

Finding Zion

Zion is a multi-definitional word, so what is Zion? Because there are several answers, there needs to be several questions asked. To properly understand the meaning of Zion the standard questions of “who,” “what,” “where,” “when” and “how” must be answered and the greatest asset to this understanding is recognizing the context in which the scriptural reference to Zion is used. Context is probably the most important characteristic of properly understanding all readings of scripture. It is the only thing that can defeat misunderstanding and misuse of otherwise useful and important spiritual information given to mankind for the benefit of all who would desire to improve their lives and increase in their knowledge of God and His operations on earth and in heaven.

Taking the questions in the order presented at the beginning, it must be asked, “who is Zion?” In the largest context it is the Church of the Firstborn and exists in the eternities of heaven and can exist on earth under certain conditions.

D&C 76:

92 And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things--where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

93 Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever.

94 They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fullness and of his grace.

95 And he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion.

From this it is understood that the actual Church of the Firstborn resides in the presence of God in His heavenly realm, which is supported with the following.

D&C Section 97:

21 Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion — THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn.

Zion is also defined by the characteristics of those who dwell there.

Some have used this scriptural reference to relieve themselves of any feelings of unrest about where they might be living at the present time. The rationale goes something like this: I am a good person, trying to do the right things, therefore, since I am pure in heart, I carry Zion in my heart, ergo Zion is wherever I am located. This same rationale is used to satisfy the scriptural admonition to “stand in the holy place” when certain occurrences are observed happening in the world. It is felt that if Zion is within one’s heart, and Zion is assumed to be the holy place, then wherever the presumed “pure in heart” person is standing is Zion and therefore “the holy place,” so they are good no matter where they are. This kind of tortured logic is of course grossly presumptive and false, but unfortunately prevalent in some circles. The most correct rendering of the scripture is that once a person is inducted into the true Zion of God and the heavenly Church of the Firstborn, then, and only then, are they defined and judged as the PURE IN HEART.

JST Genesis 9:22-0890--09876

22 And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy;

23 And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch.

The foregoing statements were made to Noah and it introduces Enoch, Noah’s father, whose city was the only one so far that achieved the functional status of Zion on earth. It was consequently taken from the earth and translated to await the time when it could be returned to the earth during the millennial reign of the Lord.

The next city chronologically to be called Zion was Jerusalem under the kingship of David and it was called Zion the city of David in the scriptures. It did not however meet the requirements to function as a true outpost of the heavenly Zion since it’s people were not operating under the laws and ordinances of the Celestial Kingdom, as did the city of

Enoch. The city referred to as Zion in the old country, was Jerusalem and in the end will be a Zion to the tribe of Judah and the remnant of the other tribes who have gathered there. This introduces the concept of every functional earthly Zion as a city of refuge and protection for the righteous. In the final analysis the people who are Zion are the Church of the Firstborn who reside or will reside in the presence or the realm of God.

The “what” is Zion question has already been broached and is in the first instance an earthly city of refuge for those who seek its protection and righteous harmony, which is striving to reach the stature of a community fully embracing the principles of the Celestial Kingdom. In the final instance it is the heavenly city and abode of God.

The first attempt at achieving a Zion on earth was the City of Enoch and it was apparently successful since it was taken from the earth. The reason for its removal is thought to be that the operation of Zion is so powerful that if it were allowed to remain on earth it would have spread to eliminate evil everywhere on this creation and would have ruined the test of mortality for the many spirits waiting for a chance to come to this earth and gain a corporal body. Consequently, the earth would have to be redeemed and sanctified long before it served its full purpose. The next place to be called Zion was Jerusalem during the reign of king David. This at least introduced the idea of Zion on earth again even though that incarnation was not as successful as before. It does however, reserve that place for a future sanctuary when more of the conditions are met to qualify it as an earthly Zion, which will come during the wrapping up of this creation. The last Zion will be the creation of a New Jerusalem and it will be separate and distinct from the original. As with the old Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem has been established as a placeholder to be fully established at some future time.

There are some phrases that are intimately linked to Zion that should be understood in an effort to comprehend the overall subject of Zion. In the book of Isaiah he makes reference to “the daughter of Zion.” The daughter of Zion is Jerusalem both old and new. It is the corporal or tangible city, which houses the inhabitants of Zion. One of the unique aspects of Isaiah’s writings is that they refer to ancient times and times to come.

These include some times contemporary to him and to generations that followed his lifetime as well as to circumstances that refer to us now and our future. When Isaiah refers to the “daughters of Zion” however, he is talking about women who are mortals within the community of people chosen to try to live the principles of Zion in every location. It refers to those who are members of a people who should know and be living the principles of the gospel of Christ and of Zion. In connection with Zion, Isaiah refers to the “mountain of the Lord’s house.” The word mountain in this case is used to mean a stronghold, a high place in principle, a sanctuary or a place protected by the power of God. It does not refer to the Rocky Mountains of the United States. The mountain of the Lord’s house is eternal in nature. Some people refer to the Rockies as the “everlasting hills,” however, they came into existence as the earth’s crust shifted around and continents were re-formed and they were much taller in the past and will eventually wear away to become non-existent. They are neither everlasting nor eternal. So what is Zion? Zion in the final analysis is a people who live the purest lives and comport themselves according to the laws and doctrines of the highest heavens and the abode of God. They are ultimately honest, which affords them great clarity so they see as they are seen and they know as they are known. They are peaceful in righteousness and ferocious in defense against evil being imposed against them.

Where is Zion today? An operating Zion does not exist on earth at the present time, but will again someday. It will have a location or locations so that those who will not take up the sword (weapons) against their neighbor will have to flee there to avoid mortal conflict. There are two initial places designated for Zion to be established as the starting places before it ultimately spreads to cover the earth. These places are the old Jerusalem and the new Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem is well known. The new Jerusalem will be in the area around Jackson County in the State of Missouri. The immediate vicinity of the City of Independence will be the center stake. After the initial centers of Zion are established there will be Stakes of Zion formed, Kirtland, Ohio will be one and other places in the western United States as well as elsewhere. These two Jerusalems are the only places that have been identified by the Lord as locations that have been consecrated by Him as the initial points for establishing Zion on earth in the last days. These are the

places to which the people of the Lord are to gather for the wrapping up scenes. These are the sanctuaries for the righteous of God to be protected during the scourges the people of the earth will suffer before the Coming of the Lord in power and majesty to institute His millennial reign. These are the places where those people so disposed can live according to the laws of God unmolested. These are the places where the Lord has called his people to gather even if they have previously gathered to other, temporary sanctuaries. Ultimately only these consecrated places will have God's protection during the destruction of the wicked. These are the holy places where one must stand during the tribulations to come.

When will Zion be established and operational and when should one gather to where Zion will be? The Hebrew have already begun gathering to Jerusalem. That gathering became official in the 1940's. The Mormons tried to begin the gathering to the western Zion in the 1830's but were driven to Illinois and then to the western territory. Focusing on the Zion in the Midwest of the United States, there are several aspects of gathering there that should be explored. There seems to be only two rationales for gathering to Missouri and at least two to avoid it. One of the reasons to gather is in response to being inspired to move there by something spiritual in nature and the other is a result of prudent preparation. Inspiration many times is the product of information. One might ask, what the status is of the American Zion? To answer such a question one should investigate the writings of those who tried to establish it originally.

D&C Section 57:

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

2 Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion.

3 And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse.

4 Wherefore, it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the saints, and also every tract lying westward, even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile;

5 And also every tract bordering by the prairies, inasmuch as my disciples are enabled to buy lands. Behold, this is wisdom, that they may obtain it for an everlasting inheritance...

14 And thus let those of whom I have spoken be planted in the land of Zion, as speedily as can be, with their families, to do those things even as I have spoken.

15 And now concerning the gathering—Let the bishop and the agent make preparations for those families which have been commanded to come to this land, as soon as possible, and plant them in their inheritance.

16 And unto the residue of both elders and members further directions shall be given hereafter. Even so. Amen.

What is alluded to here and born out by history is that initially only those who were commanded to go to Zion were authorized to go there for the purpose of living the gospel and establishing the beginnings of Zion. Early members of the church could not, of their own volition, just decide to live in Zion as part of its establishment. They could move to Missouri, but they would not be allowed to participate with the authorized community. Inclusion in Zion's community actually required a written recommend from recognized authority.

D&C Section 58:

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, and give ear to my word, and learn of me what I will concerning you, and also concerning this land unto which I have sent you.

2 For verily I say unto you, blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven.

3 Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

4 For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand.

5 Remember this, which I tell you before, that you may lay it to heart, and receive that which is to follow.

6 Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you—that you might be obedient, and that your hearts might be prepared to bear testimony of the things which are to come;

7 And also that you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand;

This revelation was received in 1831 long before they were aware of the troubles they would face in later years, but these passages are clear that they are only setting the foundation and implies that all will not go easily and these passages say nothing about Zion flourishing once it is initially established. Laying the foundation began in 1831 and continues in a far less organized way to this day. Continuing with the revelation as given:

8 And also that a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor; yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail;

9 Yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited.

10 First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble;

11 And after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come.

12 Behold, I, the Lord, have spoken it.

13 And that the testimony might go forth from Zion, yea, from the mouth of the city of the heritage of God—

The marriage feast precedes the marriage and the marriage takes place after the groom arrives. In the meantime the feast must be prepared. The original Mormons began the preparations. The Lord in this imagery is speaking of things spiritual. This is not a

restatement of the parable of the marriage where the invited guests refuse to come. It is an independent metaphor. The feast, as it always is with the gospel, is for the poor or to say the humble, meek, or those who do not assert themselves, but are worthy of mercy. The preparers however include the rich, those who have means; the learned or those who have learned the gospel; the wise or the prudent in the faith, and the noble or those with the strength of character to assist in the preparation. During the preparation of the final wedding feast the worthy preparers are also partakers of the feast while they live and if they have passed on prior to the arrival of the groom they will arrive again as part of the groom's entourage. When the groom appears and the wedding feast can commence as the official wedding, then all those who were not gathered previous will be brought to the glorious occasion. They are depicted as poor, lame, blind and deaf only because they have been spiritually hampered, but are deserving of a place at the table.

To dwell in Zion one must have an abode, which is an actual property on which to have a residence. This is referred to as an inheritance in Zion. It is called such because all property in Zion is consecrated and therefore owned by God and administered by His legal representative in the office of Bishop. The Law of Consecration is mandatory within Zion for it to exist on earth. This is the law by which there are no poor and it must be exercised righteously or Zion cannot be established and maintained. The failure of the early saints hinged on the faulty execution of this very principle. The Law of Consecration is seldom understood and difficult to live because of mistaken ideas and jealousies. The true concept is not complicated but must be examined more deeply in a different paper. Suffice it to say, until this principle can be lived properly, there will be no earthly Zion.

There are only two ways to secure an eternal inheritance in Zion. Land must either be purchased or acquired by the shedding of blood. The Lord has only authorized securing an inheritance in Zion by purchasing it with money. This is the impetus for prudent preparation. If one wishes to secure an eternal inheritance in Zion and aspire to membership in the Lord's Church of the Firstborn, then purchasing property in an appropriate region of Missouri is necessary. It does not appear mandatory to reside on

one's Missouri land, but it is mandatory that it be bought and legally owned. At some point when the Law of Consecration is put into operation the property must be consecrated so it can be deeded back as a stewardship. If one passes on before it can be properly consecrated then ownership will still reserve it as an inheritance at some future time when Zion can be established.

The reasons to avoid gathering to Zion are quite common. It is believed by some that the restriction that "only those who are called and authorized can come to the land of Zion" is still in effect and all others are prohibited because it is against the will of God. Furthermore, it is believed that when it is time to return to where Zion is to be established the move will be announced and led by the leaders of the church and it will be accomplished through the power of God manifested in a pillar of smoke during the day and a pillar of fire by night to lead them. This will of course occur, but it may be after the preparations for the wedding feast are complete, Zion is in operation and the appearance of the groom has occurred or is imminent. The Lord actually opened the way for anyone to come to the land of Zion many years ago.

D&C 64:21

21 I will not that my servant Frederick G. Williams should sell his farm, for I, the Lord, will to retain a strong hold in the land of Kirtland, for the space of five years, in the which I will not overthrow the wicked, that thereby I may save some.

22 And after that day, I, the Lord, will not hold any guilty that shall go with an open heart up to the land of Zion; for I, the Lord, require the hearts of the children of men.

This revelation was received September 11, 1831. Five years later would have been September 11, 1836. As of this writing it has been about 180 years that the land of Zion has been open and available for those seeking to gather and acquire inheritances in the land of Zion.

Some who avoid gathering to Zion in these last days of the time of the gentiles do so because they are rooted elsewhere. Their family is established in a region far removed

from Zion and they may have been there for generations. They may have properties, associations, and even established businesses. Such an uprooting would be too great a sacrifice to ask their family to endure.

Then there are those who fear the “cleansing” of Missouri so that all life will be extinguished in that area prior to the establishment of Zion on the land consecrated by the Lord. This is expressed in the following citation and known as the “yellow dog prophecy.”

J. Golden Kimball, Conference Report, October 1930, p.59

"The western boundaries of the State of Missouri will be swept so clean of its inhabitants that as President Young tells us, 'when we return to that place there will not be as much as a yellow dog to wag his tail.'

Even though brother Kimball attributes this comment to Brigham Young there is no record to be found, other than this one, that President Young ever said such a thing. There are some records of visions, which are graphically foreboding in regard to Missouri, but visions require righteous interpretation and many times they depict spiritual events as physical scenes, hence the need for interpretation. This statement more than others has inspired something akin to a doctrinal belief inside the ranks of Mormons looking for an excuse to avoid gathering to Missouri. In the final analysis, if one feels moved to gather to Missouri then do so and if one finds the notion repellent stay away. The course of Zion is set and does not depend on any of us for its ultimate success.

Mortals do not know when or how Zion will be established. The only things that are known is that it will only be allowed to exist on the highest principles, which include the true gospel of Christ organized and operated by legitimate priesthood authority on the foundation of the Law of Consecration by righteous practitioners. Until then it remains in a state of preparation. One must determine what steps are to taken in regard to Zion and the gathering of the righteous at this time for his or her self. It may be worth personally inquiring of the Lord for His recommendation. Any actions should still be

taken after adequate preparations and not done in haste or whimsically. Zion is to be a place of peace and harmony for those who would reside there, but be aware that the very last thing the adversary wants is for Zion to be established and redeemed. Consequently, many distractions exist to waylay the unsuspecting. May the Spirit of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob guide and inspire those who seek His righteousness and seek to glorify Him. Amen.

SOJ

findingzion.org