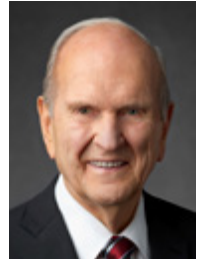




*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is preparing the world for the day when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:9).*



By President  
Russell M. Nelson

# The Future of the Church

## PREPARING THE WORLD FOR THE SAVIOR'S SECOND COMING

**Y**ou and I get to participate in the ongoing Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is wondrous! It is not man-made! It comes from the Lord, who said, “I will hasten my work in its time” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:73). This work is empowered by a divine announcement made 200 years ago. It consisted of only seven words: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Uttered by Almighty God, that announcement brought a young Joseph Smith to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those seven words launched the Restoration of His gospel. Why? Because our living God is a loving God! He wants His children to gain immortality and eternal life! The great latter-day work of which we are a part was established, on schedule, to bless a waiting and weeping world.

I cannot speak of the Restoration in tempered tones. This fact of history is absolutely stunning! It is incredible! It is breathtaking! How amazing is it that messengers from heaven came to give authority and power to this work?

Today, the Lord’s work in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is moving forward at an accelerated pace. The Church will have an unprecedented, unparalleled future. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:10).

Remember that the fulness of Christ's ministry lies in the future. The prophecies of His Second Coming have yet to be fulfilled. We are just building up to the climax of this last dispensation—when the Savior's Second Coming becomes a reality.

### **Gathering Israel on Both Sides of the Veil**

A necessary prelude to that Second Coming is the long-awaited gathering of scattered Israel (see 1 Nephi 15:18; see also the title page of the Book of Mormon). This doctrine of the gathering is one of the important teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord has declared: "I give unto you a sign . . . that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion" (3 Nephi 21:1).

We not only teach this doctrine, but we participate in it. We do so as we help to gather the elect of the Lord on both sides of the veil.

As part of the planned destiny of the earth and its inhabitants, our kindred dead are to be redeemed (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:15). Mercifully, the invitation to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7; Moroni 10:32; Doctrine and Covenants 20:59) can also be extended to those who died without a knowledge of the gospel (see Doctrine and Covenants 137:6–8). Part of their preparation, however, requires the earthly efforts of others. We gather pedigree charts, create family group sheets, and do temple work vicariously to gather individuals unto the Lord and into their families (see 1 Corinthians 15:29; 1 Peter 4:6).

Families are to be sealed together for all eternity (see Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3; 49:17; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39). A welding link is to be forged between the fathers and the children. In our time, a whole, complete, and perfect union of all dispensations, keys, and powers are to be welded

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together (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:18). For these sacred purposes, holy temples now dot the earth. I emphasize again that construction of these temples may not change your life, but your service in the temple surely will.

The time is coming when those who do not obey the Lord will be separated from those who do (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:1–7). Our safest insurance is to continue to be worthy of admission to His holy house. The greatest gift you could give to the Lord is to keep yourself unspotted from the world, worthy to attend His holy house. His gift to you will be the peace and security of knowing that you are worthy to meet Him, whenever that time comes.

In addition to temple work, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a sign to the entire world that the Lord has commenced to gather Israel and fulfill the covenants He made

to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Genesis 12:2–3; 3 Nephi 21; 29). The Book of Mormon declares the doctrine of the gathering (see, for example, 1 Nephi 10:14). It causes people to learn about Jesus Christ, to believe His gospel, and to join His Church. In fact, if there were no Book of Mormon, the promised gathering of Israel would not occur.

Missionary work is also crucial to that gathering. Servants of the Lord go forth proclaiming the Restoration. In many nations our members and missionaries have searched for those of scattered Israel; they have hunted for them “out of the holes of the rocks”

(Jeremiah 16:16); and they have fished for them, as in ancient days.

Missionary work connects people to the covenant the Lord made with Abraham anciently:

“Thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

“And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father” (Abraham 2:9–10).

Missionary work is only the beginning of the blessing. The fulfillment, the consummation, of those blessings comes as those who have entered the waters of baptism perfect their lives to the point that they may enter the holy temple. Receiving an endowment there seals members of the Church to the Abrahamic covenant.

The choice to come unto Christ is not a matter of physical location; it is a matter of individual commitment. All members of the Church have access to the doctrine, ordinances, priesthood keys, and blessings of the gospel, regardless of their location. People can be “brought to the knowledge of the Lord” (3 Nephi 20:13) without leaving their homelands.

True, in the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well. But now the gathering takes place in each nation. The Lord has decreed the establishment of Zion (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:6; 11:6) in each realm where He has given His Saints their birth and nationality. The place of gathering for Brazilian Saints

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is in Brazil; the place of gathering for Nigerian Saints is in Nigeria; the place of gathering for Korean Saints is in Korea. Zion is “the pure in heart” (Doctrine and Covenants 97:21). It is wherever righteous Saints are.

Spiritual security will always depend upon *how* one lives, not *where* one lives. I promise that if we will do our best to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and access the power of His Atonement through repentance, we will have the knowledge and power of God to help us take the blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people and to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord.

### **The Second Coming**

The Lord will return to the land that He made holy by His mission there in mortality. In triumph, He will come again to Jerusalem. In royal robes of red to symbolize His blood, which oozed from every pore, He shall return to the Holy City (see Doctrine and Covenants

133:46–48). There and elsewhere, “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 101:23). His “name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

He will govern from two world capitals: one in old Jerusalem (see Zechariah 14) and the other in the New Jerusalem “built upon the American continent” (Articles of Faith 1:10). From these centers He will direct the affairs of His Church and kingdom. Another temple will yet be built in Jerusalem. From that temple He shall reign forever as Lord of Lords. Water will issue from under the temple. Waters of the Dead Sea will be healed. (See Ezekiel 47:1–8.)

In that day He will bear new titles and be surrounded by special Saints. He will be known as “Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that [will be] with him [will be those who] are called, and chosen, and faithful”

(Revelation 17:14) to their trust here in mortality. Then He “shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

The earth will be returned to its paradisiacal state and be made new. There will be a new heaven and a new earth (see Revelation 21:1; Ether 13:9; Doctrine and Covenants 29:23–24).

It is our charge—it is our privilege—to help prepare the world for that day.

### Face the Future with Faith

Meanwhile, here and now, we live in a time of turmoil. Earthquakes and tsunamis wreak devastation, governments collapse, economic stresses are severe, the family is under attack, and divorce rates are rising. We have great cause for concern. But we do not need to let our fears displace our faith. We can combat those fears by strengthening our faith.

Why do we need such resilient faith?

Because difficult days are ahead. Rarely in the future will it be easy or popular to be a faithful Latter-day Saint. Each of us will be tested. The Apostle Paul warned that in the latter days, those who diligently follow the Lord “shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). That very persecution can either crush you into silent weakness or motivate you to be more exemplary and courageous in your daily lives.

How you deal with life’s trials is part of the development of your faith. Strength comes when you remember that you have a divine nature, an inheritance of infinite worth. The Lord has reminded you, your children, and your grandchildren that you are lawful heirs, that you have been reserved in heaven for your specific time and place to be born, to grow and become His standard bearers and covenant people. As you walk in the Lord’s path of righteousness, you will be blessed to

continue in His goodness and be a light and a savior unto His people (see Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–11).

Do whatever it takes to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ by increasing your understanding of the doctrine taught in His restored Church and by relentlessly seeking truth. Anchored in pure doctrine, you will be able to step forward with faith and dogged persistence and cheerfully do all that lies in your power to fulfill the purposes of the Lord.

You will have days when you will be discouraged. So pray for courage not to give up! Sadly, some who you thought were your friends will betray you. And some things will simply seem unfair.

However, I promise you that as you follow Jesus Christ, you will find sustained peace and true joy. As you keep your covenants with increasing precision, and as you defend the Church and kingdom of God on the earth today, the Lord will bless you with strength and wisdom to accomplish what only members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can accomplish.

We are to be builders of an individual faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith in His Church. We are to build families and be sealed in holy temples. We are to build the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth (see Matthew 6:33).

We are to prepare for our own divine destiny: glory, immortality, and eternal lives (see Romans 2:7; Doctrine and Covenants 75:5).

I humbly testify to you that—as the Prophet Joseph Smith proclaimed—the restored gospel of Jesus Christ “will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

We are engaged in the work of Almighty God. I pray for His blessings to be with each and every one of you. ■

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