

# *The Promises Made to the Fathers*

(Genesis 12-36)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

(From *Studies in Scripture Vol 3: Genesis to 2 Samuel*,  
ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet [Salt Lake City, UT: Randall Book Co., 1985], pp. 47-62)

## ***For the Living and the Dead***

If I can have proper guidance from the Spirit, I shall try and help us catch a vision of how the temples of the Lord, how these holy Houses of the Lord, assume a central position in the whole scheme of salvation. I shall set forth how all things for the living and for the dead, how all of the doctrines and principles we have received, are tied together in one unified whole in and through the ordinances performed in the Houses of the Lord.

What is a temple? It is the House of the Lord; it is a holy sanctuary. That word is used in the Old Testament with reference to the temple (e.g., 1 Chron. 22:19; 2 Chron. 30:8). A sanctuary is a place set apart from the world, a place reserved for spiritual things. It is in the temple that the veil is parted. It is in the temple that the veil is lifted, the veil between this life and the next realm of existence.

The veil is thin; the temple is the place where time and eternity link hands and are joined together and the foundations are laid for eternal joy, eternal felicity, and eternal happiness in the realms that are ahead.

We know that God is no respecter of persons, that he deals with every individual solely on the basis of personal righteousness. He has given a blanket promise in the revelations that spiritual gifts will flow to the faithful, even to the point, the promise so stipulates, that every faithful person will see the face of the Lord (D&C 67:10; 93:1). The temple is the House of the Lord, and if the Lord has occasion to visit any particular part of his kingdom, the place where he will come will be the sanctuary that is appointed, the house that has been dedicated to him, the house that is his. There are times, multitudes of them, when the Lord has appeared under other circumstances and in other places,

but they have been the periods in the earth's history when houses of the Lord had not been erected, dedicated, and appointed for his personal use. In those days he appeared in a grove of trees, as in Western New York (see JS-H 11-20), or on a mountain top such as Mt. Sinai (see Ex. 3), or the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17), or wheresoever. But when he has a house that is his, as when he appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110:1-10), that is the place to which he comes. Because all faithful people stand on a footing of total and complete

equality, because all receive blessings as a result of righteousness and not of church position or some other eminence, all who are entitled to see the face of the Lord will receive that blessing in the House of the Lord (see D&C 97:15-16). I state these things to help us gain a perspective of the spiritual worth of what is involved in a House of the Lord.

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "It matters not what else we have been called to do, or what position we may occupy, or how faithfully in other ways we have labored in the Church, none is exempt from this great obligation." He was referring to temple work, particularly for the dead. "It is required of the apostle as well as the humblest elder. Place, or distinction, or long service in the Church, in the mission field, the stakes of Zion, or where or how else it may have been, will not entitle one to disregard the salvation of one's dead. Some may feel that if they pay their tithing, attend their regular meetings and other duties, give of their substance to the poor, perchance spend one, two, or more years preaching in the world, that they are absolved from further duty. But the greatest and grandest duty of all is to labor for the dead." [*Doctrines of Salvation*, (1954-56), 2:148-49]

I shall discuss both the living and the dead. It is my hope that from the standpoint of the doctrinal expressions that are made and the spirit that will attend, we will have the concept firmly fixed in our minds that all things center in the temple: It is the hub, as it were, the heart and core of what we do as mortals to work out our salvation.

Suppose we draw a large circle or wheel and put in the center of that wheel the hub. Then let us draw outward from the hub to the rim of the circle the various spokes. Now there are at least three concepts which can be illustrated by this. We can draw a circle and put the hub as the creation, the creation of the world and of all things. Then we would be dealing with the work of God, our Heavenly Father. We would be showing that all things tie into and come because of the creation. This is basic and sound.

We can draw another circle and another hub and other spokes, and we can identify the hub of the circle as the Atoning Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ; again that would be a perfect illustration. It would show that the Atonement is the center and heart and core of all things. It is the same principle as with the creation. If there were no creation, there would be nothing. God our Father is God the First, the Creator, according to the revelation. And God the Second, the Redeemer, is Christ the Lord, and the heart and center of the gospel is the redemption, which puts into operation all the terms and conditions of the Father's plan.

Now we can draw a third chart, draw exactly the same diagram. We make a circle, a hub, and spokes going out to the rim, and this time put the temple of the Lord in the center. Thus, we first referred to the work of God our Father, which is creation, and then we referred to the work of Christ the Lord, which is redemption. Without both of these there would be nothing. Now when we draw the chart for the third time, we refer to the work of mortals, and what we must do for our own salvation and for the salvation of all our brothers and sisters who will believe and obey. Thus it is the work of God the Father; it is the work of Christ the Son; and it is the work of us, his brothers and sisters--all laboring to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. Where our labors and our work are concerned, it all centers in

the temple.

The work for the living and the work for the dead are one; there are not living and dead in the eternal perspective to the Lord. All things are present before his face, and it is the same to him whether a person is in one room or in the next room, whether one is in this life or in the next life. The same eternal lives apply to all of us. If we are to work out our salvation and have eternal reward with him everlastingly in his kingdom, we will do it by obedience to the same laws, no matter which of the spheres we live in. These things lay a foundation. It is a glorious and wondrous concept.

I now ask you to center your attention with me on some things which are in the revelations. Some of them may not appear at first to bear directly upon what we are here considering, but if we are properly led and guided by the Spirit and if we all get things tied together in this one package of which we speak, we will see that they do bear directly and pointedly on what is involved. Some of this is very basic; we hear it everlastingly in the Church. I am not sure, however, that we always hear it with the proper emphasis and clarity that should attend. Some of it goes a little beyond the basic and fundamental principles. It is an exposition that is not always given; yet it should always be given, in all appropriate meetings of the Church.

I shall begin by taking two passages which are the same passage. First, let us note how Malachi recorded the promised return of Elijah: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5), which, of course, is the Second Coming. This scripture, to the religious world of today, is perhaps the most enigmatic of all Old Testament passages. "And he [Elijah] shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:6). That is the way it reads in the King James Version, and that translation is correct. But the very interesting thing is that Moroni did not quote it that way, even though the translation is correct. Moroni gave an improved rendering. All this does is establish that there is more than one way to render a passage, and that the version that the people receive depends upon the spiritual maturity they

possess. The Lord wanted us to have an improved version. So when Moroni came to Joseph Smith on that night of 21-22 September 1823, he quoted it this way: "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. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (DISC 2:1-3; JS-H 38-39). The Prophet translated the Book of Mormon several years later and went back to the language that is in the King James version (3 Ne. 25:5-6). He also quoted this same passage in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1842, and again he went back to the King James version, not to what Moroni had said (D&C 128: 17).

Thus, we have two versions, both of which accurately portray and give a doctrine of the kingdom. One of them gives it in a way that is intended to open our eyes to something over and beyond and above that, shall we say, the generality of mankind who are not so spiritually endowed are entitled to receive. In this rendition that Moroni gave, two things concern us. One says, "I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the Prophet." What does it mean to say: "Reveal unto you the Priesthood"? Peter, James, and John came either in May or June of 1829 and gave Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood, all of it, every whit, all of it in total.

They gave them also the keys of the kingdom, the keys of the dispensation, and the holy apostleship. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had it all from that standpoint in 1829. Elijah did not come until the third day of April in 1836. He came approximately seven years after the Prophet and his associate had received the priesthood. Yet, the Lord revealed by Elijah the priesthood, in that Elijah brought the keys of the sealing power, and the Lord thus revealed the total and complete use of the priesthood. He authorized the priesthood to be used to bind on earth and to seal everlastingly in the heavens. It takes both keys and priesthood. Priesthood is power and authority. Keys are the right of presidency. Thus, a person is baptized, and the

baptism is binding on earth, and it is sealed in heaven because Elijah came. A person is married in the temple, and it is a marriage that exists in time and in eternity, because Elijah came and brought the sealing power. Those ordinances which were performed prior to his coming were in anticipation of it and were made binding and were ratified by the Lord accordingly. Elijah brought the keys of the sealing power.

The next phrase that concerns us says: "He shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers." That immediately raises the questions: Who are the children, who are the fathers, and what are the promises? If we can catch a vision from the doctrinal standpoint that answers those questions--who the fathers are, who the children are, and what the promises were--we can have our understanding of the gospel and our comprehension of the plan of salvation expanded infinitely. We shall then catch a vision of what the whole system of salvation is all about. Until we do that, really, we never catch that vision

### *The Patriarchal Promises*

First I shall explain who the fathers were. The fathers were three in number. There is a general sense in which revelations came to several ancestors that bear on the subject, or at least allude to it, but the fathers within the meaning of this passage are three in number: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob received some promises. It is extremely interesting to read about these promises, as they are referred to in the Old Testament (see Gen. 13:16; 15:1-5; 17:1-7; 22:16-18; 28:14). The Old Testament as we have it does not do a very good job of preserving what really took place, but those of us who have a vision of the gospel learn something from these Old Testament passages. The Old Testament, if we had it in its original form, would continue on in the same vein, and with the same tone, and with the same amplification which is in the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price. The Book of Moses is simply Joseph Smith's inspired revision of the first six chapters in the book of Genesis, and is a marvelous amplification of the King James Version. It contains

just one addition after another of eternal truth and lets us catch the vision that Adam and the ancients—those before the flood—had the fulness of the gospel in the same sense that we have it. They knew about Christ, baptism, salvation, and temple ordinances, and had the holy priesthood and all the rest. That same thing was true in the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but so far we do not have an Old Testament that tells us this. There will surely be a day when we will have the Old Testament in its original form, so it will demonstrate that fact. If I were to hazard a guess, I would say that it will not be until the millennial era. [See Bruce R. McConkie, “The Doctrinal Restoration,” in Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet, ed. *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plan and Precious Things* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1985), pp. 1-22]

Here is the beginning promise to Abraham. The Lord said: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:1-3). This particular promise as recorded in Genesis we do have in latter-day revelation, and I will quote it from the Book of Abraham. You will observe that it is amplified and expanded and has been given a setting; it shows forth a wisdom and understanding that no one in the world would suppose just by reading the Genesis account. In Abraham it says: “My name is Jehovah.” This is the Lord Jesus. “And I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations” (Abr. 2:8-9). That is almost the language of Genesis. “And thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (Abr. 2:9). And it happens that we, as the seed of Abraham, for our day, are now attempting as much as we have strength, to do that very thing. We are bearing the ministry here involved to all nations, carrying this same priesthood and this same ministry

everywhere that we as of now have an opportunity to go. That is missionary work.

Then the Lord said: “I will bless them [all nations] through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father” (Abr. 2:10). As a matter of fact, the seed of Abraham is so universally spread over the earth that it is a little difficult to suppose that there are any people left on earth who do not have some of the blood of Abraham in their veins, excepting the seed of Cain. There would be many people who have very little of the blood of Israel, but I believe the seed of Cain has none. We have had the great and wondrous blessing in our day of having the Lord give a revelation to President Spencer W. Kimball directing that the Holy Priesthood should go to those of every race and color and culture, solely on the basis of personal worthiness and righteousness. The curses of the past have been removed and the door is now open to all men. Those who are adopted in so as to obtain the blessings of Abraham, as his adopted sons, include the lineage of which I speak. Now, there are others of the world who have little of the blood of Israel. Also we are going to note from these revelations that the royal lineage comes down through Isaac and Jacob and not Abraham’s other descendants.

The Lord continued: “And I will bless them that bless thee,” he said to Abraham, “and curse them that curse thee.... This right shall continue in thee,” that is, in Abraham, “and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body)” (Abr. 2:11). Here is a promise that God gave to Abraham and to the literal seed of his body of whom we are a part.

What is the promise? It says that in Abraham and in his seed, “shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abr. 2:11). God gave Abraham a promise, and that promise has been planted in my heart because I am a descendant of Abraham. What God said to Abraham was, “Your descendants,” meaning, as we shall see, the ones through Isaac and Jacob, “shall have a right to the priesthood, to the gospel and to eternal life.” Three things. I have a right to

them. It may be different with some others. If they are not the seed of Abraham, they can obtain the gospel, or they can obtain the priesthood, and they can be adopted in, but I have a right--a right that I earned in preexistence when the Lord decided that I should be born in the lineage that is royal. The royal lineage! It is their right to have the priesthood, the gospel, and eternal life. If I do not obtain those things, it is my fault for not living up to the potential and the possibility that God gave me.

“Eternal life” is the key word in this passage. Eternal life is the name of the kind of life that God our Heavenly Father lives. Eternal life consists of two things. It consists of a continuation of the family unit in eternity, and it consists of inheriting the power, dignity, honor, glory, might and omnipotence of the Lord himself. That is called the fulness of the glory of the Father. Joseph Smith said, “God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself.” [see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 354] When the Prophet said that, he was speaking about people gaining eternal life.

For our purposes here, let us talk about eternal life as consisting of a continuation of the family unit in eternity. And that means celestial marriage. Celestial marriage opens the door to the continuation of the family unit in eternity. If the family unit continues in eternity, then people have eternal increase. They have, in Joseph Smith’s language, spirit children in the resurrection. [See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 300-1]

This is the promise given of God, to Abraham, for him and for his posterity. Just to get a vision of this let us look at further scriptures found in the book of Genesis. The Lord has given us these scriptures as patterns. I do not know how many people in the Church have caught the vision of what is involved in Genesis; almost the whole message of the book of Genesis in the Old Testament is family. It is family, family, family; and not only family, it is celestial marriage and the continuation of the family unit in eternity. You have to understand the gospel to catch that vision.

We read the Lord’s promise to Abraham as found in the Book of Abraham. Let us now read another one, a later one, as found in Genesis. It is clear that Abraham was deeply concerned relative to the promise he had received about his family. He did not have any children as yet, though the Lord had told him he would have posterity without end. So, he importuned the Lord and received another revelation. “And the Lord said unto Abraham, . . . Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed for ever.” Abraham had no seed as yet. “And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth.” Now that is literal. The seed of Abraham shall be as the dust of the earth in number, meaning he will have eternal increase. “So that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.” This involves celestial marriage. “Arise walk through the land the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee” (Gen. 13:14-17). Abraham’s seed will have the land of Palestine in the resurrection.

Let us read yet another passage. Abraham importuned the Lord saying: “Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?” He had the promise of seed, but he had no children. Then the Lord said that Eliezer, his steward, would not be his heir, and brought Abraham “forth abroad” and said, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” His seed shall be as the dust of the earth and the stars in heaven in number. At this point the scripture says: “And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:2-6).

Thereafter Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham as a wife, and she bore Ishmael, so he had seed in that sense. But, that was not to be the royal lineage, and so three men visited Abraham. The Inspired Version of the Bible says they were Holy Men. The account in the King James Version is garbled; it calls them angels. It seems perfectly clear to us that they were the First Presidency of the Church. They visited Abraham to give him blessings and are the ones who said that his wife would have a child. That was on

the occasion when Sarah laughed and was confused (See JST, Gen. 18). But before this the Lord appeared unto Abraham, who was still struggling with his problem, and said:

“I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant [that, of course, is the gospel, the everlasting covenant], between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger” (Gen. 17:1-8).

Abraham had the promise that he and his seed should have the gospel and all its blessings. Then Abraham was told that Sarah would conceive and that his seed would be in Isaac. Of Sarah the Lord said: “I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.” And also: “Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him” (Gen. 17:16-19). The Holy Men of whom I spoke earlier told him the same thing and in due course Isaac was born.

Then something happened that, in many respects, is the most dramatic thing in the whole Old Testament account. Isaac grew up; he was Abraham’s seed. The Lord said unto him, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:12). Isaac was the man in whom the promises were to be fulfilled. He was, as it were, Abraham’s only begotten son. The Lord told Abraham to take Isaac up on Mount Moriah and sacrifice him. Abraham believed God and knew that if he did offer the sacrifice that God would raise Isaac from the dead (see Heb. 11:17-19),

so that in Isaac his seed would flourish according to the promises. The Book of Mormon tells us that the offering of Abraham on the mount, his willingness to sacrifice his only begotten son, was in similitude of the sacrifice of God our Father and his only son on the cross when our Lord worked out the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice (Jacob 4:5).

I would suppose that among faithful people in ancient Israel, through all the ages from Abraham’s day onward, the favored illustration and the favored text to teach the people that the Only Begotten Son would be sacrificed to bring immortality to men would be the story of Abraham. There is nothing more dramatic than this in the whole biblical account.

At this point in Abraham’s life, there on Mount Moriah, the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven and said:

“By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and has’ not withheld thy son, thine only son [his only son as far as the inheritance and promises are concerned]:

“That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies” (Gen. 22:16-17).

Next came a promise that I want to single out. I want you to note that it came to Abraham; later it came to Isaac and still later to Jacob. And then in modern times it came to Joseph Smith. The promise is: “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:18). Now, that is quite graphic and that happens to be the way it reads in latter-day revelation (see D&C 110:12; 124:58; 132:30-32).

We know the account of how Abraham sent his servant to obtain Rebekah as a wife for Isaac. He did not want Isaac to marry just anyone. He sent someone back to get one of his own kin so that Isaac would have the right wife. When the servant went to get her, the promise was given to the servant that the angel would go before him, and he would make the right choice. When Rebekah left her household, she was given a blessing. She was told: “Be thou the mother of thousands of millions” (Gen. 24:60). That

totals billions of people. This blessing came by the power of the Spirit and is speaking of the eternal increase that grows out of celestial marriage.

Isaac received the same blessing, the same promise, that had been given to Abraham. The Lord God appeared to Isaac and said: "I will be with thee, and will bless thee for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries; and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and I will give unto thy seed all these countries." And then came that particular promise to which we have referred. It was: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 26:2-5). Later it was also given to Jacob.

There is a marvelous account that concerns Jacob and his marriage, as good an illustration as we have of how a strong-minded, faithful woman can influence a righteous husband to do the proper thing. I look upon Rebekah as one of the strongest characters mentioned in the whole body of revealed writ. In the account, Rebekah said to Isaac: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" Esau, Jacob's twin, had just done that very thing. So Rebekah in effect said that if Jacob were to marry out of the Church as Esau did, if he were to take to wife a daughter of the land, one of these nonmembers of the Church, what is her life worth? 'What is there left for me if my other son forsakes the gospel covenant and marries a nonmember of the Church?' In this way Rebekah stirred Jacob up. The account says:

"And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan." That is to say: 'Thou shalt not marry out of the Church. My father, Abraham, said that in my seed and continuing in yours the blessings would come' So, in this patriarchal blessing, as it were, Isaac said: "Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother." 'Stay in the family. Marry the right person.' "And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of

people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee" (Gen. 27:46; 28:1-4).

Jacob went and did as his father commanded. He married Leah, and he married Rachel. The Lord appeared to him, as he had appeared to Abraham and to Isaac, and he gave him the promises he made to these progenitors. In one account it says: "The Lord stood above" Jacob and said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth." This is the promise that Abraham had. No one can have seed as the dust of the earth in this life. That is eternal increase. "And thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south." And then, the Lord gave that great promise: "And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28: 13-14)

This is the way things were done anciently There are other similar Old Testament accounts. Genesis is a scripture that talks about families. Once the Lord has chosen his illustrations, and has given his patterns, and selected the prophets who were to exemplify to all men the principles, then he is in a position to say to all their descendants, "Go and do thou likewise" (cf. D&C 132:32).

Let us now see what has happened in modern times. There are two passages that are of particular importance. One of them is in section 110 in the Doctrine and Covenants. This account tells us what happened on 3 April 1836. We are particularly concerned with the ministry of two people on that day. The account says: "After this [after the appearance of the Savior and Moses], Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying," now this is to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, "saying that in us and in our seed all generations after us shall be blessed." Do we hear it? God came to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob and he said to each of them in turn that in them and in their seed all generations should be blessed. And lo and behold, he said the same thing to Joseph Smith in modern times; he said exactly what he said to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The grandeur and the wonder of it is almost beyond belief! Can we think of anything better? Joseph

Smith was being told that he was going to receive the kind of blessings that Abraham received. Then the account said that Elijah, the prophet who was taken to heaven without tasting death, came down; and he, of course, as indicated, restored the sealing power (D&C 110:12-16).

One more passage. This is what the Lord said to Joseph Smith relative to Abraham: "Abraham . . . hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne." Now, notice, "Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins." These are the promises made to the fathers. Is not it a marvelous thing that God himself said to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and then to Joseph Smith, that in them and their seed all generations should be blessed? This is the promise of eternal increase. Would we suppose that there is anyone else in the world in addition to Joseph Smith in our day who ever received that promise? What would we think if I indicated that the President of the Church today received the same promise that Abraham and Joseph Smith received? What would we think if I proposed that every member of the Council of the Twelve had received the same promise that Abraham and Joseph Smith received? Let us catch the vision of what is involved here. The Lord does not give blessings to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to the President of the Church, that are not available to every faithful elder and sister. It does not make one particle of difference what one's position is. Everything comes on the basis of personal righteousness: everyone in the Church who has been married in the temple has received exactly the same promise that God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Everyone who is married in the temple and who keeps the covenant has the assurance that he or she will have eternal increase, that his posterity will be like the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven in number.

Now, back to the modern revelation:

"Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins--from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph [he was speaking to the Prophet]--which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue; both in the world and out of the world should they

continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them.

"This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my father, wherein he glorifieth himself. Go ye, therefore, and do the work of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved" (D&C 132 30-32).

### *Conclusion*

Have we caught the vision? Moroni quoted the Malachi passage, and the more glorious rendition says that he [Elijah] shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers. So I am of Abraham and the promise has been planted in my heart. And the Lord sent Elias and he sent Elijah. And when Elias came, he brought the gospel of Abraham, the divine commission that God gave Abraham, the marriage discipline that God gave Abraham. Elias restored celestial marriage, and Elijah came and brought the sealing power so the ordinance would be binding on earth and sealed in heaven; and it takes the ministry of both of them to accomplish the purposes of the Lord. Because they came, God has planted in my heart the promise made to the fathers. And so I go to the Salt Lake Temple and marry my wife for time and for all eternity, and so begins a new kingdom of God. And if we are faithful, that marriage exists here and it exists hereafter. And I have been given through that ordinance every promise that Abraham received. It is given on a conditional basis. We must be true and faithful and keep the covenant that we make in the temple, but if we are faithful, we will receive the blessings. That is what is meant by the promises made to the fathers.

Once my wife and I obtain these promises, there is not anything in the world we want more than to have our children receive these same promises. So we try to bring up our children in light and in truth. Eight of them grew to maturity and eight of them have been married in the temple. And to each of them has been given identical blessings. We hope our children's children and on and on will receive the same blessings. We are concerned with the

family. But the Lord has planted in our hearts these promises, and so we not only want our children after us to have these blessings, but we want our ancestors who went before to receive them. And so it happens that my father and mother were married also in the Salt Lake Temple, and they have received the blessing. And it goes on backward. I have some children who are the eighth generation in the Church, but eventually we all have ancestors who are not in the Church, and that, of course, brings us to the great work of salvation for the dead. We search out our ancestors and get the record of them, then we go to the temple and perform vicariously the ordinances that will give them all the blessings of the gospel. We are in this place, and they are in the next place, but all are alive unto God.

I think that summarizes what is involved in temples. Is there anything more important in this whole world, where bringing to pass salvation and glory and honor is concerned, than to have the privilege of going to the House of the Lord and obtaining the ordinances of salvation and exaltation? What more holy work is there?

I suggested earlier that we draw a diagram, make it a circle, and put the temple in the center. It is in the temple where everything is tied together in one unified whole. Elijah came first for the living, and Elijah came second for the dead. And it is in the House of the Lord that all of these ordinances are performed.

Now, by way of testimony, I simply say that the work is true, and pray God that we may ponder the concepts and the principles that have been stated and that they may be living realities in our lives. It is glorious beyond any manner and mode of expression to know that we are engaged in the Lord's work and that it is true, and that out of it will come eternal reward for all who endure in righteousness to the end. May God so grant for all of us.

