

GATHERING *a* REMNANT



LORI DENNING

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ISBN 13: 978-1-4621-4343-6

Published by CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc.

2373 W. 700 S., Springville, UT 84663

Distributed by Cedar Fort, Inc., www.cedarfort.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022938848

Cover design by Shawnda T. Craig

Cover design © 2022 Cedar Fort, Inc.

Edited by Spencer Skeen

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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SCRIPTURE NERD

I am a scripture nerd. I love reading and researching the scriptures, understanding how they work, learning their context, history, and languages. I started studying the gathering of Israel, and I was excited to delve into the topic, research the scriptures, and learn more.

My passion is ancient scripture, so I started my study there. As I jumped in, first referencing the Old Testament, then the life of Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon, and finally modern scripture, I realized I needed to make the stories and references tie out, make sense, and resonate. The gathering of Israel is a vast topic found in all scripture, ancient and modern. Studying it was a bit daunting. Tying out all the stories and references was becoming a monumental task.

Let me step back for a minute and explain. When I say I love scripture, I really, *really* do. Scriptures have a unique power to invite the Holy Spirit, explain profound truths, and open our hearts to the gospel of Jesus Christ in ways that apply very specifically to our own lives. I am especially drawn to ancient scripture like the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. Ancient scriptures can be complex, however. The time in which they are written, their language, culture, and even the length of the stories can make some of the references obscure. Tracing the gathering of Israel's critical elements through scripture was very exciting for *me*.

However, as I began this book, I read back some of the exciting verses I was studying to a friend, about tame and wild olive branches of Jacob 5, the use of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, and my friend Diane gave me some advice.

“Lori, I love how excited *you* are. But that's not as exciting *to me* right now. Tell me why that matters to you. Tell me why that matters to me.”

I sat back and realized she was right. A unique power of the scriptures is how they relate to us right now. I asked myself, “How can we take complex, ancient scripture and understand it today?” I reflected on how the Savior taught important and complex gospel topics. He used many teaching techniques. Jesus did preach directly like the Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon at the temple (Matthew 5–7, 3 Nephi 12–14). He also had many conversations and personal interactions. Perhaps His most powerful and memorable teaching was



PART 1:
GOD'S PLAN
to SAVE

GOD'S PLAN

WHAT IS THE GATHERING OF ISRAEL?

The Lord is at work in the world to save His children. President Russell M. Nelson has spoken frequently about the gathering of Israel.* But what is the gathering of Israel?

The gathering of Israel is an invitation.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the way of salvation for the world. We talk of Christ often, learning his Way, following his covenant path. We covenant with Him to become the Children of Christ (Mosiah 5:7–9). He is the way of salvation, “there is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives” (Mosiah 5:8). We embrace our relationship with the Savior, covenant with Him, and follow Him. We understand our relationship to Jesus Christ and work on that relationship, that covenant, each day of our lives.

Perhaps less obvious is the relationship between Jesus Christ, His gospel, and the gathering of Israel. Jesus Christ is the message. The gathering of Israel is *the way* the message is shared with the world, living and dead. The gathering of Israel is an invitation to all, living and dead, to turn to Jesus Christ and salvation.

The gathering of Israel is a reality.

The gathering of Israel is a key belief of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The tenth Article of Faith says,

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the ten tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

One day, the ten tribes, the lost tribes of Israel, will return. Today, we see that fulfillment as people from all nations follow Jesus Christ and join the Church. There will also be a literal fulfillment in Zion, the New Jerusalem, when Christ will reign. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of that day (and we'll cover it more fully later) when he says,

O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

Jeremiah 31:7–8

There will be a day when the family of Israel, from all tribes and people, will return to the Lord. Like the second Exodus of Moses, we will see a great movement of people come to the New Jerusalem.

The gathering of Israel is a concept.

The gathering of Israel is also happening in our day-to-day actions in helping bring others to Christ. President Russell M. Nelson declared, “Anytime you do anything that helps anyone—on either side of the veil—take a step toward making covenants with God and receiving their essential baptismal and temple ordinances, you are helping to gather Israel. It is as simple as that.”* President Nelson is teaching us that the gathering is also in the actions of spreading the gospel, sharing our testimonies, and teaching of Christ. We learn that the gathering is not only an invitation to a reality that will come but also a concept that is applied to many of the activities we participate in gospel living.

The gathering of Israel is a promise of the Lord's love.

The Lord loves us. It is easy to forget when life gets hard, or challenges come our way. Sometimes we read a scripture about people being chastened, and it feels like the Lord is far away. However, scripture is filled with the divine reaching out to us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The prophet Nephi evokes our most profound emotions of love and salvation, saying, "But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I am beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15).

And again, when Christ visits the people after His Resurrection, we read: "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen . . . how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens" (3 Nephi 10:5).

The gathering of Israel is a doctrine that teaches us that God loves us and God keeps his promises. I love how our Father in Heaven describes His love for us (John 3:16 must be my favorite). The beautiful expression of love that the Father shows us, giving the life of His Beloved Son, is hard to comprehend.

There are times in our lives when we feel distant from God. We can feel unworthy or misunderstood. We can feel alone, desperate for help or relief in our lives. In these moments, the Father reminds us of His great love for all of us, the world. It isn't just the elect, worthy, or the life-long member of the church. God loves all of us.

The Savior Himself tells us He can never forget us: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands" (Isaiah 49:15–16). The Savior Himself through His atoning sacrifice shows His love to us.

Our Father and His Son love us. When we speak of the gathering of Israel, it is important to remember we are first gathered.

Let's start at the beginning.

GOD HAS A PLAN

God has a plan. From the first pages of scripture, we learn about the salvation of humanity through the grace of Jesus Christ. It is reassuring that He has a plan for the salvation of the world. When we talk about the gathering of Israel, it is easy to get tunnel vision, speaking only of the tribes, or even a smaller group, like the tribe of Ephraim. We focus on the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the formal missionaries, or doing genealogy work for our specific family members. We'll get there! When talking about the gathering of Israel, the place to start is not with the smallest group but with the largest. We will start with the big picture.

God loves everyone. Our Father in Heaven loves His Children and desires all of us to return to Him. You might be thinking, "What does this have to do with the gathering of Israel?" The gathering is about the Savior's plan to offer redemption and salvation to all people. Understanding that message of salvation is critical for understanding *why* the Lord wants to gather, *who* He is gathering, and *how* He is gathering. Our first step is understanding *why*.

Here's the big message: The Lord loves us. He loves me, and He loves you. He calls it His "work." He says, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). The Lord's work is helping us, bringing us home. His work and His *glory* are blessing us. Glory is a powerful word. It means honor, renown, or even importance or weight.* God is saying that what brings him renown is helping us. His is full of glory by helping offer us salvation and exaltation.

Something is fantastic and humbling about the idea that God's focus is us. The creator of all things chooses to love and care for our salvation. The most powerful being in the universe, who could be doing anything, chooses you and me. He is the most loving parent. He cares for us, His children, and wants to help us, save us, and have us reach our eternal potential.

A SAVIOR

The plan of salvation is beautiful. Before the world began, our Father made a way for us to learn, grow, and return to His presence. While we will sin and

die, a Savior was provided. Adam was instructed about the plan and what to teach his children. We are part of Adam's posterity, so the instruction is for us.

Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.

Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying: That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory. . . .

And now, behold, I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.

Moses 6:57–59, 62

The Lord instructs Adam to teach all that the kingdom of God is available through the grace of the Savior. We must repent and turn to the Lord. God is Holy as is His Son, the Judge, and we must be holy like them to live in their divine presence. As we become new creatures in Christ, we can be blessed with this sacred nature. Then we can live eternally with them. This is the message that Adam is to teach all of us. This is the plan of salvation.

KEY IDEAS TO REMEMBER

- The gathering of Israel is an invitation, a reality, and a concept.
- God loves each one of us.

- God has a plan.
 - The Savior is the key to the plan. Thus, we must follow Him.
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- * Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel,” worldwide devotional for youth, June 3, 2018, [churchofjesuschrist.org/broadcast](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/broadcast); Nelson, “[Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2018, 68–70; Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel” *Liahona*, November 2006.
- * Russell M. Nelson, “[Hope of Israel](#),” worldwide devotional for youth, June 3, 2018, [churchofjesuschrist.org/broadcasts](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/broadcasts), emphases added.
- * Leslie C. Allen, “Glory,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

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