



**WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL**  
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**What's with the New Latter-day Saints' Temples?**

By Tal Davis

(Note: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now prefers to be called officially simply the Church of Jesus Christ. However we will continue to use its traditional abbreviation of LDS to differentiate it from other churches. Also we will occasionally still refer to members of the church by their traditional nickname of Mormons.)

Previously, in this column we discussed that in Tallahassee, Florida, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is building a large and impressive edifice on the north side of the city facing Thomasville Road south of I-10. If you live in Tallahassee and have driven on that stretch of highway, you have undoubtedly seen that soon to be completed structure. That building is one of the newest of the only 183 temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints currently in operation (seven are undergoing renovation and 53 more, like Tallahassee's, are under construction).

If you read my earlier series about LDS temples back in 2022, you probably have a pretty good idea of what an LDS temple is all about. But many of you may still be wondering just what they do in there. In this article I will review and analyze the basic activities that occur inside each temple and the purposes for them. Before I do that, I will let you in on a couple of peculiar aspects that make them especially mysterious to non-Mormons.

First, once a temple has been dedicated and sealed, no non-LDS church members are allowed to ever enter the building. In their view, allowing non-members to enter the holy temple would be

to defile it. Only those church members who hold an authorized pass card, called a "Recommend," are deemed worthy to enter its sacred halls.

You might ask, "How, and from where, does one get a 'Recommend'? First one has to be a duly baptized member of the LDS church. Then he or she must pass a yearly examination with their local church leader (bishop). He will ask a series of personal questions about the person's moral and church life, including how much he or she has donated to the church that year (10% minimum required). If the person passes he or she will be issued the Recommend good for one year. The truth is, probably a majority of Mormons do not regularly carry a Recommend or go to the temple very often.

The second unusual fact is that no worship services are ever conducted inside LDS temples. Most Christians would assume that they are designed for people to go and hear sermons and sing hymns. But none of that is done inside the temples. The temples are designed entirely to conduct special secret (they say sacred) rituals to prepare church members for inheriting the highest levels of eternal life. They are deemed so sacred that once a members has participated in them, they are prohibited from discussing them with anyone outside of the temple, even among themselves, including family members. The first time a member finds out what happens is the first time when they participate. What's ironic is that the temple rituals have been changed by church leaders at various times over the years without the members being informed. So members who had gone before, went back only to find it was not the same. But they could not ask questions or comment about it to anyone else.

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So how would we know what is done? Actually many LDS members have surreptitiously smuggled recording devices into the temples and recorded the temple ceremonies and rituals. Some transcripts have been published and videos posted online. So non-Mormons can freely read or watch them, but Mormons are not allowed to do so.

So just what is done in the temples that requires that it be so secret? Essentially three major ceremonies or rituals are performed in all LDS temples. These rituals can only be done in dedicated temples led by duly authorized temple workers.

### Baptism for the Dead

The first ceremony which is performed on any worthy Mormon is baptism for the dead. Mormon doctrine states that if someone dies before they have a chance to be baptized into the LDS church, they will go to place called "spirit prison." There they await the resurrection of the dead at the end times. While they are in spirit prison Mormon missionaries will be sent from Paradise (where baptized Mormons go at death) to preach to them the Mormon gospel. Those dead spirits may believe and accept that gospel. However, they cannot be baptized physically after death and, in Mormonism, water baptism by immersion is the first major ingredient for salvation.

Therefore, a living Mormon must go to a temple to be baptized on their behalf by proxy in special baptism pools made for that purpose. (Note: Living converts to the LDS or member children do not have to be baptized in temples but must be baptized by a male Mormon with the Aaronic Priesthood.) Many faithful Mormons go often to be baptized on behalf of dead people. They consider it a sacred duty. The

church maintains a large computerized library of the names of millions of deceased people gleaned from genealogical research who are distributed to the temples for baptisms.

### The Endowments

The second significant ritual, or set of rituals, done in the temples are the "endowments." These are a series of blessings, lessons, and rituals taught to worthy church members, often at the time of their marriage or ordination to the priesthoods. The members first enter the temple and go to basement locker rooms where they take off their street clothes and put on loose fitting smocks. Then they are given ritual blessing washings. After that they put on special clothing and aprons to wear through the remainder of the journey through the temple.

The next part of the endowment consists of a video portraying the true story of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve. It shows how their fall from innocence was a necessary part of the Heavenly Father's plan for them to become mortal to allow humanity to progress to godhood like himself. In Mormon theology, if Adam and Eve had not sinned they would have been stuck in immortal bodies and would never have been able to reproduce children. So in Mormonism, Adam and Eve's sin was a good thing. You might wonder where that is found in the Bible. It's not. In any case, if they had not fallen and become mortal, then the billions of Heavenly Father's children in the pre-existent spirit world could not be physically born and never progress to godhood. That's not in the Bible either.

After watching that video and listening to a lesson accompanying it, the members move to another room where they stand before an altar where a temple worker leads them in learning and practicing a series of symbolic arm and hand motions (called "tokens" and

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"signs") and reciting some words and a chant-like prayer.

Finally, each person approaches a curtain or veil where they must repeat some of what they have learned to a person behind the curtain representing God. If they do so adequately, they can then pass through the curtain into an elaborately decorated room called the Celestial Room which represents the home of God the Father. The idea is that after the resurrection of the dead, at the end times, the person will need to recall the secrets he or she has learned in the temple in order to enter the real Celestial Kingdom of God – the highest level of heavenly glory.

From there, the members return to the locker room and put their street clothes back on to go home. As with baptism for the dead, a faithful Mormon can perform these endowment rituals many times over by proxy for dead people who have previously been baptized by proxy in a temple.

## Temple Marriage

The third major event held in the temples are temple marriages. These are marriage ceremonies conducted in special rooms with special altars where Mormon men and women take their vows to be "sealed" together for time and eternity. In Mormon theology a marriage and family is not just un-

til death do us part, it continues past death into eternity if it is sealed in the temple. The strange thing about it is that if the husband's and/or wife's family is not Mormon they are not allowed to attend the ceremony since they can't go in the temple. Also strange is that a man can have more than one woman sealed to him in the temple for eternity, but only one for time.

So these are the activities done regularly in the temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The LDS claims that they serve the same purposes as did the temple in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. However, any study of the Old Testament designs and procedures specified therein for the temple will obviously reveal that LDS temples have nothing in common with those of the ancient Jerusalem temples. Actually the

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modern LDS temples and rituals have more in common with those of Freemasonry Lodges, from which Joseph Smith most likely copied them.

So next time you pass the new LDS temple in Tallahassee, or any where else for that matter, you will now have some idea as what its function is the Mormon system. Check out previous articles on Mormonism at: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2018/11/non-biblical-theism/>. And look forward to an upcoming one that will review what the Church of Jesus Christ teaches is necessary for salvation.