



# DOCTRINE & COVENANTS

## & CHURCH HISTORY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

\* GREEN MOUNTAIN 1<sup>ST</sup> WARD \* LAKEWOOD, COLORADO \* 25 OCTOBER 2009 \* PAGE 1 \*

### Lesson 39: "The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn to Their Fathers," D&C 2; 110:13-16; 138; JSH 1:37-39; *Our Heritage*, pp. 98-99, 101-2, 105-7.

#### Introduction



**Spirit of the Dead Watching**

By Peter L. Myer

Frederick William Hurst was working as a gold miner in Australia when he first heard Latter-day Saint missionaries preach the restored gospel. He and his brother Charles were baptized in January 1854. He tried to help his other family members become converted, but they rejected him and the truths he taught.

Fred settled in Salt Lake City four years after joining the Church, and he served faithfully as a missionary in several different countries. He also worked as a painter in the Salt Lake Temple. In one of his final journal entries, he wrote:

*"Along about the 1st of March, 1893, I found myself alone in the dining room, all had gone to bed. I was sitting at the table when to my great surprise my elder brother Alfred walked in and sat down opposite me at the table and smiled. I said to him (he looked so natural): 'When did you arrive in Utah?'*

*"He said: 'I have just come from the Spirit World, this is not my body that you see, it is lying in the tomb. I want to tell you that when you were on your mission you told me many things about the Gospel, and the hereafter, and about the Spirit World being as real and tangible as the earth. I could not believe you, but when I died and went there and saw for myself I realized that you had told the truth. I attended the Mormon meetings.' He raised his hand and said with much warmth: 'I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart. I believe in faith, and repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, but that is as far as I can go. I look to you to do the work for me in the temple. ... You are watched closely. ... We are all looking to you as our head in this great work. I want to tell you that there are a great many spirits who weep and mourn because they have relatives in the Church here who are careless and are doing nothing for them'" (Diary of Frederick William Hurst, comp. Samuel H. and Ida Hurst [1961], 204).*

In this lesson we will discuss the redemption of the dead by briefly studying the work of four prophets: Elijah, President Wilford Woodruff, President Joseph F. Smith, and President Gordon B. Hinckley. The purpose of this lesson is to gain a greater understanding of the need to redeem the dead. The next lesson discusses some ways we can participate in temple and family history work.

#### Lesson Highlights

- Elijah:  
*"The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands."*
- President Wilford Woodruff:  
*"Somebody has got to redeem them."*
- President Joseph F. Smith:  
*"The eyes of my understanding were opened."*
- President Gordon B. Hinckley:  
*"We are determined...to take the temples to the people."*

**A study of this lesson will help us understand the need to seek out our ancestors and receive priesthood ordinances in their behalf.**

#### Next Week

#40 Finding Joy in Temple and Family History Work (See Study Guide)

**Elijah: “The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands.”**

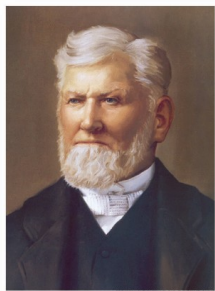


Elijah Appearing in the Kirtland Temple, by Dan Lewis, © 2007 Dan Lewis

When the angel Moroni came to Joseph Smith, he said that Elijah would “plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers” (D&C 2:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:39). In this prophecy, the word *fathers* refers to our ancestors.

**President Joseph Fielding Smith** taught: “What was the promise made to the fathers that was to be fulfilled in the latter days by the turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers? It was the promise of the Lord made through Enoch, Isaiah, and the prophets, to the nations of the earth, that the time should come when the dead should be redeemed” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:154).

**President Wilford Woodruff: “Somebody has got to redeem them.”**



President Woodruff was devoted to the work of redeeming the dead and sealing families for eternity. During his ministry, many members of the Church served genealogical missions, and in 1894 the First Presidency directed the organization of a genealogical society (*Our Heritage*, page 101). According to Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve, “events of that historic year [1894] established family history research and temple service as one work in the Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 114; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 85).

**Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** said, “God made those promises to the ancient patriarchs—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so forth—and we undoubtedly made them to our own lineal fathers and mothers, those who came to earth before the gospel was restored but whom we promised to provide its saving ordinances” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 297).

On 3 April 1836 in the Kirtland Temple, the prophet Elijah appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. (See D&C 110:13–16; see also D&C 2; Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39. He conferred the sealing power of the priesthood on Joseph Smith. This power makes possible eternal marriage, sealings to parents, and temple ordinance work for the dead.)

**Joseph Smith—History 1:37–39** and **D&C 138:47–48**. One of the primary purposes of life on earth is to establish eternal family relationships. Without the sealing power, this would be impossible.

**Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** taught that without the sealing power, “no family ties would exist in the eternities, and indeed the family of man would have been left in eternity with ‘neither root [ancestors] nor branch [descendants].’ Inasmuch as ... a sealed, united, celestially saved family of God is the ultimate purpose of mortality, any failure here would have been a curse indeed, rendering the entire plan of salvation ‘utterly wasted’ ” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 297–98).

**The urgency of temple work for the dead**

In May 1884, Bishop Henry Ballard of the Logan Second Ward was signing temple recommends at his home. Henry’s nine-year-old daughter, who was talking with friends on the sidewalk near her home, saw two elderly men approaching. They called to her, handed her a newspaper, and told her to take it to her father.

The girl did as she was asked. Bishop Ballard saw that the paper, the *Newbury Weekly News*, published in England, contained the names of more than 60 of his and his father’s acquaintances, along with genealogical information. This newspaper, dated 15 May 1884, had been given to him only three days after it was printed. In a time long before air transportation, when mail took several weeks to get from England to western America, this was a miracle.

**President Wilford Woodruff:**

“Great and glorious are these principles which God has revealed to us concerning the redemption of our dead. I tell you when the prophets and apostles go to preach to those who are shut up in prison, and who have not received the gospel, thousands of them will there embrace the gospel. They know more in that world than they do here.”  
—MS 56:341, May 28, 1894.

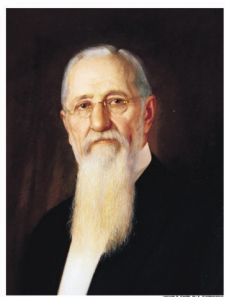


The next day, Bishop Ballard took the newspaper to the temple and told the story of its arrival to Marriner W. Merrill, the temple president. President Merrill declared, *"Brother Ballard, someone on the other side is anxious for their work to be done and they knew that you would do it if this paper got into your hands."* This newspaper is preserved in the Church Historical Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

For a period of time, President Woodruff served as president of the temple in St. George, Utah. It was in that temple that endowments for the dead were performed for the first time in this dispensation (see *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:171). While serving there, President Woodruff was visited by the spirits of many "eminent men" who had died.

**President Woodruff:** *"The spirits of the dead gathered around me, wanting to know why we did not redeem them. Said they, 'You have had the use of the Endowment House for a number of years, and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we ... remained true to it and were faithful to God.' These were the signers of the Declaration of Independence [of the United States of America], and they waited on me for two days and two nights. ... I straightway went into the baptismal font and called upon Brother McAllister to baptize me for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and fifty other eminent men, making one hundred in all, including John Wesley, Columbus, and others"* (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1946], 160–61).

### President Joseph F. Smith: *"The eyes of my understanding were opened."*



*"President [Brigham] Young, who followed President Joseph Smith, ... laid the foundation of [the Salt Lake Temple], as well as others in the mountains of Israel. What for? That we might carry out these principles of redemption for the dead. He accomplished all that God required at his hands. But he did not receive all the revelations that belong to this work; neither did President [John] Taylor, nor has Wilford Woodruff"* (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 153–54).

President Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Church, received a revelation that helped the work of redeeming the dead continue to move forward. On 4 October 1918, just weeks before his death, he said in general conference:

We learn from these two stories that those who are dead are anxious for us to perform ordinances for them and that we should be diligent in our efforts to redeem the dead.

While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve, **Elder Wilford Woodruff** taught: *"For the last eighteen hundred years, the people that have lived and passed away never heard the voice of an inspired man, never heard a Gospel sermon, until they entered the spirit-world. Somebody has got to redeem them, by performing such ordinances for them in the flesh as they cannot attend to themselves in the spirit, and in order that this work may be done, we must have Temples in which to do it"* (in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:228–29).

### The need for us to be sealed to our parents and ancestors

During the April 1894 general conference, President Woodruff announced that he had received a revelation about genealogical work. He declared that God wanted the Latter-day Saints *"to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have the children sealed to their parents and run this chain through as far as you can get it. ... This is the will of the Lord to his people,"* he said, *"and I think when you come to reflect upon it you will find it to be true."* Latter-day Saints are still encouraged to seek out the records of their deceased ancestors and perform temple ordinances in their behalf.

*"Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors."*  
(D&C 110:16)

*"I have been undergoing a siege of very serious illness for the last five months. ... I have not lived alone these five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously"* (in Conference Report, Oct. 1918, 2).

The day before President Smith made this statement, he had received a revelation that would expand the Saints' understanding of the redemption of the dead. This revelation is now section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is a record of the Savior's visit to the spirit world while His body was in the tomb.

**D&C 138:1–11.** President Smith pondered the scriptures and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As he pondered, he was led to read **1 Peter 3** and **1 Peter 4**, which include information about Jesus' ministry in the postmortal spirit world.

**D&C 138:12–19** The Savior went to the spirits who:

- a. *“Had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality”* (D&C 138:12).
- b. *“Had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God”* (D&C 138:13).
- c. *“Had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer’s name”* (D&C 138:13).
- d. *“Had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ”* (D&C 138:14).
- e. *“Were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand”* (D&C 138:15).

**D&C 138:20–21.** The Savior did not go to the wicked, the ungodly, the unrepentant who had defiled themselves while in the flesh, nor the rebellious that rejected the testimonies and the warnings of the ancient prophets.

**President Gordon B. Hinckley: “We are determined ... to take the temples to the people.”**

President Joseph F. Smith recognized the need for temples throughout the world. At a 1906 conference in Bern, Switzerland, he stretched out his hand and declared, *“The time will come when this land will be dotted with temples, where you can go and redeem your dead.”*



President Gordon B. Hinckley is another prophet who has expanded our understanding of temple work. When he became President of the Church in 1995, there were 47 temples in operation.

About two and one-half years later, he made the following announcement:

*“There are many areas of the Church that are remote, where the membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the near future. Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of the temple ordinances? While visiting such an area a few months ago, we prayerfully*

**Conclusion**

No people in history have ever had the opportunity to do so much for so many people as we do today. The next lesson will include discussion about specific ways to participate in temple and family history work.

**D&C 138:27–37.** The Savior organized the righteous spirits and commissioned them to teach those who had not yet accepted the gospel.

**D&C 138:57.** The faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching the gospel in the spirit world today.

**D&C 138:22–24, 57–59.** Note the differences between those in the spirit world who have been faithful in the testimony of Jesus and those who have not. Consider what these verses teach about the importance of teaching the gospel in the spirit world. Ponder how these verses make you feel about your responsibility to provide priesthood ordinances for the dead.

*pondered this question. The answer, we believe, came bright and clear.*

*“We will construct small temples in some of these areas, buildings with all of the facilities to administer all of the ordinances. They would be built to temple standards, which are much higher than meetinghouse standards. They would accommodate baptisms for the dead, the endowment service, sealings, and all other ordinances to be had in the Lord’s house for both the living and the dead. ...*

*“... We are determined ... to take the temples to the people and afford them every opportunity for the very precious blessings that come of temple worship”* (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 68–69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 49–50).

In April 1998, President Hinckley announced a goal to have 100 temples in operation by the end of the century (see *Ensign*, May 1998, 88).

Many people would not be enjoying the blessings of the temple if President Hinckley had not received the revelation to accelerate the building of temples.

**Gospel Doctrine Notebook**

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How to feel about your responsibility to seek out your ancestors and receive priesthood ordinances in their behalf?
- What blessings have you received by fulfilling this responsibility?

