

The Holy Temple

Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, Oct. 2010

In temples we can participate in the most exalted of the redeeming ordinances

There are many reasons one should want to come to the temple. Even its external appearance seems to hint of its deeply spiritual purposes. This is much more evident within its walls. Over the door to the temple appears the tribute “Holiness to the Lord.” When you enter any dedicated temple, you are in the house of the Lord.

In the temples, members of the Church who make themselves eligible can participate in the most exalted of the redeeming ordinances that have been revealed to mankind. There, in a sacred ceremony, an individual may be washed and anointed and instructed and endowed and sealed. And when we have received these blessings for ourselves, we may officiate for those who have died without having had the same opportunity. In the temples sacred ordinances are performed for the living and for the dead alike.

The ordinances and ceremonies of the temple are simple, beautiful, and sacred

A careful reading of the scriptures reveals that the Lord did not tell all things to all people. There were some qualifications set that were prerequisite to receiving sacred information. Temple ceremonies fall within this category.

We do not discuss the temple ordinances outside the temples. It was never intended that knowledge of these temple ceremonies would be limited to a select few who would be obliged to ensure that others never learn of them. It is quite the opposite, in fact. With great effort we urge every soul to qualify and prepare for the temple experience. Those who have been to the temple have been taught an ideal: Someday every living soul and every soul who has ever lived shall have the opportunity to hear the gospel and to accept or reject what the temple offers. If this opportunity is rejected, the rejection must be on the part of the individual.

The ordinances and ceremonies of the temple are simple. They are beautiful. They are sacred. They are kept confidential lest they be given to those who are unprepared. Curiosity is not a preparation. Deep interest itself is not a preparation. Preparation for the ordinances includes preliminary steps: faith, repentance, baptism, confirmation, worthiness, a maturity and dignity worthy of one who comes invited as a guest into the house of the Lord.

Those who are worthy may enter the temple

All who are worthy and qualify in every way may enter the temple, there to be introduced to the sacred rites and ordinances.

Once you have some feeling for the value of temple blessings and for the sacredness of the ordinances performed in the temple, you would be hesitant to question the high standards set by the Lord for entrance into the holy temple.

You must possess a current recommend to be admitted to the temple. This recommend must be signed by the proper officers of the Church. Only those who are worthy should go to the temple. Your local

bishop or branch president has the responsibility of making inquiries into your personal worthiness before you receive your temple ordinances. This interview is of great importance, for it is an occasion to explore with an ordained servant of the Lord the pattern of your life. If anything is amiss in your life, the bishop will be able to help you resolve it. Through this procedure, you can declare or can be helped to establish your worthiness to enter the temple with the Lord's approval.

The interview for a temple recommend is conducted privately between the bishop and the Church member concerned. Here the member is asked searching questions about his or her personal conduct, worthiness, and loyalty to the Church and its officers. The person must certify that he or she is morally clean and is keeping the Word of Wisdom, paying a full tithing, living in harmony with the teachings of the Church, and not maintaining any affiliation or sympathy with apostate groups. The bishop is instructed that confidentiality in handling these matters with each interviewee is of the utmost importance.

Acceptable answers to the bishop's questions will ordinarily establish the worthiness of an individual to receive a temple recommend. If an applicant is not keeping the commandments or there is something unsettled about his or her life that needs putting in order, it will be necessary to demonstrate true repentance before a temple recommend is issued.

After the bishop has conducted such an interview, the stake president likewise interviews you before you can receive your temple ordinances.

Teaching in the temple is symbolic

Before going to the temple for the first time, or even after many times, it may help you to realize that the teaching in the temples is done in symbolic fashion. The Lord, the Master Teacher, gave much of His instruction in this way.

The temple is a great school. It is a house of learning. In the temples the atmosphere is maintained so that it is ideal for instruction on matters that are deeply spiritual. The late Elder John A. Widtsoe of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was a distinguished university president and a world-renowned scholar. He had great reverence for temple work and said on one occasion:

"The temple ordinances encompass the whole plan of salvation, as taught from time to time by the leaders of the Church, and elucidate matters difficult of understanding. There is no warping or twisting in fitting the temple teachings into the great scheme of salvation. The philosophical completeness of the endowment is one of the great arguments for the veracity of the temple ordinances. Moreover, this completeness of survey and expounding of the Gospel plan, makes temple worship one of the most effective methods of refreshing the memory concerning the whole structure of the Gospel" ("Temple Worship," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 58).

If you will go to the temple and remember that the teaching is symbolic, you will never go in the proper spirit without coming away with your vision extended, feeling a little more exalted, with your knowledge increased as to things that are spiritual. The teaching plan is superb. It is inspired. The Lord Himself, the Master Teacher, taught His disciples constantly in parables—a verbal way to represent symbolically things that might otherwise be difficult to understand.

The temple itself becomes a symbol. If you have seen one of the temples at night, fully lighted, you know what an impressive sight that can be. The house of the Lord, bathed in light, standing out in the darkness, becomes symbolic of the power and the inspiration of the gospel of Jesus Christ standing as a beacon in a world that sinks ever further into spiritual darkness.

Upon entering the temple, you exchange your street clothing for the white clothing of the temple. This change of clothing takes place in the dressing room, where each individual is provided with a locker and a dressing space that is completely private. In the temple the ideal of modesty is carefully maintained. As you put your clothing in the locker, you leave your cares and concerns and distractions there with them. You step out of this private little dressing area dressed in white, and you feel a oneness and a sense of equality, for all around you are similarly dressed.

Temple marriage is the ultimate ordinance of the temple

Those of you who look forward to a temple marriage may want to know what will occur. We do not quote the words of the sealing (marriage) ordinance outside of the temple, but we may describe the sealing room as being beautiful in its appointment, quiet and serene in spirit, and hallowed by the sacred work that is performed there.

Before the couple comes to the altar for the sealing ordinance, it is the privilege of the officiator to extend, and of the young couple to receive, some counsel. These are among the thoughts that a young couple might hear on this occasion.

“Today is your wedding day. You are caught up in the emotion of your marriage. Temples were built as a sanctuary for such ordinances as this. We are not in the world. The things of the world do not apply here and should have no influence upon what we do here. We have come out of the world into the temple of the Lord. This becomes the most important day of your lives.

“You were born, invited to earth, by parents who prepared a mortal tabernacle for your spirit to inhabit. Each of you has been baptized. Baptism, a sacred ordinance, is symbolic of a cleansing, symbolic of death and resurrection, symbolic of coming forward in a newness of life. It contemplates repentance and a remission of sins. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a renewal of the covenant of baptism, and we can, if we live for it, retain a remission of our sins.

“You, the groom, were ordained to the priesthood. You had first conferred upon you the Aaronic Priesthood and probably have progressed through all the offices thereof—deacon, teacher, and priest. Then the day came when you were found worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. That priesthood, the higher priesthood, is defined as the priesthood after the holiest order of God, or the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God (see Alma 13:18; Helaman 8:18; Doctrine and Covenants 107:2–4). You were given an office in the priesthood. You are now an elder.

“Each of you has received your endowment. In that endowment you received an investment of eternal potential. But all of these things, in one sense, were preliminary and preparatory to your coming to the altar to be sealed as husband and wife for time and for all eternity. You now become a family, free to act in the creation of life, to have the opportunity through devotion and sacrifice to bring children into the world and to raise them and foster them safely through their mortal existence; to see them come one day, as you have come, to participate in these sacred temple ordinances.

“You come willingly and have been judged to be worthy. To accept one another in the marriage covenant is a great responsibility, one that carries with it blessings without measure.”

The sealing power binds on earth and in heaven

If we would understand both the history and the doctrine of temple work, we must understand what the sealing power is. We must envision, at least to a degree, why the keys of authority to employ the sealing power are crucial.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ...

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:13, 16–19).

Peter was to hold the keys. Peter was to hold the sealing power, that authority which carries the power to bind or seal on earth or to loose on earth and it would be so in the heavens. Those keys belong to the President of the Church—to the prophet, seer, and revelator. That sacred sealing power is with the Church now. Nothing is regarded with more sacred contemplation by those who know the significance of this authority. Nothing is more closely held. There are relatively few men who have been delegated this sealing power upon the earth at any given time—in each temple are brethren who have been given the sealing power. No one can get it except from the prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said he was frequently asked the question ““Can we not be saved without going through with all those ordinances, etc.?’ I would answer, No, not the fullness of salvation. Jesus said, ‘There are many mansions in my Father’s house, and I will go and prepare a place for you.’ [See John 14:2.] House here named should have been translated kingdom; and any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law too” (in History of the Church, 6:184).

Temple work is a source of spiritual power

Temples are the very center of the spiritual strength of the Church. We should expect that the adversary will try to interfere with us as a Church and with us individually as we seek to participate in this sacred and inspired work. Temple work brings so much resistance because it is the source of so much spiritual power to the Latter-day Saints and to the entire Church.

At the Logan Utah Temple cornerstone dedication, President George Q. Cannon, then of the First Presidency, made this statement:

“Every foundation stone that is laid for a Temple, and every Temple completed according to the order the Lord has revealed for his holy Priesthood, lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness, moves the heavens in mighty power in our behalf, invokes and calls down upon us the blessings of the Eternal Gods, and those who reside in their presence” (in “The Logan Temple,” *Millennial Star*, Nov. 12, 1877, 743).

When members of the Church are troubled or when crucial decisions weigh heavily upon their minds, it is a common thing for them to go to the temple. It is a good place to take our cares. In the temple we can receive spiritual perspective. There, during the time of the temple service, we are “out of the world.”

Sometimes our minds are so beset with problems and there are so many things clamoring for attention at once that we just cannot think clearly and see clearly. At the temple the dust of distraction seems to settle out, the fog and the haze seem to lift, and we can “see” things that we were not able to see before and find a way through our troubles that we had not previously known.

The Lord will bless us as we attend to the sacred ordinance work of the temples. Blessings there will not be limited to our temple service. We will be blessed in all of our affairs.

Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection

No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the family history research that supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness.

Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a people.

So come to the temple—come and claim your blessings. It is a sacred work.

Adapted from Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple (booklet, 2002)

Only those who are worthy should go to the temple. Your local bishop or branch president has the responsibility of making inquiries into your personal worthiness before you receive your temple ordinances.

Preparation for the ordinances of the temple includes preliminary steps: faith, repentance, baptism, confirmation, worthiness, a maturity and dignity worthy of one who comes invited as a guest into the house of the Lord.

Before going to the temple for the first time, or even after many times, it may help you to realize that the teaching in the temples is done in symbolic fashion. The Lord, the Master Teacher, gave much of His instruction in this way.

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If you will go to the temple and remember that the teaching is symbolic, you will never go in the proper spirit without coming away with your vision extended, feeling a little more exalted, with your knowledge increased as to things that are spiritual.

All of the ordinances of the gospel, in one sense, are preliminary to coming to the temple to be sealed as husband and wife for time and for all eternity.

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