

First Latter-day TEMPLE

By Kimberly Webb



And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me . . . , I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God (Doctrine and Covenants 97:15–16).

Today there are more than a hundred temples all over the world. But when Joseph Smith was commanded to build a temple in Kirtland, Ohio, he had never even seen one! The Kirtland Temple was the first temple built in the latter days.

Since Joseph Smith did not yet know what a temple ought to look like or exactly how it was to be used, Heavenly Father revealed to him a plan for the temple. He and his counselors saw a vision of the completed building. In the vision, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams saw the pattern of the temple both inside and out.

When an architect suggested that the seats in the building be rearranged, the Prophet Joseph would not allow it. He had seen them in the vision. According to his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, when the Saints wanted the temple to be built as



a frame or log house, he said, “ ‘Shall we, brethren, build a house for our God, of logs? No, I have a better plan than that. I have a plan of the house of the Lord, given by himself.’ ”* The temple walls, two feet thick and over sixty feet tall, were to be built of stone.

Constructing the temple seemed nearly impossible. The Saints were so poor that they could barely afford to care for their own families. The magnificent temple cost about \$40,000–\$60,000 to build, a great sum of money in the 1830s! There were very few experienced builders among them,



and none of them had ever built something as enormous as a temple. Also, enemies outside of the Church vowed that they would stop construction on the temple. But the Saints knew that they had been commanded by God to build it and that He would help them: “Verily I say unto you, it is my will that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it.” (Doctrine and Covenants 95:11.)

The Saints set to work. Men spent one day each week in the stone quarry or on the temple site, and some of them guarded the unfinished temple at night to protect it from mobs. Women spun cloth to make clothing for the workers, and they made carpets and curtains for the temple. Glass and fine china were crushed and mixed with the plaster so that when the sun struck the temple’s outside walls, they glittered. Everyone labored and sacrificed for two and a half years until the temple was finished.

When the temple was dedicated on March 27, 1836, the Lord rewarded the Saints for their obedience. Spiritual blessings were poured out upon them—people spoke in tongues, heavenly choirs sang, some people had visions, and others saw angels. A pillar of light rested on the temple, and angels were seen on the roof.

One week later, on April 3, Jesus Christ appeared in the temple to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The Savior accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house. Moses, Elias, and Elijah also appeared to restore priesthood keys.

Although the Saints suffered many trials to build the Kirtland Temple, the eternal blessings given to them were well worth all of their sacrifices. Through their faith, diligence, and obedience, they led the way for Church members throughout the world to receive temple blessings today.

**History of Joseph Smith, page 230.*