

“Thou Hast Commanded Thy Servants to Build a House to Thy Name”

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Introduction: “This is the beginning!”

I am honored to speak to such a distinguished group this evening. I sincerely pray for the Holy Spirit to bless our hearts and minds that we might be jointly edified.

From my childhood, I have felt a reverence for the temple. Watching my parents prepare their temple clothing and listening to their hushed respect for the experiences of the temple gave birth within me an “awe” for these holy places. While serving in priesthood callings, I discovered that temple participation often brought personal revelation and always helped me see more clearly.

Now, in more recent years, my life has literally been filled with temple building and temple service. For the past eight years I have watched, at fairly close range, President Hinckley dedicate or give direction to the dedication of 71 new and 5 renovated temples. In all, this has included over 300 temple dedicatory sessions. To me personally, it has been both spiritually fulfilling and physically challenging. While participating in some of these dedicatory sessions and start up of new temples, I have felt a clear witness of the value and impact of temple covenants and service.

I sincerely pray you will feel the spirit witnessing to you this same truth. Temples truly are holy houses of God, built by commandment, to allow promised blessings to be given to all who qualify and who are prepared to receive them.

As I prepared for these remarks tonight I reread the dedicatory prayers of several temples including that of the Kirtland Temple, given on 27 March 1836.

In the 109th section the Prophet Joseph Smith recalled the direction of the Lord when he said, “Thou . . . hast commanded thy servants to build a house to thy name in this place...”¹

The next few verses express the desire of the Prophet to have the temple accepted as he pled for the glory of the Lord to rest down upon the temple and the people.

10 And now, Holy Father, we ask thee to assist us, thy people, with thy grace, in calling our solemn assembly, that it may be done to thine honor and to thy divine acceptance;

11 And in a manner that we may be found worthy, in thy sight, to secure a fulfilment of the promises which thou hast made unto us, thy people, in the revelations given unto us;

12 That thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house;

13 And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord's house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.²

One cannot read this and the other dedicatory prayers without coming away with a feeling of submissiveness to the wonderful blessings promised in these houses of God. It almost seems that the innermost thoughts of the President of the Church are revealed for our view. It has opened my heart again to the love our Heavenly Father has for us in providing these sacred places of worship and covenant making.

My desire is to give emphasis to the commandment to build these holy places and the attendant blessings that come to all who will accept and strive to abide by the covenants made available through them. Secondly, I hope to demonstrate how seriously the prophets have taken this command to build, design and operate temples. From my observation this has been a specific responsibility retained by the First Presidency and more particularly the president of the Church.

I begin with the most recent announcement of the First Presidency. In the October 2005 general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the construction of the 131st temple to be built in this dispensation and the 13th to be built in the state of Utah. As part of the announcement he made the following statement:

“The building of temples is an indication of . . . growth. Our people are being greatly blessed by these. Temple service is the end product of all of our teaching and activity.

Last year 32 million ordinances were performed in the temples. This is more than have been performed in any previous year. At the moment, some of our temples are crowded to capacity and beyond. The needs and desires of our faithful Saints must be met.”³

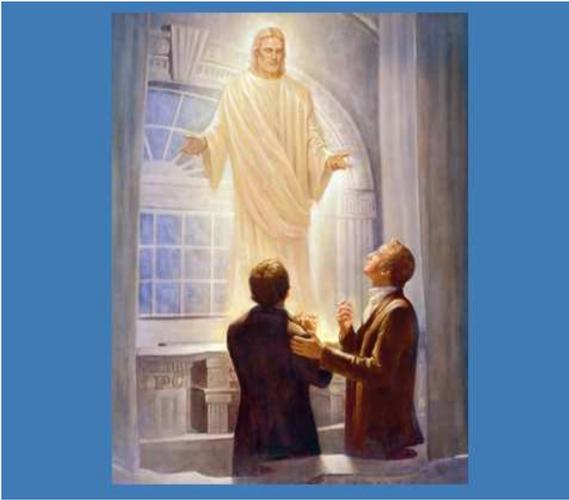
The building of temples represents a significant commitment of past, current and future resources of the Church; not only in building them but in maintaining and operating them. The commitment to temple building is not a trivial matter and has been a significant focus of every Church president from Joseph Smith to the present.

In December 1832, the Lord declared the need to build a house for the Presidency. He spoke of it being “a house, even 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.”⁴ This appears to be the first public record of the Lord’s instruction to build a temple in this dispensation and it was to be in the city of Kirtland.

Early in 1833, the Lord gave instructions as to the size of the temple. Although these specific instructions were given, the elders of the Church were slow in moving on the building. As a result, in June of 1833, Joseph received a severe chastisement from the Lord for not commencing with the building of the temple. Being rather direct the Lord said:

11 Verily I say unto you, it is my will that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it.

12 If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness.⁵



Immediately following this rebuke, the brethren went to work. Notwithstanding their poverty, persecutions and many difficulties, they labored diligently. In just thirty-nine months, after much sacrifice of time and resources, the first temple of the Restoration was completed and dedicated.

One week following the dedication the Resurrected Savior appeared in person to the Prophet Joseph and his associate Oliver Cowdery as they were praying in that newly dedicated house of God.

“I have accepted this house,” declared the Lord, “and my name shall be here . . . and the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands; and this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people.”⁶

Truly, the building of the Kirtland Temple was significant but *just* “the beginning of the blessings” which the Lord has poured out upon the living and the dead as the great work of temple and family history has gone forward throughout the earth.

1836



To think that from that humble beginning of one temple in a rural area of Ohio, temple building has now come to 31 states and the District of Columbia in the United States and 37 countries worldwide, is an absolutely amazing miracle and fulfillment of the Lord’s promise. One hundred and twenty-two temples are now available for the living to receive the fulness of priesthood blessings and for the dead to be redeemed.

Temples 2006



Ordinances in the Kirtland Temple

This first temple among latter-day temples, the Kirtland Ohio Temple, served a different purpose than the temples that followed. It did not have the formal ordinance areas which we find in all of the temples today. Saints could gather to worship and to be taught. Twice during the dedicatory prayer, the Prophet quoted the Lord's admonition that His Saints should "seek learning even by study and also by faith."⁷

The Kirtland Temple was not only a place of significant learning but was the place of restoration of priesthood keys. These keys, according to divine decree, were to be restored within the walls of a sacred temple built to the name of the Lord.

It is only in case of expediency, when there is no such house, that keys of authority are bestowed upon men, and sacred ordinances of exaltation may be permitted to be administered, outside of a temple of the Lord.⁸

The Savior's visit to His house was accompanied by prophets of Old Testament times who unlocked doors that had long been closed. Moses, Elias, and Elijah all conferred priesthood keys on the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery which allowed the work of gathering, sealing, and redeeming to bless the lives of people on both sides of the veil.⁹

The windows of heaven always seem to be opened to the Saints as temples are dedicated and that was certainly the case with the dedication of the temple at Kirtland. On the evening of the dedication a priesthood meeting was held which over four hundred men attended. In the dedicatory prayer earlier that day, Joseph Smith had asked that the temple "be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind"¹⁰ to strengthen testimony and commitment of those who were faithful to the covenants. He recorded the following entry regarding the priesthood meeting:

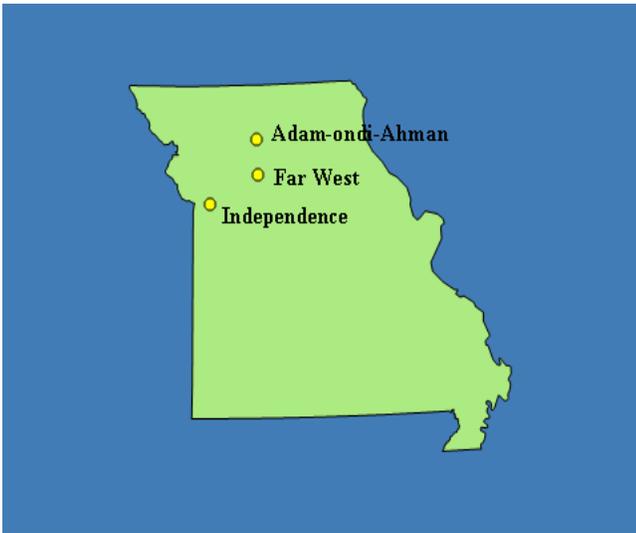
"A noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place. This continued until the meeting closed at eleven p.m."¹¹

Other spiritual manifestations were noted in the Kirtland Temple such as the one recorded in the 137th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. These spiritual witnesses not only accompanied temple dedications and temple service in the earliest days but continue even into our day. For me every time I have sung *The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning* at a temple dedication, I have felt the confirmation of the Lord's spirit present in the room. One would think after participating in so many dedications that the thrill of this sacred experience would diminish. I can say with conviction, it never has.

Although the Kirtland Temple did not have a baptismal font and other ordinance areas, the restorations that occurred there did provide the means whereby those blessings would soon be forthcoming. In fact we know that some temple blessings were administered in this first latter-day temple. However, the fullness of temple ordinances would not be available in a temple until the Nauvoo Temple. The Saints were being taught "line upon line, precept upon precept."¹²

Temple Sites in Missouri

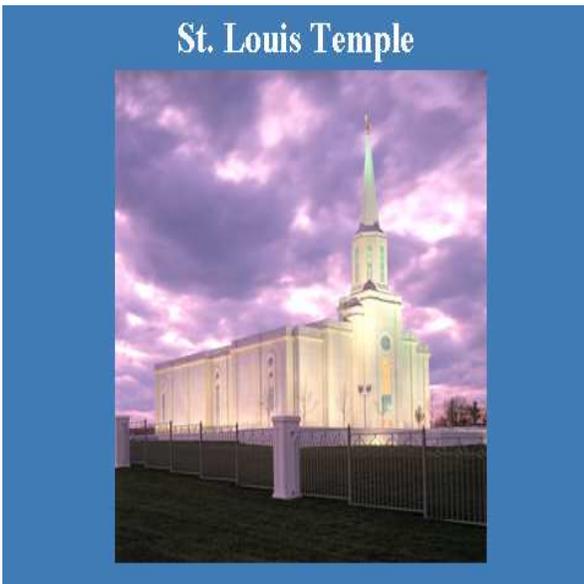
Faithful Saints were forced to abandon their beautiful temple when they fled Kirtland and gathered in Missouri. Urged by the Prophet Joseph Smith, they once again turned their thoughts to temple building. With hopeful anticipation, sites were dedicated in their new Zion.



A temple site was designated in Independence, Jackson County. However, mob violence prevented the Saints from fulfilling the Lord's command at that time to establish a city of holiness with its attendant temple. After placing the cornerstones for the temple, the Saints were driven from Jackson County, fleeing north to eventually settle in Caldwell County. As directed by revelation,¹³ the Saints gathered at the designated temple site in Far West, Missouri, on the nation's birthday in 1838, again laying stones

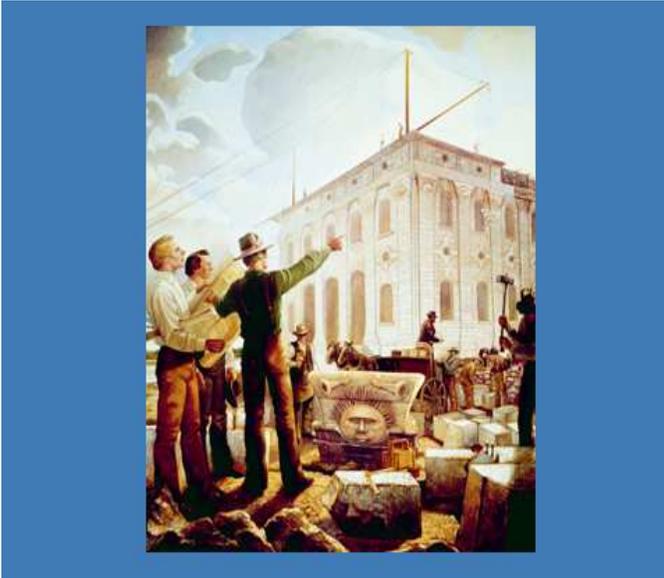
marking the four corners of the anticipated temple. A temple site was also dedicated at the historically significant Adam-ondi-Ahman (also known as Diahman) in Daviess County, Missouri. The exact location of this temple site is presently unknown.

Although the intent of the faithful early Saints was real, as evidenced by the cornerstones laid, the influence of the adversary--he who distains the very word "temple" together with his misled followers--deprived the Saints in Missouri of temples at that time. Church members in Missouri would have to wait for a future day to be accorded the privilege of having a temple nearby. As you know, on June 1, 1997, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the first completed temple in Missouri. This temple is located in St. Louis.



A Temple in Nauvoo

Driven from Missouri by mob action, and the governor's extermination order, the Saints found refuge in the neighboring state of Illinois. In 1839 the main body of the Church moved to an area on the bend of the Mississippi River, then known as Commerce, which later became Nauvoo. Within a year, in August of 1840, The First Presidency called upon the Church to build a temple in Nauvoo. Revelation received early in 1841 confirmed the Lord's continuing desire to have a holy house built to Him in which He could reveal His ordinances.¹⁴



William Weeks was appointed architect of the temple, yet it was the Prophet, following the pattern established in Kirtland, who gave significant and specific instruction regarding the design of the building. “I have seen in vision the splendid appearance of that building,” said he, “and will have it built according to the pattern shown me.”¹⁵

It has always been the specific domain of the President of the Church to have the final word on the design and architecture of temples. Such is certainly the case with President Gordon B. Hinckley, as he has led the greatest era of temple building in the history of the world.

Sacred Ordinances Outside the Temple

During a funeral service held in August 1840, Joseph Smith taught for the first time the doctrine of baptism for the dead. It is reported that at least one inspired sister went immediately to the river following the funeral and was baptized for her deceased child.

Latter-day Saints from Nauvoo to Quincy, Illinois, and even as far away as Kirtland, Ohio, entered river waters to be baptized as **proxy** for departed loved ones. Elder Wilford Woodruff wrote of one occasion:

“Joseph Smith himself ... went into the Mississippi river one Sunday night after meeting, and baptized a hundred. I baptized another hundred. The next man, a few rods from me, baptized another hundred.”¹⁶

In revelation recorded as the 124th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, given several months after these vicarious ordinances were performed, the Lord declared “*this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me, only in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me.*” He continued by telling the Saints that until such a House was built that their “*baptisms [for the dead] shall be acceptable unto me.*” However, he did issue a stern warning against continuing this ordinance outside a temple once sufficient time had been given to construct such a holy edifice.¹⁷

Perhaps after seriously reflecting on the Lord’s restrictions regarding baptisms for the dead outside of the temple, Joseph Smith discontinued the practice early in October of 1841. In November 1841 a temporary baptismal font was dedicated in the basement of the temple and baptisms for the dead commenced in the dedicated font.

This temporary font was constructed of pine. It rested on 12 oxen, which had also been carved from pine and glued together. The Prophet wrote this description in his journal “The oxen are copied after the most beautiful five-year-old steer that could be found in the country, and they are an excellent striking likeness of the original; the horns were formed after the most perfect horn that could be procured.”¹⁸



The permanent font was marble-based and rested on oxen carved from stone. The horns and ears of the animals were metallic. An interesting feature of the oxen is that they have no hoofs showing. They are buried in the foundation surrounding the font.

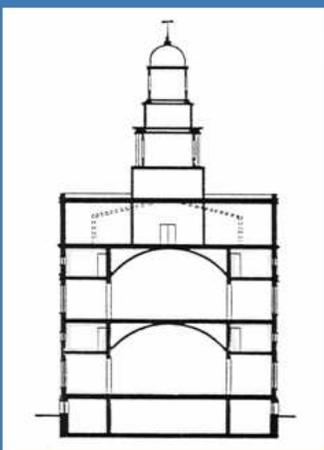
While anxiously awaiting the completion of the temple, the urgency of temple work so impressed itself upon the Prophet's mind, that he felt inspired to administer other temple ordinances outside a dedicated temple. Elder Orson Hyde later recalled Joseph saying, "I

*don't know what it is, but the Lord bids me to hasten, and give you your endowments before the temple is finished".*¹⁹

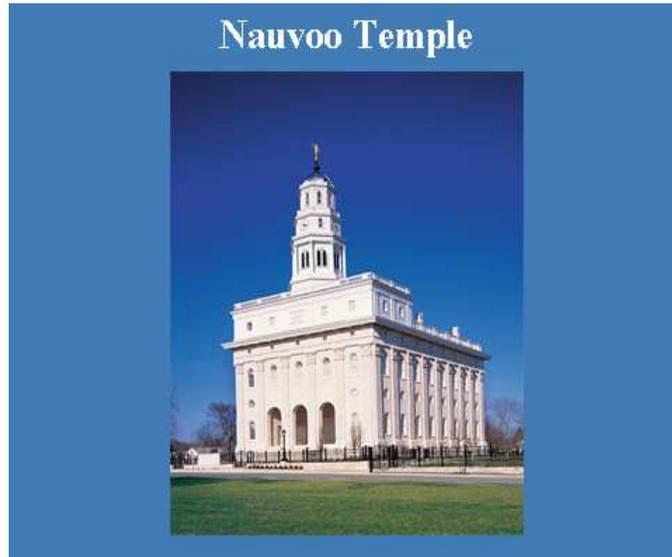
The first endowments were administered on 4 May 1842. Initially, the Prophet used a room referred to as the "Assembly Room" on the second floor of his red brick store to administer the endowment to selected Saints.

The persecution of the Saints that led to the martyrdoms of Joseph and Hyrum Smith continued following their deaths, and Brigham Young felt the urgency to not only complete the temple, but to provide the endowment to as many worthy members as possible.

On 14 January 1845, he announced in a general epistle to the Church that "as soon as a suitable number of . . . rooms in the temple are completed, we shall commence the endowment."²⁰



On 30 November 1845, attic rooms in the temple were dedicated for ordinance work and on December 10 the first endowments to the general membership were administered in the temple. Sealings commenced in January of 1846.



Because of increased persecution pressuring the Latter-day Saints to leave Nauvoo, the last endowments were administered by the Twelve on 7 February 1846. During the several month period from the time the first ordinances were administered and the closing of the work, hundreds of worthy Saints received their temple blessings under the direction of the Twelve Apostles. Reflecting on this marvelous period, Elder Erastus Snow said:

"The Spirit, Power, and Wisdom of God reigned continually in the Temple and all felt satisfied that during the two months we occupied it, in the endowments of the Saints, we were amply paid for all our labors in building it."²¹

Perhaps fearing mob action, a private dedicatory service was held on 30 April 1846. Public dedicatory services were held from May 1 through May 3.

It is of interest to note that the Nauvoo Temple is the only temple in which endowments were administered before it was fully dedicated, but none after the general dedicatory service was held.

Like the Kirtland Temple, powerful spiritual experiences were manifested to the Saints who came to the Nauvoo Temple. Even 167 years later as the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple was dedicated, the presence of the Spirit had not diminished in the least. Each one of you who participated in the dedication of the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple, will undoubtedly remember feeling the witness of the spirit when President Hinckley stood in the Assembly room conducting the dedication service. He spoke of those who had invested so much in the original building of the temple. As the brethren spoke and the choir sang, there were many spiritual witnesses evident on that occasion. The dedicatory prayer reflected on our history and the sacrifice of Joseph, Hyrum and their families. It was a cherished moment to remember as we were filled with the Spirit of Heaven.

The True Temple Travels West

Circumstances forced the removal of the Latter-day Saints from Nauvoo, leaving their temple behind. Wicked intruders defiled and desecrated the deserted building that had been constructed for sacred purposes. While it continued to be referred to as a "temple," in reality it was now just another *building*, for the ordinances and power of the priesthood had been withdrawn from its interior, along with the Spirit and presence of the Lord.

The *living* temple traveled with the Latter-day Saints to the West. The keys of authority to perform the sacred ordinances were safe and secure with the Twelve Apostles, with President Brigham Young as their divinely appointed leader. And the covenants and promised blessings which many of the Saints had received through endowments and sealings, remained in place.

Desecration of the deserted temple *building* by the wicked did nothing to destroy the priesthood authority and power of temple work, which were beyond their reach.

The Salt Lake Valley

Before even arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young's mind was focused on the erection of a temple, for he had seen the Salt Lake Temple in vision.

Just four days after their arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, in July of 1847, President Brigham Young strode to a spot that inspiration had obviously fixed in his mind. Pointing his cane to the parched ground, he declared: "Here we will build a temple to our God."²² Elder Wilford Woodruff placed a marker on the designated site.

President Young later declared "I have never looked upon that ground, but the vision of [the six-spired Salt Lake Temple] was there."²³



This declaration by President Young was a pronouncement of a prophet of God. In the midst of the summer, camped in a desert, with the pressing needs of food, shelter, and even survival weighing heavily upon the minds and hearts of the newly arrived pioneers, their prophet-leader reminded them of the "solemnities of eternity" (see D&C 43:34) which should also be resting upon their minds.

The construction of the Salt Lake Temple would not be completed in Brigham Young's lifetime, but in my own heart I feel that both he and Joseph Smith were allowed to be present on that glorious occasion on 6 April 1893, when President Wilford Woodruff dedicated this magnificent house of the Lord. In fact President Woodruff recorded in his journal:

"If the eyes of the congregation could be opened they would [have] seen Joseph and Hyrum [Smith], Brigham Young, John Taylor, and all the good men who had lived in this dispensation assembled with us, as also ... all the Holy Prophets and Apostles who

had prophesied of the latter day work. ... They were rejoicing with us in this building which had been accepted of the Lord.”²⁴

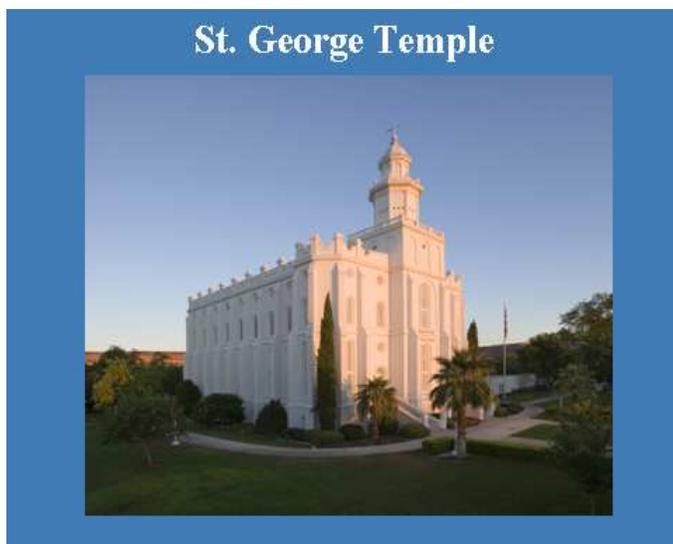
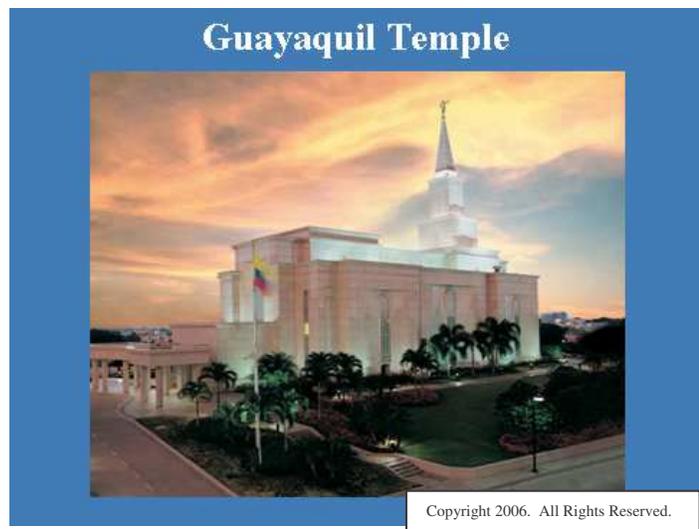
The St. George Temple

While the Salt Lake Temple was under construction, President Brigham Young pressed forward with other temple sites. President John Taylor pointed out,

“...it was found that our Temple in Salt Lake City would take such a long time to build, it was thought best to erect another temple in southern Utah where construction could go on year round. There is a people here who are worthy and God inspired President Young to build a temple here. . . ”²⁵

Priesthood leaders in the St. George area were asked to find and recommend possible temple sites. Two hilltop locations were proposed, but when President Young arrived, he invited those proposing the sites to get in their wagons and go with him to find a location. They drove to a lower level in the valley, which was described by some as, “a swamp infested land with marsh grass and cattails.” Brigham Young was not deterred when the local leaders raised objections to the seemingly undesirable location. His prophetic insight assured him this was the location the Lord wanted. ²⁶

This experience of President Young is not too unlike the experiences today in the selection of temple sites. I will long remember President Hinckley looking at several pre-selected sites in Guayaquil Ecuador. After looking at each of the sites, President Hinckley pointed to a hillside across the valley and suggested that might be a better location for the temple. It was a site that at the time was not available. Encouragement was given to see what could be done. Today this beautiful temple stands on that site selected by President Hinckley.



Ground was broken for the St George Temple on 9 November 1871. Completed portions of the temple were dedicated on 1 January 1877, including the baptismal area. Baptisms for the dead commenced on January 9, with Elder Wilford Woodruff baptizing and confirming the proxies. President Young assisted in the laying on of hands.

The official dedication of the temple took place on the anniversary of the organization of the Church, 6 April 1877. While the endowment for those who were living had begun in the Nauvoo Temple, it was in St George that the first proxy endowment blessings began.

The introduction of endowments for the dead focused greater attention on these sacred instructions. Up to this time, these teachings had been communicated from one person to another only in oral form. President Brigham Young, however, as one of the few remaining from the first group receiving the endowment from Joseph Smith in 1842, was concerned that this ordinance be preserved in a perfect form.

He therefore spent much time during the early months of 1877 giving instructions on this important subject. On January 14, he specifically assigned Elders Wilford Woodruff and Brigham Young, Jr., to write these ceremonies from beginning to end. During the next several weeks these two Apostles met with President Young, who reviewed what they had written and made corrections as necessary. By March 21 the project was completed, and the approved endowment ceremonies were then taught to the temple workers.²⁷

A Century of Temple Building

Following the dedication of the St. George Temple, three other temples were dedicated: the Logan Temple in 1884; the Manti Temple in 1888; and finally the Salt Lake Temple in 1893. All of these temples were built in the State of Utah, where the majority of Church members then resided.

In 1919, a temple was dedicated outside the continental United States in Laie Hawaii, on the island of Oahu. This was followed four years later with the dedication of the first temple built outside the United States in Cardston Alberta Canada.

The Mesa Arizona Temple was dedicated in 1927. This temple became a particular blessing for the Saints in the northern Mexico colonies. It also awakened the need for the temple ceremony in other languages. After touring the Spanish-American Mission in 1943, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith recommended to the First Presidency that the temple ceremony be translated into the Spanish language. Elder Antoine R. Ivans of the First Council of the Seventy and Brother Eduardo Balderas, a translator for the Church, were assigned the exacting task of translating the temple ordinances into Spanish. For the next year they met within the confines of the Salt Lake Temple. Brother Balderas spoke of this as a wonderful privilege and blessing where they were guided by the Holy Spirit.²⁸

Thus, during the first 100 years of temple building, there were eight temples constructed, two of which were no longer operative (Kirtland and Nauvoo). Of the six temples then in use, only one was outside North America and English remained the dominant language spoken.

With the growth of the Church and the expansion of temples, this sacred work of translation has become a significant part of temple operations. Today this work continues quietly in a very earnest way within the walls of the temple. Under the direction of the First Presidency, a few faithful members are brought from the approved language areas to the temple where they work tirelessly for a short concentrated few weeks in translating the temple ordinances into their native language. There is a significant correlation process that ensures the words of the scripture and the words of the temple ceremonies remain consistent from language to language. One can visualize the multiple interpretations one meaningful word like “eternal” or “covenant” might have in different languages.

An additional complexity occurs when the translated text is recorded and matched to the existing film. Think for a moment how challenging it would be to take the language of one country and try to fit it to the mouth movements of the film, which was recorded in English.

Today the temple ceremonies have been translated into 80 languages, and recorded in 78.

An Inspired Innovation Is Implemented

The second century of temple building would begin rather quietly, with only one temple, the Idaho Falls Temple, constructed and dedicated in the first 19 years. Then some remarkable things began to happen.

The First Presidency felt impressed to build a temple on the European Continent. However, the traditional manner in which the ordinances were administered posed some significant challenges. How could the endowment, for example, be effectively administered in the multiple languages of the European members?

In 1953, President David O. McKay was inspired to call upon the talents of a 43-year-old Church worker by the name of Gordon B. Hinckley. Brother Hinckley was assigned the task of finding “a way to present temple instruction in the various languages of Europe while using a minimum number of temple workers.”²⁹

Given access to a small room on the 5th floor of the Salt Lake Temple, Brother Hinckley spent evenings, Saturdays, and even Sunday mornings pondering, praying, and working on possible solutions to accomplishing the task. President McKay would often meet with him on Sunday mornings in the Temple. Finally, the answer came that the endowment should be placed on film.

The large assembly room on the 5th floor of the Salt Lake Temple was fitted as a sacred area where the temple film was first completed in English and then in the European languages of Dutch, German, French, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish. At that time, unlike what is done today, each film required different casts for each of the individual languages.

A month prior to the dedication of the Swiss Temple, at the direction of the First Presidency, Gordon B. Hinckley was asked to personally deliver the films to the temple in Bern. Miraculously, and with wise preparation, he safeguarded the sacred films through Swiss customs in time for the temple dedication on 11 September 1955.

It is interesting, this same Brother Hinckley, who had such a major part in enabling the Swiss Temple to open in 1955, would 37-years later return to that temple as a member of the First Presidency, and rededicate it following extensive remodeling.

The Expansion of International Temples

Enabling the temple ordinances to be administered in multiple languages was a major step in allowing temples to be built outside of North America.

As the Church grew in other lands, and the Saints gathered to areas of strength, the blessings of the temple became available to them.

The South Pacific received her first temple in 1958, with the dedication of the Hamilton New Zealand Temple. This came in

13 Operating Temples in 1958



fulfillment of a statement made three years earlier when President McKay had told the Saints in Samoa:

“I envision that someday there will be a temple in the South Seas to which you and your children may go to receive the blessings of the House of the Lord. Just where it will be we cannot say this morning, but it will be nearer than Salt Lake City.”

A similar expression was voiced by President Howard W. Hunter almost 40 years later, when he declared:

“We desire to bring the temples closer to our people.”³⁰

In September of 1958, President McKay dedicated the London England Temple. However, two decades would pass before another international temple was dedicated, this time in Sao Paulo Brazil, in October 1978.

In the next several decades temples would follow in the countries of Japan, Samoa, Tonga, Chile, Tahiti, Mexico, Australia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Guatemala, Germany, Sweden, South Africa, Korea, Peru, and Argentina.

Temples Built According to the Will of the Lord

Truly, as President Brigham Young had once said, temples were being multiplied “according to the wants of the people”³¹

However, those “wants” must always be in accord with the will of the Lord, for as President Harold B. Lee reminded us:

“Remember, it is the Lord that decides where a temple shall be built. And when He inspires the President of the Church, that is where the temple will be built. . . . We build them when and where the Lord wants His temples and their influence to be established.”³²

President Ezra Taft Benson reminded us of another principle governing the building of temples. There must be a sufficiently strong base of Church members to support the work of the temple. Said President Benson:

“We don’t build temples until the Church is well established in a country. Our predecessors have prophesied that temples will dot the landscape of North and South America, the isles of the Pacific, Europe, and elsewhere. If this redemptive work is to be done on the scale it must be, hundreds of temples will be needed. Our first step then is to see that nations are opened to receive the gospel so that stakes may be established.”³³

47 Operating Temples in 1995



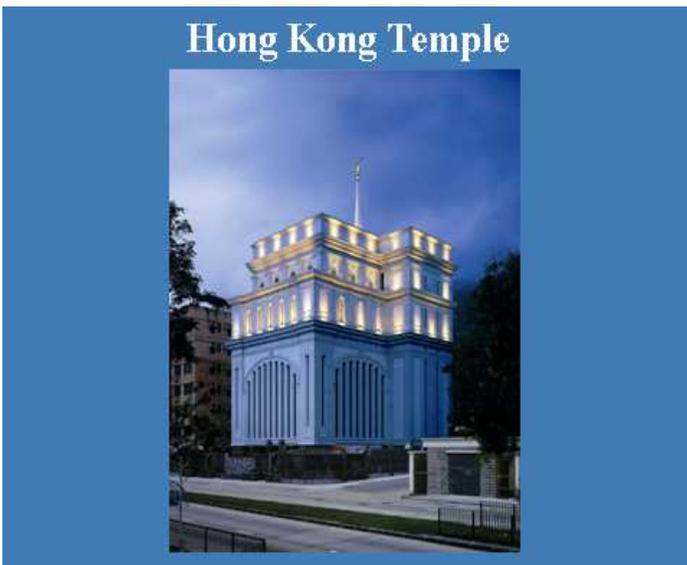
The Influence of President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gordon B. Hinckley was called as a General Authority at April conference in 1958. Three and one-half years later, he was called to be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In July of 1981, he was called to serve as a counselor in the First Presidency. At that time, there were 19 operating temples in the Church.

By the time he became the President of the Church on 12 March 1995, there were 47 operating temples of the Church, 24 of which he had dedicated. He had also rededicated an additional four following remodeling.

Temple work has been a major part of his life and ministry. As already mentioned, he was working at the direction of the First Presidency in several aspects of temple work expansion. Inspiration given to him led to the introduction of other significant aspects of temple work and temple construction.

In 1992 President Hinckley visited Hong Kong to find a suitable site for a temple. He felt very unsettled about the various sites shown him during his visit. Then one morning the Lord revealed the answer. “Something very interesting came into my mind,” he recorded in his journal.



“I did not hear a voice with my natural ears. But into my mind there came the voice of the Spirit. It said, ‘Why are you worried about this? You have a wonderful piece of property where the mission home and the small chapel stand. They are in the very heart of Kowloon, in the location with the best transportation. . . . Build a building of stories. It can include a chapel and classrooms on the first two floors and a temple on the top two or three floors’ . . . I relaxed and went back to sleep.”³⁴

Thus, the concept of building a temple as part of another building came into being. This same concept was used later in constructing the Manhattan New York Temple.

The Inspiration to Build Smaller Temples

President Hinckley pondered much about the need for temples to be in closer proximity to the members of the Church. It was while pondering such a need that another inspired innovation came to his mind. In June 1997, he attended the centennial observance of Juarez Academy in Colonia Juarez, Mexico, reached by a 3 ½ hour automobile ride from the airport in El Paso, Texas.

“As we were riding to El Paso,” he said, “I reflected on what we could do to help these people in the Church colonies in Mexico. They’ve been so very faithful over the years. They’ve kept the faith. They’ve gone on missions in large numbers. These stakes have produced very many mission presidents who served faithfully and well. They’ve been the very epitome of faithfulness.

“And yet, they’ve had to travel all the way to Mesa, Arizona to go to a temple.

“I thought of these things and what could be done. The concept of smaller temples came into my mind.

“I concluded we didn’t need the laundry. We didn’t need to rent temple clothing. We didn’t need eating facilities. These have been added for the convenience of the people, but are not necessary [for the temple ordinances].”

Responding to his impressions, he said, “I took a piece of paper and sketched out the [floor] plan, and turned it over to the architects to refine it. The concept is beautiful. It’s a very workable concept.”³⁵

President Hinckley introduced the concept of smaller temples at the October 1997 general conference, and announced the first three such temples would be built in Anchorage, Alaska; the LDS colonies in northern Mexico; and in Monticello, Utah.

Monticello Temple



Listen to these words of tender concern and the resolution coming through the President of the Church.

“There are many areas of the Church that are remote, where the membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the near future. Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of the temple ordinances? While visiting such an area a few months ago, we prayerfully pondered this question. The answer, we believe, came bright and clear.

“We will construct small temples in some of these areas, buildings with all of the facilities to administer all of the ordinances. They would be built to temple standards, which are much higher than meetinghouse standards. They would accommodate baptisms for the dead, the endowment service, sealings, and all other ordinances to be had in the Lord’s house for both the living and the dead.

“They would be presided over, wherever possible, by local men called as temple presidents, just as stake presidents are called. They would have an indefinite period of appointment. They would live in the area, in their own homes. One counselor would serve as temple recorder, the other as temple engineer. All ordinance workers would be local people who would serve in other capacities in their wards and stakes.

“Patrons would be expected to have their own temple clothing, thereby making unnecessary the construction of very costly laundries. A simple laundry would take care of baptismal clothing. There would be no eating facilities.

“These structures would be open according to need, maybe only one or two days a week—that would be left to the judgment of the temple president. Where possible, we would place such a building on the same grounds as the stake center, using the same parking lot for both facilities, thereby effecting a great savings.

“One of these small temples can be constructed for about the same cost it takes just to maintain a large temple for a single year. It can be constructed in a relatively short time, several months. I repeat that none of the essentials would be missing. Every ordinance performed in the house of the Lord would be available. These small buildings would have at least half the capacity of some of our much larger temples. They could be expanded when needed. . . .

“The operation of such temples will require some measure of sacrifice on the part of our faithful local Saints. They not only will serve as ordinance workers; it will be expected that they will clean the buildings and take care of them. But the burden will not be heavy; in view of the blessings, it will be light indeed. There will be no paid employees; all of the work of operation will represent faith and devotion and dedication”³⁶

Are you not struck by the detail of the Lord’s prophet in even the operations of the temples.

A Major Announcement and Achievement

At the conclusion of the April 1998 general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the construction of “30 smaller temples immediately.” Counting the number of temples already under construction, and those already dedicated, would bring the total temples to 98. The president then remarked, “I think we had better add 2 more to make it an even 100 by the end of this century, being 2,000 years ‘since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh.’³⁷ In this program we are moving on a scale the like of which we have never seen before.”³⁸ Of the existing operating temples today, 58 are the so-called smaller temples prompted by the visit to the colonies of Northern Mexico.

On 1 October 2000, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the Boston Massachusetts Temple, the 100th operating temple of the Church. Two months later, in December, he dedicated two temples in Brazil, bringing the total to 102 operating temples by the end of the year 2000. During this year alone, 34 new temples were dedicated. And with each, remarkable spiritual experiences touched the lives of many members and yet-to-be members.

102 Operating Temples in 2000



The statements of friends and Church members alike were heart warming.

Newspaper headline in Ascension, Paraguay: “Prophet comes to dedicate temple.”

Missionary comment: “They are asking me questions.”

Guest at open house: “What is the feeling I have here.” (She returned 20 times).

Less active member: “I feel the spirit I felt when I was baptized.”

When the Salt Lake Temple was completed, President Woodruff opened the doors for anyone who wished to, to come in and see the temple. He said essentially, we have nothing to hide and we want you to see the temple.³⁹ President Hinckley has continued this practice today. Each temple site offers at least a two week period where guests and members alike can see the interior of the temple.

Imagine if you will a husband and wife team, he a currently serving stake president and she his loving companion, hosting 30 friends in a walk through of the temple. As they arrive at the Celestial room, no words are spoken and they simply feel the Spirit of the Lord. They are then led to a sealing room where the guides bear their testimony of the holy temple and then explain the nature of being sealed together in the very room where they are seated. One of the couples is invited to stand in front of the reflecting mirrors and then the host explains the symbolism of eternity. I have in my memory many couples with moist eyes feeling they have just been taught a truth that they want to believe in.

Speaking of the remarkable achievement of building 102 temples, President Hinckley said:

“When I announced in conference that I hoped we would see the dedication of the 100th operating temple before the end of the year 2000, I wondered if it were possible. I cannot say enough of thanks to the many men and women who have worked so long and so hard to bring this miracle to pass. Some of these new temples are smaller. But every ordinance that can be performed in the Salt Lake Temple, the largest in the Church, can be performed in these smaller temples. They are devoted exclusively to ordinance work. They are beautiful structures, well built in every respect. And they have made possible a much easier journey to the house of the Lord for thousands upon thousands of our people. We shall go on building them.”⁴⁰

I am grateful for the statement made by President Hinckley. **“We shall go on building them!”**

Summary and Conclusion

I commenced my remarks by quoting words spoken by the first Prophet of this dispensation, in the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple: *“Thou Hast Commanded Thy Servants to Build a House to Thy Name.”⁴¹* And in continuing response to that divine injunction, I repeat the words of the current prophet of the Lord, “We shall go on building them.”

The Prophet Joseph warned that to neglect the work of the temples and family history (which is *one* work) is to place our own salvation in jeopardy.

“For [the salvation of those we refer to as dead, but who are living in the spirit world] is necessary and essential to our salvation.”⁴²

The gathering of family history records is not an end in itself. As President Hinckley has reminded us:

“Family research would serve no other purpose than the satisfaction of curiosity if the temple work did not follow. Likewise, only a portion of the purpose of temples would be met if there were not family history research.”⁴³

Again, to quote President Hinckley:

“This is the greatest era of temple building in all the history of the world. But it is not enough. We must continue to pursue it until we have a dedicated temple within reach of our faithful people everywhere.”⁴⁴

May each of us do our part in this great redemptive work, and personally accept the challenge of the First Presidency to “redouble our efforts and our faithfulness in going to the temple.”⁴⁵

I am grateful for the commandment to build temples. I know the ordinances performed in the temple are eternal gifts from our Heavenly Father. I bear testimony that the temple is the House of the Lord. I likewise bear testimony that our loving Heavenly Father lives and that His Jesus Christ came and still comes to His holy temple.

Atop each of the temples built in recent years is the statue of the Angel Moroni. At the media conference of the Nauvoo Temple, the press asked a question about the facing of the angel towards the west rather than in the traditional easterly direction. President Hinckley answered with an inspired statement which he later quoted in general conference.

“Today, facing west, on the high bluff overlooking the city of Nauvoo, thence across the Mississippi, and over the plains of Iowa, there stands Joseph’s temple, a magnificent house of God. Here in the Salt Lake Valley, facing east to that beautiful temple in Nauvoo, stands Brigham’s temple, the Salt Lake Temple. They look toward one another as bookends between which there are volumes that speak of the suffering, the sorrow, the sacrifice, even the deaths of thousands who made the long journey from the Mississippi River to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.”⁴⁶

While the physical placement of the Angel has no religious significance, it is a stirring, public reminder of the blessings of the restoration of the gospel in this dispensation. May I conclude this message tonight by sharing with you a video clip of the placement of the Angel Moroni on a recently dedicated temple.



I share my testimony and this presentation with you in the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

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- ¹ D&C 109:2
- ² Doctrine and Covenants 109:10 - 13
- ³ Ensign, November 2005 Opening Remarks
- ⁴ D&C 88:119
- ⁵ D&C 95:11 - 12
- ⁶ D&C 109:7, 10
- ⁷ D&C 109:7, 14; CF 88:118
- ⁸ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City, 1946-49]
- ⁹ D&C 110
- ¹⁰ D&C 109:37
- ¹¹ *History of the Church* 2:428
- ¹² 2 Nephi 28:30
- ¹³ D&C 115:8-10
- ¹⁴ D&C 124:15-41
- ¹⁵ *BYU Studies* 9 [Spring 1979]: 343
- ¹⁶ *Deseret Weekly*, 25 Apr. 1891, 554
- ¹⁷ D&C 124:29-32
- ¹⁸ *History of the Church* 4:446
- ¹⁹ *Times and Seasons*, 15 September 1844, 651
- ²⁰ James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965-75], 1: 247
- ²¹ Andrew K. Larsen, *Erastus Snow* [1971], 96
- ²² Improvement Era, 1930
- ²³ *Journal of Discourses*, 1:133
- ²⁴ Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, *Every Stone a Sermon*, 9:66
- ²⁵ John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 23, Nov. 9, 1881
- ²⁶ Richard O. Cowan, *Temples to Dot the Earth* [1989], 74
- ²⁷ CN, March 13, 1965
- ²⁸ Regional Studeies on LDS History: Arizona Temple and the Lamanites
- ²⁹ Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1996], 176
- ³⁰ *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 8
- ³¹ *Journal of Discourses*, 1:262
- ³² *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, compiled by Clyde J. Williams [1966], 582-583
- ³³ *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, compiled by Reed A. Benson [1988], 247
- ³⁴ Gordon B. Hinckley Journal, 26 July 1992
- ³⁵ *LDS Church News*, August 1, 1998, C3
- ³⁶ *Ensign*, November 1997, 49-50
- ³⁷ D&C 20:1
- ³⁸ *Ensign*, May 1998, 88
- ³⁹ Salt Lake Tribune, 6 April 1893
- ⁴⁰ *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 68
- ⁴¹ D&C 109:2; emphasis added
- ⁴² D&C 128:15
- ⁴³ *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 569
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 629
- ⁴⁵ Letter of the First Presidency, 11 March 2003
- ⁴⁶ Gordon B. Hinckley, *O That I Were An Angel, and Could Have the Wish of Mine Heart,* "General Conference October 2002