

Foundations of Temple Worship
Truman G. Madsen
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Introduction
President David A. Bednar

Brothers and sisters, we are in for a spiritual treat today, as we'll be taught by Brother Truman Madsen. Many of you have had the opportunity to read some of his writings or to hear some of the tapes about the life of the Prophet Joseph. But to be with him and hear the power of his testimony and the extensiveness of his knowledge will be a great blessing for you.

Brother Madsen joined the faculty of Brigham Young University in 1957, and is now an emeritus professor of philosophy. He has also taught at the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, serving on its academic coordinating committee, and as the director for two years, from 1991 through 1993.

Brother Madsen received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Utah in philosophy and history, and a Master of Art and a Ph.D in history and philosophy of religion from Harvard University.

Brother Madsen has served in the Church as a bishop, as a stake president, on the general Sunday School board, as executive assistant of the Temple Square visitor's center, as a counselor in two district presidencies, and as the president of the New England Mission. At the present time he serves as the patriarch in his stake, as the gospel doctrine teacher in his ward, and as a home teacher.

Brother Madsen and his wife, Ann, are the parents of four children, and at the present time they have sixteen grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, and another great-grandchild to be born any minute. Brother Madsen.

Truman G. Madsen

Brothers and sisters, the last sentence of that glorious hymn, "Take my heart and seal it," provides me the theme I would like to address with you today. But I must first say a word about the man who has just introduced me. Ann and I have been here before in this role, and have known and honored the Bednars for their leadership. I want to say to you from my heart today that their inspired leadership is, we believe, the main factor in what has happened on this campus, and what is soon to happen, and that though we have known him and honored him, he now carries the mantle of an apostle of Jesus Christ.

On September 4th this year it was announced that an architect and a builder had been designated to build the Rexburg Temple. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid," the Master said (Matthew 5:14). The temple on this hill will be the crown jewel of this campus, and the fulfillment of the sacrifice of many great and good Latter-day Saints. It will be a source of light

to this entire valley, and you who have the privilege of receiving its blessings will carry that light all over the world.

I'd like to talk today out of fifty years experience in participating in temple worship, but also in interviewing literally thousands of people for temple recommends, and in conversation about their experiences. I'd like to talk in a way that I hope will sink more deeply into you than ever, to motivate you to focus your lives on temple worship, and on the power of Jesus Christ, which is there. So I'm going to give you an acronym, a few ABCs, and use each of those letters as a lead-in, a memory peg, for my remarks and testimony.

Let's begin, then, with "A," which, in temple focus, may mean both Atonement and Anointing. I have learned in the Holy Land that those two words are almost synonymous in Hebrew. The word *kipper*, which is the word for atoning, or atoning influence, means, among other things, to smear, literally, anointing with oil, but it also means to cover, and in the Christ awareness that means to overcome and heal, to cover up and replace sin in our lives with light and healing. The ancient high priest went into the temple only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, *yom kippur*, and the idea was that he would cleanse the temple, and in that very process, cleanse the people, unless, peradventure, they were beyond repentance. Well, we have been taught by modern revelation that Christ is himself the Great High Priest, and that when he promises that he will place his name and his seal and his glory upon his sanctuary, then all who enter therein must come as worthily as they can and leave even worthier. He is the power of repentance, and all the first principles are manifest in the temple: faith, repentance, baptism, and the power of the Holy Ghost.

So we move to the next letter, which is "B," and I suggest the word "born" or "born again." Today the religious world often speaks of the "twice-born person," or of being a "born-again Christian," not fully comprehending how complete is his promise to those who come to him. It is one thing to have faith, and another to have repentance, but in the House of the Lord, His House, he requires of his children an outgoing covenant-making from the heart, and then makes promises, even more inclusive than those that come with the first principles and ordinances. When the Prophet Joseph Smith sent the first Twelve abroad to Britain one of the instructions he gave is summed up in one sentence. He said, "Brethren, Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 162). And all ordinances, therefore, are channels of his Spirit. But the crowning ordinances are those of the Holy Temple. "Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances."

Let's go to "C," Covenants. The temple is a house of covenant-making. I recall in my own earlier days, just before my mission, when I began to understand how deep-reaching and far-reaching these covenants are; I remember shrinking in a way, inwardly, and saying, "I'm not ready, I'm not ready to make that kind of promise." I am now convinced, brothers and sisters, that the earlier you can give your whole heart to covenant-making, the greater can be your expectations of the Lord's blessings. I believe that as long as we say, sometimes dishonestly, "well, I don't want to make a promise like that; I'm afraid I couldn't keep it," that's only beginning to get ready to think about anticipating, and it does not bring any strength. It's when you make a covenant in the presence of witnesses and even in the sense of the presence of God

that the heavens begin to shake for your good when you mean it, and then he promises with absolute conviction and trust in you, “I make the same covenant with you, and I will never break it.” Ultimately he asks us to give our all in covenant-making, with the promise that then and only then, he will give his all in our behalf. Every blessing that is possible to receive will remain with us and down the road in greater and greater fulfillment as we live. The everlasting covenant, the new and everlasting covenant centers in his sanctuary, the temple.

So we move to “D,” Dedication. There will be a day, some of you being privileged to attend, when this temple, *your* temple, will be dedicated by a prophet of God, who alone exercises all the keys of the holy priesthood, including the keys that we understand were given to begin with in the Kirtland Temple: The keys of Elijah, keys that involve the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the keys that have all to do with the eventual fulfillment of the patriarchal order of the priesthood; all those keys will be exercised to dedicate your temple. And it will be said, as is typical, that in that process of dedicating a structure, the hope is that you will dedicate yourselves, and thereafter, you will be living temples. For modern revelation says that the elements, your elements, the very elements of your spirit and body, are the tabernacle of God, even temples (D&C 93:33-35). And though, on the negative side it is alerted that we could betray that sacredness, we can defile the temple, it is in the House of the Lord that we gain power to fulfill the promise that we can become living temples like unto Him. It interests me that no covenant is ever required of us that isn’t immediately followed by a divine blessing to further enable us to keep it. So if we are baptized we receive the promise of the Holy Ghost. If we are partakers of the sacrament we are promised the Spirit will be with us, even always (Moroni 4:3). And now, in the House of the Lord, likewise we are promised an endowment of power, equivalent to the consecration of our own covenants.

Which leads us, then, to the “E,” Endowment. The Lord has said, “I deign (which is to say, I intend, or I promise) to reveal unto my servants an endowment of power, power from on high (D&C 38:32; 124:41), defined in another revelation as the very powers of godliness (D&C 84:20-21). How can I live a godly life in this life with all of the struggles that pertain to it? Answer: If you are a recipient of an increased endowment of the Spirit of God. And how does he define the “powers of godliness?” Well, I connect the passage to another in the Doctrine and Covenants, that says that we can become possessors (listen to this) *possessors* of all things. And then it names four specific things: the life and the light, the Spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of God through Jesus Christ, his Son (D&C 50:27). I suggest to you, out of my own experience with many, including my own inner soul, that the temple experience can be enlivening, enlightening, empowering, and vitalizing, and that we need to go back and back to have that experience.

What’s next? The word for “F,” recurrent in the Doctrine and Covenants, is Fulness. We all speak of the fulness of the gospel, implying that there are parts elsewhere, but that it comes together in this dispensation. Well, the Lord uses the word “fulness” for other things, too. He speaks of receiving, eventually, the fulness of truth. Let me quote. He speaks to the Prophet Joseph from, apparently, a record of John, that we have not yet received in full, but are promised we will some day, should we prove worthy. Having taught him, John’s testimony of Christ, how he moved from grace to grace and degree to degree, he then says, he, the Savior, to Joseph, “I

give unto you these sayings, that you may understand and know *how* to worship and that you may know *what* you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name (that's worship), (now listen) and in due time be glorified in me, as I am glorified in the Father. Therefore *you* shall receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:18-20). That is sacred truth, that we are in the full sense to become both recipients and outgiving servants of the Lord, and that if we are these powers distill into our souls. You listened to the scripture of the day from what the Prophet received in Liberty. "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then thy confidence wax strong . . . and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dew from heaven" (D&C 121:45). The fulness of truth, and the fulness of the Holy Ghost, and the fulness of the priesthood, and the fulness of the glory of the Father are all phrases that are ocurrent in connection with the temple, and cannot be received anywhere else, nowhere else on the planet. You cannot receive the fulness that the Lord has for you without coming through the temple and having the temple come through you.

Which leads us, then, to the word for "F. I said "fulness," but I hinted earlier about the word glory, so let's go from "F" to "G," and for a moment talk about the glory of the Lord. In the worldly sense we say that somebody aspires to glory, somebody achieved glory in a given way, calling, athletics, achievement. We're talking about the glory of God, which, we are taught, includes intelligence. "The glory of God *is* intelligence" (D&C 93:36). And then that is subdivided into light and truth. The fulness of the glory of the Father, surely, would then include those, but let me add that in the Doctrine and Covenants we're told something about marriage and family as the everlasting covenant (D&C 131:2), and taught that the Father is a Father indeed, and that you and I are begotten sons and daughters unto the Eternal Father (D&C 76:24), and that that we, therefore, believe there was Heavenly Mother, and that therefore we believe priesthood and parenthood are intertwined, and that therefore to be become truly glorious is to become like them, with the powers of creation and procreation given us forever. And that is the culminating ordinance of the House of the Lord, which we call "sealing."

I have recollection of a conversation with a man who had felt that in order to serve the Lord fully he must never marry. He believed in what in the tradition is called celibacy, and believed further that in the life to come there can be and will be no such possibilities, as we know here, of family relationships; they will be obliterated, and we will be single and individual and saintly people forever. I said to him before taking him for a tour of the then undedicated Provo Temple, "Before we go, dear brother, can I get two things clear? Otherwise you won't understand what you're going to see."

So I asked him, "Why don't you want to marry?"

He said, after some thought, "Well, because this things of this world do not finally matter."

I said, "Notice that you've made two assumptions. You've assumed that marriage is of this world only. Do you really know that? And secondly, you've assumed that anything that has to do with this earth is, for that very reason, to be rejected or somehow transcended."

He said, “Well that’s it, that’s the truth.”

I said, “Well, you have changed, then, the Bible.”

He said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit what?”

He said, “The earth.” (Matthew 5:5)

I said, “That’s right, but on your view, who wants it?”

Brothers and sisters, we have the unique insight that heaven and earth are to come together, that what many religions have split apart have been comprehensively united. For example, having a physical body, which the Lord calls the “temple of the Lord,” and having also a spirit, which constitutes a soul (D&C 88:15), and the Lord Jesus Christ lived and died to exalt the soul, the whole of man, and wholeness ultimately means holiness. And the holiest of all achievements in this world and the next is to give your powers of creation and procreation mutually in the sacred relationship of marriage.

He didn’t change his mind, but he deepened my own perception of how glorious it is. The glory of God is spoken of in section 132, and the fulness of the glory of the Father is the fulness and continuations of the seeds (verse 19). No more literal word could be used for the power bred in us by reason of our own birth to beget posterity. Family is glory, and will be extended, intensified, and increased forever. This earth will become the home of the truly sanctified who will follow in the mirror image of the Father and his Companion, who opened up for us this way of immortality and eternal life.

Now, I mentioned early the idea of rebirth. You have all been born as spirit children, and as such have a divine nature. You have now been born of mortal parents, and have been privileged, then, with a body, which is a step forward in your progression, not a step back. The body is not a prison house. It can become distorted, it can become perverted, and it can become in many ways a burden, but that is not the divine intent. We are, instead, to proceed to watch and pray, that it may be developed into the very likeness of our spirits, which are divine, and ultimately, then, to become, as it were, a product of another birth, which is the birth we call Jesus, who becomes, in the process of ordinances, our father. That’s a proper use of the word “father” for Jesus, for he says in section 93:22, “all those who are begotten through me (through the ordinances) are partakers of the glory of the same (meaning his role as first-born), and are the Church of the First-born.” Imagine. He has sacrificed for us in order that we can inherit what he alone could have claimed to be, the first-born. He’s saying, “It will be as if you were; all of the blessings and powers that have been bestowed upon me are now transmitted to you if you are willing to come to me.” “They are begotten through me and are partakers of the glory of the same.”

Well, there will be another birth ahead of us, and that's called the resurrection. And then the promise that we can be like him will be literal and complete.

Let me turn now to personal words and testimony. I could take you to the very place, when I was in graduate school in California, where I was reading in a book by Parley P. Pratt, called *The Key to Theology*, a chapter called "Laws of Initiation." I probably marked somehow, with a bookmark or turning down the leaf, a paragraph of which this is a paraphrase. He said, "The practice of these principles and ordinances (and he had just summarized the whole pattern) has begun to regenerate the race." And then he said, "This is reversing the tide of degeneracy, which has been in the world, beginning essentially, not so much with Adam, but with the first man named Cain, who sold out, as it were, his birthright, and even became, not the transmitter of life, but the destroyer; he became the first murderer. "The laws of degeneration have been working in the race, but the gospel of Jesus Christ will regenerate the race." And then he described the effects of the Spirit on each individual.

My wife and I were interviewed a time ago by the very man who interviewed President Hinckley, Mike Wallace. We were at the open house of Manhattan Temple. At some point in our chat with him (by the way, he has great regard for President Hinckley), he said something like this, looking at my wife, "Why are Mormon women so lovely?" We learned later that he has not had a happy married life; he's had four wives (not simultaneously). Before Ann could answer, I was thinking of Parley P. Pratt, and I said, "It's the best-kept beauty secret in the world. It is the Spirit of God." Parley P. Pratt says, "It contributes to beauty of face, form, and feature."

Then he turned to Ann, and she said, "It's fidelity." That's a great answer. She had in mind fidelity in the sense of honoring and keeping our covenants with Christ, but also honoring our covenants with each other: fidelity in marriage. And also faithfulness in marking and walking the path that Christ has laid out for us. That does make a difference, even in our physical appearance.

I testify that that is so. I believe that in the Church itself not everyone is aware of how conspicuous that beauty and that light is in the eyes and faces of the faithful, but those who have the same spirit recognize it. Jesus said once, "My sheep know my voice and my sheep know me" (see John 10:27) I suggest to you that the Lord's sheep know his other sheep and recognize when he is at work in their lives and they have the Spirit. That is a temple outcome. It comes with worship and honoring in the sanctuary.

One other point and I'm done.

It was in that same period, when I had been, I think, a little skeptical, a little troubled, about the whole idea of ritual and ceremony, when I wondered if we really had to do these particular things in order to receive particular blessings, that President David O. McKay came to a gathering in Los Angeles. I've told this story before, I'll make it brief. That was a trip he made in order to require a sacrifice of the saints in order to build the temple. One of the between-the-line messages I have for you today is that I hope you will make some sacrifices, both in terms of inner promises and in terms of helping temporally and otherwise to help the

temple be built here in your midst, because I believe from Church history that there has never been a glorious outpouring in a temple dedication that wasn't preceded by genuine sacrifice on the part of the saints. The fact that it's being built here demonstrates there already has been sacrifice. I ask you to contribute to it.

But back to my point. President McKay asked for a million dollars from the local saints, and had pledge cards before the meeting was over for that amount, plus. Then he spoke about the temple. I'll spare you the details except for the core statement that I have cherished, and which bent, as it were, the twig in me, which has grown and grown ever since.

He said, "Brothers and sisters, I believe there are few, even temple workers, who comprehend the full meaning and power of the temple endowment. Seen for what it is, it is the step-by-step ascent into the eternal presence. If our young people could only glimpse it, it would be the most powerful spiritual motivation of their lives."

I resolved that day, because of what happened in my heart, always to raise my voice in testifying of the temple and never of criticizing it, to carry out as best I could my dream of finding a queen who would share in me the total conviction that the temple is ours, made for us and prepared for us, and that out of that could come a family who would love the Lord Jesus Christ as nothing else in the universe. I bear testimony, that now that the years have passed, whatever is good and true and beautiful in our lives and the lives of our children is rooted in the Christ, who is a great giver of the privilege of temple, temple building, temple worship, and temple fulfilment. I bear that testimony in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.