

The Seattle Temple

November 21, 1981
11th Session, 9:30 A.M.

In keeping with the sweet tones of music that we have just Listened to, and in harmony with the message that President Romney has delivered relative to the great and eternal ordinances performed in this and other holy houses, and in keeping with the expressions made by Brother Robert L. Backman relative to the eternal family unit, I shall take as a text a revealed command that came in the revelation entitled “The Law of the Church.”

The Lord said, ‘Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.’ (D&C 42:22.) And now, having in mind the matter of how much we love our husbands and our wives and the members of our families, and how much we love our children and our parents, if I may properly be guided by the Spirit, I shall say something about how all things in the Church—everything that we have, all things—center in the House of the Lord.

The atoning sacrifice of Christ is the greatest event of all eternity, and all things rest upon it and are efficacious because of it. But as far as we are concerned as men and women here in this mortal probation, all things center in the House of the Lord, for there the full blessings of the atonement are received.

Now, I have had planted in my heart some promises that were made to certain of my fathers. The fathers involved are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Each one of those ancient prophets, and patriarchs, each one in turn was promised by the Lord that he would have posterity as numerous as the sands upon the seashore, or as the stars in heaven in number. Jacob, for instance, was promised that his seed “shall be as the dust of the earth.” (Genesis 28:14.)

These things are talking about celestial marriage. They are talking about the continuation of the family unit in eternity. In the book of Abraham, we discover that the Lord promised Abraham that he and his posterity, his seed—it is defined as the literal seed of the body—that he and his seed would have a right to the priesthood and to the gospel and to eternal life. (See Abraham 2:8-11.)

We understand that eternal life consists of the continuation of the family unit in eternity, for one thing. And for another thing, it consists of inheriting, receiving, and possessing the fullness of the glory of the Father. We have a revelation on marriage, Section 132, which recites the promises that were made to Abraham. This revelation says that Abraham “hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne,” and it says that the Lord made promises to him that his posterity, in the world and out of the world, would be as numerous as the sand upon the seashore or as the stars in heaven for multitude. And then the revelation says these promises are ours also because we are of Abraham and the promises were made unto Abraham. And then there is the divine word of exhortation.

“Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.” (See D&C 132:29-32.)

Salvation is the eternal life about which President Romney was speaking, and that eternal life grows out of a continuation of the family unit in eternity. In other words, if people gain for themselves through the ordinances of the Lord’s holy house, eternal family units, and if they then keep the commandments, if they obey and conform and abide by the terms and conditions of the eternal covenants, they will have eternal families and will therefore have eternal life . . .

On the 3rd day of April in 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, two people came which enabled these promises to be fulfilled. One was Elias. And what Elias did was bring, and this is the language of the revelation, the promise that “in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.” The other person who came was Elijah, and Elijah brought the sealing power, the power to bind on earth and have it sealed eternally in the heavens. So Elias brought back the commission that Abraham had. It is called in the revelation “the gospel of Abraham,” meaning the divine commission that Abraham had, which was to have celestial marriage for him and for his posterity, and that includes the promise that in us and in our seed all generations shall be blessed. And Elijah brought back the sealing power so that those blessings could be operative in the lives of people. (D&C 110:12-16.)

When Moroni came to the Prophet Joseph Smith on that September night in 1823, and quoted to him what is in the book of Malachi about the coming of Elijah, he said that the Lord would “reveal” unto us the priesthood “by the hand of Elijah the prophet,” meaning that Elijah would bring the sealing power so that the priesthood could be used to create eternal family units. And Moroni also said, “And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers.” (D&C 2:1-3.) Well, God gave these promises to Abraham, and they are the promises of the priesthood and the gospel and eternal life. And he promised Abraham that the literal seed of his body would have a right to these things.

Now, I am of the seed of Abraham. And because Elijah has come, God has planted in my heart the promise made to my fathers of old. And so I desire to get what Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob got, and that is a continuation of the family unit and a posterity that is eternal in number. And so my family unit begins with me and my wife. We have been sealed in the temple and have been promised in the ordinance the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because we have obtained those things, the greatest desire we have in this world is to have our children after us get exactly the same blessings that we have received. We have eight children, all of whom have been married in the temple and have been promised the same blessings. And so the family unit begins with us and extends to our children. But it also begins with us and it goes backward to our ancestors, our parents and grandparents before us, for all of them in like manner are the seed of Abraham and have the right to the blessings that were promised Abraham.

I have descendants who are the ninth generation in the Church, but somewhere back there, there are those who are out of the Church but who are nonetheless the seed of

Abraham, and who are entitled to the same blessings that we have received. We are talking about family units, and the family unit starts with us and it expands out. It goes downward to our posterity and backward to our ancestors. We have the privilege to come to the House of the Lord and be given these blessings, and then the genealogical enterprises of the Church enable us to search out our ancestors and offer to them vicariously the same blessings.

Thus all things center in the temple. Temples are built first for the living so that we can get the blessings of Abraham. And they are built secondly for the dead, so that we can offer to them the same blessings that have come to us who live in a day when these blessings are available. “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.” Anyone who loves his wife in the way that the Lord expects him to love her will want her as an eternal companion, and the same principle applies to the wife as pertaining to the husband. What a glorious, wondrous thing it is to have the fulness of the everlasting gospel and all the ordinances of the House of the Lord, of which President Romney spoke, so that these things can operate in our lives, so that we can become inheritors of the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all of the ancient and holy prophets and apostles of old.

God grant that we may catch the vision of this glorious work and have it operate in our lives and where our families are concerned, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.