

D&C LESSON #46
“ZION—THE PURE IN HEART”

by Ted L. Gibbons

AUTHOR’S NOTE: I have been asked to continue writing these lessons for the Old Testament year. I am willing if there is a need. But I do not know how many actually use them, nor in what way they are being used. Would those of you who are finding a use for these materials let me know your feelings? My email is [<tedgibbons@yahoo.com>](mailto:tedgibbons@yahoo.com). Thanks. TLG

INTRODUCTION: If you could fashion a community according to your own desires—one that would conform to your specifications to help you, your family, and your neighbors in the accomplishment of temporal and eternal goals, what sort of society would you create? What would you do about class distinction? About poverty? How would you prevent racial prejudice? How would you avoid criminal activity? Such a society was what the Prophet Joseph meant to establish—a society where men could live in love and peace and plenty and enjoy without restraint the bounteous goodness of God.

1. THE WORD ZION HAS SEVERAL MEANINGS.

The word Zion has a number of meanings, all alluded to in the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. For example:

1. “Should any ask, Where is Zion? tell them in America; and if any ask, What is Zion? tell them the pure in heart.” (Brigham Young, “General Epistle,” Ensign, July 1971, 42)
2. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.
3. For I have consecrated the land of Kirtland in mine own due time for the benefit of the saints of the Most High, and for a stake to Zion. 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 82:13, 14)

4. And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. (2 Sam. 5:6,7)
5. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory. (A of F, 10)
6. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect . . . (Heb 12:22,23)

In general terms, Zion can refer either to a place or a people, or to both. In this lesson we will deal with the challenge facing all of us, which is to prepare ourselves to live in such a society. Thus, the word Zion in this lesson will generally refer to the pure in heart, and the concepts discussed will focus on our personal efforts to make ourselves worthy to become Zion people who can then live in a Zion society.

2. ZION HAS EXISTED IN PREVIOUS DISPENSATIONS.

The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate

in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory . . . (“What Joseph Smith Has Said about Our Dispensation,” Ensign, Apr. 1980, 6–7)

In every age of the history of the world, righteous people have longed for the opportunity to dwell in a Zion society. On some occasions, such a society has been successfully established.

A. THE CITY OF ENOCH

Moses 7:12-19 tells us of the city of Enoch which was a true Zion. Here are the pertinent verses. As you read them, reflect on the blessings people experienced as they lived in this society.

12 And it came to pass that Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Canaan, to repent;

13 And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.

14 There also came up a land out of the depth of the sea, and so great was the fear of the enemies of the people of God, that they fled and stood afar off and went upon the land which came up out of the depth of the sea.

15 And the giants of the land, also, stood afar off; and there went forth a curse upon all people that fought against God;

16 And from that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness.

17 The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the

Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.

18 And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

19 And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.

B. THE ANCIENT AMERICAN ZION

Fourth Nephi shows us a people living by Zion principles. Although the word Zion is not used in this account, many of the principles are clearly in evidence. Read 4 Nephi 2-18 and look for (mark?) the attractive qualities of this society.

2 And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.

3 And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

4 And it came to pass that the thirty and seventh year passed away also, and there still continued to be peace in the land.

5 And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus, insomuch that they did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus.

6 And thus did the thirty and eighth year pass away, and also the thirty and ninth, and forty and first, and the forty and second, yea, even until forty and nine years had passed away, and also the fifty and first, and the fifty and second; yea, and even until fifty and nine years had passed away.

7 And the Lord did prosper them exceedingly in the land; yea, insomuch that they did build cities again where there had been cities burned.

8 Yea, even that great city Zarahemla did they cause to be built again.

9 But there were many cities which had been sunk, and waters came up in the stead thereof; therefore these cities could not be renewed.

10 And now, behold, it came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people.

11 And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.

12 And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.

13 And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus.

14 And it came to pass that the seventy and first year passed away, and also the seventy and second year, yea, and in fine, till the seventy and ninth year had passed away; yea, even an hundred years had passed away, and the disciples of Jesus, whom he had chosen, had all gone to the paradise of God, save it were the three who should tarry; and there were other disciples ordained in their stead; and also many of that generation had passed away.

15 And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

16 And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

17 There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

18 And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even they were blessed and prospered until an hundred and ten years had passed away; and the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was no contention in all the land.

Note particularly in the verses above the things that you can find abundantly in your community but that are missing from Zion. What would you be willing to pay for property and a home in a city where there were no envying or strifes or whoredoms or lyings, or murders, or lasciviousness? What would it be worth to you to be able to raise your children in such a place?

C. MELCHIZEDEK'S SALEM

The great king Melchizedek also established a city of such righteousness that they were gathered with the city of Enoch in heaven.

And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace. And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world . . . (Genesis 14:33,34, JST)

3. THE SAINTS OF OUR DISPENSATION HAVE BEEN COMMANDED TO ESTABLISH ZION.

Even before the Church was organized, the Lord defined the duty of his disciples: "Seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion." (D&C 6:6; 11:6; 12:6; 1:6) Take a moment to evaluate your own efforts in this area. What have you done and what are you doing to bring forth and establish Zion? Of course, many (perhaps most) of the activities required by Church membership are related to the establishment of a Zion people and then a Zion place. Our efforts to repent and to care for the poor and to warn our neighbors are all related to this ultimate goal. But we ought to think more about it and speak more about it by name. From time to time our Family Home Evenings ought to be centered on this most significant goal.

Brigham Young said that the establishment of Zion should follow this pattern:

"Let there be an hallowed influence go from us over all things over which we have any power; over the soil we cultivate, over the houses we build, and over everything we possess; and if we cease to hold fellowship with that which is corrupt and establish the Zion of God in our hearts, in our own houses, in our cities, and throughout our country, we shall ultimately overcome the earth, for we are the lords of the earth; and instead of thorns and thistles, every useful plant that is good for the food of man and to beautify and adorn will spring from its bosom." (Arthur R. Bassett, "Brigham Young and Social Responsibility," New Era, Jan. 1972, 24)

First we must establish Zion in our individual hearts; then in our houses, our communities, our country, and finally the world. As you review the descriptions of Zion societies above, consider your own heart. Are the attitudes missing from Zion missing from your soul? Are the desires of Zion people your desires?

Many years ago I read an article in the New Era about this matter of establishing Zion in our homes. It was written by a 12-year old whom I had the fortune to meet when he became a missionary. Here is the story.

Serving Ice Cream in a Celestial Family

by R. Todd Hunt

I was recently asked to speak about what our family is doing to become a celestial family. My father suggested I speak on how to serve ice cream in a society made up of righteous families. Now maybe you are like me. I didn't know there was any special way to serve ice cream in such a society until my dad explained it to me.

He first told me to research the subject in the scriptures. But, after failing to find anything about ice cream in the Bible or Doctrine and Covenants, I gave up. I didn't even look in the Book of Mormon. That was a big mistake, for that is where you find the best discourse on serving ice cream in a truly righteous family. Actually it doesn't talk much about ice cream. It hits that very lightly. But it does teach you a lot about proper technique in serving ice cream.

Maybe you could understand better if I told you how I used to serve ice cream and then explain the difference.

Since I am a teenager, when dad or mom would ask me to serve everyone some ice cream, the first thing I would do was find me a cereal bowl and stack the ice cream to the teenager level, which is about two inches above the rim. Then I would dish up the ice cream for the rest of my family. However, my brother and sisters are smaller than I, so of course the small ice cream dishes are just about right for them. Rachelle, my 11-year-old sister, thinks she should get a cereal bowl too, which is ridiculous because she isn't even a teenager yet.

Well, my dad showed me in the Book of Mormon where it explains that my method wouldn't have made the grade.

In 4 Nephi it tells what it was like after the Savior visited the people in America following his resurrection. After his visit, the people really lived righteous lives. And the way they lived can

help us understand how to develop celestial families. It even teaches us how to serve ice cream.

The Book of Mormon, in 4 Nephi, [4 Ne. 1] says that the people had no jealousies, they were not envious, and they had no contentions or disputations among them. They had all things in common, and there were no rich or poor, and there was peace in the land. They went to sacrament and priesthood meetings to hear the word of the Lord, and they continued to fast and pray.

But let's get back to ice cream! My dad gently explained to me that when I have the standard teenager's portion, it makes Rachelle and Kristi, my number two sister, jealous and envious. When they get like that, they start giving me all kinds of reasons why they should have as much as I do. Of course, I have to explain to them, loud enough for them to understand, that teenagers need more nourishment than "little girls." Then they always have a response for that. And I have to reply in a slightly louder tone, of course.

Well, when I read 4 Nephi, I could see that we were having one of those "disputations" that Nephi was talking about; and the disputation had been caused by a "contention;" and the contention was caused by "envying."

So you can see that there is a certain way that you have to serve ice cream in a family desiring to be more righteous.

Mom also pointed out something else. If everyone is allowed to have a fair share, according to their needs, then there are really no rich ice cream eaters and no poor ice cream eaters. Having no rich or poor means that everyone has as much as he needs, but he does not have so much more than someone else that they get envious and cause contentions which lead to disputations.

When these disputations are avoided, there really is "peace in

the land." At least there is peace in the family room, and everyone is happier!

When you think about it, this idea has some interesting applications when it comes to who is going to sit where in the car, or who is going to do what in family home evening, or which TV show to watch.

My serving of ice cream has changed since I read 4 Nephi, and I have discovered that to live like they did after Christ's visit, we have to concentrate on the little things we do day to day and the way we treat each other or think of each other. And you know, it helps me to think of my brother and sisters as much as myself. Mom says there is something about that in the scriptures, too. I suppose I should find that scripture as well. (R. Todd Hunt, "Serving Ice Cream in a Celestial Family," New Era, Jan.-Feb. 1982, 9)

Can you comprehend that becoming a Zion family may in fact be a result of just such things as the way in which ice cream is served? Just as Zion will one day fill the earth, it must now fill our hearts and lives. We must put an end to tumults and lyings in our own homes. We must avoid like the plague the whoredomes and lasciviousness images of our televisions and rented videos.

Hugh Nibley wrote:

When all the accidentals and incidentals are stripped away, what remains that is quintessentially Zion? Buildings, walls, streets, and gates--even of gold and jasper--do not make Zion; neither do throngs in shining robes. Zion is not a Cecil B. DeMille production; the properties do not make the play, no matter how splendid they may be. What makes Zion? God has given us the perfect definition: Zion is the pure in heart--the pure in heart, not merely the pure in appearance. It is not a society or religion of forms and observances, of pious gestures and precious mannerisms: it is strictly a condition of the heart. Above

all, Zion is pure, which means "not mixed with any impurities, unalloyed"; it is all Zion and nothing else. It is not achieved wherever a heart is pure or where two or three are pure, because it is all pure--it is a society, a community, and an environment into which no unclean thing can enter. "Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (3 Nephi 20:36). It is not even pure people in a dirty environment, or pure people with a few impure ones among them; it is the perfectly pure in a perfectly pure environment. "I . . . will contend with Zion . . . and chasten her until she overcomes and is clean before me" (D&C 90:36).

The chastening of the Lord with his people—with Zion—and his contention with her is the primary reason for the Church being established in Utah rather than in Missouri. The Lord told the Saints in 1834 that because of their iniquities (see D&C 101:1-8;105:2-5) they would be required to “wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion—“ (D&C 105:9) Then, like Israel of old, they were sent into the wilderness (of Utah) to wait until a generation appeared that could build up Zion.

The Doctrine and Covenants is filled with references to this requirement. There are more than 200 references to Zion and to the laws of Zion in its pages. For example,

But how about the law of consecration, which is the foundation of Zion? It is, as I said, contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, explained there not once but many times, so that there is no excuse for not understanding it. The three basic principles are (as so plainly set forth by Wilford Woodruff): (1) everyone gets what he really needs, his wants being met from a common fund that belongs entirely to the Lord and is administered through the bishop of the church; (2) nobody keeps more than he really needs, his surplus all going to that fund; (3) dickering and controversy over the amounts involved is forestalled by the clear statement of the intent and purpose of the law, which is that all may be equal in temporal as in spiritual things. One man's needs may be greater than another's--for

example, because his family is larger; but once those needs are met for each, then all are equal, satisfied, at peace, each free to develop his own talents and do the Lord's work, for that is the purpose of the law. There is plenty to do to satisfy the work ethic without a profit motive, "but the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish" (2 Nephi 26:31). Failure to observe this law places one man above another, abominable in the sight of the Lord, and for that reason, we are told, "the world lieth in sin" (D&C 49:20), in Satan's power indeed. (Hugh Nibley: Approaching Zion, p. 167)

Jeremiah prophesied

For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. (Jeremiah 31:6)

Let that day be today. Let us arise and get on our way. It may seem difficult, but that does not matter:

This promised Zion always seems to be a little beyond our reach. We need to understand that as much virtue can be gained in progressing toward Zion as in dwelling there. It is a process as well as a destination. We approach or withdraw from Zion through the manner in which we conduct our daily dealings, how we live within our families, whether we pay an honest tithe and generous fast offering, how we seize opportunities to serve and do so diligently. Many are perfected upon the road to Zion who will never see the city in mortality. (Elder Robert D. Hales, C.R., April 1986, p. 38)

And let us remember where the journey to Zion begins:

Ah, reader, the redemption of Zion is more than the purchase or recovery of lands, the building of cities, or even the founding of nations. It is the conquest of the heart, the subjugation of the soul, the sanctifying of the flesh, the purifying and ennobling of

the passions. Greater is he who subdues himself, who captures and maintains the citadel of his own soul, than he who, misnamed conqueror, fills the world with the roar of drums, the thunder of cannon, the lightning of swords and bayonets, overturns and sets up kingdoms, lives and reigns a king, yet wears to the grave the fetters of unbridled lust, and dies the slave of sin. (The Life of Heber C. Kimball, 2d ed., Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1945, pp. 65,66)

4. THE SCRIPTURES INCLUDE GLORIOUS PROMISES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF ZION.

The D&C tells us a great deal about what will happen when we create Zion. Many of the promised blessings we have begun to experience already. Others will follow.

But there is a difference . . . between those who are honest in heart in the midst of the world and those people who have received the Gospel and who have been gathered into one community, having come out from Babylon that they might not partake of her sins nor receive of her plagues. While there are thousands and millions of the children of God who are scattered among the nations of the earth and are still in darkness in relation to the principles of life and salvation, you have received light, you have been endowed with wisdom from on high; or if you have not, then there is something the matter with you. Certainly it was your privilege to be endowed with wisdom from on high. It was your privilege to receive intelligence and knowledge from God which no people on earth can possibly receive except they repent of their sins, are baptized for the remission of their sins and receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, as you have done.

Therefore, if we are not the people of God, and if this land is not the land of Zion, tell me, if you can, where I may go upon the face of the earth to find the people of God and the land of Zion; for it is the people of God that I am looking for, and it is the land

of Zion that I have desired to search out. And it is for these objects that you have gathered to these valleys in the midst of these mountains. We have come here to serve the Lord, and the Lord has said:

Behold, blessed are they who have come up unto this land with an eye single to my glory, according to my commandments;

For them that live shall inherit the earth, and them that die shall rest from all their labors, and their work shall follow them, and they shall receive a crown in the mansions of my Father, which I have prepared for them;

Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my Gospel, for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth; and it shall bring forth in its strength. (D&C 59:1-3) (Collected Discourses, Vol.3, Joseph F. Smith, January 8th, 1893)

CONCLUSION: I have two 11-year old girls. They are precious and delightful, with a simple faith in the teachings of their parents and their teachers. But they are also vulnerable. My wife and I are certain that we must teach them and prepare them, but also that we must guard them. We do not feel comfortable in setting them free with the TV and the remote control. We are intensely selective about the movies we rent or go to see. Even in the grocery store, we watch cautiously as we pass through the checkout, hoping their attention will not be diverted to the magazines on the shelves. We try to make our voices heard in the affairs of their school. and in their activities with their friends. We are not dictators. We cherish and promote agency. But we labor to insure that they are not drawn away from Zion and from righteousness without correct counsel and clear instruction.

One day we hope to live with them in an environment where we can give our hearts and souls more completely to the affairs of the Spirit, but until we

come to that Zion of neighborhoods and nations, we must safeguard it in our hearts and our homes. And if we all do it together. Then we can do it anywhere in the world.

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