
Elijah Returned

D&C 110:13

One week after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, other epochal manifestations were witnessed in the temple. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote:

Attended meeting [April 3, 1836] in the Lord's House, assisted the other Presidents of the Church [the First Presidency and quorum presidents] in seating the congregation. ... In the afternoon, I assisted the other Presidents in distributing the elements of the Lord's Supper to the church, receiving them from the Twelve, whose privilege it was to officiate at the sacred desk this day. After having performed this service to my brethren, I retired to the pulpit, the veils being dropped, and bowed myself, with Oliver Cowdery, in solemn, but silent prayer.¹

While in the act of prayer, the Prophet Joseph continued:

The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened. We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah. (D&C 110:7)

The Savior said, "I have accepted this house. ... And the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands; and this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people" (D&C 110:10).

¹ Journal, 1835–1836, 191–192. Joseph Smith Papers.

When the vision closed, the heavens again were opened. Moses appeared and committed to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery “the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.” Next came Elias, bestowing the keys of “the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham,” which are the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant (see D&C 110:12; Abraham 2:9–11). And then “another great and glorious vision” was opened—Elijah appeared and bestowed the keys to turn “the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers” (D&C 110:13, 15).

Of the three ancient prophets who committed priesthood keys to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery—Moses, Elias, and Elijah—Elijah’s return had been anticipated since the days of Malachi. Contemporaries of John the Baptist thought that he was Elijah, while others viewed Jesus Christ as the returned prophet (John 1:21; Matthew 16:14; Luke 9:8). Observant Jews maintain that Elijah is the “Angel of the Covenant” and the hoped-for guest at Passover, as a door is left ajar for his entrance and a cup of wine at a Sabbath dinner awaits him. Muslims contend that when he returns he will be a young man, for they believe that he drank of the water of life and has never grown old. The Catholic Carmelite Monastery at Mount Carmel holds that Elijah still lives in a grotto beneath the monastery and that he will return by emerging from the grotto. Some Greeks believe that he is the patron saint of elevated climes, and they look to tall peaks as the probable site of his return. Other traditions have Elijah appearing as an Arabian merchant.

Elijah did not return to Mount Carmel or to a Jewish Passover. He did not return to the Muslims or the Greeks. Elijah returned first to the Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). He returned again, over eighteen hundred years later, to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110:13).

In the Kirtland Temple, the prophet Elijah gave Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery keys to seal hearts to the fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is done by making and keeping sacred covenants. Joseph Smith declared, “If you have power to seal on earth and in heaven, then we should be wise. The first thing you do, go and seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, and yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory.”² Joseph further said, “God destroyed the world by a flood” in the days of Noah, and the Lord promised to “destroy [the earth] by fire in the last days: but before it should take place, Elijah should first come and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.”³

² Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:253.

³ *History*, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], 1920+.

Elder Octaviano Tenorio, in his general conference address in October 2007, told of his joy at being sealed to his parents:

In 1993, after I had served as president of the Mexico Tuxtla Gutiérrez Mission, we traveled as a family to see my parents, who lived in northern Mexico. During the trip we talked about the joy of serving the Lord and seeing the change in people who had accepted the gospel during the three years we were in the mission. We were commenting about those people who were baptized, confirmed, and had received the priesthood and the ones we knew had entered the temple and were sealed as families for eternity.

My youngest son asked a question that made me reflect: "Dad, are you sealed to your parents?" I told him that because my father had been less active for many years, he and my mother were not sealed in the temple. To help him become active, I thought up a plan.

It involved my children, and I explained to them how we would do it: Every Sunday my father would get up early to take my mother and sister to church, only to return home, wait for the services to end, then go back to pick them up. So I assigned my children to go with him and say, "Grandpa, would you do us a favor?" I knew his answer would be, "Whatever you want, my children." Then they would ask him if he would go with them to church and stay with them so he could listen to their testimonies. It was the first Sunday of the month. I also knew my father would give any excuse not to go, so I planned to enter the room to help my children convince him.

The time soon came for executing the plan. My daughter, Susana, approached my father and asked him about the favor. Sure enough, my father told her he would do anything he could for them. Then came the invitation to go to church, and just as we had predicted, he used this excuse: "I can't because I haven't even showered." That's when my wife and I, who were hiding behind the door, shouted, "We'll wait for you!"

When we realized he was not making a decision, my wife and I entered the room and, together with our children, began to insist: "Shower! Shower!" Then what we expected happened. My father came with us, he stayed for the services, listened to the testimonies of my children, his heart was softened, and from that Sunday on he never missed church.

Months later, at the age of 78, he and my mother were sealed, and we, his children, were sealed to them.

I know that thanks to the power of godliness manifest in the ordinances of the temple, I can now be reunited with my parents for all eternity, even after death.⁴

⁴ Octaviano Tenorio, "The Power of Godliness Is Manifested in the Temples of God," *Ensign*, November 2007.