

# Christ's Church –The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

## THE CHURCH IN CHRIST'S DAY AND APOSTASY

The history of the Church doesn't begin in 1830—as we sometimes think. It's significant to understand that we are not a new Church, but an extension of the Church that Jesus established.

The Church of Christ has appeared through the centuries whenever a people:

1. Allow God to form and mold them (Gen 2:8; Mos 9:28-42, Acts 2:1, Grove)
2. Receive the breath of life (Gen 2:8; Mos 9:43-50, Acts 2:2-4, Sec 17:1a)

### What is the Church?

*The Church of Jesus Christ is a living body of believers (1) founded upon the Rock, (2) connected through the covenant, (3) true to the Word, (4) empowered through authority and ordinances, and (5) filled with the Spirit of God. The Church is a tool to share the Gospel—not the destination.*

According to Thayer, the Greek word for “Church” literally translates to,

1. **a gathering** of citizens called out from their homes into some public place
2. an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting.
3. *to call aloud*, utter in a loud voice; **to invite**.

**In other words**, the Church, in its simplest form, is a call or invitation for Christians to assemble in one body. Paul commanded the saints to be one people, united in faith and in the bond of peace. One in body, spirit, and hope. With “*One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all...*” (Ephesians 4:3-6). Jesus said, “*Be one; and if you are not one, ye are not mine* (Sec 38:6a).”

The Church is not a building of physical stones. It's a spiritual body—a living family—established upon the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. When Jesus told Peter, “*...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:16-19), He was speaking of this very foundation. The Church cannot exist without this revelation, and hell cannot stand against it.

Jesus Himself is the chief cornerstone, and the priesthood the foundation (Ephesians 2:19-22). Through the covenant, we ourselves become living stones (1 Peter 2:1-5). And when framed and fitted together, we become a spiritual house, a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit. We become Zion.

In this sense, the Church that Jesus established is far more than a building, a set of rules, a collection of quorums, or an organization of programs. It is an assembly of God's children—men and women who have covenanted with Him to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-11).

This body—which does not belong to man, but to God—exists for the sole purpose that His voice might be heard, that His name might be glorified, and that He might be known in all the earth.

To this end, God established His Church and endowed it with authority to speak in His name. To proclaim the truth of God's redeeming love and to warn the inhabitants of the earth of the coming calamity (Section 1:4). Namely, that we will all stand before God face-to-face one day— but will we be prepared (Alma 9:41)?

The Scriptures repeatedly call the saints to fellowship and worship: to consider one another, receive one another, provoke each other to love and good works; to not forsake one another, but to build each other up; to confess, forgive, and exhort one another; and to break bread in remembrance of Christ. In fact, there are 27 “one anothers” in the New Testament alone.

God designed the Church to be the instrument through which the citizens of His Kingdom are united under the Lord Jesus Christ. God gave every ordinance, gift, talent, calling, and duty with this purpose in mind—*“to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him”* (Ephesians 1:10).

### **Priesthood, Ordinances, and Spirit**

We must always remember that Jesus established His Church. He didn't claim authority on His own, but received it from His Father, who alone had the right and power to bestow it (Hebrews 5:4-5). Only the Father could declare, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him”* (Matthew 3:46 IV).

With that divine authority, Jesus chose and ordained twelve others (John 15:16) to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom (Luke 9:1-2, 6; Luke 10:1, 8-9). Saying, *“As my Father sent me, so I send you”* (John 20:21). **The priesthood** therefore is a gift (1 Corinthians 12:28-31)—given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body (Ephesians 4:11-15). In other words, authority is a gift so that the people can be made whole through Christ as they keep God's ordinances.

**Ordinances**, in turn, are sacred means by which we remember God, the sacrifice of His Son, and our covenant to consecrate our lives to Him. They teach us what kind of life we are to live—that we are to become a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). These ordinances are our highest forms of worship. They refine and renew us, keeping our vision clear and our hearts and minds aligned with His purpose. *“Therefore, if they profane not mine ordinances, I the Lord will sanctify them”* (Leviticus 22:9). Through this sanctification, God sets us apart as holy.

Ultimately, the Church is the vehicle through which the world is invited to gather under the name of Jesus Christ and to walk in newness of life. It is the instrument by which the Great Commission is fulfilled and God’s righteousness is established on earth—the foundation of Zion, the Kingdom of God.

And so the Church in Christ’s day was born. It was:

1. founded upon the Rock (Matthew 16:17-18)
2. connected through the covenant (Acts 2:37-38; 8:12)
3. true to the Word (John 1:1-19; 8:31-32; 14:15)
4. empowered through authority and ordinances (Mark 14:20-25)
5. Filled with the gifts of the Spirit (Luke 9:1-6; Mark 16:14-21)

### **The Falling Away**

God warned the Church in the days of the Apostles that before the Lord Jesus Christ should come, there would first come a falling away (2 Thessalonians 2:2-3). Soon after the Gospel began to be preached in all the world for a witness, abominable heresies crept into the Church. Members began to follow the principles of men—those teachings that pleased the ears (2 Timothy 4:3-4)—and the simplicity of Christ became corrupted (2 Corinthians 11:2-4).

It wasn’t outsiders who transgress the laws, change the ordinances, and break the everlasting covenant (Isaiah 24:5-6), for they had no knowledge such things. It was the members themselves who did so. *“Because that, when they **knew** God, they glorified Him **not** as God, **neither** were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And **changed** the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man”* (Romans 1:21-23).

For this reason, the Apostles sought to warn the people—especially the priesthood who were charged to watch over the flock of God. Yet it was the priesthood who brought the corruption in (Acts 20:29-31; 2 Peter 2:1-2).

It might seem strange that the Church could so quickly depart from the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and embrace another (Galatians 1:6-9). But the priesthood alone were not entirely to blame. The people themselves, as Ezekiel prophesied, would, “...sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (Ezekiel 33:30-33).

In consequence of these things, both the priesthood and the members fell away from the fundamental principles of Christ. In time, there became too much man and not enough God within the Church, producing division and strife. Thus, the Church—which was supposed to be one body in Christ—became many churches in man.

The churches of men began changing the ordinances and doctrine of the Church.

Ordinance/Doctrine	Change
<b>Baptism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 254 AD Infant baptism accepted</li> <li>• 1311 AD Sprinkling officially permitted</li> </ul>
<b>Sacrament</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1215 AD Transubstantiation and Oral confession</li> <li>• 1415 AD Communion cup restricted</li> </ul>
<b>Priesthood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 440 AD Pope Leo I is the first true Pope</li> <li>• 1059 AD Cardinal formalized</li> <li>• 1123 AD Celibacy mandatory for priests</li> </ul>
<b>Scripture &amp; Prayer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 360 AD Veneration of Saints started</li> <li>• 553 AD Sacred Tradition emphasized</li> <li>• 1200 AD Rosary beads</li> <li>• 1229 AD Members forbidden from non-Latin Bibles</li> </ul>
<b>Life after Death &amp; Salvation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1302 AD Papal Supremacy over kings &amp; salvation</li> <li>• 1439 AD Purgatory and the Treasury of Merit</li> </ul>

### Questions to consider

1. What does the word Church mean?
2. What is the Church’s mission? Why is it important?
3. Why did the Church fall away? Why does this matter today?

## THE RESTORATION

When we speak of the Restoration, we often focus on the organization of the Church and the return of divine authority—and rightly so. Yet the Restoration is much more than this. It is the restoration of the *Gospel* itself, for without the fullness of the Gospel, the Church cannot fulfill its purpose. A foundation in Church history is valuable, but we must not lose sight of the significance of the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Inspired Version*, which God brought forth through the Restoration of His Church.

### What is it?

The Restoration is not merely about the Church—it is about God’s desire to restore *us* to His image, to bring us back into fellowship with Him. To accomplish this, God seeks a deep and personal intimacy with His children. Such intimacy requires that we truly *know* Him (John 17:3), and to know Him fully we must possess the fullness of His Gospel—the divine vehicle that enables our relationship with God to grow and flourish.

Tragically, the Gospel that Jesus established during His ministry became altered over time, clouding humanity’s understanding of God and obscuring their relationship with Him. Therefore, the Lord set His hand again to restore His Gospel—as He promised in *Revelation 14:6*—through the prophet Joseph Smith Jr., that we might know Him, His covenant, and His plan concerning the days to come (Sec 1:4).

### The Writing on the Wall

As centuries passed after Christ’s ascension, many began to recognize that what they saw in the Scriptures did not match what they saw in practice. Reformers such as Martin Luther, John Robinson, Roger Williams, and John Wesley sought to purify the Church, and though each discovered portions of truth, none held the full light of the Gospel. The world did not need a *reformation*—it needed a *restoration*. This Restoration was to:

- Restore the gospel and the everlasting covenant (Sec 45:2d)
- Restore authority to the earth (Sec 1:2a)
- Restore man to God (Sec 22:23b; 66:1b)
- Restore God’s Kingdom on earth (Sec 65:1)

God has never ceased to speak. He wants His people to know “*the things whereof He had appointed*” (Alma 9:38–56), to understand His ways (Psalm 53:2), and to receive the knowledge of His everlasting covenant (Genesis 9:21–23). That

covenant is simple: *If you will keep my commandments, embrace the truth, and choose Me—I will choose you.* It is God’s promise of eternal life to all who are faithful. He wants us to know where we stand (1 John 5:10-13).

## The Covenant Restored

The title page of the *Book of Mormon* declares that God brought forth the Restored Gospel so that we might understand His covenants. “*And for this cause, **that men might be partakers of the glories** which were to be revealed [i.e., eternal life], the Lord sent forth the fullness of His Gospel,<sup>1</sup> His everlasting covenant, reasoning in plainness and simplicity, to prepare the weak for those things which are coming on the earth*” (Sec 108:11a).

Through Isaiah, the Lord promised that a book would come forth in a time when people would honor Him with their lips but not their hearts: “*And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness...They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine*” (Isaiah 29:29-30, 32 [KJV Isa 29:17-18, 24]).

Indeed, the scriptures of the Restoration have illuminated many long-standing theological debates—free will and grace, faith and works, repentance and baptism. While many have viewed these truths as opposites, the *Book of Mormon* reveals their harmony, showing that faith and obedience, mercy and justice, all unite perfectly in Jesus Christ.

**Free Will:** Some use *Ephesians 1:4–5* to argue that free will doesn’t exist, while others use *1 Peter 1:2* or *Joshua 24:15* to affirm human choice. These aren’t contradictions—they’re just difficult to align.

- **Book of Mormon Insight:** *2 Nephi 1:116–120* teaches that Christ’s redemption gives us the freedom to choose good or evil. This clarifies both Paul’s and Peter’s teachings and confirms that agency is central to God’s plan.

**Faith vs. Works:** Many argue about what faith means—whether it’s a gift, a mental belief, or something that involves action. *Ephesians 2:8–9* emphasizes grace, while *James 2:14, 18* insists faith must be shown through works. Who’s right?

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<sup>1</sup> The fullness of the Everlasting Gospel includes the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Inspired Version [read Sec 26:2a; 32:3d-e; 35:2-3].

- **Book of Mormon Insight:** *1 Nephi 4:52–57* explains that while we are saved by grace, we are judged by our works. Paul and James weren't contradicting—they were addressing different problems. True faith leads to obedience.

**Repentance:** Some say repentance isn't required for salvation, citing *Romans 8:1*. Others, like Peter in *Acts 2:38*, teach it is essential and must bear fruit (*Luke 3:8*).

- **Book of Mormon Insight:** *2 Nephi 6:45–48* and *Alma 19:93–94* make it clear that salvation requires repentance and that mercy only takes effect under its conditions. Paul and Peter both call believers to leave behind sin (*Colossians 3* confirms this).

**Baptism:** Views on baptism vary: Protestants often call it a nonessential “work,” while Catholics view it as necessary for removing original sin. Disagreements also exist on sprinkling vs. immersion, infant vs. believer's baptism, and the need for authority.

- **Book of Mormon Insight:**
  - *Alma 5:24–27*: Baptism is a covenant tied to salvation
  - *Mosiah 9:50–51*: Proper authority is required
  - *3 Nephi 5:24–27*: Baptism must include repentance and immersion
- **Covenant:** The covenant is a helpmeet—a sacred promise binding us together with God and with one another. It's designed to help us in our journey, offering security, accountability, and intimacy. It involves five key elements: vows, an exchange, a seal, authority, and sacrifice. All five are returned in the Restored Gospel.

## Early Events of the Restoration

The following traces foundational moments of the Restoration Movement. It begins with religious confusion that stirred Joseph's spiritual questions, follows his visions and divine visitation, and concludes with the translation of the Book of Mormon and the formal organization of the Church.

**Religious Confusion and a Search for Truth (Joseph Smith, Jr. | 1805–1820):** Growing up amid the religious revivals of western New York, young Joseph Smith saw his family divided among competing Protestant sects. Confused by their conflicting claims, he asked, “*Who of all these parties are right?*” Turning to the

Bible, he found guidance in *James 1:5*—an invitation to ask God directly for wisdom.

**The First Vision in the Grove (Spring 1820):** Acting on that counsel, Joseph prayed in a grove near his home and beheld a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ. They told him that the fullness of truth was not found in any existing denomination. Though ridiculed and persecuted, Joseph bore steadfast testimony of what he saw, affirming that divine revelation continues in modern times.

*“I discovered that they did not adorn their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository. This was a grief to my Soul. Thus, from the age of twelve years to fifteen, I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world...My mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins, and by searching the scriptures I found that mankind...had apostatized from the true and living faith. And there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament”* (Joseph Smith Papers).

**Visitation from Moroni (1820–1823):** After years of spiritual struggle and repentance, Joseph was visited by the angel Moroni, who revealed an ancient record hidden in a nearby hill. The heavenly visits, repeated over several years, prepared him to become a prophet and translator of sacred scripture.

**The Translation of the Book of Mormon (1827–1829):** In 1827 Joseph received the plates and, by divine means, translated them with the help of scribes Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery. Despite the loss of the first 116 pages, the work was completed in less than three months. The *Book of Mormon* recounts 2,600 years of sacred history and bears powerful testimony of Jesus Christ’s ministry among all nations.

**The Organization of the Church (April 6, 1830):** By revelation, Joseph and a small group of believers formally organized the Church of Jesus Christ. They testified of spiritual gifts and divine authority restored to the earth. This marked the reestablishment of Christ’s true Church—built upon revelation, authority, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### Questions to consider

1. What did God want to restore and why?
2. What is the restored gospel? What does it do?
3. What role does the Church and the Book of Mormon play?



## RESTORATION DISTINCTIVES USING KJV

Today, there are over 45,000 Christian denominations worldwide, each with differing doctrines about God, Jesus Christ, and salvation. With so many voices, how can anyone know which to follow? Are all doctrines true, and do they all lead to salvation? What makes the *Restored Gospel* distinct—and necessary?

Most Christian faiths teach the gospel of salvation through belief in Christ. The Restoration goes further—it teaches the gospel of *eternal life* through a personal relationship with both the Father and the Son. For those who desire to truly know God (John 17:3), the Restored Gospel provides the *fullness* of His plan.

These distinctives can be remembered by the acronym KOLA: **K**ingdom of God, **O**pen canon of scripture, **L**ife after death, and **A**uthority.

### Kingdom of God

While the Lord Jesus came to pay the price for our sins, He told us in Luke 4, why He lived. *"And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent"* (Luke 4:43). His message was simple: *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Mat 4:17). Throughout His ministry, Jesus:

- preached the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43, Luke 8:1)
- commissioned others to do the same (Luke 9:1-2, 6; 10:1, 8-9)
- taught His disciples to pray and seek the Kingdom (Luke 11:1-2; 12:34-35)
- spoke of it even after His resurrection (Acts 1:1-3)
- told priesthood to continue preaching it (Acts 8:14; 14:21-23; 28:30-31)

To see *and* enter God's Kingdom, one must be born of water *and* Spirit (John 3:1–8), through one having authority (Acts 8:12–17). Peter declared, *"Repent, and be baptized... and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). It is this Spirit that confirms our citizenship in God's Kingdom—changing our hearts.

Jesus taught us to *seek first the Kingdom of God* (Matthew 6:33). This Kingdom is not merely future—it begins now, as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17). It is the Kingdom Daniel foresaw, which *"shall never be destroyed"* (Daniel 2:44–45). Zion is the physical expression of this Kingdom, and its law is love (Mark 12:28–34). Thus, our prayer is *"Our Father which are in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* Matthew 6:10-11).

## Sources:

- <https://www.greatplanofredemption.com/kingdom-of-god>
- <https://www.greatplanofredemption.com/the-kingdom-of-god-on-earth>

## Open Canon of Scripture

Many believe revelation ceased after the Bible was completed, citing Revelation 22:18–19. Yet these verses apply *only* to the Book of Revelation itself—*not to the entire Bible*. When John wrote Revelation, the Bible as we know it did not yet exist.

The collection of sacred writings varied widely for centuries:

- The Old Testament was not compiled into scrolls until around 200 B.C., and its contents were debated until 400 A.D.
- Both the Old and New Testaments reference other letters and books we no longer have. The OT references 14, while the NT references 2.
- If “*add thou not*” from Rev 22:18-19 and Deut 4:1-2 were applied universally, neither Old nor New Testament could have been expanded.

The Bible we have today is not the only word of God ever written, simply it is a book comprised of various writings that men deemed at one time were worthy to be considered scripture.

For nearly four centuries after Christ, the Church maintained an open canon, adding revelations as God gave them. The Restoration continues that pattern. In 1827, God revealed another sacred record—the Book of Mormon—hidden for centuries and brought forth by divine power, reaffirming that God still speaks today.

- Source: <https://www.greatplanofredemption.com/open-canon>

## Life After Death

Romans 10:9–10 promises salvation through confession and belief, but Jesus defined *eternal life* as knowing “*the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*” (John 17:3). Eternal life, therefore, is more than belief—it is a living relationship with God. Jesus said “*not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven...*” (Mat 7:21-23).

**So what does happen when we pass from death unto life?** Following our death (Hebrews 9:27), our bodies return to the earth and our spirit goes to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). From there, we receive one of two/three rewards,<sup>2</sup> namely paradise (Luke 23:42-43, Rev 2:7), or hell/prison (**Hell**: Psa 9:17, Psa 55:15, 2 Pet 2:4; **Prison**: Isa 24:22, Isa 61:1, 1 Pet 3:18-20, 1 Pet 4:6), and here we will await the time of our resurrection from the dead.

The scriptures explain that all will be raised from the dead to be judged according to their works, both the just and the unjust (John 5:24-29, Rom 2:1-11). Jesus Christ Himself will be our judge (John 5:22). He will judge us by the Word (John 12:48, Rev 20:12-14) and by our works (Mat 16:27, Rev 22:12, 2 Cor 5:10, Rom 14:10-12).

In other words, our reward—or final resting place—will depend on the condition of our heart. How did we receive the ministry of Christ once we heard the Gospel message (Mat 13:3-9, 18-23)?

Ultimately, there are four eternal resting places. Paul explained that as a seed of grain is planted in the earth and dies, it brings forth a new body—some wheat and to another barely.

So too are we planted in the earth, and following our death we will be resurrected a new body—some to one glory and some to another depending on our faithfulness.

*“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”* (Rev 22:11-12).

Life after death, therefore, reflects the condition of our heart and our response to Christ’s mercy.

- Source: <https://www.greatplanofredemption.com/from-death-unto-life>

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<sup>2</sup> It's important to recognize that some believe that the prison house is actually a part of hell, which very well could be true, as both Psalms 86:13 and Deuteronomy 32:22 speak of the "lowest hell," suggesting that there could be levels to hell. Regardless however of whether hell and prison are two separate places or not, they are at least distinguishable from one another.

## Authority

While God invites all peoples to come unto Him through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, forbidding none, He has an established pattern of calling and choosing certain individuals or nations to accomplish specific tasks. God chose to make a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that through them all the nations of the earth might be blessed. He chose the people of Israel to bring into a promised land (Deut 7:6-11). God even chose Jerusalem to be the place where His name would be found and David to be King over His people (2 Chr 6:5-6).

God also called and chose priesthood—setting them in the Church (Eph 4:11, 1 Cor 12:27-31)—for the purpose of “...*perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till [or until] we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Authority is not self-assumed or inherited—it is *bestowed by God*. “*No man taketh this honor unto himself... but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*” (Hebrews 5:4–5; read also Exo 4:14-16, 27-30; 40:13). Jesus told His apostles, “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you*” (John 15:16). Through this divine commission, the Church acts in Christ’s name with power to teach, baptize, and administer the ordinances of salvation (Acts 6:1–6; 8:14–17; 13:1–3; 14:21-23; 20:28).

Without this authority, religion becomes man’s invention rather than God’s work. With it, the Church becomes the living body of Christ, guided by revelation and the Holy Spirit.

<https://www.greatplanofredemption.com/restored-authority>

## Questions to consider

4. What sets the Restoration apart from other faiths?
5. Which of the four distinctives is the most difficult for people to hear?
6. Why do you think that is? And how would you address it?

## ZION

In His first advent, the Lord Jesus came as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—to atone for sin and show us how to live in the Kingdom of God. He came unto His own and His own received Him not (John 1:10–12). When He comes again, He will return as the triumphant Lion of Judah to those who will receive Him.

God calls His people to be a light to the world—a city on a hill—to prepare the way of the Lord even as John the Baptist did (Luke 1:16–17). Jesus commands us to *“prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken”* (Isaiah 62:10–12).

### Zion the Beautiful

The city not forsaken is Zion. It is the City of the Lord (Isaiah 60)—whose foundation, builder, and maker is God (Hebrews 11:8–16)—and it is radically different from the kingdoms of this world.

- *Jesus Is King*: Every kingdom has a king, laws, and subjects. Jesus Christ is the King of Zion—the ultimate authority (Genesis 7:23; D&C 45:12–13). No earthly government can establish Zion; our hope must rest in Christ alone.
- *Peace in Zion*: It will be a place of safety and righteousness where fear and war cease, and even nature itself is at peace (Isaiah 2:4; 11:6–9).
- *All Things Common*: Zion is defined by unity—a people of one heart and mind, with no poor among them (Genesis 7:23–25; 4 Nephi 1:3). Through consecration and stewardship, they meet one another’s needs (D&C 42:8–15; 51:4).
- *Dwell in Righteousness*: It will be a place of healing and holiness, where joy and peace replace fear and shame (Isaiah 35:10; Genesis 7:23–25).

### Preparing the Way

One of the most powerful invitations in scripture is “Come and see.” When asked, “Where dwellest thou?” or “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”—

Jesus and Philip both replied, “*Come and see*” (John 1:37–46). They didn’t win people by argument but by example. This phrase captures the essence of the Gospel and of Zion.

A day of calamity is coming—not only natural disasters (Sec 85:25; 43:5–6), but a day when all will meet their God. Are they prepared? Do they know there is refuge and safety in Christ? Most of the world has never heard of Zion. Our mission is twofold: **to live it** and **to testify of it**—inviting others to “*come and see*.” The Church itself is not the destination but the instrument to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ and the everlasting covenant.

How can the elders tell people to flee to Zion (Sec 108:3b-d)—or in other words, “*to come and see*”—if there’s no Zion to flee too? God’s charge to His people is clear (Section 65):

- to *share the Gospel* of the Kingdom,
- to *prepare the way* of the Lord,
- to *prepare the supper* of the Lamb,
- to *make ready* for the Bridegroom, and
- to *call upon* the Lord.

We prepare, or cast up, the way by how we live—through sacrifice, obedience, forgiveness, reconciliation, and love. There is no secret formula for Zion; the pattern is already revealed. We must:

- live by every word of God (Sec 83:7a; 95:3)
- lift up our voices with the sound of a trump (Sec 28:2)
- to warn our neighbor of those things which are coming (Sec 38:9c-e)
- keep the sabbath day holy (Sec 68:4d; 119:7)
- pay God’s tithe (Sec 64:5a-b)
- forsake all evil (Sec 95:3a)
- forgive all men (Sec 64:2)
- love God (Sec 59:2a-b)

## When is Zion?

Before we attempt to answer this, it’s important to understand that the word “Zion” can mean different things depending on the context. Zion can refer to:

- A Spiritual Condition (Sec 94:5c, Gen 7:23)
- A Holy City prepared to **meet** Jesus (Gen 7:70)
- Enoch City promised to return **with** Jesus (Gen 7:71)

- New Jerusalem (Gen 7:70, 3 Nephi 10:1-3, Eth 6:4-6, Sec 42:3b)
- The final New Jerusalem with a new heaven and earth (Rev 21:1-8)

To understand where Zion fits within God's timeline, let's take a step back and look at the big picture. Scriptures show a clear timeline (Gen 7:68-75, Rev 20):

1. A great tribulation among the wicked
2. Righteousness and truth will sweep the earth
3. The saints gather to a holy city called Zion, which God prepares
4. Jesus Christ will return with Enoch's city
5. The first resurrection and Millennial reign
6. The little season
7. Final judgment

If we zoom in, the details get a big hazy, but this much we do know. There are certain things that must transpire before the earthly Zion and the heavenly Zion can come to pass.

## Earthly Zion

**The Church must be organized...again:** how can the gospel of the Kingdom be proclaimed to all the world for a witness if we remain in a divided state? If Zion is set apart by its oneness (Gen 7:23), how can we effectively testify of it unless *we too* are one? This is what we are telling the world to come and see. Think of how great an ensign it will be to the nations (Sec 64:8a, Isa 5:26), to see a people who have learned to become one in every sense of the word. Moreover, the scriptures foretell of one mighty and strong who will lead the people out of bondage (Sec 98:6-8; 100:1-4; and CH Vol 1 pgs. 259-260).

**The Gospel must spread to all nations:** The gospel must be shared throughout the world, especially with the Lamanites and the Jews (3 Nephi 10:1-8, Eth 6:6-8, Hel 5:100-104, 3 Nephi 2:104-109). Not only this, but the scriptures explain that the Jews will believe (2 Nephi 12:85-86).

**The Gathering:** Jesus said that the fullness of the Gospel will be preached to the house of Israel, they will believe, and then they will be gathered again (3 Nephi 9:69-73). God will set His hand again the second time to gather His people to their inheritance, some to Jerusalem, and some to Zion (Sec 108:3-4, Isa 11:12).

Since neither the sharing nor the gathering have occurred, it leads me to believe more must be done before the coming of Zion, and thereby Jesus Christ's return.

## Heavenly Zion

**Earthly Zion must be established:** Gen 7:70, Sec 83:17b, and Mat 6:11 show us that there must be a place to gather to. For example, Sec 108:3 explains that the elders will go to all nations calling on the people to flee to Zion. How can this happen if there's no earthly Zion?

**The Kingdom must roll forth:** Section 65:1 states that the Kingdom of God must roll forth so that the Kingdom of Heaven may come. The Gospel must go forth as a witness to all the earth, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:32). This Kingdom will fulfill the everlasting covenant found in Gen 9:21-23.

**Great tribulations:** Before Jesus returns, God will remove His Spirit, protection, and blessings from the entire earth (Gen 7:68-69; Rev 6:12-13; Joel 3:2, 14-15; Mat 24:34-35). During this time, there will be great commotions and destruction. Fear will come upon all people (Sec 85:25; 43:5-6; 34:3d). While this will be a time of great concern, it will also be a time of tremendous hope. For these signs mean that Jesus is near, even at the door.

In Luke 21, Jesus gives the same warning again about the sun, the moon, and the stars. But then He goes onto say, *"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory"* (Luke 21:27-28).

## Questions to consider

- What is Zion to you?
- How might you share Zion with others?
- What is the spiritual condition of Zion?
- How can we move toward that condition, individually and collectively?