



**By Elder  
Gerrit W. Gong**  
Of the Quorum  
of the Twelve  
Apostles

# Bring Forth Zion

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*As Latter-day Saints blessed with the restored gospel, we are called to strengthen the Church and build Zion.*

**T**hroughout history, the Lord's people have sought to bring forth a gospel society where He can dwell. To become such a community of Saints, we must learn to sanctify and unify our hearts and minds, deal justly without contention and disputation, and dwell in righteousness with no poor among us (see Moses 7:18).

For example, after John and Maria Linford joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Gravely, England, in 1842, John became president of the local branch. Relatives and friends, however, did not share the joy the Linfords found in the Restoration. If they could not persuade John to give up his new religion, then they would “starve him to it” by boycotting his shoemaking business.

In 1856 the Perpetual Emigrating Fund gave John and Maria an opportunity to immigrate to the Salt Lake Valley. They sailed to New York with three of their sons. From there they traveled to Iowa City, Iowa, from which they left in July 1856 with the ill-fated James G. Willie handcart company.

Early on October 21, near the banks of the Sweetwater River in Wyoming, John spoke his last words.

“I am glad we came,” he told Maria when she asked him if he was sorry they had left England. “I shall not live to reach Salt Lake, but you and the boys will, and I do not regret all we have gone through if our boys can grow up and raise their families in Zion.”<sup>1</sup>



## What Is Zion?

Few topics outside the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ have inspired ancient and modern prophets and Saints more than the latter-day gathering of the house of Israel and the building of Zion in preparation for the Savior's Second Coming.<sup>2</sup>

Why is Zion so important to Latter-day Saints—then and now, wherever the Lord's people are found?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared, "From the day of Adam to the present moment—whenever the Lord has had a people of his own; whenever there have been those who have hearkened to his voice and kept his commandments; whenever his saints have served him with full purpose of heart—there has been Zion."<sup>3</sup>

The scriptures describe a Zion society. Enoch, a prophet of great faith during Noah's day, "built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion" (Moses 7:19). The Lord dwelt there with His people, blessing them and their land (see Moses 7:16–18). The Lord said unto Enoch, "Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name" (Moses 7:35).

An aspiration of Zion is to establish a united place of faith founded on the celestial principles of heaven, wherein God's people can walk with Him and God Himself can find abode.

The Book of Mormon testifies that after the resurrected Savior visited the New World, "the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land. . . .

"And they had all things in 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. . . .

"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" (4 Nephi 1:2, 3, 15).

## Armed with Righteousness and Power

Enoch's day was a time of war, bloodshed, fear, darkness, and hate—when "the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth" (Moses 7:24; see also verses 16, 17, 33). But Enoch was faithful, and the Lord called him to cry repentance.



The Lord told Enoch that similar “great tribulations” (Moses 7:61) will precede His Second Coming. “As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah” (Moses 7:60).

Of our day, President Russell M. Nelson recently observed, “I view the current [COVID-19] pandemic as only one of many ills that plague our world, including hate, civil unrest, racism, violence, dishonesty, and lack of civility.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, we have prophetic assurance. President Nelson has also said:

“We live in the day that ‘our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation.’ [Doctrine and Covenants 121:27.] We have front-row seats to *witness live* what the prophet Nephi saw *only in vision*, that ‘the power of the Lamb of God’ would descend ‘upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.’ [1 Nephi 14:14.]

“*You*, my brothers and sisters, are among those men, women, and children whom Nephi saw.”<sup>5</sup>

The invitation to gather and bless those on both sides of the veil, build Zion, and prepare the world for

our Savior’s Second Coming includes each of us. “Of all the people who have ever lived on planet earth,” said President Nelson, “*we* are the ones who get to participate in this final, great gathering event.”<sup>6</sup>

### How Do We Get There?

As Latter-day Saints blessed with the restored gospel, we are “called to labor in [the Lord’s] vineyard, and to build up [His] church, and to bring forth Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 39:13). That work requires love, unity, faith, service, sacrifice, and obedience.

“When people love God with all their hearts and righteously strive to become like Him, there is less strife and contention in society. There is more unity,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He added: “*Unity* is . . . a broad, comprehensive term but most certainly exemplifies the first and second great commandments to love God and love our fellowmen. It denotes a Zion people whose hearts and minds are ‘knit together in unity’ [Mosiah 18:21].”<sup>7</sup>

With that love and unity, we exercise faith to draw upon our Savior’s Atonement, which can transform us as we purify our hearts and lives (see Mosiah 3:19; Doctrine and



Covenants 97:21). We gather those willing to come unto the Lord in righteousness. Through sacred ordinances and celestial principles, we invite the power of godliness into our lives (see Doctrine and Covenants 105:5). Consecrated by covenant belonging with God and each other, we build Zion and prepare for the Second Coming.

“Charity is the pure love of Christ,” said President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. “And it is faith in Him and the full effects of His infinite Atonement that will qualify you, and those you love and serve, for the supernal gift to live in that sociality of a long-looked-for and promised Zion.”<sup>8</sup>

### Prepare for the Days to Come

Modern prophets teach that coming unto the Savior is a matter of individual commitment, not physical location.

“In the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well,” President Nelson has explained. “But now the gathering takes place in each nation. The Lord has decreed the establishment of Zion in each realm where He has given His Saints their birth and nationality.”<sup>9</sup>

As we embrace the challenge and blessing of building Zion in our families, branches, wards, stakes, and

communities, we look with John and Maria Linford toward the day when our children and grandchildren “can grow up and raise their families in Zion” among every nation, kindred, and tongue.

As we seek first the Lord and His righteousness, we pray “that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 65:5). ■

#### NOTES

1. See Andrew D. Olsen, *The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie and Martin Handcart Pioneers* (2006), 45–46, 136–37.
2. See Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
3. Bruce R. McConkie, “Come: Let Israel Build Zion,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 116–17.
4. Russell M. Nelson, in Sarah Jane Weaver, “President Nelson Invites Us to Give Thanks,” Nov. 20, 2020, [thechurchnews.com](https://www.thechurchnews.com).
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 88.
6. Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, “Hope of Israel.”
7. Quentin L. Cook, “Hearts Knit in Righteousness and Unity,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 18, 19.
8. Henry B. Eyring, “Sisters in Zion,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 69.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 81.