

ZION--ANCIENT AND MODERN

In the early revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord reiterates the counsel that the Sainte should seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion. That great challenge has never been rescinded. The Prophet Joseph Smith said,

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, "the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God will gather together all things that are in heaven, and all things that are upon the earth, even in one," [*History of the Church*, 4:609-10; hereafter cited as *HC*.]

Zion is defined as "the pure in heart," but this statement needs to be placed in proper context. The "pure in heart" are those who are sanctified and who receive the blessings of the sanctified – the blessings of the Comforter. Thus, Zion consists of a body of people who have embraced the gospel, have been regenerated by its divine spiritual powers, and have in this way become pure in heart to the degree that they can see God, that is, receive the blessings that relate to the Second Comforter.

Technically speaking, then, Zion does not truly exist until there is a body of people who are pure in heart, who have made their calling and election sure, who have been sealed to eternal life and lives, and who are enjoying the blessings of the Second Comforter.

This means that we still have a distance to go to prepare a Zion-people for the Second Coming of Christ, for Zion is a group of people who are worthy to enjoy, personally, directly, and immediately,

the presence and communion of Christ on the spiritual plane of the Second Comforter. That is one of the basic concepts of Zion taught in the scriptures.

There is also a system of Zion. Zion is a society sufficient within itself to take care of every legitimate need of man. It is a divine system that is so organized and designed, by its inward principles and its mechanics, that it not only fosters righteousness and enhances the spread of truth, but regenerates man spiritually so that he can return to the presence of God and commune openly with him. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave us a few insights into this view of Zion. In the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, he indicates that Zion on earth is an approximation of a heavenly system in the presence of God. In speaking on the subject of salvation, he explained that a man may be saved after the judgment in the terrestrial or telestial kingdom, but he can never see the celestial kingdom of God unless he is born of water and of the Spirit. That is, man can never come unto "Mount Zion," the residence of the righteous who dwell in celestial glory, except in this way. The real Zion is about the veil, and the Zion on earth is to be built up according to the pattern of that great system above the veil. The Prophet stated that man can "never come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the Church of the Firstborn, unless he becomes as a little child, and is taught by the Spirit of God." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 12; hereafter cited as *TPJS*.)