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. The movement was unfortunately halted by external forces, including pressure from the U.S. government (see Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom).

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."*.

Where Our Focus Can Drift

The early Saints’ efforts invite us to examine our own priorities. We can drift toward Babylon when material gain, competition, or individual interests take precedence over the people around us. We can begin to change that by paying attention to what our daily choices encourage in our homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

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 for the Zion Builders Institute

I founded the Zion Builders Institute (ZBI) to help the Saints understand what Zion is and begin building it where they live. ZBI provides resources for reflecting on God’s vision for Zion. We are developing ways for people to come together and put Zion principles into practice in their own families, neighborhoods, and workplaces. Our early leaders taught that cooperation could be a stepping stone to Zion. Today it can help us learn 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 take part in the work of the Zion Builders Institute (ZBI). We can gather people who care about the cause of Zion and learn from one another as we put these principles into practice. What we learn together can help other families and communities begin in their own settings.

ZBI can help you put Zion principles into practice at home, in your neighborhood, or at work. You could use a reflection exercise to examine a daily habit or try a small change with a group you belong to. For example, you could invite everyone affected by a neighborhood decision to speak before the group decides. Then share what you learned at ZBI and talk about what to try next.

If you enjoy writing articles or essays, making videos, or posting on social media, you might serve as a Zion Ambassador. You can use those skills to share what people are learning as they 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.

What's your most pressing question about building Zion?
I'll use your questions to shape a free online webinar. Submit it here.

> *"Zion comes not as a gift but because virtuous covenant people are drawn together and build it."*
>
> - Elder D. Todd Christofferson.