
Kirtland Temple

D&C 95:1–10

“This revelation is a continuation of divine directions” given to the Prophet Joseph Smith to “build houses for worship and instruction” (D&C 95: Introduction). What makes this revelation stand out is the specific instruction to build a temple—a House of the Lord.

Learning of the revelation, one Latter-day Saint suggested to the Prophet Joseph that a wood-framed structure would suffice to fulfill the commandment. Another proposed a log structure. “Shall we, brethren, build a house for our God, of logs?” the Prophet Joseph asked. “No,” he retorted, “I have a better plan than that. I have a plan of the house of the Lord, given by himself.” The Lord’s plan for the Kirtland Temple was intricate and multi-faceted in design and financially beyond the means of the Saints. “Notwithstanding the Church was poor,” Joseph explained, and that “there was not a scraper and hardly a plow that could be found among the Saints,” the followers of Joseph Smith willingly tackled the impossible.¹

This was accomplished under the direction of Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, and Jared Carter—the Kirtland Temple Committee, also known as the Church Building Committee. This committee was assigned “to build mine houses, according to the commandment, which I, the Lord God, have given unto you and to raise funds, procure building materials, and give oversight to temple construction” (D&C 94:15).

On June 5, 1833, the Prophet Joseph Smith and some of the brethren went to the temple site and removed a fence and much foliage. Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon dug “the trench for the walls of the Lord’s House, and finished the same with their own hands.”² The following day at a conference of high priests, the Kirtland Temple Committee was assigned to purchase or accept donations of stone, brick, and lumber for the Lord’s House.

¹ Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life’s Review* (Mesa, AZ: 21st Century Printing, 1992), 16.

² *History, 1838–1856*, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 302.

On July 23, 1833, “Hyrum officiated with twenty-three other priesthood holders as the corner stones of the Lord’s House were laid in Kirtland, after the order of the Holy Priesthood. Six brethren officiated at each of the four corners.”³

After laying the cornerstones, work on the temple moved forward at a quick pace. By September 1833, nearly every Latter-day Saint in the Kirtland vicinity had contributed in some way or another to the building of the temple. Men cut stones, felled trees, and donated carpentry skills. Women helped too. Heber C. Kimball explained, “Our wives were all the time knitting, spinning and sewing, and, in fact, I may say doing all kinds of work! They were just as busy as any of us.”⁴ Lucy Mack Smith explained why the women wanted to be so engaged: “There was but one mainspring to all our thoughts and actions; and that was, the building of the Lord’s House.”⁵

The Prophet Joseph noted the benefit that came from their united efforts: “Notwithstanding the church was poor, yet, our unity, harmony and charity abounded to strengthen us to do the commandments of the Lord.”⁶

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, in his general conference address in April 2000, praised the men and women who helped construct the Kirtland Temple:

My mind goes back 167 years to a little handful of women, older men, and those children that could labor who were left to keep construction going on the Kirtland Temple while virtually every man well enough to do so had undertaken a relief march of 1,000 miles to aid the Saints in Missouri. The records indicate that quite literally every woman in Kirtland was engaged in knitting and spinning in order to clothe the men and boys laboring on the temple.

Elder Heber C. Kimball wrote, “The Lord only knows the scenes of poverty, tribulation, and distress which we passed through in order to accomplish this.” It was recorded that one leader of the day, looking upon the suffering and poverty of the Church, frequently went upon the walls of that building by day and by night, weeping and crying aloud to the Almighty to send means whereby they might finish that building.⁷

³ Journal History of the Church, July 23, 1833 (from a statement by George A. Smith, November 1859).

⁴ Heber C. Kimball, “Building the Temple,” *Journal of Discourses*, 10:165.

⁵ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, Document Transcript, chap. 44, 226.

⁶ *History*, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 297.

⁷ Jeffrey R. Holland, “As Doves to Our Windows,” *Ensign*, May 2000.

The building of temples continues in this dispensation. President Russell M. Nelson explained why: “Each holy temple stands as a symbol of our membership in the Church, as a sign of our faith in life after death, and as a sacred step toward eternal glory for us and our families.”⁸

⁸ Russell M. Nelson, “Personal Preparation for Temple Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 2001.