



Prepare for the Blessings of the Temple

By Elder Russell M. Nelson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

As temples are prepared for the people, the people need to prepare themselves for the temple

Inscribed on each temple are the words “holiness to the Lord.”¹ That statement designates both the temple and its purposes as holy. Those who enter the temple are also to bear the attribute of holiness.² As temples are prepared for the people, the people need to prepare themselves for the temple.

A temple differs from other houses of worship. Unlike chapels, the temple is closed on the Sabbath so that people can attend church and be with their families on that hallowed day. Temples are open for sacred work on other days of the week. A temple is literally the house of the Lord, reserved for ordinances of eternal significance. Those

ordinances include baptisms, marriages, endowments, and sealings.

Each temple is symbolic of our faith in God and an evidence of our faith in life after death. The temple is the object of every activity, every lesson, every progressive step in the Church. All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. Ordinances of the temple are absolutely crucial. We cannot return to God’s glory without them.

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◀ Houston Texas Temple.
Dedicated Aug. 26, 2000.



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spiritual significance of it and the importance of keeping the sacred covenants and obligations we make in receiving this gift. Each “temple ordinance is not just a ritual to go through, it is an act of solemn promising.”³

The temple endowment was given by revelation. Thus, it is best understood by revelation, vigorously sought with a pure heart. President Brigham Young explained that “your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, . . . and gain your eternal exaltation.”⁴

Obedience to the sacred covenants made in temples qualifies us for eternal life

In each temple the sealing authority of the priesthood is exercised. President Gordon B. Hinckley explained that “no king, no president of a nation, no official of any entity in the world of which we are a part has any authority over matters beyond the grave. Everyone is helpless before the reach of death, but the humblest, good, righteous high priest who has received the sealing authority may bind in the heavens that which is bound on the earth.”⁵

Just as priesthood is eternal—without beginning or end—so is the authority of that priesthood.⁶ Consequently, the ordinances and covenants

of the priesthood also transcend time. The first revelation given by the angel Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith referred to this priesthood authority.⁷ In later instructions to the Prophet regarding the temple, the Lord said:

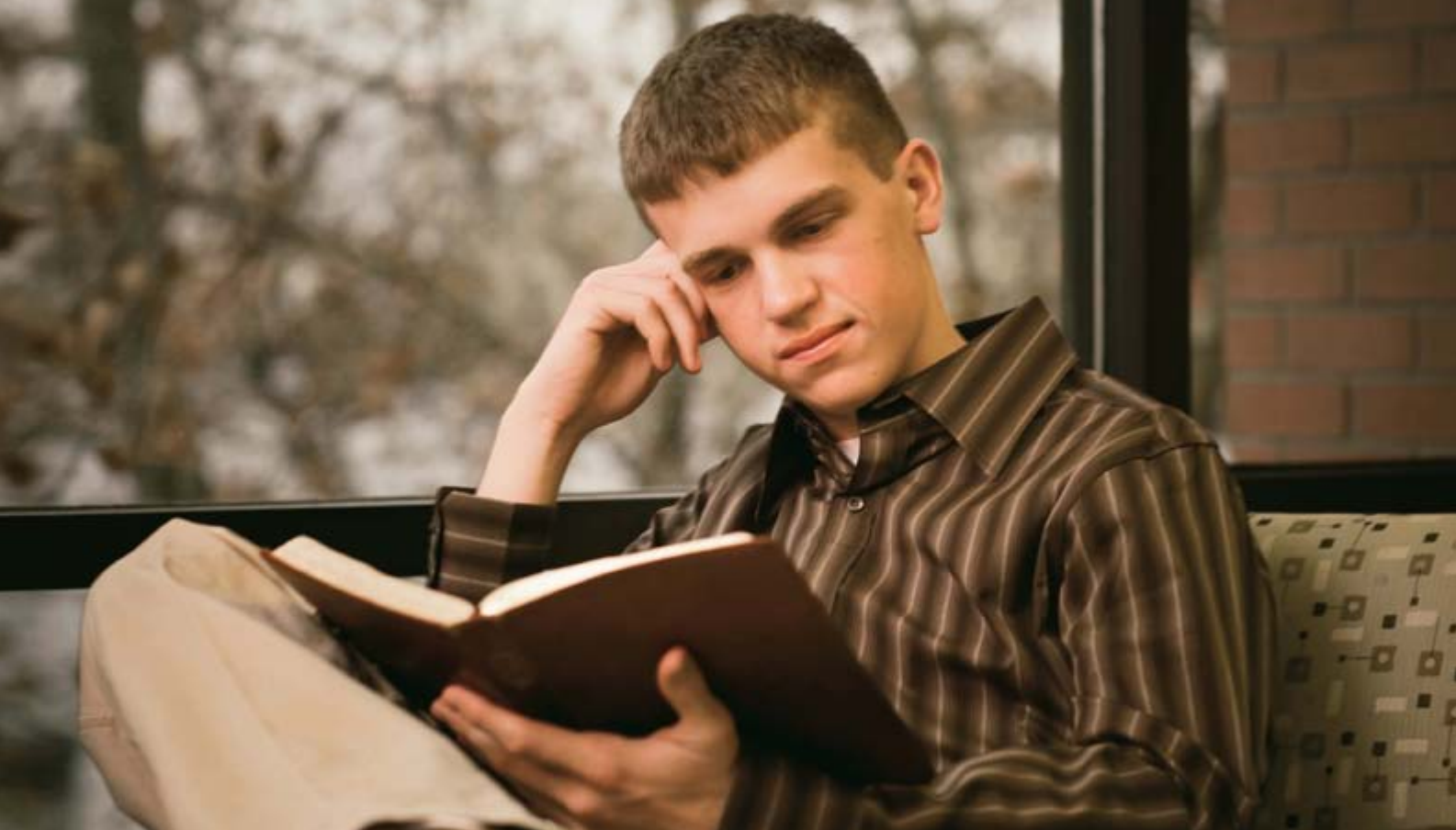
“Let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people;

“For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times.”⁸

We are living in that dispensation. Temples, ordinances, covenants, endowments, and sealings have been restored, precisely as prophesied. Ordinances of the temple provide for reconciliation with the Lord and seal families together forever. Obedience to the sacred covenants made in temples qualifies us for eternal life—the greatest gift of God to man.⁹

Anyone who is willing to prepare well may enter the temple

Because a temple is sacred, the Lord asks that it be protected from desecration. Anyone may enter who is willing to prepare well for that privilege. The concept of preparation prevails in other fields of endeavor. I remember when I was but a young boy, I told my parents I wanted to attend the university. They said I could, but only if I worked hard in preliminary schooling and met all



the requirements for admission to the university. Similarly, we must qualify for admission to the temple. We prepare physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Eligibility is determined individually for each person applying for a recommend.

Those who hold keys of priesthood authority and responsibility help us prepare by conducting temple recommend interviews. These leaders care for us and help us determine if we are ready to attend the temple. They also love the Lord and ensure “that no unclean thing shall be permitted to come into [His] house.”¹⁰ Thus, these

interviews are conducted in a spirit of accountability.

How do you prepare for a temple recommend? You may consult with your bishopric, as well as your parents, family, stake presidency, teacher, or quorum adviser. The requirements are simple. Succinctly stated, an individual is required to keep the commandments of Him whose house it is. He has set the standards. We enter the temple as His guests.

The Lord would be pleased if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. “Interviews . . . for temple recommends, with

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[members of your bishopric and members of your stake presidency are precious experiences. And, in a way, they could be considered meaningful ‘dress rehearsals’ for that grand colloquy when you will stand before the Great Judge.”¹¹

Prepare physically to go to the temple

Now, with a temple recommend in hand, you are ready for additional preparation. You prepare physically by dressing properly to go to the temple. It is not a place for casual attire. Latter-day prophets have emphasized self-respect for our physical bodies. That respect should be observed especially by those who would enter a holy temple.¹²

In the temple, all are dressed in spotless white. “The symbolic purity of white likewise reminds us that God is to have a pure people.”¹³ Age, nationality, language—even position in the Church—are of secondary significance. I have attended many endowment sessions when the President of the Church participated. Every man in the room was accorded the same high regard that was extended to the President.

All sit side by side and are considered equal in the eyes of the Lord. Through a democracy of dress, temple attendance reminds us that “God is no respecter of persons.”¹⁴

Brides and grooms enter the temple to be married for time and all eternity. In the temple, brides wear dresses that are white, long sleeved, modest in design and fabric, and free of elaborate ornamentation. Men do not wear tuxedos or formal wear. President Boyd K. Packer, now President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote: “It is pleasing to the Lord when we bathe our bodies and put on clean clothing, however inexpensive the clothing may be. We should dress in such a way that we might comfortably attend a sacrament meeting or a gathering that is proper and dignified.”¹⁵

Speaking of temple attire, mothers and grandmothers can exert a great influence for good among their children and grandchildren. As their skill and circumstances permit, they can provide tangible motivation for their family. A mother’s gift of a hand-embroidered handkerchief or other article of temple



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▲ Johannesburg South Africa Temple. Dedicated Aug. 24, 1985.



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clothing can be a powerful incentive for a loving child or grandchild to cherish.

The temple garment symbolizes continuing commitment

The wearing of the temple garment bears great symbolic significance and represents a continuing commitment. Just as the Savior gave us an example of His ability to endure to the end, wearing the garment is one way we demonstrate enduring faith in Him and in His eternal covenants with us.

The First Presidency prepared a letter to the Church on this subject. They wrote:

“Practices frequently observed among the members of the Church suggest that some members do not fully understand the covenant they make in the temple to wear the garment in accordance with the spirit of the holy endowment.

“Church members who have been clothed with the garment in the temple have made a covenant to wear it throughout their lives. This has been interpreted to mean that it is worn as underclothing both day and night. . . . The promise of protection and blessings is conditioned upon worthiness and faithfulness in keeping the covenant.

“The fundamental principle ought to be to wear the garment and not to find occasions to remove it. Thus, members should not remove either all or part of the garment to work in the yard or to lounge around the home in swimwear or immodest clothing. Nor should they remove it to participate in recreational activities that can reasonably be done with the garment worn properly beneath regular clothing. When the garment must be removed, such as for swimming, it should be restored as soon as possible.

“The principles of modesty and keeping the body appropriately covered are implicit in the covenant and should govern the nature of all clothing worn. Endowed members of the Church wear the garment as a reminder of the sacred covenants they have made with the Lord and also as a protection against temptation and evil. How it is worn is an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow the Savior.”¹⁶

Prepare mentally and spiritually to go to the temple

In addition to physical preparation, we need to be prepared mentally and spiritually. Because the ordinances and covenants of the temple are sacred, we are under absolute obligation not to discuss outside the temple that which occurs in the temple. Sacred matters deserve sacred consideration.

In this house of learning, we are taught in the Lord’s way. His ways are not our ways.¹⁷ We should not be surprised if teaching techniques differ from those employed in educational pursuits more familiar to us. Temple ordinances and covenants have been an integral part of the gospel since the days of Adam and Eve. Anciently, symbols were used to teach profound truths, and this method of instruction is used in the temple today.

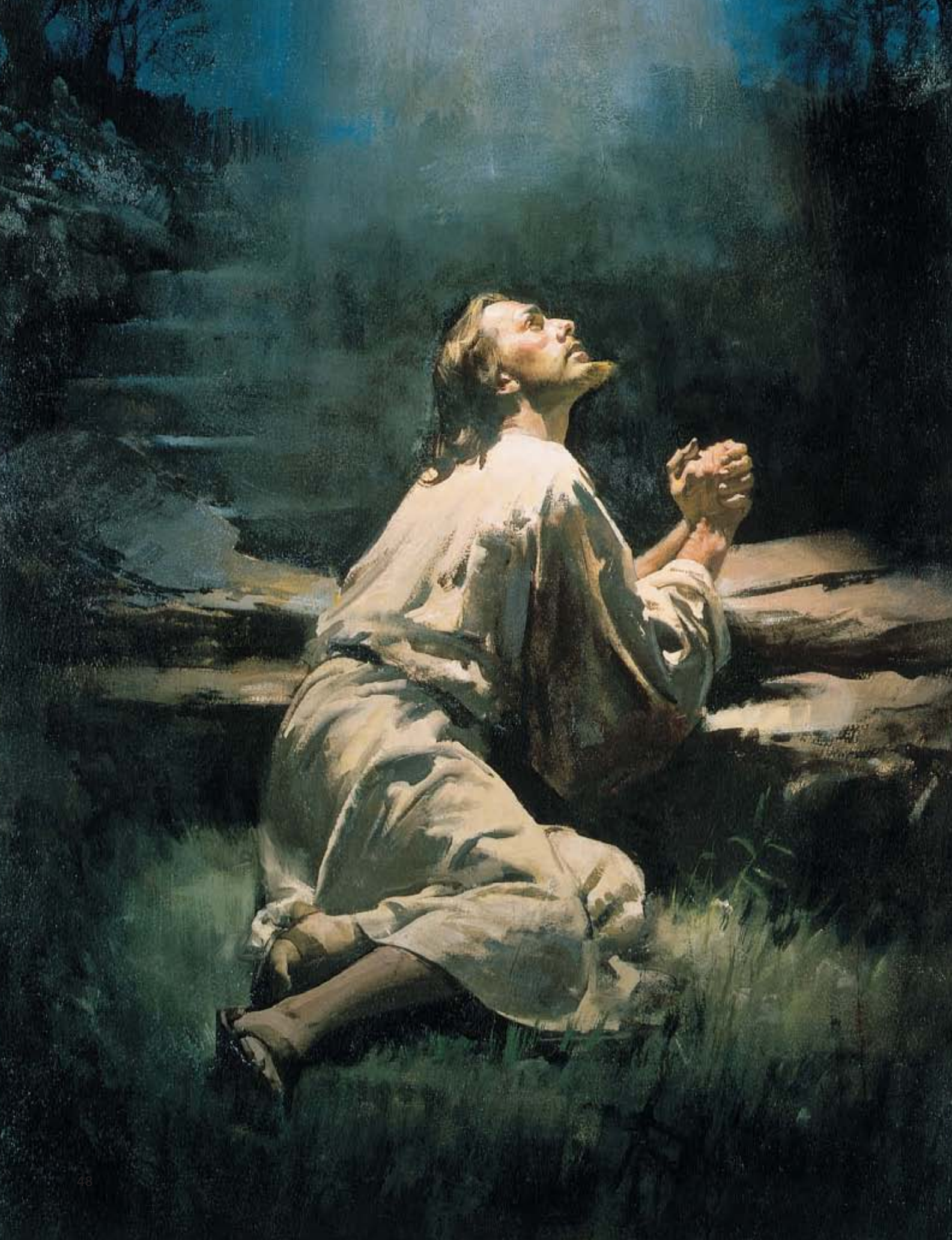
It is necessary, therefore, that we ponder the symbols presented in the temple and see the mighty realities for which each symbol stands.¹⁸ “The temple ordinances are so imbued with symbolic meaning as to provide a lifetime of productive contemplation and learning.”¹⁹ The teachings of the temple are beautifully simple and simply beautiful. They are understood by those who have had little opportunity for education, yet they can excite the intellect of the highly educated.

I recommend that members going to the temple for the first time read entries in the Bible Dictionary that are related to the temple, such as “Anoint,” “Covenant,” “Sacrifices,” and “Temple.” One may also wish to read Exodus, chapters 26–29, and Leviticus, chapter 8. The Old Testament, as well as the books of Moses and Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price, underscores the antiquity of temple work and the enduring nature of its ordinances.



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▲ Helsinki Finland Temple.
Dedicated Oct. 22, 2006.



Without the infinite Atonement, all mankind would be irretrievably lost. Temple ordinances and covenants teach of the redeeming power of the Atonement.

Keeping a covenant with God is both protective and enabling

There are two concepts we especially need to keep in mind as we prepare for the temple. The first is *covenant*. We need to remember that a covenant is a promise. A covenant made with God should be regarded not as restrictive but as protective. Covenants with Him protect us from danger.

This concept is not new. If our water supply is of questionable quality, for example, we filter the water. Similarly, divine covenants shield us from harm. When we choose to deny ourselves of all ungodliness,²⁰ we lose nothing of value and gain glory known only to those who obtain eternal life. Keeping a temple covenant is not constraining but enabling. It elevates us beyond limits of our own perspective and power. It is like the difference between plodding through a muddy field and soaring through the skies in a supersonic jet. Keeping a covenant with God is both protective and enabling.

The second concept to stress in our mental preparation is *Atonement*. The

Atonement of Jesus Christ is the central act of all human history. It is the core of the plan of salvation. Without the infinite Atonement, all mankind would be irretrievably lost. Temple ordinances and covenants teach of the redeeming power of the Atonement.

Eternal life is available to us through our obedience to covenants made in the temple

Service in the temple brings blessings to us in this life as well as in eternity. Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that “temple work is not an escape from the world but a reinforcing of our need to better the world while preparing ourselves for another and far better world. Thus, being in the Lord’s house can help us to be different from the world in order to make more difference in the world.”²¹

If we are true and faithful in this life, we may obtain eternal life. Immortality is to live forever. Eternal life means more than simply being immortal. Eternal life is to gain exaltation in the highest heaven and live in the family unit. God declared that His grand



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—President Joseph Fielding Smith

mission statement—“my work and my glory”—is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”²² His gift of immortality is unconditional—a free gift of salvation to all humankind. The possibility of eternal life—even exaltation—is available to us through our obedience to covenants made and ordinances received in holy temples of God.

The blessings of the temple become most meaningful when our loved ones are taken in death from our family circles. To know that our period of

separation is but temporary provides peace that passes ordinary understanding.²³ President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote, “Through the power of this priesthood which Elijah bestowed, husband and wife may be sealed, or married for eternity; children may be sealed to their parents for eternity; thus the family is made eternal, and death does not separate the members.”²⁴ Blessed with eternal sealings, we can face death as a necessary component of God’s great plan of happiness.²⁵

The eternal perspective we receive in the temple gives us strength to endure the trials of life

An eternal perspective helps us maintain complete fidelity to the covenants we make. President Packer emphasized that “ordinances and covenants become our credentials for admission into [God’s] presence. To worthily receive them is the quest of a lifetime; to keep them thereafter is the challenge of mortality.”²⁶

Ordinances of the temple relate not only to our eternal glory but also to that of our departed ancestors. “For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, . . . they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.”²⁷ Service in their behalf provides an opportunity for our continuing temple worship, selflessly rendered as



a vicarious work patterned after that of the Lord as He wrought the Atonement to bless all who would ever live.

One day we will surely meet our Maker and stand before Him at the bar of judgment. Scripture teaches us that “the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name.”²⁸ The Lord Himself will determine whether we have been true to the covenants we made with Him in the temple and thus merit the glorious blessings He has promised those who keep their covenants.

This perspective gives us strength to endure the trials of life. President Packer stated, “The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father.”²⁹

Each temple stands as a symbol of our membership in the Church, as a sign of our faith in life after death, and as a stepping-stone to eternal glory for us and our family. I pray that each member of the Church will prepare for the marvelous blessings of the temple.

Adapted from *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 17–23

Notes

1. See Exodus 28:36; 39:30; Psalm 93:5.
2. See Exodus 19:5–6; Leviticus 19:1–2; Psalm 24:3–5; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Moroni 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 20:69; 110:6–9; see also Bible Dictionary, “Holiness.”
3. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 638.
4. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 416.
5. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 639.
6. See Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3, in Bible appendix; Alma 13:8.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:1 (dated Sept. 21, 1823); see also 138:47–48.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 124:40–41.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 109:20.
11. Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 75.
12. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 70–71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 52; “Your Greatest Challenge, Mother,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 99. In these addresses, President Hinckley read the statement of the First Presidency and the Twelve that “the Church discourages tattoos. It also discourages the piercing of the body for other than medicinal purposes, although it takes no position on the minimal piercing of the ears by women for one pair of earrings.” See also “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 11; *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 7–8.
13. Neal A. Maxwell, *Not My Will, But Thine* (1988), 135; see also Doctrine and Covenants 100:16.
14. Acts 10:34; see also Moroni 8:12.
15. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (1980), 73.
16. First Presidency letter, Oct. 10, 1988.
17. See Isaiah 55:8–9.
18. See John A. Widtsoe, “Temple Worship,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 62.
19. Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 33; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 27.
20. See Moroni 10:32; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:26, in Matthew 16:24, footnote d.
21. Neal A. Maxwell, *Not My Will, But Thine*, 135.
22. Moses 1:39.
23. See Philippians 4:7.
24. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:118.
25. See Alma 42:8.
26. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 27; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 24.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
28. 2 Nephi 9:41.
29. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 8.



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▲ Recife Brazil Temple.
Dedicated Dec. 15, 2000.