

## Turning the Hearts

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I consider it a great honor and a privilege to greet you this afternoon. I am sure the Lord is much concerned about the families of the earth today.

The family is the basic unit of society, and more importantly it is the basic unit of exaltation. It seems that nothing is more important to the Lord than a family. He has designed the greatest blessings for His children to be received through families, and the temple, of course, is the means of creating these eternal, exalted families.

I believe that families are under a more serious attack today than at any time since the beginning of the world, with the possible exception of the days of Noah. It must have been bad then too. Maybe we today are not quite as bad as they were. Moses recorded in the Book of Genesis: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Gen. 6:5.) I don’t believe I have ever known anyone quite that bad, whose “every thought was evil continually.”

The Lord further indicated that all flesh was corrupt in those days, and so he brought forth the flood and destroyed all flesh except Noah and his family. Therefore, we are all descendants of righteous Noah. But the family concept is under very serious attack today all over the world.

The Lord said from Mt. Sinai, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” (Ex. 20:12.)

We seem to have conditions today similar to those Noah faced; and the Lord speaks of smiting the earth with a curse, as happened at the time of the flood, and this will happen if there is not a turning of “the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.” (Mal. 4:6.)

There are those who feel that this turning of the hearts is strictly Elijah’s job, but in Doctrine and Covenants 98:16 [D&C 98:16] the Lord seems to give *us* that assignment. He said, “Seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children.”

Elijah came and delivered the keys, but the Lord looks to us to do the work. In a little plainer translation of the Malachi scripture, the Lord said:

“Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

“And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

“If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.” (D&C 2:1–3; see also JS—H 1:38–39.)

We, then, are in the very serious business of attempting to save the earth or to keep it from being “wasted” when the Lord comes. This earth was created so God the Father would have a place to send His children to receive bodies of flesh and bones and prove themselves. If we will no longer permit the Lord to send his children to this earth, then the earth is wasted, and as in the days of the flood He will surely destroy it.

So what must we do? We must follow the living prophet, for herein is our only safety. He says, among other things:

1. Complete four-generation family records and as far beyond as you can go.
2. Write a personal and family history.
3. Perform a reasonable number of temple ordinances by attending the temple as often as is practical.

I personally believe that the writing of personal and family histories will do more to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to children than almost anything we can do. I am sure you will never turn your own children’s hearts more to you than you will by keeping a journal and writing your personal history. They will ultimately love to find out about your successes and your failures and your peculiarities. It will tell them a lot about themselves, too. They will get a great desire to raise a family of their own when they see what a great blessing they were to you.

Also, I seriously doubt that you will ever turn your own heart more to your own fathers than by writing your family history. You must know a lot about them before you can write it. This will lead you to much in-depth research. I promise you will love them when you become acquainted with them. They were noble people, and they sacrificed much to give you the heritage you have today. They deserve the best you can give them, which of course is membership in the Church and the kingdom of God and the sealing of their loved ones to them.

I am convinced that these records we are commanded to write are absolutely vital, not only to the salvation of our ancestors but also to ours, for are we not to be judged out of the books which John saw were to be opened, as recorded in Revelation 20:12 [Rev. 20:12]?

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were

judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

After quoting this verse from Revelation, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 128:7–8 [D&C 128:7–8]:

“You will discover in this quotation that the *books* were opened; and another book was opened, which was the book of life; but the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the *books*, according to their works; consequently, the *books* spoken of must be the books which contained the record of their works, and refer to the records which are kept on the earth. ...

“Now, the nature of this ordinance consists in the power of the priesthood, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, wherein it is granted that whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Or, in other words, taking a different view of the translation, whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven, and whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the *books* shall your dead be judged.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book.)

Sometimes we feel we just don’t have time to write in our journals. I wonder. President Kimball stood before the World Conference on Records last August and said: “By now, in my own personal history, I have managed to fill seventy-eight large volumes, which are my personal journal. There have been times when I have been so tired at the end of a day that the effort could hardly be managed, but I am so grateful that I have not let slip away from me and my posterity those things which needed to be recorded.” (*Ensign*, Oct. 1980, p. 72.)

“The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead. Those saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation.” (*Teachings of the Prophet*, p. 193.)

To become a savior on Mount Zion, then, goes far beyond the performance of the temple ordinance. It encompasses the personal and family history as well as the four-generation-and-beyond research—plus participation in the extraction program.

Of course, none of this would mean very much if we did not have a holy house in which to perform this work. In this sense, temple building then becomes the most important work of this dispensation. How glorious to live upon the earth at this time and have part in the grand work of rearing the Lord’s house in nations around the world so the saving ordinances of the gospel and the ties that bind eternal families may be made available to all the children of the earth! Surely we are the most blessed people who have ever lived, to which I bear witness in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.