

Come to Zion!

# Foundations for a Millennial Society

Lawrence (Larry) Walters

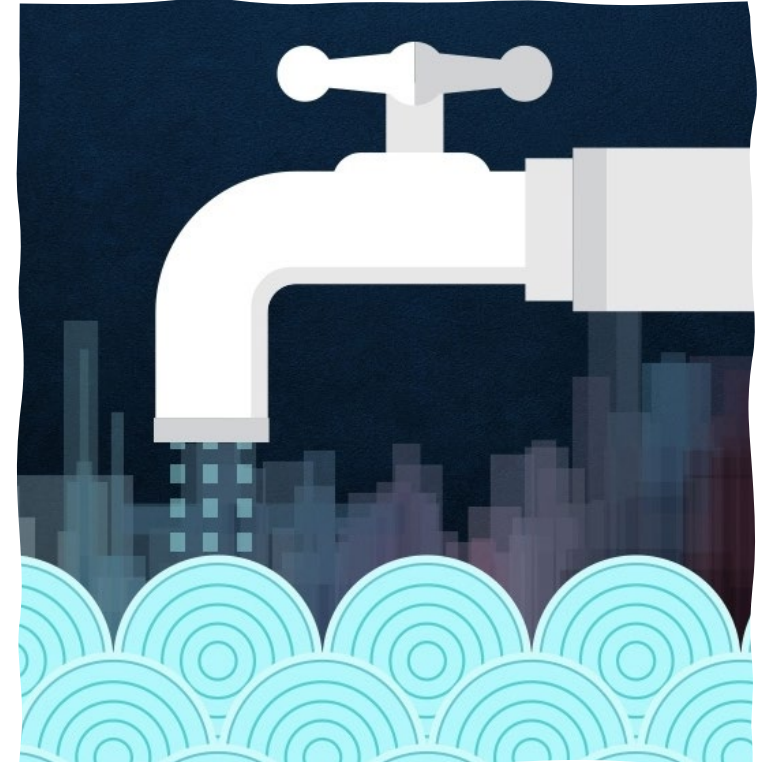
BYU Education Week, 2025



**“The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age;** it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; **we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory;** it is left for us to **see, participate in and help to roll forward** the Latter-day glory.”  
(Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:609-10)

# City management background

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# All these distant views of Zion!

- **How will Zion function as a society?**
- My hope and aspiration: If we understand the answer to that question, we can nudge society in the right direction



# Agenda for the week

## Principles

- What is Zion?
- Changing role of the Church
- Cornerstone of Zion
- Foundation stones of Zion

Today!

## Practices

- “All things common”
- Stewardship & Land in Zion
- Eliminating Poverty

## Governance

- Non-Church organizations
- Governance in Zion
- Organizing a Zion society





Does Zion need to be established before Christ comes or will it happen afterwards?

**Joseph Smith:**

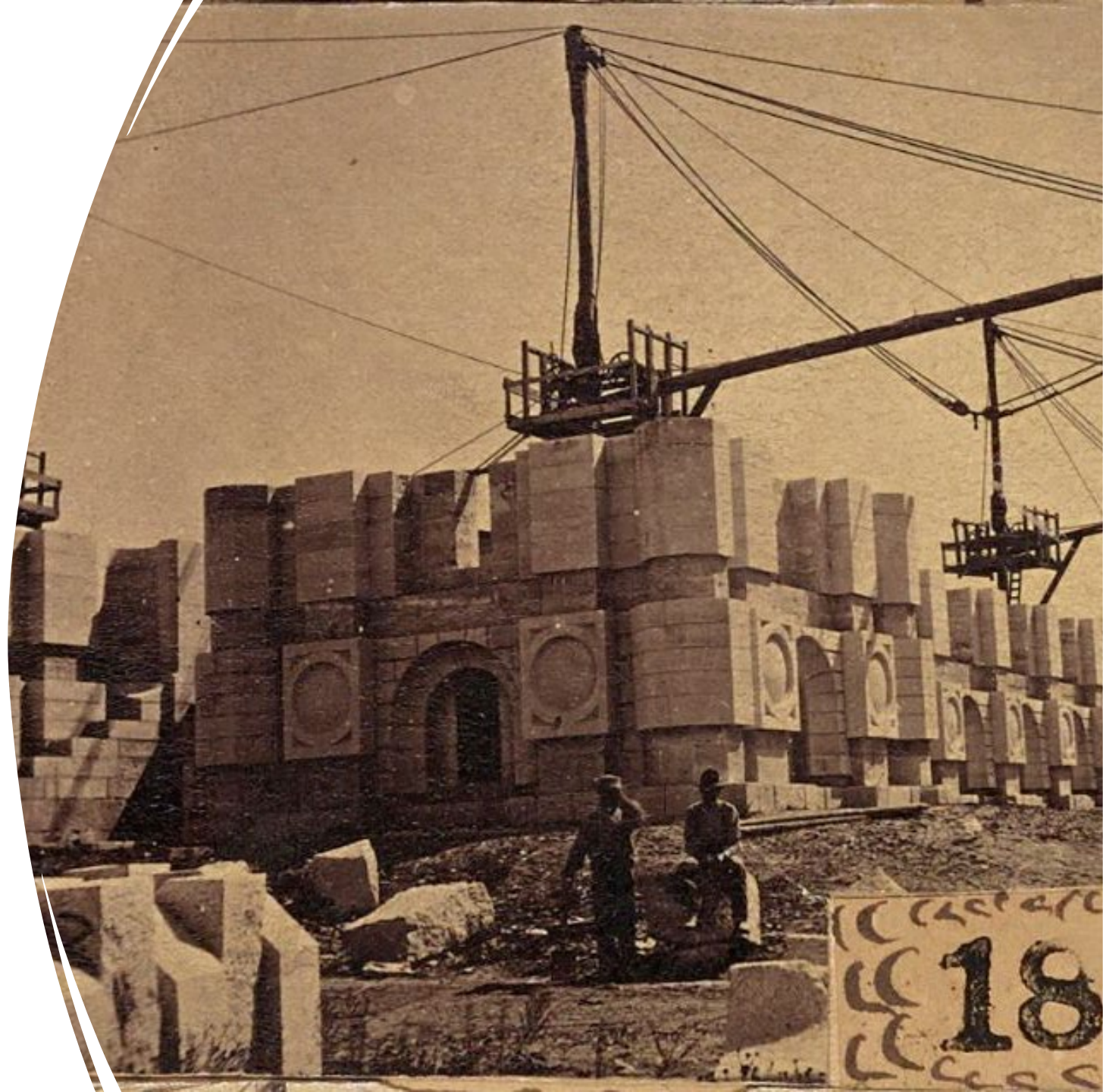
- “... for Zion and Jerusalem must both be built up before the coming of Christ ... **when these cities are built** then shall the coming of the son of man be.”

*(Joseph Smith Papers, 19 July 1840)*

Does Zion need to be established before Christ comes or will it happen afterwards?

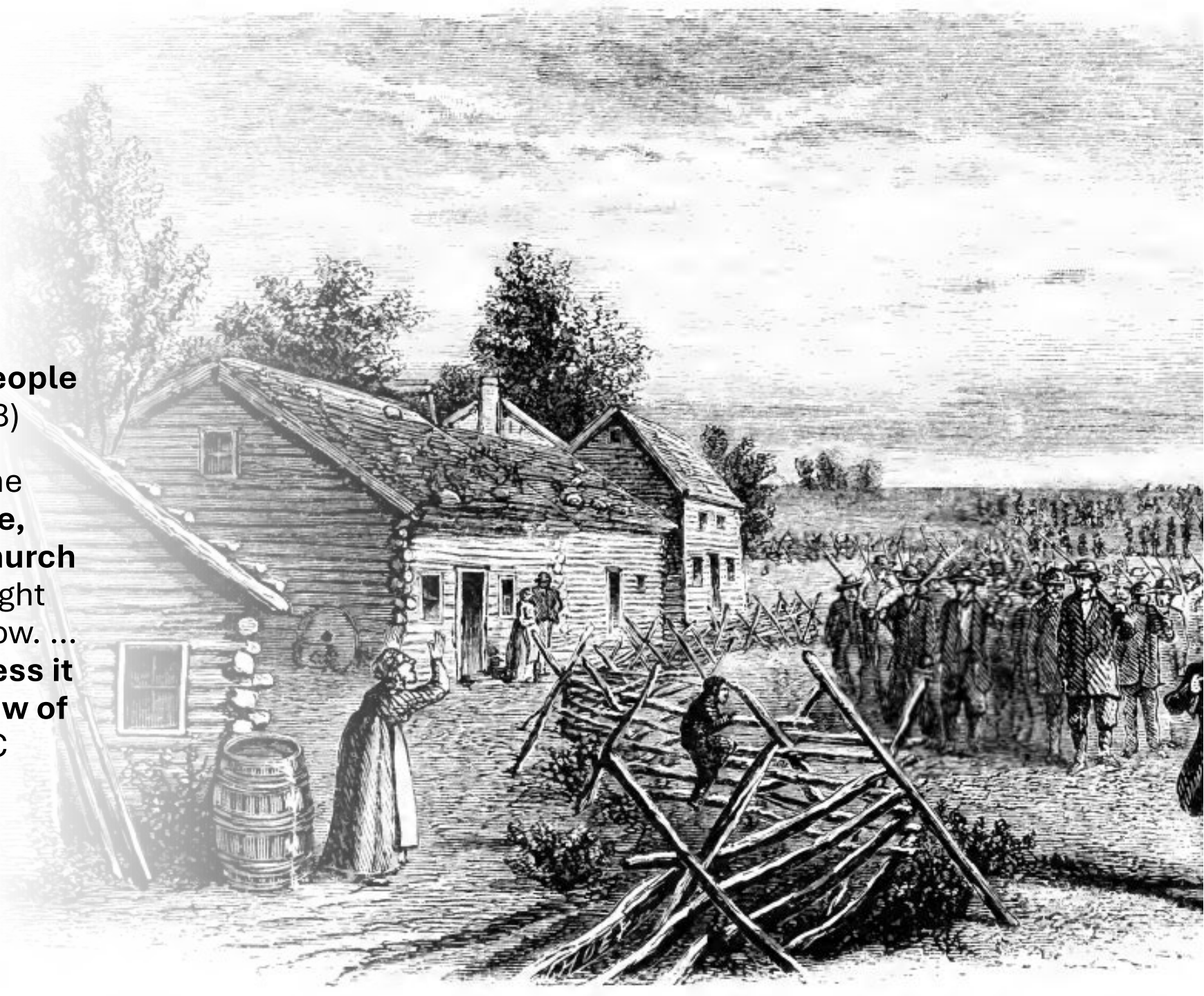
**Bruce R. McConkie:**

- The foundations of Zion have already been laid ... in every place where there are stakes of Zion. But Zion is not yet perfected in any of these places. **When she is perfected**, it will be as it was with Zion of old—**the Lord will come** and dwell with his people. (1977)



# What is Zion?

- And **the Lord called his people Zion**, because ... (Moses 7:18)
- Behold, ... were it not for the **transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals**, they might have been redeemed even now. ... **Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom;** (D&C 105:2-5)



# What is Zion?

Zion is a spiritual relationship between God's people in a given place

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Now, what is Zion, and where shall she be established? ... Zion has been established many times among men. From the days of Adam to the present moment—**whenever the Lord has had a people of his own; ...**

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**Please note: Zion is people; Zion is the saints of God; ...** or in other words, as our revelation recites: “This is Zion—the pure in heart.” (Bruce R. McConkie, 1977)





## D&C 84:1-2

A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and six elders ... Yea, the word of the Lord **concerning his church**, established in the last days **for the restoration of his people**, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and **for the gathering of his saints** to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem.

President Russell M. Nelson is shown from the chest up, standing behind a dark wood podium. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a blue tie. He has his right hand extended to the side. The background is dark with some greenery and orange flowers. The right side of the image is faded.

## President Russell M. Nelson

As I have stated before, **the gathering of Israel is the *most* important work taking place on earth today.**

## David O. McKay

The mission of the Church is to prepare the way for the final establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Its purpose is, first, to **develop in men's lives Christ-like attributes**; and, second, to **transform society** so that the world may be a better and more peaceful place in which to live.



# Changing Role of the Church: Pre-2009

- The first 70 years of the Church's existence:



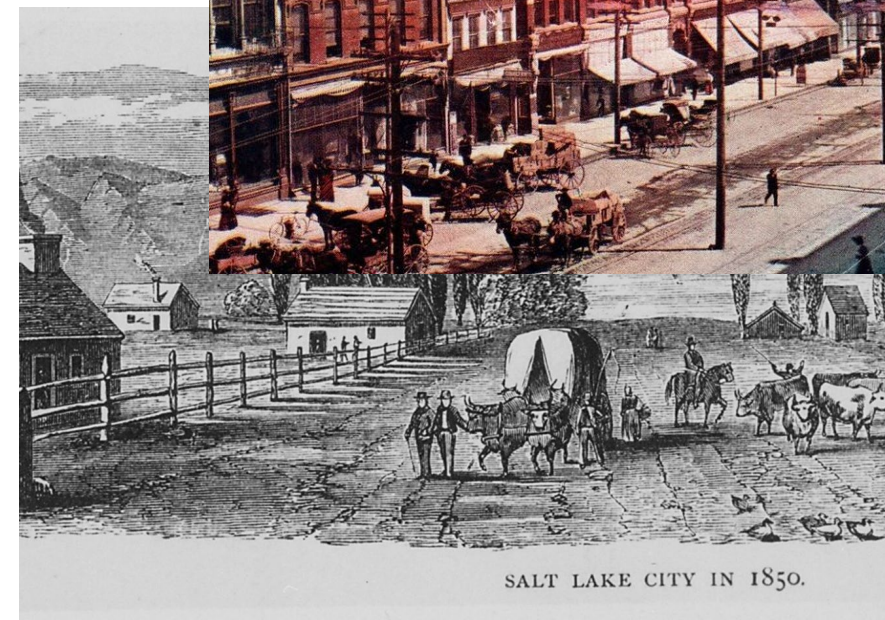
From the inception of the Nauvoo Stake in October 1839, the Saints considered its officers to be the equivalent of a civil government of the area.

- The Nauvoo High Council
  - Passed resolutions regarding ferry usages,
  - Set standards and procedures for the cost and sale of town lots in Nauvoo
  - Contracted to erect a stone schoolhouse in the city,
  - Supervised the work of poor relief,
  - Approved the establishment of businesses such as a water mill operated by Newel K. Whitney.

# 1906 Priest manual

Like worldly governments, it [Church government] also furnishes many temporal blessings.

- The cause of education is promoted by the establishment of academies, colleges, and universities;
- Lands are purchased and homes and farms brought within the reach of many worthy people.
- The poor and destitute are clothed, fed, and housed; the sick and the afflicted are cared for.
- Assistance is rendered in various ways, in the laying out of new towns and villages;
- Public industries and enterprises are started, and fostered by Church government.

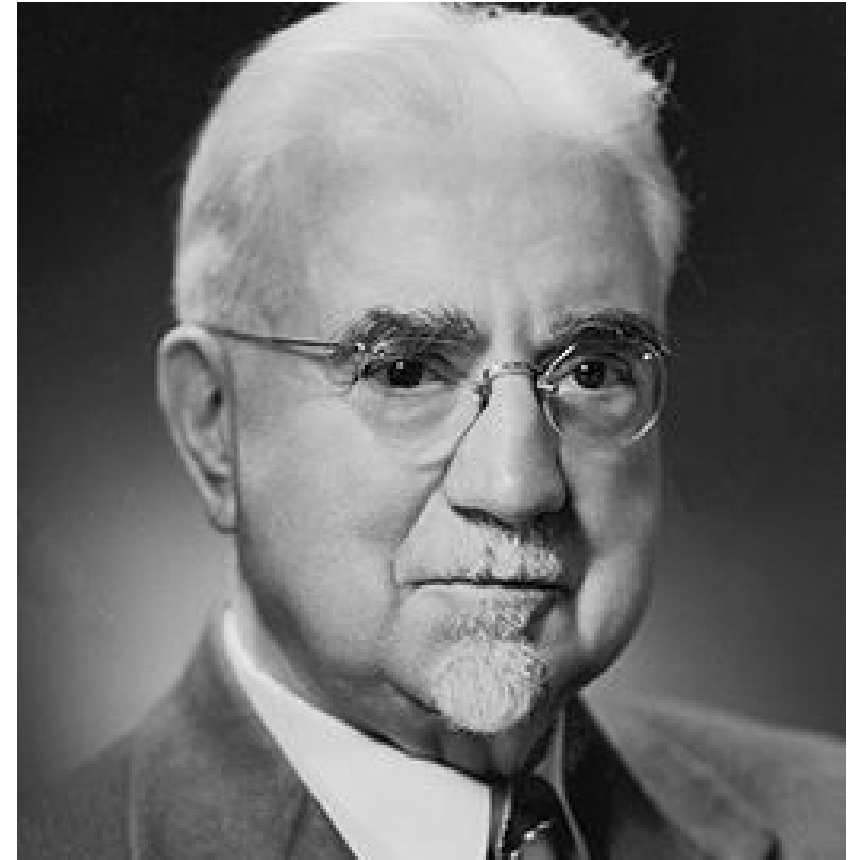


# Sharpening the focus: The “organized body of believers in the plan of salvation are under three heavy obligations.”

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**John Widstoe, 1936**

- “First, **the Church must care for its members** ... The members of the Church must receive constant, intelligent care.
- “Second, **the Church must vigorously and incessantly spread the knowledge of the Gospel** over the earth. The Church as the earthly agent of the Lord ... Finding, teaching, converting, must be constant activities of the Church.
- “Third, . . . the **ordinances of earth must be performed for the dead**. . . . To give the dead such opportunities is a **heavy responsibility of the Church**.
- “These are **three duties, carrying with them tremendous obligations**, which require a perfected organization for their performance.”



# Role of the Church: After 2009

- 2009: Caring for the poor added
- *General Handbook*, May 2019:  
“In fulfilling its purpose to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation, the Church focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities. These include **helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ**, gathering Israel through **missionary work**, **caring for the poor** and needy, and **enabling the salvation of the dead** by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances.”



# *General Handbook, 2020*

Jesus Christ established His Church to ***enable individuals and families to do the work*** of salvation and exaltation. To help accomplish this divine purpose, the Church and its leaders provide:

- Priesthood authority and keys.
- Covenants and ordinances.
- Prophetic direction.
- Scriptures.
- Gospel learning and teaching support.
- Service and leadership opportunities.
- A community of Saints.

In their homes, ***individuals and families engage in the work*** of salvation and exaltation. This work consists of four divinely appointed responsibilities:

- Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Caring for those in need.
- Inviting all to receive the gospel.
- Uniting families for eternity.

"IT IS TIME FOR A HOME-CENTERED CHURCH,  
SUPPORTED BY WHAT TAKES PLACE INSIDE  
OUR BRANCH, WARD, AND STAKE BUILDINGS."

*President Russell M. Nelson*



THE TEMPLE, NAUVOO.

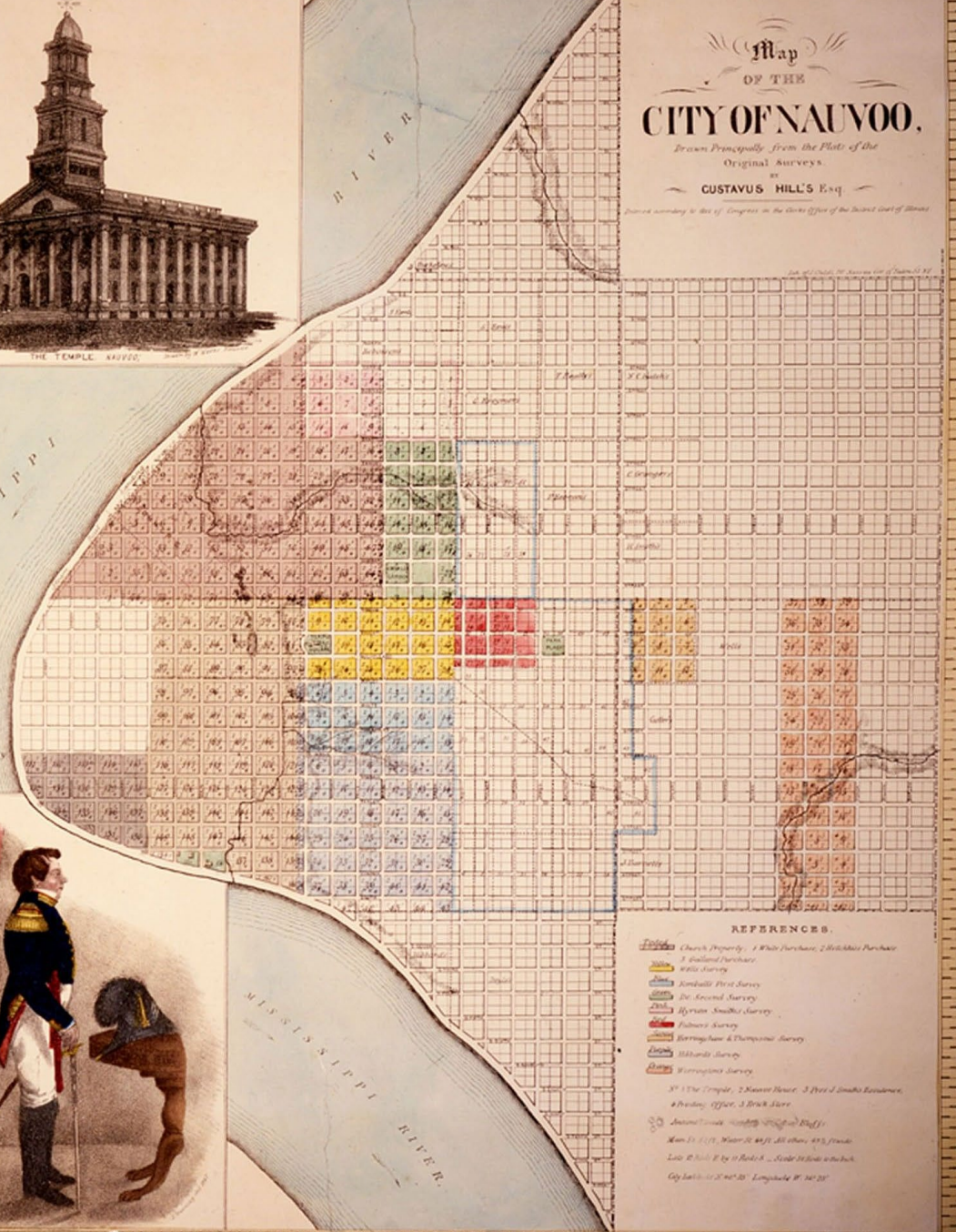
# Map OF THE CITY OF NAUVOO.

Drawn Principally from the Plots of the Original Surveys.

BY CUSTAVUS HILL'S Esq.

Printed according to Act of Congress in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of Illinois.

Jan. 20th 1841. No. 1000000 of Sales of 1841.



Lieut. Gen. JOSEPH SMITH.

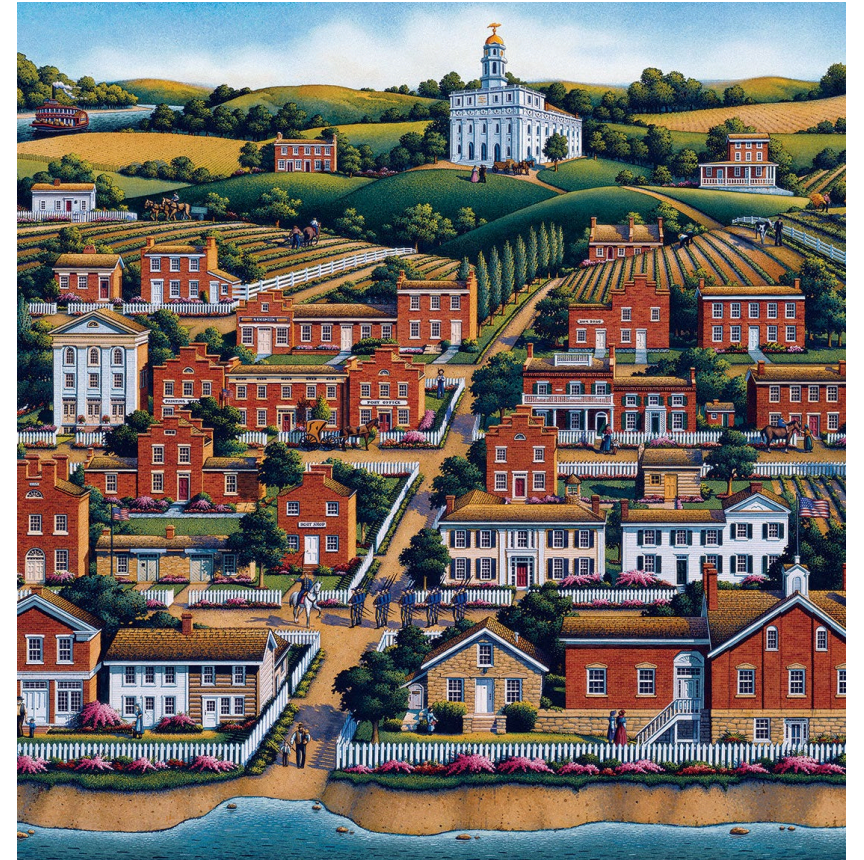
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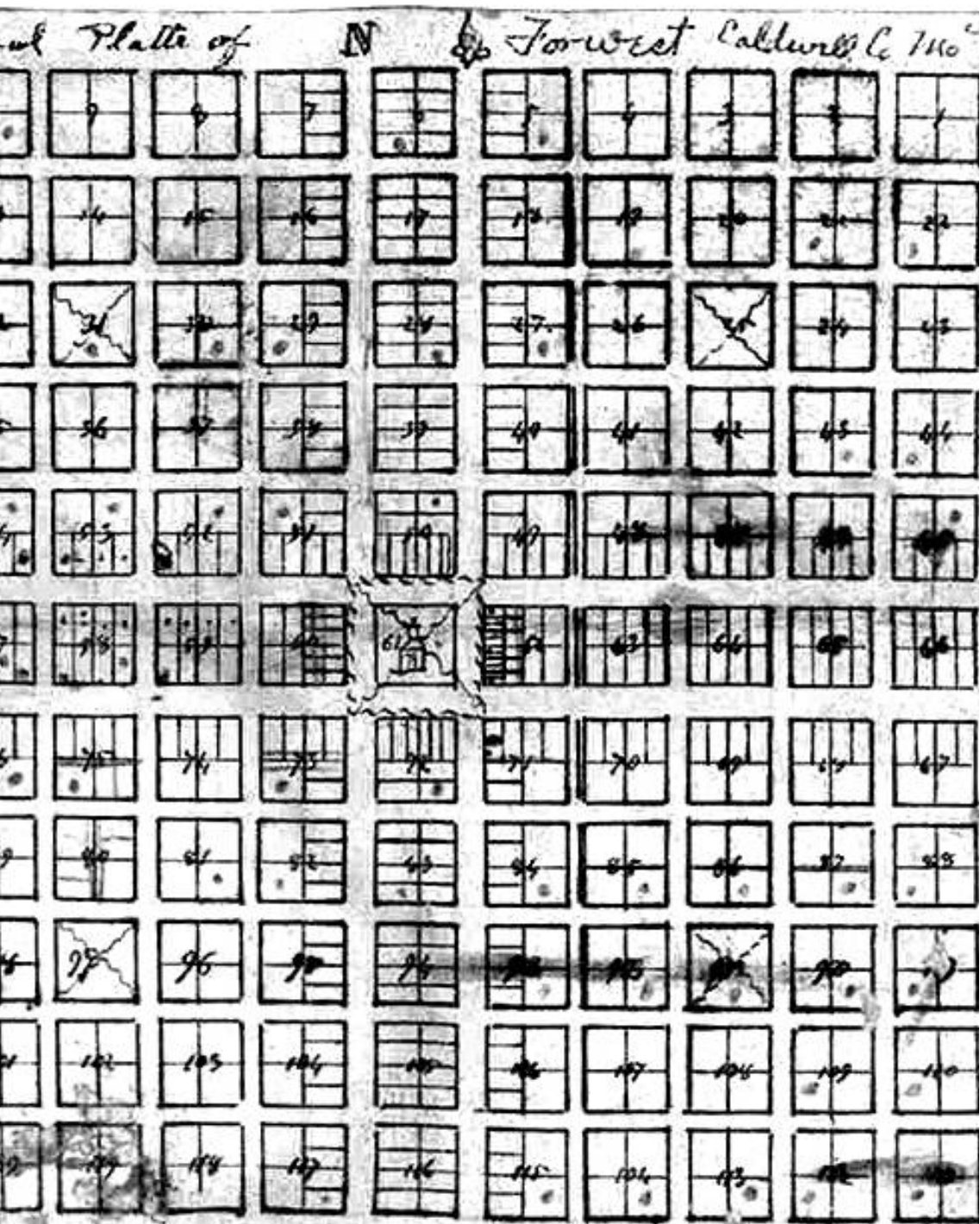
- Church Property, 1 White Purchase, 2 White Purchase
  - 1 Galland Purchase
  - White Survey
  - Kimball's First Survey
  - De. Second Survey
  - Hyman Smith's Survey
  - Fulmer Survey
  - Birmingham & Thompson Survey
  - Edwards Survey
  - Birmingham Survey
- \* The Temple, 2 Market House, 3 First & Smith's Residence  
 # Printing Office, 3 Brick Store  
 @ Annual Convention Meeting (1841) (1842) (1843)  
 \* Jan. 11, 1841, Water St. 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844  
 \* See 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846, 1847, 1848, 1849, 1850  
 \* City built on 2nd & 3rd Longwalk St. 1841

# The Cornerstone of Zion

# Nauvoo as the cornerstone of Zion: D&C 124

- “Make a solemn proclamation of my gospel, and of this stake which I have planted to be a cornerstone of Zion”
- D&C 124 covers
  - Saints always required to build a temple
  - Organization of the Church
  - Nauvoo House
  - Counsel to those who want to live in Zion
- Nature of commercial organizations in Zion
  - Cooperative firms with shared capital





# Meaning of “Stake” in 1841

- In September 1837 church leaders in Kirtland selected Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to go to Missouri and “appoint other **Stakes or places of gathering**” in addition to Far West.
- May 18, 1838, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and a number of others left Far West and traveled north “for the purpose of **Laying off stakes of Zion**, marking Locations & laying claims **for the gathering of the saints** for the benefit of the poor, and for the upbuilding of the Church of God.”

# Bruce R. McConkie: Three Phases of the Gathering

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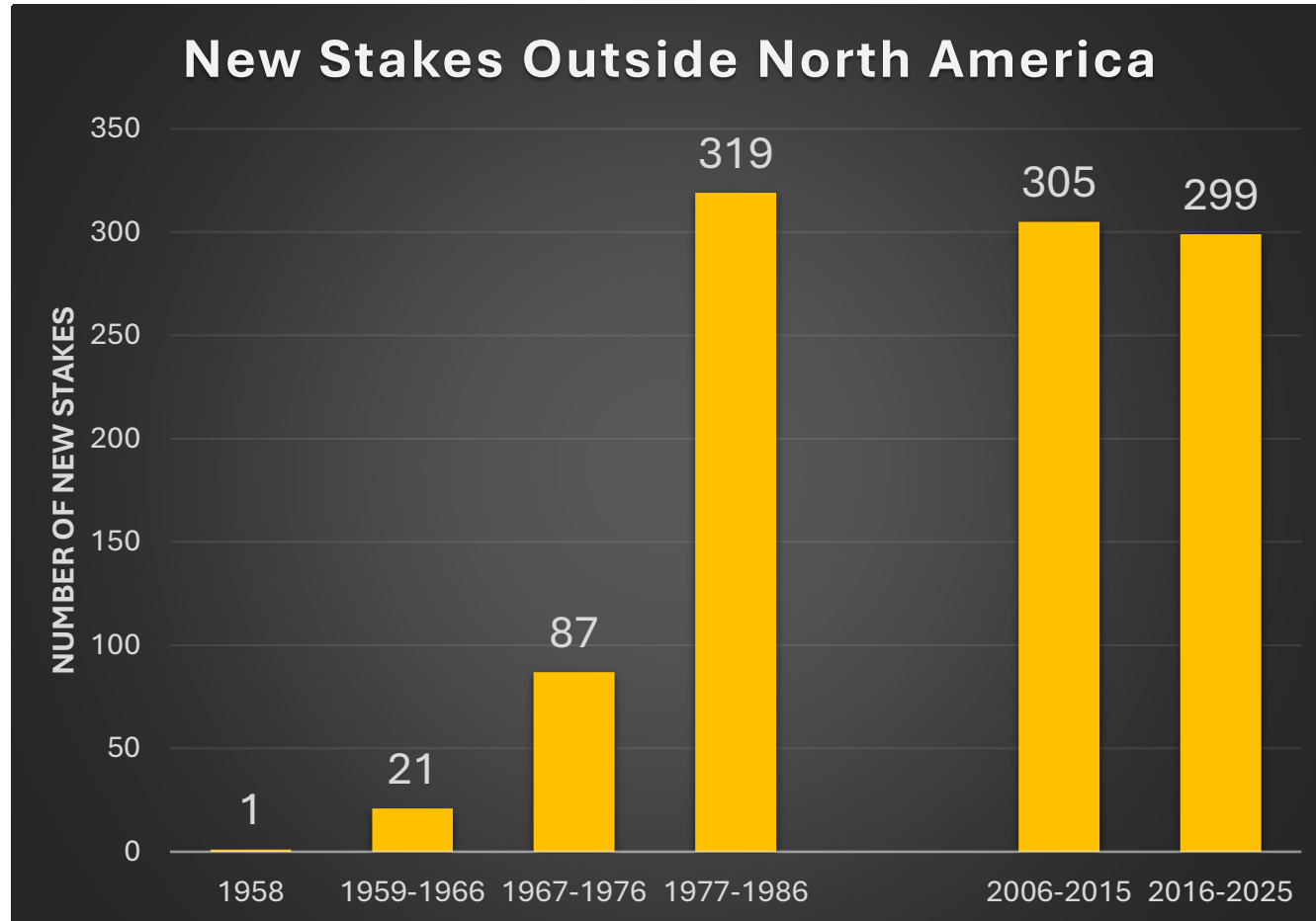
Phase I—From the First Vision, the setting up of the kingdom on April 6, 1830, and the coming of Moses on April 3, 1836, to the secure establishment of the Church in the United States and Canada, a period of about 125 years.

Phase II—From the creation of stakes of Zion in overseas areas, beginning in the 1950s, to the second coming of the Son of Man, a period of unknown duration.

Phase III—From our Lord's second coming until the kingdom is perfected and the knowledge of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea, and from then until the end of the Millennium, a period of 1,000 years.

(Bruce R. McConkie, Come: Let Israel Build Zion, *Ensign*, May 1977)

# Growth outside North America after 1977



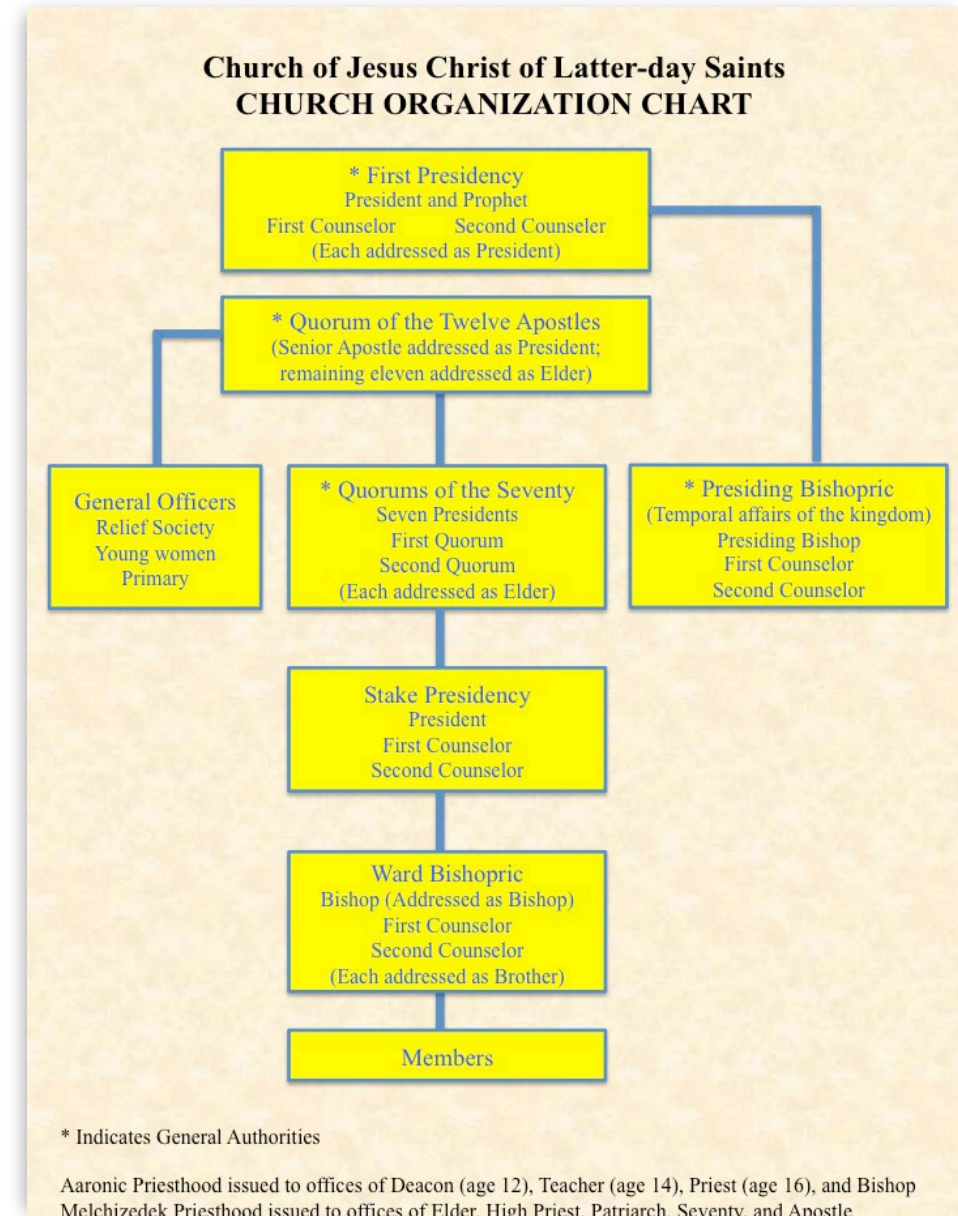
At the end of 2024

- Stakes worldwide:
  - 3,608
- Stakes outside US & Canada:
  - 1,846 (51%)

# Organization of Church

The offices identified in section 124 include:

- A president and two counselors
- A president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and twelve Apostles
- A bishop for the Church as a whole
- A patriarch
- A stake president with two counselors
- A stake high council
- At least one elder's quorum presidency
- Seven presidents of the seventy
- Local bishops
- Aaronic priesthood quorum presidents





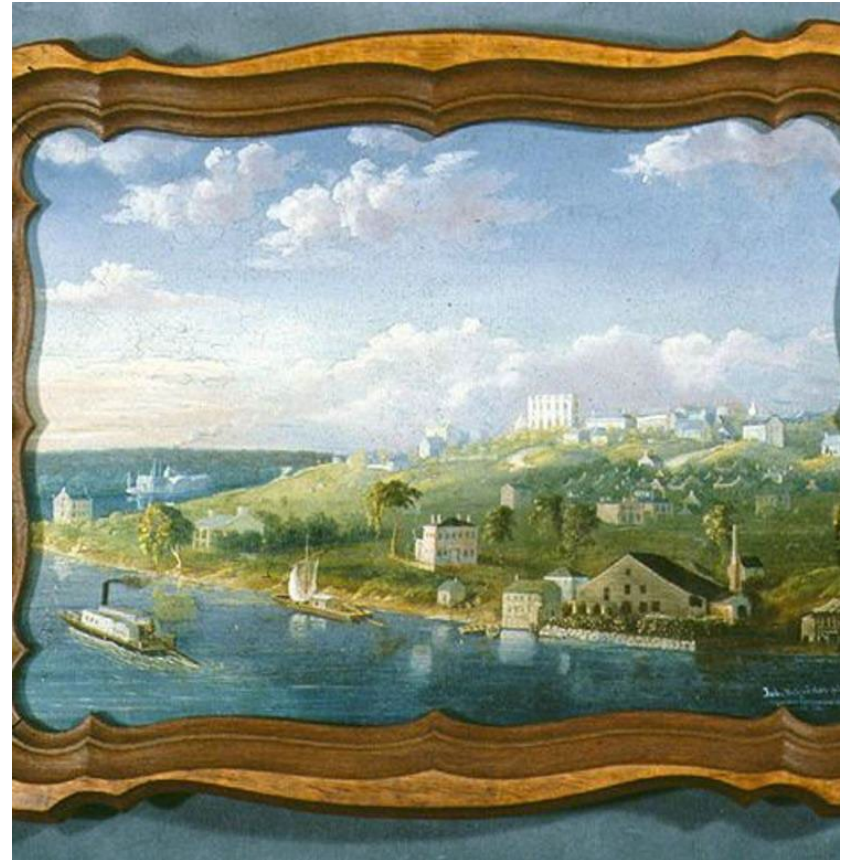
# When the saints gather, they will always build a temple

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- “it is ordained that in Zion, and in her stakes, ... those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead” (D&C 124:36)
- “verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead ... are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which *my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name.*” (D&C 124:39-41)
- “verily I say unto you, I command you again to build a house to my name, even in this place.” (D&C 124:55)

# Guidance to those living in Zion

- 54 men mentioned by name
- 9 individuals instructed to buy stock in Nauvoo House
- Other examples of council:
  - “Henceforth hearken to the counsel of my servant [the prophet]” “and unto the authorities which I have called to lay the foundation of Zion”
  - “go and proclaim my everlasting gospel, with a loud voice, and with great joy,”
  - “lift up [your] voice, long and loud, in the midst of the people, to plead the cause of the poor and the needy,”
  - “Arise and come up and stand in the office of [your] calling”



## Section 124 also contains extensive direction regarding the purpose, organization, funding, and initial management of a commercial boarding house to be built in Nauvoo

- Guidance for non-Church commercial ventures
- Cooperative stock company, moderately priced shares
- Limit on how many shares any one person can own
- Profits reinvested or distributed to shareholders
- Governance by a small board with the express directive to pursue the good of Zion over profit
- Shares only sold to believers





# Our responsibility

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Zion shall be built up—she shall obtain that perfection and glory which is hers—when the Lord appears in his glory. ... This will be during the Millennium when the restoration of all things is completed. Zion shall be perfected after the second coming of Christ.

But in the meantime, and as of now, **the Lord has laid upon us the responsibility to lay the foundation for that which is to be. We have been commissioned to prepare a people for the second coming of the Son of Man.** ... We have been commanded to **lay the foundations of Zion and to get all things ready for the return** of Him who shall again crown the Holy City with his presence and glory. (Bruce R. McConkie, 1977)



# Principles

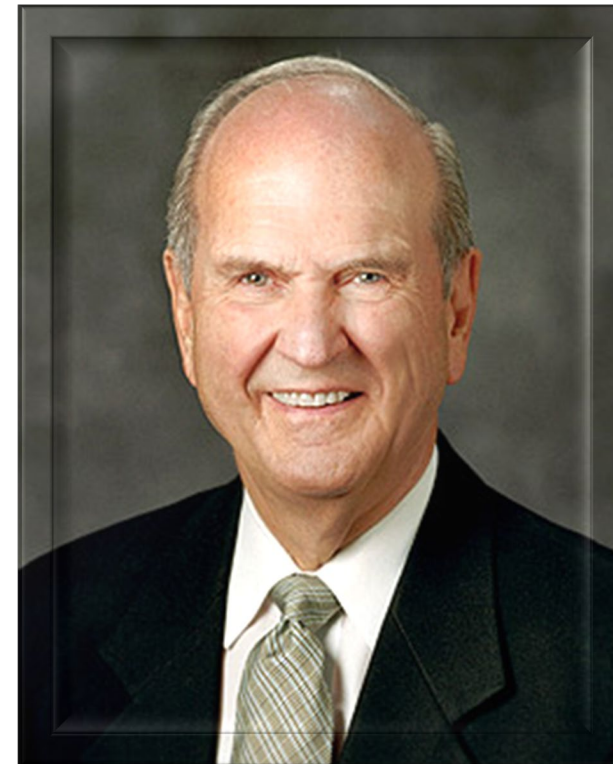
“Zion cannot be built up unless it is by **the principles** of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.” (D&C 105:5)

# President Nelson and Sabbath

My conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a sign between me and my Heavenly Father

When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, 'What sign do I want to give to God?'

That question made my choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear.



**Are there a few principles that form the foundation for any Zion society?**

Yes!

Five Foundation Stones



# Foundation stones 1 and 2

“Thou shalt **love the Lord thy God** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt **love thy neighbour** as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matt 22:37-40)





# Elder Gary Stevenson

- Elder Stevenson compared these two commandments to the foundation and supporting towers of a suspension bridge. (April, 2024)





# Elder Stevenson

## **Love the Lord:**

The Lord asks that you love with all your soul—your entire consecrated being—and finally, to love with all your mind—your intelligence and intellect.

## **Love your neighbor:**

Love of the Lord is not complete if we neglect our neighbors. This outward love includes all of God's children without regard to gender, social class, race, sexuality, income, age, or ethnicity.

**Our ability to follow Jesus Christ depends upon our strength and power to live the first and second commandments with balance and equal devotion to both.**



Foundation  
Stones 3 and 4:

- Individual agency
- Personal accountability

# Adam and Eve

- Adam & Eve were given several commandments in the garden
  - Have children
  - Don't eat the fruit of a particular tree
- They were told why
  - Joy and rejoicing
  - Thou shalt surely die
- “Nevertheless thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto you”





# Adam's choice to eat the fruit

- He knew it was contrary to the commandment
- He knew the consequence would be his death
- He knew if he didn't eat the fruit neither he nor Eve could keep the commandment to multiply
- He did not know there would be a Savior provided

# Two foundation truths are revealed

1. We have agency and are able to choose our future
2. Choices have consequences, and when we exercise our capacity to choose, we are also responsible and accountable for the consequences



Lana Gloschat

# Five components of agency

Agency includes five components

1. Instruction/information
2. Alternatives
3. Choice
4. Action
5. Consequences

Agency and accountability are gifts from God, not commandments



The exercise of agency involves taking informed action that changes the future, for better or for worse, and inescapably involves accountability (responsibility) for the consequences that result.

# Foundation stone 5: A commandment we can't keep on our own

“I say unto you, be one; and if  
ye are not one ye are not mine.”

- One of the reasons the Lord identified for the Saint's failure to establish Zion in the 1830s:

“And [they] are not united  
according to the union required  
by the law of the celestial  
kingdom” (D&C 105:4)



Marie-France Bernadette Guigny

# Three dimensions of unity

- Vertical: Unity in Christ
  - I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, **even one in me as I am one in the Father**, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one. (D&C 35:2)
- Horizontal: Unity with the Saints
  - The night he was betrayed and arrested, Jesus prayed, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, **that they may be one, as we are.**” (John 17:11)
  - In 1831, the Lord said, “be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine.”
- Temporal: Unity across dispensations
  - ... it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, ... that **a whole and complete and perfect union**, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place (D&C 128:18)



# President Russell M. Nelson

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As I have stated before, **the gathering of Israel is the *most important work taking place on earth today***. One crucial element of this gathering is preparing a people who are able, ready, and worthy to receive the Lord when He comes again, **a people who have already chosen Jesus Christ** over this fallen world, a people who rejoice in their agency to live the higher, holier laws of Jesus Christ.

I call upon you, my dear brothers and sisters, to **become this righteous people**. Cherish and honor your covenants above all other commitments. As you let God prevail in your life, I promise you greater peace, confidence, joy, and yes, *rest*.





# Where to next?

The prophets have taught us about the importance of gathering and establishing Zion

Over the next two days, we will explore the implications of the gathering for a society erected on the five foundation stones of Zion

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- Stewardship & Land in Zion
- Eliminating Poverty

## Governance

- Non-Church organizations
- Governance in Zion
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Tomorrow!



Questions?

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