

How to Get to Heaven

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I appreciate, my brothers and sisters, the opportunity of spending these few minutes with you. It is an interesting experience to come back to BYU from time to time and to have the opportunity to speak to the student body. May I relay my congratulations to the *Universe* staff. I hope most of you are planning to make journalism a career. We are in deep need of some objectivity in the profession and we are in need of people who don't carry their individual biases into the profession. We are in need of people who uphold the truest standards of journalism and have the ability to bring out the facts and to be objective about what they are looking at and what they report and what they do. A free press is based on the integrity and ability of people who are involved with the press, and it will stay as free as they are capable and competent enough to be worthy of the trust of the people. So there is great need for what these young people are training themselves for today.

I was going through some notes last night and came across something that was of interest to me at least. Somebody had collected some phobias. I hope I can pronounce all these correctly. (There's a sister out in Orem who, if I go wrong in my grammar or enunciation, sends me an anonymous letter and always spells my

name wrong.) The list included *amathaphobia*, an abnormal fear of dust; *amaxaphobia*, morbid dread of boarding a trolley car; *chronaphobia*, impulse to smash clocks; *rectophism*, an uncontrollable desire to buy shoes; *triskaidekaphobia*, irrational fear of the number thirteen; and, finally, *uranathphobia*, the fear of going to heaven.

And I guess it's this last one that I would like to speak most about, because we run across people who seem to have a great fear of going to heaven. I guess the gospel of Jesus Christ is aimed at helping people to understand, first of all, what it means to go to heaven and, secondly, what they need to do in order to get there. So what I'd like to do in the next few minutes today is to discuss with you the whole concept of how to get you to heaven. There are two basic, fundamental scriptures—or I should say concepts—that teach us how to get to heaven. Let me share those with you if I can.

Obedience

This is the Lord speaking in 3 Nephi:

Loren C. Dunn was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 7 May 1974.

And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. [3 Nephi 11:32]

I like that. This is the Lord teaching the Nephites right after he appeared. First of all, he taught that he was obedient to his Father and gave us a pattern that we must follow if we are to be saved, and that is to be obedient to the Lord as the Lord has been obedient to his Father. I think there is another principle there which is also beautiful, and that is just the simple, plain, basic principle of a son or a daughter being obedient to his father and his mother. There's something divine about that relationship. There's something that strengthens everybody concerned when that kind of obedience is enjoyed.

The Covenant of Baptism

The following verse is one I would like you to listen to:

And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. [3 Nephi 11:33–34]

The Lord sends us here as his children to do one basic thing that we know of, and that is to be baptized. Anybody who wishes to inherit the kingdom of God and anybody who wishes to be saved on the face of this earth must be baptized and must be baptized by someone who has the authority. Belief in Jesus Christ is essential, and baptism by someone who has the authority is essential. But we're sent to this earth, basically, to partake of two significant ordinances, and one of those is baptism. So important is it that the Lord says, "And whoso

believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned," which is to say that his progress will be stopped.

Baptism is one of the first doctrines that the Savior taught the Nephites after he appeared. His words are recorded in 3 Nephi 11:33–34. Three verses later he returned to the same topic: "And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things" (3 Nephi 11:37). In the very next verse, for the third time, as if he were trying to emphasize to the Nephites what the basic fundamentals of the gospel of Jesus Christ were about, he said, "And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (3 Nephi 11:38). That's three times. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them" (3 Nephi 11:39).

Baptism is essential for a person who wants to inherit the kingdom of God. That's one of the basic ordinances that the Lord sent us here to earth to partake of, and the person who is baptized has a hope of inheriting the kingdom of God. The person who doesn't, according to the Lord, will be damned—or his progress, in other words, will be stopped.

Childlike Forgiveness and Faith

I like this statement in 3 Nephi where the Savior says, "And become as a little child" (3 Nephi 11:37). He repeats that a couple of times. He's not referring to becoming childish, but childlike. And I think children teach us great lessons sometimes. We have five children now. Our most recent one is four months old. We have a relatively young family, and I'm interested in watching my children to learn some of the great qualities and characteristics that they teach us.

I have a two-year-old who's a bandit. He's a very active little boy, and he gets in trouble sometimes and requires some punishment—a spanking or something of the nature. He's very dramatic when he's spanked; first his lips begin to quiver, and then he goes into his room and cries. But always, within two or three minutes, he's back again. Life is back to normal, and he's going about doing the things he's doing—sometimes the same things that he was doing before.

It's remarkable to me to see the ability of a child to forgive. I had a friend once who punished his child for something he didn't do. That was an interesting experience because, when he found out the child hadn't done it, he called him in and said, "Son, I'm sorry I did this, but I want you to know that there's something to be learned from it. That is that you will, in your lifetime, be blamed for things that you didn't do." Now, everyone has to go through that. That's one of the trials of life. But if you can undergo that trial with a forgiving heart and if it doesn't make you bitter, then you will have learned something that will help you in your eternal progression and bring you peace and joy and happiness in your life. A child has the ability to do that. A child has the ability to forgive. And that, truly, is a great characteristic.

Children are also full of faith. They're quick to believe, aren't they? They're anxious to believe, and they continue to believe until we do things that destroy that faith and until they get older and maybe a little bit more cynical. In a way that change is unfortunate. You look at some of the great men you know and you'll find that spirit and quality of faith, the desire and the ability to believe. That truly is a great and a beautiful and a marvelous characteristic—the ability to have faith and the ability to believe and to maintain that belief through life.

My father had that quality in his adult life. I can remember a person came to town one day and wanted a handout for a meal. My father

wouldn't give it to him, but he said, "Now, what do you do?"

The fellow said, "Well, I've been a painter."

The poor man's hands were shaky and the rest of it, but Father said, "Well, we've got an old barn that we'd like you to paint, and if you'll paint that, then we'll pay you for it and you'll have something to go on."

So the fellow went around the corner to England's paint store and bought some paint. Then he went down and painted our barn.

Mr. England called us after it was over and said, "You know that man you sent up?"

My father said, "Yes."

He said, "Well, he bought more paint than he needed." Of course, by then he was gone.

But my father said, a little bit philosophically, "Well, we got our painted barn and we've given this man an opportunity to know that somebody had faith in him and trust in him. Hopefully, somewhere down the line that will take effect."

Some people may have said to my father, "Well, you were taken," but I look on the situation in a little different way. He had the ability to have faith, to have faith in other people.

The Covenant of Temple Marriage

The second great commandment, or ordinance, that we need to take advantage of as we go through life is explained in section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Let me read that to you:

In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

And if he does not, he cannot obtain it. [D&C 131:1–3]

We all know that there are three degrees of glory, but in the highest degree there are also three degrees. A man may enter into the second

or third degrees of the celestial degree, but that is the end of his kingdom. He cannot have an increase. It's interesting to me that the Lord would equate exaltation with increase. The world seems to think that increase is a dirty word nowadays, but I think of the passage, also in the Doctrine and Covenants, where the Lord says that the world is "full, and there is enough and to spare" (D&C 104:17). The world has abundance, or it is full and to spare—which is to say that, if its resources are used properly, there is enough for everyone. I think that we have a great need to look more toward the second coming of Jesus Christ than we do toward the time when there won't be enough of the environment left for people to live in. The Lord is not that poor a planner. The world was created for man and it will serve its purpose. That doesn't mean that we don't have to be careful as far as the environment is concerned, because we do. He expects us to husband and take care of what we have. But the problem is not overpopulation, generally speaking. The problem is the salvation of man and the earth's fulfilling its purpose as far as the destiny of man is concerned.

The Lord tells us, if we can put these two scriptures together, that a man will inherit his kingdom, which I assume is the kingdom where he is—the celestial kingdom—through baptism and temple marriage. It is through temple marriage that a man and wife are sealed together for time and eternity. That's the ordinance that binds together the family and the family organization. In section 132 the Lord, listing a whole number of things—like contracts, oaths, obligations, and so forth—says that these things will have an end when men are dead because they are sealed by the authority of this earth. But there is only one thing that will go beyond this earth, as far as authority is concerned, and that is that which has been sealed by the priesthood, because that and that alone will be recognized after men are out of this world. If a person wants a marriage

for time and eternity, and if he wants an eternal family unit, it must be based on the principle of temple marriage and the principle of the priesthood, which causes something to last beyond this life (see D&C 132:7). The Lord has sent us here to do essentially two things: first, get baptized and keep all the ordinances surrounding baptism—that is, keeping the commandments associated with baptism; second, get married in the temple. And if we are married in the temple and are faithful to the covenants associated with it, then he has promised us that we can inherit the highest degree in the highest kingdom. We can go where he is. We can become like unto gods if we take advantage of these two great and glorious ordinances.

Genealogy

Genealogical work is so important to these two ordinances that the Lord has seen to it that we go to great lengths to perform them for people who didn't have the opportunity to do them when they were here. Their whole progress and their whole future, eternal future, and their whole exaltation rest with these two great and glorious ordinances—the ordinance of baptism and the ordinance of temple marriage.

As you come into this earth life, if you want to do two things that will bring joy and a hope of eternal progression to yourself—and I'm sure joy to the angels of heaven and to the lord himself—you will live so that you can be worthy of baptism and then keep the baptismal covenant, and you will live so that you can be worthy of temple marriage and then keep the temple covenant.

Missionary Work

If that is the way that a person returns and is exalted in the presence of God, do you see now the importance of our going into the world and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ? We teach the discussions to bring a person to a realization that he needs to be baptized in the appropriate and proper way by someone who

has the authority in order to enter into the kingdom of God. That's the beginning of eternal progression. The whole purpose of these discussions is to reach out to the lovely, wonderful sons and daughters of God who have not yet received this information and to bring them to an understanding that this is the way that a man or a woman or a child returns to the presence of God.

In connection with this, President Kimball has spoken to both the General Authorities and the Regional and Mission Representatives about missionary work. Also, in the priesthood session of the last general conference, he made one thing very clear as he began to enlarge the vision of all of us concerning this great work, through which we bring the gospel of the kingdom to the entire world. He said every young man is expected to go on a mission. As you think of the baptismal covenant, as you think of the responsibilities associated with the priesthood, that's just a natural thing, isn't it? In order to honor his priesthood, in order to honor his baptismal covenant, a young man will put himself in a position where he can bring this knowledge to the sons and daughters of God who are in darkness. There are millions of them and God loves them. How will they know unless we tell them? I'm sure this is precisely the thing the Lord expects of us as his children—to bring this knowledge of salvation and exaltation to those who are yet in darkness.

You can do a lot of things in life and you can become part of a lot of causes, but what a magnificent thing you have done when you have brought to some child of God, some son or daughter of God, the pathway and the ordinances that lead to his presence! That's the ultimate gift. Everything else pales next to the opportunity of returning to the presence of God, and so the ultimate in service and in love of fellowman is our ability to offer others the way to exaltation—the strait gate, the narrow way, the way to return to the presence of a God who lives. President Kimball—and I'm sure the

Lord, because he speaks through President Kimball—expects the priesthood, the young priesthood, to prepare, to be worthy, and to go into the world and bring exaltation and the pathway to exaltation to those who are yet in darkness. Baptism and temple marriage are important ordinances in this context.

Winning the Race Toward Exaltation

Not too long ago, my son and I went to a professional track meet. It was a good night. We saw two or three world records broken. One, as I remember, was in the 880. If you've been to one of these meets, you know the way to tell whether or not the person is going to break a world's record. There are simulated lights around the track that flash on and off at the pace of the world's record. You watch those blinking lights go on and off around the track and know that that's the pace that will have to be bettered in order to beat the world's record. You watch the man running, and you watch those lights, and you can tell how close the record is to being broken. The runners in the 880 got off to a furious start; almost everybody was ahead of the light. At 440, one person in particular was still ahead of the light. As they came into the final lap and he made his move, he was a good quarter of a track ahead of the light. He finished strong and broke the world's record, and the place was in pandemonium. It was exciting to watch.

The thing that interested me about the winner, though, was that, when he passed the 440 mark and was ahead of the light, he didn't stop and jump up and down. You see, nobody gives you credit until you've crossed the finish line. And the race is not through until you've crossed the finish line. Although you may be ahead at the 440 mark, it can all go for naught if suddenly you stop to say, "I made it this far."

Perhaps in the Church there is danger of this feeling. We're taught, many of us, in our youth to respond to the question "What do you want to do?" by saying, "Well, I want to go on

a mission and maybe I want to graduate from college." (It's not important what you do professionally as long as you become as good as you can be at whatever you decide.) Our youth conclude by saying, "And I want to get married in the temple." So we pass those marks. We pass the 110 and the 220, the 440, and sometimes we're into the final lap, or maybe we're not that far along, and perhaps that final lap consists of temple marriage. We get married in the temple, and perhaps we have fulfilled all the goals we have set for ourselves.

Tragically enough, some of us in those kinds of circumstances, after baptism and temple marriage, don't understand that from that point forward we simply have to finish the race. Tragically enough, some who don't realize the fact begin to run into problems, and some of them stop before they've crossed the finish line. Some marriages go in the wrong direction. Some people who had everything going for them suddenly haven't been able to make their marriages work, and they have some difficulties.

The objective is not temple marriage alone. The objective is being married in the temple, then keeping the covenants, and then crossing the finish line—living your marriage a day at a time. Someone once said that you get married in the temple and then you spend the rest of your life learning to live together and putting together an eternal relationship. It's not all glory. You have to do it a day at a time. You have to lay your foundation. You have to accomplish the things you need to accomplish a day at a time. You need to learn to know each other and you need to work out your problems. You need to learn to be loyal to each other, and when the humdrum pace of life sets in, you need to see things through. A day at a time, make your marriage and your relationship and your love a little stronger and a little better. Temple marriage is no guarantee in itself that you'll have a successful marriage,

although it is a tremendous beginning, a *tremendous* beginning. But from that point forward, your marriage will be the sum total of what you and your companion contribute to it. You don't get very much out of your marriage that you haven't first of all put into it. And if you establish that marriage relationship, that eternal marriage relationship, then you'll have something going for you. But just because you're on the starting blocks and just because you've pushed off into a temple marriage does not guarantee, without any effort on your part or without the living of the commandments, that you're going to finish the race. You have to persevere, and you have to cross the finish line. There are a lot of older people who can tell you that. Marriage can become, and it should become, more beautiful as time goes on, as you honor the covenants, as you honor each other, as you put your marriage together, as you seek to finish the race.

The Lord has sent us here, not just to get baptized, but to get baptized and to live the baptismal covenants—to keep the commandments. He sent us here, not just to have a temple marriage, but to have a temple marriage, then to live the holy covenants of the temple and of that marriage relationship when two are joined together, to live them for the rest of our lives, and to begin to make a little bit of heaven on earth in the sanctity and beauty of our own homes. We have to finish the race. It's not good enough just to push off the starting blocks and know that we're on the right track. We have to continue on, persevere, and endure to the end and establish an eternal relationship between husband and wife. Would you please remember that? Would you please remember that, when you enter into your temple marriage, it is by no means the end, but only the beginning? The next objective is indeed to endure to the end, to bless that relationship with children, and to begin to establish the kind of family that can truly be eternal. That's the purpose of life—not merely to launch into

the sacred temple relationship, but to go on from there and make a truly eternal temple marriage out of that relationship, out of that beginning.

I think everybody is aware, for the most part, what the covenants and commandments are, what the Lord expects of us. In order to endure to the end, we've got to set our goals on finishing the race. In order to make things work, in order to be true to the baptismal covenant and the temple covenant, we must finish the race.

Loyalty to the Priesthood

May I read to you a statement from the First Presidency of the Church some years ago, when Joseph F. Smith was President of the Church, which I think summarizes what it is that I'd like to convey regarding how we can prepare ourselves to run the race to the end. The principle here is obedience to the priesthood and to the Lord's anointed. I've become convinced in my life that, after all of the nitty-gritty issues have faded away, the Lord is going to judge us pretty much on how loyal we were to the priesthood and how loyal we were to those whom he called. After all the issues have disappeared, I believe much of how we'll be measured will be our attitude and loyalty in that regard. This quotation is titled "The Warning Voice":

Directions for the guidance of the Church will come by revelation through the head. All faithful members are entitled to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost for themselves, their families, and for those over whom they are appointed and ordained to preside. But anything at discord with that which comes from God through the head of the Church is not to be received as authoritative or reliable. In secular as well as spiritual affairs, Saints may receive divine guidance and revelation affecting themselves, but this does not convey authority to direct others and is not to be accepted when contrary to Church

covenants, doctrines, or discipline, or to known facts, demonstrated truths, or good common sense.

*The Lord's church is a house of order. It is not governed by individual gifts or manifestations, but by the order and power of the holy priesthood as sustained by the voice and vote of the Church in its appointed conferences. [That is a great principle. You know, some people are more apt to believe what they hear in Relief Society by way of, not the lesson, but informal discussion, than they are to believe what the President of the Church says in the editorial of the *Ensign* magazine that month. And that's what this principle is talking about.]*

The history of the Church records many pretended revelations claimed by imposters or zealots who believed in the manifestations they sought to lead other persons to accept, and in every instance, disappointment, sorrow, and disaster have resulted therefrom. Be not led by any spirit or influence that discredits established authority and contradicts true scientific principles and discoveries or leads away from the direct revelations of God for the government of the Church. The Holy Ghost does not contradict its own revealings. Truth is always harmonious with itself. Piety is often the cloak of error. The counsel of the Lord, through the channel he has appointed, will be followed with safety. Therefore, Oh ye Latter-day Saints, profit by these words of warning.

Joseph F. Smith
Anthon H. Lund
Charles W. Penrose
The First Presidency

If we develop, as we take these ordinances upon ourselves, a spirit and attitude of loyalty to the priesthood and to those whom the Lord has anointed and ordained as the leaders of his church, then there is no way that we can find ourselves in disharmony with the Lord or his purposes. When we develop that attitude, then the covenants and commandments become

easier to live and the ability to finish the race becomes easier and more realistic in our lives.

Now, let me say something that I've said before. I think that, after all the issues have faded away, the Lord will judge us on how faithful and loyal we were to the priesthood and to the Lord's anointed. The issue seems to lie there as far as our own exaltation and our own finishing of the race are concerned.

I am grateful again for this opportunity to be with you. I pray that we may set as goals in our lives baptism, if we have not done it, and then the honoring of the baptismal covenant; temple marriage and the honoring of the marriage covenant and the building of the marriage relationship; then the determination to

finish the race, to run it and accomplish that which will bring us peace and happiness, and to be loyal to that marriage relationship, loyal to the priesthood, and loyal to the Lord's anointed.

I bear you my witness that I know that this is the church of Jesus Christ. I testify to you that I know God lives and that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw and that Spencer W. Kimball is a prophet of God today. I bear you that witness. This is the church of Jesus Christ. This is the way that a man returns to the presence of God. May we be loyal to it. May we bring this message to those yet in darkness, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.