

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 12: "The Gathering of My People"

(Doctrine and Covenants 29:1–8; 33:3–7; 37; 38:24–41; 52:2–5, 42–43; 57:1–3; 110:11)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand how latter-day Israel was gathered in the early days of the Church, how it is being gathered today, and how we can participate in this gathering.

Article of Faith 10: We believe in the literal **gathering** of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that **Zion** (the New Jerusalem) **will be built upon the American continent**; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

Bruce R. McConkie: "Why is the Lord gathering Israel in these last days? It is to fulfill the covenant made with Abraham and renewed with Isaac and Jacob and others. . . The gathering of Israel, at whatever place Deity specifies, is a necessary condition precedent, something that makes possible the fulfilling of the ancient covenant. What then is the covenant itself?" (*The Mortal Messiah*, Volume 4, 337).

Covenant of Abraham -- The Lord is gathering Israel in these last days to fulfill the covenant made with Abraham.

- Abraham first received the gospel **by baptism** (which is the covenant of salvation).
- Then he had conferred upon him **the higher priesthood**
- he entered into **celestial marriage** (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase.
- Finally he received a **promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity** (D&C 132:29–50; Abr. 2:6–11).
- Included in the divine promises to Abraham were the assurances that
 - (1) **Christ would come through his lineage**, and that
 - (2) **Abraham's posterity would receive certain lands as an eternal inheritance** (Gen. 17; 22:15–18).

These promises taken together are called the "Abrahamic covenant."

Being an heir to the Abrahamic covenant signifies that we carry the gospel to all the peoples of the earth. Abraham's seed have carried out the missionary activity in all the nations since Abraham's day. (Abr. 2:9–11.)

To fulfill the covenant God made with Abraham—referring to the fact that the literal seed of his body would be entitled to all of the blessings of the gospel—a number of specific things must take place in the last days:

- **The gospel must be restored, the priesthood must be conferred again upon man,**
- **the keys of the sealing power must be given again to mortals,**
- **Israel must be gathered, and**
- **the Holy Ghost must be poured out upon the Gentiles.**

All this has already taken place or is in process of fulfillment. ("LDS Bible Dictionary," 602).

Ted Gibbons: Introduction: A small tent, held in place by a tent peg, or stake, on each corner could be easily flattened or remodeled. But if the tent were larger and secured with 2500 stakes, it would be almost impossible to move. This is the image Isaiah used to describe the Church and Kingdom in the last days:

"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left . . ." (Isaiah 54:2,3)

In the early days of the church with small branches of members in multitudes of locations, Lucifer's task may have been simpler. People in isolated areas without the sustaining strength of church leaders and faithful congregations were probably easier to deceive and mislead. **But early in this dispensation the Lord commanded his people to gather.** As his saints complied and assembled in each of the designated locations, **their strength was "enlarged,"** "their cords were lengthened," and the stakes of Zion were strengthened. **The Lord knew that the Saints would be safer together than separated,** and so they came together and continue to come together, to Kirtland and Missouri and Nauvoo and Salt Lake, and finally to the strengthened stakes of Zion throughout the world. (LDS Gospel Doctrine.com)

1. The Lord is gathering His people.

The gathering of Israel has a spiritual meaning and a physical meaning:

a. **Spiritual gathering.** The spiritual gathering of Israel occurs as **people learn the gospel, come unto Christ, are baptized** into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and **keep their covenants. In this way they are gathered from the world into the Church, or the kingdom of God on earth.**

b. **Physical gathering.** The physical gathering of Israel occurs as **Church members come together in a particular location or in the stakes of Zion throughout the world.**

The purpose of gathering (D&C 29:7-8):

- To prepare the hearts of the people.
- To prepare the people for the day of tribulation and desolation.

Joseph Smith: "All that the prophets ... have written, from the days of righteous Abel, down to the last man that has left any testimony on record for our consideration, in speaking of the **salvation** of Israel in the last days, goes directly to show that **it consists in the work of the gathering**" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith 83).

Joseph Smith: "It was the design of the councils of heaven before the world was that **the principles and laws of the priesthood should be predicated upon the gathering of the people** in every age of the world" (*Teachings*, 308).

The keys of the gathering were delivered to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple:

D&C 110:11: After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us **the keys of the gathering of Israel** from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

Bruce R. McConkie : "The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is in Mexico; the place of gathering for the Guatemalan Saints is in Guatemala; the place of gathering for the Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth. . . **every nation is the gathering place for its own people**" (*Church News*, 3/06/93)

2. The Saints gathered in Ohio.

In December 1830, just eight months after the Church was organized, the Lord gave the first call in this dispensation for the Saints to gather physically. (D&C 37).

D&C 38:31-32: And that ye might escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me a righteous people, without spot and blameless—**Wherefore, for this cause I gave unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high;**

Counsel the Lord gave these early Saints as they prepared to leave for Ohio— (D&C 38)

- Let every man esteem his brother as himself (v24).
- Practice virtue and holiness (v24).
- They are to be unified as one (v27).
- Leaders to be appointed by the voice of the Church (v34).
- Look after the poor and needy (v35)
- Beware of pride (v39).

Between January and May 1831, most Church members in New York sold, rented, or left their farms and made the 300-mile journey to Ohio. Many of these Saints made great sacrifices to heed the Lord's call to gather.

3. The Saints gathered in Missouri.

A few months after the Saints began gathering in Ohio, Joseph Smith traveled to Missouri and received a revelation designating Missouri as the place for the city of Zion (D&C 57:1-3). With this revelation, Missouri became a second gathering place for the Church in this dispensation (D&C 63:24, 36-48). From 1831 to 1838, the Church maintained centers of population in both Ohio and Missouri.

D&C 57:1-3: Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion. And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse.

The following time line summarizes the early revelations about the land of Zion and the establishment of the Church in Missouri:

- September 1830**—Fayette, New York: The Lord revealed that the city of Zion would be built "on the borders by the Lamanites," with the precise location to be identified later (D&C 28:9).
- September/October 1830**—Fayette, New York: The Lord called four missionaries to preach the gospel to the Lamanites (D&C 30:5-6; 32:1-3). These missionaries were the first Church members to go to Missouri. (D&C 32:1-3)

- c. **February 1831**—Kirtland, Ohio soon after the Saints began arriving there: The Lord said He would reveal the location of the New Jerusalem in His own due time (D&C 42:62).
- d. **June 1831**—Kirtland, Ohio after the first conference there: The Lord called Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and other elders to go on a mission to Missouri. The Lord also promised to consecrate the land of Missouri to His people as the land of their inheritance (D&C 52:2–5, 42–43).
- e. **June 1831**—Kirtland: The Lord revealed that the Saints from the Colesville Branch in New York, who had journeyed to Ohio, should continue on to Missouri (D&C 54:8).
- f. **July 1831**—after the Prophet had traveled to Missouri: The Lord revealed that the city of Zion would be located in Missouri, with Independence as the center place. A temple would be built in Independence (D&C 57:1–3).

D&C 57:3. Behold, the place which is now called **Independence** is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse.

4. The Saints now gather to the stakes of Zion in their own lands.

Ezra Taft Benson: "Presently, Israel is being gathered to the stakes of Zion... **A stake has at least four purposes:**

1. [Stakes are] **to unify and perfect the members who live in [their] boundaries by extending to them the Church programs, the ordinances, and gospel instruction.**
2. Members of stakes are to be **models, or standards, of righteousness.**
3. Stakes are to be a **defense.** They do this as stake members **unify under their local priesthood officers and consecrate themselves** to do their duty and keep their covenants. ...
4. Stakes are a **refuge from the storm** to be poured out over the earth" ("Strengthen Thy Stakes," Ensign, Jan. 1991).

Joseph Smith: "What was the object of gathering ... the people of God in any age of the world? ... The main object was **to build unto the Lord a house** whereby He could reveal unto His people the **ordinances** of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and **teach the people the way of salvation.** ... **It is for the same purpose that God gathers together His people in the last days,** to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and anointings" (*History of the Church*, 5:423–24).

Harold B. Lee: "If we would be **united in love and fellowship and harmony**, this Church would convert the world, who would see in us the shining example of these qualities which evidence that divine ownership." (C Report, Apr 1950)

Brigham Young: "We have been **gathered** ... for the express **purpose of purifying ourselves**, that we may become **polished stones** in the temple of God. We are here for the **purpose of establishing the Kingdom of God on the earth.** To be prepared for this work it has been necessary **to gather us** out from the nations and countries of the world [to receive] **the ordinances of the holy Priesthood** of the Son of God, which are necessary for the perfection of the Saints preparatory to his coming" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, 111).

Russell M. Nelson: "The choice to come unto Christ is not a matter of physical location; **it is a matter of individual commitment.** People can be "brought to the knowledge of the Lord" without leaving their homelands. True, in the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well.

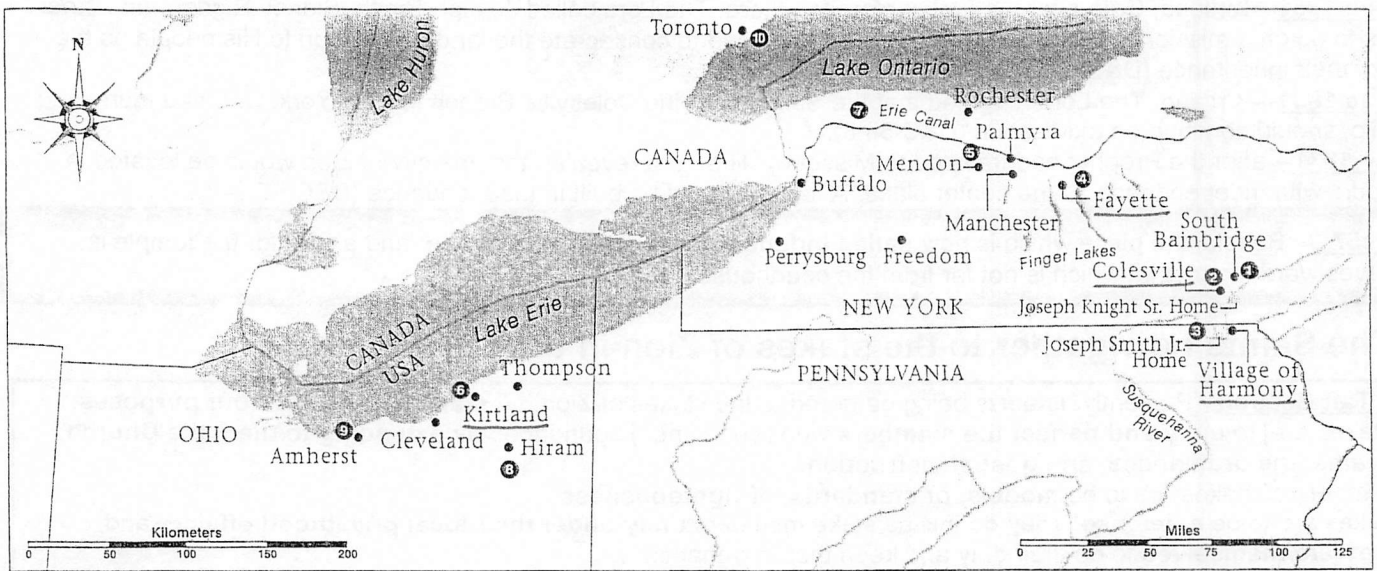
"**But now the gathering takes place in each nation.** The Lord has decreed the establishment of Zion in each realm where He has given His Saints their birth and nationality. Scripture foretells that the people "shall be **gathered home** to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise" [2 Ne. 9:2]. **Zion is "the pure in heart."** Zion is **wherever righteous Saints are**" ("Gathering of Scattered Israel," Conference Report 2006).

5. Conclusion

Harold B. Lee: "The Lord has placed the responsibility for directing **the work of gathering** in the hands of the leaders of the Church to whom he will reveal his will where and when such gatherings would take place in the future. It would be well—before the frightening events concerning the fulfillment of all God's promises and predictions are upon us—that **the Saints in every land prepare themselves and look forward to the instruction** that shall come to them from the First Presidency of this Church as to where they shall be gathered and not be disturbed in their feelings until such instruction is given to them as it is revealed by the Lord to the proper authority." (CR, Apr 1948)

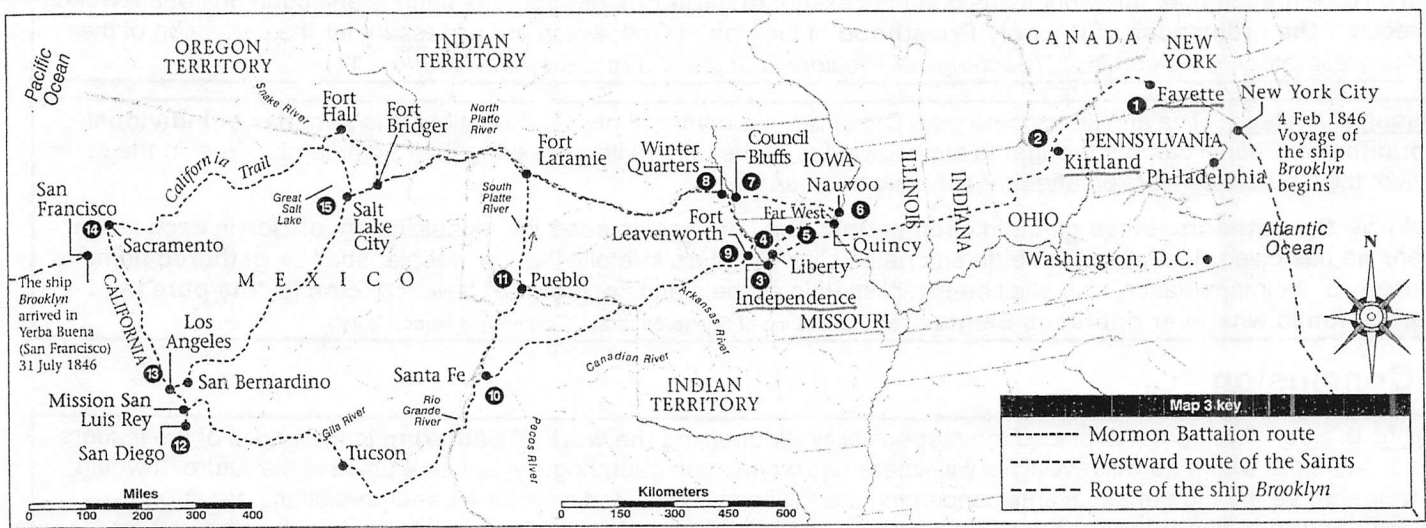
D&C 29:1-2, 7-8: "Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer . . . **Who will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings**, even as many as will **hearken to my voice and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer.** . . . And ye are called to bring to pass **the gathering** of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts; Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, **to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked**"

Map 1: The New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio Area of the United States



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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. South Bainbridge. Joseph Smith Jr. and Emma Hale were married here on 18 January 1827 (see Joseph Smith—History 1:57). 2. Colesville. One of the first branches of the Church was organized at the Joseph Knight Sr. home, in Colesville Township, in 1830. 3. Joseph Smith Jr. Home in Harmony. Most of the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed here. On the banks of the Susquehanna River the priesthood was restored in 1829 (see D&C 13; 128:20; Joseph Smith—History 1:71–72). 4. Fayette. The Three Witnesses saw the gold plates and the angel Moroni here (see D&C 17). The Book of Mormon | <p>translation was completed here in June 1829. The Church was organized here on 6 April 1830 (see D&C 20–21).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Mendon. Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball lived here when they first heard the restored gospel. 6. Kirtland. Missionaries who had been sent to the Lamanites stopped here in 1830 and baptized Sidney Rigdon and others in the area. Kirtland was the headquarters of the Church from early February 1831 to 12 January 1838. The first temple of this dispensation was built here and was dedicated on 27 March 1836 (see D&C 109). 7. Erie Canal. The three branches of the Church in New York emigrated via the Erie Canal and Lake Erie to Kirtland, Ohio, in April and May 1831. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Hiram. Joseph and Emma lived here from September 1831 to September 1832. Joseph and Sidney Rigdon worked on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Revelations received here: D&C 1, 65, 67–69, 71, 73–74, 76–81, 99, and 133. 9. Amherst. Here Joseph Smith was sustained as President of the High Priesthood on 25 January 1832 (see <i>History of the Church</i>, 1:243; see also the heading to D&C 75). 10. Toronto. Home of John Taylor, who became the third President of the Church, and Mary Fielding, who later married Hyrum Smith. |
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Map 3: The Westward Movement of the Church



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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fayette. The Prophet Joseph Smith left Fayette for Kirtland, Ohio, in January 1831. The three New York branches followed in April and May 1831 under the Lord's command to gather (see D&C 37–38). 2. Kirtland. The headquarters of the Church from early February 1831 to 12 January 1838, when the Prophet moved to Far West, Missouri. 3. Independence. The Lord identified Independence as the center place of Zion in July 1831 (see D&C 57:2–3). Mobs forced the Saints from here in November 1833. 4. Liberty. The Saints from Jackson County gathered in this area from 1833 until 1836, when they were required to leave. 5. Far West. A refuge was established here for the Saints from 1836 to 1838. It was the headquarters of the Church for part of 1838. In 1838–39 the Saints were forced to flee to Illinois. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Nauvoo. The headquarters of the Church from 1839 to 1846. About two years after the martyrdom of the Prophet and his brother Hyrum, the Saints moved west. 7. Council Bluffs (Kanesville). The pioneers arrived here in June 1846. Members of the Mormon Battalion departed on 21 July 1846 under Lieutenant Colonel James Allen. 8. Winter Quarters. The headquarters settlement for the Saints en route to the Salt Lake Valley (1846–48). The vanguard company under the direction of President Brigham Young departed in April 1847. 9. Fort Leavenworth. The Mormon Battalion was outfitted here before starting the march west in August 1846. 10. Santa Fe. Lieutenant Colonel Philip Cooke commanded the Mormon Battalion as it marched from here on 19 October 1846. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Pueblo. Three sick detachments from the Mormon Battalion were ordered to recuperate in Pueblo, where they spent the winter of 1846–47 with Saints from Mississippi. These parties entered the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847. 12. San Diego. The Mormon Battalion finished its 2,000-mile march here on 29 January 1847. 13. Los Angeles. The Mormon Battalion was discharged here on 16 July 1847. 14. Sacramento. Some discharged battalion members worked here and at Sutter's Mill farther east on the American River, where they helped discover gold. 15. Salt Lake City. President Brigham Young arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on 24 July 1847. |
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