

# Temple Symbols

Understanding the Atonement through  
architectural symbols at the Los Angeles Temple



## Learning Through Symbols

*"And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me. Moses 6:63*

How many times have you come to the temple? When you look around the grounds what do you see? Maybe you have noticed the Angel Moroni, the beautiful building and grounds, fountains and trees. Have you stopped to consider that each of these items were placed to teach you? While Christ was on the earth he taught using parables. The parables used common things or symbols such as lambs, shepherds, fishes or talents to teach us.

### **Why do you think the Lord uses symbols to teach us?**

*"Symbols can help us remember important things. They can teach us abstract truths that might be hard to learn in other ways. Symbols can represent feelings." Endowed from on High*

An example of a symbol is a wedding ring. What does a ring symbolize? Each person may look at a ring and think or feel something different. Looking at a wedding ring may even bring back memories and cause a person to feel love.

The Lord provides us with many symbols as we enter the temple to teach us, if we are prepared to learn. As you ponder on a symbol the Holy Ghost can teach you through personal revelation. Symbols can have multiple meanings and so can convey a personal message from our Heavenly Father through the Spirit to you individually. Before you start this temple walk, pray that you will receive revelation to learn more about the Plan of Salvation and our Savior. As you look at each symbol you might want to ask yourself the following questions.

- **What might this symbol represent?**
- **Why was this symbol placed here?**
- **How does this symbol teach me about the Savior & the Plan of Salvation?**

As you walk the temple grounds look for symbols. This booklet will point out some and through scriptures, quotes and questions give you an opportunity to relate them to the Plan of Salvation and Jesus Christ as our Savior. You do not need to follow any particular order, so take your time and look for things you may not have noticed before. Allow the Spirit to guide you.

## This is God's House

"...I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house"

Luke 16:27



"And again, verily I say unto you, how shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name?"

D & C 57:3

"The temple is a place of holiness. It is the most sacred and holy place on earth and should be treated with the greatest degree of reverence and respect."

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy

- How do you prepare yourself to come to the temple?
- Do you act differently when you are here? Do your clothes, language and actions reflect that you know that this is literally God's house?
- Do your actions allow others to feel the Lord's presence?

"We have felt Thy presence and in times of doubt and perplexity have hearkened unto Thy voice. Here in Thy holy house, in humility and deep gratitude we acknowledge Thy divine guidance, Thy protection and inspiration. This is truly Thy work—help us to be able representatives, faithful and true! "

Los Angeles Temple Dedicatory Prayer

- Do you feel the Lord's presence at the temple?
- When have you received personal revelation while at the temple?
- How has that revelation helped you in your life?

## Set Upon A Hill

*"Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the Lord of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Isaiah 2:3*

*"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?"  
Psalms 24:3*

- Where in the scriptures have you learned of prophets going to the mountain to be taught from God?
- What have you learned about the purpose of your life from participating in sacred temple ordinances?
- How does your knowledge of the eternal nature of life help you to walk in His paths and stand strong ?

## Entrance and Fence

*..put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Exodus 3: 5*

*"I always change into my best clothes before I come over to the temple grounds."*  
President Martz, 2nd Counselor LA Temple 2012



If you walk down to the front of the temple grounds you will see that the sign on the front gate on Santa Monica Blvd says "Temple Entrance".

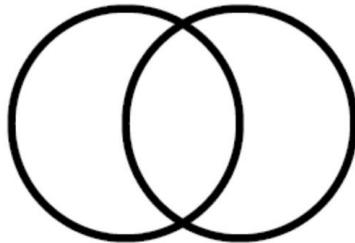
- What does that tell you about where you are standing?

*"The consecration of the sacred place begins with its separation from the profane spaces by means of a fence."*

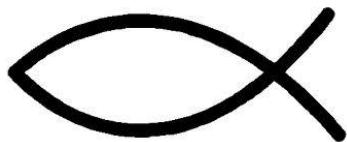
Camilian Demetrescu, in Sacred Architecture and Iconography

Notice the fence which surrounds the temple grounds. Look at the top of the fence and the shape that is on top of the fence.

- Think about the shape. What does it bring to mind?



That arch shape is created when two circles intersect. A circle does not have a beginning or end and can remind us of eternity. Our life here on earth can be thought of as the intersection of our pre-mortal and post-mortal lives.



Turn that symbol sideways and you should notice a symbol you see frequently. This symbol has been used for centuries to represent Christ.

*"Joseph Gibby, a Los Angeles artist and technical illustrator, received the assignment to paint for the baptistery a mural depicting the Savior's baptism. As this work neared completion, the artist experienced a problem, so went to visit with President David O McKay. 'I cannot paint the Savior's face to my satisfaction. I need to know his complexion and coloring.' Without hesitation the prophet described the Savior's features for the artist."*

#### *Temples to Dot the Earth*

- What has Christ done in our premortal, earthly and postmortem lives so that you and others can progress?
- The fence around the Temple protects it from desecration. We make covenants in the temple. How do those covenants prove protection to you?

## Fountains

You will find fountains as you enter temple grounds. Go sit beside one of the fountains. Notice that the water is continually flowing. Next time you are in the temple notice that the water in the baptistery is also continually flowing.

- **What might the continuous flow represent to you?**

*"The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4: 11-14*

- **What is the water that Christ provides you?**



*"How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints."*

*D & C 121:33*

- **How does your activity in the church help you stay pure?**

## He Has Walked These Paths

Walk the paths that lead from the front gates. Notice the trees that line these paths. Count the number of trees along the paths.

- What might these numbers symbolize? \*
- You are standing among olive trees. Where in the scriptures have you read about olive trees?



*"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."*

*Matthew 26: 30, 36, 39*

*"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must*

*suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink— Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men."* D & C 19:16-19

*"In Aramaic, the word gethsemane means olive press."*  
*Bible Dictionary*

- As you walk away from the gate where are you pointing and what have you turned your back on?
- Who helps you to stay on the straight and narrow path?
- When has the Spirit borne witness to you that the Savior suffered for you because of his personal love for you?

\* There are 10 trees on one path and 12 on the other for those unable to go and count them yourself :)

## Angel Moroni

*"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelations 14:6*

The statue of the Angel Moroni is placed on top of all but 5 Temples. Take a close look if you can at the statue and see if you can tell what he is wearing and what he is holding. The LA Temple has the only statue where Moroni is dressed in Mayan style clothing.



*"The 15½-foot figure of the angel Moroni, sculpted by Millard F. Malin, was placed atop the temple in October 1954. During one of his frequent visits to the temple, President David O. McKay noticed that the angel faced southeast as did the temple. He informed architect Edward O. Anderson 'that it was not correct in that position...that the angel must face east.' The angel had generated much conversation among the neighbors, and one indicated, perhaps tongue in cheek, that she 'certainly never would be interested [in learning more about the Church] until the angel faced her home. 'One morning she awoke to find the statue was looking directly at her place.' Brother Anderson had followed President McKay's instructions to turn the angel."*

*LDSChurchTemples.com*

- Why do you think the statue needed to face east?

*"For as the lightning (sunlight) cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."*

*Matthew 24:27*

- The scriptures symbolize knowledge as light. What knowledge have you gained as you attend the temple?

Look at Moroni and notice what he is holding in his hand?

- What does the trumpet bring to your mind about your role in declaring the gospel?



### Tree and flowers

"And the *LORD* God planted a garden eastward in *Eden*; and there he put the man whom he had formed." *Genesis 2:8*

"*Gethsemane: A garden spoken of in the New Testament as being near the Mount of Olives... Jesus went to the garden on the night that Judas betrayed him. There he prayed and suffered in Gethsemane for the sins of mankind.*" *Bible Dictionary*

"Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid." *John 19:41*



- Why do you think that so much expense and time is given to plant flowers and trees around temples?
- What do you feel when you step onto the temple grounds?
- How can you keep that feeling when you leave?

## Palm Trees

*"On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." John 12:12-13*

*"From the ground unto above the door were cherubims and palm trees made, and on the wall of the temple." Ezekiel 41:20*



*"Hosanna: At the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated the Lord's deliverance of Israel into the promised land, people chanted the words of Psalm 118 and waved palm branches. At the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the multitudes cried "Hosanna" and spread palm branches for Jesus to ride upon, thus demonstrating their understanding that Jesus was the same Lord who had delivered Israel anciently. These people recognized Christ as the long-awaited Messiah." Guide to the Scriptures*

Palm trees surround temples that are located in climates that will support their growth. The date palm was the symbol of the tree of life in many cultures. Because they grow tall and straight they can be seen from long distances. In a desert this tall tree would be the first sign to a traveler that an oasis with life giving water is there.



- How do you show others that you recognize Christ as the Messiah and the giver of eternal life?
- How can you share your testimony of Christ so that you are a beacon to others?

## Architectural Patterns

*"From the clothing worn in the temple to the decor, to the ceremonies performed there, symbolism plays a central role in teaching us about our true nature and the divine plan God has for our exaltation."*

*Why Symbols, Liahona 2007*

Take a look around the building and notice the shapes that are repeated in the architecture. Prominent are squares, connected squares, squares within squares, interposed circles with squares and pyramids. The interior of the temple includes these same designs in the furnishing. Notice these patterns next time you attend the temple.

As with other symbols there is not one meaning connected with each symbol. Following is just a very brief list of what other people and religions have seen in these symbols. Study and personal revelation can help you to discover what these symbols can teach you. Look for these symbols and as you do ask the following questions:

- Why did the Lord chose this symbol to be placed in the architecture of the temple?
- What does this symbol teach you about the great work that is done in this and other temples?
- How can you live your life so that you can qualify for the blessings received in the temple?
- What commitments can you make so that you can be blessed by priesthood ordinances and bring those blessings to others?

## Squares

"Be square with your neighbors, plumb with Heaven and level with yourself,"  
Jeffrey R Holland, October 2012

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."  
Matthew 5:48



*The perfect square, when "amplified into a cube, was the symbol of truth, because from whatever point of view it may be contemplated it is always the same"*  
Maurice H. Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*

## Concentric Squares

"And the altar shall be twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof." Ezekiel 43:16

The Tabernacle served as a portable temple for the children of Israel. It was always erected at the center of the camp. Centered within its walls was The Holy of Holies with the Ark of the covenant at the center.

*"Temples are unique among all buildings. ... They are places of covenants and promises. At their altars we kneel before God our Creator and are given promise of his everlasting blessings"*  
Gordon B. Hinckley

- What are you doing now so that you will be worthy to kneel at the altar to be sealed?



## Inscribed Circle with Square

*"The Square was a geometrical symbolical figure used to indicate the earth; the circle was the symbol of heaven. Thus eternity was shown by a circle, life by a square and the eternity of life by a square within a circle."*

*Sacred Symbols in Art, Elizabeth Goldsmith*

*"It is in the temple that things of the earth are joined with the things of heaven."*  
Howard W Hunter



*"The plan of the building, based on a dialogue between circles and squares, summarizes the fundamental relationship between God and man. The circle stands for Heaven, the sacred, the spiritual world. The square, on the other hand, represents the cosmos, material things, the terrestrial condition.."*

*Camilian Demetrescu, Symbols in Sacred Architecture and Iconography*

## Pyramids

*"When we trace the original Name for Pyramid back to Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, we come upon the glyph Per-Neter, or Per-Neteru, which translates as "House of Divine Principles".*

*Joseph Panek, [www.aseekersthoughts.com](http://www.aseekersthoughts.com)*



## Connected Squares

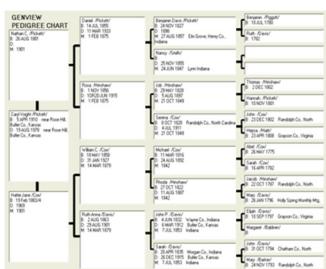


*"This is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead, and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven. ... This is the power of Elijah and the keys of the kingdom of Jehovah."*

*Joseph Smith*

*"For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation ... they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect."*

*D & C 128:15,18*



*"I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord for your kindred dead. And I urge you to help other people identify their family histories."*

*"Very simply, the Spirit of Elijah is the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of Elijah will influence anyone who is involved in this work. That, for a young person in the wickedness in the world in which we live today, is one of the greatest safeguards against the temptations of the adversary. The Spirit of Elijah will not only bless you, it will protect you."*

*David A. Bednar*

- What are you doing to help redeem your ancestors?
- Why is this work important to you?
- How has this work helped to protect you?

## Symbol of our Faith

"No Church-built facility is more important than a temple. Temples are places where relationships are sealed together to last through the eternities."

Thomas S Monson, Oct 2012 General Conference

"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."

Russell M Nelson, General Conference, April 2001

"This edifice, as eleven other temples dedicated to Thy holy name, is a magnificent monument testifying to the faith and loyalty of the members of Thy Church in the payment of their tithes and offerings. Not only the building of temples is thus made possible in different parts of the world, but also the proclaiming of the restored gospel, and the carrying out of Thy purposes by the building of chapels, tabernacles, and recreation halls wherever needed by churches organized in many lands and climes.

In this respect, we invoke Thy blessing particularly upon Thy people and their friends in this temple district who have so willingly and generously contributed their means, time, and effort to the completion of this imposing, impressive house of the Lord. May each contributor be comforted in spirit and prospered a hundredfold! May all be assured that they have the gratitude of thousands, perhaps millions, on the other side for whom the prison doors may now be opened and deliverance proclaimed to those who will accept the truth and be set free.

For this purpose Thou hast revealed that the gospel is to be preached to those who have passed beyond the veil, as well as to the millions now living whose faith in Thee and in Thy gospel is faltering and unstable, who are now being influenced by false ideologies, which are disturbing the peace of mind and distorting the thinking of honest men and women. May the temples, tabernacles, churches, wherever a branch or ward of the Church is organized, declare even in silence that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the light, and that "...there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Los Angeles Temple Dedicatory Prayer

*"We ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them;*

*And from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hand, to fulfil that which thou hast spoken by the mouths of the prophets, concerning the last days."*

*LA Temple Dedicatory Prayer*