

*Investigative  
Series*

**Do  
Christians  
Need  
Temples?**





## Do Christians Need Temples?

### Why Do Mormons Build Temples?

LDS Apostle Mark E. Petersen wrote, "In Biblical times sacred ordinances were administered in holy edifices for the spiritual salvation of ancient Israel...While the people travelled in the wilderness, they used a portable Tabernacle. This tabernacle is called 'the temple of the Lord'...When they ceased their wanderings and obtained a stable government, they built a glorious temple in Jerusalem to take its place. Following the pattern of Biblical days, the Lord again in our day has provided these ordinances for the salvation of all who will believe, and directs that temples be built in which to perform those sacred rites" (*Why Mormons Build Temples*, pp. 2-3).

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth LDS Prophet, declared, "...a temple is a sacred edifice in which ordinances are performed for both the living and the dead" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, Vol. 4, p. 198). Ordinances for the living include sealing husbands and wives together for eternity and sealing children to parents for eternity. The same ordinances are performed for the dead by proxy after baptism for the dead and the conferral of priesthood blessings.

Smith also said, "When the temple of Solomon was built, we read of a 'molten sea' ten cubits from one brim to the other, it stood on the backs of twelve carved oxen. This fount or brazen sea, was *not* used for baptisms for the dead, for there were no baptisms for the dead until after the resurrection of the Lord...it

was used for baptizing the living for the remission of their sins" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 5, pp. 12-13).

McConkie explained that a temple is "...a House of the Lord... where he and his Spirit may dwell...From the days of Adam to the present, whenever the Lord has had a people on the earth, temples and temple ordinances have been a crowning feature of their worship. 'My people are *always* commanded to build temples,' the Lord says, 'for the glory, honor, and endowment' of all the saints (D & C. 124:39-40)... But in the days of poverty, or when the number of true believers has been too small, the Lord has used mountains, groves, and wilderness locations for temple purposes" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 780). LDS Apostle Franklin D. Richards added, "The temples, the houses of our God, when acceptably dedicated, become to us the gates of heaven" (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 25, p. 231).

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie also declared, "Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (known informally by the nickname Mormons) believe the Bible. Indeed, so literally and completely do their beliefs and practices conform to the teachings of the Bible that it is not uncommon to hear informed persons say, 'If all men believed the Bible, all would be Mormons.' Bible doctrine is Mormon doctrine and Mormon doctrine is Bible doctrine. They are one and the same" (*What The Mormons Think of Christ*, p. 3).

### Were Temples in Use from Adam to Moses?

Temples and temple ordinances from "Adam to the present" should be found in the Bible if LDS beliefs

and practice conform "literally and completely" to it. But until God revealed the design and use of the tabernacle to Moses in Ex. 25-40, neither tabernacles nor temples were even mentioned! Instructions to Moses for the tabernacle would have been unnecessary if temples were already in use! If "whenever the Lord had a people on the earth, temples and temple ordinances" were part of their worship, no one from Adam to Moses belonged to the Lord!

The first time the word "temple" is used in the Bible is in 1 Sam. 1:9, where it refers to the portable tabernacle Israel received through Moses. The first permanent temple was built by King Solomon about 1,000 years before Christ (1 Kgs. 6:17).

Sidney B. Sperry, BYU professor of Old Testament Language and literature, admitted, "It is true that scripture says little directly about temples in the days of the ancient patriarchs, but that does not prove they did not exist" (*Ensign*, January, 1972, p. 68). Some Mormons claim that "temples" are among the "plain and precious" truths lost out of the Bible (1 Nephi 13:24-29). But if other churches used "lost scripture" as a basis for their doctrines, Mormons would reject it! Furthermore, McConkie claimed that Mormon belief and practice conformed to what the Bible teaches, not to something missing from the Bible!

### Do LDS Leaders Agree on Solomon's Temple?

Joseph Fielding Smith said *no* baptisms for the dead were done in either Moses' tabernacle or Solomon's temple. But Brigham Young, the second LDS president,

said, "Our Temple there in St. George, Utah is finished, which is the first completed Temple built to the name of the Most High, in which the ordinances for the living and the *dead* can be performed, since the one built by Solomon in the land of Jerusalem" (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 19, p. 220).

President George Q. Cannon, First Counselor to Brigham Young, also said, "The idea of building a temple or temples to the Most High God, in which ordinances shall be performed for the living and the *dead* strikes the people as something strange and fanatical. But let me ask, what was the object of building a temple in the days of Solomon...?" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 14, p. 126). And LDS Apostle, Orson Pratt said, "You recollect there was a brazen sea, a large place in the basement of the Temple of Solomon, underneath which were twelve oxen, their heads pointing to the four points of the compass—three to each point. This great brazen sea, standing upon these oxen, was a place intended for baptisms for the *dead*" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 16, p. 258).

### Do LDS Temples "Follow the Biblical Pattern"?

Mormon temples have a "molten" or "brazen" sea on the backs of twelve oxen in the basement which is used for baptisms for the dead, but not baptisms of the living. But the "sea" in Solomon's temple was not in the basement nor was it used for baptisms for the living or the dead. It was "for the priests to wash in" (11 Chron. 4:2-6), just like the laver in Moses' Tabernacle (Ex. 30:18-21). Both the tabernacle and the temple were used for burnt offerings and bloody sacrifices (11 Chron. 2:6; 7:1-12; 29:20-35).

If LDS temples and temple ordinances “conform literally and completely to the Bible,” why do they not have such offerings and sacrifices in their temples? Not one LDS temple rite is found in the instructions God gave for the tabernacle in Ex. 25-40, nor for Solomon’s temple in I Kgs. 5-8. Nor did Jesus or His disciples build temples or practice temple rites like the Mormons. The only wedding in which Jesus participated was in Cana of Galilee where there was no temple (Jn. 2:1-10). The LDS temple rites cannot “follow the Biblical pattern” if there is no Biblical record of such rites! Robert J. Matthews, chairman of the Ancient Scriptures Department at BYU, admitted that “The Bible was not the source of the doctrines the Prophet Joseph Smith taught” (*Ensign*, September, 1981, p. 16). That is certainly true concerning the LDS temple rites!

Mormons often claim their temple rites are “sacred not secret.” But Assistant Apostle ElRay Christiansen said, “The ordinances of the temple are so sacred that they are not open to the view of the public...Their sacred nature is such that discussion in detail outside the temple is inappropriate (*Ensign*, January, 1972, p. 66). Thus they are *secret*! In contrast, Jesus declared, “I spoke openly to the world...and in secret have I said nothing” (Jn. 18:20).

### Does God Dwell in Temples Built by Men?

McConkie said a temple is a “House of the Lord...where he and his Spirit may dwell.” But Solomon questioned, “Who is able to build Him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? Who am I, then, that I should build Him

an house, save only to *burn sacrifices* before Him?” (II Chron. 2:6). At the temple dedication, Solomon prayed, “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built!” (II Chron. 6:12). He also prayed, “...hear Thou in *heaven Thy dwelling place...*” (I Kgs. 8:30).

When King Hezekiah later restored the temple, “...the priests and Levites arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to His *holy dwelling place*, even unto *heaven* (II Chron. 30:27). Just before Stephen was killed, he said, “But Solomon built Him (God) an house. Nevertheless, the Most High *delleth not in temples made with hands*, as saith the prophet, *Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will ye build me? saith the Lord. Or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?*” (Acts 7:47-50).

Paul also declared, “God, who made the world and all things in it, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, *delleth not in temples made with hands*” (Acts 17:24). The book of Hebrews explains: “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty *in the heavens*, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the *true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man...* But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect *tabernacle, not made with hands*, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us...For *Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands*, which are the

figures of the true, but into *heaven* itself, now to appear *in the presence of God* for us” (Heb. 8:1-2; 9:11-12, 24).

Since God does not dwell in temples made with men’s hands, temples cannot be the “gate” to His kingdom as LDS leaders have taught. Here on earth, God dwells in a “temple” built by the Lord Himself known as the Church or the Body of Christ (I Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:21-22). He also indwells the physical bodies of believers in Christ which are called temples of God (I Cor. 6:19-20; II Cor. 6:16).

### What is the Christian’s Hope of Glory?

Heb. 7:24-25 declares, “But this man (Jesus), because He lives forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him, seeing He lives forever to make intercession for them.” And Jesus declared, “I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (Jn. 10:9). He also said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me (Jn. 14:6). Jesus never said, “My *temple* is the way or the gate to the Father.” It is not you in the temple, but “Christ in you that is the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). If LDS beliefs conformed to the Bible, they would proclaim that “There is one God, and *one Mediator* between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5). Are you trusting in Christ alone to get to the Father’s kingdom?

-Marvin W. Cowan

**IM-4** For additional information and literature write to

**Utah Christian Publications**

P.O. Box 21052 Salt Lake City, Utah 84121