
The Land of Zion

D&C 57:1–3

Through the ages, Zion has been the topic of holy prophets and psalmists: “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined” (Psalm 50:2). The city of Enoch was known as Zion, as was the ancient city of Jerusalem (see Moses 7:18–21; 1 Kings 8:1).

“When will Zion be built up in her glory, and where will Thy temple stand, unto which all nations shall come in the last days?” Joseph Smith asked the Lord.¹ In answer to his query, the Prophet Joseph

received, by a heavenly vision, a commandment in June [1831] following, to take my journey to the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and there designate the very spot which was to be the central place for the commencement of the gathering together of those who embrace the fullness of the everlasting Gospel.²

On July 20, 1831, while in Jackson County, Missouri, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph, “This is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion” (D&C 57:2). The Lord further revealed, “Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and the spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the court-house” (v. 3).

Sidney Rigdon, who had accompanied Joseph Smith to Jackson County, wrote a description of the land of Zion. His description pales in comparison to the exuberant writings of holy prophets and psalmists of Zion in the last days:

The country is unlike the timbered states of the East. As far as the eye can reach the beautiful rolling prairies lie spread out like a sea of

¹ History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 127. Joseph Smith Papers.

² History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838], 606. Joseph Smith Papers.

meadows; and are decorated with a growth of flowers so gorgeous and grand as to exceed description; and nothing is more fruitful, or a richer stockholder in the blooming prairie than the honey bee. ... Turkeys, geese, swans, ducks, yea a variety of the feathered tribe, are among the rich abundance that grace the delightful regions of this goodly land—the heritage of the children of God.³

In his description, Sidney also wrote of disadvantages in the land of Zion: “lack of mills and schools, together with the natural privations and inconveniences.”⁴

From 1831 to 1833 a Zion-like society composed of Latter-day Saints resided in Jackson County, Missouri. There they received lands of inheritance, stewardships, and committed to live sacred doctrines. In 1833 they were forced to abandon property and flee across the Missouri River to Clay County to find refuge from religious bigotry and persecution.

Although the society left Jackson County, Zion has “not be[en] moved out of her place” (D&C 101:17). In the future, Latter-day Saints will assemble “upon the land of Zion” (D&C 62:4) and “receive an inheritance” (D&C 63:48). Until then, Latter-day Saints are to gather to the stakes of Zion.

³ Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:197.

⁴ Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:197.