

# OF SAINTS, OF SHIPS,

*Safe passage through deep waters—the metaphor endures in sacred writing as a symbol of our reliance on God as we journey through life.*



# AND OF THE SEA



By Richard M. Romney  
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Images of oceans and ships abound in the scriptures. The books of Genesis and Moses say that during the Creation, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God created the seas (see Genesis 1:2, 9–10; Moses 2:2, 9–10). A hymn hails Christ as “the Master of ocean and earth and skies” and tells us that the winds and the waves obey His will (“Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Hymns*, no. 105).

The Old Testament tells of Noah building the ark (see Genesis 6:14–8:17), of Moses lifting up his rod to part the Red Sea (see Exodus 14:16, 21–22), and of Jonah being cast into and returning from the deep (see Jonah 1:11–15, 17; 2:1, 10). The New Testament tells of fishermen leaving their nets (see Matthew 4:20), of Christ and Peter walking on the water (see Matthew 14:29), and of the Redeemer preaching a sermon on a mount overlooking a sea called Galilee (see Matthew 5–7; Bible photo 23). The Book of Mormon tells of Nephi building a ship (see 1 Nephi 17:8), of Hagoth launching oceangoing explorations (see Alma 63:5–8), and of Jaredites receiving light in their vessels thanks to stones touched by the finger of the Lord (see Ether 6:2).

During the early history of this dispensation, the Savior once again guided His Saints, by the Holy Ghost, through the winds and the waves as ships played a key role in dispersing missionaries and gathering converts to Zion. Today, as Latter-day Saints build the Church wherever they may be, the legacy of Saints, of ships, and of the sea endures as a symbol of our journey through life and our reliance on God to see us through.

## “Thou Shalt Construct a Ship”

More than once in scriptural history, the Lord has commanded a prophet to build a ship, often to the amazement of other people.

Noah, for example, was told to make an ark and was given specific instructions about the size, shape, and construction materials. Though others mocked him, Noah was obedient, and when the great flood came he was able to save his own family as well as the animals of the earth. (See Genesis 6–8.)

The brother of Jared and his fellow travelers, “being directed continually by the hand of the Lord,” built barges that were “light upon the water” and “tight like unto a dish.” Knowing that they would need to have light inside the barges but that they would not be able to use windows, the brother of Jared made 16 molten stones and asked the premortal Christ to touch them. Because of the faith of the brother of Jared, the Lord revealed Himself to him. And thanks to the stones, the people were not forced to travel in darkness. (See Ether 2:6–25; 3:1–13; 6:1–12.)



The Lord also told Nephi, “Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee” (1 Nephi 17:8). Nephi willingly began, but his brothers rebelled and were rebuked before they gave their labor. On the great waters, Laman and Lemuel rebelled again until faced with a tempest and destruction. But eventually, under divine guidance, the ship brought Lehi and his family safely to the promised land. (See 1 Nephi 17:9–55; 18.)



*Built entirely by hand and without the use of power tools, fishing boats in Visakhapatnam, India, today (here and below) may remind those who witness their construction of the ship built by Nephi. “We did work timbers of curious workmanship,” the Book of Mormon prophet says, and “the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine” (1 Nephi 18:1, 4).*





# The Sea and the Shore

**B**ecause so much of Christ's mortal ministry took place on or near the Sea of Galilee, it is not surprising that images of the sea are found throughout the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as well as in many hymns.

Peter and Andrew were casting nets when the Savior said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

Christ calmed the storm, and men marveled. "What manner of man is this," they said, "that even the winds and the sea obey him!" (Matthew 8:27). The hymn "Master, the Tempest Is Raging" (*Hymns*, no. 105) captures the drama of this powerful event and turns it into an analogy for the soul rescued from torrents of sin and anguish, comforted by the Savior's message, "Peace, be still."

On the shores of Galilee, Christ went up on a mount and taught the marvelous sermon that contains the Beatitudes (see Matthew 5:3–12; Luke 6:20–23). At their request, He allowed devils to enter into swine that then ran into the water and perished (see Matthew 8:28–32). And He instructed Peter to catch a fish, find a coin inside, and use it to pay tribute to Caesar (see Matthew 17:27).

During and after His mortal life, the Savior told His Apostles where to fish, and their nets were completely

filled (see Luke 5:3–9; John 21:6–11). The resurrected Christ taught Peter, pointing at the ships and fish of his former life and asking, "Lovest thou me more than these?" He then committed him to "feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17).

But perhaps one of the most enduring images from the Sea of Galilee is of Christ walking on the water and bidding Peter to join Him. As Peter walked to the Master, the wind frightened Peter and he began to sink, but the Lord reached out and rescued him. (See Matthew 14:29–31.)

Hymns repeat this theme of deliverance from the storm and encourage us to also reach out and rescue: "Some poor fainting, struggling seaman you may rescue, you may save" ("Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy," *Hymns*, no. 335). Of course the Savior's Atonement makes such rescue possible.

How fitting, then, that President Thomas S. Monson counsels: "Is there a way to safety? Is there an escape from threatened destruction? The answer is a resounding *yes!* I counsel you to look to the lighthouse of the Lord. . . . There is no fog so dense, no night so dark, no gale so strong, no mariner so lost but what the lighthouse of the Lord can rescue. It beckons through the storms of life. It calls, *'This way to safety. This way to home'*" ("Believe, Obey, and Endure," *Ensign*, May 2012, 127).

*Scriptures recount numerous events involving ships and the sea (opposite page, top): Noah preserved animal life, the Lord provided light for the Jaredite vessels, and Lehi's family crossed the great waters. Much of the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ occurred on or near the Sea of Galilee, including the calming of a terrifying tempest (right). Though the storms of life may seem overpowering (below), living prophets testify that, through the Savior, such storms can still be calmed today.*



LEFT: THE LORD FULLILLETU ALL HIS WORDS, BY CLARK KELLEY PRICE. COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM. BROTHER OF JARED, SEEING THE FINGER OF THE LORD, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI. LEHI AND HIS PEOPLE ARRIVE IN THE PROMISED LAND, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI. PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY; RIGHT: MASTER, THE TEMPEST IS RAGING, BY WALTER RANE © 2001 IRI; PHOTOGRAPH FROM ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK





## The Winds and the Waves

Until the end of the 18th century, ocean voyages were hazardous and lengthy. They were usually a one-way trip for all but explorers, governors, military personnel, and the very wealthy. Emigrants embarked with near certainty that they would never return to their home countries. Yet at a time when the restored Church was enduring persecution and poverty, the Prophet Joseph Smith received the astonishing revelation to send Apostles to England (see D&C 118:4; L. Tom Perry, “What Is a Quorum?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 23–24).

Twenty years earlier, such a journey would have been impossible for missionaries with no means of support other than the kindness of others, and most of those who joined the Church would have been too poor to immigrate to Zion. However, three critical innovations occurred in the 18th and early 19th centuries that helped Saints as well as sailors overcome “the wrath of the storm-tossed sea” (*Hymns*, no. 105).

**Improved Navigation.** For years, navigators could fix latitude with precision, but longitude was only an estimate based on reckoning. When a British fleet sank in 1707, the government offered a prize to the person who could invent a method to precisely determine longitude. Finally, in 1761 a clockmaker named John Harrison designed a marine chronometer that, when perfected, made fixing longitude a routine practice.

*For centuries, sea travel was perilous and slow. Navigation was imprecise, and passage was expensive. But thanks to inspired innovations, the speed, ease, and safety of ocean travel reached a high point precisely when improved transportation would aid missionaries in spreading the gospel and help Latter-day Saints gather to Zion.*







**Packet Ships.** For decades, booking an ocean voyage was a trial of patience. The owner would advertise a ship's departure, then wait until sufficient cargo and passengers had been contracted. When wind and weather seemed favorable, they would depart. Then a merchant named John Thompson, who wanted faster, more reliable service, found partners and created a transatlantic shipping line, with several vessels known as "packet ships" sailing according to a published schedule. By the time the Apostles left for England, a dozen ships a month left New York for Europe, and a dozen more arrived in New York.

**Innovative Design.** Until the early 1800s, oceangoing ships were slow, clumsy, and loaded with cannons to fend off pirates. Then from 1795 through 1815, shipbuilders in Baltimore, Maryland, began building faster vessels, and in 1845 in New York, a naval architect named John W. Griffiths designed what naval historians consider the first true clipper ship, the *Rainbow*. Such speedy ships became widely used and reduced transatlantic crossing time from months to weeks.

Thanks to these inspired innovations, the speed, ease, and safety of ocean travel reached a high point from 1845 through 1860, precisely when improved transportation would aid missionaries in spreading the gospel and help Latter-day Saints gather to Zion. It is also interesting to note that the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, which allowed flat barges to transport a printing press to Palmyra, New York, where the Book of Mormon was printed, and that during the Nauvoo period of Church history, paddle-wheel steamboats brought many Saints up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, Louisiana, to Nauvoo, Illinois. Today, of course, Latter-day Saints are encouraged to build up the Church where they live, and various modes of transportation continue to facilitate the Lord's work. ■

*—Includes information contributed by Brian Bullock, a digital mapmaker from Colorado, USA*