

# TEMPLE PREPARATION

*Those keys—the keys to  
seal and bind on earth, and  
have it bound in heaven—  
represent the consummate  
gift from our God.*

—President Boyd K. Packer

## SELECTED TEACHINGS

### *Temple Worthiness*

#### **President Howard W. Hunter**

“I also invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 8).

#### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

“These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology. I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein. I am satisfied that every man or woman who goes to the temple in a spirit of sincerity and faith leaves the house of the Lord a better man or woman. There is need for constant improvement in all of our lives.

There is need occasionally to leave the noise and the tumult of the world and step within the walls of a sacred house of God, there to feel His spirit in an environment of holiness and peace” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53).

### ***Covenants and Obligations***

#### **President Joseph Fielding Smith**

“If a person violates a covenant, whether it be of baptism, ordination, marriage or anything else, the Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval, and the blessings will not be received” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:45).

#### **Elder James E. Talmage**

“The ordinances of the endowment embody certain obligations on the part of the individual, such as covenant and promise to observe the law of strict virtue and chastity, to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure; to devote both talent and material means to the spread of truth and the uplifting of the race; to maintain devotion to the cause of truth; and to seek in every way to contribute to the great preparation that the earth may be made ready to receive her King,—the Lord Jesus Christ. With the taking of each covenant and the assuming of each obligation a promised blessing is pronounced, contingent upon the faithful observance of the conditions” (*House of the Lord*, 84).

### ***Symbolism of the Temple***

#### **President Hugh B. Brown**

“Here we will not only lay aside the clothing of the street, but the thoughts of the street, and will try not only to clothe our bodies in clean white linen but our minds in purity of thought” (*Continuing the Quest*, 38).

#### **Elder John A. Widtsoe**

“We live in a world of symbols. No man or woman can come out of the temple endowed as he should be, unless he has seen, beyond the symbol, the mighty realities for which the symbols stand” (“Temple Worship,” 62).

## ***Purpose of the Endowment***

### **The Prophet Joseph Smith**

“You need an endowment, brethren, in order that you may be prepared and able to overcome all things” (*History of the Church*, 2:309).

### **President Brigham Young**

“Let me give you a definition in brief. 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” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 416).

### **President Joseph Fielding Smith**

“It is a wonderful thing to come into the Church, but you cannot receive an exaltation until you have made covenants in the house of the Lord and received the keys and authorities that are there bestowed and which cannot be given in any other place on the earth today” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:253).

### **Elder John A. Widtsoe**

“The temple endowment relates the story of man’s eternal journey; sets forth the conditions upon which progress in the eternal journey depends; requires covenants or agreements of those participating, to accept and use the laws of progress; gives tests by which our willingness and fitness for righteousness may be known, and finally points out the ultimate destiny of those who love truth and live by it” (*Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 178).

## ***Understanding the Endowment***

### **Elder John A. Widtsoe**

“The endowment which was given by revelation can best be understood by revelation; and to those who seek most vigorously, with pure hearts, will the revelation be greatest” (“Temple Worship,” 63).

### **Elder Harold B. Lee**

“When you enter a holy temple, you are by that course gaining fellowship with the Saints in God’s eternal kingdom, where time is no more. In the

temples of your God you are endowed not with a rich legacy of worldly treasure, but with a wealth of eternal riches that are above price.

“The temple ceremonies are designed by a wise Heavenly Father who has revealed them to us in these last days as a guide and a protection throughout our lives, that you and I might not fail to merit exaltation in the celestial kingdom where God and Christ dwell” (“Enter a Holy Temple,” *Improvement Era*, June 1967, 144).

### **Elder Carlos E. Asay**

“A few years ago, in a seminar for new temple presidents and matrons, Elder James E. Faust, then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, told about his being called to serve as a General Authority. He was asked only one question by President Harold B. Lee: ‘Do you wear the garments properly?’ to which he answered in the affirmative. He then asked if President Lee wasn’t going to ask him about his worthiness. President Lee replied that he didn’t need to, for he had learned from experience that how one wears the garment is the expression of how the individual feels about the Church and everything that relates to it. It is a measure of one’s worthiness and devotion to the gospel.

“There are some who would welcome a detailed dress code answering every conceivable question about the wearing of the temple garment. They would have priesthood leaders legislate lengths, specify conditions of when and how it should and should not be worn, and impose penalties upon those who missed the mark by a fraction of an inch. Such individuals would have Church members strain at a thread and omit the weightier matters of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Matt. 23:23–26).

“Most Latter-day Saints, however, rejoice over the moral agency extended them by a loving Father in Heaven. They prize highly the trust placed in them by the Lord and Church leaders—a trust implied in this statement made by the Prophet Joseph Smith: ‘I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves.’ [As quoted by John Taylor, *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, 339.]” (“The Temple Garment: ‘An Outward Expression of an Inward Commitment,’” *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 19).

## ARRANGEMENTS FOR A TEMPLE MARRIAGE

Latter-day Saints are taught the importance of being married in the temple. There, the marriage of a bride and groom is sealed for eternity.

There are several details that must be attended to before you can be married in the temple. Some have to do with the laws of the Church and some with civil laws of the land. Since temples are located in many different countries, legal requirements differ.

If you are considering marriage in a certain temple, you should contact that temple and request the necessary information. For temple addresses, please ask your bishop. He should have a copy of the “All Temple Schedule” for the current year.

Listed below are some of the arrangements you should consider.

### *Laws of the Land*

#### **Serological Tests**

Some areas require you to get blood tests to obtain a marriage license.

#### **Marriage License**

If civil law recognizes a temple marriage, you will need a marriage license valid in the civil jurisdiction in which the temple is located.

In the United States and Canada you must take to the temple a legal license that permits you to marry. This license can be obtained in the country or state/province in which the temple is located. In some locations you might have to establish residency before a license can be granted.

#### **Consent**

Depending on your age, you may need to have your parents with you to give written consent in order to obtain a marriage license.

#### **Waiting Period**

Some governmental entities require a waiting period between the date you apply for your license and the date that you may receive it.

### **Civil Ceremony Preceding Temple Sealing**

Temple marriages in some countries are recognized by the law of the land. Laws in many other countries, however, require persons desiring to be sealed in these temples to be married civilly first.

### **Church Procedures**

#### **Witnesses**

Two male members of the Church who have current temple recommends will serve as witnesses to your marriage. You may select your own witnesses, who will sign your marriage papers at the temple, or the temple will provide witnesses.

#### **Temple Marriage Recommend**

When going to the temple to receive your endowment or to be sealed in marriage, you must have two recommends: the temple recommend and the recommend for living ordinances. The first part you will use to return to the temple to do work for the dead. The latter part is the recommend for your endowment, marriage, or sealing. It includes information from your membership record, such as your parents’ names, your baptismal date, and your endowment date if you have been endowed previously. It must also indicate that you have come to the temple to be married.

#### **Announcements and Invitations**

Do *not* mail announcements or invitations until your temple marriage recommend is obtained to avoid possible embarrassment if the recommend is denied for any reason. Be aware that follow-up interviews may be scheduled as you near the date of your marriage.

#### **Less than a Year**

A person may not receive a temple recommend until one full year has passed following baptism and confirmation. If a couple is civilly married and then decides that they wish to be sealed in the temple, they must wait one year from the date of their civil marriage to be sealed. This restriction applies only to those people who could have been married in the temple initially but chose not to do so.

**Time and Date**

Couples should coordinate their wedding plans with the temple to make certain it will be open on the day and at the time they have chosen. Your bishop will have a schedule.

**Endowment and Sealing**

Couples who plan to be sealed must first receive their endowments. You can receive your endowment on the day of the sealing or before.

You should plan to spend three to four hours for your own endowment. The sealing, including the counsel given by the person who officiates, will take another forty-five minutes. When you are being endowed or sealed, you should be at the temple one hour before the session or sealing is scheduled.

**Temple Clothing**

Special white clothing is worn in the temple. You may rent it at the temple or take your own with you.

**Wedding Dresses**

Brides may wear their wedding dresses in the temple to be sealed. Dresses must be white, without heavy ornamentation, have long sleeves and a modest neckline, have all sheer material lined, and the train must be removable or be able to be pinned or hooked up out of the way. If there is any question about appropriateness, take the dress or fabric and pattern to the temple for approval. Brides may wear their wedding dresses during the endowment session but must remove the trains for the session. They may not wear gowns with long dress pants in the temple. Many temples have beautiful white dresses for those who might need one for their special occasion. Check with individual temples for availability.

**Storage of Wedding Dress**

Wedding gowns may be delivered to most temples before the sealing. The gowns will be taken to a bride's dressing room and held for you.

**Number of Guests**

Because the sealing rooms vary in size, you should inform the temple (when you make

reservations) how many guests you expect to attend your sealing. Only persons who have received their own endowment and have current temple recommends may attend the sealing. Most temples are not able to accommodate large groups. Therefore, invitations should be limited to family members and close friends.

**Inform Guests of Time and Clothing Requirements**

If you are receiving your endowment on your wedding day, you may want some guests to participate in an endowment session with you. Other guests may have time only to attend your sealing. In either case, you must inform these guests when they should arrive at the temple. Double-check this information with the temple.

Guests should be counseled to dress as they would to attend a sacrament meeting. Tuxedos or other formal wear is not appropriate. All guests must have current temple recommends.

**Officiator**

The temple presidency and other temple sealers are officially set apart to perform temple marriages. Because the General Authorities have heavy schedules, the Church members have been asked not to request them to perform marriages.

**Language**

Most temples have sessions in multiple languages. Check with the temple president to verify that your endowment and marriage will be in the language of your choice.

**Taking Pictures on Temple Grounds**

Cameras are not permitted inside the temple. After the sealing, pictures of the bride and groom can be taken on the temple grounds. Therefore, your photographer is not required to have a temple recommend.

**Other Information**

Each temple will supply you or your bishop with all the necessary information to plan your temple marriage. You can always telephone the temple (ask for the marriage clerk) or write to the temple president if you have questions.

### Summary Checklist

Mark when completed:

- Contact temple to be married in and request necessary information. Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Reserve date and time for your marriage with the temple. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_
- Make sure the number of invited guests is not larger than the reserved temple room.
- Indicate in your temple reservation the language you wish the ceremony to be conducted in.
- Inform invited guests of the temple's clothing requirements.
- If not already endowed, reserve a date and time for own endowment. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_
- Invite those you wish to accompany you to be endowed, and inform them of the date and time.
- Obtain blood tests, if necessary.
  - Date \_\_\_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_\_\_
  - Marriage license
  - Residency required? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
  - Consent required? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
  - Waiting period required? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- Civil ceremony required to precede temple sealing? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ If yes, date, time, by whom? \_\_\_\_\_ Arranged \_\_\_\_\_
- Arrange for witnesses for the temple ceremony.
- Have temple recommend with recommend for endowment and/or marriage. Date \_\_\_\_\_
- If married civilly, by our own choice, we have waited one year. N/A \_\_\_\_\_
- Temple garments. If not previously endowed, we have talked with our bishops about the purpose of garments. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Garments purchased \_\_\_\_\_
- Wedding dress: white \_\_\_ long sleeves \_\_\_ modest high neckline \_\_\_ sheer materials lined \_\_\_
- If desired, I will rent a white dress at the temple. Checked with temple for availability. N/A \_\_\_\_\_

## THE HOLY TEMPLE



*President Boyd K. Packer*

*Acting President  
of the Quorum  
of the Twelve Apostles*

*Ensign, Feb. 1995,  
32–36*

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

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

### *These Things Are Sacred*

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

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

The ordinances and ceremonies of the temple are simple. They are beautiful. They are sacred. They

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

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

### ***Worthy to Enter***

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

You must possess a current recommend to be admitted to the temple. This recommend must be signed by the proper officers of the Church. Only those who are worthy should go to the temple. Your local bishop or branch president has the responsibility of making inquiries into your personal worthiness. This interview is of great importance, for it is an occasion to explore with an ordained servant of the Lord the pattern of your life. If anything is amiss in your life, the bishop will be able to help you resolve it. Through this procedure, as you counsel with the common judge in Israel, you can declare or can be helped to establish your worthiness to enter the temple with the Lord's approval.

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

Acceptable answers to the bishop's questions will ordinarily establish the worthiness of an individual to receive a temple recommend. If an applicant is not keeping the commandments or there is something

unsettled about his life that needs putting in order, it will be necessary for him to demonstrate true repentance before a temple recommend is issued.

After the bishop has conducted such an interview, a member of the stake presidency likewise interviews each of us before we go to the temple.

### ***Taught from on High***

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

The temple is a great school. It is a house of learning. In the temples the atmosphere is maintained so that it is ideal for instruction on matters that are deeply spiritual. The late Elder John A. Widtsoe of the

Quorum of the Twelve was a distinguished university president and a world renowned scholar. He had great reverence for temple work and said on one occasion:

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

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

***The temple is a great school. It is a house of learning.***

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

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

### ***The Power to Seal***

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

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

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

“You were born, invited to earth, by parents who prepared a mortal tabernacle for your spirit to inhabit. Each of you has been baptized. Baptism, a sacred ordinance, is symbolic of a cleansing, symbolic of death and resurrection, symbolic of coming forward in a newness of life. It contemplates repentance and a remission of sins. The sacrament

of the Lord’s Supper is a renewal of the covenant of baptism, and we can, if we live for it, retain a remission of our sins.

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

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

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

If we would understand both the history and the doctrine of temple work, we must understand what the sealing power is. We must envision, at least to a degree, why the *keys* of authority to employ the sealing power are crucial—crucial not just to the ordinance work of the temples but to all ordinance work in all the Church throughout the world.

The sealing power represents the transcendent delegation of spiritual authority from God to man. The keeper of that sealing power is the Lord’s chief representative here upon the earth, the President of the Church. That is the position of consummate trust and authority.

As has been said, much of the teaching relating to the deeper spiritual things in the Church, particularly in the temple, is symbolic. We use the word *keys* in a symbolic way. Here the keys of priesthood authority represent the limits of the power extended

from beyond the veil to mortal man to act in the name of God upon the earth. The words *seal* and *keys* and *priesthood* are closely linked together.

The keys of the sealing power are synonymous with the keys of the everlasting priesthood. “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? . . .

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

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

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

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

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

A clear statement follows regarding the sealing power as binding on all that we do for the living and the dead.

“Whenever the fulness of the gospel is on earth, the Lord has agents to whom he gives power to bind on earth and seal eternally in the heavens (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; Hel. 10:3–10; D&C 132:46–49.) . . .

“All things that are not sealed by this power have an end when men are dead. Unless a baptism has this enduring seal, it will not admit a person to the

celestial kingdom; unless an eternal marriage covenant is sealed by this authority, it will not take the participating parties to an exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial world.

“All things gain enduring force and validity because of the sealing power. So comprehensive is this power that it embraces ordinances performed for the living and the dead, seals the children on earth up to their fathers who went before, and forms the enduring patriarchal chain that will exist eternally among exalted beings” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, p. 683).

In the Church we hold sufficient authority to perform all of the ordinances necessary to redeem and to exalt the whole human family. And, because we have the keys to the sealing power, what we bind in proper order here will be bound in heaven. Those keys—the keys to seal and bind on earth, and have it bound in heaven—represent the consummate gift from our God. With that authority we can baptize and bless, we can endow and seal, and the Lord will honor our commitments.

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

### ***Not without Opposition***

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

At the Logan Temple cornerstone dedication, President George Q. Cannon made this statement:

“Every foundation stone that is laid for a Temple, and every Temple completed according to the order the Lord has revealed for his holy Priesthood, lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the

power of God and Godliness, moves the heavens in mighty power in our behalf, invokes and calls down upon us the blessings of the Eternal Gods, and those who reside in their presence" (*Millennial Star*, 12 Nov. 1877, p. 743).

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

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

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

### ***Come to the Temple***

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

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

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

***The Lord will bless us as we attend to the sacred ordinance work of the temples.***

## **THE TEMPLE GARMENT: "AN OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF AN INWARD COMMITMENT"**



*Elder Carlos E. Asay*

*Emeritus Member  
of the First Quorum  
of the Seventy*

*Ensign, Aug. 1997,  
18–23*

A few years ago, in a seminar for new temple presidents and matrons, Elder James E. Faust, then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, told about his being called to serve as a General Authority. He was asked only one question by President Harold B.

Lee: "Do you wear the garments properly?" to which he answered in the affirmative. He then asked if President Lee wasn't going to ask him about his worthiness. President Lee replied that he didn't need to, for he had learned from experience that how one wears the garment is the expression of how the individual feels about the Church and everything that relates to it. It is a measure of one's worthiness and devotion to the gospel.

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Samuel the Lamanite declared:

“And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.

“He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you” (Hel. 14:30–31).

I believe there is a critical body of knowledge relating to the temple garment. When that knowledge is obtained, Latter-day Saints filled with faith wear the garment and wear it properly, not because someone is policing their actions but because they understand the virtues of the sacred clothing and want to “do good and be restored unto that which is good.” On the other hand, when one does not understand the sacred nature of the temple garment, the tendency is to treat it casually and regard it as just another piece of cloth.

The critical body of knowledge associated with the garment of the holy priesthood may be categorized under three headings: Armor of God, Historical Background, and Teachings of Modern Prophets. I shall present some information pertaining to each of these headings, hoping that the thoughts shared will provoke a greater appreciation of the garment and stir a greater resolve in the minds of Saints to wear it willfully and properly.

### ***Armor of God***

We are at war! Our enemy is not an invading army from a bordering nation or a navy of some overseas power. Bullets are not whizzing above our heads, nor are bombs exploding in and around our homes. Nevertheless, we are engaged in a life-and-death struggle with forces capable of thrashing us inside out and sending us down into the depths of spiritual defeat if we are not vigilant.

I refer, of course, to the “wrestle” against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places spoken of by the Apostle Paul (see Eph. 6:12). I refer to the onslaught of immorality, crime, substance abuse, and other insidious influences threatening our society. Such threatening influences, along with other imminent dangers, constitute “the wiles of the devil” (Eph.

6:11) against which we must stand in these “perilous times” (2 Tim. 3:1).

Paul counseled: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13). With his prophetic powers, Paul could foresee the wicked conditions that would exist on the earth in our modern day. Therefore, he urged all Saints to have their “loins girt about with truth” (Eph. 6:14), to put on “the breastplate of righteousness” (v. 14), to have their feet shod “with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (v. 15), to grasp “the shield of faith” (v. 16), to place on their heads “the helmet of salvation” (v. 17), to take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v. 17), and to pray always (see v. 18) so that they might be preserved. He knew that armor made of truth, righteousness, faith, spirit, and prayer would protect people from the “fiery darts” (v. 16) crafted and thrown by Satan and his henchmen.

There is, however, another piece of armor worthy of our consideration. It is the special underclothing known as the temple garment, or garment of the holy priesthood, worn by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have received their temple endowment. This garment, worn day and night, serves three important purposes: it is a reminder of the sacred covenants made with the Lord in His holy house, a protective covering for the body, and a symbol of the modesty of dress and living that should characterize the lives of all the humble followers of Christ.

It is written that “the white garment symbolizes purity and helps assure modesty, respect for the attributes of God, and, to the degree it is honored, a token of what Paul regarded as taking upon one the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:13; cf. D&C 27:15). . . . Garments bear several simple marks of orientation toward the gospel principles of obedience, truth, life, and discipleship in Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Much, much more could be said about the war for the souls of men and the whole armor of God. The war on the earth began in the days of Adam, continued down through the years with Moses and the children of Israel, and still rages in a dispensation known as the fulness of times—a dispensation ushered in by the revelations received through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Hence, the issue of protective coverings enabling us to withstand the fiery darts of Satan will continue to be of great significance.

We must put on the armor of God spoken of by the Apostle Paul and reiterated in a modern revelation (see D&C 27:15–18). We must also “put on the armor of righteousness” (2 Ne. 1:23) symbolized by the temple garment. Otherwise, we may lose the war and perish.

The heavy armor worn by soldiers of a former day, including helmets, shields, and breastplates, determined the outcome of some battles. However, the real battles of life in our modern day will be won by those who are clad in a spiritual armor—an armor consisting of faith in God, faith in self, faith in one’s cause, and faith in one’s leaders. The piece of armor called the temple garment not only provides the comfort and warmth of a cloth covering, it also strengthens the wearer to resist temptation, fend off evil influences, and stand firmly for the right.

### ***Historical Background***

It should be understood that “the things of the Lord” (2 Ne. 4:16) have included sacred clothing from the very beginning of this world. The scriptures contain many references to the wearing of special garments by the ancients. Prior to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were clad in sacred clothing. We read: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21).

They received this clothing in a context of instruction on the Atonement, sacrifice, repentance, and forgiveness (see Moses 5:5–8). The temple garment given to Latter-day Saints is provided in a similar context. It is given to remind wearers of the continuing need for repentance, the need to honor binding covenants made in the house of the Lord, and the need to cherish and share virtue in our daily living so that promised blessings may be claimed.

Moses was commanded to place holy garments and priestly vestments upon Aaron and others, thus preparing them to officiate in the tabernacle. Said the Lord to Moses, “And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel . . . and thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty . . . that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office” (Ex. 28:1–3).

References to Aaron’s clothing and the vestments of the priesthood worn by selected leaders in Old Testament times are accompanied by expressions such as “precious garments,” “glorious garments,”

“garments of honor,” “coats of glory,” and “garments of salvation.”<sup>3</sup> These expressions may apply more particularly to the raiment worn by those who officiated in tabernacle or temple rites; nevertheless, these descriptive words also apply to the sacred clothing worn on a daily basis by those “who call themselves by [God’s] name and are essaying to [become] saints” (D&C 125:2). The honor, glory, and precious nature of sacred garments, whether worn only in the temple or in everyday life under street clothes, transcends the material of which they are made. Their full worth and beauty is appreciated and regarded as precious or glorious when viewed through the “eye of faith” (Alma 5:15).

“The garment is inadequate without the thing that it signifies. . . . It won’t protect you unless you’re true and faithful to your covenant, and only to the degree to which you don’t dishonor your garment has it any significance at all. Only on that condition that you don’t dishonor it, that you’re pure, that you are true and faithful to your covenant—does the garment have any benefit,” wrote Hugh Nibley, an emeritus professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.<sup>4</sup>

Yes, garments have been worn by prophets and other righteous Saints throughout the ages, whenever the ordinances of the priesthood and the temple have been available to the children of men. When the Church was restored to the earth in our day, the sacred priesthood ordinances associated with the holy temple were revealed anew to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The revelations he received included instructions about the garment.

Many references are found in the scriptures relating to garments and clothing. Enoch declared: “I beheld the heavens open, and I was clothed with glory” (Moses 7:3). Jacob spoke of a day of judgment when “we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness” (2 Ne. 9:14). Isaiah rejoiced, saying, “God . . . hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10). Alma referred to “all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white” (Alma 5:24). These and other prophetic statements suggest not only a cleanliness and purity within one’s soul, but also a spotless covering over

one's soul, signifying a life of goodness and devotion to God.

### ***Teachings of Modern Prophets***

I fear that too many Church members take for granted the promise of protection and blessings associated with the temple garment. Some wear it improperly, and others remove it to suit whims of circumstance. In such cases, the instructions of modern prophets, seers, and revelators are ignored and spiritual protection placed in jeopardy.

In a letter from the First Presidency dated 3 July 1974, Church members were reminded of the sacred nature of the garment: "The sacredness of the garment should be ever present and uppermost in the wearer's mind; . . . the blessings which flow from the observance of our covenants are sufficiently great to recompense for any mere inconvenience. To break our covenants is to forfeit the protection and blessings promised for obedience to them."<sup>5</sup>

And in a letter to priesthood leaders dated 10 October 1988, the First Presidency made the following important statements regarding how the garment should be worn: "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. This sacred covenant is between the member and the Lord. Members should seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to answer for themselves any personal questions about the wearing of the garment. . . . 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.*"<sup>6</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith had strong feelings about the proper wearing of the garment. Said he: "The Lord has given unto us garments of the holy priesthood, and you know what that means. And yet there are those of us who mutilate them, in order that we may follow the foolish, vain and (permit me to say) indecent practices of the world. In order that such persons may imitate the fashions, they will not hesitate to mutilate that which should be held by them the most sacred of all things in the world, next to their own virtue, next to their own purity of life. They should hold these things that God has given unto them sacred, unchanged and unaltered from the very pattern in which God gave them. Let us have the moral courage to stand against the opinions of fashion, and especially where fashion compels us to break a covenant and so commit a grievous sin."<sup>7</sup>

In his book, *The Holy Temple*, Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained succinctly why it is so important to wear the garment properly.

"The garment represents sacred covenants. It fosters modesty and becomes a shield and protection to the wearer.

"The wearing of such a garment does not prevent members from dressing in the fashionable clothing generally worn in nations of the world. Only clothing that is immodest or extreme in style would be incompatible with wearing the garment."<sup>8</sup>

What more needs to be said about the garment and the way it is to be worn and treated? The principles are stated clearly, and it is left to the wearers and their consciences to live accordingly. People of faith need not be commanded in all things for they do not endeavor to excuse themselves in the least point or over the absence of a Mosaic code of conduct. But rather, they govern their dress and behavior as God and his prophets have decreed, allowing the justice, mercy, and long-suffering of God to have full sway in their hearts (see Alma 42:29–31).

### ***A Reminder We Carry***

I like to think of the garment as the Lord's way of letting us take part of the temple with us when we

leave. It is true that we carry from the Lord's house inspired teachings and sacred covenants written in our minds and hearts. However, the one tangible remembrance we carry with us back into the world is the garment. And though we cannot always be in the temple, a part of it can always be with us to bless our lives.

Don't forget that the word *garment* is used symbolically in the scriptures and gives expanded meaning to other words such as *white, clean, pure, righteous, modesty, covering, ceremonial, holy, priesthood, beautiful, perfection, salvation, undefiled, worthy, white raiment, shield, protection, spotless, blameless, armor, covenants, promises, blessings, respect, eternal life*, and so forth. All of these words occupy special places in the vocabularies of people sincerely essaying to become Saints.

Of one choice group of believers, it is written, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Rev. 3:4–5).

How wonderful it would be if all Church members walked with God in white and were numbered with the Saints in Sardis!

Remember always that our very salvation depends, symbolically, upon the condition of our garments. The prophet Alma told the members of the Church in his day that they could not be saved unless their garments were symbolically washed, cleansed, and made white through the blood of Jesus Christ. He taught:

"No man [can] be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified

until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins. . . .

"Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins?" (Alma 5:21, 27).

It is my prayer that our garments will be cleansed through the blood of Christ and that we will reaffirm in our minds and hearts the declaration "Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness, . . . and put on her beautiful garments" (D&C 82:14).

#### Notes

1. As quoted by John Taylor, *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, 339.
2. Evelyn T. Marshall, "Garments," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (1992), 2:534; emphasis added.
3. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:534.
4. "Sacred Vestments: A Preliminary Report," Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (1986), 13.
5. First Presidency Letter, 3 July 1974.
6. First Presidency Letter, 10 Oct. 1988; emphasis added.
7. *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1906, 813.
8. *The Holy Temple* (1980), 75.