

See Yourself in the Temple

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I pray that each of us will honor the Savior and make any necessary changes to see ourselves in His sacred temples.

The rolling forth of the Lord's plan of salvation during this dispensation of the fulness of times is almost beyond comprehension.¹ This is exemplified by President Thomas S. Monson's announcement of 4 new temples in this conference session. When President Monson was called as an Apostle in 1963, there were 12 operating temples in the world.² With the dedication of the Provo City Center Temple, there are now 150, and there will be 177 when all announced temples are dedicated. This is cause for us to humbly rejoice.

One hundred eighty years ago, on this very day, April 3, 1836, a magnificent vision was opened to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple. This occurred just one week after the dedication of that temple. In this vision they saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit in the

temple. Among other things, the Savior declared:

"Let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name.

"For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house."³

On that sacred occasion, ancient prophets appeared, including Elijah, who bestowed the keys essential for temple ordinances.

We have some sense of the rejoicing that is going on in Quito, Ecuador; Harare, Zimbabwe; Belém, Brazil; and Lima, Peru, both with members and missionaries, based on what happened in Bangkok, Thailand, a year ago when that temple was announced. Sister Shelly Senior, wife of the then-president of the Thailand Bangkok Mission, David Senior, emailed family and friends to say that after she and her husband had listened to President Monson announce that temple, there

had been “12 sleepless hours and lots of tears of happiness.” They called their mission assistants at 11:30 p.m. and informed them. The assistants called all the missionaries. The report came back that the “whole mission was awake in the middle of the night jumping on their beds.” Sister Senior humorously admonished family and friends, “Please don’t tell the Missionary Department!”⁴

The deep spiritual response of the members in Thailand was equally strong. I am confident there have been spiritual preparations in hearts and homes and manifestations from heaven preparing the Saints where these newly announced temples will be located.

Sister Senior, in Thailand, had some special hand mirrors made for her personal teaching, especially with sisters. There was a temple etched in the mirror with the wording, “See Yourself in the Temple.” As people gazed into the mirror, they saw themselves in the temple. The Seniors taught the investigators and members to picture themselves in the temple and make the necessary lifestyle changes and spiritual preparations to meet this goal.

My challenge this morning is for each of us, wherever we live, to see ourselves in the temple. President Monson has stated: “Until you have entered the house of the Lord and have received all the blessings which await you there, you have not obtained everything the Church has to offer. The all-important and crowning blessings of membership in the Church are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God.”⁵

Despite the lack of righteousness in the world today, we live in a sacred, holy time. Prophets, with loving and longing hearts, have described our day for centuries.⁶

The Prophet Joseph Smith, citing both Obadiah⁷ in the Old Testament and 1 Peter⁸ in the New Testament, acknowledged the great purpose of God in providing baptism for the dead and allowing us to be saviors on Mount Zion.⁹

The Lord has prospered our people and provided the resources and prophetic guidance so we can be valiant in attending to our temple responsibilities for both the living and the dead.

Because of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we understand the purpose of life, the Father’s plan of salvation for His children, the Savior’s redemptive sacrifice, and the central role of families in the organization of heaven.¹⁰

The combination of increased numbers of temples and advanced technology to fulfill our sacred family history responsibilities for our ancestors makes this the most blessed time in all history. I rejoice in the extraordinary faithfulness of our

youth in indexing and finding their ancestors and then doing the baptism and confirmation work in the temple. You are literally among the prophesied saviors on Mount Zion.

How Do We Prepare for the Temple?

We know that righteousness and sanctification are essential parts of preparing for the temple.

In Doctrine and Covenants section 97, it reads, “And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it.”¹¹

Until 1891 the President of the Church signed each temple recommend to protect the sanctity of the temple. That responsibility was then delegated to bishops and stake presidents.

It is our great desire that members of the Church will live to be worthy of a temple recommend. Please don't see the temple as some distant and perhaps unachievable goal. Working with their bishop, most members can achieve all righteous requirements in a relatively short period of time if they have a determination to qualify and fully repent of transgressions. This includes being willing to forgive ourselves and not focus on our imperfections or sins as disqualifying us from ever entering a sacred temple.

The Savior's Atonement was accomplished for all of God's children. His redeeming sacrifice satisfies the demands of justice for all those who truly repent. The scriptures describe this in a most beautiful fashion:

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”¹²

“And I will remember [them] no more.”¹³

We assure you that living righteous principles will bring you and your family happiness, fulfillment, and peace.¹⁴ Members, both adults and youth,¹⁵ self-certify their worthiness when they answer the temple recommend questions. The essential requirement is to increase our testimony of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Restoration of His gospel and to experience the ministering of the Holy Ghost.

The Blessings of the Temple Are Numerous

The primary blessings of the temple are the ordinances of exaltation. The gospel plan is about exaltation and encompasses making and keeping sacred covenants with God. Except for baptism and confirmation, these ordinances and covenants are performed and received in the temple for the living. For the dead, all the saving ordinances and covenants are received in the temple.

Brigham Young taught, "There is not one thing that the Lord could do for the salvation of the human family that he has neglected to do; ... all that can be accomplished for their salvation, independent of them, has been accomplished in and by the Savior."¹⁶

Church leaders organize stakes, wards, quorums, Church auxiliaries, missions, and so forth in our chapels and other buildings. The Lord organizes eternal families only in temples.

It is clear that those with broken hearts and contrite spirits who have truly repented of their sins are completely acceptable to the Lord in His holy house.¹⁷ We know "God is no respecter of persons."¹⁸ One of the precious things I love about the temple is that among those who attend, there are no distinctions of wealth, rank, or position of any kind. We are all equal before God. Everyone is dressed in white to signify we are a pure and righteous people.¹⁹ All sit side by side with a desire in their hearts to be worthy sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father.

Just think, across the entire world women and men can through "sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples ... return to the presence of God and ... be united eternally."²⁰ They do this in a beautiful, sacred sealing room available to all temple-worthy members. After they enter into these covenants, they can "see themselves in the temple" mirrors that face each other. "Together the temple mirrors reflect back and forth images that stretch seemingly into eternity."²¹ These reflected images help us contemplate parents, grandparents, and all previous generations. They help us recognize the sacred covenants that connect us to all generations that follow. This is incredibly significant, and it starts when you see yourself in the temple.

President Howard W. Hunter counseled us to "consider the majestic teachings in the great dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, a prayer the Prophet Joseph Smith said was given to him by revelation. It is a prayer that continues to be answered upon us individually, upon us as families, and upon us as a people because of the priesthood power the Lord has given us to use in His holy temples."²² We would do well to study the 109th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and to follow President Hunter's admonition "to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of [our] membership."²³

The temple is also a place of refuge, thanksgiving, instruction, and understanding, “that [we] may be perfected ... in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth.”²⁴ Throughout my life it has been a place of tranquility and peace in a world that is literally in commotion.²⁵ It is wonderful to leave the cares of the world behind in that sacred setting.

Often in the temple, and as we engage in family history research, we feel promptings and have impressions from the Holy Ghost.²⁶ Occasionally in the temple the veil between us and those on the other side becomes very thin. We get additional assistance in our efforts to be saviors on Mount Zion.

Several years ago in a temple in Central America, the wife of one of our now-emeritus General Authorities assisted a father, a mother, and their children in receiving eternal covenants in the sealing room, where the temple mirrors are located. As they concluded and faced those mirrors, she noticed there was a face in the mirror that was not in the room. She inquired of the mother and learned that a daughter had passed away and accordingly was not physically present. The deceased daughter was then included by proxy in the sacred ordinance.²⁷ Never underestimate the assistance provided in temples from the other side of the veil.

Please know how earnestly we desire that everyone make any necessary changes to qualify for the temple. Prayerfully review where you are in your life, seek the guidance of the Spirit, and talk to your bishop about preparing yourself for the temple. President Thomas S. Monson has said, “There is no more important goal for you to work toward than being worthy to go to the temple.”²⁸

The Savior “Is the Chief, Immovable Cornerstone of Our Faith and His Church”

I was privileged to participate with President Henry B. Eyring at the rededication of the Suva Fiji Temple two months ago. It was a special, sacred occasion. President Eyring’s courage and strong spiritual impressions allowed the rededication to proceed in the face of the worst cyclone ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere. Physical and spiritual protections were provided to youth, missionaries, and members.²⁹ The hand of the Lord was clearly evident. The Suva Fiji Temple rededication was a refuge from the storm. Often as we experience the storms of life, we witness the Lord’s hand in providing eternal protections.

The original dedication of the Suva Fiji Temple on June 18, 2000, was also remarkable. As the temple neared completion, members of parliament were taken hostage by a group of rebels. Downtown Suva, Fiii, was looted and burned.

The military declared martial law.

As the Area President, I went with the four stake presidents in Fiji and met the military leaders at the Queen Elizabeth barracks. After we explained the proposed dedication, they were supportive but concerned about the safety of President Gordon B. Hinckley. They recommended a small dedication with no events outside the temple, like the cornerstone ceremony. They emphasized that anyone outside the temple could be a potential target for violence.

President Hinckley approved one small dedicatory session with just the new temple presidency and a few local leaders; no others were invited because of the danger. However, he emphatically stated, "If we do dedicate the temple, we will have the cornerstone ceremony because Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, and this is His Church."

When we actually went outside for the cornerstone ceremony, there were no nonmembers, children, media, or others present. But a faithful prophet demonstrated his courageous and unwavering commitment to the Savior.

Later President Hinckley, speaking of the Savior, said: "There is none to equal Him. There never has been. There never will be. Thanks be to God for the gift of His Beloved Son, who gave His life that we might live and who is the chief, immovable cornerstone of our faith and His Church."³⁰

Brothers and sisters, I pray that each of us will honor the Savior and make any necessary changes to see ourselves in His sacred temples. In doing so, we can accomplish His holy purposes and prepare ourselves and our families for all the blessings the Lord and His Church can bestow in this life and eternity. I bear my sure witness that the Savior lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.