

D & C Lesson 39

“THE HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN SHALL TURN TO THEIR FATHERS”

Prepared by Duane S. Crowther, November 2001

1. Key events in the revealing of the doctrine of vicarious work for the dead

A. Keys restored by Elijah. On April 3, 1836, the prophet Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple, and restored “the keys of this dispensation” “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to their fathers.” [D&C 110:13-16] His last-days coming was prophesied by Malachi, and that prophecy was repeated by Moroni [Mal. 4:5-6; JS-H 1:36-39; D&C 2:1. See D&C 138:46-48] “He conferred the sealing power of the priesthood on Joseph Smith. This power makes possible eternal marriage, sealings to parents, and temple ordinance work for the dead.” {*Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, p. 228}

B. The doctrine of *Baptism for the Dead* announced. Joseph Smith announced the privilege of saints being baptized for their dead on August 15, 1840, at the funeral of Seymour Brunson. D&C 124:29-39, given January 19, 1841, gave further instructions. [See Gospel Doctrine Lesson 30]

C. The necessity of work for the dead revealed. D&C 128, given September 6, 1842, reveals that “their salvation is necessary for our salvation,” and “they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.” [D&C 128:15; See Heb. 11:40.]

D. The instruction to seal our families together given. “During the April 1894 general conference, President Woodruff announced that he had received a revelation about genealogical work. He declared that God wanted the Latter-day Saints ‘to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have the children sealed to their parents and run this chain through as far as you can get it. . . . This is the will of the Lord to his people,’ he said, “and I think when you come to reflect upon it you will find it to be true.” [Our Heritage, p. 101]

E. The vision of the redemption of the dead was given. On October 3, 1918, President Joseph F. Smith received the glorious vision which is now D&C 138. He was shown how the Lord visited the righteous spirits [D&C 138:12-15] [in Paradise in] the Spirit World and appointed missionaries to preach the gospel [D&C 138:29-37] to those who had not yet received the gospel [D&C 138:20-22].

F. Faithful saints of this dispensation will preach the gospel in the spirit world. In his *Vision of the Redemption of the Dead*, President Joseph F. Smith also saw that “faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption” [D&C 138:57].

G. For clarification concerning the separate areas of *Paradise*, the *Spirit Prison* and *Hell*, see Duane S. Crowther, *Life Everlasting*, 1997 Revised Edition, pp. 275-298.

2. Numerous spiritual manifestations and visitations from beyond the veil show the need, the urgency, and our eternal responsibility to perform vicarious work for the dead

A. The experience of Frederick William Hurst: “Frederick William Hurst was working as a gold miner in Australia when he first heard Latter-day Saint missionaries preach the restored gospel. He and his brother Charles were baptized in January 1854. He tried to help his other family members become converted, but they rejected him and the truths he taught. Fred settled in Salt Lake City four

years after joining the Church, and he served faithfully as a missionary in several different countries. He also worked as a painter in the Salt Lake Temple. In one of his final journal entries, he wrote: ‘Along about the 1st of March, 1893, I found myself alone in the dining room, all had gone to bed. I was sitting at the table when to my great surprise my elder brother Alfred walked in and sat down opposite me at the table and smiled. I said to him (he looked so natural): “When did you arrive in Utah?” He said, “I have just come from the Spirit World, this is not my body that you see, it is lying in the tomb. I want to tell you that when you were on your mission you told me many things about the Gospel, and the hereafter, and about the Spirit World being as real and tangible as the earth. I could not believe you, but *when I died* and went there and saw for myself I realized that you had told the truth. *I attended the Mormon meetings.*” He raised his hand and said with much warmth: “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart. I believe in faith, repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, *but that is as far as I can go. I look to you to do the work for me in the temple. . . . You are watched closely. . . . We are all looking to you as our head in this great work. I want to tell you that there are a great many spirits who weep and mourn because they have relatives in the Church here who are careless and are doing nothing for them.*” (Diary of Frederick William Hurst, comp. Samuel H. and Ida Hurst [1961], 204).” [*Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, pp. 226-227]

B. *The experience of Bishop Henry Ballard:* “In May, 1884, Bishop Henry Ballard of the Logan Second Ward was signing temple recommends at his home. Henry’s nine-year-old daughter, who was talking with friends on the sidewalk near her home, saw two elderly men approaching. They called to her, handed her a newspaper, and told her to take it to her father. The girl did as she was asked. Bishop Ballard saw that the paper, the *Newbury Weekly News*, published in England, contained the names of more than 60 of his and his father’s acquaintances, along with genealogical information. *This newspaper, dated 15 May 1884, had been given to him only three days after it was printed.* In a time long before air transportation, when mail took several weeks to get from England to western America, this was a miracle. The next day, Bishop Ballard took the newspaper to the temple and told the story of its arrival to Marriner W. Merrill, the temple president. President Merrill declared, ‘*Brother Ballard, someone on the other side is anxious for their work to be done and they knew that you would do it if this paper got into your hands.*’ This newspaper is preserved in the Church Historical Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.” [*Our Heritage*, p. 99]

C. *Other accounts, from Life Everlasting:*

1. James W. LeSueur’s Spirit Prison visit: *Families preach to their kindred dead.* (288-90)
2. President Rudger Clawson: *Unsealed married couples must live separately* (312)
3. Eliza Neville’s visit from Grandmother Stiff: *Must be a perfect link back to Adam* (310-11)
4. Horatio Pickett, F.T. Pomeroy, Joseph H. Smith, J. Hatten Carpenter: *Spirits are [sometimes] present when vicarious ordinances are performed* (317-321)
5. Bertha Call’s experience: *Spirits can take actions to correct genealogical errors and omissions* (323-24)
6. John M. Lang’s angelic manifestation: *Recording angels keep a perfect record* (309-10)
7. Leron A. Wilson’s warning from her deceased father: *Do the family’s genealogy and temple work or be moved out of the way for someone else to do it* (314-15)
8. President Wilford Woodruff: *The spirits of the dead will seek after you to see that their redemptive ordinances are done* (315-16)

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