

# "THE GATHERING OF MY PEOPLE"

**INTRODUCTION:** A small tent, held in place by a tent peg (or stake) on each corner could be easily flattened or remodeled. But if the tent were larger and secured with 2500 or 2600 stakes, it would be almost impossible to move. This is the image Isaiah used to describe the Church and Kingdom in the last days.

"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left . . ." (Isaiah 54:2,3)

In the early days of the church with small branches of members in multitudes of locations, Lucifer's task may have been simpler. People in isolated areas without the sustaining strength of church leaders and faithful congregations were probably easier to deceive and mislead. But early in this dispensation the Lord commanded his people to gather. As his saints complied and assembled in each of the designated locations, their strength was "enlarged," their cords were lengthened, and the stakes of Zion were strengthened. The Lord knew that the Saints would be safer together than separated, and so they came together and continue to come together, to Kirtland and Missouri and Nauvoo and Salt Lake, and, finally, to the strengthened stakes of Zion throughout the world.

## 1. THE LORD IS GATHERING HIS PEOPLE.

This quote is from the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"All the prophets that have written, from the days of righteous Abel down to the last man that has left any testimony on record for our consideration, in speaking of the salvation of Israel in the last days, goes directly to show that it consists in the work of the gathering."  
(*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, [1972], p. 83)

The gathering of which we are a part began when the Lord called missionaries and

sent them forth to “declare glad tidings of great joy unto this generation.” (D&C 31:3) How many of the new members of the church were expected to take part in this great missionary effort? (See D&C 38:40,41; 88:81—every man; all men). Almost every man who received revelation or instruction from the Lord through the prophet Joseph Smith, as recorded in the D&C, was directed to preach the gospel. Take a few minutes and review some of the verses in which these instructions are given. (See D&C 29:4; 30:5; 30:9; 31:4; 32:1; 33:2, 8-10; 34:5; 35:23; 36:2-7, etc.)

What was the purpose of this great missionary effort? (D&C 29:7) How were missionaries to recognize the elect? (D&C 29:7) In what way would it be possible for the elect to hear the voice of the Lord? (See D&C 1:38—the voice of the Lord’s servants; 84:60—the words of the Lord in the scriptures)

Although this missionary effort began with a few members in New York, it would one day spread to the ends of the earth. (Read D&C 33:6,7) Since the gathering is not yet completed, what responsibility to you have today in this effort?

The Lord’s great interest in this work is demonstrated by his desire and willingness to be a part of it. Turn to D&C 32:3. What great promise did the Lord make the Lamanite missionaries? (“I myself will go with them”) The Lord expanded on this promise in D&C 84:88. What promises does he make to missionaries in this verse? In Jacob 5:72, the Savior is even more direct about his purposes in being with the missionaries. What does this verse tell us the Lord would do? (“the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them”) Can you remember experiences with the power and involvement of the Lord in this great work of gathering?

The keys of the gathering were delivered to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple. Turn to D&C 110:11. Who appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery? What keys did Moses deliver to them?

## **II. THE CHURCH WAS COMMANDED TO GATHER IN OHIO.**

As the Lord sent forth his servants to gather the elect, what did he indicate his Father had decreed? (29:8--“That they shall be gathered in unto one place upon

the face of the land.”)

In December of 1830, the Lord designated Ohio as the first gathering place. (See D&C 37:1, 3) What purposes did the Lord give for asking his people to go to Ohio? (D&C 38:31,32)

In what way would this endowment “with power from on high” be made possible? (At least in part it would come from the construction of the Kirtland Temple) Read the following from the prophet Joseph Smith:

“What is the object of the gathering of the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world? . . . .

“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. . . .

“It is for the same purpose that God gathers together His people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and annointings, etc. . . .”  
(Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, V, p. 423,424)

What instructions did the Lord give about this matter? (D&C 38:27)

What comforting promise did the Lord make to those who incurred financial hardship because of the commandment to gather? (D&C 38:39) Why do you think church members were willing to suffer financially and in other ways in order to gather with the saints?

Between the end of January and the middle of May, 1831, most of the New York saints sold their possessions and migrated to Kirtland and adjacent areas. The church maintained a strong presence in Ohio until 1838.

### **III. THE LORD’S PEOPLE WERE DIRECTED TO GATHER TO THE LAND OF ZION.**

The New York saints and others who lived or gathered in Kirtland knew that Ohio was not the final gathering place for the church, and that at least one more move lay ahead of them, to a land they would call Zion. What did the Lord tell the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery in September of 1830 about the location of Zion? (D&C 28:9) Where did the Savior say the city would be built? (D&C 28:9) In a meeting of the New York saints held in the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, on January 2, 1831, Joseph received the revelation now called D&C 38. What promises did the Lord make to the faithful saints in D&C 38:18-20? What should we be doing now to “seek [this blessing] with all our hearts”? Brigham Young taught:

“When Joseph Smith first revealed the land where the saints should gather, a woman in Canada asked if we thought that Jackson County would be large enough to gather all the people . . . I will answer that question . . . Zion will extend, eventually, over all this earth. There will be no nook or corner upon the earth but what will be in Zion. It will all be Zion . . . We are going to gather as many as we can, bless them, give them their endowments, etc., preach to them the truth, lay the principles of eternal life before them, inform their minds all we have power to do, and lead them into the path and righteousness . . .”  
(Brigham Young, JD, 14:138)

At a conference of the church held in June 1831, the Lord gave a revelation in which he specified the location for the next conference and the names of those who were to attend. Where was that location? (D&C 52:1) What did the Lord promise to reveal in that place? (D&C 52:5)

The Lord also gave information to the members of the church about their destiny. Where did the Lord indicate church members would one day assemble if they were faithful? (D&C 52:42,43)

Who were the first Mormons to visit Missouri? (The members of the mission to the Lamanites called in D&C 32) Next the Lord sent church leaders and various elders to the land of Missouri for a conference. To them he revealed the location of the “city of Zion,” or the “center place.” Where was it to be? (D&C 57:1-3) While

Joseph Smith and the others were in the land of Zion, Joseph Smith and six brethren met at a spot in Independence, Missouri, and dedicated the site for the building of a temple. Other temple sites were also dedicated in Missouri, but persecution made it impossible to build those temples at that time.

By the time the revelation identifying the site of Zion was given, the Lord had already commanded saints living at Thompson, Ohio, to journey to Missouri (see D&C 54:7,8) Thus the Lord began to establish his presence upon the land of Zion. What direction did he give his saints in D&C 63:24? Thus the land of Missouri became a second gathering place for the church in this dispensation. Converts gathered in both Ohio and Missouri.

When conditions in Missouri became intolerable, the Saints left the state. Where did they gather next? (Nauvoo) Again, they gathered their strength and resources and built a temple. In 1846, Brigham Young led the saints west to a new gathering place. Where was it? (In the Rocky Mountains near the Great Salt Lake) Just four days after the arrival of the Latter-day saints in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Brigham Young placed the tip of his cane on the ground and identified the spot for the construction of a temple. That same day the ten acres of Temple Square were marked off. The city was laid out around the temple site.

#### **IV. SAINTS NOW GATHER TO THEIR OWN LANDS AS TEMPLES ARE BEING BUILT AROUND THE WORLD.**

Have class members turn to Luke 3:5,6 (JST Appendix) These verses describe the mission of the Savior. What three endeavors are mentioned in verse 5? (Take away the sins of the world; bring salvation to the heathen nations; gather together the lost of the house of Israel) What other endeavor is mentioned in verse 6? (Prepare for the preaching of the gospel unto the Gentiles) The Savior has always intended to make the blessings of the gospel available to all of his children. They were all (heathen, Jew, and Gentile) to be given the opportunity to gather to the true church and kingdom of God, and to come to the House of the Lord for the blessings of the temple.

Finally the pioneering phase of the gathering came to an end. The church had sufficient members and resources to establish stakes and build temples in many

areas of the world. It was no longer necessary for all the members to attempt to come to a single location. Ponder the following quote regarding the gathering.

In an areal conference held in Mexico City in 1972, Bruce R. McConkie said:

“[The] revealed words speak of . . . there being congregations of . . . covenant people of the Lord in *every nation, speaking every tongue,* and *among every people* when the Lord comes again . . .

“The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is in Mexico; the place of gathering for the Guatemalan Saints is in Guatemala; the place of gathering for the Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth . . . Every nation is the gathering place for its own people” (In Conference Report, Mexico and Central America Area Conference, 1972, p. 45; italics added).

The following April, President Harold B. Lee quoted those words in general conference and, in effect, announced that the pioneering phase of gathering was now over. The gathering is now to be out of the world into the Church in every nation (See Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 7; or *Ensign*, July 1973, pp. 4,5) [Elder Boyd k. Packer, Conference Report, Oct. 1992, p. 99]

There is one other part of the gathering worth a brief mention here. The Lord speaks of the Gathering of Israel to the *lands* of her inheritance many times in the scriptures. That gathering was to include the return of the “dispersed of Judah” (2 Nephi 21:12) to Judah and Jerusalem. That gathering, like the ones to Ohio and Missouri, was also to be conducted under the direction of the living prophet and by the inspiration of Jehovah.

As a part of the gathering of the Jews, Orson Hyde, who was of the house of Judah (See *Essentials in Church History*, p. 313) and also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was sent to Jerusalem to dedicate that land for their return. When Orson Hyde was confirmed a member of the church by the Prophet Joseph Smith, the following was a part of the blessing:

"In due time thou shalt go to Jerusalem, the land of thy fathers, and be a watchman unto the house of Israel; and by thy hands shall the most High do a great work, which shall prepare a way and greatly facilitate the gathering of that people." (Cited in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 313, 314)

In April Conference in 1840, Elder Orson Hyde was set apart to travel to Palestine and dedicate that historical land for the gathering of the Jews. Elder Hyde left Nauvoo on April 15, 1840, and after a journey of eighteen months and thousands of miles, he arrived at his destination. Early Sunday morning, October 24, 1841, he ascended the Mount of Olives and dedicated by prayer the land of Palestine for the gathering of the Jews. He prayed "for the gathering together of Judah's scattered remnants," as had been prophesied. He appealed for the rebuilding of Jerusalem again, and for the construction of a temple to the name of the Lord. He also placed a pile of stones, as a witness of the deed, on the top of the Mount of Olives and on top of Mount Moriah, where the ancient temple stood.

## **CONCLUSION:**

If the purpose of the gathering in every dispensation is to build temples and prepare covenant people for the ordinances of the House of the Lord, what is the most important way in which we can participate in the gathering in our own day?

President Howard W. Hunter said:

"... I invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of-and carry a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families."  
(President Howard W. Hunter, Conference Report, October 1994, p. 8)

President Hunter also said,

“Let us make the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience.” (President Howard W. Hunter, Conference Report, October 1994, p. 118)

As you gather to the stakes of Zion and strengthen those stakes, and as you prepare for and participate in temple ordinances, you also become a part of the gathering.

Copyright © 2001 by Ted Gibbons <tedgibbons@yahoo.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.