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THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom of God is an organized effort of the Church to establish God's righteousness upon the earth. The prophets of the Old Testament called it "Zion." At the time of Enoch, Zion was described as a people of one heart and one mind, dwelling in righteousness and having no poor among them (see Genesis 7:23; D&C 36:2h). Jesus referred to it as the "Kingdom of God" and taught His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven" (Matthew 6:11).

The latter-day prophet Joseph Smith and his successors used "Zion," "Kingdom of God," and "A New Jerusalem" interchangeably (see D&C 36:12). "Zion must increase in beauty and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily, I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments" (D&C 81:4c). "The kingdoms of this world may be constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ" (D&C 102:9b).

Zion—the Kingdom of God—is a spiritual and economic enterprise that changes the hearts of men from self to God. It calls for the dedication of the whole of man to establish God's righteousness upon the earth as it is done in heaven. It is a call for justice to triumph over injustice, truth over error, kindness over cruelty, purity over lust, peace over enmity.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the 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" (Isaiah 2:3).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU

When the Pharisees asked Jesus how and when the Kingdom was to appear, He answered, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation The kingdom of God has already come unto you" (Luke 17:20-21). It cannot be observed by the senses, and it is not manifested by outward signs and political changes altogether. It must come by a spiritual regeneration of the heart and mind, the result of being reborn.

God told Enoch His plan for the last days: "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, a 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. 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; 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.

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" (Genesis 7:70-73).

John had a vision of the last days: "And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:2-3).

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

The book of Revelation describes a woman in travail: "The woman, which was the church of God, . . . brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ" (Revelation 12:7). The Church of Jesus Christ is the mother of God's Kingdom. Its mission is to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. The responsibility of the Church is to nurture, feed, and care for the individual members—just as it is

the responsibility of a mother to nurture, feed, and care for her children—that they may become the children of God.

The Lord spoke to the Church in August, 1833, and told the Saints that the power required to redeem Zion comes from those who are pure in heart: “Let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion, the pure in heart” (D&C 94:5).

A few months later this instruction was received: “There is, even now, already in store a sufficient, yea, even abundance, to redeem Zion and establish her waste places—no more to be thrown down—were the churches who call themselves after my name willing to hearken to my voice” (D&C 98:10c).

In June, 1834, the Saints were told that Zion could have been redeemed already, but they were not obedient and not united. “Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom” (D&C 102:2c).

Every Kingdombuilder must have one great desire, and that is to do the will of God. Even Jesus, the greatest of all, said, “For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). It must be a voluntary surrender of one’s own will to that of his Father. It is not our Kingdom that must be established—it is God’s Kingdom.

THE NEED FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Hosea and Isaiah, who were social reformers of Israel and Judah, were keenly aware of the fact that they belonged to a people of unclean lips (see Isaiah 6:5). Repeatedly they denounced the corrupt rulers of Israel (see Isaiah 3:14-15), judicial injustice (see Isaiah 5:23), and economic inequality and wasteful luxury (see Isaiah 5:11-12). The warning voices of the prophets to Israel were to establish God’s Zion or perish. The basic passions and motives of our society have changed little from those of Israel. The same problems and sins that perplexed and destroyed Israel have entrenched themselves within our society.

We have betrayed and disobeyed our conscience, refused to live up to our ideals, and therefore stunted our characters—all because of our selfishness instead of obedience to the Lord’s commandments. Our society has become self-centered instead of God-centered. This is the root of inequality and evil. David recognized this when he wrote, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest” (Psalm 51:4).

“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matthew 24:10). Men have wronged society because they have had no passionate loyalty to God. They have been unfaithful to God because they do not know Him and do not love Him. This is what stimulated the prophet Hosea to say, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

The antidote to the sickness of society is a knowledge of the Kingdom of God. If there is to be a perfect order as the Church of Jesus Christ teaches, those who are to participate in its establishment must have an intimate knowledge of the character and purpose of our Lord, Who not only was the perfect One, but gave His life that through knowledge of—and obedience to—Him, His children might build this perfect society.

Only those who know the perfect way can build the Kingdom of God. Ignorant people cannot build God’s way of life because they just don’t know how. They might want to help with all their hearts, but they are disqualified by the lack of knowledge. Knowledge does not come through instruction only, but by personal insight, experience, and the Holy Ghost.

Jesus told His disciples to put first things first: “Wherefore, seek not the things of this world; but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God and to establish his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33; see also 3 Nephi 6:11).

What is needed? “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:7a).

Questions for Discussion

1. Give two reasons why it is essential that the Kingdom of God be established.
2. Are we the only church working for the Kingdom? How do we differ from the others?

3. Why is this statement not true? "Give man enough time and he will achieve the Kingdom of God by the simple matter of evaluation."
4. The final goal of the Kingdom of God is _____. How do you know this is true?
5. List one scripture from each of the Three Standard Books that deals with the Kingdom of God.
6. What are three personal qualities that are found in the lives of effective Kingdom builders?
7. Why must a Kingdom builder seek to do God's will and not his own?
8. Why is knowledge of Christ so important in establishing the Kingdom?
9. How can praying for the Kingdom of God help? Is prayer alone sufficient?