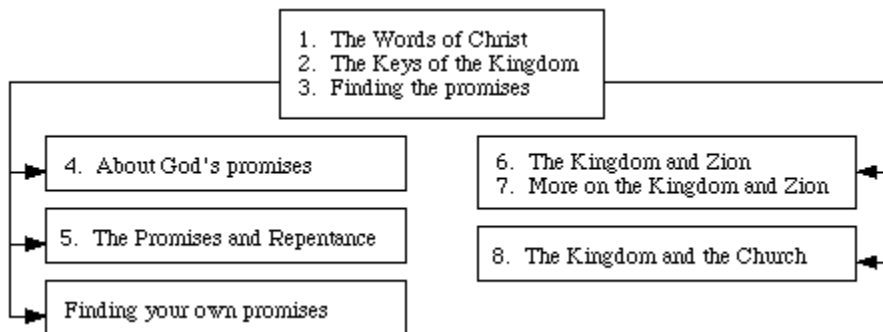


The Kingdom Way

Introduction

The material in this booklet is intended as an introduction to the most exciting topic that I have found within the scriptures: the Kingdom of God. For the last 20 years, since we traveled together as missionaries, both my Father and I have found that our ministry has been centered on the Kingdom and the promises of the scriptures which are introduced here. For almost as many years I have been aware of the need to write down this material so that it could be studied and considered by a wider audience. I sat down many times to start, but almost anything else takes precedence over writing in my life. Over the years, we have presented workshops which eventually took on the name "Kingdom Way Workshops," and we put together booklets of worksheets for use during those classes. We have used this material in some form for classes from Junior High to Senior Adults. However, we never developed an independently usable resource until now. It is my hope that those who will take the time to consider the scriptures that we present here will be touched by the fire of the Holy Ghost as it has touched us time and time again as we have presented this material.

The heart of the material is contained in the first 3 sections. (See the illustration for the prerequisite structure.) For personal or group scripture study, go through at least the first 3 sections thoroughly, and then start finding your own promises. If you have a 5 day camp or reunion scripture class, throw in one or two of the other sections as desired. Sections 6 and 7 are good discussion starters, and you may have some who disagree with the point of view presented. That's OK. They are mostly about our traditional terms, and people will have different perspectives on terms. What is most important about these sections is that the prophecies concerning Zion are treated with respect and brought to our consciousness.



For best results, look up each scripture. It is often more enlightening to read the scriptures in a setting where the context is available than to simply accept the parts that have been dug out for you.

I have tried to copy the scriptural texts verbatim, including wording, spelling, and punctuation whenever possible. Bible verses are quoted from the Inspired Version of the Bible, with references to the King James versification included in parentheses wherever there is a difference. For example, Matthew 6:38 (33) indicates that the verse is quoted as found in the 38th verse in the Inspired Version. The corresponding verse in the King James or other versions of the Bible is

verse 33. Many times the text will be essentially or even exactly the same, but sometimes comparing several versions is a useful exercise.

1. The Words of Christ

Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do. II Nephi 14:4

My mother used to ask me, "What would Jesus do?" That was the standard by which we were expected to gage the legitimacy of our actions. In asking the question, it was assumed that we knew pretty well what Jesus did during his life, and that we could make the application to the task at hand. I would like to change the question slightly, and ask, "What would Jesus say?" That is, what would Jesus talk about if He were here today? Let us begin with the mission statement that Jesus gave while he was alive. Jesus said,

I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent. Luke 4:43

I know of no other place where Jesus says why he came as clearly as in this verse. The setting for this saying was probably the town of Capernaum. Jesus had just healed Peter's mother in law, among other things. When he got ready to leave, the people naturally wanted him to stay. When they asked him to stay, he replied that he was compelled to leave because he was sent to preach the kingdom of God in other places as well. This was more important than the healing and the miracles that he was doing. It was the reason he was sent. In describing the ministry of Jesus shortly afterwards, Luke says that Jesus

...went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God... Luke 8:1,2

Jesus was not alone in his ministry. He chose twelve disciples and prepared them for ministry as well. Jesus' instructions to these hand picked ministers is recorded by Luke as follows:

Then he called his twelve disciples together, and he gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. Luke 9:1,2

In the next chapter Luke records the sending forth of the seventy. The instructions recorded there are much more detailed than the instructions to the twelve. Jesus tells these ministers, among other things, to "eat such things as are set before you." I personally have always found that particular duty very enjoyable as I have traveled as a seventy. However, the focus of the instructions about what the seventy should preach are these:

And heal the sick that are therein, and say, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. Luke 10:9

For both the twelve and the seventy, the instruction was to preach the kingdom of God. The following chapter begins with the disciples' request for Jesus to teach them to pray. Listen carefully to the very first request that Jesus teaches his disciples to make.

When ye pray, say, Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth. Luke 11:2

We note that before asking for forgiveness or even daily bread, his disciples were to pray for the kingdom. Jesus again stresses to his disciples the importance of the kingdom compared to daily bread in the next chapter.

Seek not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind; for all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father who is in heaven, knoweth that ye have need of these things Therefore seek ye to bring forth the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:31-35 (29-32)

Jesus often taught in parables which contain within them an illustration of his main point. Often, the parables were given in response to a question. For example, when asked, "Who is my neighbor," Jesus replied with the parable of the good Samaritan. But what was the focus of Jesus' parables when he was not answering questions from others? We find some of these parables in the next chapter. (A larger collection can be found in Matthew 13.)

Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. Luke 13: 18-21

What are these parables about? Some would say they are about a mustard seed, or leaven. But that is only the surface illustration. The beginning of understanding of these parables is the realization that the subject is the kingdom of God.

I believe that a real key to understanding Jesus' message is to understand the importance of the kingdom. It was, after all, his preaching of the kingdom that finally led to his crucifixion. The final accusation that accompanied him on the cross was,

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Luke 23:39 (38)

The list goes on and on. In Luke's account alone, the word "kingdom" appears 45 times. The total for the four gospels is about 122. For those interested in such statistics, a more detailed tabulation of the occurrence of this word is given below, along with "love" and "peace" for comparison.

Frequency of references to the words kingdom (*basileia*), love (*agape, agapao*), and peace (*eirene*) in the gospels.

Gospel	Kingdom	Love	Peace
Matthew	54	9	4
Mark	19	5	2
Luke	45	14	14
John	4	47	6

Note: Does not include *phileo* lit., to be a friend; or *sigao* lit., to be quiet.

Source: Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible.

After his resurrection, Jesus spent forty days talking with his apostles. Can you guess what Jesus talked to them about?

He showed himself alive after his sufferings by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3

By this time, the alert reader will begin to discern what I believe to be a definite pattern that runs throughout the ministry of Jesus. The kingdom of God was a central concern of his ministry. He preached it, he taught his disciples to preach it, he taught them to pray for it, he told them to seek for it first, he died because of it, and he taught it after his resurrection.

If Jesus were here today, I believe that he would speak to us about the kingdom. In our day, he has spoken to the church and said:

I will be with you and strengthen you for the tasks that lie ahead if you will continue to be faithful and commit yourselves without reservation to the building of my kingdom. DC 153:9c

2. The Keys of the Kingdom

The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth. DC 65:1b

The year that I graduated from college, I was looking for something to do with my life. Specifically, I wanted to do something of worth for the world, and I looked into possibilities of volunteering for the Peace Corps or Vista. Shortly before graduation I talked about my plans with my father, a full-time missionary. He suggested that if I wanted to volunteer, I might consider traveling with him for the year and assisting in his ministry. I was thrilled with the possibilities, and asked if he really meant it. He did. And so, I embarked on a faith journey that shaped and molded my subsequent ministry.

It was during this time that we "discovered" the kingdom in the scriptures. It was not discovered all at once, but unfolded over several weeks in which, day after day, the scriptures began to come alive for me. Initially, we had been asked to go to Edmonton, Alberta, to help the congregations there focus their program. Members of the two branches had attended a regional meeting at which they had participated in a brainstorming session on goals and objectives for their congregations. They had come up with a list of 54 things to do, including everything from raising attendance to building a gymnasium for inner city kids. Where should they start? What was really important? These were the questions that we started to try to help them clarify. However, what we heard when we listened to the members of one congregation was quiet frustration over

their inability to keep the church doors open. Wednesday prayer service attendance averaged 3 to 8 people. Sunday services were somewhat better attended. How will we do 54 new things? Someone observed that doing one new thing a week would result in the passage of a year before they ever got back around to the first item!

As we fasted and prayed about an appropriate response to this situation, the Lord impressed upon our minds the truth of the words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you." Not knowing where it would lead, we called a meeting and read the scripture. Naturally, everyone thought we had something up our sleeves--some new program or technique--but we did not. All we had was the assurance that seeking the kingdom was extremely important. Over the next few weeks, there were five key scripture verses that helped us to understand some central truths about the kingdom. I would like to share them with you.

Key number five is the verse already quoted about the priority of the kingdom.

Key #5. 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 (33)

But what is the kingdom? If you ask half a dozen people this question, you will get at least as many different answers. The spectrum covers everything from a nebulous purple blob to a city of righteousness to celestial glory. But what was Jesus talking about when he said the kingdom was at hand? I was reading through the book of Romans one day when this passage jumped out at me.

Key #4. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Romans 14:17

The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Here is a simple, clear definition of the kingdom of God! The kingdom is not the physical things, the meat and the drink, but it is the righteousness, the peace, and the joy that comes from the Holy Ghost.

The list "righteousness, peace, and joy" brings to mind another list that starts off "love, joy peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" These are the "fruit of the spirit," as given in Galatians 5:22. Picture a piece of fruit in your mind, say, an apple. Where does an apple come from? It comes from a tree, of course. And what kind of trees do apples come from? The answer is obvious: apple trees. The fact is, there is no other kind of tree that produces apples but apple trees. That is so obvious that it is hardly worth mentioning, except that when the same questions are asked about the fruit of the Spirit, the answers suddenly seem obscure. Where does the fruit of the spirit come from? From the spirit, of course! But all over, we see people dying because they are looking for the fruit of the spirit and trying to get it from other sources. Take peace, for instance. Many try to obtain peace by filling their bodies with alcohol, or other drugs. But these things do not bring peace. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit. It comes as a result of having the Spirit in your life. Many try to obtain joy by amassing money, or power, or having sex outside of marriage. But these things do not bring joy. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. And the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Just as we cannot expect to have the fruit of the apple tree if we cut down the tree after every harvest, we cannot expect to have the fruit of the spirit if we cut off the Spirit. So now it becomes clear that in order to build up the kingdom of God, it is necessary to have the Spirit of God with us always. Two questions present themselves.

First, is it desirable to have the Spirit always? One former pastor and long-time church member said he did not wish to have the Spirit always. Upon inquiry, he clarified his statement by saying that there were certain things that he did that he would not be able to do if he had the Spirit always. He was, I believe, being more honest than most of us in answering this question. Nevertheless, each of us must answer this question for ourself each day of our life.

If our answer is "yes, I wish to have the Spirit with me always," then the question of whether this is possible arises. Many saints do not believe that it is possible. At the same time, however, the phrase "that they may always have his spirit to be with them" is very familiar. Perhaps it is too familiar. It comes from the communion prayers. If we listen closely, we will find that the prayer on the bread lists three things that we are willing to do in order to have God's Spirit with us always.

Key #3. O God, the eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen. DC 17:22d

According to this prayer, partaking of the bread symbolizes the fact that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus, to always remember him, and to keep all his commandments. In return, we will always have his Spirit to be with us.

The good news of the gospel is as simple as that. If we do these three things, God's spirit will be with us always. When that happens, we will begin to have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. And when that happens, when righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost fill us, then we are part of the kingdom of God!

So there it is. Since taking the name of Christ and remembering Him always are commandments, the bottom line is that we are part of the Kingdom of God only when we keep the commandments of God. Only then can His will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.

The hard part, of course, is keeping all the commandments. Who even knows them all? As faithful Latter Day Saints, we have more commandments than any other Christians. We have three books full of them! Is there any hope for us? For me, the key insight came from the very first section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Key #1. Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled. DC 1:7

According to this passage, the commandments are made up of two sorts of things: prophecies and promises. I think of prophecies as those passages that tell of things that are certain to occur

regardless of our individual action. For example: "A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men," and "Zion shall be." Even if we choose not to be a part of these events, the prophecies will be fulfilled.

Promises, on the other hand, depend on our action as well as God's in order to be fulfilled. Each promise has two parts: a condition, and a blessing. The condition tells what we must do to be assured of the blessing, which is God's part. For example:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts. Malachi 3:10-12

Many people who read this passage say that it is a command to pay tithing. But paying tithing is only the condition. The blessing is that the windows of heaven will be opened and a blessing poured out that is so big that there will be no room to receive it! How long has it been since you have had a blessing so big that you had to tell the Lord, "Stop, I can't take any more blessing today! Please wait till tomorrow!" And besides this blessing, God is promising a physical blessing: crops will not be destroyed before they are harvested. Wow! Not only does God want to give us these blessings, but he also challenges us to put Him to the test on this one. "Prove me" in this context means "test me" or "try it out." What a promise!

Now promises by themselves are useless. We can search the scriptures finding promises until we are blue in the face and the kingdom will not come. But if we take the next step, the whole picture falls into place.

Key #2. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. I Thessalonians 5:21

In order to prove the promises, we must meet the condition. Then the blessing is received. As we begin to receive the blessings of the Spirit, we will have the fruit of that Spirit in our lives, which is righteousness, peace, and joy. And this is the Kingdom.

There is much more to say about the promises and the Kingdom of God, but for the moment, let us recall the key scriptures outlined here.

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| #1. Find the promises. | DC 1:7 |
| #2. Prove the promises. | I Thessalonians 5:21 |
| #3. Keep the commandments. | DC 17:22d |
| #4. Have the Spirit. | Romans 14:17 |
| #5. Build the Kingdom. | Matthew 6:38 (33) |

3. Finding the Promises *And they ... were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them. IV Nephi 1:12*

We have seen that finding the promises is an important step in keeping the commandments. So how do we start finding promises? I highly recommend a little game that my Dad and I

sometimes played when we first started finding promises: Label three columns on a sheet of paper "Reference, Blessing, Condition". (I like to list the blessing before the condition, because a list of blessings is most useful when trying to locate a promise to try out.) Pick an arbitrary chapter or page in one of the books of scripture and start reading until the next promise is found, and write it down. It usually doesn't take long, and sometimes you will discover a virtual gold mine of nuggets packed into a very small space.

For example, start reading Proverbs, chapter 3.

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments; For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Proverbs 3:1,2

What is the blessing? Length of days, long life, and peace. Would you like long life and peace? I would! So what do we need to do to obtain this blessing? The condition is twofold: remember the law, and keep the commandments in your heart. Remembering is done in our heads, but the heart is metaphorically thought of as the seat of emotions and motivations. Instead of just keeping commandments in our head, let us keep the commandments in our hearts, where love is the motive, and we will surely be blessed with peace.

Continuing in Proverbs, we read:

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart; So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Proverbs 3:3-4

Have you ever said, "No one understands me! Everyone hates me!" If so, here is a promise for you. The blessing is that both God and man will understand and even favor you. And what is the condition of such a blessing? Always be merciful and truthful.

When I think of showing mercy, I envision the Roman Circus with the gladiators battling to the death. But before delivering the final blow to the vanquished, the victor would look to the Emperor. If his thumbs were up, the victor would show mercy and not deliver the final blow that was rightfully his. Now we don't often have a chance to show mercy in this way, but how many times have we earned the right to say "I told you so," and not done it? That is mercy. How many times have we had the right to talk about a neighbor's injustice and refrained? That is mercy. How many times have we had the right to strike back at a brother or sister, but did not? That is mercy. And what about truth? Is it all right to tell a little white lie, or to stretch the truth a bit for fun? My wife and I made an agreement before we got married that we would always tell each other the truth. When we play games together, we avoid asking questions whose truthful answers (or non-answer) would spoil the fun--but we always tell each other the truth. And we understand each other. Perhaps favor and good understanding aren't blessings that everyone seeks, but if you need them, here is a promise for you.

The next couple of verses in Proverbs are:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5,6

Would you like to be blessed with direction from God? If so, here is your promise. The conditions are to trust in God, and acknowledge him in everything you do. A slightly different wording of the same promise is found in the letter of Alma to his son Helaman:

O remember my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God; yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; Yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest, let it be in the Lord; yea, let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord for ever; counsel the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good. Alma 17:68-69

While we have been advised that we cannot wait to be commanded in everything without being slothful and unwise servants, (DC 58:6c) we can let the Lord know everything that we are about to do. Counsel Him, listen for His advice, and be ready to follow His leading. Then we may step out in assurance that we will have His direction whenever He sees that we need it.

Here is the way that this promise worked in my life. I was ending my year of volunteer missionary work with my father and trying to decide what to do with the rest of my life. We had discovered new ways to work together, and there was a part of me that wanted to continue in the volunteer mode, but another part of me said that I needed to continue my education or get a job so that I could be a more productive member of society. I gave the matter considerable attention and prayer, but I just couldn't seem to see the Lord guiding me definitively either way. I submitted an application to graduate school at Iowa State University in order to meet the deadline for Fall entrance so that my options would stay open. I received a letter of acceptance, and an appointment as a teaching assistant. But I still wanted to know the Lord's will, and did not feel that I had received much direction. I kept reading "Seek ye first to build up the Kingdom of God, and establish His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Finally, I made up my mind. I decided to volunteer for a second year. So, I wrote a letter to the head of the mathematics department at Iowa State thanking them for their kind offer, and explained as best I could why I was not accepting the teaching assistantship and would not be coming in the fall. I was in Billings, Montana at the time, and I took the letter to the corner mailbox. I remember holding it for a few seconds halfway into the slot and praying, "Lord, you know that I want to be where you want me to be. Please take care of this letter."

Two days after mailing the letter, I got a phone call from Graceland College. Jim Hawley, from the math department said he understood that I was going to grad school in the fall and asked if I would consider working at Graceland when I finished. Professor Ned Jacobson was retiring, and they wanted to know if I would be interested in the job. I told him that would be a dream come true, but that I had just turned down my opportunity to go to grad school for the next year. The next day, another math professor from Graceland called and suggested that if I still wanted to return to school in the fall, I should call Iowa State. He said that they were always looking for more assistants to teach calculus, and that even if they had given the position to someone else, I could probably pick up a similar job for the second quarter. I made the call. By this time it had been three days since I mailed my letter. I asked Dr. Barnes at Iowa State if my letter had been received. He said no, and informed me that in addition to my assistantship, there was a grant for half my tuition! I told him that I was coming to school and to just tear up the letter if it ever arrived. Then I thanked the Lord for the assurance of His direction.

I got my degree, and then took the math position at Graceland College, where I have remained for the last 18 years. My Dad got other volunteers to work with him for the next year and all the subsequent years until he retired from church appointment. And when times got tough, particularly at grad school, I could thank the Lord because I knew that it was His hand that had brought me there. Had I not acknowledged the Lord, made my own decision, and begun to move, how could I have ever been sure of the Lord's direction? As it happened, his direction came in such a way that I was convinced of it.

But I digress. Back in Proverbs we read:

Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Proverbs 3:7,8

I am not sure exactly what is meant in Hebrew by the phrases "health to thy navel" and "marrow to thy bones." However, I do know that a navel is important when a baby is born, and that bone marrow is essential to good health. I believe that the blessing being promised here has to do with healthy children and health in general. The condition is to fear the Lord (not others) and to depart from evil.

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. Proverbs 3:9,10

Do you need a blessing of financial security? The condition, as I paraphrase it, is to give to the Lord before all the bills are paid, and to dedicate all that you do spend on necessary things (your substance) to the Lord.

We have gone through the first 10 verses of one chapter of one book in the Bible, and we have found 5 wonderful promises. There are lots more promises where these came from, even in this same chapter. And the fun is just beginning, for we have more promises than any other Christians--three books full of them! Perhaps you may disagree with some of my thoughts on what is being promised, or how to interpret some of the conditions. That is okay. I believe that these promises come from God, and if you find a blessing that you need, the call is to try out the condition. Prove the promise. See how it works in your life, and hold fast to that which is good.

Now that you can identify a promise when you see one, turn to Jesus' most famous sermon, known as the "Sermon on the Mount." Read Matthew 5:1-14 (1-12), also found in III Nephi 5:47-59, and list the promises. Can you find at least 10? Do it now! Look at the blessings Jesus promised. We can: obtain a remission of sins (not in KJV), inherit the kingdom of heaven, receive comfort, inherit the earth, be filled with the Holy Ghost, obtain mercy, see God, be called the children of God, etc. People have long called this list of promises the beatitudes, meaning the attributes (attitudes) that we should have (be). But this is only because they were focusing on the conditions of the promises and not the blessings! What a difference finding the promises makes.

4. About God's promises *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Numbers 23:19*

Does God really mean for us to pursue the blessings that he has promised? Do we risk tempting God if we approach the scriptures by looking for promises? There are many questions that commonly arise as we begin considering the promises in the scriptures. If you have already tried at least one promise and are convinced that the promises will all be fulfilled, or if you have gotten excited about the prospects of finding and proving promises, then you probably do not need to read this section. The scriptures of this section are mainly for those who are still testing the waters.

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebrews 11:6

If we wish to come to God, we must believe that He is. James 2:19 informs us that even the devils believe and tremble, and the Inspired Version adds, "thou hast made thyself like unto one of them." So if all we do is believe in God, then we have come up to the devil level! But there is more. We must also believe that God rewards those who diligently seek him. I believe that the process of seeking him is a matter of keeping the conditions of the promises He has made, and that He rewards us according to the blessings he has promised. The faith spoken of in Hebrews is not that we have a perfect knowledge that the words are true. Indeed, it is impossible to have such a perfect knowledge until we actually try it out. I appreciate very much the approach to faith outlined by Alma.

Now as I said concerning faith that it was not a perfect knowledge, even so it is with my words. Ye can not know of their surety at first, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge. But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith; yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. Alma 16:149-152

The thing that Alma says is required is the willingness to try out a portion of the words. I would paraphrase crudely as "pick a promise, any promise, and try it out." We are not asked to swallow the whole thing at one time. Rather, the word is compared to a seed, and when we try one, and it begins to grow and bear fruit, then our faith turns to knowledge in that thing, and we can try other promises as well.

Some of the most fantastic promises that we find in the scriptures, to be sure, deal with blessings on which it is difficult to experiment. But there are many promises which do not require waiting till we die to fulfill, and which are intended to help build our faith. Jacob assures us that these promises will be fulfilled while we are alive.

For I will fulfill my promises which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh. II Nephi 7:26

Another assurance of the certain fulfillment of promises was given by King Benjamin, and it applies to us today as much as it ever did to his people.

And behold, all that he requires of you, is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments, ye should prosper in the land; And he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments, he doth bless you, and

prosper you. And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him. And secondly: he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you, for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore, he hath paid you. Mosiah 1:55-58

All that is required is that we keep the commandments, or the conditions of the promises. When we meet those conditions, we are blessed immediately with the blessing of the promise. But sometimes we miss out on God's promised blessings. How can this be?

Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments? Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and a man obeys not, I revoke and they receive not the blessing; then they say in their hearts, This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But woe unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above. DC 58:6g-i

One of the difficulties that we often encounter is that our understanding of the promises is not sharp in the sense of knowing which blessings result from what conditions. When we only have a vague understanding, we may be expecting blessings whose conditions have not been fulfilled. When we do not see those things happening, we may decide that the promise was faulty. Nevertheless, we still have this assurance given to the early restoration saints:

Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father has in his own hands, and prepared for you; and ye can not bear all things now; nevertheless be of good cheer, for I will lead you along; the kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours; and the riches of eternity are yours; and he who receiveth all things, with thankfulness, shall be made glorious, and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundredfold, yea, more; wherefore do the things which I have commanded you, saith your Redeemer... DC 77:4a-d

Another key passage describing our response to the promises is also found in modern day revelation:

I give unto you a new commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you, or in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation. I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise. DC 81:3

What is it that God is bound to do when we keep his commandments? He is bound to keep his promise! Now it is important to notice that this passage does not say that if we do not keep the conditions, that God will not bless us. This is hardly the case. God often does bless us in spite of our actions. But what happens when we do not keep the conditions, is that we lose the promise of the blessings.

Also note that we can be certain of God's will for us. If we understand the promises that He has made and we fulfill the conditions, we can be certain that the blessings we ask for will be in accordance with His will, and that it will be done.

Alma offered his son Helaman the following assurance that God's promises would be fulfilled.

For he will fulfill all his promises which he shall make unto you, for he has fulfilled his promises which he has made unto our fathers. Alma 17:48

In our day, the Lord has given us this specific counsel regarding His promises:

My word shall not fail, neither will my promises, for the foundation of the Lord standeth sure. DC 140:5d

5. The Promises and Repentance *From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 4:16 (17)*

Perhaps people do not really change very much. Old Testament prophets called the people to repentance. John the Baptist and Jesus told the people of their day to repent. Nephi and the Book of Mormon prophets preached repentance. And many of the early Latter Day Saints were instructed to preach repentance:

I command you that you preach naught but repentance...until it is wisdom in me. DC 18:21

They shall go forth into the regions round about, and preach repentance unto the people. DC 44:2b

Take upon you mine ordinances, even that of an elder, to preach faith and repentance, and remission of sins, according to my word, and the reception of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. DC 53:2b

Surely this is a day in which repentance is needed as sorely as at any time in the past. Many deny the very existence of sin. Others preach that no repentance is necessary. How then do we in this day understand the call to preach repentance? I believe that the promises are the key.

Jesus often used the promises as a way to call sinners to repentance.

Blessed are they who shall...come down into the depths of humility, and be baptized in my name; for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins. Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit, who come unto me; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And again, blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. And blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. And blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. And blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. And blessed are all the pure in heart; for they shall see God. And blessed are all the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. Matthew 5:4-11 (3-9)

Was Jesus calling the people to repent? Of course he was! He was telling them to be humble, to be baptized, to come to him, and to be meek. He was telling them to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to be merciful, to be pure in heart, and to be peacemakers. But he did not just list the conditions of repentance. Rather, he associated each condition with a blessing that would result when the condition was fulfilled. Those who were baptized were to receive a remission of sins. Those with poor spirits who came to him would receive the kingdom of heaven. Those who were mourning when they came would be comforted. Those who hunger and thirst after

righteousness would be filled with the Holy Ghost. Those who were merciful would obtain mercy. Those who were pure in heart would see God, and the peacemakers would be called the children of God.

The fact that Jesus was thinking of all these conditions given in this sermon as commandments is made clear in the following statement:

Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so to do, he shall in no wise be saved in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach these commandments of the law until it be fulfilled, the same shall be called great, and shall be saved in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:21 (19)

When Jesus commanded his disciples to preach repentance, he told them to teach by the promises.

Go ye into the world, saying unto all, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come nigh unto you ... Say unto them, Ask of God; ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Matthew 7:9,12-13 (7-8)

I was driving one night in Kansas during an ice storm when I lost control and skidded off the interstate and into the median. No one was hurt, but the car was buried up to its axles in snow and was facing the wrong direction. I tried to push the car back to the road, but there was not enough traction. I tried digging around the tires with my hands without much success. Fortunately a young man with a shovel came along before very long and we were able, after about an hour of digging and praying and pushing, to get the car back on the road and into the nearest town. What if the young man had come to us and said, "You silly people, don't you know that you are not supposed to be stuck in the median facing the wrong way? Turn the car around and go to town!" That would not have been very helpful at all. I knew I was stuck, and that I had no way to get out on my own. Instead, he provided a way to get back to the road and into town, for which I was very grateful.

Repentance is that same way. Most of the time, it is not very helpful to tell someone simply that they need to change what they are doing. Rather, we need to help them see a way to repent, and to help turn their lives around. This is where the promises come in. If we can come to someone who recognizes a need in their life, and if there is a promise whose blessing meets the need, then we can share with them the promise. The condition gives a way to start, and we can be confident that God wants them to have the blessing. We have been told:

Let my word be preached to the bruised and broken-hearted as well as to those enmeshed in sin, longing to repent and follow me My Spirit is reaching out to numerous souls even now and there are many who will respond if you, my people, will bear affirmative testimony of my love and my desires for all to come unto me. DC 153:9a,b

But is it really God's plan to use the promised blessings as an inducement to keep the conditions? I think so. Listen carefully to the way in which Peter claims that we become partakers of the divine nature.

[By his divine power] are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. II Peter 1:4

In other words, God gives us promises so that we will be able to take part in his divine nature! After listing a number of conditions in the next few verses, Peter gives the promise that

If ye do these things, ye shall never fall; For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. II Peter 1:10-11

Another affirmation that God intended for us to respond to His promises is recorded in the Book of Mormon.

The people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another; And they had all things common among them, therefore they were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift... And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them. IV Nephi 1:3-4,12

Note that these people were blessed according to the promises. The exciting thing is that all the promises that were made to the people in Peter's day and in the Book of Mormon are available to us now. They wait only for us to fulfill the conditions.

Every "condition of repentance" spoken of in the scriptures is contained in a promise from God. Listen with new ears to the familiar scripture about the worth of souls, and notice that it is through the conditions of repentance that we come to God.

Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; for, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth. Wherefore you are called to cry repentance unto this people. And if it so be that you should labor all your days, in crying repentance unto this people, and bring save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! DC 16:3

God gives us promises which contain conditions and blessings. He makes the promises because He wants to give us the blessings. But we cannot obtain the blessings unless we fulfill the conditions of the promise. It is fulfilling the conditions that is called repentance. When we repent, then God can give the blessings, and we become part of the kingdom of God.

6. The Kingdom and Zion *Unto him that keepeth my commandments, I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life. DC 63:7b*

Because the kingdom and Zion are closely related, many people equate the two ideas and do not distinguish at all between them. I believe that this approach has caused many to be confused

about the nature of both, and often leads to the conclusion that some important characteristics of one or the other must be disregarded. Consider the following pair of scriptures.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; Neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, Lo, there! For, behold, the kingdom of God has already come unto you. Luke 17:20-21

The nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say, Surely Zion is the city of our God; and surely Zion can not fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there... DC 94:5b

The Pharisees were demanding that Jesus tell them when the kingdom would come. Jesus replied that the kingdom he was talking about was not observable to them. They would not be able to point somewhere and say, "There it is." In fact, the kingdom had already come among them at that time (past perfect tense), and they were not aware of it. Zion, on the other hand, will come (future tense) and all the nations of the earth will be able to point to it and tell where it is because the power of the Lord will be in that place.

Was the unobservable kingdom of which Jesus spoke the very same as the city of Zion which all the nations of the earth shall see nearly 2000 years later? If we do not distinguish between the two, then we are faced with a paradox. I believe that the paradox is resolved by observing that the first passage refers to the kingdom, and the second to Zion, and that the scriptures consistently use these words in different ways. Notice the consistent pattern in the following sample passages.

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 (14-15)

[The Father] hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Colossians 1:13

Hearken, O ye people of my church, to whom the kingdom has been given... DC 45: 1a

In each case, the kingdom is spoken of in the present or completed past. Zion, on the other hand, is (for our day) yet to be.

Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness; and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. Zion shall flourish upon the hills, and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed. DC 49:5a,b

Keep all the commandments and covenants by which ye are bound, and I will cause the heavens to shake for your good, and Satan shall tremble, and Zion shall rejoice upon the hills, and flourish; and Israel shall be saved in mine own due time. And by the keys which I have given shall they be led, and no more be confounded at all. Lift up your hearts and be glad; your redemption draweth nigh. Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold, I come quickly. Even so. Amen. DC 34:6

In this last passage, notice that Zion is spoken of in the future and is tied in with the prophecies concerning the salvation of Israel. The kingdom, on the other hand, is available in the present.

This is entirely consistent with the definition of the kingdom given earlier, namely righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, but we have yet to give a satisfactory definition of Zion that is also consistent with these observations.

The name "Zion" is literally the Hebrew word for "fort," and it is used in the scriptures to describe three cities:

1. The city of Enoch.

And it came to pass in his days that [Enoch] built a city that was called the city of holiness, even ZION and lo! Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. DC 36:3a,d

2. The city of David at Jerusalem: the gathering place for the house of Israel.

David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David...So David dwelt in the fort. II Samuel 5:7,9

For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more; he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. Isaiah 30:19

I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people, and I have covenanted with them, that I would gather them together in mine own due time; That I would give unto them again the land of their fathers, for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them for ever, saith the Father...And then shall be brought to pass that which is written, Awake, awake again, and put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city... III Nephi 9:67,68,74

3. The New Jerusalem, at Independence, Missouri: the gathering place for the Saints.

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 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 shall you and all your 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 my 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. DC 36:12f-13b

Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land... And that a New Jerusalem should be built up upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph...and it shall be a land of their inheritance; and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old. Ether 6:4-8

Gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you, and it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the most high God; and the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it; and it shall be called Zion... And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing, with songs of everlasting joy. DC 45:12c-14

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... DC 57:1a-d

Let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion ... there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed, neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed for the work of the gathering of my Saints, until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them. DC 98:4f,h

Having seen that the name Zion has been applied to three separate cities where there was, is, or will be a gathering place for the people of God, the question arises as to whether there is a single, simple definition of Zion that is consistent with all of these passages. The following statement about the promise that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not receive but were assured of sums it up for me. (See also DC 45:2g,h)

[Abraham] looked for a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews 11:10

For me, this is the primary definition of Zion. The name is also applied metaphorically to the people who belong to Zion, and we will say more about this in the next section. However, some final remarks about the close relationship between the kingdom and Zion are in order.

[My people] might have been redeemed even now; but, behold, they...are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; and Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom. DC 102:2a-c

You can have the kingdom without Zion, as was the case during the golden age of the Book of Mormon, but you cannot have Zion without the Kingdom. The relationship between the kingdom and Zion is like the leaven and the loaf. Jesus said:

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. Matthew 13:32 (33)

The leaven is the necessary ingredient to make the bread rise and to make it useful. The city of Zion, like the dough, will undoubtedly change in physical form over the many years of its existence, but it is the kingdom within it that will cause it to be Zion and make it fulfill God's purpose. Gathering is necessary, but as the Saints of the early church discovered, not sufficient to establish Zion. Until we are part of the kingdom, responding

to the commands of the King, and being united according to His law, the land of Zion will not be Zion to us (DC 106:2c).

7. More on the Kingdom and Zion

The kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ. DC 102:9b

In this section, we would like to anticipate some of the questions that are regularly raised regarding the kingdom and Zion.

Question 1. Do we have Zion wherever there is a gathering of righteous people?

There are two passages in particular that have often been cited in support of this view. The first is found in the story of Enoch's city.

And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. DC 36:2h-i

If ever there has been a people since the time of Enoch that fit the description of a righteous, gathered people, it was the people of the Book of Mormon following Jesus' visit. Notice, however, that the name Zion was never applied to them. Read carefully what the Book of Mormon says:

And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God: There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God. IV Nephi 1:17-19

The people inherited the kingdom of God! Jesus prophesied extensively to these people about Zion, but he told them that Zion would be established in the latter days as a fulfillment of His covenants. A literal reading of the record shows that they were not Zion, but they were part of the kingdom.

The second passage that is understood by some to mean that Zion can be applied to all righteous gatherings of people is the following:

Let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion, THE PURE IN HEART. DC 94:5c

I believe that this interpretation ignores both the context and the typography of the quotation. This quote is taken from DC 94:5, which says that the nations of the earth will recognize Zion as the city of God, and that Zion cannot fall because God has sworn to be her salvation. I do not believe that the nations of the earth are going to honor all the pure in heart wherever they may be found and call them the city of God. Rather than being a definition of Zion, the phrase "THE PURE IN HEART" which is written in all capital letters, is a descriptive name for the people

who will be in Zion. To conclude otherwise is somewhat like reading the sign "Philadelphia, THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE," and claiming that Philadelphia is everywhere brotherly love is shown. This would not be a valid conclusion even if Philadelphia consisted entirely of loving brothers.

Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered, they that remain and are pure in heart shall return and come to their inheritances; they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy; to build up the waste places of Zion. And all these things, that the prophets might be fulfilled. DC 98:4g

The pure in heart will come back to Zion. It is then that Zion will be "THE PURE IN HEART." They are not Zion before they return and the prophecies are fulfilled.

Now it is customary to speak of people metaphorically as if they were the land to which they belong. Hence the name Zion is applied to the people of Zion in the same way as America is applied to citizens of the United States. Nevertheless, it is important to understand such usage to be metaphorical if we are to understand the meaning of Zion. The scriptures are somewhat more explicit that refer to the "children of Zion" (e.g. DC 98:11) or the "inhabitants of Zion" (e.g. DC 68:4).

Wherever there are righteous people gathered together, you will find the kingdom, but only when they are gathered to the place and in the time that God has designated for the fulfilling of the covenants do you find Zion.

Question 2. Will Zion eventually fill the whole earth?

Many scriptures say that the kingdom will fill the whole earth, or that the gospel will fill the whole earth, but I do not find any that claim Zion will fill the whole earth. While Zion will not be moved out of her place, we find the following affirmations about the kingdom:

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream, and we will tell the interpretation thereof In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Daniel 2:34-36,44

The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth. DC 65:1b

And again, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked. Matthew 24:32 (14)

These all indicate that the kingdom will eventually fill the whole earth, but they do not say that Zion will fill the whole earth, at least not until after Jesus returns. Notice in the following scripture that the land of Zion is distinct from the ocean, the islands of the sea, and the land of Jerusalem, even though the Lord will stand in each of those places.

Behold, he shall stand upon the Mount of Olivet, and upon the mighty ocean, even the great deep, and upon the islands of the sea, and upon the land of Zion he shall command the great deep and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land, and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided. And the Lord even the Savior shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. DC 108:5d-g

Question 3. Is Zion already on the earth?

Since Zion has a number of legitimate applications, the answer to this question depends on the context. We will list explicitly several uses along with a scripture reference, and the answer we would give at the time of this writing.

1. Enoch's city	DC 36 3a,13	No
2. Old Jerusalem	Isaiah 52:6-9	Yes
3. The land of Zion, the New Jerusalem	DC 62:2a-c; 63:8a	Yes
4. The people of Zion	DC 36:2h-i	Some are
5. Zionic Conditions	DC 140:5c	See below

The work of preparation and the perfection of my Saints go forward slowly, and Zionic conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of my people justifies. DC 140:5c

I identify Zionic conditions with the kingdom of God, but this is just a matter of labeling. The important point here is that whatever you call them, the spiritual condition of God's people is the key to the progress of Zion in our day.

Question 4. How do we establish or build up Zion?

First, there is a very real sense in which these activities are the Lord's responsibility. It is not our prerogative to determine when or where Zion is to be. The Lord has already done that. In addition, there are a number of scriptures that indicate that it is the Lord who will build up Zion.

When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. Psalms 102:16

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people and he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. II Nephi 9:126,127 also Isaiah 11:11-12

On the other hand, since the place and time to build up Zion is here and now, there are two senses in which the call comes to us. Physically, the church was told to buy up land in Jackson county, Missouri, and the regions round about so that there would be inheritances there.

Gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you, and it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the most high God and it shall be called Zion. DC 45:12c-d

Wherefore this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion It is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the Saints; and also every tract lying westward, even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile. And also every tract bordering by the prairies, inasmuch as my disciples are enabled to buy lands. Behold, this is wisdom, that they may obtain it for an everlasting inheritance. DC 57:1b,e-g

And let all those who have not families, who receive moneys, send it up unto the bishop in Zion, or unto the bishop in Ohio, that it may be consecrated for the bringing forth of the revelations and the printing thereof, and for establishing Zion. DC 83:18b

Buy lands and gather together upon them, and in this way they may establish Zion. 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. DC 98:10b-c

In a spiritual sense, the call is to build up the "cause of Zion," or "the kingdom."

Behold, thou art Hyrum, my son; seek the kingdom of God, and all things shall be added according to that which is just. DC 10:11a

Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, Keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion. DC 11:3

Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion. Keep my commandments in all things; and if you keep my commandments and endure to the end, you shall have eternal life; which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God. DC 12: 3

And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you, will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father. Amen. DC 13:3, 14:3

8. The Kingdom and the Church *Lift up your hearts and rejoice, for unto you the kingdom, or in other words, the keys of the church, have been given. DC 42:18e*

In this section we will explore the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church. As we have been careful to give a definition of the kingdom and Zion in previous sections, we will proceed to give a definition of the church here. It is our hope to clarify the relationship between the kingdom and the church.

Behold, this is my doctrine: Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church; whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore, he is not of my church. DC 3:16

As a definition of the church, one couldn't ask for a more straightforward pronouncement, uncomfortable as it may be for us. Where do the gospel and the priesthood fit in this picture? A good place to start is by reviewing the scriptures about the restoration. I was pleasantly surprised

by what I found there. We will begin with a part of the vision that was seen by John, and its interpretation . Read Revelation 12:1-8 (1-9) now.

John describes a vision in which he sees a woman having a baby. The baby is supposed to rule the world with a rod of iron, but there is a dragon standing by ready to eat the baby when it is born. So, just after the baby is born, it is taken up to God, and the woman is whisked away to the wilderness where she remains 1260 years. There is more to the vision, but this is the portion which we are interested in interpreting.

Now according to verse 1, the vision that John saw was in "the likeness of things on the earth." In other words, the events that he describes are symbolic of things that are on the earth. The following verses make that symbolism explicit:

The woman...was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ. Revelation 12:7 (IV only)

This is the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand... The seven stars are the servants of the seven churches... Revelation 1:20

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Revelation 21:23

Neither was there place found in heaven for the great dragon, who was cast out; ...also called Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. Revelation 12:8 (8,9)

The rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God...I Nephi 3:68

Those to whom these commandments were given might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity, and out of darkness ... DC 1:5e

Thus we see that each of the symbols is given a fairly explicit interpretation from within the book of Revelation itself with the exception of the rod of iron and the wilderness, which are spoken of elsewhere. The symbols are summarized as follows:

Woman	Church of God
12 Stars	12 Servants of the Church
Sun	Glory of God
Moon	Light of Christ
Man Child	Kingdom of God
Rod of Iron	Word of God
Wilderness	Obscurity and Darkness

The interpretation is then fairly clear. John sees that the church brings forth the kingdom of God, which is destined to rule over all nations by the word of God. As the kingdom is being born, Satan tries to destroy it, but the kingdom is taken from the earth, and the church goes into the darkness and obscurity where it stays for a long time. If we look at the church as those who would come to Christ, this makes sense as a description of the long period of the "dark ages"

when the Roman church was oppressive, the ordinances were changed, and the everlasting covenant was not available on the earth.

In a sequel to this vision, John sees the restoration of the gospel of the kingdom to the earth.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

Revelation 14:6

Jesus also prophesied of this restoration to the earth of the gospel of the kingdom.

And again, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked. Matthew 24:32 (14)

Now read the rest of the story from the Doctrine and Covenants.

And verily, verily I say unto you, that this church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness; and even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice; open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying, Repent, repent and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; yea, repent and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. DC 32:2a,f,g

The intent of the organization whose foundations were laid by Joseph Smith, Jr. and others was to call the church, those who would come to Christ, out of obscurity and darkness. What was restored to the earth was the gospel of the kingdom, including specifically the authority to baptize with water and the Holy Ghost into the everlasting covenant.

Behold, I say unto you, that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and everlasting covenant; even that which was from the beginning For it is because of your dead works, that I have caused this last covenant, and this church to be built up unto me; even as in days of old. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded... DC 20:1

For the specifics of the everlasting covenant, which is referenced in the King James Bible but never explicitly given, we need to look into the Inspired Version.

I made [my everlasting covenant with] thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch. Genesis 9:21-23

The gate by which we enter the covenant is baptism.

For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water: and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire, and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son. II Nephi 13:24,25

The purpose of the church, as John saw in his vision, was to bring forth the kingdom on the earth. The purpose of bringing the church out of the wilderness was to establish the kingdom on the earth again. It is by the restoration of the gospel of the kingdom that the everlasting covenant was established again on the earth, and those who are in darkness and obscurity are called to come into that kingdom. Jesus told the church in Palestine to "seek first to build up the kingdom." He told his church in America to "seek first to build up the kingdom." He tells us:

I will be with you and strengthen you for the tasks that lie ahead if you will continue to be faithful and commit yourselves without reservation to the building of my kingdom. DC 153:9c

What is the purpose of the church now? To bring forth the kingdom, of course! And thereby to establish the cause of Zion.
