

The Lord's American Zion

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The Saints Shall Build Zion

A summary of the revealed word and a recitation of what has happened in our dispensation with reference to the redemption of Zion and the building of the New Jerusalem with its temple of temples will be instructive. The hope and longing for the New Jerusalem was deeply rooted in the hearts of the early saints. As early as February 9, 1831, the Lord said "The time shall come when it shall be revealed unto you from on high, when the city of the New Jerusalem shall be prepared, that ye may be gathered in one, that ye may be my people and I will be your God." (D&C 42:9.)

This revelation, in an initial sense, was not long delayed, although, as we shall see, the ultimate and actual time for the building of the holy city is yet to be revealed. On March 7 1831, after speaking of the signs of the times and the wars and desolations to be poured out upon the world, the Lord said: "Gather ye out from the eastern lands, assemble ye yourselves together ye elders of my church: go ye forth into the western countries, call upon the inhabitants to repent, and inasmuch as they do repent, build up churches unto me." Always and everlastingly the call is to go forth to all men, inviting them to come and be one with the saints and to be inheritors of that joy and peace and eternal reward promised the faithful.

But the elders of the kingdom are to do more than spread the gospel. "With one heart and with one mind, gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you." Zion is to be purchased, built, and established by gathered Israel. "And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God." Zion shall be set apart from the world; though war and desolation overshadow all nations, Zion shall be at rest. How could it be otherwise when perfect righteousness prevails?

"The glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion. And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety." These are the conditions

that prevailed in the day of Enoch; they are descriptive of his Zion; and they are to prevail again in the latter-day Zion that is to be.

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"There shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another." As yet this has never happened. "And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy."

None of [his was fully consummated during the lives of those to whom the divine word came. From our perspective it is perfectly clear that the promises cannot be fulfilled until Millennial conditions prevail on earth. That is to say, all this lies in futurity, a fact that the concluding words of the revelation bear out: "For when the Lord shall appear he shall be terrible unto them [those in the world who are the enemies of the saints], that fear may seize upon them, and they shall stand afar off and tremble. And all nations shall be afraid because of the terror of the Lord, and the power of his might." (D&C 45:64-75.)

Independence, Missouri -- Center Place

These promises fed the hopes and made sure the desires of the little flock who alone were the Lord's saints in that day. Some four months later, in July 1831, in Jackson County, Missouri, "the Prophet exclaimed in yearning prayer: 'When will the wilderness blossom as the rose? When will Zion be built up in her glory, and where will thy Temple stand, unto which all nations shall come in the last days?'" (Heading, D&C 57.)

In the true sense, the wilderness shall blossom as the rose when the earth is renewed and receives its paradisiacal glory. In the full sense, Zion shall regain her ancient glory, and attain that grandeur and might promised in the prophetic word, only during the Millennium, though the work of establishing Zion and

building the New Jerusalem must precede our Lord's return. And as to the temple unto which all nations shall come in the last days, it shall be built in the New Jerusalem before the Second Coming, all as a part of the preparatory processes that will make ready a people for their Lord's return.

And so the Lord, giving line upon line, as his purposes mandate, revealed to the Prophet a partial answer to his yearning plea. He named the heaven-selected site of the temple and also what the little flock should then do relative to the building of that holy house. "The land of Missouri is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion. And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse." (D&C 57:1-3.)

The center place! Let Israel gather to the stakes of Zion in all nations. Let every land be a Zion to those appointed to dwell there. Let the fulness of the gospel be for all the saints in all nations. Let no blessing be denied them. Let temples arise wherein the fulness of the ordinances of the Lord's house may be administered. But still there is a center place, a place where the chief temple shall stand, a place to which the Lord shall come, a place whence the law shall go forth to govern all the earth in that day when the Second David reigns personally upon the earth. And that center place is what men now call Independence in Jackson County, Missouri, but which in a day to come will be the Zion of our God and the City of Holiness of his people. The site is selected; the place is known; the decree has gone forth; and the promised destiny is assured.

The Purchase of the Land of Zion

What, then, did the Lord, in July 1831, expect of his little flock? "Wherefore, it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the saints," he said, "and also every tract lying westward, even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile; and also every tract bordering by the prairies, inasmuch as my disciples are enabled to buy lands. Behold, this is wisdom, that they may obtain it for an everlasting inheritance." Sidney Gilbert was appointed "an agent unto the church, to buy land in all the regions round about, inasmuch as can be done in righteousness, and as wisdom shall direct." Edward Partridge was appointed to "divide unto the saints their inheritance," and the Lord's people were to

be planted in the land. (D&C 57:4-8.) Some lands were acquired, and these planting processes had an initial beginning before the saints were driven by murderous mobs from their Missouri home-land-to-be.

Knowing the end from the beginning and that in reality the New Jerusalem would not be built in that day, the Lord, on August 1, 1831, cautioned his saints in these words: "Give ear to my word, and learn of me what I will concerning you, and also concerning this land unto which I have sent you." Knowing what has, in fact, taken place since the Lord first cautioned and commanded his people, it may be that we are in a better position than they were to envision the full import of the divine word that then came forth. Following an initial decree to them to keep the commandments, the early saints were told: "Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation. For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand."

Is the Lord warning them that all will not go well with their efforts to build the New Jerusalem? Are they being told that tribulation and trials and persecutions and mobbings lie ahead? And are they being reassured that after much tribulation, and though driven from their promised land, they will yet be crowned with eternal glory?

"Remember this, which I tell you before, that you may lay it to heart, and receive that which is to follow." Are they being strengthened for the trials ahead? "Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you -- that you might be obedient, and that your hearts might be prepared to bear testimony of the things which are to come; and also that you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand." Truly, the doctrine relative to Zion and the New Jerusalem is being revealed to them, and they are laying the foundation, a foundation upon which their successors in interest shall yet build. How glorious it was for them to commence the work, and how filled with wonder and awe is the prospect before us of building upon the foundation they laid.

Then the Lord speaks of the gospel feast and of the supper of the Lord to which all nations are invited. The word relative thereto is to "go forth from Zion, yea, from the mouth of the city of the heritage of God." Edward Partridge is again named as the one "to divide the lands of the heritage of God unto his children," as the Lord's

judges in ancient Israel divided the promised land among the ancient chosen people. Counsel is next given about obedience and the proper use of agency, and then come these rather enigmatic words: "Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments? Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing. Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above."

Do these words contain a message about the building up of Zion and the New Jerusalem? Are the shadows of coming events being cast before? Are they being forewarned and prepared for a future commandment that will deny them the privilege of building the City of Holiness and of dwelling within its sacred walls? Whatever the Lord's intent is, his next words are: "And now I give unto you further directions concerning this land." He then directs Martin Harris to stand forth as "an example unto the church, in laying his moneys before the bishop of the church." All others who come "unto this land to receive an inheritance" are commanded to do likewise. Lands are to be "purchased in Independence" for various purposes and for certain named persons.

Then this shadow of coming events is cast before them: "And now, verily, I say concerning the residue of the elders of my church, the time has not yet come, for many years, for them to receive their inheritance in this land, except they desire it through the prayer of faith, only as it shall be appointed unto them of the Lord." They are to preach the gospel and "build up churches" in other places.

Even now, a century and a half later, are we not still subject to the same decree that many years must pass before Zion is redeemed? And yet if we had faith and desired to build on the foundations of our forebears, would not the Lord direct us to go forward? The building up of Zion, be it remembered, depends upon the faith and righteousness of the Lord's people.

The revealed word then speaks of collecting "moneys to purchase lands in Zion." Sidney Rigdon is told to "write a description of the land of Zion, and a statement of the will of God, as it shall be made known by the Spirit unto him." This inspired writing is to be used to collect moneys to purchase lands. The gathering is to continue, and Elder Rigdon is to "consecrate and dedicate this land, and the spot for the temple, unto the Lord." (D&C 58:1-57.)

In August 1831, the Lord renewed the commands to purchase lands in Zion and to gather to that sacred spot.

"This is the will of the Lord your God concerning his saints," he said "that they should assemble themselves together unto the land of Zion, not in haste, lest there should be confusion, which bringeth pestilence."

An everlasting principle underlies this command. The Lord's newly converted saints must flee from Babylon lest they be swallowed up by the world and, walking with the world partake again of the ways of the world. Always and in all ages the Lord's people must gather to those places where true worship prevails; gather into congregations where they can strengthen and perfect each other; gather to holy temples where the ordinances of salvation and exaltation are performed; and, particularly in our day, gather to the holy houses wherein their dead may be redeemed. The law of the gospel includes the law of gathering. But the Lord's house is a house of order; his saints must be organized; the gathering is not a hasty, unprepared foray to a new locale. It is a wisely planned and prearranged assembling; provision must be made for food clothing, shelter, travel, and even a future livelihood, if possible.

And, further, lands must be purchased whereon the assembling hosts may dwell. Hence the decree: "Behold, the land of Zion -- I, the Lord, hold it in mine own hands; nevertheless, I the Lord will that you should purchase the lands, that you may have ... claim on the world, that they may not be stirred up unto anger. For Satan putteth it into their hearts to anger against you, and to the shedding of blood." Satan would slay all of the saints if he could; he managed, rather quickly, to do away with all of them in the meridian of time and he would do the same again in this dispensation if he could. What a pretext he would have for persecution and slaughter if the saints gained the lands that are to be theirs by any means except those set forth in the laws of the land!

"Wherefore, the land of Zion shall not be obtained but by purchase or by blood, otherwise there is none inheritance for you. And if by purchase, behold you are blessed; And if by blood, as you are forbidden to shed blood, lo, your enemies are upon you, and ye shall be scourged from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue, and but few shall stand to receive an inheritance." The reasoning is right and the decree is clear: the saints are to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

Next the Lord speaks of the decreed wars in which the wicked shall slay the wicked until the day of his coming. "Wherefore, seeing that I, the Lord, have decreed all these things upon the face of the earth, I will that my saints should be assembled upon the land of Zion" -- the one place where peace and safety might prevail -- "and that every man should take righteousness

in his hands and faithfulness upon his loins and lift a warning voice unto the inhabitants of the earth; and declare both by word and by flight that desolation shall come upon the wicked.” The gathering of the saints to Zion or to any of her stakes is a sign to the world and a witness to all men that the gospel has been restored and is in process of preparing a people for the coming of the Lord.

And all those who take part in the glorious gathering and who use their influence and means to build up Zion have this divine promise: “He that sendeth up treasures unto the land of Zion shall receive an inheritance in this world, and his works shall follow him, and also a reward in the world to come.” (D&C 63:24-48.) Surely where a man’s treasure is, there will his heart and his inheritance be also.

Saints in Zion Live the United Order

When Zion is fully established, in a yet future day, the divine promise, given September 11, 1831, shall be fulfilled: “Zion shall flourish, and the glory of the Lord shall be upon her; and she shall be an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto her out of every nation under heaven. And the day shall come when the nations of the earth shall tremble because of her, and shall fear because of her terrible ones.” (D&C 64:41-43.) To a degree the stakes of Zion now flourish and the lost sheep of Israel are gathering to them, but the day when all the earth shall tremble and fear because of the Zion of God is yet to be.

To prepare his people for such a glorious reward and for such a grand state of excellence, in March 1832 the Lord said this about the United Order, the order through which the divine principle of consecration was and is destined to operate: “The time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place [Ohio] and in the land of Zion [Missouri].” As is well known, the saints attempted to live in the United Order and failed. That it will yet be operated in its fulness among the Latter-day Saints is also well known. What concerns us here is to set forth the principles upon which that order, destined to prevail in Zion, must operate.

This heaven-sent organization came, the Lord said, “for a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which ye have espoused, to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven; that you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things

also, for the obtaining of heavenly things. For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things. For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.” (D&C 78:3-7.) These are the principles underlying the establishment of Zion; these are the laws that must be lived in the New Jerusalem; these are the standards set by the Lord for the saints of latter days. Let every man judge for himself how nearly we approach them at this time.

Building the Temple in Jackson County

Now we come to the much misunderstood revelation that gives the direction for building the temple in the New Jerusalem. Given September 22 and 23, 1832, it is: “The word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem.” The Church, which is to build the city and the temple, is set up upon the earth as the organization to which Israel shall gather. Those who gather are the Lord’s saints; they shall stand upon Mount Zion which is the New Jerusalem.

“Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased. Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation. For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house. For the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation, upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed -- and the sons of Moses and of Aaron shall be filled with the glory of the Lord upon Mount Zion in the Lord’s house, whose sons are ye; and also many whom I have called and sent forth to build up my church.” (D&C 84:2-5, 31-32.)

It is perfectly clear that the New Jerusalem, crowned by the Holy Temple to which our Lord shall come, was destined to be built within the promised generation. The fact is that neither the city nor the temple yet graces

Missouri's soil, and the generation is long since gone by. Why so? This is the foreshadowed case in which the Lord said he commanded and then revoked, and we are left to say naught except, Blessed be the name of the Lord. As to why he revoked, that is quite another thing. Could it be other than because his people did not climb the gospel heights that it was in their power to reach? Their faith was imperfect, as is ours, and their enemies drove them from their inheritance. It could have been otherwise had they, as ancient Israel did on occasions, persuaded the Lord to fight their battles, with two of them putting their tens of thousands to flight.

After the saints were driven from Missouri; after keys and powers had been given in a preparatory house of the Lord built in Kirtland, Ohio; after the refiner's fire had purified the saints to a degree -- the Lord deigned to give them a temple in Nauvoo, Illinois, in which the fulness of the ordinances of his kingdom might be administered for the living and the dead.

In the Nauvoo Temple -- as will be the case in due course in the temple in Missouri -- the saints were to receive "the fulness of the priesthood" through celestial marriage, which is the patriarchal order. In it they were to "be baptized for those who are dead"; in it they were to receive honor and glory, washings, anointings, oracles, conversations, statutes and judgments, and much else -- all "for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipalities." In this house the Lord promised to reveal "things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times. That is to say, the revelations, endowments, ordinances, covenants, promises, and eternal truths received in this and all subsequent temples are for the express purpose of preparing and purifying the Lord's people, freeing them from the blood and sins of the world, so they will be ready in due course to build the New Jerusalem and the temple in that center place.

With reference to the saints in the days of Nauvoo and to the temple to be built in that Illinois city, the Lord said: "If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot [where the Nauvoo Temple is to be built] that it shall be made holy." That temple and all those temples built thereafter stand on holy ground, ground consecrated to the Lord for the salvation of his children. "And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place." It is within the power of the Lord's people to gather to Zion, to her stakes, or to whatever place the Lord directs, there to be preserved,

protected, and blessed if they keep the commandments.

"But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest, because they pollute mine holy grounds, and mine holy ordinances, and charters, and my holy words which I give unto them." In part, but not in full, the saints conformed to this standard. Hence, for their failures, they were driven from state to state and finally from the confines of the United States itself to the mountains of western America.

"And it shall come to pass that if you build a house unto my name, and do not the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfil the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord. For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies and by all your abominations, which you practice before me saith the Lord." Who can doubt that the saints today -- sadly -- are as the saints were in Nauvoo, as yet unworthy to receive all the blessings that might be theirs.

It is in this setting that the Lord gives the reason why the temple was not built in Jackson County in the designated generation. The general principle is set forth in these words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings. And the iniquity and transgression of my holy laws and commandments I will visit upon the heads of those who hindered my work, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord God." Such is the law of the Lord.

As to its application to the Missouri temple situation, the divine word continues: "Therefore, for this cause have I accepted the offerings of those whom I commanded to build up a city and a house unto my name, in Jackson county, Missouri, and were hindered by their enemies, saith the Lord your God." The command to purchase lands, to build the New Jerusalem, to build the chief temple of this dispensation in the appointed generation all these were revoked by the same power that gave the commands in the first instance. The Lord's people were to retreat, regroup, and prepare themselves for the great battles of the future.

"And I will answer judgment, wrath, and indignation, wailing, and anguish, and gnashing of teeth upon their heads [the heads of the enemies of the saints],

unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me saith the Lord your God. And this I make an example unto you, for your consolation concerning all those who have been commanded to do a work and have been hindered by the hands of their enemies, and by oppression, saith the Lord your God. For I am the Lord your God, and will save all those of your brethren who have been pure in heart, and have been slain in the land of Missouri, saith the Lord.” (D&C 124:28-54.)

Though the city and the temple were not built within the appointed generation, and though the early saints were excused from that labor, yet the ultimate triumph of the cause of Zion remains unchanged. On March 8, 1833, the Lord promised: “I, the Lord, will contend with Zion, and plead with her strong ones, and chasten her until she overcomes and is clean before me. For she shall not be removed out of her place.” (D&C 90:36-37.) Zion remains where she has ever been; the New Jerusalem shall yet be built in the appointed place, and the Latter-day Saints will build the decreed temple in that day which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

In the midst of her struggles, on August 2, 1833, the Lord sent this word to Zion: “If Zion do these things -- build the temple and become pure in heart so as to qualify, as a people, to see the face of the Lord -- “she shall prosper, and spread herself and become very glorious, very great, and very terrible.” This has not yet happened; neither will it, nor can it until the inhabitants of Zion attain the spiritual stature specified.

“And the nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there and the hand of the Lord is there; and he hath sworn by the power of his might to be her salvation and her high tower.” No matter what might have been, it seems clear to us now that the fulfillment of this promise awaits the day when “God is there,” when the great Millennium arrives and the Lord dwells with his people.

“Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord let Zion rejoice, for this is ZION THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn.” As pertaining to his saints, the time of the Lord’s return is The Year of His Redeemed. As far as the wicked are concerned, it is The Day of Vengeance.

“For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it?” This refers to the great and dreadful day of the Lord when the wicked will be as stubble. But before that day comes, “the Lord’s scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come: for the

indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works.” We live in the day of the indignation of the Lord, when the wicked are slaying the wicked and there are abominations on every hand.

“Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her. But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire.” If the saints -- those in Zion or in any of her stakes -- live after the manner of the world, they will inherit the curses and plagues destined to be poured out without measure upon the ungodly. The saints are no better than any other sinners, if they remain in their carnal and fallen state and do not have the Holy Spirit for their guide.

“Nevertheless, let it be read this once to her ears, that I, the Lord, have accepted of her offering; and if she sin no more none of these things shall come upon her; and I will bless her with blessings, and multiply a multiplicity of blessings upon her, and upon her generations forever and ever, saith the Lord your God.” (D&C 97:18-28.) Let every man ponder upon the state of that Zion which might have been in Missouri, and also upon that Zion which now exists in the stakes of Zion that are beginning to dot the earth. Who is there among us who does not desire to escape the Lord’s scourge?

On October 12, 1833, the Lord sent this word to his people: “And now I give unto you a word concerning Zion,” he said. “Zion shall be redeemed, although she is chastened for a little season.” We are now in process of finding out how long a little season is to the Lord. “Therefore, let your hearts be comforted; for all things shall work together for good to them that walk uprightly, and to the sanctification of the church. For I will raise up unto myself a pure people, that will serve me in righteousness; and all that call upon the name of the Lord and keep his commandments, shall be saved.” (D&C 100:13-17.) Obedience, walking uprightly, purity, righteousness, prayer, sanctification, salvation -- always these are the things that the Lord associates with Zion and her redemption. The extent to which they exist in the hearts of the saints is the extent to which Zion prospers.