

241.2: Temples and Sacred Space (D&C Gospel Doctrine Lesson 18)

“Establish ... a House of God”

Hook	Is there any aspect of Mormonism more simultaneously distinctive to outsiders, emphasized to insiders, yet misunderstood by pretty much everyone as the temple? These majestic edifices represent the pinnacle of Mormon worship and represent great sacrifice. Service at the temple involves high ritual and embodied worship to a degree unknown elsewhere in the faith. Yet along with all those who have wonderful experiences with the temple, far too often members don't feel empowered and illuminated in this House of God
Goal	My goal for this lesson is short and sweet: I want to help listeners have a more positive relationship with the temple. A key step to that positive relationship is being able to talk openly and authentically (while respectfully) about this important topic.
Overview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up the conversation, suggestions how to teach this lesson, prioritize having an authentic discussion about both meaningful and challenging aspects of the temple. The temple isn't something you can package and teach in half an hour, so opening up space for engaging discussion would be a good goal. 2. Give an overview of ancient temples 3. Talk about the Jerusalem temple (In part from Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity) 4. Early Christian baptism 5. A few key elements to discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Symbolism ▪ Adam and Eve ▪ Temple clothing and biblical narratives (priestly clothing, aprons, veils) 6. Touch on idea of saving ordinances; progression between kingdoms, unity with God 7. Two entertaining and thought provoking stories
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(Be sure to outline a suggestion of how to do the Sunday School lesson, key priorities that will be modeled in the discussion, but in this lesson I also wanted to provide interesting historical context for temple worship. It really is striking and unique that Mormons are “temple going people”)

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5. A few key elements to discuss
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Other thoughts and insights (progression between kingdoms, this world as telestial, goal of unity with God)

Creation narratives! (stress the *symbolic* nature, the temple clearly teaches us these are meant to be symbolic, for example when we are supposed to consider ourselves other people)

Initiatories (listen to the wording of course, some of my favorite): lev 8:1-13; 14:10-20

Clothing: ex. 28-29.

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- 8. Go over the assigned reading

Things to cover

(Make this as uplifting and informative as possible. Draw some parallels from ancient world to current temples, add in if needed some OT scriptures that illuminate temple stuff, about anointings and clothing)

The role of the temple in current culture
What it means to us

- 1) actual worship experiences
- 2) meaning we attach to it (give a bit of history about idea of being saved through ordinances) (bring up the Protestant ideas, refer back to baptism discussion)

How we talk about it (problematize the “if you go to the temple it will solve all your problems rhetoric)

Temples in church history (get an overview of key changes, parallels to freemasonry)

Temples in the ancient world

Temples in the Bible

Concluding awesomeness about how the temple can be more meaningful

Points to cover

Veils (talk about veils in the Bible)

Adam and Eve

Progression between kingdoms? ☺ (this world as telestial kingdom)

Interesting point: Some early Christian baptism seems quite similar to LDS initiatories. Baptism generally occurred in the nude.

Dr. Robin Jensen, a scholar on early Christian baptism writes, “In Mopsuestia [modern Southern Turkey], candidates first removed their outer garments for the renunciation, received an initial anointing on the forehead afterward (as in Antioch), and then were stripped completely and anointed over their entire bodies. According to Theodore, the stripping of candidates symbolizes their returning to the state of Adam and Even in paradise (and naked) prior to the fall, while their anointing and baptism signify their recovered “garments of immortality” (Theodore of Mopsuestia, Bapt.hom. 3.8)

Robin Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions*, p. 42

The Parable of the Keys from S. Michael Wilcox, *House of Glory*

THE PARABLE OF THE KEYS

Once there was a little boy and a little girl who loved Jesus very much, and he loved them. They were kind and always told the truth, and whatever Jesus wanted them to do they tried their best to do.

”You may come to my house,” Jesus told them one day, “and there I will give you a gift.”

They put on their best clothes, made sure they were clean, and went to Jesus' house.

It was a beautiful house, and it made them feel beautiful too, just to be inside it. They met Jesus, and he gave them his gift. It was a key—a *wonderful* key.

”Take care of this key,” he said. “Put it next to your heart. Don't let it tarnish or get rusty.

Always keep it with you. One day it will open a wonderful door. Whenever you wish, you may return to my house, but each time I will ask to see the key.”

They promised him they would, and they went home.

They returned often to Jesus' house, and each time he asked if they still had the key. And they always did.

One day he asked if they would follow him. He led them to a hill covered with green grass and trees. On top of the hill was a mansion in the middle of a beautiful garden. Even in their dreams they had never imagined anything so magnificent.

”Who lives here?” they asked him.

"You may," he answered. "This is your eternal home. I've been building it for you. The key I gave you fits a lock in the front door. Now run up the path and put your key into the lock."

They ran up the hill and through the garden to the front door.

"If it's this beautiful on the outside," they said, "it must be even more wonderful inside!"

But when they reached the front door, they stopped. It was the strangest door they had ever seen. Instead of one lock, the door was covered with locks, hundreds of locks, thousands of locks. And they had only one key.

They put their key into one of the locks. It wouldn't fit. They put it into another. It didn't fit that one either. They tried many different locks. Finally they found the one that fit. They turned the key and the lock clicked. But the door wouldn't open.

They ran back to Jesus. "We cannot open the door," they said. "It is covered with locks, and we have only one key."

He smiled at them and said: "Do you think you will be happy living in your mansion all alone? Is there anyone you would like to live with you there?"

They thought for a while and then answered, "We would like our families to live with us."

"Go and find them," he said. "Invite them to my house, and I will give each one their very own key. Soon you will have many keys." They rushed out eagerly to find their families. They found their fathers and mothers, their brothers and sisters, and all their cousins and brought them to Jesus' house. Just as he had promised, he gave each one a key. When all had been given a key, together they returned to the great door of the mansion.

Now they had dozens of keys, but there were thousands of locks, and the door still wouldn't open. They needed more keys.

Once again they returned to Jesus. "We have brought our families," they said. "But the door still won't open."

"Do your parents have a mother and father and brothers and sisters?" He asked them. "Do you think they will be happy living in the beautiful mansion without them? If you look hard enough, you will find many, many people. Bring them all to my house, and I will give each one a key."

They looked very hard, just as Jesus had told them. They found mothers and fathers. They found brothers and sisters. They found grandmas and grandpas and great-great-grandmothers and great-great-great-grandfathers. They found aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews and cousins.

They found them in big cities. They found them in tiny villages. Some lived by the seashore. Some lived on the open prairie. Some lived near the mountains. Some lived far across the ocean. And some lived close, just over the next hill.

Some were blacksmiths and some were farmers. There were cobblers and tailors and fishermen. There were teachers and mechanics and shopkeepers.

Some were tall with strange-looking hats. Others were short and wore wooden shoes. They spoke different languages and came from many different countries.

They found some with long blond hair that hung far down their backs in braids. They found some with short red hair that stuck straight up and had to be hidden under a hat.

The boy and girl searched until they had found everybody and all their families.

They brought all the fathers and mothers, the brothers and sisters, the aunts and uncles, the nieces and nephews, the grandmothers and grandfathers to Jesus' house. Inside he gave each one his or her own key.

Soon all the families were gathered before the great door. There was a lock for every key. They turned the keys, but the door remained closed. There was one final lock, a great big one right in the middle of the door, and no one had its key.

The boy and girl returned to Jesus. "We have found all our families," they said. "But the door still won't open. We're missing a key and don't know where to find it."

Jesus smiled, put his arms around them, and gave each one a kiss. “I have the last key,” he said, and he held it up. It was bright and shining and beautiful.

”This is the key of my atonement,” he said. “Am I not a member of the family? Do you think you will be happy living in your mansion without me? Do you think I would be happy living without you? Now that you have found the whole family, all my brothers and sisters, all our Father's children, together we will enter our eternal home, for home will always be where families live and love together.”

He took their hands, and the whole family opened the door, entered the mansion, and spent an eternity of happiness together.

”In my Father's house are many mansions,” Jesus said. “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and *the way ye know.*” ([John 14:2-4](#); emphasis added.)

We enter temples to receive from God the key necessary to open the door to our eternal home. Once we have that key in our own possession, we hold it sacred, and a desire is born within our heart that all our family, all those we love, receive a key also. Our love begins to stretch and swell until it includes not only our children and grand-children but also our ancestors back through generations. In the temple we are given the precious key that unlocks not only eternal joy but also greater temporal fulfillment and an invitation to help the Lord unlock salvation and eternal life for all his children. In what more fulfilling work could we be engaged? Do we think we will be happy living in our mansion all alone?

Carlfred Broderick, The Uses of Adversity

While I was serving as a stake president, ...I was sitting on the stand at a combined meeting of the stake Primary board and stake Young Women's board where they were jointly inducting from the Primary into the Young Women's organization the eleven-year-old girls who that year had made the big step. They had a lovely program. It was one of those fantastic, beautiful presentations—based on the Wizard of Oz, or a take-off on the Wizard of Oz, where Dorothy, an eleven-year-old girl, was coming down the yellow brick road together with the tin woodman, the cowardly lion, and the scarecrow. They were singing altered lyrics about the gospel. And Oz, which was one wall of the cultural hall, looked very much like the Los Angeles Temple. They really took off down that road. There were no weeds on that road; there were no munchkins; there were no misplaced tiles; there was no wicked witch of the west. That was one antiseptic yellow brick road, and it was very, very clear that once they got to Oz, they had it made. It was all sewed up.

Following that beautiful presentation with all the snappy tunes and skipping and so on, came a sister who I swear was sent over from Hollywood central casting. (I do not believe she was in my stake; I never saw her before in my life.) She looked as if she had come right off the cover of a fashion magazine—every hair in place—with a photogenic returned missionary husband who looked like he came out of central casting and two or three, or heaven knows how many, photogenic children, all of whom came out of central casting or Kleenex ads or whatever. She enthused over her temple marriage and how wonderful life was with her charming husband and her perfect children and that the young women too could look like her and have a husband like him

and children like them if they would stick to the yellow brick road and live in Oz. It was a lovely, sort of tear-jerking, event.

After the event was nearly over, the stake Primary president, who was conducting, made a grave strategic error. She turned to me and, pro forma, said, "President Broderick, is there anything you would like to add to this lovely evening?"

I said, "Yes, there is," and I don't think she has ever forgiven me. What I said was this, "Girls, this has been a beautiful program. I commend the gospel with all of its auxiliaries and the temple to you, but I do not want you to believe for one minute that if you keep all the commandments and live as close to the Lord as you can and do everything right and fight off the entire priests quorum one by one and wait chastely for your missionary to return and pay your tithing and attend your meetings, accept calls from the bishop, and have a temple marriage, I do not want you to believe that bad things will not happen to you. And when that happens, I do not want you to say that God was not true. Or, to say, 'They promised me in Primary, they promised me when I was a Mia Maid, they promised me from the pulpit that if I were very, very good, I would be blessed. But the boy I want doesn't know I exist, or the missionary I've waited for and kept chaste so we both could go to the temple turned out to be a flake,' or far worse things than any of the above. Sad things—children who are sick or developmentally handicapped, husbands who are not faithful, illnesses that can cripple, or violence, betrayals, hurts, deaths, losses—when those things happen, do not say God is not keeping his promises to me. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not insurance against pain. It is resource in event of pain, and when that pain comes (and it will come because we came here on earth to have pain among other things), when it comes, rejoice that you have resource to deal with your pain."

Now, I do not want to suggest for a moment, nor do I believe, that God visits us with all that pain. I think that may occur in individual cases, but I think we fought a war in heaven for the privilege of coming to a place that was unjust. That was the idea of coming to earth—that it was unjust, that there would be pain and grief and sorrow. As Eve so eloquently said, it is better that we should suffer. Now, her perspective may not be shared by all. But, I am persuaded that she had rare insight, more than her husband, into the necessity of pain, although none of us welcome it.