

Truth and Righteousness will Sweep the earth

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A few years ago I listened to a young Hispanic sister recount her conversion story in the Saturday evening session of a stake conference. She stated the following: "When the missionaries knocked on my door, I saw the smile on their faces and felt the firm grip of their handshakes. They asked if they could take a few moments and share a message that would bring happiness into my life. At the conclusion of their visit, they turned to Moroni's promise in the Book of Mormon and invited me to pray and exercise my faith to obtain a witness of the book's truthfulness and the Joseph Smith's first vision. I was surprised! They were asking me to find out for myself, to learn that the Holy Ghost would speak to me, that I was not just to believe their words. Later as I listened to the missionaries explain the plan of salvation, I suddenly felt a confirming witness that I was more than a speck in the universe. My life was important not only to me but to a loving Heavenly Father and His Son. They knew me! There is a purpose to life and they have a plan for me to achieve that purpose. I could never feel worthless again!"

The truth of the young sister's testimony burned in me that evening. I, too, have felt the touch of the Master's hand and know there is purpose to life, that every person is of infinite worth, that there is a plan. Not only are the innumerable earths known to the Father and the Son (Moses 1:35), but more importantly the Father and Son know us. The Son not only died for our sins, but in some incomprehensible way in the garden and on the cross received power to give all "life and godliness" if we are obedient (2 Peter 1:3).

The Plan of Salvation

Before the foundation of the world, the Lord instructed His children regarding the plan for their eternal development. The blueprint for our growth and happiness called for a period of time outside His presence during which memories of our earlier spirit life would be veiled. One purpose of earth life would be to receive a physical body. Another was to receive instruction regarding our potential and the principles by which we should live and then be tested regarding our will to obey. Agency and opposition were part of the plan because they

are essential elements of human development. It would be a time to overcome destructive habits and tendencies toward sin. It would be a time to discover who we are and the potential within us. This would be accomplished by exercising faith in Jesus Christ, by repenting and entering into His ordinances and covenants. Through the atoning sacrifice of the Only Begotten, everyone could be made new, exalted to a higher plane, and receive immortality and eternal life (Abraham 3:22–26; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Moses 1:39).

Earth life is a probationary period, a time to learn eternal lessons (Abraham 3:22–26). The time outside the Lord's presence is divided into two parts—a relatively short period in mortality followed by a longer span in a world of spirits. To protect agency and righteousness, no one is forced to accept truth. It is possible for adults to reject eternal principles and lead their children and future generations astray. Many do not receive the full blueprint in mortality. Therefore, missionary work is required both on earth and in the spirit world. Some are taught the plan in mortality while others are instructed fully on the other side of the veil following death in the flesh (1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6).

It is important that individuals live the righteous principles taught them in this life. When a person receives an opportunity to hear the truth, it is imperative that she or he not procrastinate their repentance. In Amulek's words:

"This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; . . . this life is the day for men to perform their labors. . . . Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis [spirit prison], that I will repent, that I will return to my God. . . . For that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:32–33).

The plan calls for those who receive the gospel during their earthly state to share it with others, to be exemplars and teachers of righteousness. Also, they may be called upon to teach truth on the other side of the veil (D&C 138:29–34). The plan is a universal plan. The truths apply to all of the Father's family. Only one set of truths lead to a fulness of light, a fulness of joy. Jesus Christ and the truths taught by him are the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 1:17; 3:21; 14:6).

The gospel plan was given to Adam and Eve (Moses 5:4–9). But even in their day apostasies occurred. Some of Adam and Eve's children rejected the message taught by their parents for they loved carnality more than eternity (Moses 5:12–13). From the beginning of time, the Lord's servants have been commissioned to search out those who fall by the wayside, to teach them the gospel and help them to return to the fold.

Enoch was one who received such a commission. In the Pearl of Great Price, we learn of his call to cry repentance to a wayward people and establish Zion among them. In addition, the Lord gave Enoch a vision of the earth's future including key events and conditions that would transpire to the end of time (Moses 7:3–4). For example, Enoch foresaw the wickedness of Noah's day, that the Lord would cleanse the earth with water preserving Noah and his family (Moses 7:42–43). Enoch was shown the Savior's birth in the meridian of time, His ministry, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection (Moses 7:45–47, 55–57). Enoch

then saw a period of darkness which followed the Savior's earthly ministry, a time of apostasy, when "the heavens [were] darkened, and a veil of darkness [covered] the earth;" a period of "great tribulations" (Moses 7:61). This occurred when nearly all of the apostles were killed within a few years following the Savior's crucifixion and, as Paul foretold, Church members turned away from the truth, unable to "endure sound doctrine" as "grievous wolves enter[ed] in . . . not sparing the flock" (2 Timothy 4:3–4; Acts 20:28–30).

Truth and Righteousness Will Sweep the Earth

Following the Great Apostasy, Enoch was shown a time of refreshing when "righteousness [would come] down out of heaven; and truth [would come] forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of [the] Only Begotten." And then the Lord told Enoch that in the day of refreshing "righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth" (Moses 7:62).

Righteousness descending from the heavens was fulfilled in the revelations received by the prophet Joseph Smith including the appearance of the Father and the Son, Moroni's visits, the Savior's appearance in the Kirtland Temple followed by Old Testament prophets delivering priesthood keys. Truth coming forth out of the earth was fulfilled by the publication of the Book of Mormon. The spread of missionary work and the establishment of the Church in many nations is in fulfillment of the Lord's statement that "righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth."

How pervasive will the flood of righteousness be? Is it a period in which all of the Father's earthly children embrace the gospel? If not all, will most or a majority of His children enter the Kingdom? To answer these questions, it is instructive to review a similar vision received by the prophet Nephi. Nephi records that in the last days that although the members of the Church will be scattered upon all the face of the earth, they will be small in number (1 Nephi 14:12). Today the Church numbers eleven million—less than 1 percent of the earth's six billion. Sociologists have forecasted the Church's population near the end of this century with figures as high as 280 million—although a large number, it will still be less than 1 percent of the earth's expected total.¹

The Influence of a Righteous People

Although the Church will continue to represent a small proportion of the earth's population, Nephi indicates that the Saints' influence will be well beyond their numbers. He was told that "the power of the Lamb" would descend "upon the saints" and they would be "armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory" (1 Nephi 14:14). In the last few years, observers have witnessed the Church's rise out of obscurity and an increase in its influence. I believe that yesterday's humanitarian service event is one manifestation of the "righteousness and power" referred to in Nephi's vision. The mammoth blood drive, the preparation of hygiene, school, and newborn kits, the painting of toys, tying two thousand quilts, and making caps for cancer patients, plus a myriad of other activities are reflections of righteous desires. The items prepared and the blood given will increase supplies available to the Church and other organizations to relieve suffering around the world. The effort is a

strong manifestation of the power of the Lamb. Gospel principles and the Holy Spirit cloak the Saints with incentive and strength to reach out and help those in need "across the street, across the world and across the veil."²

As the Presiding Bishop a few years ago, I learned that almost three-fourths of the volunteers that appeared in Miami on the first weekend to clean up after Hurricane Andrew were LDS. Not only did they appear in significant numbers but they were organized. Someone said that is because they had a Relief Society president with them. In addition they were led by stake presidents, bishops, and quorum leaders. Moreover, they were accompanied by eighteen-wheeler trucks full of supplies from the Atlanta regional storehouse. The trucks carried plywood, nails, hammers, blankets, food, medicinal supplies, and other materials to relieve suffering and assist in the rebuilding of the city.

Following the floods in Central Georgia a few years later, approximately six thousand of the eight thousand volunteers who appeared to clean out homes were LDS, even though Church membership in Georgia is less than 1 percent of the state population. Similar responses in recent years have occurred in Oklahoma, Texas, and California. In the mid-1990s, the president of the American Red Cross learned about the help provided by Church members and asked for a meeting with Church officials to establish a set of protocols for future emergencies. As the meeting concluded, the Red Cross leader said, "There is one more thing we would like from your people—their blood, literally. Your people are a clean pool that can be trusted." Yesterday's blood drive is a partial response to that earlier conversation. Truth and righteousness are sweeping the earth and although our numbers are few, there is power in the principles by which we live.

Early Stages of Missionary Work

For a moment, it is instructive to look back through the pages of history and review the Lord's missionary program remembering that agency is a paramount principle. There has been a missionary effort from the earliest of times. In the beginning, the gospel was declared and taught to Adam, Eve, and their children by the Lord's own voice, by angels sent from His presence, and through the gift of the Holy Ghost (Moses 5:58–59). In turn, Adam and Eve were given responsibility to teach their children and reach out to those who left the fold (Moses 5:12, 26–27; 6:4–6). Enoch was called to preach repentance and was successful in converting his people, but Noah, with the same commission, was unsuccessful except for his family. All of the Old Testament prophets were called to reclaim a city, a people, or a nation.

It appears that the first organized missionary effort occurred in the meridian of time when the Savior called and gave power to the Twelve to preach the gospel to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matthew 10). The program was extended when the Seventies were called, given the same commission as the Twelve, and sent two by two "into every city and place, whither [Christ] himself would come" (Luke 10:1–16).

During one of the Redeemer's last appearances following His resurrection, the Savior expanded the call to the Twelve. He told them to "Go . . . into all the world, and preach the

gospel to every creature;" to "teach all nations" (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19). The Twelve were no longer restricted to the house of Israel. At first they may not have fully understood the new injunction as missionary work remained focused on the Jewish nation. Then Peter received a revelation which opened the door for the Gentiles. In a vision at midday, he saw the heavens open and a great sheet descending to him upon which were many animals. At least some of them were considered unclean by the Mosaic law and were not to be eaten. Peter was told to kill and eat. He protested three times, and then the vision ended. While Peter pondered the meaning, the servants of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, knocked at the door and reported their master's desire for truth. Cornelius was a generous, righteous, prayerful man with a desire to be saved. In answer to prayer, he was instructed to send for Peter. By teaching Cornelius, Peter learned that God is no respecter of persons, that Peter should not consider any man "common or unclean" (Acts 10:14). It was time to take the gospel to every nation.

Apostolic missions are believed by many to have been assigned by the Savior prior to His ascension. Tradition holds that the Twelve were sent to the known world of their day. Peter served in Syria and Rome. John served in Asia Minor and was eventually banished to the Isle of Patmos. James the Greater went to the far reaches of Western Europe while Philip served in Turkey and Andrew in Russia. Scriptural references indicate that James the Just remained in Jerusalem, while tradition holds that Simon the Zealot was assigned Persia, and Bartholomew went to the lands east of the Caspian Sea. Mark served with Peter in Rome and then visited Egypt after Peter's death and founded the Church of Alexandria.³ One of the more interesting assignments was given to Thomas. Tradition states that he was sent to India where he taught along the southwest coast, experienced considerable success, and died as a martyr in a.d. 68.⁴ Today millions of "Thomas Christians" in India trace their gospel origins to St. Thomas the Apostle.⁵

Ancient documents indicate that all of the apostles except John and perhaps Matthew died as martyrs within forty years of Christ's death. Soon priesthood keys were gone, and doctrines and ordinances were changed or lost. The apostasy became a reality. Eventually, reformers appear on the scene in the 1500s to 1600s, and light penetrates the veil once more. The refreshing was not complete, however, until a total restoration occurred.

Truth Sweeping the Earth in the Last Days

With the call of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the restoration of priesthood keys, the foundation was laid to once again initiate missionary work across the earth. As early as September 1830, the Lord told Joseph: "ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect" (D&C 29:7). In October 1830, the Lord instructed Joseph that the elect would be gathered from the "four quarters of the earth" (D&C 33:6). In January 1831, with only 280 members, the Lord told Joseph that missionaries would be sent to every nation (D&C 39:15).

Eighteen months after the Church was organized, Joseph received the Lord's preface or introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants—what is today the first section. The Church numbered a few hundred souls at the time, and the extent of the revelation's sweep and

majesty is almost unthinkable. If the Church were the work of man, it is doubtful if anyone would have the audacity to issue this proclamation. The first five verses contain the following:

"Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together. For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days. And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them" (D&C 1:1–2, 4–5).

In 1834, with Church membership near four thousand, Joseph Smith told a small gathering of priesthood brethren:

"I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it. It is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world."⁶

The tiny seed planted in upstate New York has now spread to more than 160 countries. How has that happened? Truth and righteousness are sweeping the earth in three phases. The first is missionary work, which introduces the gospel. Where success occurs, small branches are formed with limited priesthood keys. As the Church grows in an area, branches become wards, which then become stakes. Stakes represent the second phase. Stakes are centers of strength and denote additional priesthood keys. The presence of a stake indicates that the gospel has taken root and a mature membership exists. Temples represent the third phase. The placement of a temple in an area signifies the presence of a number of stakes within close proximity and a spiritual maturity worthy of higher ordinances and covenants. It is instructive to briefly review the historical progress of these three manifestations of the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" which, as Joseph said, will fill North and South America and eventually the whole earth (Daniel 2:34–35, 44–45).

The Spread of Missionary Work in the Last Days, 1830–2000

The formation of the Church and the beginning of missionary work were almost simultaneous. Samuel Smith, brother of Joseph, was the first missionary. In April 1830, shortly after the Church was organized, he filled a knapsack with copies of the Book of Mormon and traveled from community to community in upstate New York introducing the book and the story of the Restoration.⁷ One book sold to Phineas Young was passed on to his father, sister, and then to his brother, Brigham. After two years of study and soul-searching, Brigham, moved by the testimony of a Mormon elder, joined the Church in 1832.⁸ A number of people joined before Brigham, but his influence and leadership have been extraordinary.

In the fall of 1830, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson, and Peter Whitmer Jr., were called as missionaries to the western frontier of the United States. They were to teach

the Lamanites or American Indians whose story was found in the Book of Mormon. Although they met with several Indian tribes, their efforts were thwarted by government agents. However, they experienced success with the Campbellites in northeastern Ohio where Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, Edward Partridge, and many others were converted.⁹

As early as 1830, Joseph Smith and others traveled to the southern part of Ontario, Canada, which became the first country outside the United States to receive missionaries. John Taylor, the third president of the Church, was among the early converts joining in 1836.¹⁰

In the midst of an economic depression and a period of dark apostasy in the Church, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith in 1837 that missionary work should be extended to England.¹¹ Heber C. Kimball, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, along with Orson Hyde and five other brethren were called to open the British Isles to missionary work. Within nine months this small handful of men had brought more than 1,500 converts into the Church.¹² The 1837–38 mission was followed by another in 1840–41 as Brigham Young led nine members of the Twelve to Great Britain. Between 1837 and 1852, a fifteen-year period, approximately 57,000 converts joined the Church in Britain, alone, as a result of the missionary effort initiated by the Prophet Joseph, led by the Quorum of the Twelve, and carried on by others.

1840

The spread of formal, organized missions across the earth foreshadows the growth of the Church. Two formal missions were established by 1840. The first is the British Mission established July 20, 1837, with Heber C. Kimball as president. Although considerable missionary work was done in the eastern part of the United States and Canada before 1837, the British Isles was the site of the first mission unit of the Church. The second mission was the Eastern States established in May 1839.

1850

The third mission of the Church was organized in French Polynesia, the Society Islands Mission. In the spring of 1843, the Prophet Joseph Smith called four men to serve in the South Pacific including Addison Pratt. Pratt had sailed the oceans and had spent some time in Hawaii prior to the call. Leaving family and friends, the four traveled to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where they found a whaling ship bound for the Society Islands. The ship sailed on October 10, 1843. One of the missionaries died on board three weeks at sea. Six months after embarking, three missionaries arrived in Tubuai, a small island 350 miles south of Tahiti. Elder Pratt sought the Lord in prayer as to whether he was to stay in Tubuai or continue to Tahiti. The answer was a strong confirmation to stay. The other two brethren continued on with the ship to Tahiti where they began their labors.

During Elder Pratt's first year on Tubuai, he baptized one-third of the people on the island including all of the Caucasians but one.¹³ Addison Pratt served on Tubuai for nearly three years before sailing for home. He arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in September 1848 where

he joined his wife and children who had arrived eight days earlier from Winter Quarters. They had been separated five and one-half years. Louisa Barnes Pratt and the children had made the difficult journey in 1846 from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters where they "suffered for two years with sickness, too little food, and many other hardships."¹⁴

Two years after their arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, Addison returned to Tubuai with his wife, Louisa Barnes Pratt, and their children. Louisa was one of the first women called to serve as a missionary. She and her sister, Caroline Barnes Crosby, organized and operated the first LDS school in the Pacific.

In addition to the Society Islands, other missions formed by 1850 include the Welsh, California, Scandinavian, French, Italian, Swiss, and Sandwich Islands. By 1853, the First Presidency and the Twelve also had sent missionaries to South Africa, Jamaica, India, Siam, China, Chile and Australia.¹⁵ This extraordinary missionary effort was undertaken while there was only a handful of Saints in Salt Lake, and the rest were struggling on the plains of America to reach their new home.

1900

By the beginning of the twentieth century, some missions established in the mid-1800s had been discontinued while others had been established. By this time, most of the missions were in the United States and Western Europe, plus three in the Pacific, and one each in Australia and New Zealand. There were no missions in Central or South America, or in Asia or Africa.

1950

The number of missions more than doubled to forty-three by mid-century. Missions in the United States and Western Europe doubled in the fifty-year period. Three missions were created from the Scandinavian Mission: the Danish, Norwegian, and Finnish. New missions appeared in South America (Argentine, Brazil, and Uruguay). The South African mission was reestablished and the Japanese Mission, which existed from 1901 to 1924, and 1937 to the beginning of the war, was reopened in 1948 but transferred to Hawaii in 1950. One additional mission was created in the South Pacific—Tonga, which was split off from the Samoan Mission.

1970

By 1970 the number of missions was ninety-two. The density of the North American and Western European Missions continued to increase while the number of South American and Asian missions also grew. New countries added to the list include South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and Hong Kong in Asia, plus Peru (the Andes), Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela in South America. Additional missions were also created in Mexico and Central America.

1990

The 1970 to 1990 period was one of extraordinary growth as the number of missions increased from 92 to 256. There was considerable expansion in North, Central, and South America plus Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and Africa. The 1978 priesthood revelation formed the basis for opening missionary work in black Africa. By 1990, four missions in West Africa were open along with a mission in Zimbabwe and others in South Africa.

2000

Today, there are 333 missions. The fall of the Berlin Wall opened Eastern Europe to missionary work. Today, there are missions across Russia from St. Petersburg in the west to Vladivostok in the east. Philippine missions continue to divide with new missions being formed. The density of missions in North, Central, and South America continues to increase. The number of African missions is also on the rise.

The Growth of Stakes across the World, 1830–2000

Given the pattern of growth in missions, the fruits of missionary work appear in the formation of stakes in fulfillment of Joseph Smith's prophecy.

1840

The first stake of the Church was established in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1834 with Joseph Smith as the first president. The next two stakes were the Clay-Caldwell and Adam-ondi-Ahman stakes in Missouri with David Whitmer and John Smith as presidents. The two Missouri stakes became moribund when the Saints were forcibly driven from Missouri to Illinois in 1839. By 1840, eight new stakes were created in Illinois and one across the river in Iowa.

1850

By 1850 there was one stake again—Salt Lake City. With a few Saints in the valley and most strung out across the plains and in Winter Quarters, the Church experienced a new beginning. Within one year, three other stakes were created—Weber, Provo, and San Bernardino, California.

1900

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were forty-three stakes, generally stretching from Alberta, Canada, in the north to the Mexican colonies in the south. Church membership was concentrated in the Rocky Mountains.

1950

There were 180 stakes at the midpoint of the twentieth century. The Church was concentrated in the western part of the United States and Canada. In addition, there were

four stakes along the eastern seaboard, two in the Midwest, and one in Hawaii. There were no stakes in Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, or New Zealand.

1970

By 1970 there were 537 stakes with about 500 in North America. The density in North America is impressive. In a seventy-year period, the Church expanded from its concentration in the Rocky Mountains to a United States church with a few stake centers in other parts of the world. Outside the United States, stakes were formed between 1950 and 1970 in Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Central and South America, Hawaii, and the South Pacific islands.

1990

In 1990, ten years ago, there were 1,784 stakes with heavy concentrations in North and Central America plus a strong ring of stakes in the population centers that surround South America. In addition, there were considerable numbers of stakes in the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Western Europe, and the coastal areas of Australia.

2000

The location of stakes in the current year indicates that Joseph Smith's prophecy about the Church filling North and South America is coming true. Today there are more than 2,500 stakes with a heavy concentration in North, Central, and South America. The empty space in South America is essentially the Amazon Basin, which has a sparse population. How did Joseph know that the people in South America would respond to the gospel message in greater numbers and more quickly than Western Europe? Missionaries were sent to Europe long before missions were opened in South America. Today, there are numerous stakes in Western Europe with more coming, but the growth of the Church is currently centered in South America.

A new area that has opened up in the last ten years is Eastern Europe. Stakes will soon be formed in this region of the world. In fact, there are already a small number. It is interesting to note how the Lord works with small miracles as He prepares individuals and families to receive the gospel.

One story which illustrates the Lord's hand in opening new areas concerns a Russian woman, Svetlana Artiomova. Svetlana is one of the early pioneer woman to join the Church in Russia. She grew up in the Communist system as an atheist. As a young adult, however, she felt there must be a God and wanted to learn more about Him. She wanted a Russian Bible so that she could study. Unfortunately, Russian Bibles were rare and quite expensive in the late 1980s. Nevertheless, Svetlana prayed that she might be able to obtain one. On a trip to Helsinki in 1989, she went into the forest to pick mushrooms and there under the leaves on the forest floor she found a Russian Bible. A few months earlier, she had met Aino Kemppainen, the wife of the Baltic District President who had befriended her. Upon learning of Svetlana's precious find, Sister Kemppainen told her that the Bible had not been

found by chance, but that the Lord was preparing her to receive the gospel. A short time later, Aino gave Svetlana a copy of the Book of Mormon in Russian, bore her testimony, and introduced her to the missionaries. Two months later Svetlana joined the Church. Within a few months, the Russia Moscow Mission was established by the Church, and Svetlana Artiomova was called as the first Relief Society president in Russia. How did a Russian Bible end up in a Finnish forest in the path of a Russian woman who had been praying for such a book? Was the accidental meeting of Svetlana and Aino Kemppainen in a Helsinki park a few months earlier really an accident? Who is directing the Kingdom?

Temples in the Latter Days

The third phase of Church growth is the spread of temples across the earth. The highest ordinances and covenants available to mankind are given only in buildings dedicated as a house of the Lord. The first temple constructed in this dispensation was the Kirtland Temple completed in 1836. It was a preparatory temple, a building in which priesthood keys could be restored so that the full ministry of the Church could go forward including temple work. It was in this building that Elijah the prophet returned with the power to "plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers," so that "the hearts of the children [would] turn to their fathers." Otherwise, the earth would be wasted (D&C 2; Malachi 4:5–6).

Wherever the main body of Saints located in those early years, a temple was planned. Kirtland, Independence, Far West, and Nauvoo are examples. After being driven from Ohio to Missouri and then to Illinois, the Saints were able to settle long enough to build their second temple. Construction on the Nauvoo Temple began in the fall of 1840 about one year after the Saints arrived. The temple was completed after the main body of the Saints crossed the Mississippi on their way to the Salt Lake Valley. A special crew of workers remained behind to finish the building and it was dedicated on May 1, 1846. Baptisms for the dead were performed beginning in 1841, endowments in 1845 and 1846. Although the building was not complete, it was filled to capacity in the months preceding the exodus as the Saints performed ordinances for both the living and the dead.

By 1850, two temples had been built and both abandoned as the Saints were forced out of their homes. The next set of temples were built in Utah. Four temples had been built by 1900—all in Utah. During the next fifty years, three additional temples were completed in the Rocky Mountains, plus one in Hawaii, making a total of eight. Those in the mountains stretched from Cardston, Alberta, Canada, in the north to Mesa, Arizona, in the south.

Between 1950 and 1970, five additional temples were constructed with two in California and three outside the United States—the London, Swiss, and New Zealand temples. It is interesting to note that thirty years ago, there were no temples in Latin America, Asia, Africa, or Australia.

Temple building accelerated in the 1980s when twenty-five temples were added in the decade. By 1990, forty-four temples were in operation—twenty-three in the United States and Canada, six in Latin America, five in Europe, three in Asia, two in Australia and New

Zealand, three in the South Pacific, and one in South Africa.

The current status of temples is as follows. There are approximately eighty operating, twenty-eight under construction, and twelve announced but the ground not broken. President Gordon B. Hinckley has announced that there will be at least one hundred operating temples at the end of the year. More than thirty temples will be dedicated in the year 2000. The first thirty temples required 154 years.

A key feature of current and future growth is the building of temples around the earth. President Brigham Young said: "To accomplish this work there will have to be not only one temple but thousands of them, and thousands and tens of thousands of men and women will go into those temples and officiate for people who have lived as far back as the Lord shall reveal."

For years I thought President Young's statement would be fulfilled in the Millennium. Perhaps it will, but we are living in a day when it has become apparent that thousands of temples will dot the earth.

I remember sitting in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple in March 1996 during a General Authority meeting. The Church was preparing to dedicate its fiftieth operating temple after 166 years of this dispensation. At the end of the meeting, President Hinckley stated that he hoped there would be at least one hundred temples operating before he completed his ministry. I sat there stunned. He was in his eighty-sixth year. It had taken 166 years for the first fifty temples. How could another fifty temples be built in the remaining years of his life?

About eighteen months later in another meeting in the Salt Lake Temple, President Hinckley revealed the concept of the small temple. On a long summer trip returning from the Mormon colonies in Mexico, the manner in which these temples should be constructed was revealed to him. The temples would be of the finest materials and constructed to last for hundreds of years. Many of them would be built next to stake centers in fulfillment of Doctrine and Covenants 124:36, which associates temple work and stakes. Sisters, we stand on the summit of the centuries and view the Lord's miracle of the last 170 years. Where will it go from here? What is its destiny? Again we turn to the Prophet Joseph Smith for the answer:

"No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done."

It is my testimony that Joseph's words will be fulfilled. Truth and righteousness are sweeping the earth. It is evidenced by the spread of missionary work, the formation of stakes and the building of temples. May the Lord bless us that we may be faithful participants in his great work.

1. Rodney Stark.
2. Wendy L. Watson, quoted in Sarah Jane Weaver, "BYU Women's Conference Expected to Attract 30,000," *Church News*, 1 April 2000.
3. LDS Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Mark," 728.
4. *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 26 vols. (Chicago, Ill.: Field Enterprises Educational Corp., 1974), s.v. "Thomas," 19:201.
5. Franklin Hamblin Littell, *The Macmillan Atlas History of Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 12. Joseph Smith, quoted by Wilford Woodruff, Conference Report, April 1898, 57.
6. Joseph Smith, quoted by Wilford Woodruff, Conference Report, April 1898, 57.
7. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1992), s.v. "missions," 2:916.
8. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, s.v. "Young, Brigham," 4:1602.
9. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, s.v. "missions," 2:916; D&C 32.
10. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, s.v. "missions," 2:916.
11. Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols., ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-51), 2:489.
12. Bruce A. Van Orden, *Building Zion: The Latter-day Saints in Europe* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 30.
13. R. Lanier Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 3-9.
14. Britsch, *Unto the Islands*,
15. Van Orden, *Building Zion*, 10.
16. Letters from Jussi and Aino Kempainen, 2 February, 1996; see also Russell M. Nelson, "Drama on the European Stage," *Ensign*, December 1991, 15.
17. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 394.
18. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:540.

"Beginning at this place on this day, I exhort you to sweep the earth with messages filled...Â See more of Flood the Earth with Truth and Righteousness on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Flood the Earth with Truth and Righteousness on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account? New International Version I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. New Living Translation I will test you with the measuring line of justice and the plumb line of righteousness. Since your refuge is made of lies, a hailstorm will knock it down. Since it is made of deception, a flood will sweep it away.Â Berean Study Bible I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level. Hail will sweep away your refuge of lies, and water will flood your hiding place. King James Bible Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. Sweep The Earthâ€™s purpose is to help members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to fulfill the promise of the Lord regarding our present day: And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten â€| and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth â€| â€“ Moses 7:62. We hope this website helps you become better at sharing the Gospel with your family, friends and community. This is not an official LDS Church website and reflects the personal thoughts and opinions of the Sweep The Earth team. Thanks for visiting! God's kindly earth. Is kindlier than men know, And the red rose would but blow more red, The white rose whiter blow. Out of his mouth a red, red rose!Â For the lampless Earth in which he lies. Has neither Sun nor Moon. * * * They hanged him as a beast is hanged â€œTruth Will I Cause to Sweep the Earthâ€™. President Ezra Taft Benson taught: â€œThe Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to â€“sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [His] electâ€™ (Moses 7:62). This sacred volume of scripture needs to become more central in our preaching, our teaching, and our missionary work. â€| â€œThe time is long overdue for a massive flooding of the earth with the Book of Mormon for the many reasons which the Lord has given. â€|Â The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805â€“44) explained: â€œAnd now, I ask, how righteousness and truth are going to sweep the earth as with a flood? I will answer.