TEMPLE GARMENTS

See: Garments

TEMPLE ORDINANCES

The ordinances performed only in the temple are baptisms for the dead, washings and anointings, endowments, and marriages or sealings for eternity. The privilege of entering the House of the Lord, the temple, and participating in its ordinances is a spiritual apex of LDS religious life. Through temple ordinances, one receives a ceremonial overview of and commitment to the Christ-like life. Temple ordinances are instruments of spiritual rebirth. In the words of President David O. McKay, they are the “step-by-step ascent into the eternal presence.” Through them, and only through them, the powers of godliness are granted to men in the flesh (D&C 84:20–22). Temple ordinances confirm mature discipleship; they are the essence of fervent worship and an enabling and ennobling expression of one’s love for God (see TEMPLE WORSHIP).

All participants must be baptized and confirmed members of the Church, and must receive a temple recommend. However, children under eight years of age may participate in their own family sealings before being baptized. Members who are twelve years of age or older may serve as proxies in baptisms for the dead. Worthy adults may participate in the temple endowment ceremonies. All men must have been ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood. Temple ordinances are performed in sequence.

WASHINGS AND ANOINTINGS. Washings and anointings are preparatory or initiatory ordinances in the temple. They signify the cleansing and sanctifying power of Jesus Christ applied to the attributes of the person and to the hallowing of all life. They have biblical precedents (see OIL; TEMPLES THROUGH THE AGES; WASHING AND ANOINTING). Women are set apart to administer the ordinances to women, and men are set apart to administer the ordinances to men. Latter-day Saints look forward to receiving these inspired and inspiring promises with the same fervent anticipation they bring to baptism. They come in the spirit of a scriptural command: “Cleanse your hands and your feet before me” (D&C 88:74; cf. 1 John 2:27). A commemorative garment is given with these ordinances and is worn thereafter by the participant (see GARMENTS).

TEMPLE ENDOWMENT. The temple endowment is spoken of in scripture as an “endowment,” or outpouring, of “power from on high” (D&C 84:20–21; 105:11; 109:22, 26; cf. Luke 24:49). Participants in white temple clothing assemble in ordinance rooms to receive this instruction and participate in the unfolding drama of the PLAN OF SALVATION. They are taught of premortal life; the spiritual and temporal creation; the advent of Adam and Eve, and their transgression and expulsion into the harsh contrasts of the mortal probation; the laws and ordinances required for reconciliation through the atonement of Christ; and a return to the presence of God. The endowment is a series of symbols of these vast spiritual realities, to be received only by the committed and spiritual-minded (TPJS, p. 237; see also TEMPLES: MEANINGS AND FUNCTIONS OF TEMPLES). “All the ordinances,” wrote Heber C. Kimball, “are signs of things in the heavens. Everything we see here is typical of what will be hereafter” (“Address to My Children,” unpublished). The endowment increases one’s spiritual power, based in part “on enlarged knowledge and intelligence—a power from on high, of a quality with God’s own power” (Widtsoe, 1921, p. 55; Widtsoe, 1939, p. 335; see also ENDOWMENT).

During the endowment, solemn covenants are made pertaining to truthfulness, purity, righteous service, and devotion. In this way, the temple is the locus of consecration to the teaching of the law and the prophets and to the ways of God and his Son. One does not assume such covenants lightly. Modern commandments relating to temple building have been addressed to those “who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command” (D&C 97:8–9). As with Abraham of old, latter-day revelation says that to obtain “the keys of the kingdom of an endless life” one must be willing to sacrifice all earthly things (TPJS, p. 322).

Before taking these solemn vows, new converts prepare for at least a year after baptism. Missionaries typically receive the temple blessings prior to their service. Couples receive them on, shortly before, or sometimes well in advance of the day of their temple marriage (see MARRIAGE:
ETERNAL MARRIAGE; TEMPLES: TEMPLE WORSHIP AND ACTIVITY).

This order of instruction and covenant making culminates in the celestial room, which represents the highest degree of heaven, a return to the presence of God, a place of exquisite beauty and serenity, where one may feel and meditate "in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:2). Communal sensitivity in the presence of like-dedicated and like-experienced loved ones enhances deep fellowship. The temple is "a house of glory" and "a place of thanksgiving for all saints" (D&C 88:119; 97:13).

SEALING OF FAMILIES. Only after patrons make these unconditional covenants with and through Jesus Christ may they receive "the most glorious ordinances of the temple," the covenants of marriage and family sealing (Widtsoe, 1937, p. 128). Marriage and sealing covenants are performed in temple sealing rooms convenient to the celestial room. Officiants and close family and friends often attend the couple. Kneeling opposite each other at the altar, the bride and groom are placed under mutual covenants to each other, and are married through the sealing power of Jesus Christ; their children will thus be BORN IN THE COVENANT, and the family kingdom will become a nucleus of heaven. If the couple has been previously married under secular authority and now has children, the husband and wife are sealed in the temple under the new and everlasting covenant and their children are then brought to the altar and are sealed to them. All subsequent children born to this family are born in the covenant. By apostolic authority, the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are explicitly invoked upon all marriages and sealings. It is envisioned that eventually further sealings will link all the couple's progenitors and all of their descendants in an unbroken chain (see SEALING: TEMPLE SEALINGS). Thus, divine parenthood is imaged on earth. The saintly life is not in renunciation but in glorification of the family. The quest for happiness and completeness within the marital state is transformed from the banal and temporary toward the divine and eternal.

SEALING OF ADOPTED CHILDREN. If a couple elects to adopt children, those children are brought to the temple for a ceremony of sealing to their adoptive parents just as children born to them may be sealed.

PROXY ORDINANCES. All temple ordinances, beginning with baptism, may be performed by proxy for persons who died not having the opportunity to receive them for themselves (see BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD; SALVATION FOR THE DEAD).

BIBLIOGRAPHY


ALLEN CLAIRE ROZSA

TEMPLE PRESIDENT AND MATRON

Temple presidents and their wives, who serve as matrons, are appointed to specific LDS temples by the FIRST PRESIDENCY of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, usually for three years. Their principal responsibilities are to set the spiritual tone of the temple, to supervise the performance of sacred ceremonies and ordinances therein, and to oversee the physical facility. Although instructions and ORDINANCES are the same in all LDS temples, the size of the temple and the number of patrons using it alter the procedures from temple to temple.

On a typical day in a fully operating temple, the president meets with the male supervisors and ordinance workers and the matron meets with the female supervisors and ordinance workers in prayer meeting before beginning each of the several daily shifts. They may also greet patrons, give preparatory instructions and guidance to those coming for the first time, and coordinate the performance of the ordinances. The president and matron may also answer personal inquiries of patrons and resolve procedural questions, by phone or correspondence, from BISHOPS, STAKE PRESIDENTS, RELIEF SOCIETY presidents, and other Church and community leaders within the temple district. Time is also spent consulting with counselors in the temple presidency, assistants to the president, and supervisors. In addition, the president and matron meet regularly with the temple