

Civilization—Transcript

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Because everything we do is voluntary, and because no one gets paid to do any of the things that are done as part of the endeavor that we share together, in order to host a conference like this, those that choose to do so, do so at their own expense, with volunteers doing everything that gets accomplished—arranging for the use of all the facilities that get used (including this one today) and sacrifice in order to be able to host an event like this. This was a remarkable conference for the last three days now. And everything that has been done, and everything that got organized, and all of the facilities that were made available were done by the local group here that chose to sacrifice in order to make it possible. I wanted to start out by expressing my appreciation for all those who have worked to make this possible and all of the events and participants. I think it's been a marvelous conference, and I appreciate the opportunity to be invited.

We study the Old Testament to learn about individual salvation from God. We study the New Testament to learn about individual salvation through Christ. We read the Book of Mormon to reassure ourselves that, like those who lived before us, we can be individually saved in our day. We study the revelations of Joseph Smith to learn about individual salvation.

Historic Christianity and the various Mormon traditions have all focused on individual salvation. Christians have been “born again” and found salvation through God. Mormons have had their “calling and election made sure” and claim God has saved them. Throughout the Judeo-Christian landscape, individual salvation is the great quest, the overarching yearning, and the religious end to be obtained.

Salvation is individual. There is only individual salvation and no such thing as collective salvation. While I accept this as true, there is something else that is equally true: God wants “people” to collectively be His.

In the revelations of July 14, 2017 and October 4, 2018 received from God (those are in the Teachings and Commandments as sections 157 and 176), the emphasis has been on “people.” Both responses by the Lord have gone beyond individual salvation to focus on people, Zion, and the New Jerusalem. Consider these words from the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, addressing the importance of God's people:

*I, the Lord say to you: You have asked of me concerning the scriptures prepared on [your] behalf of all those who seek to become **my covenant people**, and therefore I answer you **on behalf of all the people**, and **not** as to any individual. For there are those who are humble, patient and easily persuaded. Nevertheless, people who are quarrelsome and proud are also among you, and since you seek to **unite to become one people, I answer you as one**. I covenanted with Adam at the beginning, which covenant was broken by mankind. Since the days of Adam **I have always sought to reestablish people of covenant among the living**, and therefore have desired that man should love*

one another, not begrudgingly, but as brothers and sisters indeed, that I may establish my covenant and provide **them** with light and truth...

For the sake of the promises to the fathers [I will] labor with you **as a people**, and not because of you, for you have not yet become what you must be to **live together in peace**. If you will hearken [unto] my words, **I will make you my people** and my words will give you peace. Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger **can destroy the peace of all my people**. Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but to do as you profess...

There are many things yet to be restored **unto my people**. It is ordained that some things are **only to be given to people who are mine** and cannot otherwise be given to mankind on Earth. You do not yet understand the glory to be revealed **unto my covenant people**...

It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine,...I will watch over **them** and protect **them** in the day of harvest, and gather **them**...as a hen gather[eth] her **chicks** under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be **my people** and I will be your God, and the sword will not devour you. And unto **those** who will receive will more be given, until **they** know the mysteries of God in full...

You pray each time you partake of the sacrament to always have my Spirit to be with you. And what is my Spirit? It is to love one another as I have loved you. Do my works and you will know my doctrine; for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge **to my people**. If you return good for evil, you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master. You call me Lord, and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace, and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety...

Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. I lead to all truth. I will lead all who come to me to the truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this too from me, in power, by my word and in very deed. For I will come unto you if you will come unto me. Study to learn how to **respect your brothers and sisters and to come together** by precept, reason and persuasion rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong

disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me I will tell you my part. (T&C 157:1-2,19,44,48,51,53-54, emphasis added)

These are God's words in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant. The focus is on the community and not on the individual. It's taken me years to notice that. This focus is different for a reason. Our traditions have not and cannot bring Zion; that will require viewing God's work in a new way. Individuals may be saved individually and have been throughout history. But Zion is not about individual salvation. Zion is about covenant people of God, individually saved as a prerequisite, then gathered together to live in peace.

As part of the same revelation there is a covenant that contains language that also moves the focus to community instead of individual:

Do you covenant with [the Lord] to cease to do evil and to seek to continually do good?

Second: Do you have faith in these things and receive the scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern you in your daily walk in life, to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant, and to use the scriptures to correct yourselves and to guide your words, thoughts and deeds?

*Third: Do you agree to assist **all others— who covenant to [do] likewise accept this standard to govern their lives—** to keep the Lord's will, to succor **those** who stand in need, to **lighten the burdens of your brothers and sisters** whenever you are able, and to...**care for the poor among you?***

*Fourth: ...do you covenant to **seek to become of one heart with those who seek the Lord to establish His righteousness?** (T&C 158:2-5, emphasis added)*

After those questions are answered:

Now, hear the words of the Lord to those who receive this covenant this day:

***All you** who have turned from your wicked ways and repented of your evil doings, of lying and deceiving, and of all whoredoms, and of secret abominations, idolatries, murders, priestcrafts, envying, and strife, and from all wickedness and abominations, and have come unto me, and been baptized in my name, and have received a remission of your sins, and received the Holy Ghost, are **now numbered with my people** who are of the house of Israel. I say to you:*

Teach your children to honor me. Seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel and no longer forsake them. Bring them unto me and teach them of my ways, to walk in them.

*And I, the Lord your God, will be **with you** and will **never forsake you**, and I will lead **you** in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.*

*I will **raise you up** and **protect you, abide with you, and gather you** in due time, and this shall be **a land of promise to you as your inheritance** from me.*

*The Earth will yield its increase, and **you will flourish** upon the mountains and upon the hills, and **the wicked will not come against you** because the **fear of the Lord will be with you.***

*I will visit my house, which **the remnant of my people shall build**, and I will dwell therein, to be **among** you, and no one will need...say, "Know ye the Lord," for **you all shall know me**, from the least to the greatest.*

*I will **teach you** things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and **your understanding** will reach unto Heaven.*

*And you shall be called **the children of the Most High God**, and I will **preserve you** against the harvest.*

*And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will **pass over you** as **my** peculiar treasure.*

*But if **you do not honor me**, nor seek to recover my people Israel, nor teach your children to honor me, **nor care for the poor among you**, nor help **lighten one another's burdens**, then you have no promise from me and I will raise up **other people** who will honor and serve me, and give unto them this land, and if **they** repent, I will abide with **them**. (T&C 158:9-19, emphasis added)*

People claim they have kept the covenant, but such claims cannot possibly be true. God's covenant is for and about "people"—His people. It is not possible for *an individual* to keep the covenant. Everybody rises together, or everybody falls together. The covenant can only be kept as a community. Individuals acting alone can never accomplish what is required of the group.

The October 4, 2018 revelation (T&C 176) also focuses on community. It begins by addressing "people" and not the individual. The Lord's voice to "people" begins and ends with two questions. After asking the questions a second time, He gives an answer to what ought to have been learned. Here are the Lord's words to the people:

*You ask on behalf of **my people** and therefore I answer **my people**. Hear, therefore, my words: What have you learned? What ought you to have learned?*

And then at the end:

*...I ask again, What have you learned? What ought you to have learned? I say to you...there is need for but one house, and I accept the statement you have adopted and approve it as your statement to be added. But I say again, there was honor in the labor of others. Whereas I look upon the heart and see faithful service, **many among you** do*

*not look at, nor see, nor value what I the Lord love in **the hearts of my people**. As I have said before, I say again, **Love one another**, labor willingly **alongside each other**. Learn what you ought, and when I ask you to labor, do so wisely even if you know not beforehand what you will find. I do not ask what you cannot do. Trust my words and proceed always in faith, believing that with me all things are possible. **All who have been faithful are mine**. (T&C 176:1-2,12-13, emphasis added)*

(Just as an aside, when the sacrament was passed and the group of brethren who came up here to perform that came up on stage in flannel and shorts and motley-colored shirts—to look upon that, to me, was a delight. It was a statement of the fact that righteousness holds no costume up to pretend to be something it isn't. Righteousness comes in divergent forms and manifests itself in unexpected ways. Had any one of those individuals come up to pass the sacrament, among some congregations, dressed as they were today, they would have excited the judgment, the censure, the horror of someone observing them in that garb. But to us it's accepted, and it's acceptable. I would hope that if one among us chose to wear a white shirt and a tie to come up to pass the sacrament while standing among them, that none of us would look upon that judgmentally and with disfavor, but that everyone would be welcomed, everyone would be accepted, and that we would be just as tolerant of others and their idiosyncrasies as we are of what we expect to be among us.)

God mentions His “people” in order to get our attention. The prophecies of God’s last-days work and the fulfillment of God’s covenants with the Fathers are not merely for individual salvation. The covenants are about “people” or a divinely organized community. Righteous individuals isolated and scattered throughout the world are incapable of vindicating the promises made to the Fathers. There must be people gathered together and living the correct pattern before the Lord returns.

Enoch saw the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ into heaven. He wanted to know if Christ would return again from heaven to save the earth. In response to Enoch’s inquiry, the Lord gave a promise and covenant that is still unfulfilled. Here is the account. Enoch asks:

*Wherefore, I ask you if you will not come again on the Earth? And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the Earth shall rest. But before that day, the heavens shall be darkened and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth, and the heavens shall shake and also the Earth. And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but **my people will I preserve**. And righteousness will I send down out of heaven. Truth will I send forth out of the earth to bear testimony of [mine] Only Begotten, His resurrection from the dead, yea, and also the resurrection of all men. And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, **to gather out [mine] own elect** from the four quarters of the earth, **unto a place which I shall prepare, a holy city, that my people** may gird up their loins and be looking forth for the time of my coming. For there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shall you and all your city meet **them** there, and we will receive **them***

*into our bosom. And **they shall see us**, and we will fall [on] **their** necks, and **they** shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other, and there shall be my abode. And it shall be Zion which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made and for the space of a thousand years shall the Earth rest. (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added)*

The Lord has every intention of keeping His promise to Enoch. There will be those who are gathered. There must be people gathered to a place, a holy city that meets the description and fulfills the promises God made. The people must gird up their loins or, in other words, must be living the godly religion that declares things as they really are—a religion founded on truth. Truth requires us to know things as they were, as they are, and as they are to come. Many past things that are hidden from the world must be revealed. God’s people must know ancient truths so their hearts can turn to the Fathers. But it will be to covenant *people*, not individuals, to whom this outpouring will be given. A covenant body will belong in a New Jerusalem. The City of Enoch will *meet **them** there*, and then they and the Lord *will receive **them** [unto] our bosom*. This is something more than individual salvation. Those involved will be individually saved, but the community itself must exist as something greater than individuals. There must be a “body” or a “bride” for the Bridegroom to embrace.

The focus on community or people in these last two revelations is similar to that throughout the Old and New Testaments. It’s everywhere. It is particularly clear that the prophecies about the last-day’s Zion require a people to belong to God and to be regarded by Him as His.

In Isaiah, foretelling the future Zion, we learn:

*And then shall they say, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings unto them, that publishes peace, that brings good tidings unto them of good, that publishes salvation, that says [to] Zion, Your God reigns. Your watchmen shall lift up the voice; [and] with the voice together shall they sing, for **they shall see eye to eye** when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted **his people**, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out of the midst of her; be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. For you shall not go...with haste, nor go by flight, for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rear guard. (Isaiah 18:8 RE, emphasis added)*

John also revealed how a group must depart from Babylon to be saved: *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, **my people**, that you be not partakers of her sins, ...that you [may] receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities (John 7:2 RE, emphasis added).*

This theme is also throughout the Book of Mormon and revelations through Joseph Smith. Christ describes the end-times’ Zion and its accompanying sign in 3 Nephi:

*And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place, that I shall gather in from their long dispersion **my***

*people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among **them** my Zion. And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign: for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you...shall be made known unto the gentiles, that they may know concerning this **people** who are a remnant of the house of Jacob,...concerning this **my people** who shall be scattered by them, ...that the gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the true points of my doctrine, that **they** [the gentiles] [that they] **may be numbered among my people**, O house of Israel — and when these things come to pass, that thy seed shall begin to know these things, it shall be a sign unto **them** that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto **[all] the people** who are of the house of Israel. (3 Nephi 9:11 RE, emphasis added)*

“[All] of [them] of the house of Israel” in Christ’s prophecy includes the gentiles who have accepted a covenant with Him.

In a prophecy from Joseph about those who will be in Zion, he states:

*The Lord hath brought again Zion. The Lord hath redeemed **his people** Israel according to the election of grace, which was brought to pass by the faith and covenant of their Fathers. The Lord hath redeemed **his people**, and Satan is bound, and time is no longer. The Lord hath gathered all things in one. The Lord hath brought down Zion from above, the Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath. The Earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength, and truth is established in her bowels, and...Heavens have smiled upon her, and she is clothed with the glory of her God, for he standeth in the midst of **his people**. Glory, and Honor, and Power, and Might be ascribed to our God, for he is full of Mercy, Justice, Grace, and Truth, and Peace, for ever and ever. Amen. (T&C 82:28, emphasis added)*

These are just examples. The scriptures foretelling a return of God’s people are in all passages of prophecy describing the latter-day Zion. *You cannot keep the covenant. I cannot keep the covenant. Only we can keep the covenant.* The covenant was apparently designed by God to require *all* to labor together. This is a long way off, but God is working to bring His people along so they may be able to keep the covenant together.

Creating unified people who qualify to worship God in truth (that is, knowing accurately the past, present, and future) is an extraordinary challenge. Only God can do it, and He must have willing people. It will require a new civilization. Prophecy likens that civilization to a stone carved out of a mountain that will roll out to destroy all the corruptions of Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greeks, Romans, and modern societies.

Anciently, civilizations were founded around the temple. Hugh Nibley studied ancient temples because of the LDS temples. He saw the effects temples had in the ancient world. In *Temple & Cosmos*, he explained their role. All of what I’m about to read comes from *Temple & Cosmos*:

It is the hierocentric point around which all things are organized. It is the *omphalos* (“navel”) around which the earth was organized. The temple is a scale model of the universe, boxed to the compass, a very important feature of every town in our contemporary civilization, as in the ancient world. (Years ago, Sir James George Frazer noticed a definite pattern among ancient religious cult practices: they all followed the same patterns throughout the whole world. He explained that as representing certain stages of evolution in which the mind naturally expressed itself in those forms. But since then the gaps between these various cultures have been filled in, to show that civilization was far more connected.) Civilization is hierocentric, centered around the holy point of the temple. The temple was certainly the center of things in [Babylon], in Egypt, in Greece—wherever you go...

It is the scale model of the universe, for teaching purposes and for the purpose of taking our bearings on the universe and in the eternities, both in time and in space...

The temple is the great teaching institution of the human race; universities are much older than we might...expect. A university began as a Greek *Mouseion*, a temple of the Muses, who represented all departments of knowledge. The Egyptian called it the “house of Life.” It was an observatory, a great megalithic complex of standing stones (later columns and pylons), with amazingly sophisticated devices for observing and recording the motions of the heavens...

The creation hymn was part of the great dramatic presentation that took place yearly at the temple; it dealt with the fall and redemption of man...

In short, there is no part of our civilization which doesn’t have its rise in the temple. Thanks to the power of the written word, records were kept. And in the all-embracing relationship to the divine book, everything is relevant; nothing is really dead or forgotten. In the time of gathering of all things together, we gather everything good that ever was—not just people—that nothing be lost but everything be restored in this last dispensation. In an all-embracing relationship nothing is ever really dead or forgotten. Every detail belongs in the picture. ...Where the temple that gave us birth is missing, civilization itself becomes a hollow shell.

The temple must be there. It is not just a myth, it is the core of all...our civilization. (*Temple and Cosmos*, Hugh Nibley, 1992)

I read that from *Temple and Cosmos* because I agree with those words.

The Lord is equal to the challenge. He will establish a new civilization. It will be founded on the fullness of His gospel. Lost truths will be restored; the path of righteousness will be returned.

Society is broken. Everywhere we see corrupt cultures based on corrupt laws, corrupt religions, corrupt values, and ultimately, corrupt thought. Beginning again requires re-

civilizing people. To be free from corruption requires a change in thinking. If the Lord is to accomplish this, there will need to be a new temple at the center of that new civilization.

The Lord talked with Enoch regarding His return and started with a description of His temple: *For there shall be **my tabernacle**, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem* (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added). It can only become Zion and a New Jerusalem if the Lord's tabernacle is there. His temple will be where He teaches all that must be understood to please God. Then, when people rise up to become what the Lord expects, His risen Tabernacle of glory, and the Lord Himself, will come to dwell there.

There is a great deal of work to be done to establish a foundation. And an even greater work thereafter. When God has His people, they are always commanded to build a temple. Joseph Smith explained:

What was the object of gathering the...people of God in any age of the world? ...The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose. (*Joseph Smith Papers, History, 1838–1856, Vol. D-1, p. 1572*)

Joseph Smith taught the Relief Society that “the church is not now organized into its proper order, and cannot be until the temple is completed” (*Joseph Smith Papers, Relief Society Minute Book, p. 36*). Some believe that meant temple rites would fit inside the existing church organization. However, it is possible, if the temple had been completed, the people might have been organized in a new and different order, resembling the order in the age of the patriarchs. Joseph never had the opportunity to participate in that advancement. Before the temple was finished, Joseph was dead; and those who were leading had no intention or ability to reorganize the church into the “proper order.”

The need for covenant people to cooperate in building a temple has been the same in any age. Temple builders founded the earliest civilizations. They did this to imitate the antediluvians. The Book of Abraham account suggests there was something in Egypt below the floodwaters worth waiting for the waters to recede. Some observers claim there is physical evidence that the earliest temple-complex structures in Egypt were built prior to the flood. They use archeological evidence at the Giza site to conclude the place was once under water, consistent with the description in the Book of Abraham.

When the first temples were built, or inherited by ancient civilizations, the center of life, government, education, culture, and art was at the temple. This was handed down from the first generations. The temple was founded before and will be needed to be the foundation again. When there has been an apostasy, temple building has been part of restoring. A new civilization will only become possible through teachings learned in the future House of God. The necessary ordinances can only be restored in that setting. There you will receive an uncorrupted restoration of the original faith taught to Adam and the patriarchs.

Joseph Smith was told that God intended to restore what was lost (meaning the fullness of the priesthood), but it was only to be accomplished through a temple. These were the Lord's words to Joseph:

For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before [the foundation of] the world... Therefore, verily I say unto you that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places, wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory and honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. (T&C 141:12)

Joseph was martyred before there was a place where God could come to restore what had been lost. Joseph began to roll out a portion of temple ceremonial worship, but it was never completed. Uninspired men who have changed, deleted, and added to what remained from Joseph have corrupted those incomplete ceremonies.

The gospel is for redemption. Redemption from the fall returns man to God's presence. Ascending the heavenly mount is always taught in a properly-organized-temple's ceremonies. Ascending to heaven, redemption, and becoming part of the Family of God are all part of the ancient temple rites and must also be part of future temple rites.

The concept of "adoption" is widely recognized as part of Christianity. The term is employed loosely to mean that a person believes in Christ and recognizes Him as their Savior. The language of Paul is often cited and understood to claim believers are adopted into God's family.

For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 1:34 RE)

Language in the Book of Mormon has also been used to support a loose understanding of the term "adoption." *Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women—all nations, kindreds, tongues and people—must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters (Mosiah 11:28 RE).*

The loose understanding of "adoption" was considerably tightened around October 1843 when Joseph Smith expanded his use of sealing authority. It grew from establishing marriages to include, also, man-to-man sealing through adoption. The last eight months of his life, Joseph sealed or "adopted" other men to himself. There was no settled, formal

ordinance that has been preserved, and the proof of Joseph's practice is mostly post-mortem, as those who were exposed to the practice only vaguely recalled what he had done.

Nearly a decade after Joseph died, when temple ceremonial work resumed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake, Brigham Young declared that adoption was the crowning ordinance. It was *more* important than the other temple rites, including washing, anointing, endowment, and marriage sealing:

This Chain must not [be] broken for mankind Cannot be saved any other way. This Priesthood must be linked together so that all the Children may be linked to Father Adam. ...we will seal men to men by the keys of the Holy Priesthood. This is the highest ordinance. It is the last ordinance of the kingdom of God on the earth and above all the endowments that can be given [to] you. It is a final sealing an Eternal Principle and when once made cannot be broken by the Devil. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 5, 13 January 1856, Vol. 2, p. 1033-1034)

In that talk, Brigham Young taught that the "turning of hearts to the fathers" foretold by Malachi was only to be fulfilled through adoption. He also taught the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham regarding "his seed" would only be fulfilled through the temple ordinance of adoption. LDS Church leaders unsuccessfully tried to sort out how to practice adoption.

In a meeting of the reorganized School of Prophets in Salt Lake City on January 20, 1868, attended by the church presidency Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel Wells, along with Elders John Taylor, Orson Hyde, George A. Smith, Erastus Snow, George Q. Cannon, Phineas Young, and Joseph Young, the topic of adoption was discussed. President Wells conjectured: "On Adoption he supposed it had reference to the linking together of the Priesthood...that it might reach back to the link that had long since been broken, that it might present one unbroken chain" (*Salt Lake School of the Prophets: 1867-1883*, pp. 11-12; entry of 20 January 1868). In response Orson Hyde said: "The Doctrine of Adoption he knew but little about and should decline touching it until the line is chalked out" (*ibid*, p. 12). Scholars struggle to make sense of what Joseph was doing. And the attempts to reconstruct Joseph's later adoption innovation are insufficient to give any firm understanding of what took place, how, or why.

Thirty years before he would become church president, Wilford Woodruff concluded that adoptions would be something a resurrected Joseph Smith would return to sort out during the millennium: "Man also will have to be sealed to man until the chain is united from Father Adam down to the last Saint. This will be the work of the Millenium and Joseph Smith will be the man to attend...it or dictate it" (*Salt Lake School of the Prophets: 1867-1883*, p. 42; December 11, 1869).

A half-century after Joseph's death, the apostles struggled to know how it ought to work or who should be sealed to whom—how and what effect it would have in the afterlife. In a meeting on June 1, 1893, attended by Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Francis M. Lyman, John Taylor, Marriner Merrill, Abraham Cannon, George F. Gibbs, John D. McAllister, Nephi

Cannon [Clayton] and James Jack, they “had some talk about the ordinance of adoption in the temple. Joseph F. Smith said Pres. [Brigham] Young had told him to follow in ordinance work for the dead the rules which [would] ordinarily govern similar work for the living” (*Candid Insights of a Mormon Apostle: The Diaries of Abraham H. Cannon, 1889-1895*, p. 388). The practice was to seal faithful children to parents, and faithful parents to Joseph Smith. Woodruff explained: “I was sealed to my father, and then had him sealed to the Prophet Joseph” (ibid, p.488).

The concept of adoption affected how people understood the afterlife. This led some people to view adoption as a chance to pursue their self-interests. People began to aspire to improve their post-mortality by recruiting and acquiring descendants using adoption. The Logan Temple president was told to end his practice of recruiting adoptees. Eventually president Wilford W. Woodruff announced a final adoption practice on April 8, 1894: “Pres. Woodruff announced the doctrine of the sealing of children to parents as far back as...possible to trace the genealogy, and then seal the last member to the Prophet Joseph [Smith]” (ibid, p. 496).

Family relationships were reckoned by sealing, not biology. For example, Heber J. Grant was the biological son of Jedediah Grant, but because his mother was sealed to Joseph Smith, he was regarded as Joseph Smith’s son.

What Joseph Smith understood about adoption did not get passed to subsequent church leaders clearly enough to preserve the practice intact. In September 1887, two months after John Taylor died, his son-in-law, John Whitaker, wrote in his diary:

I went back to the office where I found [Apostle] Brother Lorenzo Snow and [First Council of the Seventy member] Jacob Gates. They conversed a long time. He finally entered into a deep subject on “The Law of Adoption.” Brother Gates said he didn’t believe in it as did also Brother Snow. He [?] referenced back to the time that Brigham Young was in Kirtland[;] he had a person asked him about it and he said “I know nothing about it.” President Taylor on one different occasion had a letter written to him for the following reason: it was [two undecipherable words followed by] of ... J[oseph] Smith or rather Sister Eliza R. Snow Smith (Brother Gates didn’t know which)...about 70 persons were adopted into President J[oseph] Smith’s [family;] Sister Snow Smith said “she didn’t understand the law” but had no objections to them being sealed to her husband. And this led Brother Gates to write to President Taylor asking him if he knew anything about it. He never answered the letter. But on another occasion Brother Gates saw him and asked him plainly. President Taylor said he knew nothing about it. And also just lately when asked by Brother Snow, President...Woodruff knew nothing about it. [“]It hadn’t been revealed to him.” I know this at this time to say [or show] a prevailing feeling among the Twelve that they don’t understand it. George...Cannon also said he didn’t understand it. (“Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Summer 2011, p. 3; pp. 101-102)

As John Taylor’s health was declining in the last month of his life, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal on June 8, 1887: “I wrote 4 Letters to Jaques Emma Clara & Roskelly. I did not

rest well. To much deep thinking to Sleep” (*Wilford Woodruff's Journals*, Vol. 8: 1 January 1881 to 31 December 1888, p. 441). Roskelly was employed as the recorder in the Logan Utah temple. That letter included the following mention of adoption:

I have adopted this rule in Sealing and Adoptions: to take such as the Lord has given me, and leave the result[s] in His hands....Paul talked a good deal about Adoptions, but we did not understand much about it, until the Lord revealed it to Joseph Smith, and we may not, perhaps, understand it now as fully as we should. Still the Sealings and Adoptions are true principles, or our Prophets have been badly deceived. (“Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Summer 2011, p. 3; p. 103)

Adoption became progressively more controversial as time passed. Since the idea was not well understood by church leaders, they could provide no answers to questions on the subject. While bishop, Edward Bunker denounced the idea altogether, resulting in an 1892 church court that the church president and one of his counselors attended. The former bishop was charged with teaching false doctrine, and in his defense, he wrote a letter to the high council stating:

The adoption of one man to another out of the lineage, I do not understand and for that reason I would not enter into it. And adopting the dead to the living is as adopting the father to the son. I don't believe there is a man on earth that thoroughly understands the principle. If there is, I have never heard it taught as I could understand it. I believe it is permited [sic] more to satisfy the minds of the people for the present until the Lord reveals more fully the principle. (Edward Bunker, Letter to the Bunkerville High Council, April 25, 1891, *Edward Bunker Autobiography* (1894) 37, microfilm of holograph, MS 1581, LDS Church History Library)

In his summary of the court proceeding, Wilford Woodruff relegated the subject of adoption to one of the “mysteries” which church members ought to avoid discussing because they cause difficulties. He wrote: “June 11, 1892 We Met in the Tabernacle at 10 oclock on the trial of Bishop Bunker on Doctrin [sic]. We talked to them Plainly of the impropriety of indulging in Misteries [sic] to Create difficulties among the Saints. They professed to be Satisfied” (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, supra, 9:203).

Although John Taylor perpetuated the practice, over time it diminished and then disappeared beginning with Wilford Woodruff's presidency. Woodruff changed the policy in April 1894 to seal within biological families as far back as were known and *then* to seal and adopt the last parents to Joseph Smith. This made adoption less of an issue and the genealogical search for ancestors of greater concern. But by 1922 the de-emphasis on adoption allowed it to be ignored altogether. The practice Woodruff announced in 1894 was *deleted* in the published account by the Utah Genealogical Society *and* from Clark's *Messages of The First Presidency*. Today adoption has vanished from the LDS church and was never practiced by the RLDS church or other branches of the Restoration.

Joseph Smith did not leave the Christian practice of “adoption” a loose idea, with believers becoming sons of God by conversion, belief, or baptism. He tied it to both authority to seal and an authoritative ordinance. Both of those were lost when Joseph and Hyrum were killed.

If adoption is (as Brigham Young thought in 1856) the highest ordinance above all the endowments that can be given, if it is needed for the gospel (as taught to Abraham) to be restored, then the loss of adoption rites is indeed a sign of apostasy. Brigham Young taught adoption would bind a person beyond the devil’s power to break. But adoption was abandoned before the end of the 1800s. Adoption will need to be restored as a rite (with an accompanying authoritative ordinance and sealing) in order for the things Joseph Smith alone understood and taught to be renewed.

The LDS church has attempted to preserve other ordinances Joseph Smith began. Unfortunately, those ordinances have also been poorly preserved, changed, and compromised.

Joseph did not live to see the complete Nauvoo temple, and he never finished the temple ceremonies. Thirty-three years after Joseph died, Brigham Young explained that *he* was the one who finished the ceremony, using what he could recall from Joseph’s initiation:

[W]hen we got our washings and anointings under the hands of the Prophet Joseph at Nauvoo, we had only one room to work in with the exception of a little side room, or office, where we were washed and anointed, had our garments placed [on] us, and received our new name. And after he had performed these ceremonies, he gave the key words, signs, tokens and penalties. Then, after we went into the large room over the store in Nauvoo, Joseph divided up the room the best that he could, hung up the veil, marked it. Gave us our instructions as we passed along from one department to another, giving us signs, tokens, penalties, with...key words pertaining to those signs.

After we had got through Bro. Joseph turned to me and said, “Bro. Brigham this is not arranged right but we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed, and I wish you to take this matter in hand and organize and systematize all these ceremonies with the signs, tokens, penalties and key words.” I did so, and each time I got something more, so that when we went through the temple at Nauvoo I understood and knew how to place them there. We had our ceremonies pretty correct. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, supra, 5:3104)

“Pretty correct.” “Approximately good.”

About a year and a half after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, Brigham began to introduce the endowment to the general church membership. This was done in the attic of the unfinished Nauvoo Temple using canvas partitions. As these endowments proceeded, Brigham continued to make additions, changes, and alterations to the ceremony Joseph had introduced. By the time of the exodus from Nauvoo in February of 1846, over 5,000 members had been endowed. Endowment ordinances resumed in 1852 in the Council House in Utah and then in the Endowment House, which was completed in 1855.

When there was a large number of ordinances being performed, Brigham Young admitted the ceremony was the best he could do but would be fixed when Christ returned and Joseph was resurrected. He explained:

After Joseph comes to us in his resurrected body He will more fully instruct us concerning the Baptism for the dead and the sealing ordinances. He will say be baptized for this man and that man [for] that man [and] be sealed to that man and such a man to such a man, and connect the Priesthood together. I tell you their [sic] will not be much of this done until Joseph comes. He is our spiritual Father. Our hearts are already turned to him and his to us. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, supra, 13 January 1856, 2:1034)

From May 1842 until 1877, the temple rites were transmitted orally. Wilford Woodruff recorded on January 14, 1877: "Spent the Evening with Presidet [sic] Young. He requested Brigham jr & W Woodruff to write out the Ceremony of the Endowments from Beginning to End" (*Wilford Woodruff's Journals*, supra, 7:322). Putting the ceremony down in writing in 1877 was necessary to standardize the variations between sessions. Those variations concerned Brigham Young. Once there was a manuscript, Brigham Young introduced a 30-minute lecture that was delivered before the veil as the endowment concluded. Because he added his Adam-God teaching as part of this lecture, it was subsequently removed. Also, because some who participated in killing Joseph and Hyrum Smith were still alive, he added an oath of vengeance. This was also subsequently removed when it became public knowledge during the Reed Smoot Senate Confirmation Hearings before the US Senate.

Because Brigham Young was only able to get "our ceremonies pretty correct" (as he described it), it is clear he did not preserve exactly what Joseph Smith introduced. He said that he expected the rites to be fixed by a resurrected Joseph Smith for the millennium.

Brigham Young's successor, John Taylor, also saw the temple rites in a somewhat disorganized and incomplete state. Forty years after Joseph's death he explained to the School of the Prophets:

The reason why things are in the shape [that] they are is because Joseph felt called upon to confer all [the] ordinances connected with the Priesthood. He felt in a hurry on account of certain premonition that he had concerning his death, and was very desirous to emparrt the endowments and all the ordinances thereof to the Priesthood during his life time.... (*Salt Lake School of the Prophets: 1867-1883*, supra, p. 527; entry of 12 October 1883)

His remarks concluded with: "Had Joseph Smith lived he would have had much more to say on many of those points which he was prevented from doing by his death"(ibid). Though survivors made a sincere effort to copy what Joseph had begun, they admitted it was not altogether correct and would need further help from a resurrected Joseph Smith before it could be recovered. Had Joseph Smith survived, he may have been able to provide a ceremonial tour back through the seven heavens to the throne of God.

Succeeding generations of LDS leaders who were not taught by Joseph Smith have likewise taken advantage of the idea that the ceremonies were not perfectly preserved and could be “corrected” from time to time. The result has been numerous alterations of the temple endowment, washings, anointings, and sealings—the most recent of which were adopted four months ago.

Although the ceremony was first put into writing in 1877, portions of it were not written down because it was initially considered taboo to include the descriptions of specific signs and penalties. Those remained unwritten through at least 1923. Changes in the written form of the ceremony began during the Reed Smoot Confirmation Hearings, when the oath of vengeance was removed. Changes have continued to be made by the LDS church, the latest implemented in January 2019.

Christ taught parables that included invited guests being barred from attending the wedding feast. In one, the guests are called “virgins” to suggest that they possess moral purity and would be welcomed to the event. In another, there are strangers on the highway invited because others refused to come. Both parables, however, have some who are ultimately excluded from the wedding, a symbol of Christ’s return. These parables raise an important issue about the Lord’s return. There is a reason why five of the ten virgins could not enter into the wedding celebration. Likewise, those invited to attend the wedding feast that arrive without a wedding garment will be excluded. In both cases, those excluded were not welcome as they were unprepared.

There have been only two societies in recorded history that became Zion. Because of the age of the world at the time, both were taken up into heaven. We have very little to help us understand why these two succeeded. Apart from describing them as of “one heart, one mind, and no poor among them,” we know little else. But perhaps that is one of the most important things we *can* know about them. Maybe the point is that *nothing* and *no-one* stood out as remarkable or different within the community. There were no heroes and no villains; no rich and no poor; no Shakespearian plot lines of betrayal, intrigue, ambition, conflict, and envy. There was no adultery, theft, robbery, murder, immorality, and drunkenness—in other words, nothing to entertain us. Because all our stories, movies, music, novels, television plots, and social media are based upon and captivated by everything that is missing from these societies.

The centuries-long period of peace described in the Book of Mormon occupies only a few short pages in 4 Nephi. Their society was marked by the presence of peace, the absence of conflict, and abiding stability. This is what they attained: *There were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things 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* (4 Nephi 1:1 RE). Because there was no future ministry for them to perform, their Zion society was not taken up to heaven. Because the world was not yet ready for the Lord to return in judgment, neither Enoch nor Melchizedek returned with their people to fall on their necks and kiss them.

These people were most remarkable for what they *lacked*. How they grew to lack these divisions, contentions, and disputes is described in very few, simple words: *They did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord. And it came to pass...there was no contention among all the people in all the land* (4 Nephi 1:2 RE).

What were the names of their leaders? We don't know because, apparently, there were none. Who were their great teachers? Again, we don't know because they were not identified. Who governed? Apparently no one. They had things in common, obeyed God's commandments, and spent time praying and hearing the word of the Lord. They were so very unlike us.

To make the point clear for us, the record of these people explains: *There was no contention in the land because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people; and there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness* (4 Nephi 1:3 RE). All the negatives were missing because the love of God dwelt in their hearts.

Something else describes them: *And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God* (ibid). Consider those words carefully. You cannot be happier than by allowing the love of God to dwell in you. The happiest people who have ever lived did so by the profound peace they displayed, equality they shared, fairness they showed one another, and love of God in their hearts.

This is a description of our social opposites. Reviewing the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, the Covenant, and the recent parable of the Master's House shows that the Lord is pleading for *us* to become *this*. It's not easy; it will require civilizing the uncivilized. However, it is necessary to become the wise virgins and the invited guests wearing the wedding garment.

Five of the virtuous virgins who were expecting the wedding party to arrive were, nevertheless, excluded. They were virgins like the others; but the others were allowed to enter, and they were not. They did not lack virginity. They did not lack notice. They were not surprised by an unexpected wedding party arriving. But they lacked "oil," which is a symbol of the Holy Ghost. They failed to acquire the necessary spirit with which to avoid conflict, envy, strife, tumult, and contention. To grow into the kind of people God will want us to welcome into His dwelling requires practice, experience, and effort. People have not done it. Devout religious people are not prepared to live in peace, with all things in common, with no poor among them. God is trying to create a civilization that does not yet exist.

It is a privilege for God to give guidance to help prepare His people. There has always been a promise from the Lord that those who inherit Zion will be given commandments from Him to follow. He declared:

Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel, for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring

forth [it's] strength. And they...shall [also] be crowned with blessings from above, yea...with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time, [that] they...are faithful and diligent[ly] before me. (T&C 46:1)

Those who mock or criticize efforts to complete the Restoration are defining themselves as unworthy by their own words. No matter how good they may otherwise be, when they embrace conflict, envy, strife, tumult, and contention, they cannot be invited to the wedding of the Lamb.

We need more commandments from God to prepare for what is coming. The example in 4 Nephi commends those people who walk after the commandments received from our Lord and God. There should be fasting and prayer. People should meet together, pray, and review the words of the Lord. Every step taken will make us more like those virgins who have oil in their lamps and less like the foolish virgins who took no effort to make the required preparation.

It's not enough to avoid outright evil. We have to be good. Being "good" means to be separate from the world, united in charity towards each other, and to have united hearts. If we are ready when the wedding party arrives, we must follow the Lord's commandments to *us*. They are for our good. He wants us to awaken and arise from an awful slumber.

The third such society will not be taken into heaven. Instead, it will welcome the return of the first two to the earth. Why would ancient, righteous societies caught up to heaven want to leave there to come and meet with a city of people on earth? Why would they fall on their necks and kiss that gathered body of believers? And above all else, why would Christ want to occupy a tabernacle and dwell with such a community? Obviously, because there will be people living on earth whose civilization is like the society in heaven.

The Ten Commandments outline basic social norms needed for peace and stability. Christ's Sermon on the Mount was His exposition on the Ten Commandments. He expounded on the need to align the intent of the heart with God's standard to love your fellow man, do good to those who abuse you, and hold no anger. He took us deeper. Where the Ten Commandments allowed reluctant, resentful, and hard-hearted conformity, the Sermon on the Mount requires a willing readiness to obey. Christ wants us to act with alacrity to follow Him. He taught us to treat others as you would want to be treated.

The answer to these questions is easy to conceptualize and easy to verbalize. But living the answer is beyond mankind's ability to endure. We do not want to lay down our pride, ambition, jealousy, envy, strife, and lusts to become that community.

Enoch prophesied about the last-days Zion. He saw the earth was pained by the wickedness upon her. He wrote this account:

Enoch looked upon the earth and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying, Woe, woe is me, the mother of men. I am pained; I am weary because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest and be cleansed from the filthiness which has gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season

abide upon my face? And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying, O Lord will you not have compassion upon the earth? (Genesis 4:20 RE)

The answer describes things that have not happened—but may happen in our day, if we choose to follow the Lord. The opportunity has been offered. The Lord's answer to Enoch was in the form of a covenant. That covenant will be vindicated, but only by those who will rise up to obey Him. God's words will not fail, and this will happen:

*And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the earth shall rest. But before that day, the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth. And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but **my people** will I preserve. And righteousness will I send down out of Heaven...[I will] gather out [mine] own elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I [have] prepare[d], a holy city, that **my people** may gird up their loins and be looking forth for [a] time of my coming. For there shall be my tabernacle...it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shall you and...your city meet **them** there, and we will receive **them** into our bosom. And they shall see us, and we will fall [on] **their** necks, and **they** shall fall [on] our necks, and we will kiss each other, and there shall be my abode. (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added)*

The last-days Zion and her people were planned, foretold, and chosen thousands of years ago to live on earth when righteousness would come down out of heaven. They will be here when truth is sent forth out of the earth to bear testimony of Christ. And, like a flood, righteousness and truth will sweep the earth. Any who have witnessed a flood know floodwaters carry a great deal of debris, dirt, and detritus. Today there is a flood of information, recordings, and teachings sweeping the earth. The Internet has made it possible for an individual sitting at a keyboard to speak to the entire world. Righteousness is sweeping the earth, while floodwaters are disturbing the whole world.

In Joseph Smith's day it was required for an army of messengers to be sent. There was a practical limit on how many people Joseph could personally teach. Outside the direct sound of his voice only printed words could carry the message. He and those who followed him invested in a press to publish newspapers and books to carry the truth. But that still was not enough— It required an organized body of missionaries to take the publications, repeat the message, and convey the new truths came through revelation to Joseph Smith. Even with the enormous investment of time and resources made while Joseph was alive, there were places and people who never heard a thing about the Restoration while Joseph lived.

Today we must still warn others. However, we have much more greater means available to us. We can use a keyboard to reach the whole world. There are people in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and South America, and across North America who participate in our conferences. I want to send greetings to our brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere who cannot travel to be with us. The flood of

overflowing the world today includes the promised righteousness and truth, but it requires the Lord's elect to distinguish between the filth, folly, and foolishness to find freedom from sin through Christ, who is the foundation of righteousness and truth.

Prophets have described how this will happen. Isaiah described a coming age of peace when righteousness and truth have their opportunity to bear fruit. He spoke of Christ and of the power in Christ's teachings to transform the world itself. That same world that Enoch heard lamenting, pained by the violence on her face, will find rest. Isaiah foretells what will happen just prior to the Lord's return:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and [the] little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of [an] asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse [which] shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. (Isaiah 5:4 RE)

How will Christ smite the earth with the rod of His mouth? By teaching peace to people who are willing to obey and live at peace. What will it take to see the wolf dwell with the lamb? Why does the wolf kill the lamb today? The wolf kills because it's hungry. If the same shepherd who feeds the lamb also fed the wolf, then the wolf would not need to kill.

Wolves can be domesticated. I once owned a mixed Wolf-Malamute we named Cicely, after the fictitious town in Alaska that was the setting for the TV show *Northern Exposure*. Cicely looked entirely like a wolf, and her behavior was lupine. She was very gentle with her clan—our immediate family and friends. My children were still young then, and our neighborhood had other young children who came over. Cicely recognized them and accepted them as “belonging.” However, an adult man trying to read an electrical meter once entered our backyard, and Cicely regarded this as a threat to her clan. The man scarcely escaped through the gate. Wolves are intelligent animals and, inside their clans, are capable of treating young children with gentle, protective care. They are also capable defenders against threats.

Under the peaceful guidance of a kindly shepherd, the wolf and the lamb could learn to lie down together. Lions have been domesticated, as have bears. When Adam was given dominion over the earth, all the animals that came to him for naming dwelt together

peacefully. Why do we assume that nature is violent? Why regard it as “red of tooth and claw?”

The scriptures speak of an idyllic time, in the beginning, when man and nature were entirely at peace with one another. The scriptures also foretell of a coming idyllic age when that peace is restored again. Why do we accept these bookends as true without ever considering the role of man in destroying the original peace? Why do we assume we have no obligation imposed upon us to reform creation back to the original? The prophecy of Isaiah is not magic imposed by God on a reluctant creation. It will require shepherds to care for creation.

Who are “they” in this passage? — *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.*

And why is the passage, *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain*, followed by the statement: *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*? These are connected thoughts. It should be obvious to you that this can only be fulfilled by a different civilization than one in which we live. Ours can never produce such results.

Isaiah also describes what it will be like after the Lord’s return. After He comes to dwell with those prepared to welcome His return, events will unfold in this way:

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. In those days, there shall be no more from there an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his day; for the child shall not die, but shall live to be a hundred years old. But the sinner living to be a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and [mine] elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord. (Isaiah 24:9 RE)

The same words are used to describe the prepared people before the return of the Lord and those with whom He will dwell after His return. Neither of these *shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord*. What will they be like who do not hurt nor destroy? Can you imagine such a society? Isaiah’s description reflects this incident involving Joseph Smith and Zion’s Camp:

In pitching my tent we found three massasaugas or prairie rattlesnakes, which the brethren were about to kill, but I said, “Let them alone—don’t hurt them! How will the serpent ever lose his venom, while the servants of God possess the same

disposition, and continue to make war upon it? Men must become harmless, before the brute creation; and when men lose their vicious disposition and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the sucking child can play with the serpent in safety.” The brethren took the serpents carefully on sticks and carried them across the creek. I exhorted the brethren not to kill a serpent, [a] bird, or an animal of any kind during our journey unless it became necessary in order to preserve ourselves from hunger. (*Documentary History of the Church* 2:71–72)

Last year while my wife and I were hiking the Bonneville Shoreline Trail in Draper, Utah, she was in the lead. We were going at a rapid pace. (She always does that—that’s why she’s in the lead, because she wants to set the pace). We were going at a rapid pace, and she passed a rattlesnake so quickly that when it began to rattle its warning, she’d already passed. But I heard it before I reached it, lying only inches off the trail when I stopped to look. (I grew up in Idaho, and rattlesnakes are very common there.) After watching it for a few moments, I started to talk to it in a calm voice and made no menacing movement towards it. As I took the time to talk calmly, without advancing toward it, its nervous rattle began to slow and eventually stopped. Then it uncoiled—which only happens when the snake is not defensive. I suppose the calm of my voice and my non-threatening demeanor relieved the little animal’s fear. It began to slowly move away, and I encouraged it to stay off the trail because another passing hiker or bicyclist would probably try to kill it.

I thought of Joseph Smith’s words when I encountered that snake: “How will the serpent ever lose his venom? ...Men must become harmless....Men [must] lose their vicious disposition[s] and cease to destroy.”

I know however well I may treat an animal, another will soon come by and mistreat the same animal. Nature will refuse to be at peace with mankind while mankind continues to slay, abuse, and misuse the animal kingdom.

But the prophecy is about God’s “holy mountain.” It raises the question, if there were a place occupied by people who do not hurt or destroy in that holy mountain, could nature reach peace with the people in that place?

Cicely acted to protect the children in my yard from what she regarded as an intruding threat. It was her nature to do so. She wanted her clan to be safe. Toward her clan, she showed affection, played, and gave us all companionship. But to the threat, she was menacing.

In the first Zion, the people were at peace with nature. But that place was apparently protected *by* nature. What scripture describes is not magic or “fairy dust,” but a perfectly natural process. This creation has been ordained by God and framed with intelligence to follow certain principles established before the foundation of the world. Any people in any age who follow the same pattern will receive the same result. What is described in this passage about Enoch and his city?

And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them, and he spoke the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled,

and the mountains fled—even according to his command—and the rivers of water were turned out of their course, and the roar of...lions were heard out of the wilderness. And all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him. (Genesis 4:13 RE)

Would a lion that had been befriended by Enoch and his people be inclined, by its nature, to protect the people it viewed as part of its clan? Would a bear protect its shepherd and guardian? Would a wolf? Is it possible for a civilization to exist that does not hurt nor destroy in all their land? If they would not hurt nor destroy in all their land, would it be a holy place? We live in a very different civilization from the one described in prophecy. But the one described prophetically will not just one day appear. It will require effort, learning, obedience, and sacrifice to change.

The earth rejoiced at Enoch's people. The earth protected those people. Earthquakes, landslides, and floods stopped the wicked—and the animal kingdom, including predators like the lion, rose up to protect the City of Enoch. For those who are prepared to receive the people of Enoch and Melchizedek, and those who will welcome the Lord to dwell among them, that can and will happen.

Everybody will have to make changes. The most important changes have been provided in a blueprint revealed in the Answer to Prayer for Covenant, including the terms of the Covenant. We are expected to remember and obey these words:

My will is to have you love one another. As people, you lack the ability to respectfully disagree among one another....

Wisdom counsels mankind to align their words with their hearts, but mankind refuses to take counsel from Wisdom....

There have been sharp disputes between you that should have been avoided. I speak these words to reprove you that you may learn, not to upbraid you so that you mourn. I want my people to have understanding....

Satan is a title and means accuser, opponent and adversary; hence once he fell, Lucifer became, or in other words was called, Satan, because he accuses others and opposes the Father. I rebuked Peter and called him Satan because he was wrong in opposing the Father's will for me, and Peter understood and repented.

In the work you have performed there are those who have been Satan, accusing one another, wounding hearts and causing jarring, contention, and strife by their accusations. Rather than loving one another, even among you who desire a good thing, some have dealt unkindly as if they were...opponents, accusers and adversaries. In this they were wrong...

For you are like a man who seeks for good fruit from a neglected vineyard— unwatered, undunged, unpruned and unattended. How shall it produce good fruit if you fail to tend

it? What reward does the unfaithful husbandman obtain from his neglected vineyard? How can saying you are a faithful husbandman ever produce good fruit in the vineyard without doing the work of the husbandman? For you seek my words to recover them even as you forsake to do them. You have heretofore produced wild fruit, bitter and ill-formed, because you neglect to do my words...

You have not yet become what you must be to live together in peace. If you will hearken to my words, I will make you my people and my words will give you peace. Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of all my people. Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but to do as you profess.

The Book of Mormon was given as my covenant for this day and contains my gospel, which came forth to allow people to understand my work and [to] obtain my salvation. Yet many of you are like those who reject the Book of Mormon, because you say, but you do not do. As a people you honor with your lips, but your hearts are corrupt, filled with envy and malice, returning evil for good, sparing none— even those with pure hearts among you— from your unjustified accusations and unkind backbiting. You have not obtained the fullness of my salvation because you do not draw near to me...

Hear therefore my words: Repent and bring forth fruit showing repentance, and I will establish my covenant with you and claim you as mine....

It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine, and I will watch over them and protect them in the day of harvest, and gather them in as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be my people and I will be your God, and the sword will not devour you. And unto those who will receive will more be given, until they know the mysteries of God in full...

You pray each time you partake of the sacrament to always have my Spirit to be with you. And what is my Spirit? It is to love one another as I have loved you. Do my works and you will know my doctrine; for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge to my people. If you return good for evil, you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master. You call me Lord, and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace, and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety....

Be of one heart, ...regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them...

There remains [a] great work yet to be done. Receive my covenant and abide in it, not as in the former time when jarring, jealousy, contention and backbiting caused anger,

broke hearts and hardened the souls of those claiming to be my saints. But receive it in spirit, in meekness and in truth. I have given you a former commandment that I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And again, I have taught [you] that if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. How do I act toward mankind? If men intend no offense, I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct, and forgive and forget. You cannot be at peace with one another if you take offense when none is intended. But again I say, Judge not others except by the rule you want used to weigh yourself....

(One of the questions that someone asked is, why we are admonished to pursue judgement? The answer are those words I just read to you: *I say, Judge not others except by the rule you want used to weigh yourself.* Pursue judgement whenever the opportunity presents itself. Use judgement to evaluate based upon the standard you want applied to yourself, and pursue judgement).

The Earth groans under the wickedness of mankind upon her face, and she longs for peace to come. She withholds the abundance of her bounty because of the offenses of men against me, against one another, and against her. But if righteousness returns and my people prove by their actions, words and thoughts to yield to my Spirit and hearken to my commandments, then will the earth rejoice, for the feet of those who cry peace upon her mountains are beautiful indeed, and I, the Lord, will bring again Zion, and the earth will rejoice.

In the world, tares are ripening. And so I ask you, What of the wheat?...

Cry peace. Proclaim my words. Invite those who will repent to be baptized and forgiven, and they shall obtain my Spirit to guide them. (T&C 157)

That excerpt contains nearly 2,000 words of instruction. There is no basis to claim ignorance. Is it possible for people to change their civilization and go from strident, quarrelsome, and pugnaciousness to loving one another?

Perhaps the Book of Mormon contains one account to give us hope. Following conversion, one group of Lamanites were led by a king who encouraged them to lay down their un-bloodied weapons rather than ever shed blood again. This meant they could not defend themselves. After their king finished his proposal this took place:

And now it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings, and all the people were assembled together, they took their swords and all [their] weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth. And this they did, it being in their view a testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood. And this they did vouching and covenanting with God, that rather than shed the blood of their brethren, they would give up their own lives; and rather than take away from a brother, they

would give unto him; and rather than spend their days in idleness, they would labor abundantly with their hands. And thus we see that when these Lamanites were brought to believe and to know the truth, [that] they were firm and would suffer, even unto death, rather than commit sin; and thus we see that they buried the weapons of peace, or they buried [their] weapons of war for peace. (Alma 14:9 RE)

When their resolve was tested, they passed. Rather than take up arms they laid down their lives:

Now when the people saw that they were coming against them, they went out to meet them and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord; and thus they were in [the] attitude when the Lamanites began to fall upon them and began to slay them with the sword... Thus without meeting any resistance, they did slay a thousand and five of them; and we know that they are blessed, for they have gone to dwell with their God. Now when the Lamanites saw that their brethren would not flee from the sword, neither would they turn aside to the right...or...the left, but that they would lie down and perish, and praised God even in the very act of perishing under the sword—now when the Lamanites saw this, they did forbear from slaying them; and there were many whose hearts had swollen in them for those of their brethren who had fallen under the sword, for they repented of the thing which they had done.

And it came to pass that they threw down their weapons of war, and they would not take them again, for they were stung for the murders which they had committed. And they came down even as their brethren, relying upon the mercies of those whose arms were lifted [up] to slay them.

And it came to pass that the people of God were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain.... (Alma 14:10-12 RE)

This event is astonishing and many have been shocked by the extreme behavior of these believers. *We* are not being asked to lay down our weapons and be killed. *We* are only being asked to lay down our hostility, slander, and abuse of one another to become peaceful and loving. This is a good thing that benefits everybody. Despite this, we keep our pride, ambition, jealousy, envy, strife, and lusts. These destructive desires are preferred over forgiving offenses in meekness, love, and kindness. None of us are asked to die for a covenant, but are only asked to be more like Christ and forgive and love one another. This seems so difficult a challenge that we quarrel and dispute among ourselves. We remain haughty and self-righteous and fail to realize self-righteousness is a lie, a mirage, utterly untrue. We must trade our pride for humility, or we will never be able to keep the covenant. Remember, it is a group who must keep the covenant, not individuals. Together we must act consistent with the obligation we agreed to perform before God.

Now, I want to be clear about what I am NOT saying: Nothing in what has been said implies that people must be vegan. In the age of the first patriarchs, we learn this about the second generation: *And Abel listened unto the voice of the Lord. And Abel was a keeper of sheep...And*

Abel, he also brought [forth] the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering...(Genesis 3:6-7). There are animals whose lives are given them for the benefit of mankind. Abel raised sheep for the benefit their lives offered in food, clothing, and even company.

I am also NOT suggesting we attempt to domesticate wild animals. Until there is a community that has tamed the wild hearts of human residents and has a land to occupy, animals will remain justifiably fearful of man. Nature will not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, the hostile and the benign, the people of peace and the people at war with the animal kingdom *until* there is a "holy mountain." That will be the place made holy by the actions of the people who dwell there. When the earth sees that righteousness has returned to her face, she will yield her abundance for those whose feet walk in the way that is beautiful.

If we obey the commandments that have been given, we can qualify to inherit a land on which to build a temple. The objective of the covenant was to confer the right to live on the land, surviving the judgments coming upon the wicked. *We* need to live up to our end of the covenant. It is clear the Lord is willing to bear with, guide, give commandments to help prepare, and reprove His people when needed. We should not rely on the Lord's patience, but should be eager to obey His guiding instruction. His commandments are not to limit us, but to increase light and truth. Some intelligence is only gained by obedience to His commandments.

Joseph Smith tried to teach the people. They failed to do as they were commanded. They lost the opportunity to have the fullness of the priesthood restored to them. As a result of their failure, for nearly two centuries, institutions have pretended the fullness was restored and they inherited it. Until now, no people have acknowledged the failure, repented, and asked the Lord to restore the fullness of the priesthood.

Salem was a land filled with abominations. Melchizedek, by faith, obtained the Holy Order, taught repentance, and persuaded them to reform. Nauvoo was a viper's den. It was a place with widespread adultery and conspirators who precipitated the murders of Joseph and Hyrum.

Why, during His mortal ministry, did Jesus Christ not establish a place of peace, a city of Zion? Was not Christ the greatest teacher of all?

Reflect on this and consider whether the people who were taught by Melchizedek lived with and were taught by Joseph Smith, would they have repented, obeyed and obtained the fullness?

If Enoch's people lived in Nauvoo, would they have repented? If Joseph, instead of Enoch, taught the people of Enoch, would there have been Zion? Had Joseph, instead of Melchizedek, taught the people of Salem, would they have forsaken their abominations?

Is Zion the result of the teacher or the people?

The people matter more than the teacher. As long as the gospel is taught, including the need for repentance and obedience, any faithful teacher may be enough. But nobody can bring Zion with people who refuse to repent and obey God's commandments. The teacher is necessary, but only a community of people willing to heed the gospel can fulfill the prophecies.

I have to temper the foregoing by the lesson Alma preserved (I think perhaps quoted from the writings of Zenos) about Melchizedek:

Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem, and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abominations—yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness. But Melchizedek, having exercised mighty faith and received the office of the High Priesthood according to the Holy Order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent. And Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore, he was called the Prince of Peace, for he was the King of Salem; and he did reign under his father. Now there were many before him, and...there were [also] many afterwards, but none were greater. (Alma 10:2 RE)

If people who had all gone astray and were filled with iniquity and abominations were moved by his message of repentance, could Melchizedek have persuaded Nauvoo to abandon their wickedness, strife, ambition, jealousy, and adultery? There is no answer because of Christ's inability to bring Zion. Christ was greater than Melchizedek, and He could not accomplish with His contemporaries what Melchizedek did with his.

None of us is spared from mutual failure. We are not Zion. We will never be Zion if we do not repent. All of us must repent, turn to face God with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy, or we will not establish godly peace among us.

The Answer to the Prayer for Covenant and the Covenant are the beginning blueprint. That blueprint teaches the need to be better people. Following it is more challenging than reciting it. No one can learn what is required *without doing*. Working together is the only way a society can grow together. No isolated spiritual mystic is going to be prepared for Zion through his solitary personal devotions. Personal devotion is necessary, of course, but the most pious hermit will collide with the next pious hermit when they are required to share and work together in a society of equals having all things in common. Do not pretend it will be otherwise. Failing to do the hard work outlined in the covenant is failing to prepare for Zion. It's failing to have oil in the lamp. It's failing to put upon you the wedding garment.

If you think you are one of the five virgins who will be invited in when the bridegroom arrives and have never attempted to obey the Lord's commandments, you will find yourself left outside when the door is shut. If you come from the highways and byways without a wedding garment because you failed to keep the covenant, you'll be excluded.

As aggravating and trying as people are on one another, we need to go through this. There is no magic path to loving one another. Some people refuse and must be left outside. When it comes to loving others, some things must be abandoned, some things must be added, some

things must be forgotten, and some things must be ignored. But learning what to abandon, add, forget, or ignore is only through the doing. We chip away at ourselves and others by interacting and sharing.

We will learn things about one another that will distress us. And we may well wish we didn't know some things about others. How will the socially-offensive become socially- acceptable without help from a loving society? And how can a society become loving if people are not broad-minded enough to figure out that some things just don't matter? Few things really are important. If a man is honest, just, virtuous, and true, should you care if he swears? If a man has a heart of gold and would give you assistance if he thought it was needed, should you care if he is rough and uncouth?

The adulterous and predatory will rarely reform and must often be excluded. They will victimize and destroy. We are commanded to cast out those who steal, love and make a lie, commit adultery, and refuse to repent. The instructions we have been given state:

*You shall not kill; he that kills shall die. You shall not steal...he that steals and will not repent **shall be cast out**. You shall not lie; he that lies and will not repent **shall be cast out**. You shall love your wife with all your heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else...he that looks upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the spirit, and if he repent not...**shall be cast out**. You shall not commit adultery, and he that commits adultery and repents not **shall be cast out**; and he that commits adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsakes [it] and does it no more, you shall forgive him; but if he does it again, he **shall not be forgiven, [and] shall be cast out**. You shall not speak evil of your neighbor [nor] or do him any harm. You know my laws, they are given in my scriptures. **He that sins and repents not shall be cast out**. If you love me, you shall serve me and **keep all my commandments**. (T&C 26:6, emphasis added)*

This teaching is still binding. If your fellowship includes those who ought to be "cast out" you have the obligation to do so rather than encouraging evil. Be patient, but be firm. If a person refuses to repent and forsake sins, you may end fellowship with them and include those who are interested in practicing obedience and love.

There is work to be done. Almost all of it is internal to us. The five prepared virgins and the strangers who brought a wedding garment will be those who keep the covenant. It is designed to give birth to a new society, new culture, and permit a new civilization to be founded.

The Lord's civilization will require His tabernacle at the center. Through it, a recovered religion will be fully developed. God's house will include a higher law—an education about the universe—and a divine university will be established. It will be an ensign in the mountains, and people from all over the earth will say: Come, let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us; we will learn of his paths, to walk in them (see Isaiah 1:5; 2 Nephi 8:4 RE). That place will house a new civilization. There will be no hermit gurus proud of their enlightenment.

No one will offer himself or herself up as some great idol to follow. It will be a place of equality, where people are meek and lowly, serving one another without any attempt to compete for “chief seats.”

Christ’s apostles competed to be greater than one another. In the New Covenants, Luke 13:6, Christ’s reaction is recorded:

There was also a strife among them: who of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they who exercise authority upon them are called benefactors, but it ought not...be so with you. But he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who is chief, as he who does serve. For whether is he greater who sits at [the] meal, or he who serves? I am not as he who sits at a meal, but I am among you as he who serves.

Christ is the great example. Christ would have fit into Enoch’s city, would have been welcomed among Melchizedek’s people, and could have dwelt in peace with the Nephites of Fourth Nephi. Has He, as once before between Jerusalem and Emmaus, walked among them unnoticed to enjoy their peaceful company?

I cannot keep the covenant. You cannot keep the covenant. Only *we* can keep the covenant.

But if we do, God’s work will continue and will include the fullness previously offered to the gentiles and rejected by them. It is impossible to understand the promises that Elijah will “turn the hearts of the children to the Fathers” unless the fullness is recovered. Joseph Smith cannot fix or finish the Restoration by returning as a resurrected being in the Millennium, as conjectured by Wilford Woodruff. If the necessary rites are not returned before the Lord’s return, *the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming* (JSH 3:4 RE). There will be a new civilization built around God’s tabernacle where He will dwell. We know the purpose of that house will be for the God of Jacob to teach those people to walk in His ways. We know Joseph Smith began adoption sealing as the highest ordinance and is now been lost.

We have been given a new revelation that explains resurrection and adoption to the Fathers in heaven are linked together:

I was shown that the spirits that rose were limited to a direct line back to Adam, requiring the hearts of the fathers and the hearts of the children to be bound together by sealing, confirmed by covenant and [by] the Holy Spirit of Promise. This is the reason that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have entered into their exaltation according to the promises and sit upon thrones and are not angels but are gods. (T&C 157:42-43)

The fullness can only be returned through a temple accepted by God as His House. He must return to restore that which has been lost. But ungodly people cannot build an acceptable house for God. There is no commandment to build a temple because people are not yet qualified to do so. So far we have been spared the experience in Nauvoo, where an abortive attempt to build a temple in which the fullness could be restored resulted in the Lord not performing His oath. Nor did the Lord fulfill the promise they expected to receive. Instead of

blessings, the people in Nauvoo brought upon themselves cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments by their follies and abominations. If we are going to receive that same condemnation, it would be better to not begin to build a House of God.

Only *we* can keep the covenant. Only those who keep the covenant *together* can establish a new civilization with God's holy House at its center.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.