

BUILDING THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

“Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 P 2:3-5).

The French Armada

During the French and Indian War, a French armada of 70 ships eluded the British blockade and set sail for America on June 20, 1746, intending to lay waste the American seaboard from Halifax to Georgia. They were delayed by a prolonged calm—day after day without wind to drive their ships. That was followed by fierce storms. Lightning disabled four ships, others sunk and the rest scattered. Then, pestilence broke out, killing many.

The French Armada was scheduled to meet a squadron from the West Indies, but those ship left after waiting an extra month. On reaching Halifax with so few ships, between 2,000 and 3,000 men dead, more sick and food provisions running out, the captain became depressed, then sick and immediately died on September 15. Rumor said that he poisoned himself. His second in command committed suicide two days later. The third recruited French and Indians and set sail for Annapolis on October 13, 1746. A week before, on October 6, New England, having heard about the approaching attack, had called a day of fasting and prayer for October 16. Rev. Jonathan French reported what happened on that day of fasting and prayer: *“That very night God sent upon them a more dreadful storm than either of the former, and completed their destruction . . . A remnant only of this miserable fleet returned to France to carry the news. Thus, New England stood still and saw the salvation of God.”*

Providential Blessings

God brought a people to this land with the promise that He would protect them. They were His latter-day Israel. Through Isaiah He said, *“Behold, they shall surely gather together against thee, but not by me; whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake . . . No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper . . . This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord” (Is 54:15, 17).*

The reason that God promised to gather latter-day Israel and protect her on this continent was to fulfill the prophecy that Nathan brought to King David 1,000 years before the Savior’s advent and almost 3,000 years before the French tried to conquer America. David had wanted to build a house for the Lord. Nathan went to get that permission and returned to the King with this answer: *“Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them anymore, as before time” (2 Sam 7:10).*

Is very interesting to me that when the first group of Puritan ships set sail from England headed for this land that John Cotton used this very text for his farewell sermon. He preached it on April 6, 1630. Referring to Massachusetts, the land to where they were going, he said, *“This place is appointed me of God. Canst thou say that God spied out this place for thee, and there hath settled [sic] thee above all hindrances?”*

The early Puritans and Pilgrims who came to this land bore the testimony that God brought them here. He not only guided them, but He provided for them, including defending them against their enemies. The Book of Mormon prophesied these blessings. Nephi related his vision: *“I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters. [And] the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord, and the power of the Lord was with them . . . [And they] were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations” (1N 3:148, 152, 154).*

Testimonies of Deliverance

That is exactly what happened in 1746 when the French decided that they would invade this land, defeat the British, take the colonies for their own benefit and restore the Catholic religion to America: but God had promised to deliver His people. He had promised that there would be an appointed land—a place where His people could gather, a land where they could worship Him in truth and righteousness and

a country free from those who had previously oppressed them. Our history is filled with testimonies of divine deliverance.

We have the time when King Charles II threatened to take away Massachusetts' Charter and place them under severe subjection and oppression, but on the very night that he planned to send bloody Kirk to discharge those duties the king died.

George Washington was preserved in battle near Pittsburgh during the French and Indian War. The Chief of the Indians told all of his braves to shoot only at the General. His coat was riddled with bullet holes and there were fragments of metal balls in his hair, but Washington remained unharmed.

Divine intervention allowed the Continental Army to escape Brooklyn when they were surely to be captured. God sent a fog and a calm, which allowed the entire army to escape right under the British' noses by rowing across the East River. On the other hand, winds drove General Cornwallis backwards as he tried to escape from Yorktown. Those winds blew him right back to the Continental Army where it captured him. The war ended and a treaty was signed.

Then there is the reported vision that General McClellan had after preparing for the Battle of Antietam. Had he followed his plans, he would have been defeated by General Lee. The South might have won the Civil War. His vision caused him to change those plans. The South's advancement into the North ended and the tide of that war changed.

These are testimonies of deliverance that have come to us through time. There are also men and women who have given their lives for this country—from the time of the words "*I have but one life to give to my country*" to the men and women who are dying in the protection of our freedom today. The reason that these men and women have given their lives and the reasons that success has followed their sacrifice is because God has a divine purpose for this land of America.

A Divine Purpose

When the Pilgrims came to New England, John Winship, their leader and the first governor of Massachusetts noted, "*All other Churches of Europe are brought to desolation . . . and who knows but that God hath provided this place to be a refuge for many whom he means to save out of the general calamity. And seeing that the Church hath no place left to fly but into the wilderness, what better work can there be, than to go and provide tabernacles and food for her against she come hither.*"

It was a time of calamity. All the reformers throughout Europe were trying to bring forth the pure church of Jesus Christ, but they repeatedly met opposition from an unholy alliance, an evil alliance of church and state. There was no place to flee but to this land, the appointed land of refuge. Nathan had foretold it. For what reason was this land appointed? Nathan revealed it in the same revelation that he gave David. He said, "*Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee, that the Lord will build thee a house.*"

David wanted to house the Ark of the Covenant That was his request. What God said was, "*I will build you a house. I will subdue your enemies and on the appointed land. I will build it.*"

The House of God

What kind of house did God have in mind when He made His promise to David? Is He planning a stupendous structure with sparkling jewels and ornate marble? Does He intend a skyscraper that reached the heavens. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "*For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands*" (2 Cor 5:1).

When person build a structure and dedicates it, the Lord's spirit can reside there to bless those within, but later generations, or even the same people at a later time, can desecrate that building. Consider the first temple that Solomon built. It was desecrated. It was burned. It was destroyed. The tent, the tabernacle in the wilderness, was lost. The Bible last notes it being in the Valley of Gibeon. The second temple that Ezra began to build after the Jews returned from Babylon and which Herod completed was destroyed. Not one stone was left upon another. Even when it was standing Jesus went into the temple and overturned the money changers tables, saying, "*Ye have made it a den of thieves*" (Matt 21:11). The Kirtland Temple became a barn and a stable after the Spirit of God radiated from its exterior.

The kind of temple that God wants to build in this land is first and foremost a temple made without hands. How is that possible?

The reason that Jesus could not establish His kingdom when he came in His first advent was because its people were not holy. Because they were defiled, His purpose was to make a way for His people to become holy. He had to purify them from sin. *“Our Savior Jesus Christ,”* wrote Paul. *“Gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:13-14). Jesus came to take away our sins, to wash it away, to purge us from iniquity. John explained in his epistle, *“Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins”* (1J 3:5). John the Baptist announced the Savior by saying, *“Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29). Jesus came to die for us—that our sins might be put upon him—that we might not have to pay the rightful penalty for our transgressions.

I find it absolutely amazing that people who were well schooled in the law of Moses should choose to sacrifice Jesus on the very day that the Pascal Lamb was being offered; for Jesus is our Pascal Lamb! That is what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”* (1 Cor 5:7). Hear me! Jesus came to bear our sins so that we might not have to die. He came to prepare away for us to be purged of sin. Our Savior announced this good news when He went into Galilee. *“Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God; and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel”* (Mark 1:12-13).

His Doctrine

Please let me be a little theological in examining the Savior’s gospel and His doctrine. It will help us understand how His first mission—His redemption and teachings—can build His house—a house not made with hands.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus’ sacrificial death saves us, but what is His doctrine? What are the teachings He gave that we should practice? When Peter preached his sermon on Pentecost, the people asked, *“What shall we do to be saved.”* The Bible records his answer: *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).

We often make commitments. We agree to perform certain duties. We enter relationships, such as marriage. When we make an important decision, we make a formal commitment. We sign a contract. We make a pledge. We go through a ceremony. A husband and wife marry in a sacred ordinance.

Jesus asks us to follow him and commit ourselves to live like him. He asks us to seal that commitment in a formal ceremony: baptism. He promises that that if we will be baptized, He will give us eternal life. The token of that promise is the Holy Spirit, which the Father gives us. That is why Peter said, *“Repent and be baptized and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.”* The Holy Ghost will then live in you.

When the Holy Ghost abides in people, they become temples of God. Paul said, *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”* (1 Cor 3:16). The Holy Ghost inhabited Solomon’s temple and filled it with glory. The reason that building was a temple is because it housed God. If you have received the Holy Ghost, you house God. You become His temple. *“What! know ye not,”* Paul writes a little later. *“That your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”* (1 Cor 6:19).

Your body is not yours to fulfill whatever things gratify your appetites or satiate your senses. You are not your own if you have committed to Christ. The Holy Spirit resides in you for the expressed purpose of helping the members of your body discharge and fulfill the will of our Heavenly Father.

The Holy House

What God is wanting to do with individuals who are filled with the Holy Ghost is to knit them together into a spiritual house. That is what Peter said: *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house”* (1 Pet 2:5). Peter also told us that while we are stones, we must fit on a foundation. If you build a house, whether it is of sticks, paint and plaster, or only stones, it will not stand very long if you just put it on the ground. It needs a foundation. Peter tells us, *“For the stone which the builders disallowed, is become the head of the corner”* (1 Pet 2:8).

Paul enlarges on this thought. He says, *“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone”* (Eph 2:20). What God is wanting to do is to fit you, an individual, a person filled with the Holy Ghost, onto the foundation that Jesus laid. He wants

to fit each of us in a way that together we form a spiritual house. That is the house of God that Nathan promised God would build on this continent—in this place. Paul adds, *“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph 2:21-22).

It is one thing for you as an individual to be filled with the Holy Ghost and to be able to commune with the General Assembly of the church of the Firstborn—to be enraptured by the power and manifestations of the Holy Spirit as those gifts fill the mind and enlighten it with truth, beauty and glory. It is a far greater thing for the body of Christ—those who are individual stones—to come and worship together where the grace of Jesus can fall upon an entire assembly and the manifestations of the spirit can be displayed in such a way that light radiates from the entire body. Then, that righteousness can radiate into the entire community. This is the purpose that God has in this latter-day revelation: to build this holy house.

The House of the Lord

The prophets foresaw the house of the Lord. Micah says, *“In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it”* (Micah 4:1-2). The mountain in this passage refers to the government, to this nation. God has made America the foremost nation in the world. It remains that way today, although it presently is tainted. The time will come when people will say, *“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob.”* If they were to say that today, where is that house?

When the Puritans first came to this land, John Winthrop wrote, *“We all came to these parts of America with the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and enjoy the liberties of the gospel.”* They came for a divine purpose. Ezekiel prophesied it: *“I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries . . . Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you . . . And I will put my Spirit within you”* (Ezek 36:24-27).

God assembled latter-day Israel to this land to fit us into the house of the Lord. He calls us to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, to be a follower of His ways and to be a vessel of the Holy Spirit. As bearers of the Holy Ghost, we become tiny stones, living stones. By properly placing us on Jesus, who is our Cornerstone, we are set upon the sure foundation and built into the holy house of righteousness. This was God’s purpose when He brought the Pilgrims to America. It remains His purpose today, for in the end of time God Himself will dwell upon earth.

“I heard a great voice out of heaven,” writes John the Revelator. *“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”* (Rev 21:3). The kingdom of God will be on earth. The holy city will be built. *“Wherefore,”* the Book of Mormon promises, *“the remnant of the house of Joseph shall be built up upon this land; and it shall be a land of their inheritance; and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord . . . and they shall no more be confounded”* (Eth 6:8). This is a sure promise.

See God’s Salvation

I have a Facebook friend. I generally visit that site once a day. Every time I do, she has three or four posts about different threatening devastations soon to befall our nation. They run the gambit: the collapse of our economy; the oppression of our citizens; the overthrow of our nation; immorality forced upon our people. The shocking speculations are endless. You are aware of all of them. They can seize us with fear. They can cause us to lose faith. They can cloud our sight of what God is accomplishing and what He will do. I want to remind you that the purposes for which God brought forth this nation will not fail. Those rumors are false. They are not true. Let me underscore that point. Those speculations concerning the bondage of the church—the Lord’s people—are not true.

Listen to the promises in the scriptures: *“Neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them anymore, as before time”* (2 Sam 7:10). This promise is contained in the prophecy of the appointment of this land. I already read another promise: *“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper”* (Is 54:17). Latter day revelation says, *“My people will I preserve”* (D&C 36:12). The Book of Mormon

plainly states, *“He will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it be so that the fullness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire”* (1N 7:35-36).

I hear about the horrible events that could take place. I read all the speculation of how they will come, but I know my Lord. He will save His people. Looking toward that time, Isaiah prophesied, *“The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God”* (Is 52:10).

Isaiah’s promise is almost a repeat of what Moses said. Imagine what it would have been like to be there with Moses, following him into the wilderness, going through a narrow valley and at the end of that passageway. You are on the banks of the Red Sea with the Egyptian Army pursuing you, ready to attack and destroy you, angry because you had left. Would you tremble in fear? I would be more fearful if I were there than I am today in this nation, even with all of today’s rumors, disinformation and speculation. We do not yet have an army at our doorstep. When the Egyptian army pressed upon His people at the Red Sea, God delivered them. The people came to Moses asking what they were going to do and wringing their hands. He said, *“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord”* (Ex 14:12).

That is our future. It is the future of this group of believers. It is the future for the Church of Christ upon this land. It is the future of this nation. Stand and see the salvation of the Lord! He saved America when the French Armada sought its destruction. He saved Israel when the Egyptians pressed them against the Red Sea. He saved Judah when Sennacherib tried to destroy them. He will save us.

The salvation that lies before us is described in the Book of Mormon. Nephi saw these events: *“The power of the Lamb of God . . . descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord...And they were armed with righteousness and the power of God in great glory”* (1N 3:230). Seeing then that righteousness will fall upon every member of the church of the Lamb and that His covenant people will be armed with power, what should be our response? Let us put on righteousness!

Putting on Righteousness

John writes in his epistle, *“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not”* (1J 3:6). Never forget that God asks us to be vessels of the Holy Ghost, living stones for His temple—this house of the Lord that He is yet to construct. For the Holy Ghost to abide in you, you must abide in Him. John adds, *“Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous”* (1J 3:7).

In this day of speculation mingled with fear, God asks us to live in righteousness. We can only live righteously if we conduct ourselves like Jesus did. We promised to that in the waters of baptism, but we cannot endure in that behavior without the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit. John also said, *“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. [And] ye shall continue in the Son, and also in the Father”* (1J 2:24).

The Father gives us the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the mind of Christ. That is why Paul wrote to the Philippians, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Phil 2:5). If the mind of Christ is in us, we are enduring the presence of the Holy Ghost. We have the power to live righteously. Then we can be part of the holy temple that God will build. John continues his explanation, *“The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (1 John 2:27).

I invite you to embrace the Holy Ghost. If there is a need for repentance, then repent. Place yourself in Jesus, for He is your Savior. Place yourself underneath the direction of the Holy Ghost. If you have not already begun, begin the devoted life that He has called us to live. Why? Because the Lord is about to unveil His arm and assemble His house.

The prophet promises, *“The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in”* (Mal 3:1). When He comes to His temple, He will assemble us, if we are prepared, as stones for that spiritual edifice. And then there will be a reason to build a building on the temple lot; but until there is a holy people, there is no reason to build a structure.

Jesus came in His first advent to purify His people and in the second advent He will come to assemble those purified people into His holy house—the tabernacle in which He can dwell with the children of men on this earth.

Malachi goes on to ask an important question. He begins, “*Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire*” (Mal 3:2-3). John the Baptist said that Jesus “*shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire*” (Lu 3:16). When the Spirit lives in you, it purges you. It burns away the dross naturally produced by our carnal lives. It makes us more like Jesus, more like the righteous people we are called to become. It prepares us to abide our Savior’s coming.

The house of the Lord will be built. The foundational stone will be laid in Zion and all the parts of that spiritual structure will be placed on it holy and acceptable to Him. He is in the process of assembling the lively stones today, the parts of His house. We are just a tiny portion of that gathering, for they are being assembled even now.

Soon, God will lay the foundational stone in Zion: “*I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua*” (Zech 3:8-9). All the lively stones, people like you and me who are temples of the Holy Ghost, will be fitly framed together for a habitation of God. The prophet continues, “*Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH . . . he shall build the temple of the Lord*” (Zech 6:12).

Are you ready to be fitly framed into the house of the Lord? Are you ready to be a citizen of the kingdom of God on earth? Be ready, for its unveiling is near at hand!