuation of the family unit in the realms ahead. This is the ordinance out of which eternal life grows, for eternal life, which is God's life, consists of the continuation of the family unit forever.

It is clear that temples are the most holy and sacred places on earth; that without them we are denied the fulness of our Father's kingdom; and that with them we can gain the knowledge, enter into the covenants, perform the ordinances, and do all that is required to assure us of glory and honor and exaltation in the presence of Him whose children we are.

The Lord be praised that once again his holy temples find place on earth!

Second, what is a house of the Lord? It is a sacred and sanctified place to which the Lord can come, where his glory can be manifest, and where he can instruct and counsel his people.

God that made the world and all things therein, [Paul said] seeing that he is Lord of heaven, and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. (Acts 17:24-25.)

But that God who dwelleth in the heavens, and whose house is the wide expanse of eternity, does have houses on earth where he can come to transact the most important business pertaining to his earthly affairs.

In the days of the weakness and poverty of his people, the Lord uses the mountains and the groves as his temples. He came to Moses amid the fires and thunders of Sinai. He stood before Joseph Smith in the calm and serenity of a grove of trees near Palmyra.

But when ancient Israel had built the tabernacle of the congregation, then the Lord came down and talked to Moses and seventy of the elders of Israel in that portable house. And after Latter-day Israel had built the Kirtland Temple that became the holy house to which the great Jehovah came to confer blessings and power and to give personal direction to his earthly kingdom.

And as with the Lord, so with his servants. Peter, James and John came to mortal men "in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna County, and Colesville, Broome County, on the Susquehanna river," to confer upon mortals "the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!" (D&C 128:20.) This was in 1829 before the organization of the Church.

In April 1836, after the setting up of the -kingdom and after the erection of the Kirtland Temple, then such angelic ministrants as came to confer keys and authority, and they

included Moses, Elijah, and Elias, came to the House of the Lord which had been erected to receive such heavenly visitants.

Now this Washington Temple, as with all our other temples, is “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.” (D&C 88:119.)

It is a house to which the Lord himself will come personally when he has occasion to visit this part of his vineyard.

It is a house to which he will send his angels as his purposes may require.

It is a house where he will pour out his Spirit upon all those who here assemble to worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.

It is a house where the visions of eternity shall be seen and the revelations of his mind and will shall be given.

Now, what do we mean by dedicating a house of the Lord?

We mean that we give the building to him as another of his earthly houses.

In the case of a temple, we mean that we invite Him, whose all things are, to take personal direction and make personal use of the sanctuary which He has inspired and empowered us to build.

But we do more than this. Through the ordinance of dedication, we enter into a covenant with the Lord to use the temple for the purposes for which it was created.

In this covenant we promise:

1. That we will use this holy house as a place where the ordinances of salvation and eternal life will be performed for the living and the dead; and
2. That we will come here with pure hearts and clean minds to seek the face of the Lord and to entertain the heavenly ministrants sent from his presence to confer blessings upon us.

Thus, when we dedicate a house of the Lord what we really do is dedicate ourselves to use that house for the purposes for which it was built.

In November, 1831, before the Lord’s people had built temples and before they had sanctified themselves by keeping the covenant made in connection with the proper use of these holy houses, the Lord held out this hope to them:

. . . it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am—not with the carnal neither natural mind, but with the spiritual. (D&C 67:10.)

To those early saints he then said: “Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected.” (D&C 67:13.)

As we assemble here in worshipful reverence to wait upon the Lord and to partake of his Spirit, we might well ponder this great promise in our hearts. How long will it be before we, either as a people or as individuals, have attained that perfection which will enable us to see the face of Him whose we are?

When will we receive a fulfillment of that eternal decree that says:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. (D&C 93:1.)

God grant that we may use this holy house, not alone for ordinance work, but to commune with him face to face, as was the case with holy men in days of old, and has been the case with some among us in this last dispensation.

For myself, and as mouth for all of you, I give thanks to the Lord that he has enabled us to build another temple to his holy name; pray that we shall use it for the fullpurpose for which it was built; and testify, as one who knows, of the truth and divinity of the work, and of the eternal verity of the wondrous doctrine of building and using temples.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.