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Prepare to Meet God

Pursuing divinely appointed responsibilities in righteousness, unity, and equality will prepare us to meet God.

E liza R. Snow, speaking of the Kirtland Temple dedication (which she attended), said: “The ceremonies of that dedication may be rehearsed, but no mortal language can describe the heavenly manifestations of that memorable day. Angels appeared to some, while a sense of divine presence was realized by all present, and each heart was filled with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”¹

The divine manifestations that occurred in the Kirtland Temple were foundational to the purpose of the restored Church of Jesus Christ to bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of our Heavenly Father’s children.² As we prepare to meet God, we can know what our divinely appointed responsibilities are by reviewing the sacred keys restored in the Kirtland Temple.

In the dedicatory prayer, the Prophet Joseph Smith humbly petitioned the Lord “to accept of this house . . . which thou didst command us to build.”³

One week later, on Easter Sunday, the Lord appeared in a magnificent vision and accepted His temple. This occurred on April 3, 1836, almost exactly 182 years ago from this Easter Sunday. It was also the Passover season—one of those rare times when Easter and Passover overlap. After the vision closed,

three ancient prophets, Moses, Elias, and Elijah, appeared and committed keys which were essential to accomplish the Lord’s purpose for His restored Church in this dispensation. That purpose has been simply, but eloquently, defined as gathering Israel, sealing them as families, and preparing the world for the Lord’s Second Coming.⁴

For both Elijah and Moses to appear was a “striking parallel . . . [with] Jewish tradition, according to which Moses and Elijah would arrive together at the ‘end of time.’”⁵ In our doctrine, this appearance accomplished the foundational restoration of certain keys “given . . . for the last days and for the last time, in the which is the dispensation of the fulness of times.”⁶

The Kirtland Temple, both in location and size, was relatively obscure. But in terms of its enormous significance to mankind, it was *eternity-shaping*. Ancient prophets restored priesthood keys for the eternal saving ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This resulted in overwhelming joy for faithful members.

These keys provide the “power from on high”⁷ for divinely appointed responsibilities that constitute the primary purpose of the Church.⁸ On that



wonderful Easter day in the Kirtland Temple, three keys were restored:

First, Moses appeared and committed the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, which is missionary work.⁹

Second, Elias appeared and committed the keys of the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, which includes the restoration of the Abrahamic covenant.¹⁰ President Russell M. Nelson has taught that the purpose of the covenant keys is to prepare members for the kingdom of God. He said, “We know who we are and [we know] what God expects of us.”¹¹

Third, Elijah appeared and committed the keys of the sealing power in this dispensation, which is family history work and temple ordinances enabling salvation for the living and the dead.¹²

There are, under the direction of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, three executive councils at Church headquarters that oversee these divinely appointed responsibilities based on the keys that were restored in the Kirtland Temple. They are the Missionary Executive Council, the Priesthood and Family Executive Council, and the Temple and Family History Executive Council.

Where Do We Stand Today in Fulfilling These Divinely Appointed Responsibilities?

First, with respect to Moses’s restoration of the keys for the gathering of Israel, today almost 70,000 missionaries are spread across the earth preaching His gospel to gather His elect. This is the commencement of the fulfillment of the great and marvelous work Nephi foresaw among both the Gentiles and the house of Israel. Nephi saw our time when the Saints of God would be upon



all the face of the earth, but their numbers would be small because of wickedness. However, he foresaw that they would be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”¹³ When viewed across the brief history of the restored Church, the missionary effort has been most remarkable. We are seeing the fulfillment of Nephi’s vision. Though our numbers are relatively few, we will continue our effort and outreach to those who will respond to the Savior’s message.

Second, Elias appeared and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, declaring that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed. In this conference, significant guidance has been presented to assist in perfecting the Saints and preparing them for the kingdom of God.¹⁴ The announcement in the priesthood session with respect to elders and high priests quorums will unleash priesthood power and authority. Home and visiting teaching, now “ministering,” as taught so eloquently in this session, will prepare Latter-day Saints to meet God.

Third, Elijah committed the sealing keys of this dispensation. For those of us alive at this time, the increase in temples and family history work is phenomenal. This pace will continue and accelerate until the Second Coming of the Savior, lest the whole earth “be utterly wasted at his coming.”¹⁵

Family history work, heaven-blessed by technology, has dramatically increased in the past few years. We would be unwise to become complacent about this divinely appointed responsibility and expect that Aunt Jane or some other committed relative will take care of it. Let me share President Joseph Fielding Smith’s jarring comments: “None is exempt from this great obligation. It is required of the apostle as well as the humblest elder [or sister]. Place, or distinction, or long service in the Church . . . will not entitle one to disregard the salvation of one’s dead.”¹⁶

We now have temples across the world and the resources of the patron assistance fund to help those in need who are far from a temple.

As individuals, we would do well to evaluate our effort in pursuing missionary work, temple and family history work, and preparations to meet God.

Righteousness, Unity, and Equality before the Lord Undergird These Sacred Responsibilities

With respect to righteousness, this life is the time for all of us to prepare to meet God.¹⁷ The Book of Mormon provides multiple examples of the tragic consequences when individuals or groups fail to keep the commandments of God.¹⁸

During my lifetime, worldly issues and concerns have moved from one

extreme to another—from frivolous and trivial pursuits to serious immorality. It is commendable that nonconsensual immorality has been exposed and denounced.¹⁹ Such nonconsensual immorality is against the laws of God and of society. Those who understand God’s plan should also oppose consensual immorality, which is also a sin. The family proclamation to the world warns “that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring [or, for that matter, anyone else] . . . will one day stand accountable before God.”²⁰

As we look around, we see the devastation of wickedness and addiction at every turn. If, as individuals, we are really concerned about the Savior’s ultimate judgment of us, we should seek repentance. I am afraid many people no longer feel accountable to God and do not turn to the scriptures or the prophets for guidance. If we, as a society, would contemplate the consequences of sin, there would be massive public opposition to pornography and the objectification of women.²¹ As Alma told his son Corianton in the Book of Mormon, “Wickedness never was happiness.”²²

In regard to unity, the Savior declared, “If ye are not one ye are not mine.”²³ We know that the spirit of contention is of the devil.²⁴

In our day, the scriptural imperative for unity is largely ignored, and for many people the emphasis is on tribalism,²⁵ often based on status, gender, race, and wealth. In many countries, if not most, people are deeply divided about how to live. In the Lord’s Church, the only culture we adhere to and teach is the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The unity we seek is to be unified with the Savior and His teachings.²⁶



As we look at the primary purposes of the Church, they are all based on **equality before the Lord**²⁷ and following the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. With respect to missionary work, the principal qualifications for baptism are humbling oneself before God and coming forth with a broken heart and contrite spirit.²⁸ Education, wealth, race, or national origin are not even considered.

In addition, missionaries humbly serve where called. They do not attempt to serve based on worldly standards of status or preparation for future careers. They serve with all their heart, might, mind, and strength wherever they are assigned. They do not choose their missionary companions, and they seek diligently to develop Christlike attributes,²⁹ which are at the heart of the culture of Jesus Christ.

The scriptures give guidance for our most important relationships. The Savior taught that the first commandment was to “love the Lord thy God.” And the second is to “love thy neighbour as thyself.”³⁰

The Savior additionally explained that everyone is our neighbor.³¹ The Book of Mormon makes it clear that there must be no -ites, tribes, or classes.³² We must be united and equal before God.

Sacred ordinances and divine responsibilities are built upon this premise. I would expect that your own experiences in the temple would be similar to mine. When I would

leave my workaday world in San Francisco and arrive at the Oakland Temple, I would experience an overwhelming feeling of love and peace. A major part of that was sensing I was closer to God and His purposes. The saving ordinances were my primary focus, but a significant part of those beautiful feelings was the equality and unity that permeate the temple. Everyone is dressed in white clothing. There is no evidence of wealth, rank, or educational attainment; we are all brothers and sisters humbling ourselves before God.

In the sacred sealing room, the eternal marriage ordinance is the same for everyone. I love the fact that the couple from the humblest background and the couple from the wealthiest background have exactly the same experience. They wear the same type of robes and make the same covenants across the same altar. They also receive the same eternal priesthood blessings. This is accomplished in a beautiful temple built by the tithes of the Saints as the sacred house of the Lord.

Fulfilling divinely appointed responsibilities, based on righteousness, unity, and equality before the Lord, brings personal happiness and peace in this world and prepares us for eternal life in the world to come.³³ It prepares us to meet God.³⁴

We pray that each of you, regardless of your current circumstances, will counsel with your bishop and be worthy of a temple recommend.³⁵

We are grateful that many more members are preparing to go to the temple. There has been a significant increase in the number of worthy adult temple recommend holders for many years. Limited-use recommends for worthy youth have increased dramatically over the last two years. Clearly the

faithful core membership of the Church has never been stronger.

In conclusion, please be assured that senior Church leaders who preside over the divinely appointed purposes of the Church receive divine assistance. This guidance comes from the Spirit and sometimes directly from the Savior. Both kinds of spiritual guidance are given. I am grateful to have received such assistance. But guidance is given in the Lord's time, line upon line and precept upon precept,³⁶ when "an omniscient Lord deliberately chooses to school us."³⁷ Guidance for the Church as a whole comes only to His prophet.

We have all had the privilege of sustaining President Russell M. Nelson as our prophet and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this conference. The Twelve, as a group and individually, had a significant spiritual experience when we laid our hands on President Nelson's head and President Dallin H. Oaks,

acting as voice, ordained him and set him apart as President of the Church. I testify that he was foreordained and has been prepared his entire life to be the Lord's prophet for our day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Eliza R. Snow, in Janiece Johnson and Jennifer Reeder, *The Witness of Women: Firsthand Experiences and Testimonies from the Restoration* (2016), 124; see also Eliza R. Snow, in Edward Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (1877), 65.
2. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 109:4.
4. See Russell M. Nelson, "Epistles of the Lord" (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 25, 2015), 1–2.
5. Stephen D. Ricks, "The Appearance of Elijah and Moses in the Kirtland Temple and the Jewish Passover," *BYU Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Fall 1983), 485.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 112:30.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 38:38; see also Doctrine and Covenants 43:16; 84:20–21.
8. See *Handbook 2*, 2.2. The fourth responsibility, care for the poor and needy, did not need restored keys but does rely on the divinely inspired Church organization.
9. The Missionary Executive Council oversees this divinely appointed responsibility. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.
10. The Priesthood and Family Executive Council oversees this divinely appointed responsibility. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:12.
11. Russell M. Nelson, "Covenants," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 88.
12. The Temple and Family History Executive Council oversees this divinely appointed responsibility. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16.
13. 1 Nephi 14:14; see also 1 Nephi 14:5, 7, 12.
14. See Mosiah 18:9; Alma 6:1; 32:37; see also Jeffrey R. Holland, "Emissaries to the Church," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 61–62, 67.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 2:3.
16. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (1955), 2:148–49.
17. See Alma 34:32.
18. A recurring theme in the Book of Mormon is that if the people keep the commandments, they will prosper in the land, but if they do not keep the commandments, they will be cut off from the presence of the Lord. See, among others, 2 Nephi 1:9; 4:4; Alma 9:13.
19. This has occurred in the #MeToo movement.
20. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
21. See Ross Douthat, "Let's Ban Porn," *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 2018, SR11.
22. Alma 41:10.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
24. See 3 Nephi 11:29.
25. See David Brooks, "The Retreat to Tribalism," *New York Times*, Jan. 2, 2018, A15.
26. See John 17:21–22.
27. See 2 Nephi 26:33: "All are alike unto God," including "black and white, bond and free, male and female."
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
29. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), chapter 6.
30. See Matthew 22:36–39.
31. See Luke 10:29–37.
32. See 4 Nephi 1:17.
33. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
34. See Alma 34:32.
35. The temple recommend interview questions are a good evaluation of how we are doing in living the gospel.
36. See 2 Nephi 28:30; Doctrine and Covenants 98:12; 128:21.
37. Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (2007), 31.

