

# THE ETERNAL FAMILY NARRATION

It is time to choose an oft-forgotten path, the path we might call the family way, so that our children and grandchildren might indeed grow to their full potential. There is a national, even an international tide running. It carries the unspoken message. Return to your roots, to your families, to lessons learned, to lives lived, to examples shown, even family values. Often, it is just a matter of coming home, coming home to addicts not recently examined, to diaries seldom read, to photo albums almost forgotten.

There seems to be a yearning in all of us to know more about our family. Millions across the world of all faiths are engaged in genealogical research, trying to find cherished ancestors and binding their family ties past and present. Where does this yearning come from? Are we just curious or have some kind of emotional attachment? Most who desire to connect to those who came before them, to those whose lives and desires made their own lives possible, know it is more.

Hastening family history and temple work in our day is essential for the salvation and exaltation of families. Our Father's plan is about families. Several of our most poignant scriptures use the concept of the tree with its roots and branches as an analogy. In the closing chapter of the Old Testament, Malachi, in describing the second coming of the Savior, vividly uses this analogy. Speaking of the proud and wicked, he notes that they shall be burned as stubble and that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Malachi closes this chapter with the Lord's reassuring promise. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

It is important to know why the Lord promised to send Elijah. Elijah was a great prophet with great power given him by God. He held the greatest power God gives to His children. He held the sealing power, the power to bind on earth and have it bound in heaven. God gave it to the Apostle Peter, and the Lord kept His promise to send Elijah. Elijah came to the Prophet Joseph Smith on April 3, 1836, just after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the first temple built after the restoration of the gospel. Joseph described the sacred moment. Another great and glorious vision burst upon us, for Elijah the prophet, who is taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us and said, Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi, testifying that he, Elijah, should be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse. Remember that the names which will be so difficult to find are of real people to whom you owe your existence in this world and whom you will meet again in the spirit world.

Our hearts turn to fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, grandmothers and grandfathers because we are eternal beings. The family unit is central to God's plan for the destiny and joy of His children, and family relationships are intended to continue beyond this life. All family members, those living, those past, and those future share an enduring bond that reaches across the

generations. And our happiness is enhanced through our eternal connection to one another. God's temples are key to this binding. In the Holy Temple, We learn about God's plan for His children and how we can enter back into His presence through the sacrifice and saving grace of His Son Jesus Christ. The crowning blessings of Latter-day Saint temples are the ceremonies that unite men, women, and children in eternal family relationships, including ancestors who have already died. These temple rites are performed for them by proxy.

The Mormon experience of the temple has sort of restored that meaning to the word temple. First Corinthians 15 where Paul speaks about those who baptize themselves for the dead. And obviously takes for granted that, A, there were people who did so, and he has no complaint about it. Now with the Mormons, we have it again as a practice. It's a beautiful thing. I could think of myself as taking part in such an act, extending the blessings that have come to me in and through Jesus Christ. That's a beautiful way of letting the eternal mix into the temple, which in a way is what Christianity is about.

To turn the heart of the children to the fathers, as prophesied by Malachi, includes searching out the names of our ancestors and performing these binding ordinances in the temple on their behalf. This is the source of yearning that motivates us, even without fully understanding why, to seek out the names and histories of our ancestors. By living as the Savior has taught us to live, and having sacred ordinances performed in holy temples on our behalf and on behalf of our ancestors, we are bound eternally to our family from generation to generation. Our family can be together forever.