



Lesson 36: "The Desert Shall Rejoice, and Blossom as the Rose," Our Heritage, pp. 81-96.

Introduction

Deep in the ground underneath the temple is a strong foundation of stone blocks. The foundation has supported this magnificent temple for over 150 years.

Like buildings, our lives require strong foundations. This lesson discusses the building of the Salt Lake Temple and the efforts of the pioneers to colonize their new home and spread the gospel. It also discusses some of the foundation principles upon which the early Saints built their lives and how we can learn from



"Right here will stand the temple of our God."

On 28 July 1847, four days after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, President Brigham Young stood on the spot where the Salt Lake Temple now stands. He struck his cane on the ground and said, "*Right here will stand the temple of our God*" (in Wilford Woodruff, *Deseret Evening News*, 25 July 1888, 2). Thus the sacrifice and blessings of building another temple began.

Elder John A. Widtsoe of the Quorum of the Twelve said, "*The pioneers were hungry and weary; they needed food and rest; a hostile desert looked them in the*

face; yet in the midst of such physical requirements they turned first to the building of temples and to the spiritual food and strength that the temples provide" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1943, 38).

Within one week after President Young marked the spot for the temple, the Saints began surveying the new city, with the temple at the center of the survey. The layout of the city focused the people on the temple.

President Howard W. Hunter taught:

"We ... emphasize the personal blessings of temple worship and the sanctity and safety that are provided within those hallowed walls. It is the house of the Lord, a place of revelation and of peace. As we attend the temple, we learn more richly and deeply the

Lesson Highlights

- "Right here will stand the temple of our God."
- The Saints were obedient as they settled and colonized the Salt Lake Valley and the surrounding areas.
- Missionaries made sacrifices to teach the gospel throughout the world.

A study of this lesson will help us understand how we have been blessed by the sacrifices of the early Saints in the Salt Lake Valley and encourage us to follow the example of these faithful members.

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purpose of life and the significance of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience. ...

"May you let the meaning and beauty and peace of the temple come into your everyday life more directly" (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 87–88).

Excavation for the large foundation of the Salt Lake Temple was done by hand, requiring thousands of hours of labor. The cornerstones were laid on 6 April 1853. After a few years of work on the foundation, the Saints stopped work because of a problem with the United States government. The president of the United States had heard false stories that the Saints were rebelling against the government, so he sent an army to the Salt Lake Valley. In response, President Young had the Saints cover the foundation with dirt to make it look like an ordinary field.

When the Saints later unearthed the sandstone foundation, they noticed cracks in the rocks. They removed the sandstone and replaced it with solid granite blocks.

President Young insisted that only the best materials and craftsmanship be used in the construction of the temple. He said:

"I want to see the temple built in a manner that it will endure through the Millennium. This is not the only temple we shall build; there will be hundreds of them built and dedicated to the Lord. ... And when the Millennium is over, ... I want that temple still to stand as a proud monument of the faith, perseverance and industry of the Saints of God in the mountains, in the nineteenth century" (Discourses of Brigham Young, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 395).

The Saints were obedient as they settled and colonized the Salt Lake Valley and the surrounding areas.

See ***Our Heritage*, pages 82–84, "The First Year in the Valley"** and **"Explorations"**. From these stories we learn the characteristics which helped overcome great difficulties in the first years in the valley. We also learn how the Saints were blessed while enduring adversities.

See **"Callings to Colonize", *Our Heritage*, pages 86–89**. The stories of Charles Lowell Walker and Charles C. Rich teach valuable principles—including the tremendous value of obedience. Our Church history and the scriptures teach the value and blessings of obedience to the Lord and His servants. Think about what each of these passages teaches about this principle:

It took years for the Saints to quarry, transport, and shape the granite blocks for the construction of the temple. During this time, they struggled just to survive, as they lost crops to the elements, served missions in faraway lands, and accepted calls to leave their homes and establish communities in remote areas. In spite of these many challenges, the Saints persevered, and with the Lord's help they prevailed. The Salt Lake Temple was dedicated in 1893, 40 years after the cornerstones had been laid.

When **Jeffrey R. Holland** was president of Brigham Young University, he compared the building of our lives to the building of the Salt Lake Temple:

"The prestigious Scientific American referred to [the Salt Lake Temple] as a 'monument to Mormon perseverance.' And so it was. Blood, toil, tears, and sweat. The best things are always worth finishing. 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?' (1 Corinthians 3:16.) Most assuredly we are. As long and laborious as the effort may seem, we must keep shaping and setting the stones that will make our accomplishments 'a grand and imposing spectacle.' We must take advantage of every opportunity to learn and grow, dream dreams and see visions, work toward their realization, wait patiently when we have no other choice, lean on our sword and rest a while, but get up and fight again. ... We are laying the foundation of a great work—our own inestimable future" (However Long and Hard the Road [1985], 127).

- **D&C 58:2–4.** We will be "crowned with much glory" for keeping the commandments and faithfully obeying the Lord's direction
- **D&C 64:33–34.** The willing and obedient in Zion reap blessings in the last days
- **D&C 82:10.** The Lord will assuredly bless us when we obey the commandments
- **D&C 93:1.** The repentant who come to the Savior and keep the commandments will see Him
- **D&C 130:19–21.** Knowledge and intelligence gained here through diligent obedience will give us an advantage in the eternal life we seek after mortality.

Concerning the future destiny of the kingdom the **Prophet Joseph Smith** wrote: *"I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world. I once offered my life to the Missouri mob as a sacrifice for my people, and here I am. It will not be by sword or gun that this kingdom will roll on: the power of truth is such that all nations will be under the necessity of obeying the Gospel."*

(HC 6:365)



Missionaries made sacrifices to teach the gospel throughout the world.

With a responsibility to preach the gospel to the world, President Young wasted no time in calling missionaries to serve in North America and throughout the world.

See *Our Heritage*, pages 84-86, "Missionaries Answer the Call". In these accounts we see the areas of the world in which the gospel was preached; the sacrifices required of the early Saints to support the work; and how the faith and prayers of Elder Lorenzo Snow helped open the hearts of the people in Italy to the gospel.

For some 33 years, President Young presided over the Church. Following his death in 1877, he was succeeded by John Taylor, President of the Twelve. After three years, President Taylor was sustained as the third President of the Church in 1880 at October Conference.

Conclusion

In the Salt Lake Valley, a strong foundation for the temple was complemented by building a strong foundation for the lives of the Saints. Are we following that example of faith, perseverance, diligence, obedience, willingness to share the gospel, and enduring to the end?



President Taylor continued to send missionaries across the globe to preach and teach—from "Missionary Work", *Our Heritage*, pages 93-96:

- More areas of the world were opened while President Taylor directed the work.
- Milton Trejo was guided through his life to be able to participate in building the kingdom.
- We can learn from the stories of Elder Thomas Biesinger, Elders Kimo Pelio and Sameula Manoa, Elder and Sister Dean, and Jonathan and Kitty Napela.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How have you made the temple a central focus of your life? How have you been able to encourage others to do so?
- How has the Lord blessed you in times of adversity?
- How can you better prepare yourself to build the kingdom of God?

