

Chapter 18

KIRTLAND TEMPLE AND ENDOWMENT OF POWER

The church's first dedicated temple unto the Lord was in Kirtland, Ohio. William W. Phelps was intimately involved with this house of God in Kirtland. He promoted and helped direct the completion of the edifice. He participated in all aspects of the so-called "Kirtland endowment." Phelps wrote the "Hosanna" hymn (otherwise known as "The Spirit of God") for the temple's dedication. Church leaders have followed Joseph Smith's pattern for temple dedications in the scores of temples that have followed, including the singing of this anthem. Phelps's legacy is forever enshrined in his Hosanna hymn.

PREPARATION FOR LATTER-DAY TEMPLES

Ancient temples existed as described in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. All approved Mormon texts refer to holy experiences associated with temple worship. As a dedicated student of both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, W. W. Phelps would have felt positively about ancient temples. His subsequent 1835 writings in Kirtland demonstrate completely his love for temples.

"Would there be a latter-day temple as part of the restoration of all things?" Joseph Smith wondered. He received early revelations that, as part of Christ's second coming, "the Lord . . . shall suddenly come to his temple."¹ This prophecy has come to be interpreted as applying to a rebuilt Jerusalem temple and to other latter-day temples, especially a New Jerusalem temple.

In 1831 Joseph Smith took with him an entourage of leaders, including Phelps, to western Missouri to identify the land of Zion and the location for the New Jerusalem. The temple again came up prominently in a July 20, 1831, revelation: "Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place [of Zion]; and a spot for the temple is lying

westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse."² In a revelation received a few days later, Sidney Rigdon was charged to "consecrate and dedicate" the land of Zion and the temple lot.³

The next reference to this New Jerusalem temple occurred on September 22, 1832, in a revelation (D&C 84) received in Kirtland. "Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church," the revelation began, "established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem." Regarding the temple, the revelation continued, "Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri." Further, "the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation." Pertaining to the glory of the temple, the revelation added, "For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house."⁴ As events would unfold over the next few years, the fulfillment of these prophecies would not yet occur at a New Jerusalem temple in Missouri, though partial fulfillment would come with the temple that would be built in Kirtland and dedicated in 1836. Phelps would be involved deeply with plans for both temples and with the fruition of the Kirtland Temple. He also discussed parts of this revelation (D&C 84) in *The Evening and the Morning Star*.

Following this revelation, Joseph Smith, along with close advisers, contemplated the construction of two holy houses: one in Zion and another in Kirtland. They sought further revelation.⁵ They were rewarded in late December 1832 with the longest revelation that appears in the modern Doctrine and Covenants: section 88. This revelation has also come to be known as "the Olive Leaf." It called upon the Saints to "establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God." This commandment also stated, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing."⁶ In Kirtland in 1835 and 1836, Phelps would be closely connected with each of those revealed aspects of establishing this holy house.

In a letter that accompanied this revelation as it was sent to Phelps in Independence, Joseph Smith indicated that "the Lord commanded us in Kirtland to build an house of God, & establish a school for the Prophets." Smith also knew that great blessings awaited the Saints "on condition of [their] obedience." He said that the Lord "has promised us great things, yea even a visit from the heavens to honor us with his own presence."⁷ This promise would be fulfilled in 1836, and Phelps would report on it.

The Latter-day Saints sought diligently to fulfill this charge. At first it was thought that separate houses would be built in both Kirtland and Independence. There would even be several buildings in a "temple complex" that would include separate buildings for education and the publishing of sacred works. But mob action against the Saints in Missouri in July 1833 forestalled that project. However, plans to build a sacred house in Kirtland went forward, albeit with tremendous difficulty and sacrifice. The effort culminated with the dedication of the Kirtland Temple and the accompanying solemn assemblies in late

March and early April 1836. This building was known all throughout its construction and dedication as the “House of God” or the “House of the Lord.” Only after the endowment that accompanied the solemn assemblies would the “house” come to be known as a temple.⁸

PREPARING FOR THE HOUSE OF THE LORD IN KIRTLAND

Joseph Smith sought and received numerous revelations pertaining to the Kirtland House of God from early 1833 through May 1835, when W. W. Phelps arrived in Kirtland and became a full participant in the process. Phelps would have kept up with most of these developments through letters and revelations that he received in Zion. He also had the chance to counsel with Joseph Smith and other leading brethren in Clay County, Missouri, in June and July 1834. These Kirtland events included creating the School of the Prophets, purchasing prime land where the temple would be built, laying the temple’s cornerstone in July 1833, ongoing soliciting of funds for the temple’s construction, and building a printing house next to the temple site that was considered a holy structure as well.

Once Phelps and John Whitmer arrived in Kirtland on May 15, 1835, work on the temple hastened with the council of presidents present. Phelps took great interest in this project—after all, he knew that he and others were required to receive their endowment before they could return to Missouri to redeem Zion. During these halcyon days in Kirtland, Phelps was imbued with enthusiasm about the prospects for the kingdom of God on earth in preparing for the Lord’s imminent return.

In the July 1835 *Messenger and Advocate*, President Phelps wrote a piece entitled “The House of God.” He reported on the progress of temple construction and encouraged Saints receiving the newspaper in Ohio, Missouri, and branches spread far and wide to contribute money and labor to finish this holy structure. He pointed out that at the very time of the laying of the cornerstones, July 23, 1833, the Saints in Missouri were suffering “unparalleled outrages from the mob.” But, Phelps exclaimed, “trusting . . . in the God of Enoch, who succors the needy, and exalts the humble, a few commenced the work; and though other important matters rolled round, which, to many, would have seemed insurmountable, and calculated to retard the progress of the building, still, the walls and the timbers of the roof were finished, being raised late last fall: and the roof is now covered.”⁹

The official *History of the Church* recorded numerous financial subscriptions. For June 25, 1835, we read the following: “There was a meeting in Kirtland to subscribe for the building of the Temple; and \$6,232.50 was added to the list. Joseph Smith subscribed \$500; Oliver Cowdery, \$750; W. W. Phelps, \$500; John Whitmer, \$500; and Frederick G. Williams, \$500; of the above, all of which they paid within one hour, and the people were astonished.”¹⁰ Since these named men spent all their working hours for the church and their only surplus income would come from sales of published works or property, we must conclude that their subscriptions were mostly symbolic in nature. This was to spur other members to subscribe any surplus money or property that they could.¹¹

CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

Phelps repeatedly wrote his wife Sally about the progress on the temple. On July 30, 1835, he reported that some of the men who had come up from Missouri to Ohio were laboring on the construction. He reported, “The building of the Lord’s house is progressing very fast. It is a large house, I assure you. The men are now at work on the steeple.” Interestingly, he added, “Meetings are already held in the Lord’s house.”¹² Over the next several months, many church functions, school activities, and marriages would take place in the unfinished temple.

On September 16 William told Sally that the temple was “being finished slowly. It is a great work and will take some longer, I think, than was expected to complete it.”¹³ This observation demonstrates that in spite of their zeal and determination to follow God’s commandments to build this sacred structure, the Saints constantly fell behind in their expectations. That this temple was completed at all, enabling the jubilant Saints to witness the marvelous accompanying spiritual outpourings, remains one of the greatest legacies of faith from the Kirtland period in church history.

On October 27, Phelps reported a poignant moment in the temple: “On Sunday last we had one of the largest congregations ever convened in the House of the Lord. There were probably 1200 persons present and what added to the scene was the fact that a brother and a sister were married, according to the rules of the Church [marriage ceremony protocols] as published in the ‘Messenger and Advocate.’” This scene prompted him to add, “My heart felt for the Saints in Missouri. I longed for the day when the Saints in Zion could meet and partake of the sacrament of the Lord Jesus, confessing their sins according to the commandments.”¹⁴

In the October 1835 issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*, Phelps again implored the Saints to contribute money to help finish the temple. The blessings would make every effort worth it, he assured them: “Every one that wishes to spread the everlasting gospel; every one that wishes well to his fellow-beings; every one that wishes to have the elders instructed more perfectly in theory, doctrine and principle; and every one that wishes an house built where the Latter Day Saints can worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, have now an invitation to cast in their mites, for that purpose, and receive their reward hereafter, in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”¹⁵

On November 14, William wrote Sally about the weather’s effect on the construction: “On Thursday, the 12th inst., the snow was about three inches deep in Kirtland. This hinders the mason work on the Lord’s House considerably.”¹⁶ Other unfortunate hindrances in the winter impeded construction. The church, through its system of stewardships, owned a sawmill that prepared lumber for the temple. About two hundred men were involved with this operation. The site also employed a “board kiln”—an oven used for drying and seasoning the wood. Sadly, on the evening of December 10, a fire broke out at the kiln and destroyed three-quarters of the supply of wood.

Phelps reported to Sally that the burning of the board kiln would delay the construction of the temple. He also explained a partial solution to the problem:

The [building] committee has made a contract with a man to warm the house until the 1st of April. Four stoves are placed in the cellar and they heat twelve cylinders, four on the court for the sacrament, four in the court for the school of the Apostles and four in the attic school rooms. If this plan works well, it will save wood and save trouble as to fires. Again it will be of great service to warm the house for the men who work on it this winter and for the Hebrew School when it commences.¹⁷

In January 1836, William wrote Sally that “very great exertions have been made to finish the House of the Lord this winter. I suppose for the last fortnight, that nearly 50 men, as carpenters and Joiners, Masons, Mortar makers, hod carriers, &C, have been laboring on the house.” He noted that “the hard finish is about half on the out side, and the scaffolds cut down half way so that this monument of the latter day saints Liberty begins to show itself.”¹⁸

At the time of its completion in March, the House of the Lord was the largest and most beautiful building in all northeastern Ohio.¹⁹

PREPARING FOR THE “ENDOWMENT”

The presidents knew that spiritual preparation was paramount if they and the other priesthood brethren were to become pure before the Lord in order to obtain the promised “endowment of power from on high.” They challenged each other in this regard. William W. Phelps considered the requirements for the endowment seriously. In significant council meetings, the leading brethren charged men in the various priesthood quorums to be ready for the expected spiritual outpouring.

The Kirtland endowment, in terms of the ordinances, would not be for women. However, women would be able to partake of the spiritual blessings of the two temple dedication services. Moreover, more temple ordinances would be revealed in Nauvoo, and women would be invited to participate.

In the matter of spiritual preparation, the Prophet Joseph Smith led the way in Kirtland. In many ways, his challenge was the most acute. Wonderful things were expected to come from him constantly, and many people criticized him for not appearing to be a prophet at all times. Occasionally, he had to chasten various brethren, Phelps included. Some priesthood men were not quick to repent or forgive as Phelps was during this period.

Phelps felt deeply within himself the requirement to be ready in all things for the endowment and wrote about it to his wife, with whom he also wanted to be “one” in every way. On January 5, 1836, he wrote, “We [the leading brethren] are preparing to make ourselves clean, by first cleansing our hearts, forsaking our sins, forgiving every body, all we ever had against them.” He added that they were striving to become clean in every possible way—“by washing the body; putting on clean decent clothes, by anointing our heads, and by Keeping all the commandments.” He told Sally that he desired that she forgive him for all offenses. “Let us be wise, then, and forgive as the Lord forgives us, that we may be clean I forgive all, all their trespasses or hardness towards me.” Phelps also noted, “As we come nearer to God we see our imperfections and nothingness plainer and plainer.”²⁰

Regarding a Sunday meeting of the leading priesthood quorums, Phelps reported, “The presidents commenced the meeting by confessing their sins and forgiving their brethren and the world.”²¹

GRADUAL UNFOLDING OF THE ENDOWMENT

As events unfolded, the brethren came to understand what the Kirtland endowment would include. On November 12, 1835, Joseph Smith met with the Twelve Apostles in what turned out to be a most spiritual meeting. He instructed them on “many things that are before you, that you may know how to prepare yourselves for the great things that God is about to bring to pass.” The Prophet said that the church was still not on a “permanent foundation,” that other manifestations needed to take place. “You need an endowment, brethren,” he declared, “in order that you may be prepared and able to overcome all things, and then those who reject your testimony will be damned.” He promised the Twelve that with the endowment they would be empowered to perform all manner of miracles, such as healing the sick—causing the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, and the blind to see. But the brethren would have to prepare themselves and to exercise faith. “But when you are endowed and prepared to preach the Gospel to all nations, kindreds & tongues in their own languages, you must faithfully warn all, bind up the law and seal up the testimony, . . . while the Saints will be gathered out from among them, and stand in holy places ready to meet the Bride-Groom when he comes.” Joseph also explained that the Twelve would receive the sacred and private ordinance of washing of the feet.²² The Prophet similarly taught other quorums over the next two months.

W. W. Phelps became involved in all ordinances that accompanied the Kirtland endowment—washing ordinances, anointing ordinances, sealing of anointings, blessing each other by the laying on of hands, and the washing of feet. He likewise participated in virtually all of the associated spiritual outpourings. Clearly, Phelps fervently believed that when armed with the endowment, he and the other leading brethren would be able to fulfill the church’s mission to build Zion and prepare for the second coming of the Savior.

From Wednesday, January 13, 1836, to Sunday, January 17, Joseph Smith conducted a series of meetings called the “grand council,” consisting of the presidencies of Kirtland and Missouri (Phelps being in the latter), the Twelve Apostles, and the high councils and bishoprics of Kirtland and Missouri.²³ The brethren filled vacancies in some of the leadership bodies, better organized the priesthood quorums, and established rules of conduct for the House of the Lord, which was nearing completion. At the Friday meeting the council added the quorums of the Seventy, high priests, elders, priests, teachers, and deacons. As those wondrous days unfolded, many spiritual outpourings took place that have come to be recognized as part of the Kirtland endowment.²⁴

Joseph Smith was truly pleased and gratified with the proceedings. On January 13 he dictated, “This has been one of the best days that I ever spent; there has been an entire union of feeling expressed in all our proceedings this day; and the spirit of the God of Israel has rested upon us in mighty power, and it has been good for us to be here in this

heavenly place in Christ Jesus; and although much fatigued with the labors of the day, yet my spiritual reward has been very great indeed.”²⁵

Phelps attended each of these meetings and participated in important ways as a member of the Missouri presidency. He prominently participated in the drafting of the rules of conduct for the temple.²⁶ These rules established appropriate decorum for church members whenever they came to be enlightened in God’s holy house. When the church would erect additional temples over the decades, significant conduct protocols would likewise be followed.

Phelps’s letters to his wife Sally are revealing as to the sacred events of these days. He reported that the January 13 meeting “was one of the most interesting meetings I ever saw.” Then he observed that the meeting on January 15 was “more interesting than the first.” But the highlight for him of the “grand council” was the Sabbath meeting on January 17.

The Lord poured out his Spirit in such a manner as you never witnessed. When I was speaking, which was but few words, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me so that I could not speak and I cried as little children cry in earnest and the tears from my eyes ran in streams; the audience, which was the largest ever convened in said room, sobbed and wept aloud. The presidency and the “Twelve” occupied the forenoon. There was speaking and singing in tongues, and prophesying as on the day of Pentecost.²⁷

Joseph Smith’s record for the day confirms the sanctity of that meeting: “The Lord poured out His Spirit upon us, and the brethren began to confess their faults one to the other, and the congregation was soon overwhelmed in tears, and some of our hearts were too big for utterance. The gift of tongues came on us also, like the rushing of a mighty wind, and my soul was filled with the glory of God.”²⁸

Brother Phelps contributed to the blessedness of the “grand council” in another important aspect. Two of his hymns were sung in the proceedings. At the commencement of the first meeting on January 13, the priesthood leaders sang “Adam-ondi-Ahman.”²⁹ Phelps had composed this poem for publication in the June 1835 *Messenger and Advocate*. It spoke about ancient Zion and the preparation for Christ’s second coming:

This world was once a garden place,
With all her glories common;
And men did live a holy race,
And worship Jesus face to face,
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.

We read that Enoch walk’d with God,
Above the power of Mammon:
While Zion spread herself abroad,
And saints and angels sung aloud
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Her land was good and greatly blest,
Beyond old Israel’s Canaan;

Her fame was known from east to west;
Her peace was great, and pure the rest—
Of Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Hosanna to such days to come—
The Savior's second comin'—
When all the world in glorious bloom,
Affords the saints a holy home
Like Adam-ondi-Ahman.³⁰

At the conclusion of the meeting on the thirteenth, the brethren then sang Phelps's hymn "Now Let Us Rejoice."³¹ This hymn, too, bespoke preparation for the Second Coming:

Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation,
No longer as strangers on earth need we roam;
Good tidings are sounding to us and each nation,
And shortly the hour of redemption will come:

When all that was promis'd the saints will be given,
And none will molest them from morn until even,
And earth will appear as the garden of Eden,
And Jesus will say to all Israel: Come home!

We'll love one another and never dissemble,
But cease to do evil and ever be one;
And while the ungodly are fearing, and tremble,
We'll watch for the day when the Savior shall come.

When all that was promis'd the saints will be given,
And none will molest them from morn until even,
And earth will appear as the garden of Eden,
And Jesus will say to all Israel: Come home!

In faith we'll rely on the arm of Jehovah,
To guide through these last days of trouble and gloom;
And after the scourges and harvest are over,
We'll rise with the just, when the Savior doth come:

Then all that was promis'd the saints will be given,
And they will be crown'd as the angel of heaven:
And earth will appear as the garden of Eden,
And Christ and his people will ever be one.³²

Sacred meetings that then included the necessary ordinances of the Kirtland endowment soon followed. President Phelps was involved with each of these. The special day of ceremonial washings and anointings took place in the temple on Thursday, January 21, 1836, from 3:00 p.m. to approximately 2:00 a.m. the next morning.³³ The entire presidency

was involved at first. These men included Joseph Smith Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, who also were presidents of the high priesthood; David Whitmer, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer, of the Missouri presidency; and Joseph Smith Sr. and Hyrum Smith, who had also been ordained as “presidents.” As the evening progressed, the six members from the two bishoprics in Ohio and Missouri and the twenty-four members of the high councils in Ohio and Missouri also received these ordinances. Editors of *The Joseph Smith Papers* wrote regarding events that started on this special day: “Washing and anointing, and the connected blessings and sealings of blessings, were sanctifying prerequisites to endowment with power in the House of the Lord. In the coming days, these ordinances were given to all priesthood officers, passing along lines of hierarchy and seniority, culminating in the solemn assembly on 30 March 1836.”³⁴

Phelps surely enjoyed participating in these ordinances with these men whom he dearly loved and respected. That Thursday evening began with the presidency convening in a separate room “where we attended to the ordinance of washing our bodies in pure water, we also perfumed our bodies and our heads, in the name of the Lord at early candlelight.” The brethren then consecrated a supply of oil. One by one, from the oldest to the youngest, these nine brethren received their anointings from the hand of Joseph Smith Jr. Each received special sealing blessings directly following his anointing from the hand of Joseph Smith Sr. The last to receive his anointing and sealing was Joseph Smith Jr. from his father. The Prophet then recorded that “all of the presidency laid their hands upon me, and pronounced upon my head many prophecies and blessings, many of which I shall not notice at this time.”³⁵ Since age was a factor in all of the Kirtland endowment activities, we will note the age order of the nine presidents from oldest to youngest: Joseph Smith Sr., Frederick G. Williams, William W. Phelps, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Joseph Smith Jr., and Oliver Cowdery.

Following these ordinances, the Prophet Joseph Smith noted that the heavens were opened to them in vision. But as he proceeded with the description of the visions, he used the first person pronoun *I* to describe what he saw. Presumably, the other presidents saw some, but not all, of what Joseph Smith beheld. The Prophet saw the actual “celestial kingdom of God” in its transcendent beauty. He beheld many people who would be there, including Adam and Abraham, his father and mother (even though they were still alive), and, startlingly, his oldest brother, Alvin. This caused Joseph to marvel because Alvin had died before being able to be baptized. Heretofore, Joseph had presumed that baptism in the flesh was a requirement for entrance into the celestial kingdom. But in this vision he was able to ascertain that deceased persons who would have accepted the gospel in its fulness had they been allowed to tarry on the earth will receive a fulness of blessings. Furthermore, little children who die before the age of accountability are heirs of the celestial kingdom.³⁶

Other visions followed for Joseph Smith. He beheld in turn all the Twelve Apostles in foreign lands without their knowing that Jesus was standing in their midst protecting them, the redemption of Zion, “and many things which the tongue of man cannot describe in full.” The Prophet then noted: “Many of my brethren who received the ordinance with

me saw glorious visions also. Angels ministered unto them as well as to myself, and the power of the Highest rested upon us, the house was filled with the glory of God, and we shouted Hosanna to God and the Lamb." Warren Parrish, the Prophet's scribe for the journal, also saw a vision of the "armies of heaven."³⁷ We can assume that Phelps was motivated to compose the poem "Hosanna" (also known as "The Spirit of God") from events that he participated in that evening and the spiritual outpourings of the previous week. The "Hosanna" hymn that would be used in the temple dedication refers to visions, blessings, angels, armies of heaven, solemn assemblies, washings, anointings, and songs and shouts of hosanna to God and the Lamb.³⁸

On the next day, Friday the twenty-second, another powerful spiritual assembly took place with the presidency and the high council members. This time the Twelve Apostles and the presidency of the Seventy were invited, and they received their washing and anointing ordinances. Again, brethren were anointed in order according to their ages. Joseph Smith recounted, "I also laid my hands upon them, and pronounced many great and glorious things upon their heads. The heavens were opened and angels ministered unto us." Toward the end of the meeting, Joseph reported that "the congregation shouted a long hosanna: the gift of tongues fell upon us in mighty power, angels mingled their voices with ours, while their presence was in our midst, and unceasing praises swelled our bosoms for the space of half-an-hour." The meeting ended at 2:00 a.m. The Prophet reported that the Spirit and visions of God attended him throughout the night.³⁹

On the evening of Sunday, January 24, Phelps met together with the other presidents, and they "counseled on the subject of endowment, and the preparation for the solemn assembly, which is to be called when the house of the Lord is finished."⁴⁰ On the twenty-eighth, the presidency convened another sacred meeting, this time to see to the ordinances for all the leaders of the high priests quorum, the presidency of the seventies, and the elders quorum presidency. Sidney Rigdon instructed all the brethren and then led them in a Hosanna Shout. Throughout the night that followed, Joseph Smith experienced visions and glory from the Lord in his sleep.⁴¹

The leading brethren continued to strengthen each other spiritually and to bless each other as each day passed. On February 6, Joseph Smith called all the "anointed together to receive the seal of all their blessings." Then all worthy high priests and elders were invited into the upper rooms of the temple to receive their ordinances. Sidney Rigdon again led the brethren in another Hosanna Shout.

Over the next two weeks, the brethren focused on studying the scriptures in the original Hebrew with the aid of Professor Seixas and on strengthening each other's testimonies of the Book of Mormon. Many women in the church worked together to make a "veil of the Temple." Brigham Young was appointed to oversee the painting of and last finishing touches to the House of the Lord.⁴²

During the first three and a half weeks of March, the brethren continued to study the Bible in Hebrew and prepare for the dedication of the House of the Lord. Joseph Smith counseled the brethren from Missouri, Phelps included, about their "removing to Zion this spring" after the solemn assemblies. Joseph Smith promised that it would not be long

before he and other Ohio brethren would likewise move to Missouri. Special “singers” practiced in the four choir lofts in the temple and “performed admirably.”⁴³

Finally, on Saturday, March 26, the nine presidents met together to make final preparations for the dedication of the House of the Lord that would take place the following day. Many Saints from throughout the country had descended upon Kirtland for the services. Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon lingered into the evening to put finishing touches on the dedicatory prayer that the Prophet was to read on the morrow. They also set in type the prayer that was immediately printed into a broadside for distribution the next day.⁴⁴

DEDICATION OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

Sunday, March 27, 1836, proved to be one of the most significant and sacred days in Latter-day Saint history. Countless Saints began gathering at the doors of the temple at 7:00 a.m. At 8:00 the doormen allowed members to enter, but the building was soon filled in all of the rooms to the point of overflowing. Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon directed the seating of the congregation. Priesthood leaders were already seated in their appointed positions. W. W. Phelps estimated that approximately one thousand were able to attend the dedication, but many disappointed members were turned away. Some went to the nearby schoolhouse to hold a meeting, but that building likewise soon filled up, and many were left out.⁴⁵

President Phelps’s connection to the dedicatory services was significant. He was one of the three oldest presidents, along with Joseph Smith Sr. and Frederick G. Williams. These three were seated in the first pulpit of the Melchizedek Priesthood. (The other presidents occupied positions in other pulpits.) During the services, each of the presidents in turn was sustained as a prophet and seer. During the dedicatory prayer, Joseph Smith prayed for the presidents and their families. Phelps likely had given instructions regarding musical tunes and lyrics to a choir of singers seated in the four corners of the room. Four of the six hymns sung in the morning and afternoon sessions of the dedication had been written by President Phelps: “O Happy Souls Who Pray” (adapted from a hymn by Isaac Watts), “Now Let Us Rejoice,” “Adam-ondi-Ahman,” and “The Spirit of God.” The last of these was sung in honor of the Hosanna Shout that was part of the ceremonies.⁴⁶

The lyrics of “O Happy Souls Who Pray” are as follows:

O Happy souls who pray
Where God appoints to hear!
O happy Saints who pay
There constant service there!

We praise him still;
And happy we;
We love the way
To Zion’s hill.

God is the only Lord,
 Our shield and our defence,
 With gifts his hand is stor'd:
 We draw our blessings thence.

He will bestow
 On Jacob's race,
 Peculiar grace,
 And glory too.⁴⁷

Phelps wrote the expansive lyrics to the “Hosanna” hymn specifically to be sung at the dedication of the House of the Lord. They reflect every aspect of the Kirtland endowment. The two verses in italics below are not included in the church’s modern hymnals. Following is the hymn’s text as it appears in *Sacred Hymns*:

The Spirit of God like a fire is burning;
 The latter day glory begins to come forth;
 The visions and blessings of old are returning;
 The angels are coming to visit the earth,

We'll sing & we'll shout with the armies of heaven;
 Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb!
 Let glory to them in the highest be given,
 Henceforth and forever: amen and amen!

The Lord is extending the saints' understanding—
 Restoring their judges and all as at first;
 The knowledge and power of God are expanding
 The vail o'er the earth is beginning to burst.
 We'll sing and we'll shout &c.

We call in our solemn assemblies, in spirit,
 To spread forth the kingdom of heaven abroad,
 That we through our faith may begin to inherit
 The visions, and blessings, and glories of God.
 We'll sing and we'll shout &c.

*We'll wash, and be wash'd, and with oil be anointed
 Withal not omitting the washing of feet:
 For he that receiveth his penny appointed,
 Must surely be clean at the harvest of wheat.
 We'll sing and we'll shout &c.*

*Old Israel that fled from the world for his freedom,
 Must come with the cloud and the pillar, amain:⁴⁸
 A Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua lead him,
 And feed him on manna from heaven again.
 We'll sing and we'll shout &c.*

How blessed the day when the lamb and the lion
 Shall lie down together without any ire;
 And Ephraim be crown'd with his blessing in Zion,
 As Jesus descends with his chariots of fire!

We'll sing & we'll shout with *His* armies of heaven:
 Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb!
 Let glory to them in the highest be given,
 Henceforth and forever: amen and amen.⁴⁹

Numerous spiritual outpourings continued throughout the services. Several brethren reported seeing angels or even the Savior himself. Others who offered public testimonies spoke in tongues. The sacrament was administered and passed to the congregation. Phelps was one of the witnesses who reported these phenomena. He commented, "It was one of the solemnest as well as sublimest scenes I ever witnessed."⁵⁰ Joseph Smith's official history reported: "The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place."⁵¹

SUBSEQUENT ASPECTS OF THE KIRTLAND ENDOWMENT

Following the dedicatory services, Joseph Smith directed a meeting that Phelps attended regarding "the ordinance of washing of feet."⁵² Two days later, on Tuesday the twenty-ninth, Joseph Smith called the presidents together along with the two bishoprics. They fasted and prayed throughout the day and night "in the most holy place in the Lord's House" for the Lord's will for the church. At one point during the night, "the word of the Lord" came to Joseph Smith that they were to perform the ordinance of washing each other's feet. Sidney Rigdon began by washing Joseph Smith Jr.'s feet, and in turn the brethren continued this ordinance one by one upon each other. David Whitmer is recorded as washing Phelps's feet, and Phelps washed John Whitmer's feet. They then partook of the sacrament together. Joseph Smith's journal for these hours ends, "The Holy Spirit rested down upon us, and we continued in the Lord's House all night prophesying and giving glory to God."⁵³

Without having slept, these brethren then convened a meeting in the temple on Wednesday the thirtieth at 8:00 a.m., for members of the Twelve Apostles, the high councils, and the seventies, as well as for all other official male members of the church who had attended the previous dedication. This amounted to about three hundred men. This was the long-awaited "solemn assembly." Joseph Smith's record for this day is remarkable:

I ascended the pulpit, and remarked to the congregation that we had passed through many trials and afflictions since the organization of the Church, and that this is a year of jubilee to us, and a time of rejoicing, and that it was expedient for us to prepare bread and wine sufficient to make our hearts glad. . . . Tubs, water, and towels were prepared, and I called the house to order, and the Presidency proceeded to wash

the feet of the Twelve, pronouncing many prophecies and blessings upon them in the name of the Lord Jesus; and then the Twelve proceeded to wash the feet of the Presidents of the several quorums. The brethren began to prophesy upon each other's heads, and upon the enemies of Christ, who inhabited Jackson county, Missouri; and continued prophesying, and blessing, and sealing them with hosanna and amen, until nearly seven o'clock in the evening. . . . I made the following remarks: that the time that we were required to tarry in Kirtland to be endowed, would be fulfilled in a few days, and then the Elders would go forth.⁵⁴

The next morning, Thursday, March 31, 1836, the presidency convened a second official dedicatory service in the temple for those members who could not attend the first service on the twenty-seventh. The seating procedures, singing, discourses, and dedicatory prayer proceeded essentially the same as at the first service. This second meeting lasted five hours longer than the one on the previous Sunday, however.⁵⁵ Phelps felt strongly about this meeting, recording, "It was a sublime scene, surpassing the first in sublimity and solemnity as well as in order. The singing was grand. The Addresses were the best that could be and majesty exceeded anything I have witnessed in the last days."⁵⁶

No further temple meetings took place on Friday or Saturday. But on Sunday, April 3, further stupendous events occurred in the Lord's house. A general Sabbath meeting convened with about a thousand persons in attendance. Phelps helped the other presidents in seating the congregation. The two most senior members of the Twelve Apostles, Thomas B. Marsh and David W. Patten, spoke in the forenoon. In the afternoon the Twelve blessed the sacrament emblems, and the presidents passed them to the congregation. The presidency then pronounced official blessings on many children in attendance. Phelps described these events as "a glorious time."⁵⁷

Then, late in the afternoon, Joseph Smith took his chief counselor, Oliver Cowdery, with him to the pulpit and lowered the canvas veil of the temple from the ceiling to the floor. Thereupon in private the two received some of the most resplendent visions received in the latter days. They first beheld the Son of God in his glory, who told them that he had accepted this house and that the word of God would spread by his servants to foreign lands. In successive visions, Joseph and Oliver saw and received important priesthood keys from Moses, Elias, and Elijah. These visions were compiled into one document and canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants.⁵⁸ These visions, recorded in D&C 110, would come to be recognized in the church as a major foundation for the latter-day efforts of missionary work to all the world, temple ordinances for the living and vicarious ordinances for the dead, and eternal marriage.

The last event associated with the Kirtland endowment was the jubilee solemn assembly of church leaders in the temple on April 6, 1836, the sixth anniversary of the church's founding.⁵⁹ The brethren observed the Lord's Supper and the ritual of washing of the feet. According to Heber C. Kimball, "the meeting continued on through the night [and] the spirit of prophecy was poured out upon the Assembly. . . . Also Angels administered to many, for they were seen by many."⁶⁰

The last three months leading up to the April 6 solemn assembly had been filled with wondrous testimony meetings, visions, prophesying, and ordinances for the leading brethren, including Phelps and to some extent the members of the church who attended the temple dedications. Phelps and the other Missouri leaders who were in Kirtland were now “endowed with power” and released to return to Zion to take care of more spiritual responsibilities.

When Phelps would leave Kirtland on his return trip to Missouri, his thoughts often would be preoccupied with the redemption of Zion and the building of a similar house of God in Independence. Unknown to him at the time, events would not turn out as he had hoped and prayed. However, in the future he would participate in important ways with the proposed temple in Far West, Missouri; the actual temple in Nauvoo, Illinois; and a temporary temple, the Endowment House, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

NOTES

1. D&C 36:8 (December 9, 1830); D&C 42:36 (February 9, 1831); D&C 133:2 (November 3, 1831). These prophecies correspond with the Old Testament prophecy in Malachi 3:1 that is also recorded in 3 Nephi 24:1. D&C section 36 is discussed in *JSP*, D1:224–25, section 42 in *JSP*, D1:245–56, and section 133 in *JSP*, D2:114–21.
2. D&C 57:3 (July 20, 1831). D&C 57 is discussed in *JSP*, D2:5–12, and the location of the temple lot is discussed on p. 8n37.
3. D&C 58:57 (August 1, 1831). D&C 58 is discussed in *JSP*, D2:12–21; the dedication of the land is discussed on p. 20n102.
4. D&C 84:2–5 (September 22, 1832). See also verse 31. D&C 84 is discussed in *JSP*, D2:289–304. Upon receiving this revelation in Missouri, likely through the postal service, John Whitmer recorded it in the manuscript book now known as Revelation Book 1. See *JSP*, MRB:5, 274–75. Parts of this revelation were also discussed in *The Evening and the Morning Star*. See “The Children of the Kingdom,” *EMS* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): [4].
5. Mark Lyman Staker discusses this in *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith’s Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 410.
6. D&C 88:119 (December 27–28, 1832). This portion of D&C 88 is discussed in *JSP*, D2:334–46. As soon as he received the “Olive Leaf,” Phelps published passages of this revelation pertaining to the house of God in “Revelation,” *EMS* 1, no. 9 (February 1833): [5].
7. *JSP*, D2:367; emphasis added.
8. Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 440.
9. “Letter No. 9,” *M&A* 1, no. 10 (July 1835): 147–48.
10. *MHC*, vol. B-1, 595; *HC*, 2:234.
11. The economy of early America was cash poor. There was not enough currency in circulation for all that business people needed to do. The only legal tender (money that everyone had to accept) was scarce gold, silver, and copper coins. Coins minted in the United States and abroad (especially Mexico) were used because it was the value of the metal in the coin and not who minted it that gave it its value. Printed paper notes issued by private banks circulated even more widely as cash, but these notes were only as good as the reputation of the bank that issued them. See Tom Kelleher, “The Debit Economy of 1830s New England,” <http://www.teachushistory.org/detocqueville-visit-united-states/articles/debit-economy-1830s-new-england>.

12. WWPL, July 30, 1835, 554.
13. WWPL, September 16, 1835, 565.
14. WWPL, October 27, 1835, 567.
15. "The House of the Lord," *M&A* 2, no. 1 (October 1835): 208.
16. WWPL, November 14, 1835, 568.
17. WWPL, December 18, 1835, 570–71; WWPP.
18. WWPL, January 1836, 577; WWPP.
19. See Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 437.
20. WWPP; underlining in original.
21. WWPL, January 1836, 576.
22. *JSP*, *H1*:120–23; *JSP*, *J1*:96–99; *JSP*, *D5*:47–51.
23. See *JSP*, *D5*:138–39.
24. Events at these meetings are discussed in *JSP*, *J1*:148–61; *JSP*, *H1*:170–83; *JSP*, *D5*:138–54; *MB1*, 200–205; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 685–93; *HC*, 2:365–76.
25. *JSP*, *J1*:151; *JSP*, *H1*:173; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 687; *HC*, 2:368.
26. WWPL, January 1836, 576. Other members of this rules committee were Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and David Whitmer. See *JSP*, *D5*:142–45; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 686; *HC*, 2:367; *MB1*, 201, 231–33.
27. WWPL, January 1836, 576; WWPP; underlining in original.
28. *JSP*, *J1*:160; *JSP*, *H1*:183; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 693; *HC*, 2:376.
29. *JSP*, *J1*:148; *JSP*, *H1*:171; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 685; *HC*, 2:364.
30. *M&A* 1, no. 9 (June 1835): 144. See also *Sacred Hymns*, 29–30. It was among the most popularly sung hymns in the early church. "Adam-ondi-Ahman" is in the modern *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 49. It is occasionally, but not regularly, sung in Latter-day Saint congregations today.
31. *JSP*, *J1*:149; *JSP*, *H1*:171; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 686; *HC*, 2:366.
32. Phelps originally wrote this hymn in 1833. See "Home," *EMS* 1, no. 10 (March 1833): [8]. See also *Sacred Hymns*, 24–25. This hymn is in the modern *Hymns* (1985), no. 3. It is one of the most popular Latter-day Saint Restoration hymns and is sung frequently in congregations and general conferences.
33. The entire proceedings of January 21–22 are recorded in Joseph Smith's journal and published in *JSP*, *J1*:166–71. See also *MHC*, vol. B-1, 695–97; *HC*, 2:379–82.
34. *JSP*, *J1*:167n314. See also *JSP*, *D5*:157.
35. *JSP*, *J1*:166–67; *JSP*, *D5*:157–58; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 695; *HC*, 2:379.
36. This vision of the celestial kingdom was canonized in 1979 as part of the Pearl of Great Price and then in 1981 as Doctrine and Covenants section 137. For its original form, see *JSP*, *J1*:167–70; *JSP*, *D5*:158–60. See also *MHC*, vol. B-1, 695–96; *HC*, 2:380–81.
37. *JSP*, *J1*:168–70; *JSP*, *D5*:159–60; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 696; *HC*, 2:381.
38. The original wording of the hymn, which includes two additional verses beyond what is sung today, is found in *Sacred Hymns*, 120–21. One of them deals with washings and anointings.
39. *HC*, 2:382–83; *JSP*, *J1*:171–72; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 697.
40. *JSP*, *J1*:172; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 698; *HC*, 2:385.
41. *JSP*, *J1*:172–75; *MHC*, vol. B-1, 698–700; *HC*, 2:385–87.
42. *JSP*, *J1*:182–91.
43. *JSP*, *J1*:191–99.

44. *JSP*, J1:199–200, 199n413; *JSP*, D5:189, 201.
45. *JSP*, J1:200; *JSP*, D5:189–90; WWPP; MHC, vol. B-1, 713–14; *HC*, 2:410.
46. The dedicatory services, including the dedicatory prayer, are published in *JSP*, J1:200–211; *JSP*, D5:191–209; MHC, vol. B-1, 713–23; *HC*, 2:410–28; *M&A* 2, no. 6 (March 1836): 273–81. The dedicatory prayer was later included in the Doctrine and Covenants and appears now as section 109. D&C 109:71 contains Joseph Smith’s petition in behalf of the presidents and their families.
47. Phelps first wrote these lyrics in 1832: “Happy Souls,” *EMS* 1, no. 3 (August 1832): [8]. The song then appeared in *Sacred Hymns*, 14–15. It appeared in a subsequent hymnal, but it is not in the modern *Hymns* (1985).
48. *Amain* means “with full force.”
49. *Sacred Hymns*, 120–21. The lyrics first appeared in the *Messenger and Advocate*: “Hosanna to God and the Lamb,” *M&A* 2, no. 4 (January 1836): 256. It is presently in *Hymns* (1985), no. 2.
50. These experiences are documented in Steven C. Harper, “A Pentecost and Endowment Indeed: Six Eyewitness Accounts of the Kirtland Temple Experience,” in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 327–71. The Phelps accounts that appear in Harper’s article come from WWPP. For additional discussion of the spiritual outpourings, see *JSP*, J1:211n443; and *JSP*, D5:190–91.
51. *HC*, 2:428. This sentence does not appear in Joseph Smith’s journal (*JSP*, J1) or in MHC.
52. *JSP*, J1:211; MHC, vol. B-1, 723; *HC*, 2:428.
53. *JSP*, J1:212–13; MHC, vol. B-1, 723–24; *HC*, 2:429–30; Edward Partridge diary, 1835–1836, entry for March 29, 1836, CHL.
54. *JSP*, J1:213–14; *JSP*, D5:218–19; MHC, vol. B-1, 724–25; *HC*, 2:430–31. Phelps’s account of this meeting is found in WWPP, April 6, 1836.
55. *JSP*, J1:216, 216n461; MHC, vol. B-1, 726; *HC*, 2:433.
56. WWPP, April 6, 1836.
57. *JSP*, J1:219, 219n470; *JSP*, D5:225; MHC, vol. B-1, 727; *HC*, 2:434; WWPP, April 6, 1836.
58. D&C 110; *JSP*, D5:225–29; *JSP*, J1:219–22; MHC, vol. B-1, 727–28; *HC*, 2:434–36; WWPP, April 6, 1836.
59. Phelps identified it as a “jubilee” in his last letter to his wife, dated April 6, 1836. See WWPP, April 6, 1836.
60. A description of the meeting according to Heber C. Kimball, William W. Phelps, and John Corrill is found in *JSP*, J1:223, 223n480.