

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple

Just before the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple, President Wilford Woodruff and his Counselors issued an epistle to the Saints. While a hundred years have passed, it might have been issued today. They said:

"During the past eighteen months . . . political campaigns have been conducted, elections have been held. . . .

"We feel now that . . . before entering into the Temple to present ourselves before the Lord . . . , we shall divest ourselves of every harsh and unkind feeling. . . .

" . . . Thus shall our supplications, undisturbed by a thought of discord, unitedly mount into the ears of Jehovah and draw down the choice blessings of the God of Heaven!"¹

When the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated, it had been fifty-seven years since the Lord appeared in the Kirtland Temple, keys were bestowed, and Elijah appeared, fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi 2,200 years earlier.

There were to have been temples at Independence, at Far West, and on Spring Hill at Adam-ondi-Ahman, but those temples were never built.

It had been fifty-two years since the Lord had commanded the Saints to build a temple in Nauvoo and warned that if they did not complete it within the allotted time, "your baptisms for your dead shall not be acceptable unto me; and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God."²

The Saints built the temple, but they were driven away, and it was destroyed by the mobs.³

Colonel Thomas L. Kane wrote:

"They succeeded in parrying the last sword-thrust" of the mobs until "as a closing work, they placed on the entablature of the front . . .

"The House of the Lord:

"Built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Holiness to the Lord!

" . . . It was this day," he wrote, that "saw the departure of the last elders, and the largest band that moved in one company together. The people of Iowa have told me, that from morning to night they passed westward like an endless procession. They did not seem greatly out of heart, they said; but, at the top of every hill before they disappeared, were to be seen looking back . . . on their abandoned homes, and the far-seen Temple and its glittering spire."⁴

The Saints disappeared beyond the western horizon, beyond Far West, where the cornerstones set seven years earlier were still in place—led by prophets and Apostles who held the keys of the priesthood and who carried in their minds the ordinances of the temple and the authority to administer the new and everlasting covenant.

Beginnings of the Salt Lake Temple

When the Saints trickled into the Salt Lake Valley, all they owned, or could hope to get, was carried in a wagon, or they must make it themselves.

They marked off the temple site before even the rudest log home was built.

There was an architect in that first company, William Weeks, who had designed the Nauvoo Temple. But the hopeless desolation was too much for him. When President Young went east in 1848, Brother Weeks left, saying, "They will never build the temple without me."⁵

Truman O. Angell, a carpenter, was appointed to replace him. He said: "If the President and my brethren feel to sustain a poor worm of the dust like me to be Architect of the Church, let me . . . serve them and not disgrace myself. . . . May the Lord help me so to do."⁶

The isolation, which gave some relief from the mobs, was itself an obstacle. Where would they get sledgehammers and wedges with which to split out building blocks of granite? They didn't carry many of those in handcars, or in wagon boxes either.

In 1853 the cornerstone was set, and ox teams began dragging granite stones from the mountains twenty miles away.

"'Good morning, Brother,' one man was heard to say to a teamster. 'We missed you at the meetings yesterday afternoon.' 'Yes,' said the driver of the oxen, 'I did not attend meeting. I did not have clothes fit to go to meeting.' 'Well,' said the speaker, 'Brother Brigham called for some more men and teams to haul granite blocks for the Temple.'

"The driver, his whip thrown over his oxen, said, '. . . We shall go and get another granite stone from the quarry.'"⁷

President Woodruff had watched men cut out granite stones seventy feet square and split them into building blocks.⁸ If there was no mishap (and that would be an exception), that teamster, "too poorly clad to worship," could return within a week.⁹

The foundation

The wicked spirit, which had inspired Governor Boggs of Missouri to issue the order to exterminate the Saints and broods forever and always over the work of the Lord, had followed them west.

President Young had said when they entered the Valley, "If they let us alone ten years we would ask no odds of them."¹⁰ Ten years to the day a messenger arrived with word that Johnston's army was marching west with orders to "settle the Mormon question."

President Young told the Saints:

"[We] have been driven from place to place; . . . we have been scattered and peeled. . . .

" . . . We have transgressed no law, . . . neither do we intend to; but as for any

nation's coming to destroy this people, God Almighty being my helper, they cannot come here."¹¹

The settlements were evacuated, and the Saints moved south. Every stone was cleared away from Temple Square. The foundation, which after seven years' work was nearing ground level, was covered over, and the block was plowed.

Later, when the foundation was uncovered, they found a few cracks. It was torn out and replaced.

Sixteen large, inverted granite arches were built into the new foundation. There is no record as to why they did that. That manner of construction was unknown in this country then. If someday perchance there be a massive force wanting to lift the temple from beneath, then we shall know why they are there.

Building the temple

Construction inched upward. A young married couple might have visited the construction site and returned with teenage grandchildren to the yet unfinished temple.

As the temple neared completion, James F. Woods was sent to England to gather genealogies,¹² and it was the beginning of a sacred family history work beyond anything that man had ever imagined.

John Fairbanks and others were sent to France to learn to paint and to sculpt "so that the Lord's name may be glorified through . . . the arts."¹³

He left seven children for his wife to look after. He could not bear to part with her in public, so two of the children walked with him to the station for a tearful parting.¹⁴

Women contributed no less than the men to the building of the temple. Perhaps only another woman can know the sacrifice a woman makes to see that something that must be done, that she cannot do herself, is done. And only a good man knows in his heart of hearts the depth of his dependency upon his wife—

how she alone makes what must be done worth doing.

In the throng on the day of dedication was a seven-year-old boy from Tooele who would carry a clear memory of that event and a clear memory of President Wilford Woodruff for another ninety years. LeGrand Richards would one day serve in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as his father before him had done.

When he was twelve, LeGrand heard President Woodruff give his last public address. Even after he was ninety years old, Elder Richards bore clear testimony to us of those sacred events.

There have been many visitations to the temple. President Lorenzo Snow saw the Savior there. Most of these sacred experiences remain unpublished.

A place to restore the fulness of the priesthood

However imposing the Salt Lake Temple may be, the invisible temple within is the same in all temples. The ordinances are the same, the covenants equally binding, the Holy Spirit of Promise equally present.

On the day ground was broken for the Salt Lake Temple, President Brigham Young said: "Very few of the Elders of Israel, now on earth, . . . know the meaning of the word endowment. To know, they must experience; and to experience, a temple must be built."¹⁵

The Lord, commanding the Saints to build the temple in Nauvoo, said:

"For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore . . . the *fulness of the priesthood*."¹⁶

"I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the *priesthood thereof*."¹⁷

"For therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained."¹⁸

Priesthood conferred by ordination

Some members of the Church are now teaching that priesthood is some kind of a free-floating authority which can be

assumed by anyone who has had the endowment. They claim this automatically gives one authority to perform priesthood ordinances. They take verses of scripture out of context and misinterpret statements of early leaders—for instance, the Prophet Joseph Smith—to sustain their claims.

What is puzzling is this: with all their searching through Church history and their supposed knowledge of the scriptures, they have missed the *one simple, obvious absolute* that has governed the bestowal of priesthood from the beginning, said as simply as this:

"We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."¹⁹ The priesthood is conferred through ordination, not simply through making a covenant or receiving a blessing. It has been so since the beginning. Regardless of what they may assume or imply or infer from anything which has been said or written, past or present, specific ordination to an office in the priesthood is the way, and the only way, it has been or is now conferred.

And the scriptures make it very clear that the only valid conferring of the priesthood comes from "one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church."²⁰

Remember, it was the resurrected John the Baptist, "under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek,"²¹ who came, in person, to restore the Aaronic Priesthood,²² and it was the resurrected Peter, James, and John who came, in person, to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood²³—facts in Church history except for which our claim to priesthood authority would be invalid.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that the angel who appeared to Cornelius sent him to Peter to be taught because "Peter could baptize, and angels could not, so long as there were legal officers

in the flesh holding the keys of the kingdom, or the authority of the priesthood"; and that while the Lord called Paul as "minister and . . . witness" on the road to Damascus,²⁴ he sent him to Ananias to receive instruction and authority.²⁵

The priesthood is an everlasting covenant. The Lord said, "All who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the *foundation of the world*."²⁶

Do not miss that one simple, obvious absolute: the priesthood ever and always is conferred by ordination by one who holds proper authority, and it is known to the Church that he has it. And even when the priesthood has been conferred, an individual has no authority beyond that which belongs to the specific office to which one has been ordained. Those limits apply as well to an office to which one is set apart. Unauthorized ordinations or settings apart convey nothing—neither power nor authority of the priesthood.

If they seek to do mischief with the priesthood and with the sacred things of the temple, the Lord has said he would "blind their minds, that they may not understand his marvelous workings."²⁷

Rededicating ourselves to the Lord

In that epistle issued at the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple, the First Presidency also said:

"Can men and women who are violating a law of God, or those who are derelict in yielding obedience to His commands, expect that the mere going into His holy house and taking part in its dedication will render them worthy to receive, and cause them to receive, His blessing?"

"Do they think that repentance and turning away from sin may be so lightly dispensed with?"

"Do they dare, even in thought, thus to accuse our Father of injustice and partiality, and attribute to Him carelessness in the fulfillment of His own words?"

"Assuredly no one claiming to belong to His people would be guilty of such a thing."²⁸

The Lord promised the Saints at Nauvoo:

"If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate [the temple site] that it shall be made holy.

"And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the *voice of my servants* whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place.

"But if they will not hearken to my voice, *nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed*, they shall not be blest."²⁹

On this hundredth anniversary of the dedication of the temple, may we each dedicate ourselves anew to the service of the Lord.

Say the word *temple*. Say it quietly and reverently. Say it over and over again. *Temple. Temple. Temple.* Add the word *holy*. *Holy Temple*. Say it as though it were capitalized, no matter where it appears in the sentence.

Temple. One other word is equal in importance to a Latter-day Saint. *Home*. Put the words *holy temple* and *home* together, and you have described the house of the Lord!

May God grant that we may be worthy to enter there and receive the fulness of the blessings of His priesthood, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith, in James H. Anderson, "The Salt Lake Temple," *Contributor*, Apr. 1893, pp. 284–85.
2. D&C 124:32.
3. See Don F. Colvin, "A Historical Study of the Mormon Temple at Nauvoo, Illinois" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962).
4. *The Mormons: A Discourse* (pamphlet, discourse delivered before The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 26 Mar. 1850), pp. 20–21; Archives Division, Church His-

- torical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as Church Archives.
5. See Thomas Bullock Journals, 1844–1850, 8 July 1848; Church Archives.
 6. Truman O. Angell Journal, 1857–1868, 28 May 1867; Church Archives.
 7. David O. McKay, Salt Lake Temple dedication services, 21 May 1963, pp. 7–8.
 8. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 4 July 1889; Church Archives.
 9. David O. McKay, Salt Lake Temple dedication services, 21 May 1963, pp. 7–8.
 10. In *Journal of Discourses*, 14:108; see also 5:226.
 11. In *Journal of Discourses*, 5:226.
 12. Abraham H. Cannon Journal, 13 July 1891; Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; hereafter cited as BYU Library.
 13. John Fairbanks Diary; BYU Library.
 14. John Fairbanks Diary; BYU Library.
 15. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941), pp. 415–16.
 16. D&C 124:28; italics added.
 17. D&C 124:42; italics added.
 18. D&C 124:34.
 19. Articles of Faith 1:5.
 20. D&C 42:11.
 21. Joseph Smith—History 1:72.
 22. D&C 13.
 23. John came as a translated being. See D&C 7.
 24. Acts 26:16.
 25. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 265.
 26. D&C 132:5, italics added; see also D&C 124:33.
 27. D&C 121:12.
 28. “The Salt Lake Temple,” p. 284.
 29. D&C 124:44–46; italics added.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing “God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand.” The benediction will then be given by Elder W. Mack Lawrence of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until two o’clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang “God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand.”

Elder W. Mack Lawrence offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 163rd Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1992, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a single-adult choir from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake institutes. Richard L. Openshaw conducted

the choir, and Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Hinckley made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this second general session of the 163rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ