

Podcast 147: Shem, Part 6

This is the sixth part of a series about Shem, who came to be known as Melchizedek, one of the Patriarchal Fathers, who established a city of peace that ultimately achieved the status of "Zion" and was taken up into heaven.

DENVER: There's more about that subject in the Book of Mormon than anyone has ever bothered to talk about. When the people of Jared were brought to the Americas, they were brought to the Americas by an act and direction of God in order for them to inherit a land of promise. When they inherited the land it was theirs, but they wore out their welcome by their rebellion, their forgetfulness, their failure to honor the God of this land. It is within the Book of Ether that we find out that this land comes with a restriction on it that those that possess it have to worship the God of this land or they will be swept away.

Now the sweeping away sometimes takes generations before it happens. But it happens. It happened to the Jaredites and then the Nephites were brought over—the party of Lehi—and they were also given the land to possess as a covenant. Throughout the time, though, that the Nephites inherited this land as their covenant land of promise, there was a constant reference to a future moment, a future time, a time in which the Nephites themselves would be destroyed. And they'd be destroyed by the Lamanites. And then the Lamanites would inherit the land, and they would in turn be displaced because they forgot the God of this land. And a new group would be brought over, and the new group would eventually likewise enter into a covenant and receive the land of promise. Now very often in order for the Lord to achieve his end you have to have three attempts. You have to have two attempts that fail before you finally have one that succeeds.

The purpose behind establishing a covenant with the gentles in the last days is not so that the gentles get to inhabit the land as a place for them to celebrate and rejoice. It's to bring about the Lord's purposes in creating Zion. If the youth enter into the covenant and then keep the covenant it has one and only one purpose and that is to bring about Zion. We've had persistent failures of humanity to create Zion, but it's happened once in the time of Enoch, it happened again in the time of Melchizedek, and it's going to happen a third time at some point on this land. The existence of Zion in this land will precede the redemption in Jerusalem, but Jerusalem will also become one of the places where for a thousand years our Lord is going to have a jurisdiction.

Take courage! Life was meant to be a living sacrifice, to be lost in the service to God, only by losing your life will you find it. Saving faith is so rare precisely because it requires courage to engage the opposition in this world and to cheerfully endure the abuse, lies, threats and fiery darts sent by those who fear your faith above everything. Faith in God will save you through His grace, it can render every weapon of this world and hell powerless, but it takes courage. When friends betray you and fear overtakes your associates and causes the knees to buckle under the weight of the burdens God allows to be imposed upon you, remember

the Lord descended below it all and when He cried out asking for the bitter cup to be removed, there was no relief. He is the prototype of the saved man and the Father loved Him for his sacrifice. It was the Lord's sacrifice for us that perfected His love for us. He values us because of the great price He paid for each one of us. If you love God you will be given the opportunity to prove your love. You will be proven by the things you endure for His name's sake. Do not fail. Melchizedek's people in the land of Salem were like this people they had waxed strong in iniquity and abominations, yeah, they had all gone astray, they were full of all manner of wickedness but Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith and received the office of the high priesthood according to the Holy Order of God did preach repentance unto his people and behold they did repent.

The Covenant being offered does not require one to reject it, only voluntary acceptance. It assumes mankind's rejection and therefore to reject one need do nothing. Entering into the Covenant offered by the Lord today does not mean there is a church or organization to be joined, it only means that you affirm that you will accept and abide the terms set by the Lord for being one of His people. You can be one of His covenant people and also hold membership in any church of your choosing.

However, the Covenant imposes the responsibility to **help** others who also accept the Covenant. To regard **them** also as the Lord's, to honor God, seek to recover Israel, teach children to honor God, care for the poor among God's people and to help lighten the burdens of others. None of those responsibilities involve establishing or joining an institution. The words of the Covenant...the words of the Covenant require us to have left behind the destructive and vile practices of the world. It reads in part, "all you who have turned from your wicked ways and repented of your evil doings of **lying and deceiving** and of all **whoredoms** and of **secret abominations, idolatries, murders, priestcrafts, envying and strife** and from all wickedness and abominations and have come unto Me and been baptized in My name and received a remission of your sins and received the Holy Ghost are now numbered with My people who are of the House of Israel." Those enumerated vile and destructive things must end among us today. **We** are all equal. We all accept the Book of Mormon as a Covenant for us to be numbered among the Lord's covenant people. This land, in particular, is a land of promise to those who serve the God of this land who is Jesus Christ. The time is coming when those who are not the Lord's people will be swept off the land.

There is so much left to be done. I know that we can't jump hastily from point to point along the way and that we have to carefully proceed with every step. But it's astonishing to me the steps that people decide to get hung up on and to spend a great deal of time, when time could better be spent moving further along on the path. I don't know what it will take to get people to enthusiastically welcome and to move along with alacrity on the pathway that the prophecies foretell someone is going to achieve in the last days. Because it seems like all that murmuring that we read about in the Book of Exodus going on in the camp of Israel, when we scratch our heads and say, why are they complaining about missing the fleshpots of Egypt when God is leading them with a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night? One would think that you'd be happy eating manna in the wilderness if you knew God was with you.

I also think that in our current state of technological development it's possible for the discontent to magnify the voice electronically over the Internet and to make any level of discontent seem to be much greater than it really is. But if one person is discontent and 500 people are arguing with the one who is discontent it appears that the argument includes at least half a thousand, maybe more. As between one another, that is every one of us, because every one of us is involved in a relationship with one another; you choose. Mind you, Christ could have disputed, he could have corrected, he could have challenged every one of the ongoing religious and social conventions of his day. *You are doing that wrong. Oh, you should stop doing that. Would you quit it! And by the way, you're so dark in your mind that I don't know where it begins, except for him, he's worse, and then her. Oh!* [cross talk and audience laughter]

How much of the gospel of Christ would not have been possible for Him to preach if He'd gone about contending? He chose not to. In that respect, perhaps His most godly example was the patience with which He dealt with those around him; kindly, patiently, correcting them when they largely came to Him with questions trying to trap Him, but affirmatively stating in the Sermon on the Mount how you could take any group of people and turn them into Zion itself, if we would live the Sermon on the Mount.

I figure that I'm not that good a teacher because it appears to me that there are a lot of mistakes being made that are perfectly avoidable. I don't take King Benjamin's statement that the number of errors that people can make, the number of sins that people can commit are endless, there is no way to possibly number them, as I don't take that as consoling words. I take that as a challenge to say, *Okay, but your people did find peace among one another.* And even Enoch's people found peace among one another. Melchizedek was called the Prince of Peace because he preached but what he preached was repentance. The office of the ministering of angels is to spread the message of repentance. So then all of us have an obligation there, to join in the same thing, repenting, turning to face God. The more we face Him, the more light we take in, the more differently we behave, individually and in connection with each other.

I am certain we will see Zion because it's been promised and it's been prophesied from the beginning of time. When father Adam prophesied, being overcome by the Spirit in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and foretold what would happen to his posterity down to the latest generations, Zion was pointed to. Therefore, from the days of Adam on, all the holy prophets have looked forward to that as the essential moment in the history of the world, because Christ will come and will redeem the world. It will be the end of the wicked; it will be the beginning of something far better. That's been the hope, that's been the promise, that's been what they've looked forward to. I wonder how many of us share that same longing, that same hope, that same desire that originated in the beginning, because if we don't subdue our desires, appetites, and passions enough to try and deal peaceably one with another, choosing deliberately to not contend, even when we know people are wrong. When Christ was confronted and he corrected the error he corrected only that error, he didn't go on with a list of other weaknesses, failings and challenges, He only addressed the one that was put to him.

We have an opportunity. We have a bona fide, actual offer from God to allow us to be that generation in which the promises get fulfilled. But we have the freedom of choice that allows us to elect to be stubborn, to be contentious, to be agents of disruption, and to discourage and break the hearts of those who would willingly accept the challenge to repent and follow God.

Don't be reading into it what I'm saying that I dislike or condemn the LDS Church. The LDS Church just is. It's like the Community of Christ; it's like the Remnant Church. There are a lot of good people that belong to these various institutions who are very trusting of what the institutions are doing. The leaders of these institutions I'm fairly certain don't intend to do evil but the result is evil, and all of the good intentions notwithstanding. Where, where is the fulfilment of the promise? Amassing wealth and waiting is not going to achieve any good end. Repentance, baptism, and finding yourself accountable directly to God, that's where the work of the restoration is going to continue. As far as the scriptures inform us, the only thing that Enoch claimed for himself was the role of being a teacher. Melchizedek was given the praise of being called a King and a Priest, new name given to him, but his role was that of a preacher of righteousness.

Christ taught parables that included invited guests being barred from attending the wedding feast. In one, the guests are called "virgins" to suggest that they possess moral purity and would be welcomed to the event. In another, there are strangers on the highway invited because others refused to come. Both parables, however, have some who are ultimately excluded from the wedding, a symbol of Christ's return. These parables raise an important issue about the Lord's return. There is a reason why five of the ten virgins could not enter into the wedding celebration. Likewise, those invited to attend the wedding feast that arrive without a wedding garment will be excluded. In both cases, those excluded were not welcome as they were unprepared.

There have been only two societies in recorded history that became Zion. Because of the age of the world at the time, both were taken up into heaven. We have very little to help us understand why these two succeeded. Apart from describing them as of "one heart, one mind, and no poor among them," we know little else. But perhaps that is one of the most important things we *can* know about them. Maybe the point is that *nothing* and *no-one* stood out as remarkable or different within the community. There were no heroes and no villains; no rich and no poor; no Shakespearian plot lines of betrayal, intrigue, ambition, conflict, and envy. There was no adultery, theft, robbery, murder, immorality, and drunkenness—in other words, nothing to entertain us. Because all our stories, movies, music, novels, television plots, and social media are based upon and captivated by everything that is missing from these societies.

The centuries-long period of peace described in the Book of Mormon occupies only a few short pages in 4 Nephi. Their society was marked by the presence of peace, the absence of conflict, and abiding stability. This is what they attained: *There were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all*

things common among them; therefore, there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free and partakers of the Heavenly gift (4 Nephi 1:1 RE). Because there was no future ministry for them to perform, their Zion society was not taken up to heaven. Because the world was not yet ready for the Lord to return in judgment, neither Enoch nor Melchizedek returned with their people to fall on their necks and kiss them.

These people were most remarkable for what they *lacked*. How they grew to lack these divisions, contentions, and disputes is described in very few, simple words: *They did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord. And it came to pass...there was no contention among all the people in all the land (4 Nephi 1:2 RE).*

What were the names of their leaders? We don't know because, apparently, there were none. Who were their great teachers? Again, we don't know because they were not identified. Who governed? Apparently no one. They had things in common, obeyed God's commandments, and spent time praying and hearing the word of the Lord. They were so very unlike us.

To make the point clear for us, the record of these people explains: *There was no contention in the land because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people; and there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness (4 Nephi 1:3 RE).* All the negatives were missing because the love of God dwelt in their hearts.

Something else describes them: *And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God (ibid).* Consider those words carefully. You cannot be happier than by allowing the love of God to dwell in you. The happiest people who have ever lived did so by the profound peace they displayed, equality they shared, fairness they showed one another, and love of God in their hearts.

This is a description of our social opposites. Reviewing the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, the Covenant, and the recent parable of the Master's House shows that the Lord is pleading for *us* to become *this*. It's not easy; it will require civilizing the uncivilized. However, it is necessary to become the wise virgins and the invited guests wearing the wedding garment.

Five of the virtuous virgins who were expecting the wedding party to arrive were, nevertheless, excluded. They were virgins like the others; but the others were allowed to enter, and they were not. They did not lack virginity. They did not lack notice. They were not surprised by an unexpected wedding party arriving. But they lacked "oil," which is a symbol of the Holy Ghost. They failed to acquire the necessary spirit with which to avoid conflict, envy, strife, tumult, and contention. To grow into the kind of people God will want us to welcome into His dwelling requires practice, experience, and effort. People have not done it. Devout religious people are not prepared to live in peace, with all things in common, with no poor among them. God is trying to create a civilization that does not yet

exist.

It is a privilege for God to give guidance to help prepare His people. There has always been a promise from the Lord that those who inherit Zion will be given commandments from Him to follow. He declared:

Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel, for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth [it's] strength. And they...shall [also] be crowned with blessings from above, yea...with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time, [that] they...are faithful and diligent[ly] before me. (T&C 46:1)

Those who mock or criticize efforts to complete the Restoration are defining themselves as unworthy by their own words. No matter how good they may otherwise be, when they embrace conflict, envy, strife, tumult, and contention, they cannot be invited to the wedding of the Lamb.

We need more commandments from God to prepare for what is coming. The example in 4 Nephi commends those people who walk after the commandments received from our Lord and God. There should be fasting and prayer. People should meet together, pray, and review the words of the Lord. Every step taken will make us more like those virgins who have oil in their lamps and less like the foolish virgins who took no effort to make the required preparation.

It's not enough to avoid outright evil. We have to be good. Being "good" means to be separate from the world, united in charity towards each other, and to have united hearts. If we are ready when the wedding party arrives, we must follow the Lord's commandments to us. They are for our good. He wants us to awaken and arise from an awful slumber.

The third such society will not be taken into heaven. Instead, it will welcome the return of the first two to the earth. Why would ancient, righteous societies caught up to heaven want to leave there to come and meet with a city of people on earth? Why would they fall on their necks and kiss that gathered body of believers? And above all else, why would Christ want to occupy a tabernacle and dwell with such a community? Obviously, because there will be people living on earth whose civilization is like the society in heaven.

The Ten Commandments outline basic social norms needed for peace and stability. Christ's Sermon on the Mount was His exposition on the Ten Commandments. He expounded on the need to align the intent of the heart with God's standard to love your fellow man, do good to those who abuse you, and hold no anger. He took us deeper. Where the Ten Commandments allowed reluctant, resentful, and hard-hearted conformity, the Sermon on the Mount requires a willing readiness to obey. Christ wants us to act with alacrity to follow Him. He taught us to treat others as you would want to be treated.

The answer to these questions is easy to conceptualize and easy to verbalize. But living the answer is beyond mankind's ability to endure. We do not want to lay down our pride, ambition, jealousy, envy, strife, and lusts to become that community.

Enoch prophesied about the last-days Zion. He saw the earth was pained by the wickedness upon her. He wrote this account:

Enoch looked upon the earth and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying, Woe, woe is me, the mother of men. I am pained; I am weary because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest and be cleansed from the filthiness which has gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face? And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying, O Lord will you not have compassion upon the earth?
(Genesis 4:20 RE)

The answer describes things that have not happened—but may happen in our day, if we choose to follow the Lord. The opportunity has been offered. The Lord's answer to Enoch was in the form of a covenant. That covenant will be vindicated, but only by those who will rise up to obey Him. God's words will not fail, and this will happen:

*And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the earth shall rest. But before that day, the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth. And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but **my people** will I preserve. And righteousness will I send down out of Heaven...[I will] gather out [mine] own elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I [have] prepare[d], a holy city, that **my people** may gird up their loins and be looking forth for [a] time of my coming. For there shall be my tabernacle...it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shall you and...your city meet **them** there, and we will receive **them** into our bosom. And they shall see us, and we will fall [on] **their** necks, and **they** shall fall [on] our necks, and we will kiss each other, and there shall be my abode. (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added)*

The last-days Zion and her people were planned, foretold, and chosen thousands of years ago to live on earth when righteousness would come down out of heaven. They will be here when truth is sent forth out of the earth to bear testimony of Christ. And, like a flood, righteousness and truth will sweep the earth. Any who have witnessed a flood know floodwaters carry a great deal of debris, dirt, and detritus. Today there is a flood of information, recordings, and teachings sweeping the earth. The Internet has made it possible for an individual sitting at a keyboard to speak to the entire world. Righteousness is sweeping the earth, while floodwaters are disturbing the whole world.

In Joseph Smith's day it was required for an army of messengers to be sent. There was a practical limit on how many people Joseph could personally teach. Outside the direct sound of his voice only printed words could carry the message. He and those who followed him invested in a press to publish newspapers and books to carry the truth. But that still was not enough— It required an organized body of missionaries to take the publications, repeat

the message, and convey the new truths came through revelation to Joseph Smith. Even with the enormous investment of time and resources made while Joseph was alive, there were places and people who never heard a thing about the Restoration while Joseph lived.

Today we must still warn others. However, we have much more greater means available to us. We can use a keyboard to reach the whole world. There are people in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and South America, and across North America who participate in our conferences. I want to send greetings to our brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere who cannot travel to be with us. The flood of overflowing the world today includes the promised righteousness and truth, but it requires the Lord's elect to distinguish between the filth, folly, and foolishness to find freedom from sin through Christ, who is the foundation of righteousness and truth.

Prophets have described how this will happen. Isaiah described a coming age of peace when righteousness and truth have their opportunity to bear fruit. He spoke of Christ and of the power in Christ's teachings to transform the world itself. That same world that Enoch heard lamenting, pained by the violence on her face, will find rest. Isaiah foretells what will happen just prior to the Lord's return:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and [the] little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of [an] asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse [which] shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. (Isaiah 5:4 RE)

How will Christ smite the earth with the rod of His mouth? By teaching peace to people who are willing to obey and live at peace.

In the first Zion, the people were at peace with nature. But that place was apparently protected by nature. What scripture describes is not magic or "fairy dust," but a perfectly natural process. This creation has been ordained by God and framed with intelligence to follow certain principles established before the foundation of the world. Any people in any age who follow the same pattern will receive the same result. What is described in this passage about Enoch and his city?

And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them, and he spoke the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled—even according to his command—and the rivers of water were turned out of their course, and the roar of...lions were heard out of the wilderness. And all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him. (Genesis 4:13 RE)

Would a lion that had been befriended by Enoch and his people be inclined, by its nature, to protect the people it viewed as part of its clan? Would a bear protect its shepherd and guardian? Would a wolf? Is it possible for a civilization to exist that does not hurt nor destroy in all their land? If they would not hurt nor destroy in all their land, would it be a holy place?

We live in a very different civilization from the one described in prophecy. But the one described prophetically will not just one day appear. It will require effort, learning, obedience, and sacrifice to change.

The earth rejoiced at Enoch's people. The earth protected those people. Earthquakes, landslides, and floods stopped the wicked—and the animal kingdom, including predators like the lion, rose up to protect the City of Enoch. For those who are prepared to receive the people of Enoch and Melchizedek, and those who will welcome the Lord to dwell among them, that can and will happen.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's remarks at "A Day of Faith and Connection" youth conference in UT on June 10th, 2017
- His Opening Remarks given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho on September 3rd, 2017
- A fireside talk titled "That We Might Become One", given in Clinton, UT on January 14th, 2018
- Denver's remarks titled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work" given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, UT on August 4, 2018; and
- Denver's conference talk titled "Civilization", given in Grand Junction, CO on April 21, 2019