



The Restoration of All Things: The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

“[This] is truly the dispensation of the fullness of times, when all things which are in Christ Jesus, whether in heaven or on the earth, shall be gathered together in Him, and when all things shall be restored.”

From the Life of Joseph Smith

The Prophet Joseph Smith loved the Nauvoo Temple and yearned to see it completed. Nauvoo resident Martha Coray was present at an address where she saw the Prophet stretch his hand toward the temple and say in a melancholy tone, “If it should be . . . the will of God that I might live to behold that temple completed and finished from the foundation to the top stone, I will say, ‘O Lord, it is enough. Lord, let thy servant depart in peace.’”¹

George Q. Cannon, who later became a counselor in the First Presidency, recalled: “Previous to his death, the Prophet Joseph manifested great anxiety to see the [Nauvoo] temple completed, as most of you who were with the Church during his day, well know. ‘Hurry up the work, brethren,’ he used to say,—‘let us finish the temple; the Lord has a great endowment in store for you, and I am anxious that the brethren should have their endowments and receive the fullness of the priesthood.’ He urged the Saints forward continually, preaching unto them the importance of completing that building, so that therein the ordinances of life and salvation might be administered to the whole people, but especially to the quorums of the holy priesthood; ‘then,’ said he, ‘the Kingdom will be established, and I do not care what shall become of me.’”²



The Prophet Joseph Smith yearned to see the Nauvoo Temple completed. "Hurry up the work, brethren," he used to say,—"let us finish the temple; the Lord has a great endowment in store for you."

The plans for the Nauvoo Temple called for an edifice that would be larger and even more beautiful than the Kirtland Temple. Situated on the summit of a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, the completed Nauvoo Temple would be one of the most magnificent buildings in Illinois. It was made of limestone obtained from quarries near Nauvoo and lumber floated down the river from pineries in Wisconsin. When finished, it would be 128 feet long, 88 feet wide, and 165 feet high at the top of the spire. The exterior was ornamented with intricately carved moonstones, sunstones, and starstones, while sunlight streaming through the many windows illuminated the interior.

Joseph Smith did not live to see the Nauvoo Temple completed, but after his death, thousands of Saints received sacred ordinances in the temple under the direction of Brigham Young. After the Saints were forced to leave Nauvoo, their beautiful temple was destroyed. It was gutted by fire in 1848, and in 1850 a tornado leveled some of the walls, leaving the remaining walls so weakened that they had to be razed. Some 150 years later, construction began on a new Nauvoo Temple, built on the original site. The reconstructed temple was dedicated on June 27, 2002, becoming one of more than a hundred temples throughout the world. Each of these temples is a symbol that the fulness of God's blessings to His children, living and dead, has been restored in this last dispensation.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was called of God to restore these great blessings to earth and to stand at the head of the dispensation of the fulness of times. During the Prophet's ministry, all things were restored that were necessary to lay the foundation of the greatest dispensation of all time. The priesthood, with its essential keys, was restored; the Book of Mormon was translated; the Church was organized; and doctrines, ordinances, and covenants were revealed, including the ordinances and covenants of the endowment and the marriage sealing. The Lord declared that He had committed unto Joseph Smith "the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (D&C 27:13).

Teachings of Joseph Smith

In this last dispensation, all the authority, ordinances, and knowledge of earlier dispensations have been restored.

“It is in the order of heavenly things that God should always send a new dispensation into the world when men have apostatized from the truth and lost the priesthood.”³

On September 6, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote the following to the Saints, later recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 128:18: “It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.”⁴

“Truly this is a day long to be remembered by the Saints of the last days,—a day in which the God of heaven has begun to restore the ancient order of His kingdom unto His servants and His people,—a day in which all things are concurring to bring about the completion of the fullness of the Gospel, a fullness of the dispensation of dispensations, even the fullness of times; a day in which God has begun to make manifest and set in order in His Church those things which have been, and those things which the ancient prophets and wise men desired to see but died without beholding them; a day in which those things begin to be made manifest, which have been hid from before the foundation of the world, and which Jehovah has promised should be made known in His own due time unto His servants, to prepare the earth for the return of His glory, even a celestial glory, and a kingdom of Priests and kings to God and the Lamb, forever, on Mount Zion.”⁵

“The dispensation of the fullness of times will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations;

also other things that have not been before revealed. He shall send Elijah, the Prophet, etc., and restore all things in Christ.”⁶

“‘Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.’ [Ephesians 1:9–10.]

“Now the purpose in Himself in the winding up scene of the last dispensation is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations.

“And again. God purposed in Himself that there should not be an eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one, and that all things whatsoever, that should be gathered together in one in those dispensations unto the same fullness and eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus. . . .

“. . . All the ordinances and duties that ever have been required by the Priesthood, under the directions and commandments of the Almighty in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last dispensation, therefore all things had under the authority of the Priesthood at any former period, shall be had again, bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets.”⁷

**Joseph Smith holds the keys of the dispensation
of the fulness of times.**

“I . . . hold the keys of the last kingdom, in which is the dispensation of the fullness of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy Prophets since the world began, under the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood.”⁸

“Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council. It is the testimony that I want that I am God’s servant, and this people His people. The ancient prophets declared that in the last days the

God of heaven should set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, nor left to other people. . . .

“I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world.”⁹

“I have the whole plan of the kingdom before me, and no other person has.”¹⁰

*Lucy Mack Smith was present when Joseph Smith preached in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1832. She recalled these words of the Prophet: “I myself hold the keys of this last dispensation, and I forever will hold them in time and in eternity. So set your hearts at rest, for all is well.”*¹¹

This final dispensation is of such vast importance that it requires the complete, unselfish dedication of the Saints.

In September 1840, Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency made the following declaration to the members of the Church: “The work of the Lord in these last days, is one of vast magnitude and almost beyond the comprehension of mortals. Its glories are past description, and its grandeur unsurpassable. It is the theme which has animated the bosom of prophets and righteous men from the creation of the world down through every succeeding generation to the present time; and it is truly the dispensation of the fullness of times, when all things which are in Christ Jesus, whether in heaven or on the earth, shall be gathered together in Him, and when all things shall be restored, as spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began; for in it will take place the glorious fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers, while the manifestations of the power of the Most High will be great, glorious, and sublime. . . .

“ . . . We feel disposed to go forward and unite our energies for the upbuilding of the Kingdom, and establishing the Priesthood in their fullness and glory. The work which has to be accomplished in the last days is one of vast importance, and will call into action the energy, skill, talent, and ability of the Saints, so that it may roll forth with that glory and majesty described by the prophet [see Daniel 2:34–35, 44–45]; and will consequently

require the concentration of the Saints, to accomplish works of such magnitude and grandeur.

“The work of the gathering spoken of in the Scriptures will be necessary to bring about the glories of the last dispensation. . . .

“Dear brethren, feeling desirous to carry out the purposes of God, to which work we have been called; and to be co-workers with Him in this last dispensation; we feel the necessity of having the hearty cooperation of the Saints throughout this land, and upon the islands of the sea. It will be necessary for the Saints to hearken to counsel and turn their attention to the Church, the establishment of the Kingdom, and lay aside every selfish principle, everything low and groveling; and stand forward in the cause of truth, and assist to the utmost of their power, those to whom has been given the pattern and design. . . .

“Here, then, beloved brethren, is a work to engage in worthy of archangels—a work which will cast into the shade the things which have been heretofore accomplished; a work which kings and prophets and righteous men in former ages have sought, expected, and earnestly desired to see, but died without the sight; and well will it be for those who shall aid in carrying into effect the mighty operations of Jehovah.”¹²

“The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory, ‘the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God will gather together all things that are in heaven, and all things that are upon the earth, even in one’ [see Ephesians 1:10], when the Saints of God will be gathered in one from every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, when the Jews will be gathered together into one, the wicked will also be gathered together to be destroyed, as spoken of by the prophets; the Spirit of God



Full-time missionaries at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. Joseph Smith declared that in the last dispensation, “it will be necessary for the Saints to hearken to counsel and . . . stand forward in the cause of truth.”

will also dwell with His people, and be withdrawn from the rest of the nations, and all things whether in heaven or on earth will be in one, even in Christ.

“The heavenly Priesthood will unite with the earthly, to bring about those great purposes; and whilst we are thus united in the one common cause, to roll forth the kingdom of God, the heavenly Priesthood are not idle spectators, the Spirit of God will be showered down from above, and it will dwell in our midst. The blessings of the Most High will rest upon our tabernacles, and our name will be handed down to future ages; our children will rise up and call us blessed; and generations yet unborn will dwell with peculiar delight upon the scenes that we have passed through, the privations that we have endured, the untiring zeal that we have manifested, the all but insurmount-

able difficulties that we have overcome in laying the foundation of a work that brought about the glory and blessing which they will realize; a work that God and angels have contemplated with delight for generations past; that fired the souls of the ancient patriarchs and prophets; a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family.”¹³

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages vii–xii.

- Review pages 507–9. Why are temples so important in the accomplishment of the Lord’s work?
- Why do you think ancient prophets and wise men looked forward to our day? (For some examples, see pages 510–11.) Ponder the privilege of being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the dispensation of the fulness of times.
- Study the paragraph that begins on the bottom of page 511. As you ponder this statement, what are your thoughts and feelings about your callings to serve in the Church?
- Read the first three full paragraphs on page 512. How do these statements strengthen your testimony of the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith?
- The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “The work of the Lord in these last days, is one of vast magnitude” (page 512). Study pages 512–15, pondering our responsibility to help accomplish the Lord’s work in the last dispensation. Why must we “unite our energies” if we are to accomplish this work? Why must we “lay aside every selfish principle”? Think about how you can use your “energy, skill, talent, and ability” to contribute to the Lord’s work.

Related Scriptures: D&C 27:12–13; 90:2–3; 112:30–32; 124:40–41

Notes

1. Quoted by Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, reporting a discourse given by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois; Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, Notebook, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; this discourse is dated July 19, 1840, in Sister Coray's notebook, but the discourse was probably given at a later date.
2. George Q. Cannon, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, Dec. 14, 1869, p. 2.
3. *History of the Church*, 6:478–79; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on June 16, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Thomas Bullock; see also appendix, page 562, item 3.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18; a letter from Joseph Smith to the Saints, Sept. 6, 1842, Nauvoo, Illinois.
5. *History of the Church*, 4:492–93; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Jan. 6, 1842, Nauvoo, Illinois.
6. *History of the Church*, 4:426; from the minutes of a Church conference held on Oct. 3, 1841, in Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 15, 1841, p. 578.
7. *History of the Church*, 4:208, 210–11; from a discourse prepared by Joseph Smith and read at a Church conference held on Oct. 5, 1840, in Nauvoo, Illinois.
8. *History of the Church*, 6:78; spelling modernized; from a letter from Joseph Smith to James Arlington Bennet, Nov. 13, 1843, Nauvoo, Illinois; James Bennet's last name is incorrectly spelled "Bennett" in *History of the Church*.
9. *History of the Church*, 6:364–65; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on May 12, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Thomas Bullock.
10. *History of the Church*, 5:139; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Aug. 29, 1842, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by William Clayton.
11. Quoted by Lucy Mack Smith, reporting a discourse given by Joseph Smith in early 1832 in Kirtland, Ohio; Lucy Mack Smith, "The History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet," 1844–45 manuscript, book 13, p. 5, Church Archives.
12. *History of the Church*, 4:185–87; punctuation modernized; from a letter from Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency to the Saints, Sept. 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, pp. 178–79.
13. *History of the Church*, 4:609–10; punctuation modernized; paragraph divisions altered; from "The Temple," an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, May 2, 1842, p. 776; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.