

Church History and the Scattering and Gathering of Israel

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PART ONE

One of the basic doctrines fundamental in understanding the role of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints centers on the scattering and gathering of Israel. The tenth Article of Faith states: “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes.” The history of the latter-day Church is the history of the gathering of Israel.

Though the belief of a literal scattering and gathering of Israel is a basic tenant of the Church, there are many who find themselves confused regarding this doctrine. Normally the confusion comes because they lack understanding of the Old Testament where both the story and the theology that underlies the scattering and gathering are recorded. It is therefore imperative that the study of Church History begins with an understanding of ancient Israel.

ABRAHAM AND THE COVENANT

To properly understand the scattering and gathering of Israel, we must first examine the doctrinal foundation upon which it lay: the Abrahamic Covenant. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has noted: “Israelite history begins not with father Jacob, who is Israel nor with his tribal descendants who adopted his name as theirs, but with Abraham, their father. In the true and spiritual sense of the terms, Abraham was the first Hebrew, the first Israelite, and the first Jew, although none of these names originated with or had their first application to him. But Abraham was the father of the faithful, the progenitor of the chosen people, the one through whose loins the Lord promised to raise up a righteous nation and people, the one with whom God made an eternal covenant that would save him and his seed after him . . .” (McConkie, *A New Witness For the Articles of Faith*, p. 503).

The Three Major Promises of the Abrahamic Covenant

Abraham was born and raised in Ur of the Chaldees at a time when Egyptian influence, both political and

religious, was felt over much of the ancient Near East (Abr. 1). After having escaped the Egyptian priests who tried to kill him because he would not conform to the status quo religion, Abraham fled his homeland and went to Haran, a neighboring area (Abr. 2:1-5). While in Haran, the Lord revealed himself to Abraham and introduced Abraham to the covenant of exaltation. This covenant is known both as the Abrahamic Covenant and the marriage covenant for time and all eternity. Hence, the Abrahamic Covenant is really a covenant made to both Abraham and Sarah, his wife.

The Abrahamic Covenant, recorded Abraham 2:6-11, consists of several promises that may be generalized into three categories of earthly promises with each having eternal fulfillment.

- **Posterity** Abraham and Sarah were promised that they would have a posterity while in mortality. Their faithfulness in bearing and raising a righteous family would secure them eternal increase in the eternities.
- **Land** Abraham and Sarah were promised that their posterity would have a land. The importance of this can be seen in the fact that Abraham was raised in a land without religious freedom. Therefore, the promise of land would insure that Abraham’s posterity would have a land where they could worship God the way God intended. Through proper worship of God, Abraham and his posterity would ultimately receive an eternal land of inheritance, the celestial kingdom.
- **Gospel** Abraham and Sarah were also promised that their posterity would have gospel or priesthood privileges. Further, they were promised that their posterity would become a blessing to all nations of the world by bringing them gospel opportunities. The eternal fulfillment of this promise is that if Abraham and his posterity and any who joined the truth faith through Abraham’s posterity lived the gospel fully they would receive exaltation or eternal life.

There is a principle associated with the Abrahamic covenant that is important in understanding God's dealings with his children. Because the Lord promised Abraham that his posterity would have gospel/priesthood rights, the Abrahamic covenant also insures that if Abraham's posterity ever strayed from the gospel covenant, the Lord would do all in his power to bring them back into the covenant. This is possible only if the law of justice, which would condemn Abraham's posterity because of their disobedience, could be satisfied. Thus, the role of Jesus Christ was to satisfy the law of justice making it possible for Abraham's posterity (and any gentile who unites himself with Abraham's posterity by covenant) to return to God's covenant and receive the same blessings promised to Abraham.

This concept is essential in understanding scriptural history. For example, this principle lies behind the purpose of the Book of Mormon. Moroni stated that the Book of Mormon was written "to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever-- And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST" (Title Page, Book of Mormon). Essentially, then, the scriptures are an historical account of the Abrahamic covenant, including prophecies of its fulfillment.

Abraham Enters into the Covenant

The incident of Abraham 2:6-11 was only preparatory to Abraham to the actual entering into the covenant. The covenant was entered into after Abraham had left Haran and had come into the land of Canaan, the land the Lord promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:6-7; 13:14-17). Sometime after entering into the promised land, Abraham asked, "whereby shall I know that I shall inherit" the land of Canaan? (Gen. 15:8). In response, the Lord told Abraham to bring him a certain number animals. Abraham secured the animals and then cut them in half, laying the severed halves together. Why? Abraham understood that the Lord intended to formalize the covenant with Abraham through a covenant ritual.

Covenant rituals in the ancient world most often involved cutting and blood. Often animals were cut in half. Then after reciting the terms of the covenant, the parties making the covenant would pass between the severed parts of the animal (thus identifying themselves with the animal) suggesting that if he did not keep his part of the covenant then what was done to the animal would be done to himself: i.e., he would be killed. The proper way to say in Hebrew, "he made a covenant" is

"he *cut* a covenant". (For another Old Testament example, see Jeremiah 34:18-19.)

After the animals were cut in half, the Lord stated the terms of the covenant saying: Abraham's posterity would become enslaved in another land for four generations (a generation was one hundred years). At the end of that period the Lord would bring them out of bondage and give them the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:13-16). Then the Lord, represented by a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, passed between the severed animals. Abraham then knew the land would be his.

In Genesis 15, only the Lord entered in the covenant. Genesis 17 records the occasion relative to Abraham's entering into the covenant. The ritual which initiated the covenant on Abraham's part also involved cutting and blood. The ordinance was that of circumcision. The one entering into the covenant cut off his foreskin symbolizing that if he did not keep his part of the covenant that he and his posterity would be cut off from the presence of the Lord even as he had cut off the foreskin.

Abrahamic Covenant Extended to Isaac and Jacob

The covenant made with Abraham was also made with Abraham's son, Isaac (Gen. 26:1-5). Further, the covenant was made with Jacob, his grandson (Gen. 28:10-22; 35:1-15). As part of the covenant, Jacob's name was change to Israel. To Jacob or Israel the Lord gave twelve sons. These sons have become known as the twelve tribes of Israel. It was through these sons that the promises made to Abraham concerning his seed would be fulfilled.

MOSES AND THE FIRST GATHERING OF ISRAEL

The Twelve Tribes are Brought into Bondage

Genesis 37-50, records the well known story of how Jacob and the twelve sons came to live in Egypt. Because of envy, ten of Jacob's sons sold their brother Joseph into slavery. This proved to be fortunate because Joseph was instrumental in saving both the Egyptians and his own family from a famine that consumed much of the Near East. As part of the salvation of his family, Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt where they lived the rest of their lives.

While in Egypt "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Ex. 1:7). However, sometime after Joseph died, a new Pharaoh brought the Israelites into bondage, a condition

they lived in for several hundred years. During this period of time, the Israelites gradually fell into apostasy and began to worship the gods of their Egyptian overlords.

After four hundred years, the Lord heard the grief and sorrow of the Israelites. Then “God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Ex. 2:24). He would honor Abraham by bringing Israel out of the spiritual and physical bondage which bound them and bring them to the promised land where they could worship God the way they should. But this required the work of a prophet.

Moses and the First Gathering of Israel

Sometime around 1300 B.C., the man ordained of God to restore the gospel to Israel and free them from bondage was born. His name was Moses. Elder McConkie stated that, “Moses, the man of God, continued the work of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in standing as a father and friend and founder of the family of Israel” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 522). Though Moses was born a Hebrew and raised an Egyptian in Pharaoh’s court, he eventually came to live in the Sinai wilderness as part of the family of Jethro, the Midianite High Priest and descendant of Abraham third wife, Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4). Jethro gave to Moses one of his daughters to marry, Zipporah (Ex. 2:21). He also conferred upon Moses the Melchizedek priesthood (D&C 84:6).

While Moses was in the Sinai, he received the call from the Lord to redeem captive Israel (Ex. 3-4). He was told to bring Israel out of Egypt to the mountain upon which he stood, Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:12), where the Lord could give Israel the covenants they would need to become and “holy nation” (Ex. 19:5).

Moses returned from Sinai to the court of Pharaoh in Egypt. To Pharaoh, Moses said, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go” (Ex. 5:1). To no surprise, Pharaoh refused the request. Under the direction of God, Moses levied a series of plagues that eventually soften Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh released Israel from bondage. Then God, represented by a pillar of fire and smoke, led the children of Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea (Ex. 13:20-22).

Israel at Mt. Sinai

In the third month of their journey from Egypt, the children of Israel arrived at the base of Mt. Sinai where they “camped before the mount” (Ex. 19:1). Their stay lasted for eleven months. It was the Lord’s intent to establish the descendants of Abraham as a unified people

with one God and one religion. The gathering of Israel is expressly for that purpose. And in order for Israel to be fully gathered, they must receive the temple ordinances of salvation. Joseph Smith once stated, “What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world?” He answered, “The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 307-308).

The first step in becoming “an holy nation” was for the children of Israel to enter into the preparatory gospel by covenant. The preparatory gospel is the gospel of repentance, baptism for remission of sins, and carnal commandments (D&C 84:26-27). Exodus 19-24 gives an account of the children of Israel entering into the preparatory gospel, including the ten commandments, by covenant.

After entering by covenant into the preparatory gospel, the next step for Israel to become “an holy nation” involved entering into higher covenants or ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Moses ascended Mt. Sinai where for forty days and nights he received the higher law (Ex. 24:12; JST Ex. 34:1-2).

However, during the 40 days Moses was on the mount, the children of Israel turned back to Egyptian idolatry. They fashioned a golden calf and participated in the fertility cult worship with its immorality (Ex. 32:1-6). In so doing, they violated the ten commandments they had covenanted with the Lord that they would obey. Moses came off the mount and threw down the tables of stone upon which the Lord had written the higher law. This act was a sign of the broken covenant and the loss of the higher law they would have received (Ex. 32:19).

Moses returned to the mount once again for another forty days and forty nights (Ex. 34:28) where he received divine assurance that the Lord would once again own his people and bring them to the promised land (Ex. 32:31-33:23). In the place of the higher law, the Lord gave the children of Israel a law designed to teach Israel about the preparatory gospel. The new law became known as the law of Moses. Returning from the mount, Moses explained the new law and covenant to the children of Israel (Ex. 34:29-35:19). Then the children of Israel entered into a covenant to keep the law of Moses (Ex. 34:27-28). This covenant replaced the covenant the children of Israel had made in Exodus 24.

ISRAEL INHERITS THE PROMISED LAND

Having entered into a covenant with the Lord, Israel was now ready to inherit the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The “camp of Israel” dissembled and began their march to the promised land (Num. 9). After further rebellions, the children of Israel were forced to wander for forty years in the wilderness until a generation could be raised that would obey all the Lord commanded.

Israel Enters into the Promised Land

At the end of the forty years of wandering, a generation had been raised who were willing to follow the Lord’s new leader into the promised land. That leader was Joshua. He brought the children of Israel into the promised land. Under the direction of the Lord, the Israelites were to destroy the Canaanites living in the land. The first of these Canaanite cities were the strategic sites of Jericho and Ai (Joshua 1-8).

An Important Covenant is Made at Shechem

After the conquering of Jericho and Ai and before proceeding to conquer more of the land, Joshua led the children of Israel to Shechem, an ancient Canaanite city that laid in the heart of the land (Ex. 8:30-35) to fulfill a command given by Moses in his final discourse (Deut. 27-28). Shechem, which lay near the center of the promised land, was a place made sacred to the Israelites by Abraham. It was at Shechem that the Lord first “appeared unto Abraham and said, “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen. 12:7). Moses wanted Israel to go to the place where the promised land was first revealed and enter into a covenant with God that they would remain faithful to him and the law.

Shechem. Shechem was situated between two mountains, Mt. Ebal on the north and Mt. Gerizim on the south. Moses charged Israel that once they arrived at Shechem, they were to set up the ark of the covenant between the two mountains (Joshua 8:33). Then six of the tribes of Israel were to place themselves on Mt. Gerizim while the other six were to ascend Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27:11-13). Upon large stones, the law of Moses was to be written in the presence of the children of Israel (Joshua 8:32). The law was then to be read to all the Israelites (Joshua 8:33). This was to be followed by the Israelites renewing their covenant that they would honor the law of Moses.

Blessings and Curses. As part of the covenant renewal, the six tribes on Mt. Gerizim would shout out all the blessings that Israel would receive if they were

obedient to the law. This included blessings over their cities, fields, crops and the blessing of rain for water. They were also promised that the land would remain theirs and that the Lord would fight their enemies for them (see Deut. 28:1-14). The other six tribes would then pronounce the curses that would result if they were disobedient to the covenant including the loss of their cities, fields, crops and rain. When their enemies would attack, the Lord would not fight their battles. The ultimate curse Israel would experience would be the loss of the promised land. This would be accomplished by the Lord scattering Israel among the gentiles “from the one end of the earth even unto the other.” Israel would live among the gentiles and serve their gods. In this condition, Israel would continue to wander among these nations (see Deut. 28:15-68). As the prophet Amos would later prophesy, after the Lord sifts “the house of Israel among all nations” (Amos 9:9) they would “wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:12).

Significance of North and South. The significance of this sacred setting is enhanced when the proper orientation of the ancient Hebrew map is understood. Instead of north being the primary direction for orientation as in western societies, east was the primary direction. Therefore, south is on the right hand of the map while north is on the left. The Hebrew word for south is *yamin*, or right hand. This is also the Hebrew word for *blessing*. The Hebrew word for north is *smol*, or left hand. Though *smol* is not the same word for curse in Hebrew, often left hand or north is associated with curses (see, for example, Matthew 25:31-46 and Mosiah 5:12). To the Hebrew mind, then, the southern mountain, Mt. Gerizim, was the appropriate mountain to yell out the blessings while the northern mountain, Mt. Ebal, was the appropriate side to yell out the curses.

In light of this it is interesting to note that eventually, as we shall see, Israel broke their covenant with God and he used the nations of Assyria, Babylon, and Rome as instruments to scatter Israel. Curiously enough, when these warring nations came upon Israel, they came from the north or cursing side. Further, captive Israel was taken to the north before being scattered among the nations of the world. The symbolism of this is obvious. Having broke their covenant with God, Israel experienced the full brunt of the curses by losing the land and being taken captive to the north; that is, they were placed under the burden of the curse by being taken to the north. Regardless of where Israel has been scattered among the nations, they

are under the curse of the broken covenant and thus are in the “north.”

Comparable to Genesis 15. The covenant renewal at Shechem is comparable to the “cutting” of the covenant between God and Abraham recorded in Genesis 15 where God promised Abraham that his posterity would inherit the land after they were enslaved for four hundred years. It should be remembered that in that covenant ceremony, animals were cut in half and laid side by side. Then God passed through the severed animals upon making his covenant with Abraham. At Shechem, no animals were cut in half and passed between, but the land of Canaan (which represented the fulfillment of the covenant) was symbolically cut in half. This was represented by the two mountains that stood adjacent to each other. The placing of the ark between the two mountains symbolized God (passing between severed animals) promising to bless Israel if they were obedient. Israel identified themselves with the land (or the fulfilled covenant) by standing on the two mountains. If Israel kept their covenant with God, they would keep the land. But if they broke the covenant, they, like the two mountains, would be split apart and scattered among all the nations of the earth.

Israel Enters Covenant. Joshua fulfilled the command of Moses and led the children of Israel in the covenant renewal at Shechem before continuing the conquering of the land of Canaan (Joshua 8:30-35). Then before he died, he once again gathered Israel to Shechem where he delivered his final discourse encouraging the children of Israel in their obedience to the covenant. He then led the people once more in a covenant renewal (Josh. 24).

The Period of the Judges

After the death of Joshua, the Israelite tribes were left without a strong leader. The Book of Judges describes this period. The tribes of Israel were loosely allied but with no central government. For the most part each tribe became autonomous, fending for itself.

Adding to this precarious condition was the fact that the Canaanites had *not* been entirely driven out of the land as the Lord had commanded (Judges 1). Therefore the Israelites and Canaanites cohabited. During the period of the Judges, the Israelites struggled with honoring their covenant, especially in relation to the first three commandments. Consequently, a pattern developed wherein Israel forsook the worship of Jehovah while adopting the Canaanite religion of Ba’al worship.

According to the terms of the covenant, the Lord allowed neighboring nations to overtake Israel bringing them into subjugation. This curse would humble Israel causing them to return to Jehovah. To free Israel from these “spoilers,” the Lord at various times called certain individuals to unite Israel and lead them in battle against these nations in order to lift the yoke of oppression. These leaders were called “judges.” However, their authority was not passed on to their posterity.

ISRAEL IS UNITED

Saul Attempts to Unite Israel

The last of the judges was Samuel (1 Samuel). He was more than a judge, he was also a prophet, priest, and a leader of Israel. In his days, the children of Israel desired to be ruled by a king “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). Though Samuel felt he was rejected, the Lord told him to give Israel a king “for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7). In giving Israel a king, the Lord was trying to work with the weakness of his people.

The first man to be chosen king of Israel was Saul, a Benjaminite (1 Sam. 9-31). He attempted to unite the autonomous tribes of Israel and defeat their enemies. However, though humble at first, Saul became a proud, arrogant king. In his pride, he disobeyed the commands of the Lord given through Samuel (1 Sam. 15:1-23). Eventually, the Lord rejected him as king (1 Sam. 15:24-31). Upon his death, the kingdom was given to David, the head of the Israelite army.

David Unites the Twelve Tribes of Israel

The kingdom David inherited was fractured by internal strife. Further, the worship of Jehovah and the law of Moses among the Israelites was almost non-existent as evidenced by the fact that the ark of the covenant was not even in an established sanctuary. David desired to unite the twelve tribes of Israel and reinstitute Jehovah worship and the law of Moses as the governing law of Israel. He did this by first capturing Jerusalem, a Canaanite city that was not controlled by any of the tribes of Israel (2 Sam. 5:6-9). He made the neutral site of Jerusalem the capital of Israel. He then conquered the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17-25).

After establishing peace, he invited all Israel, including both men and women, to Jerusalem. He then

retrieved the ark of the covenant from its dubious location and brought it to Jerusalem. He placed it in a new Tabernacle that he had made on the highest point of the hill upon which Jerusalem was built (2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chron. 16:1). (Jerusalem was built on the southern end of Mt. Moriah where the water source was located. The highest point of the hill was outside the wall of the city to the north.) As the ark was brought into Jerusalem, David danced before the ark without his royal robes, showing to all Israel that their real king was Jehovah (2 Sam. 6:14-16).

With the ark in place in the new Tabernacle, David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings in behalf of Israel. These were offerings of the law of Moses that demonstrated the reconciliation of God with those who had sinned. Then David gave to each man and woman a loaf of raisin or date bread (2 Samuel 6:17-19). Bread is symbolic of life and the raisins and dates are symbolic of eternity. This last gesture suggested that by reuniting with Jehovah, Israel would have eternal life.

Through these actions David brought Israel and God *at one* with each other. This was prophetic of two important events associated with the work of the Messiah in Jerusalem. First, the atoning sacrifice was performed at that very location. Second, after the Savior's second coming, he will reunite scattered Israel (the ten tribes) and Judah into one kingdom in Jerusalem (see Ezekiel 37:20-28). [*The importance of this last event is lost until it is remembered that the kingdom David united eventually divided into two nations and eventually became scattered among the nations of the world.*]

Solomon, Last King of United Israel

David's son, Solomon, became the last king of united Israel (1 Kings 3-11). During his reign, a permanent temple, that has become known as the Temple of Solomon, was built in Jerusalem. It was built over the spot where David placed the ark of the covenant. Upon its completion, Solomon had the ark of the covenant placed within the most holy place. The temple was then filled with the glory of the Lord as it was when the Tabernacle had been built and dedicated by Moses (1 Kings 8:1-11).

During his reign, Solomon entered into several political marriages contrary to the law of Moses. Towards the end of his life, his foreign "wives turned away his heart after others gods" (1 Kings 11:4). The Lord was angry with Solomon and told him that the kingdom of Israel would be taken from him upon his death and divided into two separate nations. For David's sake, Solomon's son would rule over Jerusalem and the

kingdom of Judah but the rest of Israel would be ruled over by another (1 Kings 11:9-13).

The Kingdom of Israel Divides into Two Nations

Civil war followed the death of Solomon, splitting the kingdom in two separate nations, one north and one south. Oddly enough, the splitting of the kingdom took place at Shechem (1 Kings 12). The northern kingdom became known as Israel (sometimes called Ephraim, after the head tribe, or Samaria, after the capital) and initially consisted of the northern ten tribes. The southern kingdom became known as Judah (often called Jerusalem or Zion) and consisted mainly of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Those living in Judah became known as Jews, regardless of what tribe they came from.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH ARE SCATTERED

The splitting of the kingdom was the beginning of the final curses that the children of Israel would experience as a result of their breaking the covenant their fathers had made at Shechem and the first step in the scattering of the twelve tribes of Israel among the nations of the world.

The Scattering of Israel

The kings of the northern kingdom were wicked. As a result, many from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon left the northern kingdom and fled to Judah "when they saw that the Lord his God was with" Judah, who at that time had a righteous king (2 Chron. 15:9). This could explain why Lehi, a descendant of Manasseh, was living in Jerusalem. As a result of the wickedness of their kings, the northern kingdom succumbed to Canaanite Ba'al worship, utterly breaking their covenant with Jehovah.

The Lord used several prophets to try to get the children of Israel to repent and turn back to the worship of Jehovah. Chief among those prophets was Elijah whose specific mission was to get Israel to "turn their heart back again" to the covenant made with the "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel" (1 Kings 18:36-37). However, Israel rejected the prophets and their warnings. As promised in the curses shouted out from Mt. Ebal, Israel experienced several natural disasters intended to humble Israel (e.g., 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 8:1-6). Yet Israel failed to repent. Therefore, Israel experienced the final curse of the broken covenant. In 722 B.C., Israel fell to the expanding Assyrian empire, a vicious people living in northern Mesopotamia. This army came from the north (or cursing side) and destroyed Israel. Those

who were not killed were taken captive through a series of deportations and scattered throughout the Assyrian empire (2 Kings 15, 17). From there, eventually, Israel became lost among the nations of the world (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 4:27; 32:26; Jer. 9:16; Ezek. 20:23; 22:15; 36:19; Amos 9:9, 17; 1 Ne. 22:3-5; 3 Nephi 5:24; 20:12-13).

Not all of Israel, however, was scattered by the Assyrians. The peons, the laboring class consisting mostly of farmers, were left. The Assyrians imported peoples from other parts of the empire to intermarry with the remaining Israelites. This mixed group became known as the Samaritans, taking their name after the capital city of Israel, Samaria.

The Exile of Judah to Babylon

The downfall of the southern kingdom was more gradual than that of the northern kingdom. Though Judah had its share of wicked kings, there were also a few righteous ones as well. The righteous kings learned from the mistakes made by the northern kingdom. Under the leadership of Hezekiah, 715-687 B.C. (2 Kings 18-20), and Josiah, 640-609 B.C. (2 Kings 22-23), Judah briefly returned to the Lord and renewed their covenant with him. However, during the years following the death of Josiah, Judah's kings caused the Jews to reject Jehovah, thus breaking the covenant. Consequently, the Jews suffered a fate similar to the northern kingdom.

In the latter part of the 7th century B.C., the Assyrian empire began to crumble. Babylon, a kingdom in the southern part of Mesopotamia, challenged the Assyrian overlordship. In 605 B.C., the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians in a major battle in northern Mesopotamia. The Assyrians were aided by the Egyptians in the battle. With the defeat of the Assyrians, the Egyptians began a retreat to Egypt. As Babylon pursued the retreating Egyptians all the Assyrian vassal states in Syria and Palestine were at the mercy of Babylon. As Babylon drew closer to Judah, came into Babylonian control. At that time, several Jews were taken into Babylon including Daniel.

The last kings of Judah vacillated between allegiance between Babylon and Egypt. However, when

Zedekiah, the last kingdom of Judah swore allegiance with Egypt around 587 B.C., Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. Those Jews who were not killed were exiled into Babylon (2 Kings 24-25). This period has become known as the Babylonian exile. The Babylonians hoped that with the loss of their homeland, the Jews would be absorbed in Babylonian society and thus suppress their rebellious spirit. However, many of the Jews retained their identity due to a commitment that is best expressed in Psalm 137:1-6: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. . . If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Therefore, many of the Jews remained loyal to the institutions of their fathers.

The Return of the Jews

In 539 B.C., the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians. Cyrus, king of Persia, allowed those nations who had been deported by the Babylonians to return back to their homelands. He hoped that this generosity would create local governments who were loyal to him. This was the case with the Jews. Over the next century and a half, numbers of Jews returned to rebuild Jerusalem and her temple. The Jews who went back to Jerusalem, however, were the children and grand children of those who had been exiled. The majority of the Jews, however, remained in Babylon where they established a strong Jewish community.

During the next several centuries, the Jews in Judea (as the southern kingdom came to be known) were subject to several overlords. The Persians Empire was conquered by the Greeks about 332 B.C. The Greeks gave way to the Romans about 62 B.C. The Romans ruled the Mediterranean world during the time of Jesus. A couple of decades after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the Jews revolt against the Romans. In 70 A.D., the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and many Jews fled from the Romans. Those not fleeing were killed. With the destruction of Jerusalem there was a further scattering of the Jews throughout the world.

PART TWO

UNIVERSAL APOSTASY

While Jerusalem was under Roman rule, the awaited Messiah was born into the world. His ministry began when he was thirty years old. During his ministry, Christ

organized a Church with apostles and prophets. After a three year ministry, the Savior, while in Jerusalem, enacted the great atoning sacrifice which ended in his crucifixion and resurrection. After his resurrection, the Savior gathered the apostles atop the Mt. of Olives

where He ascended into heaven within their view.

With the Savior's ascension, the Apostles were now to guide and direct the affairs of the Church through revelation. Eventually all the apostles were killed through persecution with the exception of John who was translated (D&C 7). Before their death, the apostles prophesied of the eventual apostasy of the Christian church (for example, 2 Thes. 2:1-4).

Speaking of this, Andrew Skinner has noted: "The deaths of the Apostles meant the loss of what Paul had called 'the foundation' (Eph. 2:20) of the Church. This loss allowed false brethren to drive the true Church 'into the wilderness' (Rev. 12:6) until the promised restoration. Modern scholars have labeled the post-apostolic era an 'obscure period' (Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946], p. 34.) Indeed it was, for the doctrinal integrity of the Church began to be compromised with self-appointed rulers stepping in to fill the void left by the Apostles' passing. Formerly, bishops and other Church officers had been appointed and supervised by the Apostles, as indicated in the book of Acts and Paul's letters (see, for example, Acts 6; 1 Tim. 2, 3; Titus 1). But immediately after the Apostolic Age, things changed radically. Evidence indicates that by the end of the first century, the great apostasy was an accomplished fact" ("Apostasy, Restoration, and Lessons in Faith," *Ensign*, Dec. 1995, p. 29.)

The apostasy was caused by the rejection of priesthood keys. Priesthood keys are the right to direct the use of priesthood authority, to regulate the church, and to perform priesthood ordinances that give access to the atonement of Jesus Christ. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught, "that if the Saints who heard Paul had possessed a testimony of the value of the power of the keys he held, perhaps the Apostles would not have had to be taken from the earth" ("Faith and Keys," *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, p. 26).

After the apostasy took place (probably around 100 AD), what was left was a Christian church with (1) some of the vital doctrines of salvation changed, and (2) without priesthood authority and keys to administer the priesthood ordinances of salvation.

Not only did the original Christian church in the old world fall into the depths of apostasy, but eventually the fulness of the gospel was taken from the entire earth including those places where the Lord had led any remnants of the tribes of Israel. This is made clear in the Book of Mormon. The allegory recorded in Jacob 5 reveals that in an attempt to save apostate Israel in Old Testament times, the Lord took select groups of Israel

and placed them in various spots throughout the earth where they were privileged to retain the gospel. Apostate Israel was symbolized as an olive tree producing bad fruit. In order to save the dying tree, Jacob 5:7-18 says the Lord took certain branches (groups of Israel) and placed them in various parts of the vineyard (world) while the rest of the bad branches were burned with fire. We are told that the Lord visited the various places where the select groups had been placed (Jacob 5:19-28). This is verified in 3 Nephi where Christ appeared to the Nephites/Lamanites and said he would visit the other scattered remnants of Israel (3 Nephi 16).

Eventually these remnants of Israel lost the fulness of the gospel through apostasy. Just as the Book of Mormon records the apostasy of Lehi's posterity, so the allegory in Jacob reveals that all the remnants who had retained the gospel also fell into apostasy (see Jacob 5:30-40). Thus, the whole world, scattered Israel included, were in a state of darkness for several hundred years. During this time, the remnants of Israel continued to scatter among the nations of the world intermixing their blood with the gentiles until the blood of Abraham was spread throughout the whole earth. Finally, after America had been colonized, and a country was founded that secured the right of religious freedom, the Lord saw fit that he would fulfill his covenant that he made with Abraham and restore the fulness of the gospel both to scattered Israel and the gentiles.

THE CHURCH IN THE LAST DAYS

The Restoration

In 1820, in response to prayer, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to a young boy named Joseph Smith in a grove of trees. Joseph asked which church he should join. He was told that the truth was not on the earth. With the gospel nowhere to be found on the earth, there needed to be a complete restoration of the gospel including the ordinances associated with the Abrahamic covenant (which are performed in the temple).

On September 22, 1823, Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith and began training him for his work, which work was similar to Abraham, Moses, and Elijah. That is, Joseph Smith was to restore the gospel with all the ordinances that scattered Israel's heart may be turned back to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the covenant. Moroni told Joseph that Elijah would return and "reveal unto [him] the Priesthood" (or sealing powers) and that he would "plant in the hearts of the

children [modern scattered Israel] the promises made to the fathers [the promises of the Abrahamic covenant]" (Joseph Smith History 1:38-39; D&C 2).

Moroni also announced the coming forth of a special book designed to gather Israel from among the nations of the earth: the Book of Mormon! President Ezra Taft Benson stated: "The responsibility of the seed of Abraham, which we are, is to be missionaries to 'bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations' (Abraham 2:9). Moses bestowed upon Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple the keys to gather Israel (see D&C 110:11). Now, what is the instrument that God has designed for this gathering? It is the same instrument that is designed to convince the world that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith is His prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true. It is that scripture which is the keystone of our religion" ("The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants," *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 85.) Again, President Benson said: "The Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to 'sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [His] elect.' (Moses 7:62.)" ("Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 4.).

Part of the mission of Joseph Smith was to translate the Book of Mormon so that its contents would convince scattered Israel that the truth of the gospel had once again been restored to the earth.

In May of 1929, while Joseph Smith and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, were translating the Book of Mormon, both retired to the banks of the Susquehanna River to pray. At this time, John the Baptist appeared to them and restored the Aaronic Priesthood with its keys. Later, Peter, James and John appeared to and restored the Melchizedek Priesthood including the keys of the kingdom. The following year, after the Book of Mormon was translated and published, the Joseph Smith exercised the priesthood keys he had been given and restored the Lord's Church on April 6, 1830.

As part of the restoration, a land of promise was announced. On Jan. 2, 1831, the Lord stated to the church in language similar to the Old Testament: "I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh. And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts. And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away" (D&C 38:18-20).

On July 20, 1831, the place of the new land of promise was revealed. The land of Missouri was to be the new land of promise and the place where Zion (the New Jerusalem) would be built (D&C 57:1-16). On Aug. 1, 1831, the church (modern Israel) was told that they would receive the land of promise only after many years and "much tribulation." The church in the days of Joseph were only "laying the foundation" of Zion (D&C 58). Israel must first be gathered from the four quarters of the earth. This would be accomplished by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh who would "push the people together from the ends of the earth" (D&C 58:45; cf with Deut. 33:17).

On Aug. 2, 1831, the *History of the Church* records a significant event. On that day, twelve men representing the twelve tribes of Israel placed a log for a foundation of a house near Independence, Missouri, symbolizing the laying of the foundation for Zion in the latter-days. Sidney Rigdon stood up and said to the men representing the twelve tribes: "Do you receive this land for the land of your inheritance with thankful hearts from the Lord?" They replied: "We do." He then said, "Do you pledge yourselves to keep the law of God in this land which you never have kept in your own lands?" They replied, "We do." This ritual is reminiscent of the covenant their forefathers made at Shechem between Mt. Gerizim and Ebal when they had first entered the land of promise.

In 1833, the saints in Jackson County were driven from their homes and lands. They lost the promised land. In D&C 103:11 the Lord stated the promised land would be redeemed. However, they were reminded of D&C 58:4 in which they were told that they would receive their land only "after much tribulation" (D&C 103:12). They were then told that a new Moses would be raised "who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel." Further, they were told, "For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm. And as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be" (103:16-18). Thus the first gathering of Israel from bondage is a type of the gathering of Israel in the last days. That is to say, before Israel can gather to their promised land, they must first gather to the "mountain of the Lord's house," or temple, wherein they can enter into the same covenant that Abraham made with God.

Keys for Israel's Gathering Restored

Though Joseph Smith had organized the Church, Israel could not fulfill the law of the gathering without a

temple wherein they could receive the ordinances of the higher gospel. Joseph Smith taught that the purpose of the gathering was to obtain the ordinances of the temple. Said he: "What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world?" He answered: "The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p.308).

But Joseph Smith did not have the keys to perform the sacred ordinances in the temple. A place needed to be built for such a purpose. In 1832, Joseph received a commandment to build a temple in Kirtland, Ohio (D&C 88:119). It would not be a temple where the ordinances of the higher order would be performed. Rather, it was a temple where, among other things, the keys for temple ordinances could be restored. After the Kirtland temple was built and dedicated on March 27, 1836, an important event occurred. A week later, on April 3, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to the prophet Joseph Smith and committed various keys necessary to the fulfill of the Abrahamic covenant (see D&C 110).

First, Moses committed "the keys for the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north" to Joseph Smith. Concerning this, Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated:

Two things are involved in this commission. First, Israel--all Israel, the Ten Tribes included--is to be gathered "from the four parts of the earth," out of every nation and from among every people. They are to be gathered into the true church and fold of the God of Israel. This gathering is primarily spiritual, but it is also temporal in that the gathered sheep are assembled into the stakes of Zion where the living waters flow. But next, this commission directs the one who holds the keys of the gathering, meaning the President of the Church, to lead the Ten Tribes from the land of the north to their destined Palestinian homeland. They will be led to their promised inheritances after they join the Church, after they return unto the Lord, after they believe in Christ and accept his gospel, after they receive, individually and collectively, the Abrahamic

covenant again. This part of the gathering of Israel is Millennial, for that is the assigned period in which the Ten Tribes are to come forth; that is the day in which the kingdom will be restored to Israel in the political as well as the ecclesiastical sense. ("Promises Made to the Fathers," in *Studies in Scripture Vol 3: Genesis to 2 Samuel*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet [Salt Lake City, UT: Randall Book Co., 1985], p. 61.)

Following Moses, Elias restored the keys of the "dispensation of the gospel of Abraham"--the Abrahamic covenant or the temple marriage covenant. Then Elijah appeared restoring the sealing powers to the prophet Joseph Smith so that the covenant made in marriage is bound on earth and in eternity.

Of the visit of Elias and Elijah, Elder McConkie stated: "And the Lord sent Elias and he sent Elijah. And when Elias came, he brought the gospel of Abraham, the divine commission that God gave Abraham, the marriage discipline that God gave Abraham. Elias restored celestial marriage, and Elijah came and brought the sealing power so the ordinance would be binding on earth and sealed in heaven; and it takes the ministry of both of them to accomplish the purposes of the Lord" ("Promises Made to the Fathers," in *Studies in Scripture Vol 3: Genesis to 2 Samuel*, p. 61).

Through the instrumentality of these keys given to the prophet, he could begin to turn scattered Israel's heart back to the promises made to the fathers. The actual temple ordinances associated with the Abrahamic covenant were restored in Nauvoo in the 1840's.

Nauvoo and the Temple

During the winter of 1837-38, because of persecution, the saints were forced to leave Kirtland, Ohio, and flee to Missouri where members of the Church had been gathering since 1831. However, persecution continued during that year. Eventually, the saints were driven out of Missouri in the fall and winter of 1838-39. Joseph Smith was incarcerated in Liberty Jail, Liberty, Missouri. He was allowed to escape at the end of April, 1839. He found his way to where the saints were living along the banks of the Mississippi River in Quincy, Illinois. In May, he purchased an area north of Quincy, where he founded a new city he named Nauvoo. This now became the gathering place for new converts.

In 1840, Joseph Smith sent the Quorum of the Twelve to England to do missionary work. They were very successful. While they were gone, Joseph Smith

received a revelation in January, 1841, commanding all saints to gather to Nauvoo where they were commanded to “build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein. For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood” (D&C 124:27-28). Construction on the temple began on April 6, 1841.

However, “for fear he should not live to see the Temple completed, he prepared a place over what was known as the brick-store” (John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, 25:183) where he introduced the temple ordinances to a select few including Brigham Young (see *History of the Church*, 5:1-2). By the spring of 1844, the prophet had transferred all the keys of the priesthood to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

About this same time, at the April 1844 General Conference of the Church, the prophet taught: “You know there has been great discussion in relation to Zion—where it is, and where the gathering of the dispensation is, and which I am now going to tell you. The prophets have spoken and written upon it; but I will make a proclamation that will cover a broader ground. The whole of America is Zion itself from north to south, and is described by the Prophets, who declare that it is the Zion where the mountain of the Lord should be, and that it should be in the center of the land.” He further stated: “I have received instructions from the Lord that from henceforth wherever the Elders of Israel shall build up churches and branches unto the Lord throughout the States, there shall be a stake of Zion. In the great cities, as Boston, New York, &c., there shall be stakes. It is a glorious proclamation, and I reserved it to the last, and designed it to be understood that this work shall commence after the washings, anointings and endowments have been performed here” (*History of the Church*, 6:319.).

The Gathering to Salt Lake Valley

In June of that year, the prophet was martyred. But because he had transferred the priesthood keys to the Twelve, the Church continued to grow and progress. By 1846, the temple was dedicated and members of the Church began receiving their ordinances. During that same time, the Illinoisans began forcing the saints to leave Nauvoo. Under the leadership of Brigham Young, the Saints left Nauvoo and during the next few years eventually made their way to the Salt Lake Valley where they established a new gathering place for the saints. During the next several decades saints gathered from all over the world to Utah and surrounding areas.

The Gathering of Israel Completed in Phases

As can be seen, with the temple ordinances restored, the gathering of Israel commenced on a broad scale. It appears that the gathering of Israel was foreordained to take place in phases. Indeed, Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that the gathering of Israel would be accomplished in three phases of the gathering of Israel:

- **Phase I**--From the First Vision, the setting up of the kingdom on April 6, 1830, and the coming of Moses on April 3, 1836, to the secure establishment of the Church in the United States and Canada, a period of about 125 years.
- **Phase II**--From the creation of stakes of Zion in overseas areas, beginning in the 1950's to the second coming of the Son of Man, a period of unknown duration.
- **Phase III**--From our Lord's second coming until the kingdom is perfected and the knowledge of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea, and from then until the end of the Millennium, a period of 1,000 years. (“Come, Let Israel Build Zion,” *Ensign*, May 1977, pp. 115-118; the *Ensign* reporting this talk states: “The following sermon was given by Elder McConkie on 27 February 1977 in Lima, Peru. President Spencer W. Kimball was desirous that it be printed for the membership of the Church.”)

We are currently living in Phase II. Phase I and II deal with Israel gathering first to the church through baptism and then to the temple. It is during Phase III that Israel gathers back to the land promised to Abraham.

President Kimball on the Gathering

Concerning the law of the gathering, President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “Now, the gathering of Israel consists of joining the true church and their coming to a knowledge of the true God. Any person, therefore, who has accepted the restored gospel, and who now seeks to worship the Lord in his own tongue and with the Saints in the nations where he lives, has complied with the law of the gathering of Israel and is heir to all of the blessings promised the Saints in these last days” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], pp. 438-439).

Concerning Phase II of the gathering, President Kimball said, “The Saints are no longer to come to a single place. In 1955, Sister Kimball and I went to Europe. We spent six months touring all of the missions in Europe. The people were still laboring under the

impression that they should come to America for the gathering process. The burden of our sermons to them was, ‘Stay where you are. You have received the gospel. The blessings will be brought to you. It will not be long until you have stakes, and the Brethren will come across the ocean to visit you. Eventually temples will come, and you will have all the blessings of Zion.’ “ (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 438-439)

He also stated, “Early in the history of this world there was the great scattering of Israel, but today we have the gathering of Israel. In sixty-five countries we are now bringing the gospel by these fine young men who are among you. What are they doing? They are gathering Israel. Now, in the early days of the Church we used to preach for the people to come to Utah as the gathering process largely because that was the only place in the whole world where there was a temple. Now we have sixteen temples, and two more that have been approved, scattered throughout the world. So it is no longer necessary that we bring the people all to Salt Lake City” (*Proclaiming the Gospel: Spencer W. Kimball Speaks on Missionary Work* [Ed. by Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987], p.99).

Finally, he said, “Many people have been holding their breath waiting to see the gathering of Israel. We are in Israel and are being gathered” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 439.).

Temples to Dot the Earth

As President Kimball promised the saints in Europe, temples were built in Switzerland and England in the mid-1950's to which saints in that part of the world could gather for their temple blessings. Slowly, temples began to spread throughout the world.

To expedite the work of gathering to temples, in October 1997 General Conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley introduced the concept of small temples. Said he: “I believe that no member of the Church has received the ultimate which this Church has to give until he or she has received his or her temple blessings in the house of the Lord. Accordingly, we are doing all that we know how to do to expedite the construction of these sacred buildings and make the blessings received therein more generally available. . . . But there are many areas of the Church that are remote, where the membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the near future. Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of the temple ordinances? While visiting such an area a few months ago, we prayerfully pondered this question. The answer, we believe, came bright and clear. We will construct small temples in some of these areas,

buildings with all of the facilities to administer all of the ordinances. They would be built to temple standards, which are much higher than meetinghouse standards. They would accommodate baptisms for the dead, the endowment service, sealings, and all other ordinances to be had in the Lord’s house for both the living and the dead” (“Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, p. 49.).

Since that announcement, temple building has increased at an unprecedented rate. This blessing has been essential in the second phase of the gathering of Israel.

The New Jerusalem- The Center Place

Though the gathering of Israel is first, spiritual (to the Church and temple and stakes of Zion), and second, temporal (to the land that God promised Abraham), it is also apparent that there is a *general* gathering of the ten tribes and a *general* gathering of Judah and that these gatherings are *generally* separate from one another before the millennium. It is also evident that Israel’s gathering is spiritually to the church before the coming of Christ and then physically to their lands of inheritance after the coming of Christ.

On the other hand Judah’s gathering seems to be temporal then spiritual. That is, Judah will first gather to the land of Palestine, the land promised to Abraham, then to the gospel after the coming of Christ. This is not to say that there will be no Jewish converts to the church before the second coming. But generally speaking, the Jews will not be converted until the coming of Christ. This is made clear in the *Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* published under the direction of President Brigham Young on April 6, 1845 (see *Messages of the First Presidency* 1:253-266)

In that document the following was stated concerning the gathering of Israel: “And we further testify that the Lord has appointed a holy city and temple to be built on this continent for the endowment and ordinances pertaining to the priesthood; and for the Gentiles, and the remnant of Israel to resort unto, in order to worship the Lord; and to be taught in his ways and walk in his paths: in short, to finish their preparations for the coming of the Lord” (p. 254). The holy city that is appointed is the New Jerusalem that “will be built upon the American continent” (A of F 10). This has yet to be built.

The New Jerusalem is to be the center place of the stakes of Zion in the latter-days. President Harold B.

Lee explains: “In the early years of the Church specific places to which the Saints were to be gathered together were given, and the Lord directed that these gathering places should not be changed but then he gave one qualification: ‘Until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them: and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion’ (D&C 101:21)” (“Strengthen the Stakes of Zion,” *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 4).

The imagery behind the scripture quoted by President Lee is that of the tents used by nomadic dwelling peoples in the middle east such as the Bedouin. These tents were made of goatshair which were erected over a series of poles looking much like an awning. Each pole was stabilized by stretching a piece of rope from the top and staking it to the ground. Curtains were hung from the top all the way around making the sides of the tent. Curtains were also hung within the tent dividing the tent into rooms where family members stayed. A tent always had a center place where visitors could be received. The tent could be enlarged by adding additional sections of goatshair awnings and curtains to the original tent.

The Kingdom of God in the last days is likened to a nomadic tent that will be spread over the whole earth. In an early revelation to Joseph Smith, the Lord designated that the “center place” would be New Jerusalem (D&C 57:3). The tent is to be strengthened by adding additional stakes to give greater support the poles upon which the awning and curtains rest. It is by the addition of stakes that “the mountain of the Lord’s house” will be “exalted” or lifted up in the eyes of the world and eventually becomes “a great mountain” that fills “the whole earth” (Dan. 2:35).

A few years after the restoration of the Church, the Lord stated: “For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged: her stakes must be strengthened: yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments” (D&C 82:14). Speaking of this verse, President Lee stated: “This people must increase in beauty before the world; have an inward loveliness which may be observed by mankind as a reflection in holiness and in those inherent qualities of sanctity. The borders of Zion, where the righteous and pure in heart may dwell, must now begin to be enlarged. The stakes of Zion must be strengthened. All this so that Zion may arise and shine by becoming increasingly diligent in carrying out the plan of salvation throughout the world” (“Strengthen the Stakes of Zion,” *Ensign* July 1973, p. 3).

As the Kingdom of God is expanded through missionary efforts, stakes of Zion will be established throughout the world. The “borders” of the tent of Israel will be “enlarged” and her “stakes . . . strengthened” (D&C 82:14). President Kimball taught, “Now, in the early days of the Church we used to preach for the people to come to Utah as the gathering process, largely because that was the only place in the whole world where there was a temple.” He then declared, “it is no longer necessary that we bring the people all to Salt Lake City” stating that it is the Lord’s will that Stakes of Zion be established over all the earth. “The First Presidency and the Twelve see great wisdom in the multiple Zions, many gathering places where the Saints within their own culture and nation can act as a leaven in the building of the kingdom -- a kingdom which seeks no earthly rewards or treasures” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 439-440).

But where is the *center place* spoken of in D&C 57:3? Elder Orson F. Whitney taught, “Jackson County, Missouri, is the chosen site for the City of Zion. No other place has been or will be appointed for that purpose. All other gathering places of God’s people are Stakes of Zion, holding the outside cords and curtains of the spiritual Tabernacle of the Lord” (*Saturday Night Thoughts* [Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1927], p. 183). In line with this, Joseph Fielding Smith stated, “We accept the fact that the center place where the City New Jerusalem is to be built, is in Jackson County, Missouri. It was never the intention to substitute Utah or any other place for Jackson County” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:72).

What must happened to bring about the city of Zion? Elder Whitney explained: “Zion is greater than any of her stakes. It will require the Law of Consecration to bring forth Zion, while a lesser law suffices for the creation of stakes” (*Saturday Night Thoughts*, p. 183). Further, Elder McConkie said: “Those who dwell in the perfect Zion must be qualified to live the law of consecration, and obedience to that law is the very way in which the New Jerusalem will be built” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 618.). President Snow taught that it was lack of obedience to this law that caused the Saints expulsion from Jackson County in the first place:

Hence we learn that the Saints in Jackson County and other localities, refused to comply with the order of consecration, consequently they were allowed to be driven from their inheritances; and should not return until they were better prepared to keep the law of God, by

being more perfectly taught in reference to their duties, and learn through experience the necessity of obedience. And I think we are not justified in anticipating the privilege of returning to build up the center stake of Zion, until we shall have shown obedience to the law of consecration. One thing, however, is certain, we shall not be permitted to enter the land from whence we were expelled, till our hearts are prepared to honor this law, and we become sanctified through the practice of the truth. (*Journal of Discourses*, 16:276)

When the members of the Church have shown through their obedience that they are willing to do all the Lord asks, then the command will be given for the building of the New Jerusalem. Brigham Young declared, “Just as soon as the Latter-day Saints are ready and prepared to return to Independence, Jackson County, in the State of Missouri, North America, just so soon will the voice of the Lord be heard, ‘Arise now, Israel, and make your way to the centre [place] of Zion.’” (*Journal of Discourses*, 9:138.).

The period of time from the organization of the Church until the building of the New Jerusalem is a period of preparation. It is a time for modern Israel to master the principle that eluded ancient Israel: complete trust and obedience to the Lord. The building of New Jerusalem will signal that Israel has become obedient, consequently, the ideal prophesied by Isaiah is ready to be fully realized.

The Jewish Gathering

Concerning the Jews, the 1845 Proclamation states: “And we further testify, that the Jews among all nations are hereby commanded, in the name of the Messiah, to prepare, to return to Jerusalem in Palestine; and to rebuild that city and temple unto the Lord: And also to organize and establish their own political government, under their own rulers, judges, and governors in that country.” The document then states: “For be it known unto them that *we* now hold the keys of the priesthood and kingdom which is soon to be restored unto them” (*Messages of the First Presidency* 1: 254).

The Resurrection and the Return of the Ten Tribes

In Joseph Smith–Matthew (in the Pearl of Great Price) we are informed that once the gospel has gone to all the world then the end of the world will come (vs. 31). The end of the world is directly preceded by the war that has become known as the battle of Armageddon

(vs. 32). Zechariah prophesied that as part of this war Jerusalem would be besieged.

At a point in the war when the Jews have lost most of the “land” of Israel in battle and are about to be destroyed, the Lord will return to this remnant of the covenant people of Abraham to fulfill his covenant. When he comes, he will stand upon the Mt. of Olives. A great earthquake will split the Mt. of Olives in two, with half going towards the north (or left-hand) and the other towards the south (or right-hand) - a reminder of the covenants made with Abraham in Gen. 15 and at Shechem in Joshua 8! The Jews will escape their destruction by passing between the two halves of the Mt. of Olives - symbolizing that only by covenanting with the Lord can we be saved (again, note the similarity of this to the Israelites passing through the Red Sea thus being saved from destruction by the Egyptian army). Concerning these events, the *Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles* says, “In that day all who are in the siege, both against Judea and against Jerusalem, shall be cut in pieces; though all the people of the earth should be gathered together against it” (*Messages of the First Presidency* 1:258).

Doctrine and Covenants 45 continues the story. As the Jews pass “between the pieces” of the Mt. of Olives they will see their Messiah with wounds in his hands and his feet (a token of the blood of the covenant). They ask, “what are these wounds in thine hands and thy feet?” When they learn that this is the Savior, Jesus Christ, they are converted and the final fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant commences. The “earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation” (vs. 58).

Doctrine and Covenants 133 finishes the story. After the Savior stands “upon the mount of Olivet . . . the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided” (vss 20, 24). Then, “the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh” (vs. 25). At this point, “they who are in the north countries [scattered Israel gathered in stakes of Zion throughout the world] shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence.” Though the 10 tribes have gathered to stakes of Zion, they are still considered in the north countries (or under the curse) because they have not yet been restored back to the land from whence they were scattered - the land promised to Abraham!

Before the coming of the Lord, “the saints that have slept shall come forth to meet me in the cloud. Wherefore, if ye have slept in peace blessed are you; for as you now behold me and know that I am, even so shall ye come unto me and your souls shall live, and your redemption shall be perfected; and the saints shall come forth from the four quarters of the earth” (D&C 45:45-46; see also 29:13). Elder McConkie explains: “Many persons have already come forth from the grave in their resurrected and glorified bodies. Righteous saints who lived from the day of Adam to the day of Christ were with him in his resurrection. (Matt. 27:52-53; D. & C. 133:54-55; Hela. 14:25.) To us, however, the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just, will come with the return of our Lord and the commencement of his millennial reign” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p.493).

The city of Enoch will return with the second coming of Christ. The Lord spoke of this in a vision given to Enoch in these words: “Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them [latter-day Israel gathered to New Jerusalem] there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest” (Moses 7:63-64).

Then begins the great awaited Millennium.