

TEMPLES AND FAMILY HISTORY

Temples are not regular places of Sunday worship for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are quite different from the thousands of regular chapels all over the world that are used for Sunday services. Anyone, regardless of religion, may enter a Latter-day Saint meetinghouse and attend services. Visitors are also welcome to visit the temple grounds at any temple and attend open houses prior to dedication. However, because of the sacredness of temples as “houses of the Lord,” only members of the Church, who are in good standing are allowed to enter the temples. A member must be observing the basic principles of the faith and attest to that fact to his or her local leaders once every two years in order to enter a temple.

The sacredness of the temple anciently can be seen in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, Moses had the children of Israel carry with them the Tabernacle (a large, portable temple) as they wandered in the wilderness. King Solomon built the great temple that was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. It was rebuilt and later substantially expanded, but again destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The New Testament gives an account of Jesus Christ clearing the temples when its sacredness was violated by people using its courts as a common market.

Latter-day Saint temples are considered houses of God, a place of holiness and peace separate from the preoccupations of the world. They provide a place where Church members make formal promises and commitments to God. They are also

the place where the highest sacraments of the faith occur – the marriage of couples and the “sealing” of families for eternity.

For the millions of people who lived before the Restoration of Christ's Church, temple ordinances were not available during their lifetime. Even today, millions live and die without ever hearing the name of Jesus Christ or without accepting the gospel he taught. Provision must be made, then, for those who have died without that opportunity.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all saving ordinances are to be performed on earth on behalf of the dead. Latter-day Saints stand as proxies for their own ancestors in these ceremonies, including baptisms and sealings for husbands and wives and for parents and children. All temple work is valid only if it is willingly accepted by each individual prior to the Resurrection. Performing temple ordinances receives strong emphasis in the Church. Members of the Church are taught that they have a religious obligation to trace their own genealogies and perform temple ordinances for their ancestors

The Church operates the largest genealogical library in the world – the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. Open to the public with no fees for any of the services, the Family History Library offers access to millions of volumes of birth, marriage, death, and other records. The Church also operates branch libraries throughout the world that are open to anyone interested in family history.

To learn more about temples, please visit www.lds.org/temples.

To trace your ancestors and find information about family history resources, please visit www.familysearch.org.