



# TALKS GIVEN AT THE CORNERSTONE LAYING

December 11, 1953

The cornerstone-laying exercises of the Los Angeles Temple began with the Mormon Choir of Southern California singing "Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation." The choir was directed by H. Frederick Davis and accompanied by Cicily Adams Brown at the organ. The opening prayer was offered by President Joseph Fielding Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve.

## Opening Comments by President David O. McKay

"To the many thousands here assembled on this solemn occasion, we take this opportunity to bid you welcome and pray that the spirit of reverence and sacredness which should characterize an occasion of this kind, may prevail throughout the exercises." The president acknowledged leaders from the cities of Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, and Los Angeles who were present. He then read messages of congratulations from the mayor of Los Angeles, county board of supervisors, and city council. President McKay then continued:

"We desire to take this occasion to express appreciation of the united support given by the stake presidencies, the high councilmen, bishopricks of wards in the Los Angeles Temple District, and commendation of their efforts, and those put forth by the membership of the Church in this area in contributing so generously toward the cost of erecting and furnishing this house of the Lord.

"We include in this expression of appreciation made for the holding of these exercises, including the space reserved and marked for the convenience of those who attend in automobiles, for the seating arrangements, and all other details which contribute to the convenience of the audience here assembled, President Clifford D. Wright, chairman of transportation, and those associated with him, and those twenty-five or thirty drivers of automobiles.

"We wish especially to express appreciation to the Traffic Department of Los Angeles City, for the police escort from the Union Station to the temple site; to the Westwood Ward Relief Society; and to President and Sister Bunker for the luncheon upon the arrival of the visitors; to the Union Pacific

Railroad Co. for special service furnished and courtesies extended from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles, and to all others who may not be mentioned who have in any way contributed to the success of this most important occasion.

“One hundred and twenty years ago last July the cornerstone of the first temple in this dispensation was laid at Kirtland, Ohio. That building still stands, a stone structure 80 feet long, 60 feet wide, 50 feet to the square, with a tower extending 100 feet from the ground.

“Since that date nine other temples have been erected, and today we are assembled to lay the cornerstone of the eleventh, the largest yet to be built in this dispensation.

“No matter what the poverty of the people in the early days was, no matter what the economic conditions under which they lived, members of the Church proceeded at once to erect a house of the Lord in which to perform ceremonies pertaining not only to the living, but also to the dead.

“Each temple is dedicated as 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.’

“Most cordially and gladly we again extend to all who are here assembled and to the hundreds, perhaps thousands, who are listening in, a most cordial welcome, and pray that the occasion may be an uplifting and inspiring experience and recalled in memory with satisfaction and joy.”<sup>1</sup>

## Message of Appreciation by President W. Noble Waite, South Los Angeles Stake

“President McKay and Counselors, and other members of the General Authorities of the Church, honored guests, brothers and sisters, and friends:

“This is indeed an honor for which I shall always be grateful. In representing the presidencies of the Los Angeles Temple Area, I should be remiss in my responsibility if I were to fail to give credit where credit belongs. To arrange for a ceremony of this nature requires much planning and organization. Many people are brought into play, and finally, after many hours of hard work, everything is in readiness. I should like to say that I feel that everything is in readiness for this ceremony this afternoon.

“I should like to give credit to a few people, among the hundreds who have contributed to making this ceremony possible: Elder Harold B. Lee and Elder Adam S. Bennion, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, who guided the entire planning with finesse and understanding. Without these brethren, we would not have known what to do. We greatly appreciate it.

“President John Russon, of the Los Angeles Stake, and his helpers, Brother John Koer and Sam Pierce, for the arrangement of the chairs and for the ushering of the thousands of people here, today.

“President Hugh C. Smith and Leon Fraser, who parked hundreds, several thousand automobiles here on the grounds, and it required a great deal of meticulous care and detail. It was a job well done.

“To Daken Broadhead, to whom we assigned the responsibility of the public address system. When Daken does things, he does them very well, and I am sure that you will agree with me that you are able to hear all over this temple site.

“And then to President Clifford B. Wright, as President McKay said, who organized a company that brought the General Authorities from the train to the temple site, and who will take them back to their hotels.

“To Brother and Sister Bunker, President Bunker and his wife, and the Relief Society for the delicious luncheon that was served at the Mission Home.

“And to the Temple Committee, made up of stake presidencies, I should like to express, personally, my appreciation to them for their support, for their loyalty, for their willingness to do everything that has been assigned. No one has had a greater privilege than I to associate with them in our capacity.

“Then to the bishops and bishops’ counselors, and to the people at large in the Los Angeles Temple Area who have contributed so generously of their time and their means to make it possible for us, as President McKay pointed out, to meet our financial obligations.

“Now, of course, among those who should be mentioned, are Soren Jacobsen, the man upon whom the responsibility was placed to erect the temple. This building can speak far more eloquently than words can describe, his genius and devotion and loyalty to the Church;

“Brother Edward O. Anderson, the Church architect. The beautiful building is a product of his genius;

“Brother William Walch, who purchases the materials, or did purchase the materials that have gone into the building; Brother Vern Loder, the superintendent, and Virgil Buttars the engineer, and the many of you people who have aided and assisted in making this possible.

“Now in conclusion, I should like to say, as the chairman of the temple committee, we have a long way to go, maybe a year and a half or two years, before we are able to dedicate the building. In the meantime, I have been given the privilege of asking you members of the Church to remember the pledges you have made, to meet them, and I know that you will. The stake presidencies of the southern California or the Los Angeles Temple Area, including fifteen presidents and President Bunker, have authorized me to say to the First Presidency, that by the time that this temple is dedicated we will have met every obligation that we have pledged, which is \$1,648,000, and we know that you are going to do it.

“God help us I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”<sup>2</sup>

President McKay commented: “It is fitting that President Waite expressed appreciation for the builder, Brother Soren N. Jacobsen, and the architect, Brother Edward O. Anderson, and those associated with them, but their work is not finished. We will say more about their great contributions when they shall have finished their work.”<sup>3</sup>

## “Necessity and Uses of Temple,” Principal Address by President J. Reuben Clark Jr.

“My brothers and sisters and friends: I am greatly honored in having the opportunity of saying a few words on this occasion.

“It has been said that this temple is the largest temple that has been erected in this, the last dispensation. I believe, President McKay, we can go still farther and say that this is the largest temple erected, for the purposes for which this temple has been erected, in the entire Christian era. The work which will be done here, rapidly, apparently, disappeared from the knowledge of the early Christians, and they had no temple of the kind which this temple is, and erected for the purpose for which this temple has been erected.

“To the Latter-day Saints, life is purposeful. We know that we existed before we came here. We know that our existence hereafter will have a direct relationship with what we do here. We know that after we leave here we shall go on through eternity with the rewards which we merit. And we know that in administering his rewards, God will not only be merciful, but also will be filled with love.

“We know that there are certain requirements which are attendant upon our lives here. We know that we were sent here in order that we might show by our lives that we merited the destiny which God has marked out for us. We are to observe the commandments of the Lord and to show by our observance what we merit.

“We know that there have been untold millions, indeed billions, of people who have lived on this earth, who have never been taught the commandments of the Lord, and yet we know that there will be universal salvation. Our third Article of Faith declares: ‘We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.’

### “What of the Dead?”

“But what about those untold million and billions who lived without any knowledge of the gospel, who died without it, who could not, therefore, observe it, who could not, therefore, win the awards which would come from observance, what of them? Are they to be left without salvation? Not so under the principles of the restored gospel, which has come to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

“We know that even as the Savior said, when the Jews were seeking to kill him after he had healed the man at the pool of Bethesda, that ‘The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live . . . they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation’ (John 5:24–29).

“We know that Peter dwelt upon this subject. He said that the Christ ‘went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah’ (1 Peter 3:19–20). . . .

“We know, therefore, that all men are entitled to salvation. We know, too, that there are certain requirements that must be met, and one of them is baptism.

### “Words of the Master

“You remember, the Savior came to John as he was baptizing, and said to John, who demurred, saying he was not fit to baptize Jesus, ‘Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness’ (Matthew 3:15). We know that in his first recorded great conversation with Nicodemus, the Savior said, ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God’ (John 3:5).

“We also know that as he gave his final instructions to his Apostles, he told them to go abroad and to preach the gospel which he had taught them, saying, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned’ (Mark 16:15–18).

“We also know that Peter declared the same principle (Acts 2:38).

“But, how are those who are dead going to be baptized? Well, the restored gospel has taught us what that plan is. Under the restored gospel we understand the work of vicarious labors. That is thoroughly a part of our gospel.

“So Paul understood it, because he said in his epistle to the Corinthians: ‘Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?’ (1 Corinthians 15:29).

“And so, part of the work that is carried on in this temple is the work of baptism for the dead. This is done vicariously. We baptize for our ancestors. We seek out our genealogy, we go back as far as we can, and thousands here could testify to the aid which they have received in trying to search out their ancestors. Having acquired the names and the other necessary data, they are vicariously baptized for them here in this temple. That is one of the great purposes for which this temple is erected.

### “Sealing Ceremony

“Another great purpose has to do with the sealing ceremony. One of the most beautiful principles of the restored gospel is that of the sealing. You will remember that the Savior said to his Apostles, ‘Whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’ (Matthew 18:18).

“You will recall, also, that in the early days of this Church, Joseph and Oliver had a great vision, and in that vision there appeared to them Moses, Elias, and Elijah. Moses conferred upon them, the keys of the gathering of Israel, Elias conferred upon them the blessings of Abraham, and Elijah conferred upon them the blessing of turning ‘the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse’ (D&C 110:14–16).

“Now that is also done here, will be done here, in this temple. The hearts of the fathers have been turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, and insofar as that is concerned, the earth shall not be smitten with a curse.

“Now then, the sealing ceremony perpetuates the family relationship, the most sacred relationship of which we know anything. Husband and wife are sealed here, will be sealed here, for time and for all eternity. Their children will be sealed to them, and that family, and the families which succeed them out of their own blood, they will be bound together, and in the hereafter we shall live together in these great families, with joy and satisfaction, throughout all the eternities to come.

### “Basic Principles

“My brothers and sisters and friends, these are two of the basic principles, two of the basic ordinances which will be administered, carried on in this temple. All of them have to do with our love for our fellow men. All of them have to do with our desire to bring elevation to all people. With us, salvation is universal. There can be no greater concept than this. There can be no greater work than this. There can be no greater work of unselfishness than this.

“As we go forward to the completion of this temple, those who contribute will have increasing joy in that which they give in order that the temple may be completed and that the great work to which I have alluded may be carried on.

“May God give you and each of you the spirit of this work, the spirit of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers, to the end that you may see to it that the commitments which you have made shall be lived up to. I repeat, there can be no greater blessing come to any man than the blessing of trying to save his fellow man, than the blessing which comes from unselfishness.

“May God give to each and every one of us, the spirit of love, of kindness, of charity, the spirit of forgiveness, the spirit of tolerance for the belief of others. Give to each of us a desire to serve our Heavenly Father. Give to each of us a testimony that Jesus is, indeed, the Christ—a great teacher, yes, but also, the Son of God.

“God give to us, to each of us, increasing knowledge of the great principles which have come to us in the restored gospel. God give to us every blessing that we need in order that we may so live that finally we may be saved and exalted in his presence, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus, amen.”<sup>4</sup>

President McKay then cautioned: “We observe for your special attention a notice of which we hope all present will take cognizance. Hundreds of you, perhaps thousands, would like to go through the temple in its present incomplete state. However, it is deemed advisable by Brother Jacobsen, the contractor, Brother Anderson, the architect, and others associated with them, that such a visit might result in accident, because of ladders, temporary structures, etc., so they respectfully ask, and we concur in

that request, that you refrain from attempting to go through the unfinished building today. Later you will get an opportunity to do so.” The choir then sang “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

## Cornerstone Laying by President Stephen L Richards

President Richards listed the contents of the copper container that was placed in the receptacle in the cornerstone of the Los Angeles Temple (see appendix G) and then announced the depositing of that container. He then officially placed the cornerstone plaque and declared:

“I report that the box has been duly sealed, the box being contributed by the Kennecott Copper Company, and has been placed in the cornerstone of the temple. I may now report and announce that the cornerstone of the temple is now in place. I will therefore come to the stand to offer the dedicatory prayer.

“President McKay, distinguished guests, officers and members of the Church, and other friends assembled: I greet you with deep feelings of brotherly love, respect and admiration. I assure you I am sensitive to the high honor conferred on me by President McKay to participate in this glorious ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of the Los Angeles Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and offer the prayer of dedication therefore. I undertake the assignment with earnest solicitation that the Lord will bless the words I shall utter, with import beyond their natural usage, that they may, in a measure at least, express our collective gratitude and the desires of our hearts.

“The significance of this great occasion has been set forth so fully and so eloquently by President Clark, and in statements and comments made by President McKay, that it becomes unnecessary for me to make additional remarks. It is my province, however, to declare as I have just done, that the cornerstone of this the Los Angeles Temple, being the eleventh temple to be erected by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this the dispensation of the fulness of times, is now properly laid. Will you therefore, in the unity of our brotherhood and faith, join with me in a prayer of thanksgiving, devotion and dedication.” (The complete text of President Richards’s prayer is found in appendix H.)

President McKay then commented in conclusion: “In the words of the Chief Apostle on the Mount of Transfiguration, we can say with one heart, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here,’ and may the spirit of that inspirational prayer, the spirit of this great occasion, be an encouragement to the architects, the contractor, the workmen, the artists who will continue their labors until the temple shall have been completed. May the sanctity of this occasion spread beyond the vastness of this audience to the hearts of the thousands in the temple area. There is nothing so great that you will not readily undertake to perform, and when you have performed it you reach out willingly for even greater service.

“God bless you in all the efforts that you must now put forth to the consummation of this great ideal, the completion and dedication of the house of the Lord in the Los Angeles area.”

The Mormon Choir of Southern California sang “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning,” and the benediction was offered by Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church.<sup>5</sup>

## Notes

1. “Appreciation and Gratitude Voiced by Church Leader,” *Church News*, December 19, 1953, 6.
2. “Workers Who Planned Ceremony Given Credit,” *Church News*, December 19, 1953, 11.
3. “Appreciation,” *Church News*, 6.
4. “President Clark Explains Necessity and Uses of Temple,” *Church News*, December 19, 1953, 10.
5. “Appreciation,” *Church News*, 6.