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## Was Temple Work Done in the Days of the Old Prophets?

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**Abstract:** This article affirms that baptism was practiced by the ancient Israelites.

names of your ancestors, and by being baptized by proxy, they may become members of the kingdom of God in the other world as we are members here.

We pray that the love of the gospel and the universal brotherhood of man may increase among nations, that

true peace may soon be established on earth, and that God's will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

The purpose of the temple is to bless those members who willingly give of their time and their talents to become "saviors on Mt. Zion."



by Joseph Fielding Smith

PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE

## Was Temple Work Done in the Days of the Old Prophets?

**Question:** "Was temple work done in the days of the old prophets? Did they have the sealing powers or was all of this work left for the Church in this dispensation? If they had it, was it done in temples?"

**Answer:** The detailed history of the performance of the saving ordinances of the gospel as practised in ancient times was never recorded in any detail, because such ordinances are sacred and not for the world. There are, however, in the Old Testament references to covenants and obligations under which the members of the Church in those days were placed, although the meaning is generally obscure. For example in Exodus 40:12-15, Numbers 25:11-13, and Jeremiah 31:31-33, we have reference to sacred covenants.

The fact that Adam and Noah, long after they were dead, appeared to Daniel as Michael and Gabriel (Dan. 10:13, 21; 8:16); and to Zacharias and Mary, (Luke 1:11 19; and 1:26-31) is evidence that they had received the fulness of blessings that entitled them to stand in the presence of God. Likewise the appearance of Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration with our Redeemer and his apostles, Peter, James, and John, is evidence that they also had obtained the fulness of the blessings of exaltation. Moreover, the fact that Elijah was the last of the ancient prophets to hold the keys of the sealing power before the coming of our Savior in his ministry, is evidence that this power was exercised in the interest of Israel in ancient times. Because of the fact that Elijah held this sealing authority, the Lord inspired Malachi to prophesy of Elijah's coming in the last days to restore these keys of authority in the following words:

"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 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." (Malachi 4:5-6.)

We know that this prophecy was fulfilled, for on the third day of April, 1836, Elijah came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple and conferred upon them this sealing authority. Since that day the hearts of the children have turned to their fathers, and

without doubt the hearts of the fathers have turned to their children, and this influence is felt throughout the world causing the children to search the records of their dead. This fact is so definitely apparent that it cannot be denied. Today we have the privilege of going into our temples and there sealing children to parents and parents to each other that we all may, as Paul declared, bow our knees ". . . unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, . . ." (Eph. 3:14-15.)

That ordinances for Israel might be performed, the Lord commanded Moses to build a portable tabernacle—at times called the temple—in the wilderness in which sacred ordinances could be performed. The purpose of this building, in which Samuel officiated, has been declared in our day in these words: "For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was." (D & C 124:38.)

There is a sufficient reason why the ordinance of baptism is not more clearly revealed in the Old Testament, and it is that in the repeated copying of the ancient records and their repeated translations, scribes and translators took from the record the plain and precious parts because they were contrary to their beliefs or comprehension. The Book of Mormon makes this clear; and in the writings of Moses, as they are given to us, we have them restored; and we know that baptism was taught to Adam, and he taught it to his children. There are some references in the Old Testament to washings, which could well mean baptisms, and the evidence of the font in the temple of Solomon is a mute witness that baptisms must have been practised in it; these are spoken of as washings. The Book of Mormon makes the fact very clear that baptism was practised among the Jews, and in the writings of Moses which have been restored, we learn that baptism was taught to Adam, and he was commanded to teach it to his children.

Joseph Fielding Smith

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