

Section Three: The Marvelous Work and Wonder

Chapter Five: The Parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees

(v 1.00)

Multiple Interpretations

“As you study this parable, consider the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “[The Savior’s] parables had multiple meanings or applications according to the spiritual maturity of the listener. They had a message for both children and gospel scholars” (“Scripture Reading and Revelation,” Ensign, Jan. 1995, 8). Look for multiple meanings and applications in this parable (see also Bible Dictionary, “Parables”).” (D&C 101 Seminary Manual)

There are many interpretations to parables. If you have heard somebody interpret a parable or teach a parable in a different way, good for you and good for them. Someone else’s interpretation does not invalidate learning gained from other interpretations. So we need to understand, going into any parable, that there will be multiple interpretations and multiple ways to apply the parable.

Primary vs. Secondary Interpretations

With that said however, that there are many interpretations or applications of parables that can be of use and edification, that is not what we will be doing in our parable breakdowns. Even though there are multiple interpretations and applications, there is only one primary interpretation or application.

In this book I will go over parables of the utmost importance that have been used so often in their secondary and tertiary forms that most members don’t understand or even know the primary interpretation of the parables. Can parables be interpreted or likened in multiple ways for the benefit of man? Yes. Can washing the vase and the dishes and placing them on a clean cloth add symbolic weight to traditions and ordinances (Mark 7:4-23)? Yes. The problem comes when the washing of the dishes in the eyes of the participant becomes the primary activity and they neglect the actual primary purpose. Jesus, pointing the Jews towards their behavior in doing this very thing, said you “have omitted the weightier matters of the law” (Matthew 23:23-28).

Unlocking the Primary Interpretation

Understanding how the Lord teaches is crucial to understanding the primary intent of the parable. Joseph Smith had a laugh at a member who thought that the beast kingdoms described in Daniel’s vision were symbols of God’s kingdoms. Joseph Smith said, “the Lord would never make use of a figure of a beast nor any of the brute kind to represent His Kingdom” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 289). Joseph Smith taught that every jot and tittle of the word had to be literally fulfilled and this included parables, visions etc. Joseph Smith in identifying that the Lord even in a parable or vision wouldn’t use something ungodly to represent something

godly clarifies that even the symbols in parables have to make sense. Joseph Smith also taught on another occasion the best way to go about trying to find this primary purpose; “I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I inquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable?” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.276-277) Joseph then goes on to explain that the question being answered is the primary interpretation and “all straining on this point is a bubble” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.277).

So in summary, if your interpretation doesn't:

1. Answer the question being asked specifically
2. Have all of the symbols make sense,

then what you are teaching is a secondary interpretation of the parable. For it to be the primary interpretation it must answer the question and all symbols in the parable must make sense.

The Question

What drew out the parable?

The Saints were chastened and afflicted because of their transgressions and were “cast out of the land of their inheritances” (i.e., Zion, New Jerusalem in Jackson County Missouri). The Lord in D&C 101:1-42 proceeds to explain that there will be a time of chastening, “all those who will not endure chastening but deny me cannot be sanctified.” He then says that His indignation was soon to be poured out when the cup of the gentile nation's iniquity is full. The Lord then promises “in that day”, meaning in the day that his wrath is poured out because of the people's iniquity being full, “all who are found upon the watchtower, or in other words, all mine Israel, shall be saved. And they that have been scattered shall be gathered. Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands. Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered. They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances...to build up Zion and all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled.” The Lord then describes that after that event, the redemption of Zion and building of New Jerusalem, “they shall prepare themselves, for that which is to come, when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle, which hideth the earth, shall be taken off, and all flesh shall see me together.”

D&C 101:23-26

23 And prepare for the revelation which is to come, when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle, which hideth the earth, shall be taken off, and all flesh shall see me together.

24 And every corruptible thing, both of man, or of the beasts of the field, or of the fowls of the heavens, or of the fish of the sea, that dwells upon all the face of the earth, shall be consumed;

25 And also that of element shall melt with fervent heat; and all things shall become new, that my knowledge and glory may dwell upon all the earth.

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26 And in that day the enmity of man, and the enmity of beasts, yea, the enmity of all flesh, shall cease from before my face.

These scriptures describe the Great and Dreadful Day. The Lord then describes conditions in the Millennium and the hope that members should have in the Millennium and that brings us up to verse 42.

So in summary, the Lord gives you the macro last-day timeline.

1. Saints kicked out of Jackson County MO (i.e., Zion, New Jerusalem) →
2. Many days will pass as “the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers” →
3. The Gentile nation’s cup of their iniquity is full →
4. The Redemption of Zion: The wrath of the Lord is poured out without measure. “All who are found on the watchtower, they that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion” and shall be saved. →
5. There they will prepare for the Great and Dreadful Day →
6. The Great and Dreadful Day

After the Lord explains all this, he says “and now, I will show unto you a parable, *that you may know my will concerning the redemption of Zion.*” We should now clearly understand our “why?” for this parable being given.

The Folly

Looking at the points of reference above, it should be clear what time period or “point of reference” that this parable is addressing.

The folly of the early Saints in believing that this had to do entirely with them and thus the redemption of Zion also had to deal with them (e.g., Zion’s camp), is surpassed only by the folly of members today treating all of this like it had do with the Saints’ failure back then and nothing to do with the failure of the Saints today, while also not believing any longer in a Redemption of Zion. So the early Saints believed in the Redemption of Zion, but incorrectly, at the time, believed the parable to be about themselves and thus believed that the Redemption of Zion was at hand- if that wasn’t accurate, don’t we think that Joseph Smith Jr. would have cleared up that misconception?

Yes! And he did teach and clarify this point of doctrine (a full transcript of what he taught will be provided at the end of this chapter, but this quote is crucial to anti-anti people upfront):

“The olive trees are 12 stakes which are yet to be built not the Temple in Jackson as some suppose for while the 12 olive stakes are being built we will be at peace”

- **Joseph Smith Jr** (Joseph Smith Papers, 19 July 1840)

Proving that *the majority of this parable* was to take place *in futurity* from Joseph Smith’s time forward (clearly identifying the planting of the 12 olive trees as being future from 1840, meaning

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everything post the planting of the 12 olive trees as being clearly post 1840) and also proving that Joseph Smith Jr. knew, understood, and taught that this parable had nothing whatsoever to do with the Saints of his time, but of a future date.

We are not in Jackson County Missouri, meaning this parable does not refer to the past for the parable is about the redemption of Zion. That fact alone, even without the Joseph Smith clarification, seems to make the point so obvious that even the simplest amongst the Saints shouldn't be confused on the point.

This parable is about the time period surrounding the redemption and building of New Jerusalem. It is not a parable about why we are not in Jackson County Missouri and it is not a parable about how the early Saints failed to build New Jerusalem etc.

Teaching the Parable of the Nobleman and His Olive trees in this false manner (as though it dealt almost entirely with Joseph Smith's time period) would be like teaching the parable of the ten virgins as though it dealt with the ancient church of Christ!

“When the virgins ‘slept’ it actually meant that they died and a thousand plus years passed and when the procession passed by, the old Saints were resurrected (i.e., woke up), but some found that they had no oil when they woke up and couldn't join the procession. And the procession consisted of all members of the modern church.”

Do you see what viewing a parable in that lens does to you? It puts all of the failure, all of the fear, all of the actions on a previous generation and alleviates you, the reader in the present generation, of any guilt or action etc. And thus, the parable would literally hold no value for the Saints in either time period. We know that there is value in the ten virgins parable only because we liken ourselves to the ten virgins and then we scrutinize and try to figure out what the oil is so that we can be ready. Likewise, in this parable, the Parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees, if you believe that 99% of the parable had to do with failures of previous Saints and the only thing that has to deal with you is “Yay, we win! Yay, we redeem Zion! Yay, we build New Jerusalem!”, it is no different. What value would there be in this parable written specifically for Saints *to know the will of the Lord regarding the redemption of Zion*, if none of it had to do with *the generation that would redeem and build Zion*? This parable and the ten virgins have more in common than most members realize. The failure of members to build the tower in this parable and their self-justification is exactly why the necessity of oil in the ten virgins is the way it is.

Before Continuing

What takes place directly before and during the redemption of Zion? And what are some events that occur in conjunction with or shortly after? If this parable, the Parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees, does in fact reveal the will of the Lord *regarding the redemption of Zion*, knowing/understanding what is to take place surrounding the redemption of Zion, will bring the figures used in the parable into focus.

Take a moment to go back and re-read the points surrounding “The Redemption of Zion” in the Preface. Once you have taken the time to at least familiarize yourself broadly speaking of that time period, let us continue on and read the will of the Lord, a parable concerning the redemption of Zion, and let’s see how much sense this parable already makes.

The Parable

A certain nobleman had a spot of land, very choice; and he said unto his servants: Go ye unto my vineyard, even upon this very choice piece of land, and plant twelve olive trees; And set watchmen round about them, and build a tower, that one may overlook the land round about, to be a watchman upon the tower, that mine olive trees may not be broken down when the enemy shall come to spoil and take upon themselves the fruit of my vineyard. Now, the servants of the nobleman went and did as their lord commanded them, and planted the olive trees, and built a hedge round about, and set watchmen, and began to build a tower. And while they were yet laying the foundation thereof, they began to say among themselves: And what need hath my lord of this tower? And consulted for a long time, saying among themselves: What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace? Might not this money be given to the exchangers? For there is no need of these things. And while they were at variance one with another they became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord. And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants of the nobleman arose and were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works, and broke down the olive trees. Now, behold, the nobleman, the lord of the vineyard, called upon his servants, and said unto them, Why! what is the cause of this great evil? Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you, and—after ye had planted the vineyard, and built the hedge round about, and set watchmen upon the walls thereof—built the tower also, and set a watchman upon the tower, and watched for my vineyard, and not have fallen asleep, lest the enemy should come upon you? And behold, the watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer. And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry; And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money. Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land; break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen. And inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies, that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land. And the servant said unto his lord: When shall these things be? And he said unto his servant: When I will; go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you; And this shall be my seal and blessing upon you—a faithful and wise steward in the midst of mine house, a ruler in my kingdom. And his servant went straightway, and did all things whatsoever his lord commanded him; and after many days all things were fulfilled. (D&C 101:44-62)

The Figures

Let's go through the parable and identify what we clearly should recognize and relate it back to points in the timeline:

The Nobleman: is the Savior

Vineyard: is the promised, choice land (i.e., America)

Servants: leaders of the church (i.e., People with keys)

Twelve Olive Trees: the house of Israel was frequently compared to that of an olive tree (Jacob 5) and the house of Israel consists of 12 tribes; 12 being a symbol of completeness. The trees themselves represent, according to Joseph Smith, "12 stakes" that were to be built in the future from 1840. The function of our churches, temples, wealth etc. is entirely that of gathering scattered Israel and building them up. We refer to these collective units as "stakes". The fruit of the trees include saving ordinances, temporal salvation, money, converts etc. performed or gained by the house of Israel. (i.e., the works) Remember that in the parable, the members of the Church actually planted the olive trees, they got that far along.

Hedge: the hedge being in place is what gives the servants/watchman a sense of security, thus it becomes clear that the hedge is the law of the land/lower laws (i.e., "the constitution"). It and the tower held similar functions, the tower was simply greater and more important. (i.e., "earthly laws vs heavenly")

Watchmen: are political/civil/etc. leaders, as they are who protect/maintain the hedge

Enemy/Destroyer: the Assyrian or scourge

Periods of Time

Period of peace: the Saints did not experience this in 1830. This is further proof that this parable did not take place pre-1840 (and remember that Joseph said this period of peace was to take place *in the future from 1840*). This period of peace gives birth to the 12 stakes or olive trees. It should be noted that President Brigham Young, almost as soon as Salt Lake City was inhabited, began to immediately send out companies of Saints to settle throughout the land- one might say "they began to plant the olive trees".

Period of variance: this is a time period that takes place because of the period of peace, in which people debated the need to build the tower vs simply maintaining the hedge and basking in the fruit. This period might have taken place among the Saints as early as Wilford Woodruff, who "made peace" for the Saints with the manifesto.

Period of slothfulness: not only did they give up on the tower, they began to neglect the hedge and their watching. President Benson warned that the Church had officially reached this point,

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that we were neglecting our fight for freedom on the hedge. The rationale given for this sloth was because of the love of money. Full stop.

“We are tested, we are tried, we are going through some of the severest tests today and we don’t realize perhaps the severity of the tests we are going through. In those days there were murderings, there were mobbings, there were drivings. They were driven out into the desert, they were starving and they were unclad, and they were cold. They came here to this favored land. We are the inheritors of what they gave to us. But what are we doing with it? Today we are basking in the lap of luxury, the like of which we’ve never seen before in the history of the world. It would seem that probably this is the most severe test of any test that we’ve ever had in the history of this Church.”

-**Harold B. Lee** (Christmas address to Church employees, Dec. 13, 1973)

“Do you know what peace and prosperity can do to a people—It can put them to sleep.”

- **Ezra Taft Benson** (“Our Obligation and Challenge,” regional representatives’ seminar, Sept. 30, 1977)

Period of wickedness (not keeping commandments): this is now a point in time where members have given up on the tower, neglecting their watch duties and the hedge, and now they are watering down or completely making obsolete the commandments of God. They are going “hand in hand” with Babylon. As President Heber C. Kimball put it, it would become impossible to “*tell the face of a Saint from the face of an enemy to the people of God.*” Joseph Smith will be discerning between the righteous and wicked in the Church (gone over in Section 3, Chapter 2), ergo there has to be an unrighteous element established in the church **before that point**. The Family: A Proclamation to the World given in 1995 is a warning of this time period.

Period of breaking down the hedge and robbing the vineyard: this is the period of the Assyrian breaking down the laws of the land, the protections and freedoms thereof etc. (the hedge). Isaiah chapter 10 goes over the Assyrian breaking down the hedges (verses 1-5) as well as robbing the eggs from the nest (verse 14). Joseph Smith in his sermon said, “*Then the Enemy shall come as a thief in the night and scatter the servants abroad... This Nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground and when the constitution is upon the brink of ruin this people will be the Staff up[on] which the Nation shall lean and they shall bear the constitution away from the <very> verge of destruction.*” (The Joseph Smith Papers, 19 July 1840). This once again confirms the connection between “the enemy” and “the Assyrian” for both destroy the laws of the land and also confirms the connection between the hedge and the laws of the land as they are what was broken down.

Period of separation and capitulation: this is when the servants flee from the hedge and capitulate to the Assyrian. This is the period where the focus of the Church is drawn to that of the will of the Assyrian over that of the twelve olive trees. The problem in the eyes of many

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members and leaders of the Church become that of the Assyrian's will versus that of the Lord's will and His vineyard. And it is explained later in the parable that if the tower had been built, this would never have happened. The Family Proclamation states "Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets." A key component to understand then becomes "the disintegration of the family", and when we see "the servants flee" from upholding the family, in the name of inclusivity and tolerance.

Period of chastisement: this is the rebuking from the Lord. If the leaders and members of the church had built the tower, the capitulation and losses to the Assyrian would not have occurred. The Lord says that he (the nobleman) *personally goes to the servants*, which narrows down this group.

D&C 112:22-26

22 Inasmuch as they shall humble themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit.

23 Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face.

24 Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord.

25 And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord;

26 First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord.

Period of Joseph Smith's return: we learn in D&C 103:21 that this servant is Joseph Smith and lookey here, this is exactly the time period that Joseph is to be returning.

D&C 103:15-22:

*"Behold, I say unto you, **the redemption of Zion must needs come by power**; Therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel. For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and **ye must needs be led out of bondage by power**, and with a stretched-out arm. And as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be. Therefore, let not your hearts faint, for I say not unto you as I said unto your fathers: Mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence. But I say unto you: Mine angels shall go up before you, **and also my presence**, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land. Verily, verily I say unto you, that **my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., is the man to whom I likened the servant to whom the Lord of the vineyard spake in the parable** which I have given unto you. Therefore let my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., say unto the strength of my house, my young men and the middle aged—Gather yourselves together unto the land of Zion, upon the land which I have bought with money that has been consecrated unto me."*

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People constantly ask “when will Joseph Smith make his open appearance?” As far as holy writ, this is the only thing we have to pinpoint down the timing of his open return.

Period of gathering: this is a period where Joseph is discerning and gathering “the strength of mine house”, the “young and middle aged”- one might say “the Lord’s youth battalion”. The ten tribes as a body do not return (are not “gathered”) until after the Redemption of Zion, but they are being made ready.

There will be those who will be asked to tarry, who are worthy. They are being asked to tarry for a specific, foreordained mission.

Period of redemption: this is when the Lord, with these individuals, redeem Zion. These are Joseph’s Boy (Chapter Six). The Lord in the 1830’s (after Zion’s camp) told the Saints to purchase the land in Jackson Country legally so that at this time the Lord would be justified in taking this specific land by force because “I have bought it with money.” So in the parable, when the redemption occurs, the land has already been bought.

It is important to mention the enemy’s “walls, towers, watchmen” etc. because there are some people who continue to hypothesize that “the tower” represents the temple (despite Joseph Smith’s clear teaching to the contrary), however the Lord here says that the enemy *has towers*, as well as *watchmen*. The Lord would not compare *his temple* with that of some other religion’s sacred building and make them equal. Remember, the Lord would not make use of a beast to compare to something holy, ergo the Lord would not make such a comparison using His house. However, a member of the Church in political office defending the hedge could be compared to an enemy of the Lord in politics on another wall/hedge. Also, the Lord only has one tower whereas the enemy has multiple towers (D&C 105:16), so once again, the tower is not the temple.

A period of gathering to New Jerusalem: gathering the residue to New Jerusalem, or as the Lord says in the parable, “*that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land*”

The period of the ultimatum: the parable says “*inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies*”, or as Nephi has it described

1 Nephi 14:

7 For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other—either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds unto their being brought down into captivity, *and also into destruction, both temporally and spiritually*, according to the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken.

Recap

I hope that after having taken the time to learn the macro timeline and now having read this parable, it becomes self-evident what is happening in this parable. I would also say that this parable is yet another proof that Joseph Smith will return, much like 2 Nephi 27, there was not “another servant” that was promised. And the Savior specifically identified this servant in this parable as Joseph Smith by name (D&C 103:21). As the student manual for the church makes clear:

Doctrine and Covenants 103:21–28. The Lord commands the Prophet Joseph Smith to go to Zion

In December 1833 the Lord revealed a parable regarding the redemption of the land of Zion. In that parable “a certain nobleman” had his servants plant 12 olive trees on a “very choice piece of land” (D&C 101:44). He commanded his servants to “set watchmen round about them, and build a tower, that one may overlook the land” and protect it from the enemy (D&C 101:45). However, the servants did not complete the tower, and the enemy “came by night, and ... destroyed their works, and broke down the olive-trees” (see D&C 101:46–51). The nobleman, the Lord of the vineyard, then said to one of his servants, “Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, ... and go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard” (D&C 101:55–56).

In the revelation recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 103, the Lord identified the Prophet Joseph Smith as the servant in the parable *who would* “redeem,” or reclaim, the vineyard (see D&C 103:21). (emphasis added)

The Tower

Hopefully what the tower represents is starting to become self-evident in your mind. But for further edification let’s investigate this a little further. What do we know about the tower?

1. We know the Saints were commanded by the Lord to build it
2. They started laying the foundation- they actually started to build it (dedicating land is not starting to build it) and we also know that the Kirtland temple was built and it didn’t stop the Saints from being driven out. We also know the Nauvoo temple was built- it also didn’t stop the Saints from being driven out. Ergo this has nothing to do with the temple in Jackson County because a temple in and of itself was not and is not enough to keep the enemy at bay.
3. We know that the debate on following through was fought entirely over money and the time of peace, meaning that they either A) thought that building it would disrupt the peace, B) because it was peace there was no need for it, or C) they became greedy, selfish and prideful and they decided that they knew a better way to use resources or they simply wanted the resources for themselves and were justifying not giving them up
4. The enemy had towers
5. Lastly, and the most telling of all, is that the building of this tower would have prevented the damage dealt by the Assyrian to the Saints. So, when determining what the tower is,

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ask the question, “would ___ have prevented the damage?” if the answer is “no”, then you’ve got your tower wrong!

What has the Lord commanded us to do, that if we would have done, it would have protected us from the effects of the destroyer entirely (this prophesied damage)?

D&C 78:13-15

13 Behold, this is the preparation wherewith I prepare you, and the foundation, and the ensample which I give unto you, whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given you;

14 That through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, ***that the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world;***

15 That you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion, who hath established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman;

Elder Bruce R. McConkie also gives us a hint,

“And so we raise the warning voice and say: Take heed; prepare; watch and be ready. There is no security in any course except the course of obedience and conformity and righteousness.

For thus saith the Lord: “The Lord’s scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come; ...

“Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her,” saith the Lord.

“But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire.” (D&C 97:23, 25–26.)” (Stand Independent Above All Other Creatures, April 1979)

Here the Lord identifies that the building of the tower would allow us to be independent of all creatures under heaven, and if we don’t build it, we will have to face the scourge. President Joseph Fielding Smith, after reading those same scriptures, said, *“This way of escape, insuring the protection of the Lord, is a very simple one. Unfortunately, many of the people of Zion have refused to take advantage of this promise. As I observe conditions among the people I cannot see how we are going to escape when the judgments are to pass over the nations, which are promised in this revelation and in others which I cannot take time to read. Because of our disobedience and our failure to keep the commandments of the Lord, the righteous, as in times past, may be called upon to suffer with the unrighteous among us.”* (Doctrines of Salvation, vol 3, p.32)

(B-5) Geographical Designations of Zion (Student Manual):

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Places of Safety Ancient Jerusalem, and particularly the temple site of that city, has been referred to as Mount Zion (see 2 Samuel 5:7–9; 1 Kings 8:1; Isaiah 29:7–8), and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have used the term Zion to identify their own locations (see Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 347), but as used in the Doctrine and Covenants, Zion most often refers either to the people and their condition of purity or to the center place of Zion in the last days—namely, Jackson County, Missouri. Though Zion is foretold in other scriptures (see 3 Nephi 21:22–25; Ether 13:2–12; Moses 7:61–64), only in the Doctrine and Covenants can be found the directives for its establishment, its laws and principles, and its location. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the New Jerusalem would be the first of Zion communities built in preparation for the Millennium. The New Jerusalem will be called “an ‘holy city’ . . . because it is a place of righteousness” (*History of the Church*, 2:254), and it will be located at Independence, Jackson County, Missouri (see D&C 45:66–67; 57:1–3). The New Jerusalem is spoken of as “the center place” (D&C 57:3), or the administrative center, or capital, for all Zion (see Dyer, *Refiner’s Fire*, pp. 99–104; *History of the Church*, 5:212). It is also spoken of as “Mount Zion” (D&C 84:2) and the “mountain of the Lord” (*History of the Church*, 6:319). From the beginnings laid in the New Jerusalem, the establishment of Zion communities will go forth throughout the world. The stakes of Zion will be the means through which the Zion societies will be prepared and strengthened (see D&C 82:14, 101:21, 133:9). Zion will first grow to include all of North and South America (see *History of the Church*, 6:318–319, 321) and eventually the entire earth (see Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:138)

In his vision of the future, Enoch saw that great tribulations would make necessary a means of preserving the Lord’s people upon the earth in the last days. That means is to gather the elect in Zion (see Moses 7:61–62). The Doctrine and Covenants declares that in addition to the true “center place,” the stakes of Zion would also be “for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:6). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the same principle when he said that “without Zion, and a place of deliverance, we must fall; because the time is near when the sun will be darkened, and the moon turn to blood, and the stars fall from heaven, and the earth reel to and fro. Then, if this is the case, and if we are not sanctified and gathered to the places God has appointed, with all our former professions and our great love for the Bible, we must fall; we cannot stand; we cannot be saved; for God will gather out His Saints from the Gentiles, and then comes desolation and destruction, and none can escape except the pure in heart who are gathered.” (*History of the Church*, 2:52.) On another occasion, the Prophet gave the following admonition:

“We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object. When wars come, we shall have to flee to Zion. The cry is to make haste. The last revelation says, Ye shall not have time to have gone over the earth, until these things come. . . . “ . . . The time is soon coming when no man will have any peace but in Zion and her stakes. “I saw men hunting the lives of their own sons, and brother murdering brother, women killing their own daughters, and daughters seeking the lives of their mothers. I saw armies arrayed against armies. I saw blood, desolation, fires. The Son of Man has said that the mother shall be against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. These things are at our doors. They will follow the Saints of God from city to city. Satan will rage, and the spirit of the devil is now enraged. I know not how soon these things will take

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place; but with a view of them, shall I cry peace? No! I will lift up my voice and testify of them. How long you will have good crops, and the famine be kept off, I do not know; when the fig tree leaves, know then that summer is nigh at hand.” (History of the Church, 3:390–91.)

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual/enrichment-b-establishing-zion?lang=eng> (edited)

“The Tower” is the center stake of Zion, the New Jerusalem in Jackson County Missouri. If we had built it, we would have stood independent of all creatures under heaven and the damage would not have been. The very first thing the Lord does when this breaking point is reached (according to the Parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees) is

1. Redeem Zion
and
2. Gather His people in and unto the New Jerusalem

i.e., “finish the tower”...

Cup of Iniquity Full

Can we narrow down the damage to the olive trees and pinpoint this event? We have already covered what the Family Proclamation stated, which is key:

“Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”

The following quotes, in addition to that quote from the Family Proclamation, rounds out our understanding:

“There comes a time when the general defilement of a society becomes so great that the rising generation is put under undue pressure and cannot be said to have a fair choice between the way of light and the way of darkness. When such a point is reached the cup of iniquity is full, and the established order that has passed the point of no return and neither can nor will change its ways must be removed physically and forcibly if necessary from the earth, whether by war, plague, famine, or upheavals of nature” (Mormon 2:13-15).”

-Hugh Nibley (Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.6, Part.5, Ch.11, p.140).

“We must love our young people, whether they are in righteousness or in error. In this way we can give them a chance to discern and to learn. But we must also give them a fair choice. Today many are not succeeding.

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Yes, “There comes a time when the general defilement of a society becomes so great that the rising generation is put under undue pressure and cannot be said to have a fair choice between the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness.”

-Elder Ezra Taft Benson (Satan's Thrust- Youth, Ensign, December 1971)

And what about the “servants fleeing”?

“And when the spirit of persecution, the spirit of hatred, of wrath, and malice ceases in the world against this people, it will be the time that this people have apostatized and joined hands with the wicked...”

- President Brigham Young (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 112)

Brigham Young: A Second Witness

Brigham Young brings into clear view what the tower was that would have allowed us to stand independent above all nations.

*“Some may ask why we did not tarry at the Center Stake of Zion, when the Lord planted our feet there? We had eyes, but we did not see; we had ears, but we did not hear; we had hearts that were devoid of what the Lord required of his people; consequently we could not abide what the Lord revealed to us. We had to go from there to gain an experience. Can you understand this? I think there are some here who can. **If we could have received the words of life and lived according to them**, when we were first gathered to the Center Stake of Zion, we never would have been removed from that place. **But we did not abide the law the Lord gave to us**. We are here to gain an experience, and we cannot increase in that any faster than our capacities will admit. Our capacities are limited, though sometimes we could receive more than we do, but we will not. Preach the riches of eternal life to a congregation, and when the eyes and affections of that congregation are like the fool's eyes, to the ends of the earth, it is like throwing pearls before swine. If I can actually reach your understandings, you will know just what I know, and see just what I see in regard to what I may say.”* (Brigham Young, May 15 1864 Journal of Discourses 10:290)

“This is the land of Zion; but we are not yet prepared to go and establish the Center Stake of Zion. The Lord tried this in the first place. He called the people together to the place where the New Jerusalem and the great temple will be built, and where He will prepare for the City of Enoch. And He gave revelation after revelation; but the people could not abide them, and the Church was scattered and peeled, and the people hunted from place to place till, finally, they were driven into the mountains, and here we are. Now, it is for you and me to prepare to return back again; not to our fatherland, in many cases, but to return east, and by-and-by to build up the Center Stake of Zion. We are not prepared to do this now, but we are here to learn until we are of one heart and of one mind in the things of this life. Do all the Latter-day Saints arrive at this? No; they have not, our former experience has proved this. Of the great many who have

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*been baptized into this Church, but few have been able to abide the word of the Lord; they have fallen out on the right and on the left, and have foundered by the way, and a few have gathered together. Will these be prepared to enter the celestial kingdom? Some of them will be, and will become kings and priests; but not all of these, only a portion of them. They do not know what to do with the revelations, commandments, and blessings of God. Talking, for instance, about everyday things, how many do we see here that know what to do with money and property when they get it? Are their eyes single to the building up of the kingdom of God? No; they are single to the building up of themselves. With all the knowledge that Elders have obtained who have traveled in the Church five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, or thirty years, there are few who understand the principles of the kingdom and whose eyes are single to the building of it up in all respects; but their eyes are like the fool's eye—looking to the ends of the earth. They want this and that, and they do not know what to do; they lack wisdom. **By-and-by, perhaps, their wealth will depart from them, and when left poor and penniless, they will humble themselves before the Lord that they may be saved.***

This is the situation of the Latter-day Saints, yet they are increasing. It is astonishing to look back and see the ignorance that was manifested by the people in their first gathering together; their experience then was far less than their experience and doings now. Still we are far short of being what we should and must be.

When the people assemble together they should be instructed with regard to their temporal lives. It is good to assemble together and pray, and preach, and exhort, so that we may obtain the power of God to that degree that we can heal the sick, cast out devils, speak with tongues, prophecy and enjoy all the blessings and gifts of the holy gospel; but that does not raise our bread, nor perfect the Saints in wisdom. I referred here, last Sunday, to men out of the Church who possess great gifts and who are not in the Church. Men who know nothing of the Priesthood receive revelation and prophecy, and yet these gifts belong to the Church, and those who are faithful in the kingdom of God inherit them and are entitled to them; and all ought to live so as to enjoy the spirit of these gifts and callings continually.

Do we know and understand that it is our business to build up Zion? To have seen the way this people have conducted themselves in years past, one would not have had the least idea that such was our business; but it made no difference whom we built cities for; many would build for Jew or Gentile, Greek, Mahomedan, or Pagan, every class of men on the earth, as readily, apparently, as they would build up Zion. Yet the word of the Lord to us is to build up Zion and her cities and stakes. Lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes, O ye House of Israel; add to her beauty and add to her strength! Why, to have seen the conduct of the people you might have supposed they knew no more about Zion than about a city of the Chinese, or a city in France, Italy, Germany, or Asia; just as soon build up a city in Asia or Africa as anywhere else, “no matter whom we build for if we only get the dollar, only get our pay for our work.” Yet the commandment of God to us is to build up Zion and her cities. I told you here last Sunday what Joseph said in this respect—what we should build and what we should not build up. This book [the book of Doctrine and Covenants] is full of it.

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We say we believe Joseph was a prophet, that he had the priesthood and was called of God to gather the people together and establish Zion. If we believe this, why not let our lives prove that we believe the doctrine that we profess? Can you see any of the Christians in the world who do not believe the doctrine they profess? It is a very dark picture to look upon—a sad affair that we disbelieve our own doctrines. Let us remember them and live accordingly.” (Brigham Young, February 10 1867, Journal of Discourses, 11:324)

Conclusion

It is a sad state where the Saints know more about the Palmyra temple dedication than they do about the New Jerusalem. It is a sad state that we could not come to our God and knit our hearts together in unity and build Zion. Zion was the tower and Zion cannot be built up save it be on celestial law. Members of the Church, not only are not espousing Zion and her law, they are actively supporting Satan and his laws of tolerance, inclusivity, etc. It is a sad state that members find themselves in, when they not only didn't make themselves a Zion people, willing and able to live celestial law, they now find themselves “agnostic” towards it- i.e., “slothful and wicked”.

The Redemption of Zion is coming. Those who have oil in their lamps will join the procession. The rest will panic or continue to say “all is well in Zion”. Saints of God, buckle in, strap down, don't stop preparing and when you are in the thick of it, remember, Joseph Smith is coming back for those who remain faithful during this time. The prepared shall not fear; those who are not prepared, those who did not do what was asked of them, those who did not do all that they could do (and easily so, it wasn't difficult) will have their knees buckle in fear as they tremble. When the manna and saving doesn't come raining down from heaven, they will find themselves fulfilling yet another prophecy, “I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessings. Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above (D&C 58:32-33), for of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation. Ye call upon my name for revelations, and I give them unto you; and inasmuch as ye keep not my sayings, which I give unto you, ye become transgressors; and justice and judgment are the penalty which is affixed unto my law. I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise (D&C 82:3-4, 10).”

As I have stated before, the gathering of Israel is the most important work taking place on earth today. One crucial element of this gathering is preparing a people who are able, ready, and worthy to receive the Lord when He comes again, a people who have already chosen Jesus Christ over this fallen world, a people who rejoice in their agency to live the higher, holier laws of Jesus Christ. I call upon you, my dear brothers and sisters, to become this righteous people.

-President Nelson (Overcome the World and Find Rest)

President Benson made it very clear to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1989, “*My dear brethren and sisters, we **must** prepare to redeem Zion.*” (Beware of Pride)

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Finish. The. Tower.