

THE GATHERING AND THE KINGDOM

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SCRIPTURE: III Nephi 9:106 and 10:1-7, Book of Mormon

It shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day, whosoever will not repent and come unto my beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel, and I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard. But if they will repent, and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant, and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance; and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob; And also, as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem; And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the new Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in their midst.....And then shall the work commence with the Father among all nations, in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. (These words were spoken by Jesus to the people on the American continent, whom he visited following his resurrection.

Righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out my own elect from the four quarters of the earth unto a place which I shall prepareZion, a new Jerusalem.

No king can successfully rule over subjects who are scattered throughout a multiplicity of other kingdoms, living under the rule of other kings in geographical isolation from the king they want to serve and from his dominion. Any honest person who has tried to live in the kingdom of God spiritually, and still to earn his living, bank his money, find his entertainment, secure his education, provide for his security, and worship God in the various political, social, and economic kingdoms of this world knows that it is at best a difficult, and at worst an impossible task. The kingdoms of this world do not tolerate a complete dedication to the kingdom of God. If we want to serve God in perfection and completeness, there must be a geographical, as well as a spiritual, ideological, and political "togetherness" of the subjects of God's kingdom. The subjects of the kingdom must be gathered together in one place. They must be agreed on beliefs, doctrines, organization, and methods of procedure. They must be "together" in mind and spirit and purpose, as well as in body. Therefore we believe that there must be a gathering of the subjects of the kingdom of God before there can be a perfected kingdom.

This raises the old question as to whether the kingdom is "this worldly" or "other worldly." Will this gathering of which we speak be in heaven, or on this earth? I believe that the right answer is, "Both." There is a gathering now going on in the heavenly kingdom, as the church triumphant is increased day by day from the ranks of the saints who leave this earth at death, and who are gathered home into the heavenly kingdom. There, gathered together in fellowship with each other and with God and Christ, they await the day of resurrection. But that gathering is not the final gathering place of the complete and perfected kingdom. To believe that it is, is to deny the resurrection; and to deny the resurrection is to deny the whole redemptive mission of Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead that we might have hope of a like glorious resurrection.

Jesus Christ is now with the heavenly kingdom. But some day he will be here. To some that may seem like superstitious nonsense. But that is what the Bible teaches, Centuries ago Job stated his belief thus: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that

he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." The Redeemer, the Messiah who is the King over this kingdom of God, shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. Jesus came as a babe, not in the "latter day," but "in the meridian of time;" therefore Job could not have been referring to his incarnation, but rather to his Messianic reign. This prophecy is yet to be fulfilled.

The Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament all promise that a king shall reign -- not over a distant heavenly kingdom, but over an earthly kingdom made heavenly; a king who shall sit on the throne of his father David to reign over a perfected kingdom here on earth. None of those prophecies, either, have been fulfilled by the life of Jesus on this earth nearly two thousand years ago, for one of the conditions of that reign were fulfilled in his first advent. We therefore look forward to a day when Christ, the Messiah prophesied by the Old Testament prophets, shall stand again on earth -- when the righteous shall be resurrected and clothed in immortal flesh, no more to die -- when those who have been gathered into the heavenly kingdom shall once more stand with their Savior upon the earth -- and when those who have acknowledged him on earth and remain at his coming shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye and gathered with the heavenly kingdom into the kingdom of God on earth.

The basis of that kingdom will be Israel. There will be in this gathering those who are of Israel by lineage. It is well to note and remember in passing that the Jews are only a small part of Israel, and that the promises are to all Israel, that they shall be gathered from among all the nations where they have been scattered and their identity lost. That gathering, say the prophets, will be contingent upon their acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the King of Israel.

The kingdom of God on earth will also contain many Gentiles who are not of the seed of Israel. They will become members of Israel by adoption -- by reason of their acceptance of and obedience to Jesus Christ as their King, their Redeemer, their Messiah and Savior.

Many changes will have to take place in the world and in its political, social, economic, and religious organizations, before this sort of gathering can take place. Many such changes have already taken place, some with catastrophic impact, with much suffering and bloodshed and violence, and some very quietly and unobtrusively. It is something we do not often think about, but it would be extremely difficult at this moment to name half a dozen governments of the world which had the same form of government today that they did one hundred years ago. I am not talking about name, or geographical location, but form of government. How many of the kingdoms of a hundred years ago still exist in the same form as then? How long will the kingdoms that remain today endure? The judgments which have already been poured out, and which will be poured out upon the earth to indicate the time of Christ's return will destroy many wicked men, and their works, institutions, organizations, and even nations, in preparation for the coming of the kingdom of God.

In one way or another the way will be cleared for the gathering of the people of Israel by lineage and by adoption into the kingdom of God. Scripture says that they shall come from the north, the south, the east, and the west -- from the north countries, from the islands of the sea, from wherever the descendants of Israel have been scattered.

The principle of the gathering finds expression in our Latter Day Saint philosophy of Zion, where we are trying to gather together a people who shall implement the laws of the kingdom in social, political, economic, and religious life. Gathered together, obedient to the King, striving in our corporate as well as in our individual life to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven, we are trying to establish a nucleus for the kingdom of God on earth -- a place and a people to which Christ can come when it is time for him to set up his kingdom on earth -- a people of one heart and one mind as well as in one place -- a people pure in heart -- a people where there are no rich and no poor -- a people who help, sustain, comfort, strengthen, and teach each other in mutual endeavor as in obedience to the will of their King they strive to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven.