

Zion the Beautiful

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Zion the Beautiful

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side...and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 60:1-4 and 14

In Exodus, we read that following four hundred and thirty years of captivity in the land of Egypt, the people of Israel cried unto the Lord their God for deliverance, and God, remembering the covenant which He had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, set His hand to bring His people out of Egypt and establish them in the Promised Land. However, because of the people's disobedience, they were forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years until all of the first generation had passed away, save for Joshua and Caleb.

Before Moses was taken up by the Spirit, he promised the children of Israel that they would receive great and wondrous blessings if they would "hearken *diligently* unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and *to do* all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth; and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, *if* thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.¹"

Moses also told Israel what would occur if they did not obey, saying, "The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies; thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them; and shalt be *removed* into all the kingdoms of the earth...And the Lord shall *scatter* thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.²" Sadly, we read in the Old Testament that Israel chose not to hearken to the voice of God and because of this the Lord did scatter the tribes of Israel just as all the holy prophets had testified. "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."³

¹ Deuteronomy 28:1-2

² Deuteronomy 28:25 and 64-65

³ Amos 9:9

Although God scattered His people Israel throughout the world because of their transgressions, the Lord also promised Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan as an everlasting inheritance to his seed. Therefore God made a covenant with the people that He would gather them again. In the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, we read, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to *recover* the remnant of his people, which shall be left... And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall *assemble* the outcasts of Israel, and *gather together* the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”⁴ From both a historical and contemporary viewpoint, we have already begun to witness God gathering together the dispersed of Judah back to the Promised Land with the establishment of the country of Israel in May 1948. We would ask the reader, “If God has promised to gather together the house of Israel, then what about the Gentiles?”

In Matthew, chapter twenty-three, Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying, “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Ye who will kill the prophets, and will stone them who are sent unto you; how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen *gathers* her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate! For I say unto you, that ye shall not see me henceforth, and know that I am he of whom it is written by the prophets, until ye shall say, blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord, in the *clouds of heaven*, and all the holy angels with him. Then understood his disciples that he should come again on the earth, after that he was glorified and crowned on the right hand of God.”⁵

From the beginning of the world, it has been a part of God’s eternal plan that Jesus Christ would return to earth and that “in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ.”⁶ The Scriptures mentioned above have touched on the Lord’s covenant with Israel to gather them again back to the land of their inheritance, but what of the Gentiles? Since God is not a respecter of persons [read 2 Chronicles 19:7, Acts 10:34-35, and Romans 2:11], He must therefore also have a land of gathering for the Gentiles. For Jesus said, “And now I show unto you a parable. Behold, whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together; so likewise shall mine elect be *gathered* from the four quarters of the earth...And whoso treasureth up my words, shall not be deceived. For the Son of Man shall come, and he shall send his angels before him with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall *gather together* the remainder of his elect from the four winds; from one end of heaven to the other. Then shall be fulfilled that which is written, that, in the last days, two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two shall be grinding at the mill; the one taken and the other left.”⁷

The Restored Church of Jesus Christ believes that Zion is the gathering place for the Gentiles and those adopted, or grafted in, to the house of Israel [read Galatians 3:26-29]. While there are many people today who believe that Zion and Jerusalem are synonymous, the Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah, Joel, and Zechariah, explained that these are two distinct places. For Joel prophesied of the latter days, saying, “The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of

⁴ Isaiah 11:11-12

⁵ Matthew 23:37-41

⁶ Ephesians 1:10

⁷ Matthew 24:28, 39-40, and 46-48

Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God *dwelling in Zion*, my holy mountain; *then* shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her anymore.⁸” The prophet Micah also explained that before the Kingdom of God should come to Jerusalem, Zion would have “first dominion.”⁹ Please read the following from Isaiah 60:2-5 10-11, 14-16:

60:2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. **60:3** And the ***Gentiles*** shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. **60:4** Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they **gather themselves together**, ***they come to thee***; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. **60:5** Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea [people] shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the ***Gentiles shall come unto thee***.

60:10 And the sons of ***strangers shall build up thy walls***, and their kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee. **60:11** Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee **the forces of the Gentiles**, and that their kings may be brought.

60:14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and ***they shall call thee***, The ***city*** of the Lord, The ***Zion*** of the Holy One of Israel. **60:15** Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. **60:16** Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings; and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

In the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, God promised that in the latter days many of the Gentiles would be converted to the Lord and that they would be gathered together in a place where the gates would be opened continually, a city where the glory of the Lord would shine, a city called Zion. As discussed earlier, Jesus prophesized unto the disciples that just as the eagles gather around a carcass, the elect according to the covenant would be gathered together from the four quarters of the earth. In other words, those who have been converted and baptized in the name of Jesus Christ will be gathered to the city of Zion before the return of the Lord. [For more on Zion, please read a separate study entitled **The Redemption of Zion**]

What is Zion

Although there are many people who have unfortunately not heard of Zion, the reader might be surprised to know that the Old Testament gives several insights to the glory and to the beauty of the Holy City of God. In the Inspired Version of the Bible, we read the testimony of Enoch, who was a seer and a prophet of the Lord during a time when Satan had great hold upon the hearts and minds of the people. God therefore called His servant Enoch to preach repentance to the children of men and to say

⁸ Joel 3:16-17

⁹ Micah 4:8

unto them “choose ye this day to serve the Lord God who made you...and he [God] gave unto me a commandment, that I should baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, who is full of grace and truth, and the Holy Ghost which beareth record of the Father and the Son.¹⁰” Please read of Enoch and of Zion from Genesis 7:14-17, 21-28, and 76-78:

7:14 And it came to pass, that Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Cainan, to repent. **7:15** 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 spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command. **7:16** And the rivers of water were turned out of their course, and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness. **7:17** 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.***

7:21 And the fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the ***glory of the Lord*** which was upon his people. **7:22** And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish. **7:23** And the Lord called ***his people***, Zion, ***because*** they were of **one heart** and of **one mind**, and dwelt in **righteousness**; and there were no poor among them. **7:24** And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. **7:25** And it came to pass in his days, that he built ***a city*** that was called the city of Holiness, **even Zion.**

7:26 And it came to pass, that Enoch talked with the Lord, and he said unto the Lord, Surely, Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch, Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed. **7:27** And it came to pass, that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth, and he beheld, and lo! Zion in process of time was ***taken up into heaven.*** **7:28** And the Lord said unto Enoch, Behold mine abode forever.

7:76 And all the days of Zion, in the days of Enoch, were three hundred and sixty-five years. **7:77** And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion. **7:78** And it came to pass, that Zion was not, for God **received it up into his own bosom**; and from thence went forth the saying, Zion is fled. And all the days of Enoch were four hundred and thirty years.

Through faith and righteousness, Enoch and his people were able to achieve what very few have, which was to be of one heart, one mind, and one soul with the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, because of their love, humility, and obedience, God was able to gather together in one all the people in Christ [read Ephesians 1:10], which has been God’s eternal purpose from the beginning. For Jesus prayed to God over all those that might believe in Him “that they all may be ***one***; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be ***one in us***; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, ***even as we are one***; I in them, and thou

¹⁰ Genesis 6:35 and Genesis 7:13

in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.¹¹”

The early saints in Jerusalem also experienced this perfection for a period of time after Jesus ascended into heaven and established His apostles to build up His Church and His Kingdom on the earth. In the fourth chapter of Acts, following the imprisonment and release of Peter and John, the saints prayed together with one accord that God would grant them the authority to preach the Gospel with boldness and to perform miracles in the name of Christ. “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.¹²”

By exercising their faith in God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, the Lord filled the people of Enoch and the early saints in Jerusalem with the power of the Holy Ghost, which caused a mighty change in their hearts. Enoch and the saints witnessed to God with full purpose of heart that they were willing to repent and to take upon them the name of the Only Begotten Son through the baptism of water and of fire. Thus it was through keeping the commandments of God and enduring to the end, that the people were able to be united in one desire and one purpose, which was to build up the Kingdom of God and establish the cause of Zion. Jesus said, “Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness.¹³”

Zion is simply the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. When Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, He said, “Therefore after this manner shall ye pray, saying, Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.¹⁴” Zion is first and foremost a spiritual condition where righteousness reigns and the will of God is done rather than the will of mankind. Zion is a place of supreme joy, a place of brotherhood and sisterhood where there will be no poor either spiritually or temporally. Please read of Zion from Psalms 50:1-5, Isaiah 2:2-4, Isaiah 4:2-5, Isaiah 11:6-9, Isaiah 51:11-16, Isaiah 60:18-22, and Isaiah 65:20-25:

50:1 The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. **50:2** Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. **50:3** Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. **50:4** He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. **50:5** **Gather my saints together unto me**; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

2:2 And it shall come to pass in the **last days** when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it; **2:3** And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the

¹¹ John 17:21-23

¹² Acts 4:31-32

¹³ Matthew 6:38

¹⁴ Matthew 6:9-11

mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of **his ways**, and we will walk in **his paths**; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; **2:4** And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, **neither shall they learn war anymore.**

4:2 And it shall come to pass, they that are left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called **holy**, even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem; **4:3** When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. **4:4** And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory of Zion **shall be a defense.** **4:5** And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

11:6 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 a little child shall lead them. **11:7** And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. **11:8** And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. **11:9** 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.

51:3 For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody...**51:11** Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and **everlasting joy and holiness** shall be upon their heads; they shall **obtain gladness and joy**; and sorrow and mourning **shall flee away.** **51:12** I am he, yea, I am he that comforteth you; behold, who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; **51:13** And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? **51:14** The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. **51:15** But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared; The Lord of hosts is his name. **51:16** And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Behold, **thou art my people.**

60:18 Violence shall **no more** be heard in thy land, **wasting nor destruction** within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls **Salvation**, and thy gates **Praise.** **60:19** The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an **everlasting light**, and **thy God thy glory.** **60:20** Thy sun shall no more go down;

neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. **60:21** Thy people also shall be **all righteous**; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. **60:22** A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation; I the Lord will hasten it **in my time.**

65:20 In those days there shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child **shall not die,** but shall live to be an hundred years old; but the sinner, living to be an hundred years old, shall be accursed. **65:21** And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. **65:22** 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. **65:23** 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. **65:24** And it shall come to pass, that before they call, **I will answer;** and while they are yet speaking, **I will hear.** **65:25** The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

The prophets have foretold that Zion will be a place of defense, a city of refuge, that there will be no more violence or destruction, and that the glory of God will be an everlasting light to those that dwell there. Truly Zion is a beautiful place and a spiritual condition worth striving for. Nonetheless, Zion was not only for Enoch and his people, but it is also a promise to those saints in the latter days. For the Lord told Enoch that Zion would again appear on the earth before the second coming of the Son of God. Please read of the promise of Zion from Genesis 7:70-75:

7:70 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; ***an 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.*** **7:71** And the Lord said unto Enoch, ***Then*** shalt thou and all thy city meet them there; and we will receive them into our bosom; and they shall see us, and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; **7:72** And there shall be mine 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.***

7:73 And it came to pass, that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth, in righteousness, for the space of a thousand years. **7:74** ***But before that day,*** he saw great tribulation among the wicked; and he also saw the sea, that it was troubled, and men's hearts failing them, looking forth with fear for the judgment of the Almighty God, which should ***come upon the wicked.*** **7:75** And the Lord showed Enoch all things, even unto the end of the world. And he saw the day of the righteous, the hour of their redemption, and received a fullness of joy.

How do we have part in Zion

If Zion is a place where God will gather His saints before Jesus Christ returns, we would ask the reader, “What might it take for us to be a part of it?” Jesus said that His elect would be gathered from the four quarters of the earth as the eagles are gathered around a carcass, but who are the elect of God? The Book of Mormon, which is the ancient American record of the Son of God, explains that the elect, or in other words the covenanted people of the Lord, are those who keep the commandments of God. “For the Lord covenants with none, save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel.¹⁵”

It is critical to understand that anyone can become the elect of God regardless of whether they are of the house of Israel or a Gentile. Jesus said, “Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, Abraham is our father; we have kept the commandments of God, and none can inherit the promises but the children of Abraham; for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.¹⁶” The answer to these questions can also be found in the ninth chapter of Genesis, which bears record of the everlasting covenant that God gave to mankind. Please read from Genesis 9:18-23:

9:18 And God made a covenant with Noah, and said, This shall be the token of the covenant I make between me and you, and for every living creature with you, for **perpetual generations**; **9:19** I will set my bow in the cloud; and it shall be for **a token of a covenant** between me and the earth. **9:20** And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which I have made between me and you, for every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

9:21 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should **keep all my commandments**, **Zion should again come on the earth**, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. **9:22** And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity **shall embrace the truth**, and **look upward**, then shall **Zion look downward**, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; **9:23** And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch.

Within the everlasting covenant is a promise that all those who will believe in Jesus Christ and take upon themselves His name will be a part of the Holy City of Zion. The covenant however is only effective if we abide by its conditions, which are to keep *ALL* the commandments of God, to embrace the truth, meaning to hold firm to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, and to look upward, or in other words to keep our eye single to the glory of God. While these conditions are relatively easy to understand, they have been proven very difficult to apply, as there have only been a handful of Zionite conditions in all of the

¹⁵ 2 Nephi 12:78

¹⁶ Luke 3:13

Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, we can find that all three of these conditions were evident in the life and the ministry of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the very embodiment of Zion.

Keep All the Commandments

The first requirement of the everlasting covenant is to keep the commandments and we know that Jesus accomplished this because of the simple truth that He lived and died without sin. If sin is defined as the willful rebellion against God, then we understand that Jesus must have kept all of His Father's commandments as the Master said in John, "For I can of mine own self do nothing; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who hath sent me. Therefore if I bear witness of myself, yet my witness is true...for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.¹⁷"

Throughout His life, Jesus only sought to do the will of God which was in part to show mankind the way to enter into the Kingdom of God and to receive eternal life. In Matthew, chapter three, before Jesus's ministry could begin in earnest, He came "from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be *baptized* of him; but John refused him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and why comest thou to me? And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Suffer me to be baptized of thee, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.¹⁸"

It is important to note that not only was the Lord Jesus baptized in order to fulfill all righteousness, but everything that He did was to fulfill all righteousness. As Jesus told Peter in the garden at Gethsemane, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?¹⁹" Jesus witnessed to both the Father and to all men that He truly was the Son of God by being obedient to the will of God in all things, even unto death. If we desire to be a part of Zion, then we too must learn how to die as Jesus did, so that in return we might also learn how to live unto God and to keep all of His commandments. [For more on keeping the commandments, read **Chapter Twenty-One**]

Embrace the Truth

In Revelation, chapter four, we read that John the Beloved was taken up by the Spirit into the throne room of God, and there he beheld four heavenly creatures worshiping the Lord day and night, saying, "Holy holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."²⁰ In his vision, John essentially witnessed in God the pure definition of truth, which is things as they were, as they are, and as they are to come, for He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and by the power of His Only Begotten Son the worlds were, are, and will be created.

Perhaps the most essential truth that God desires for mankind to recognize and to embrace is that He is God, that He has all wisdom and power both in heaven and in earth, that man cannot comprehend all the things which God can comprehend, and that the Son of God died and rose again that all those who

¹⁷ John 5:31-32 and 37

¹⁸ Matthew 3:41-43

¹⁹ Matthew 26:51-52

²⁰ Revelation 4:8

will repent might be saved in the everlasting Kingdom of the Lamb. While these truths are self-evident, the children of men have often struggled to lay down their own wills so that they can fully embrace these precious truths. Whereas Jesus, who, as Paul exclaimed, “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”²¹

According to the 1828 Webster’s Dictionary, the term embrace means “to take, clasp or inclose in the arms; to press to the bosom, in token of affection. To seize eagerly; to lay hold on; to receive or take with willingness that which is offered.” Nonetheless, the Scriptural definition of the word embrace is witnessed in the life of Jesus Christ as He willingly held fast to all truth and “endured the cross, despising the shame.”²² Throughout His work and ministry, the Lord Jesus spoke of nothing except His Father, saying, “For I have given you an *example*, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him...for my Father is greater than I...I must work the works of him that sent me, while I am with you; the time cometh when I shall have finished my work, then I go unto the Father.”²³ In order for mankind to do as Jesus has done, they must first learn how to die unto themselves. Please read the following from the twelfth chapter of John, which took place just prior to the crucifixion of Jesus:

12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. **12:24** Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, ***it abideth alone***; but if it die, ***it bringeth forth much fruit***. **12:25** He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. **12:26** If any man serve me, let him ***follow me***; and where I am there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.

12:27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; ***but for this cause*** came I unto this hour. **12:28** Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. **12:32** And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. **12:33** This he said, signifying what **death he should die**.

12:44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on ***him that sent me***. **12:45** And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. **12:46** I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

²¹ Philippians 2:6-8

²² Hebrews 12:2

²³ John 13:15-16, John 14:28, and John 9:4

12:47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. **12:48** He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

12:49 For I have not spoken of myself; **but the Father which sent me**, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. **12:50** And I know that his commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Although the worlds were created by Him and through Him, Jesus still had to obey every word that proceeded forth from the mouth of God, otherwise Christ could not have been sanctified as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In the seventeenth chapter of John, Jesus prayed for the disciples, saying, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth...And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."²⁴ It was only through embracing the truth of His Heavenly Father that Jesus was able to lay down His own life freely, and this so He would be the great and eternal sacrifice. If we desire to be in Zion, then we too must embrace the truth of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son and lay down our life before them.

Jesus told the disciples in the upper room, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."²⁵ In order for mankind to embrace the truth of Jesus Christ and thereby the Father, we must *live* the commandments of God, not only to say but also to do. If we do not act upon the words of Christ, how can we be sanctified through the truth and be a part of Zion?

Look Upwards

The final and greatest condition of the everlasting covenant, and that from which the other two conditions are both founded upon and leading toward, is to look upwards, meaning to have an eye single to God's glory. In both Matthew and Luke, Jesus is recorded as saying, "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single to the glory of God, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light which is in thee be darkness, how great shall that darkness be. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore is full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle lighteneth a room and doth give the light in all the room."²⁶

In the entire history of the world there has been no greater light than that of Jesus Christ and this was because His only focus was to do the will of His Father continually. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world...Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light...I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."²⁷ Perhaps the greatest

²⁴ John 17:17 and 19

²⁵ John 14:6

²⁶ Matthew 6:22-23 and Luke 11:36-37

²⁷ John 9:5 and John 12:35-36; 46

example of Jesus keeping His eye single to God is found in the garden of Gethsemane. Please read the following from Luke 22:39-44:

22:39 And he came out, and went, as he was accustomed, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples followed him. **22:40** And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

22:41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, **22:42** Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, **not my will, but thine be done**. **22:43** And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

22:44 And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and he sweat as at were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

As Jesus had done His whole life, He again kept His eye single to the glory of God in the garden by looking upward and surrendering His own will to that of His Father's. Yet it is imperative to understand that the word "look" means to "to direct the eye towards an object, with the intention of seeing it." In other words, Jesus did not surrender His will blindly but willingly and with full purpose of heart. Only through keeping all the commandments of God and embracing the truth was the Son of Man free to accomplish this task. For Jesus said to those people which believed on Him, "If ye continue in my word [meaning to keep the commandments], then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know [or embrace] the truth, and the truth shall make you free.²⁸" There has never been a freer person on the earth than the Son of God. Arthur Oakman, an apostle in the Church of Jesus Christ, once said, "Jesus was free to take the worst that wicked men could do and love them into repentance." If we want to be a part of Zion, then we must be filled with the pure love of Jesus Christ, which can only be obtained by looking upwards in all things so that our whole body might be filled with light.

How can we look upwards however if we are not first humble, and how can we embrace the truth if we do not recognize the greatness of God and our own nothingness before Him? To keep our eye single to the glory of God means that we must worship the Father in light and in truth. Nonetheless, how can we truly worship Him unless we first humble ourselves to the dust even as Christ did? For Jesus "hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?²⁹" Zion, which is the Kingdom of heaven on earth, is not like any other kingdom in existence today. In order to be a citizen of this Holy Kingdom, we must walk uprightly before the Lord by yielding our own will to God's. There is a hymn which states it best, "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey."

Conclusion

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord God promised the children of Israel that He would set His hand a second time to gather them back to the Promised Land. As can be witnessed, this Scripture has already begun to take place with more and more of the house of Judah gathering to Israel. Nonetheless, this creates an interesting question, "If the seed of Abraham are to be gathered to the Promised Land, what

²⁸ John 8:31-32

²⁹ Micah 6:8

about the Gentiles?” We know that because God is not a respecter of persons, that there must also be a place of gathering for those Gentiles who will believe in the Son of God and follow after Him. The prophets have declared by the power and the revelation of the Holy Ghost, that this place is called Zion, the New Jerusalem.

Isaiah described Zion as a city which the Gentiles would flock too and that “the Redeemer [Jesus Christ] shall come to Zion.³⁰” Zion shall truly be as a light set on hill where those who have been converted unto the Lord will gather and it will be filled with the glory of God. Moreover, the Holy City shall be a refuge for all those who desire to be taught in the ways of the Lord. Zion is truly a beautiful promise, and if we will keep the commandments of God, embrace the truth, and look upwards, then we have the blessed assurance that we will have place within its walls.

³⁰ Isaiah 59:20