

# Salvation for the Dead

## Lesson 45

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**Purpose** To help class members gain an appreciation of God's eternal plan and a desire to participate in the salvation of their ancestors.

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**Preparation**

1. Prayerfully study Malachi 4:5–6; John 3:5; Doctrine and Covenants 138:30; Articles of Faith 1:4.
2. Additional reading: *A Member's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* (34697).
3. Materials needed:
  - a. The plan of salvation chart you made for lesson 2 (or the copy of the chart found in the picture section of the manual).
  - b. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

*Note to the teacher* *The requirements for obtaining exaltation and entering the highest degree in the celestial kingdom include many ordinances that must be done on the earth. Because billions of people have died without any knowledge of these saving ordinances, Heavenly Father has provided a way for all his children to receive them. President Joseph Fielding Smith calls this plan of salvation for the dead "one of the grandest, most reasonable, and soul satisfying doctrines ever revealed to man" (Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:143). Help class members understand this doctrine and become enthusiastic about participating in this work.*

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### **Suggested Lesson Development**

#### **Ordinances are Necessary for Entrance into the Celestial Kingdom**

Chart and  
scripture  
discussion

Display the plan of salvation chart throughout the lesson.

- What are the first principles and ordinances of the gospel?

Invite a class member to recite the fourth article of faith to help answer the question.

- Why are the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost important to us?

Have class members read and mark John 3:5. Point out that these ordinances are necessary for entrance into the celestial kingdom. Explain that these are earthly ordinances that must be performed here on earth.

- How many people do you think have lived on the earth and then died without hearing the gospel, being baptized, or receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost?
- What will happen to these people?

Explain that if these people never receive earthly ordinances, they will be unable to enter the celestial kingdom, regardless of their righteousness. However, Heavenly Father's plan of salvation applies to all his children, and he has provided a way for these people to hear the gospel and receive the ordinances, even though they were unable to do so when they were on the earth.

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### **We Can Help Those Who Have Died without Gospel Ordinances**

Story

Relate the following story told by Elder Royden G. Derrick, who was a member of the Seventy:

"When I was a young child, our family was anxious for the return of Uncle Orson. My mother had deep feelings about the matter, which she implanted in her children. For some reason I always watched for Uncle Orson to come to the back door of our home. I remember on a number of occasions when a peddler would come to the back door. I would pull on my mother's dress to get her attention and ask, 'Is this Uncle Orson, huh?' But the answer was always no.

". . . Uncle Orson was born in 1881. Fourteen months later his father died, leaving him without the guidance of a father during those critical early years. When he was 17 years old, he, with a group of other boys his own age, went to Saltair, a dance pavilion on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. Before the evening was over, they became drunk and ended up in the county jail.

"The following morning, parents and family members came to the jail house and obtained their sons' releases. Many of them put their arms around their sons and built them into pillars in the community. But unknown to my grandmother, Uncle Orson was released from jail, given a one-way ticket to the Northwest, and told never to return.

"Mother said that on occasions she would hear her mother sobbing in her bedroom during the night. When she went to her mother's side, her mother would say, 'I wonder where my wandering boy is tonight.'

"Uncle Orson likely worked in the lumber camps of the Northwest in an atmosphere that was not conducive to living the principles of the gospel. If he were living today, he would be very old. It is most likely that he has gone to the world of spirits by now. . . .

"My good friend, Joseph S. Nelson, died a few months ago at age 86. He was a great missionary during his life. He served four missions. . . . I've been searching the scriptures to find [what he is doing now]—and here he is:

"I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead' (D&C 138:57). . . .

"I have loved Uncle Orson from childhood because I inherited a longing for him. I want so much to buy him a return ticket home to his eternal family. . . .

“I wonder if my good friend Joe Nelson might find Uncle Orson and teach him the gospel truths that his father would have taught him in mortality had he been here to do so” (“Find Them,” *New Era*, Sept. 1981, 4–6).

Scripture  
discussion

Have class members read and mark Doctrine and Covenants 138:30. Remind them that after Christ died, he went to the spirit world and organized righteous members of the Church to teach the gospel to those who had died without hearing it. Once these spirits are taught the gospel, they have the same opportunity to accept or reject it as those who are taught on earth.

- If these spirits accept the gospel, what else is required before they can enter the celestial kingdom? (Baptism, bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and other earthly ordinances.)
- How do those who have died receive earthly ordinances? (We can perform these ordinances for them in the temple.)

Write the words *vicarious* and *proxy* on the chalkboard. Explain that to do something vicariously means that a person does something in place of someone else. The person doing the work or activity for another person is called a proxy. In the temple we can be baptized and receive other ordinances for people who have died without receiving the ordinances. We are the ones who go down into the waters of baptism or who have hands placed on our head, but they are the ones for whom the ordinances are in effect.

- What ordinances are performed for the dead in the temple? (Baptism, confirmation and bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost, ordaining to the priesthood for the men, endowment, marriage, and sealing of children to parents.)
- Which of these ordinances can you participate in for someone who is dead?

Explain that any worthy Church member who is at least 12 years old can receive a recommend from the bishop and go to the temple to be baptized and confirmed for the dead. When class members are older and have received their own temple ordinances, they can return to the temple to receive other ordinances for the dead.

If there is a temple nearby, encourage class members to talk to their parents or Young Men and Young Women leaders about arranging a trip to the temple to do baptisms for the dead.

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### How We Can Start Helping Those Who Have Died without the Gospel

Chalkboard  
discussion

Explain that we are each responsible for helping our own ancestors receive temple ordinances.

- What is the first step in performing temple work for our dead? (Finding out who they are.)
- What kind of information do we need to know about our ancestors in order to do their temple work? (The minimum essential information is each person’s name; sex; and one identifying date, such as a birth or death date. However,

the more information we can provide, the better. Other helpful information includes birthplace, parents' names, marriage date, spouse's name, and place of death. All this information should be as accurate as possible.)

- What are some things we can do to find out more about our ancestors?

List class members' responses on the chalkboard. Responses might include asking living relatives for information and copies of records that they may have; doing research at family history centers; writing letters to request copies of birth certificates; looking at census records; and going to cemeteries. You may want to remind class members of the things they discussed in lesson 44 about how to learn about our ancestors.

Encourage class members to discuss with their families, perhaps in family home evening, activities they can do as a family to learn about their ancestors.

Teacher  
presentation

Explain that when a person has the necessary information on an ancestor, he or she can submit the ancestor's name to the temple. If family members want to do the temple work for their own ancestors, the information is held in the family file at a specific temple for a short time until the family members can come to the temple. If family members are unable to do the work, other members of the Church will perform the ordinances.

Story and  
discussion

Read or tell the following story:

While 11-year-old Cindie and her father were taking a walk together, they found an old tombstone. They cleared the moss from it and found the following inscription:

MARYANN DEMING  
wife of Rufus Deming  
died Jan. 5, 1855  
in the 56th year  
of her age

"Cindie said, 'Oh, dad, I can just see what happened. There were Mormon pioneers crossing the plains, and poor Maryann [died], and her husband and children were heartbroken, and they buried her here and sadly left her and went on to Utah. It was so tragic!'"

Cindie's dad replied, "'I don't think so. . . . The Mormon pioneers didn't pass through Lake County, California, in 1855 or any other time. More likely she and her family were here as part of the gold rush or to find a good farm or something like that. But I'm sure you're right about her family being very sad when she died.'"

Cindie was very excited about the thought of using this information to help Maryann's descendants do her temple work:

"'Oh, dad, I can just see it now: one of her great-grandchildren has been looking for her records for just years and years, and they need her death date, and they're praying that someone will find her tombstone and send in the information to the [Family History] Library.'"

Cindie and her parents spent three days collecting information from local cemeteries. They then compiled a book and sent it to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City.

“A few weeks later . . . Cindie came home from school to discover an impressive-looking envelope in the mailbox. Excitedly, she called [her father at work] and read, ‘The Genealogical Society wishes to thank you for your 41-page booklet, *Cemetery Inscriptions of Lake County, California*. You have provided important information which we did not have in our collection—information which will no doubt be very useful to many of our patrons in the years ahead. We congratulate you, at age 11, on having your own author card in our card catalog’” (Terry J. Moyer, “An Author Card for Cindie,” *New Era*, May 1981, 14–17).

- Why was Cindie so excited to find the tombstone, even though the woman was not one of her ancestors? (Although Cindie was not searching out her own ancestors, she was inspired by the Spirit to help others.)
- What can we learn from Cindie’s enthusiasm and determination?

Emphasize that there is much we can do to help our ancestors and others through family history and temple work.

#### Scripture discussion

Have class members read Malachi 4:5–6. Remind them that they discussed these verses during the previous lesson.

- What does it mean to turn our hearts to our fathers? (As we learn about our ancestors and dedicate ourselves to do temple work for them and for others who have died without the gospel, we are turning our hearts towards them.)
- How can this work for the dead help us and them to become perfect? (By being baptized for the dead, we help them fulfill the principles and ordinances of the gospel. This work blesses us as we obey the Lord’s commandment to turn our hearts to those who have died without the gospel.)

#### Quotation

Read or have a class member read the following statement by President Joseph Fielding Smith:

“By this means [doing temple work for the dead] we may help to save those who have gone before and in our limited way become *saviors to many people*. How great shall be the satisfaction of the man and the woman who have performed those ordinances for their dead, when they stand in the presence of their dead, and see their joy and hear expressions of gratitude” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:143).

#### Testimony

Bear testimony, as the Spirit directs, of the importance of doing temple work for the dead. Encourage class members to choose one activity to do this week, by themselves or with their families, that will help them find out more about their ancestors.

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## Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Before class, write on a card, in the most beautiful writing possible, the text of John 3:16 (“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”) and Doctrine and Covenants 14:7 (“And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God”). Place the card in a box and wrap it nicely.

Have class members sit or stand in a circle. Pass the wrapped box around the circle, having each class member tell what the nicest gift he or she could receive would be before passing the box to the next person. When the box comes back to the first class member who spoke, have him or her open it and read the card.

Explain that when we help provide temple ordinances for our ancestors, either by participating in the actual ordinances at the temple or by finding and submitting information so the ordinances can be done by others, we are helping to make “the greatest of all the gifts of God” available to those ancestors.

2. Invite a ward or branch member who has participated in temple work for family members to come to class and share his or her feelings about temple work for the dead. Or invite the ward or branch family history consultant to teach class members more about how to prepare and submit names for temple work.