

D&C#30 "The Prisoners Shall Go Free"

Outline:

- I. Introduction
- II. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord Revealed the Doctrine of Priesthood Ordinances For the Dead
- III. The Lord Commanded the Saints to Build a Temple in Nauvoo
- IV. We [Also] Should Be Enthusiastic and Joyful in Our Efforts to Perform Baptisms For the Dead
- V. Conclusions

I. Introduction

The ordinances of baptism and the reception of the Holy Ghost are essential ordinances of salvation. Their importance was taught by Jesus Himself to Nicodemus.

John 3:3, 5

**3 Jesus answered and said unto him [Nicodemus],
Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born
again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

**5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee,
Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit,
he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

A simple reading of these words spoken by the Savior, is that every individual who is born upon the earth, must receive the ordinances of water [baptism] and Spirit [reception of the Holy Ghost]. Without these two ordinances, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

If there is agreement these two ordinances are essential requirements in order to enter the kingdom of God, the next question maybe what about the millions of individuals who did not receive these ordinances during their mortal life? Is their eternal progress halted? Are they denied entrance into the kingdom of God due to no fault of their own? If the answer is "yes," then the Father of us all is a very partial and unmerciful God.

The truth is that God, the Father of our Spirits, is both impartial and merciful to all. His love extends to all His

children, the dead as well as living, and, therefore, the provision has been made whereby all may enter through the gate of baptism and reception of the Holy Ghost, and walk the path that leads to the kingdom of God. This doctrine is known as the Priesthood Ordinances for the dead, and includes both baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. This doctrine is not new to our day for it was understood and taught in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul.

1 Corinthians 15:29

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

For those who have died without the opportunity to be baptized or to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, this ordinance can be performed by proxy, on behalf of the individual, in the Holy Temple. In this manner, all of God's children will be given the opportunity to accept or reject the essential ordinances performed on their behalf. The opportunity of choice extends to God's children in the Spirit world, as well as during mortality.

In order for these ordinances to have validity beyond this life, they must be performed by one who has the prerequisite authority to perform these ordinances. The individual must hold the priesthood of God. This priesthood, which was upon the earth, was lost during the apostasy that took place. The keys have again been restored, by heavenly messengers, in these latter days.

Doctrine and Covenants 13:1

1 Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of the Messiah, I [John the Baptist] confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth. until the sons of Levi, do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

20 ...The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the times!

On May 15, 1829, John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery near Harmony, Pennsylvania and bestowed upon them the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood. In May-June, 1829, Peter, James, and John appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and bestowed upon them the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The authority to perform essential ordinances for the living and dead was once again upon the earth.

On April 3, 1836, three messengers appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple, and bestowed upon them sacred keys. One was Elijah. He had come to restore the keys "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse" (D&C 110:14). The key Elijah held involved the sealing power that make the ordinances performed in the Holy Temple valid in heaven as on earth.

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"Why does [the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] perform ordinances for the dead, including baptism and reception of the Holy Ghost? [We believe] all people must have the opportunity to hear the gospel and receive the saving ordinances of the priesthood. People who did not receive these blessings during mortality will have that opportunity in the spirit world. Because they do not have physical bodies in the spirit world, they cannot receive the ordinances themselves. However, we can receive these ordinances in their behalf. Individuals in the spirit world then choose whether to accept or reject the ordinances that have been performed for them." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 171).

II. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord Revealed the

Doctrine of Priesthood Ordinances For the Dead

Unique to the religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is the doctrine of priesthood authority. This is especially important regarding priesthood ordinances performed for the dead.

Donald Q. Cannon, Larry E. Dahl, and John W. Welch state,

"Joseph Smith proclaimed that he received [the Priesthood] authority and power directly from heavenly messengers and that religious ordinances performed without divine authority have no binding effect outside this life. Baptism, for example, is valid only when someone possessing divine authority performs it.

"Joseph Smith taught that priesthood authority and power had to be restored to the earth because it had been lost through apostasy." ("The Restoration of Major Doctrines Through Joseph Smith: Priesthood, The Word of God, and the Temple," in *Ensign*, February 1989, 7).

Essential to the operation of the Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth is the principle of revelation. Through the spirit of revelation, the Prophet receives guidance and direction regarding the restoration of important ordinances upon the earth. Often the revelation came "line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little" (D&C 128:21). This was especially true with the restoration of the doctrine of priesthood ordinances for the dead.

Chart 1: Timeline: Important events in the Restoration of doctrine of Priesthood Ordinances for the Dead

Date	Event	Reference
A. Sept. 21, 1823	Angel Moroni to Joseph Smith: Coming of Elijah.	D&C 2:1-3
B. Summer- April 6, 1830	Ordinances necessary for all to receive.	D&C 20:25-26
C. Jan. 21, 1836	Vision: Alvin in Celestial Kingdom.	D&C 137:5-6
D. Mar. 27, 1836	Kirtland Temple: Ordinances of washing, anointing, and sealings.	R Bennett, <i>BYU Stud, Quarterly</i> , 68-69: Issue. 3, Article 4.

E. April 3, 1836	Kirtland Temple: Elijah restores keys.	D&C 110:13-16
F. Aug. 15, 1840	Funeral: Seymour Brunson Baptism for the Dead.	Words Jos. Smith, Ehat/Cook, 49
G. 1840-1841	Baptism in Mississippi River.	Discourses Wilford Woodruff, 153
H. Sept. 14, 1840	Request J.Smith, Sr. Alvin be baptized. Hyrum performed.	Teaching the Presidents: J. Smith, 403
I. Oct. 19, 1840	Letter to Twelve in England.	<i>History of the Church</i> , Vol. 4. 231.
J. Jan.19, 1841	Nauvoo Temple: Baptismal font supported by twelve oxen.	<i>D&C 124:29-33; History of Church</i> , Vol. 4. 446.
K. May 4, 1842	Red Brick Store-Endowment.	<i>History of Church</i> , Vol. 5:1-3.
L. Sept 1 &6, 1842	Nauvoo: Directions on Baptisms for dead.	D&C 127-128.
M. Apr.1844	"You and all your dead are to receive all ordinances" Joseph Smith.	Wilford Woodruff, <i>Journal 1833-1898</i> , 2:388, April 8, 1844.
N.Dec.1845-Late Jan. 1846	Nauvoo Temple: Brigham Young and 12 Apostles gave endowments to Saints.	R Bennett, <i>BYU Studies Quarterly</i> , Vol 44., Issue 3, Art. 4, 47.

Having provided a timeline regarding the unfolding of the important doctrine of Priesthood Ordinances for the Dead, further details will be provided regarding each of the dates noted.

A. September 21, 1823. Angel Moroni appears to Joseph Smith.

On this night, the Angel Moroni first appeared to the boy, Joseph, in his bedroom at the house of the Prophet's father at Manchester, New York. The words of the angel Moroni were repeated three times to Joseph during each of his nightly visits.

Doctrine and Covenants 2:1-3

- 1 Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
- 2 And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promise made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.
- 3 If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

It is likely that Joseph did not understand the events that were going to unfold in the preceding years in preparation for the return of Elijah. These words are important for Elijah's return is paramount for the restoration of the authority regarding the priesthood ordinances for the dead.

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"It is tremendously significant to me that...this repletion of the wondrous words of Malachi concerning the work of the dead, was given to the boy Joseph four years before he was allowed to take the plates from the hill. It was given before he received either the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood, before he was baptized, and well before the Church was organized. It says much concern the priority of this work in the plan of the Lord." ("A Century of Family History Service," in *Ensign*, March 1995, 61).

B. Summer-April 6, 1830. Ordinances necessary for all to receive.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:25-26

- 25 That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, shall be saved—
- 26 Not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believe in the world of the holy prophets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who truly testified of him in all things, shall have eternal life.

Richard E. Bennett states,

"In his Articles and Covenants of the Church (D&C 20) presented at the organization of the Church in April, 1830, Joseph Smith indicated that the first principles and ordinances of the gospel--faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the gift of the Holy Ghost--were necessary and available not only for those of this era but also for "all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he [Christ] came" (D&C 20:26), as well as those who came after." ("Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept: Reflections on the 1877 Commencement of the Performance of Endowments and Sealings for the Dead," in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44/Issue 3, Article 4, 41).

C. January 21 1836. Vision: Alvin in Celestial Kingdom.

Doctrine and Covenants 137:5-6

**5 I saw Father Adam and Abraham; and my father and mother; my brother Alvin, that has long since slept.
6 And marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed from this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and, had not been baptized for the remission of sins.**

The vision that Joseph Smith received of the Celestial Kingdom was future regarding the appearance of his father and mother, for both of his parents were yet alive in the flesh. Alvin, the prophet's older brother, had, however, previously died on November 19, 1823, at Manchester, Ontario County, New York.

Alvin's death had brought great grief to the family, and especially to Joseph.

Joseph Smith states regarding Alvin,

"He was the oldest and noblest of my father's family. He was one of the noblest of the sons of men...In him there was no guile. He lived without spot for the time he was a child. From the time of his birth he never knew mirth. He was candid and sober and never would play; and minded his father and mother in toiling all day. He was one of the

soberest of men, and when he died the angel of the Lord visited him in his last moments." (*History of the Church*, Vol. 5. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 126-127).

Joseph's astonishment was that he understood that it was necessary for all who had lived upon the earth, including his brother, Alvin, to receive the same ordinances as those living, including baptism by immersion and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Robert L. Millet states,

"Because Alvin had died seven years before the organization of the Church and had not been baptized by proper authority, Joseph wondered during this vision how it was possible for his brother to have attained the highest heaven. Alvin's family had been shocked and saddened at his funeral by the remarks of a Presbyterian minister. William Smith, Alvin's younger brother, recalled: Hyrum, Samuel, Katherine, and mother were members of the Presbyterian Church. My father would not join. He did not because Rev. Stockton had preached at my brother's funeral sermon and intimated very strongly that he had gone to hell, for Alvin was not a church member, but he was a good boy, and my father did not like it." (*Precept Upon Precept*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2016, 262).

D. March 27, 1836. Kirtland Temple: Ordinances of washing, anointing, and sealing.

Donald Q. Cannon, Larry E. Dahl, and John W. Welch state,

"After the completion of the Kirtland Temple in 1836, washing, anointing, and sealing the anointing were performed there." ("The Restoration of Major Doctrines Through Joseph Smith: Priesthood, The Word of God, and the Temple," in *Ensign*, February 1989, 11).

Richard E. Bennett quotes Brigham Young,

"[Regarding the limitations of Kirtland Temple regarding the temple ordinances noted], it had no basement, nor a font, nor preparations to give endowments for the living or the dead." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 18. London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1877, [Eighth Reprint, 1974], 303).

He then states,

"These ceremonies in the Kirtland Temple were not as complete as those administered in Nauvoo but were sufficient in the time in keeping with the commandments of the Lord. The Kirtland Temple was, in reality, a preparatory temple and as such pointed the way for more complete work in the years to come." ("Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept: Reflections on the 1877 Commencement of the Performance of Endowments and Sealings for the Dead," in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44/Issue 3, Article 4, 68-69).

E. April 3, 1836. Kirtland Temple: Elijah restores keys.

Doctrine and Covenants 110:13-16

13 After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

14 Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi--testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come--

15 To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse--

16 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.

One of the purposes for the construction of the Kirtland Temple was for the purpose of providing a heavenly place where ancient prophets could return to the earth and bestow upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery additional sacred keys. The keys that Elijah restored involved the authority to perform the ordinances for the living and the dead that were later to occur in sacred temples upon the earth during the latter days. Without the restoration of these keys, the work could not go forth.

Because of Elijah's return, the hearts of the living were opened and as a result they began to seek after the

genealogy of their deceased families. Sacred ordinances could now be performed on behalf of those who had not had the opportunity to do the work for themselves, including baptism and receipt of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The living could also participate in ordinances in the sacred temples that would enable couples to be sealed to their spouses in eternal marriage and to have their children for eternity. In this manner, when the Lord returned to the earth there would be a covenant people prepared to receive Him. The visit of Elijah and Ordinances of the dead and the living go hand in hand. This was a required step before the work to be performed in the temple would be binding in heaven.

F. August 15, 1840. Funeral: Seymour Brunson.

Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook state,

"On 10 August 1840 Seymour Brunson, member of the Nauvoo High Council, died in Nauvoo. The Prophet took the occasion of his funeral, on 15 August 1840, to deliver the first [public] discourse on the doctrine of baptism for the dead. (see *History of the Church*, 4:231).

"Although there is no known contemporary text for this discourse, Simon Baker (1811-63) left the following reminiscent account with the Historian's Office: I was present at a discourse that the prophet Joseph delivered on the baptism for the dead 15 August 1840. He read the greater part the 15th Chapter of Corinthians and remarked that the Gospel of Jesus Christ brought glad tidings of great joy, and then remarked that he saw a widow in that congregation that had a son who died without being baptized and this widow in reading the sayings of Jesus 'except a man be born of water and of the spirit cannot enter the kingdom of heaven,' and that not one jot nor tittle of the Savior's words should pass away, but that all should be fulfilled. He then said that this widow should have great tidings in that thing. He also said the apostles was taking to people who understood baptism for the dead, for it was practiced among them. He went on to say that people could now act for their friends who had departed this life, and that the plan of salvation was calculated to save all who were willing to obey the requirements of the law of God. He went on and made a very beautiful discourse' (Journal

History, under date, Church Archives)." (*The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary accounts of Nauvoo discourses of the Prophet Joseph*. Compiled and Edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook. Orem, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1991, [Third Printing, April 1994], 49).

Robert L. Millet adds,

"After the meeting [15 August 1840], the widow, Jane Nyman, was baptized vicariously for her son by Harvey Olmstead in the Mississippi River." (*Life After Death*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1999, 65).

G. 1840-1841. Baptisms in Mississippi River.

Wilfort Woodruff states,

"There are witnesses here of what he [Joseph Smith] did. He never stopped till he got the fullness of the word of God to him concerning the baptism for the dead. But before doing so he went into the Mississippi River, and so did I, as well as others, and we each baptized a hundred for the dead, without a man to record a single act that we performed. Why did we do it? Because of the feeling of joy that we had, to think that we in the flesh could stand and redeem our dead. We did not wait to know what the result of this would be, or what the whole of it should be. Finally the Lord told the Prophet: 'When any of you are baptized for our dead, let there be a recorder, and let him be eyewitness of your baptisms; let him hear with his ears, that he may testify of a truth, saith the Lord; that in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven; whatsoever you bind on earth, may be bound in heaven; whatsoever you loose on earth, may be loosed in heaven' (D&C 127:6-7). That was the beginning of the work." (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*. Edited by G. Homer Durham. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946, [Second Collector's Edition Printing, 1995), 153).

The enthusiasm and joy the Saints felt in now being able to perform the work for their kindred dead, exceeded their wisdom for recording the sacred ordinances. In September 1, 1842, the Lord gave the Prophet Joseph, Section 127, which provided the necessary guidelines.

H. September 14, 1840. Request by Joseph Smith, Sr.,

Alvin be baptized.

Robert L. Millet states,

"...On 14 September 1840, on his deathbed the Patriarch Joseph Smith Sr. made a final request of his family--that someone be baptized in behalf of his eldest son, Alvin. Hyrum complied with that wish and was baptized in 1840 and again in 1841." (*Life After Death*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1999, 65).

How ironic that just one month later Joseph had taught the sermon regarding baptism for the dead at Seymour Brunson's funeral, Joseph was able to bring comfort to his own father who lay dying. He told him that it was now possible for Alvin, his oldest son, to be baptized. What joy this news must have brought to this aged Patriarch. It will also be a source of great joy to many others.

I. October 19, 1840. A Letter from the Prophet to the Twelve.

Joseph Smith sent the following letter to the Twelve who were serving in England,

"I presume the doctrine of 'baptism for the dead' has ere this reached your ears, and may have raised some inquiries in your minds respecting the same. I cannot in this letter give you all the information you may desire on the subject; but aside from knowledge independent of the Bible, I would say that it was certainly practiced by the ancient churches; and St. Paul endeavors to prove the doctrine of the resurrection from the same, and says, 'Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all: What are they then baptized for the dead?'

"I first mentioned the doctrine in public when preaching the funeral sermon of Brother Seymour Brunson; and have since given general instructions in the Church on the subject. The Saints have the privilege of being baptized for those of their relatives who are dead, whom they believe would have embraced the Gospel, if they had been privileged with hearing it, and who have received the Gospel in the spirit, through the instrumentality of those who have been commissioned to preach to them while in prison." (*History of the Church*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City:

Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 231).

J. January 19, 1841. Nauvoo Temple: Baptismal Font supported by twelve oxen.

Matthew B. Brown and Paul Thomas Smith state,

"On 19 January 1841, the Lord had indicated that the Nauvoo Temple would need to include a font to be used in performing baptisms for the dead (see D&C 124:29-33). [Shortly thereafter, Elijah Fordham began carving the oxen upon which the baptismal font would rest upon].

"The baptismal fond seen in modern temples is derived from the basin or laver that was located in the courtyard built by Moses. The laver, filled with water, was used to purify the priests before they were allowed to serve inside the tabernacle (Exodus 29:4; 2 Chronicles 4:6). When the temple of Solomon was built in Jerusalem, the laver was enlarged in size and placed on the backs of twelve oxen, with three of the animals facing toward each direction of the compass (see 1 Kings 7:23-26). It was this modified form of the font that was constructed for the temple in Nauvoo.

"Although the oxen are often believed to signify the twelve tribes of Israel, the ancient Israelites saw the ox as the symbol of the tribe of Joseph (see Deuteronomy 33:17). Because this tribe hold the birthright blessings, it also had responsibility for the salvation of the rest of the tribes of Israel (see 1 Chronicles 5:2; Jeremiah 31:9). (*Symbols in Stone: Symbolism of the Early Temples of the Restoration*. American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, Inc., 1997, 94-95).

Joseph Smith states,

"October 3, 1841, [he stated], there shall no more baptisms for the dead, until the ordinances can be attended to in the Lord's House;..." (*History of Church*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969]. 426).

Heidi S. Swinton adds,

"In a little more than a month [November 8, 1841], Brigham Young dedicated a temporary font in the unfinished basement of the edifice [Nauvoo Temple] under construction...A well supplied the basin with water. As the temple neared completion in 1845, the wooden font was replaced with a more substantial one of carved stone.

"Elijah Fordham [had] carved the initial oxen for the baptismal font from pine planks glued together...He spent eight months shaping the oxen, as well as ornamental moldings. It was said that the oxen were patterned after 'the most beautiful five year steer that could be found in the country.

"The baptistery proved to be 'one of the most striking artificial curiosities in this country,' according to a press account." (*Sacred Stone: The Temple at Nauvoo*. American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, Inc., 2002, 70).

K. May 4, 1842. Red Brick Store: Endowment.

On January 3, 1842, the "Red Brick Store" was opened. On the first floor was a mercantile business that Joseph Smith operated that provided sugar, molasses, salt, and other supplies. The second floor contained an office where he was able to do translations, and other church business.

Roger D. Launius and F. Mark McKiernan state,

"More than simply a place where Joseph produced religious writings, the upper floor of the Red Brick Store was a location where he held meetings and taught his followers his doctrinal conceptions. The most important of these were the temple rituals that he began to teach to a select gathering of associates early in 1842. On May 3, 1842, Joseph Smith prepared the assembly room of his store for the introduction of secret [sacred] temple ceremonies.

"With all the preparation, the upper room of the store was ill-suited to conducting the temple rituals. It was, however, the most adequate location in Nauvoo before the completion of the Temple. The prophet believed that the ceremonies could only be conducted in an upper room, and

the assembly room of the Red Brick Store was the only place of adequate size in Nauvoo during 1842 and 1843 where people could assemble with relative privacy. Brigham Young, for example, noted that in spite of the limitations of the store, Joseph Smith divided 'up the room the best he could.' He added that when finished it 'was arranged representing the interior of a temple as much as the circumstances would permit.

"After the preparation had been completed, on May 4, 1842, Joseph called together several church leaders and initiated them into the new religious ordinances, commanding them to conduct these in the Temple once it was completed." (*Joseph Smith, Jr.'s Red Brick Store*. Macomb, Illinois: Western Illinois University, Monograph Series, Number 5, 1985, 28-29).

Joseph Smith states,

"4 May 1842: I spent the day in the upper part of the store,...in council with General James Adams, of Springfield, Patriarch Hyrum Smith, Bishops Newel K. Whitney and George Miller, and President Brigham Young and Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to the washings, anointing, endowments and the communication of the keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which anyone is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds. In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days.

"And the communications I made to this council were of things spiritual, and to be received only by the spiritually minded and there is nothing made known to these men but what will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive, and a proper place is prepared to communicate them, even to the weakest of the Saints; therefore let the Saints be diligent in building the Temple, and all houses which they have been, or shall hereafter be, commanded of God to build."
(*Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*

[manual]. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-days Saints, 2007, 414).

Roger D. Launius and F. Mark McKiernan state,

"Between the introduction of these temple ceremonies in the Red Brick Store's assembly room on May 4, 1842, and Joseph and Hyrum Smith's deaths on June 27, 1844, more than sixty men and women were taught the rituals." (*Joseph Smith, Jr.'s Red Brick Store*. Macomb, Illinois: Western Illinois University, Monograph Series, Number 5, 1985, 31).

L. September 1 and 6, 1842 Nauvoo: Directions on Baptisms for the Dead.

In response to the persecution and threats against his life by those in Missouri who sought to bring him to trial, as well as the growing opposition by apostates and others, it was necessary for Joseph Smith to go into hiding to protect his life. During this time, he communicated with the Saints through letters. Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 127 and 128, are from his letters of correspondence.

In Doctrine and Covenants 127, Joseph addresses the need for thorough records to be kept and preserved regarding the baptisms of the dead that were being performed. This included: a recorder of the name of the individual, and that he, and assumedly another, may witness that the baptism was performed correctly and a record kept. These records were to then be preserved and "to be held in remembrance from generation to generation" (D&C 127:9).

In the 2013 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the heading for Section 128 states, "An epistle from Joseph Smith the Prophet to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, containing further directions on baptism for the dead, dated at Nauvoo, Illinois, September 6, 1842." (Heading: Section 128. *The Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, [2013], 258). The heading for Section 127 is exacting the same, except the date is September 1, 1842. (see Heading, Section 127, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 2013 edition, 257).

Doctrine and Covenants 128, is a second letter which also contained further directions regarding baptisms for the

dead. Additional information is given regarding the duties of the recorder, and the preservation in the "general church book" (D&C 128:4). This order is related to Revelations 20:12, where John states "the books were opened,; and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelations 20:12). One book, he clarifies, is "the records which are kept on the earth...[whereas] the book of life is the record which is kept in heaven" (D&C 128:7).

He confirms that the power has been given..."a power which records or binds on earth and binds in heaven. The *summum bonum* of the whole subject...consists in obtaining the powers of the Holy Priesthood. For him to whom these keys are given there is no difficulty in obtaining a knowledge of facts in relation to the salvation of the children of men, both as well for the dead as for the living" (D&C 128:11).

He states that the immersion of proxy [into the water] is as if they are dead, and the coming forth out of the water is in the likeness of the resurrection of the dead. In like manner, the baptismal font is in likeness of the grave. (see D&C 128:12-13).

He reminded the Saints of the importance of this sacred work for the dead.

Doctrine and Covenants 128:15

15 And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation as Paul says concerning the fathers--that they without us cannot be made perfect--neither can we without them be made perfect.

Joseph then quotes Malachi 4:5-6, which states that unless Elijah comes, the earth will be smitten with a curse. He continues, "the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other--and behold what is the subject? It is the baptism for the dead.

22 Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free.

24 ...Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance.

These words, written by Joseph Smith, reflected the importance of the work to be completed on behalf of the dead. He knew the resources that would be needed and the hours of dedicated service by the Saints required in order to bring this work to pass. But, he wanted all to understand the importance the Lord attached to this great work being completed.

M. April, 1844. "You and all your dead are to receive all ordinances" Joseph Smith.

Wilford Woodruff recorded,

"[Joseph declared," when the House [Temple] is done, baptismal font erected and finished and the worthy are washed, anointed, endowed, and ordained kings and priests, which must be done in this life, when the place is prepared you must go through all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, so that you who have dead friends must go through all the ordinances for them the same as for yourselves.

"Then on April 8 1844, just weeks before his death at Carthage, Joseph said, 'For every man who wishes to save his father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends must go through all the ordinances for each one of them separately, the same as for himself.'" (*Wilford Woodruff Journal* 1833-1898, 2:388, April 8, 1844; see also ("Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept: Reflections on the 1877 Commencement

of the Performance of Endowments and Sealings for the Dead," in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44/Issue 3, Article 4, 45).

N. Dec. 1845-Late Jan. 1846. Nauvoo Temple: Brigham Young and Twelve Apostles gave endowment to Saints.

Brigham Young states,

"The main and only cause for our tarrying as long [in Nauvoo], was to give the brethren those blessings in the Temple for which they have labored so diligently and faithfully to build, and as soon as it was prepared we labored incessantly almost night and day to wait on them until a few days prior to our departure.

Between December 10, 1845, and late January 1846, the Quorum of the Twelve supervised three weeks of intensive temple ordinance work in which at least 5,200 members received their endowments." ("Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept: Reflections on the 1877 Commencement of the Performance of Endowments and Sealings for the Dead," in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44/Issue 3, Article 4, 46-47).

It is important to understand that all the ordinances that are part of the Temple today were not found in the Temples at Kirtland or Nauvoo. What were available to the Saints were all that then were necessary for their continued exaltation.

Brigham Young states,

"When the doctrine of baptism for the dead was first given this Church was in its infancy; and not capable of receiving all the knowledge of God in its highest degree; this you all believe...

"The Lord has led this people all the while in this way, by giving them here a little and there a little, thus he increases their wisdom, and he that receives a little is thankful for that shall receive more and more...

"Joseph in his life time did not receive everything connected with the doctrine of redemption, but he has left the key with those who understand how to obtain and teach

to this great people all that is necessary for their salvation and exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our God." (Brigham Young Speech, April 6, 1845. *Times and Seasons* (July 1, 1845): 954-955.).

III. The Lord Commanded the Saints to Build a Temple in Nauvoo.

On August 15, 1840, the Prophet Joseph Smith first taught, at the funeral service of Seymour Brunson, the doctrine of the baptisms for the dead. The Saints immediately began implementing this ordinance on behalf of their kindred dead with baptisms being performed in the Mississippi River.

On January 19, 1841, the Lord, through revelation to Joseph Smith, commanded the Saints to build a Temple in Nauvoo.

Doctrine and Covenants 124:26-27 [underline added]

26 And send ye swift messengers, yea, chosen messengers, and say unto them: Come ye, with all your gold, and your silver, and your precious stones, and with all your antiquities; and with all who have knowledge of antiquities, that will come, may come, and bring the box-tree, and the fir-tree, and the pine-tree, together with all the precious trees of the earth;

27 And with iron, with copper, and with brass, and with zinc, and with all your precious things of the earth; and build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein.

*What reasons did the Lord give for this commandment?

"a. To reveal additional priesthood ordinances.

Doctrine and Covenants 124:28, 40-41

28 For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood.

40 And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people.

41 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 fullness of times.

"b. To provide a place to perform baptism for the dead.

Doctrine and Covenants 124:29-30, 33 [underline added]

29 For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead--

30 For this ordinance belongs to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me, on in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me.

33 For verily I say unto you, that after you have had sufficient time to build a house to me, wherein the ordinances of baptizing for the dead belongeth, and for which the same was instituted from before the foundation of the world, your baptisms for your dead cannot be acceptable unto me.

"c. To have the Saints prove their faithfulness in keeping His commandments so He could bless them with honor, immortality, and eternal life.

Doctrine and Covenants 124:55 [underline added]

55 And again, verily I say unto you, I command you again to build a house to my name, even in this place, that you may prove yourselves unto me that ye are faithful in all things whatsoever I command you, that I may bless you, and crown you with honor, immortality, and eternal life.

(a-c. (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 172).

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"One of the primary purposes of this temple [Nauvoo] was to provide a place for the Saints to perform ordinances such as baptisms and confirmations for the dead, the endowment,

and temple marriage. There ordinances were not performed in the Kirtland Temple." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 172).

Despite their poverty, the Saints sacrificed to build the Nauvoo Temple, just as they had done to build the Kirtland Temple.

Our Heritage states,

"More than 1,000 men donated every tenth day in labor. Others...gave horses, wagons, cows, pork, and grain to aid in the temple's construction.

"Caroline Butler had no pennies or dimes to contribute, but she wanted very much to give something. [When] she saw two dead buffalo,...She and her children pulled the long hair from the buffaloes' manes and took it home with them. They washed and carded the hair and spun it into coarse yarn, then knitted eight pair of heavy mittens that were given to the rock cutters working on the temple in the bitter winter cold.

"Mary Fielding Smith, wife of Hyrum Smith, wrote to Latter-day Saint women in England, who within a year gathered 50,000 pennies, weighing 434 pounds, that was shipped to Nauvoo...The Saints in Norway, Illinois, sent 100 sheep to Nauvoo to be used by the temple committee.

"Brigham Young remembered: 'We did much hard labor on the Nauvoo temple, during which time it was difficult to get bread and other provisions for the workman to eat. Still, President Young counseled those in charge of temple funds to give out all the flour they had, confident the Lord would provide Within a short time Joseph Toronto, a recent convert to the Church from Sicily, arrived in Nauvoo, bringing with him \$2,500 in gold, which he laid at the feet of the Brethren.'" (*Our Heritage*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996, 59-60).

*What impresses you about the sacrifices made by the early Saints in building the Nauvoo Temple?

I am reminded of the importance of being willing to sacrifice as part of our being able to receive our eternal salvation.

The Lectures on Faith states,

"...the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life." (Lecture Six: 7. *Lectures on Faith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985, 69).

The willingness to sacrifice is one of the lessons early Saints as well as the Saints of the Latter-days need to learn. It is essential for our eternal development that we reach the point in our spiritual growth, in response to our love of the Lord, that we are willing, to give of our time, talents and earthly possessions to the building up of the kingdom of God on earth. In essence, as we become truly "born again," as we are willing to give all we have received to the Lord. When we reach this level of commitment, like Abraham of old, we will not hold back anything from the Lord, including our lives, if necessary. We then have developed "the faith necessary to lay hold on eternal life" (*Lecture on Faith: 6:7*).

On October 3, 1841, the Prophet Joseph announced,

"[T]here shall be no more baptisms for the dead, until the ordinance can be attended to in the Lord's House" (*History of the Church*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 426.

On November 8, 1841, Brigham Young dedicated a temporary but carefully crafted wooden baptismal font in the basement of the unfinished temple" *History of the Church*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 426-427).

*What can we learn from the Saint's determination to build a baptismal font before the temple was completed?

Their desire to both comply with Joseph's directive, and to create a wooden font so the work for their dead could continue, are symbolic of both their obedience to the word of the prophet, and their commitment to doing the work for their deceased dead. Our commitment to doing our own family history work is a measure of the importance we give to the accomplishment of this great work.

IV. We [Also] Should Be Enthusiastic and Joyful in Our Efforts to Perform Baptisms For the Dead

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"[Although] some baptisms for the dead were done in the New Testament times following the Resurrection of Christ...the great work of providing saving ordinances for the dead is now the responsibility of the Church members in this dispensation. [The requirements for performing temple baptism and confirmations include:] membership in the Church with a current or limited-use recommend; must be 12 or older; and, male members must hold the priesthood.

Doctrine and Covenants 128:15

15 And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says, concerning the fathers--that they without us cannot be made perfect--neither can we without our dead be made perfect.

*In what ways do the dead depend on us for their salvation?

If we do not do the research necessary to learn the full name and date of birth of our relatives, they will have to wait until the Millennium for their work to be accomplished. We live at a time when the means to do family research has been advanced to the point where we can now do the research necessary on our computers in our own homes. Surely they will hold us responsible if we do not do our part on their behalf.

*In what ways does our salvation depend on the salvation of the dead?

Doctrine and Covenants 128:18

18 ...It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other--and behold what is the subject? It is baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also; for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union and welding together of dispensations, and keys and powers and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time...

The dead are dependent upon us, the living, to perform the work on earth for them.

Monte S. Nyman states,

"In verse 15, Joseph emphasized the importance of the records of our dead. We must do the ordinances for them, to obtain our own salvation. He paraphrases Hebrews 11:40 as the validity for this doctrine; we cannot be saved without our dead." (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary: It Came From God*, Vol. 2. Orem, Utah: Granite Publishing and Distribution, LLC, 2009, 517).

17 And again, in connection with this quotation [1 Corinthians 15:29], I give you a quotation from one of the prophets, who had his eye fixed on the restoration of the priesthood, the glories to be revealed in the last days, and in an especial manner this most glorious of all subjects belonging to the everlasting gospel, namely, the baptism for the dead; for Malachi says, last chapter, verses 5th and 6th: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart to the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

18 I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other--and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also; for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories, should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fullness of times.

John A. Widtsoe states,

"In our present state, in the day of the grand council, we made a certain agreement with the Almighty. The Lord proposed a plan, conceived by him. We accepted it. Since the plan is intended for all men, we became parties to the salvation of every person under that plan. We agreed, right then and there, to be not only saviors for ourselves,

but...saviors for the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father's work, and the Savior's work, but also our work. The least of us, the humblest, is in partnership with the Almighty in achieving the purpose of the eternal plan of salvation." ("The Worth of Souls," in *Utah Genealogical Historical Magazine*. October, 1934, 189).

Wilford Woodruff continues,

"Oh, I wish many times that the veil were lifted off the face of the Latter-day Saints. I wish we could see and know the things of God as they do who are laboring for the salvation of the human family who are in the spirit world; for it this were so, this whole people, with very few, if any, exceptions, would lose all interest in the riches of the world, and instead thereof their whole desires and labors would be directed to redeem their dead, to perform faithfully the work and mission given us on earth; so that when we ourselves should pass behind the veil and meet with Joseph and the ancient apostles, and others who are watching over us and who are deeply interested in our labors, we might feel satisfied in having done our duty." (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*. Edited by G. Homer Durham. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946, [Second Collector's Edition Printing, 1995), 152).

*How can performing baptisms for the dead help us turn our hearts to our ancestors?

It is one thing to understand our responsibilities as members of the Church; it is another to do something about our responsibilities. As we personally go to the temple and do the work for our own kindred dead, we are becoming partners with the Lord in caring for the spiritual growth and development of our ancestors. We are not hearers only, but doers also.

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"After researching more than 400 names, both male and female, the Young Women of the Meridian [Idaho] 15th Ward invited the Young Men to go with them to the Boise [Idaho] Temple to do baptisms. The temple arranged for the names to

be kept in a file for their ward. Hether Bennett, 15, said, 'The best part was being baptized for them. The names sounded familiar to me. That was the neatest thing about the whole project. We did work for people that otherwise wouldn't have been done. They might have been forgotten.' (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 174).

Gordon B. Hinckley concludes,

"That which goes on in the House of the Lord...comes nearer to the spirit of sacrifice of the Lord than any other activity of which I know. Why? Because it is done by those who give freely of time and substance, without any expectation of thanks or reward, to do for others that which they cannot do for themselves." ("A Century of Family History Service," in *Ensign*, March 1995, 62-63).

Joseph Smith called the work of redeeming the dead the "most glorious of all subjects belonging to the everlasting gospel" (D&C 128:17). We must each ask ourselves, "How do I feel about the work of redeeming the dead?" "It is important enough for to give it our time and attention?" It is a part of the covenant we made to the Lord when we shouted for joy as the plan of our Father was first presented. Now is the time to honor our covenant.

V. Conclusions

The gospel of Jesus Christ, as we have learned, is as important for the dead as for the living. The Lord loves each of His children, on both sides of the veil, and has made provisions for both to gain their exaltation in His kingdom. An essential part of His work involves the ordinances for the dead.

There are certain ordinances, essential to eternal salvation, that can only be completed on earth. These include, among others, the ordinances of baptism and the reception of the Holy Ghost. This lesson addresses how this occurs for those who have departed this mortal life.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord Revealed the Doctrine of Priesthood Ordinances For the Dead: A time-line noting important dates involved in the restoration of the

doctrine of Priesthood Ordinances had been provided, along with detailed information, supporting their importance. We came to understand that the revelation concern this important work can line upon line, and precept upon precept.

The Lord Commanded the Saints to Build a Temple in Nauvoo:

In order to provide a permanent place where the ordinances for both the living and the dead could occur required the building of a second temple in this dispensation, in Nauvoo, Illinois. This temple fulfilled three purposes: (1) To reveal additional priesthood ordinances; (2) To provide a place to perform baptisms for the dead; and, (3) To have the Saints prove their faithfulness in keeping his commandments so He could bless them with honor, immortality, and eternal life. Building this temple, like the Temple at Kirtland, Ohio, would require the Saints to sacrifice their time, talents, and means unto the Lord.

We [Also] Should be Enthusiastic and Joyful in Our Efforts to Perform Baptisms for the Dead: All can do the family history research necessary but, you must be at least twelve years of age, to do the baptismal work for those who have gone before them. As we participate in this sacred work, our hearts are truly turned to our ancestors as we offer to them the ordinances of the gospel. With their acceptance of this work, they will then be able to move forward in their eternal progression. How blessed we are to live in a time when we are able to participate in this great and glorious work.

In our next lesson [D&C#31], we will address the importance of the eternal marriage. Through the restored temple ordinances, it is now possible for couples to be married not only for this life, but for eternity.