

Zion Builders Institute: Enlisting in the Cause of Zion

"Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 13:37).

A Legacy of Zion Building

In the early days of the Latter-day Saints, leaders like Brigham Young and others took bold steps to establish a Zion society in the Utah Territory. They envisioned a community where the Saints lived together in unity, sharing resources through cooperatives and other ventures that promoted equality and prosperity for all. This movement was unfortunately halted by external forces, including the US Government, which took measures that made it impossible for the Saints to fully realize this vision at that time.

As Brigham Young taught, *"We talk and read about Zion, we contemplate upon it, and in our imaginations we reach forth to grasp something transcendent in heavenly beauty, excellency, and glory. But... do we realize that if we enjoy a Zion... we must make it for ourselves?"*

John Taylor further emphasized, *"We are here [in Utah] really to build up and purify the Church of the living God. We are here to build up and establish the kingdom of God. We are here also to build up a Zion unto our God."*

A Lost Focus: Building Babylon Instead

Despite the early zeal for building Zion, the modern-day Church has seen the Saints shift their focus. We are, knowingly or unknowingly, preoccupied with Babylon – our lives are centered around the world's values: economic materialism, competition, and individualism. The promises of Zion have not been fulfilled, not because God has withdrawn His hand, but because we, His people, have shifted our priorities.

As Brigham Young warned, *"We have gone just as far as we can be permitted to go in the road on which we are now traveling. One man has his eye on a gold mine, another is for a silver mine... Babylon is here and we are following in the footsteps of the inhabitants of the earth who are in a perfect sea of confusion."*

He further taught, *"We can make Zion or we can make Babylon just as we please."*

The Vision:

Establishing the Zion Builders Institute

It is time to remind the Saints of their divine calling to build Zion. I propose the creation of the Zion Builders Institute (ZBI), a think tank dedicated to rekindling the fire of Zion-building in the hearts of the Saints. ZBI will provide a platform for deep reflection on God's vision for Zion and create opportunities through Action Labs, where individuals come together to implement Zion-like principles in local, practical ways. Cooperatives, once termed by our early leaders as "a stepping stone to Zion," would be a central focus, reintroducing the Saints to principles of unity and shared stewardship.

As Lorenzo Snow taught, *"I view cooperation when properly understood and practiced as being a steppingstone to the Order of Enoch and will enable the Saints who receive it in a proper spirit to gradually prepare themselves to enter in due time more fully into the practice of principles necessary to accomplish the building up of the kingdom of our God."*

George A. Smith also counseled, *"Sustain our Cooperative stores and cease to sustain those who do not build up Zion."*

Brigham Young declared, *"This cooperative movement is only a stepping stone to what is called the Order of Enoch but which is in reality the Order of Heaven."*

A Strategy for Social Change

Social change does not happen overnight. It requires a strategic path rooted in theories of how societies evolve. The ZBI will engage with multiple social change models—such as grassroots movements, educational outreach, and community-based action—to gradually prepare the Saints for the challenges and opportunities of living Zion principles. By creating spaces for experimentation, dialogue, and cooperative enterprise, ZBI can be a guiding force, preparing us spiritually and practically for the eventual return of Christ.

A Personal Mission

For many years, I have poured my heart and soul into awakening my fellow Saints to the "cause of Zion." Through Priesthood and Sunday School lessons, newspaper articles, essays, a book, and even Facebook posts, I have tried to show that Zion is not just an ideal for a far-off time but a practical and necessary goal for us today. However, this work must outlive my personal efforts. As Brigham Young declared, *"We are to build up and establish Zion, gather the house of Israel, and redeem the nations of the earth. This people have this work to do whether we live to see it or not"*.

A Call to Action: Building Zion Together

I invite you to join me in co-founding the Zion Builders Institute (ZBI), an organization that will not only continue this mission but expand it. Together, we can gather a community of like-minded Saints – those who already champion the cause of Zion in their hearts and actions – and unite our efforts. By bringing together individuals who share this passion, we can build a collective momentum that will inspire and empower others to live Zion-like principles in their daily lives.

Your role, and the role of others who join ZBI, would be to engage in efforts similar to those I have pursued: writing articles, essays, creating video series, and/or using social media platforms like Facebook to promote the cause of Zion. Additionally, I am confident that you and others will think of new and creative ways to advance this work – ideas and actions that I may not have considered but which will be crucial in the ongoing effort to build Zion.

The ZBI will provide a platform for collaboration, strategizing, and creating actionable plans to make Zion a reality here and now. With your insights, energy, and dedication, I believe we can make this vision a lasting legacy that transforms lives and prepares us for the eventual return of Christ. Let us join forces and find others who are ready to take up this mantle with us.

"Zion comes not as a gift but because virtuous covenant people are drawn together and build it."

- Elder D. Todd Christofferson.