

## Podcast 148: Shem, Part 7

This is the seventh and final 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.

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DENVER: If we obey the commandments that have been given, we can qualify to inherit a land on which to build a temple. The objective of the covenant was to confer the right to live on the land, surviving the judgments coming upon the wicked. *We* need to live up to our end of the covenant. It is clear the Lord is willing to bear with, guide, give commandments to help prepare, and reprove His people when needed. We should not rely on the Lord's patience, but should be eager to obey His guiding instruction. His commandments are not to limit us, but to increase light and truth. Some intelligence is only gained by obedience to His commandments.

Joseph Smith tried to teach the people. They failed to do as they were commanded. They lost the opportunity to have the fullness of the priesthood restored to them. As a result of their failure, for nearly two centuries, institutions have pretended the fullness was restored and they inherited it. Until now, no people have acknowledged the failure, repented, and asked the Lord to restore the fullness of the priesthood.

Salem was a land filled with abominations. Melchizedek, by faith, obtained the Holy Order, taught repentance, and persuaded them to reform. Nauvoo was a viper's den. It was a place with widespread adultery and conspirators who precipitated the murders of Joseph and Hyrum.

Why, during His mortal ministry, did Jesus Christ not establish a place of peace, a city of Zion? Was not Christ the greatest teacher of all?

Reflect on this and consider whether the people who were taught by Melchizedek lived with and were taught by Joseph Smith, would they have repented, obeyed and obtained the fullness?

If Enoch's people lived in Nauvoo, would they have repented? If Joseph, instead of Enoch, taught the people of Enoch, would there have been Zion? Had Joseph, instead of Melchizedek, taught the people of Salem, would they have forsaken their abominations?

Is Zion the result of the teacher or the people?

The people matter more than the teacher. As long as the gospel is taught, including the need for repentance and obedience, any faithful teacher may be enough. But nobody can bring Zion with people who refuse to repent and obey God's commandments. The teacher is necessary, but only a community of people willing to heed the gospel can fulfill the

prophecies.

I have to temper the foregoing by the lesson Alma preserved (I think perhaps quoted from the writings of Zenos) about Melchizedek:

*Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem, and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abominations—yea, 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. And Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore, he was called the Prince of Peace, for he was the King of Salem; and he did reign under his father. Now there were many before him, and...there were [also] many afterwards, but none were greater. (Alma 10:2 RE)*

If people who had all gone astray and were filled with iniquity and abominations were moved by his message of repentance, could Melchizedek have persuaded Nauvoo to abandon their wickedness, strife, ambition, jealousy, and adultery? There is no answer because of Christ's inability to bring Zion. Christ was greater than Melchizedek, and He could not accomplish with His contemporaries what Melchizedek did with his.

None of us is spared from mutual failure. We are not Zion. We will never be Zion if we do not repent. All of us must repent, turn to face God with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy, or we will not establish godly peace among us.

The Answer to the Prayer for Covenant and the Covenant are the beginning blueprint. That blueprint teaches the need to be better people. Following it is more challenging than reciting it. No one can learn what is required *without doing*. Working together is the only way a society can grow together. No isolated spiritual mystic is going to be prepared for Zion through his solitary personal devotions. Personal devotion is necessary, of course, but the most pious hermit will collide with the next pious hermit when they are required to share and work together in a society of equals having all things in common. Do not pretend it will be otherwise. Failing to do the hard work outlined in the covenant is failing to prepare for Zion. It's failing to have oil in the lamp. It's failing to put upon you the wedding garment.

If you think you are one of the five virgins who will be invited in when the bridegroom arrives and have never attempted to obey the Lord's commandments, you will find yourself left outside when the door is shut. If you come from the highways and byways without a wedding garment because you failed to keep the covenant, you'll be excluded.

As aggravating and trying as people are on one another, we need to go through this. There is no magic path to loving one another. Some people refuse and must be left outside. When it comes to loving others, some things must be abandoned, some things must be added, some things must be forgotten, and some things must be ignored. But learning what to abandon, add, forget, or ignore is only through the doing. We chip away at ourselves and others by

interacting and sharing.

We will learn things about one another that will distress us. And we may well wish we didn't know some things about others. How will the socially-offensive become socially-acceptable without help from a loving society? And how can a society become loving if people are not broad-minded enough to figure out that some things just don't matter? Few things really are important. If a man is honest, just, virtuous, and true, should you care if he swears? If a man has a heart of gold and would give you assistance if he thought it was needed, should you care if he is rough and uncouth?

The adulterous and predatory will rarely reform and must often be excluded. They will victimize and destroy. We are commanded to cast out those who steal, love and make a lie, commit adultery, and refuse to repent. The instructions we have been given state:

*You shall not kill; he that kills shall die. You shall not steal...he that steals and will not repent **shall be cast out**. You shall not lie; he that lies and will not repent **shall be cast out**. You shall love your wife with all your heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else...he that looks upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the spirit, and if he repent not...**shall be cast out**. You shall not commit adultery, and he that commits adultery and repents not **shall be cast out**; and he that commits adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsakes [it] and does it no more, you shall forgive him; but if he does it again, he **shall not be forgiven, [and] shall be cast out**. You shall not speak evil of your neighbor [nor] or do him any harm. You know my laws, they are given in my scriptures. **He that sins and repents not shall be cast out**. If you love me, you shall serve me and **keep all my commandments**. (T&C 26:6, emphasis added)*

This teaching is still binding. If your fellowship includes those who ought to be "cast out" you have the obligation to do so rather than encouraging evil. Be patient, but be firm. If a person refuses to repent and forsake sins, you may end fellowship with them and include those who are interested in practicing obedience and love.

There is work to be done. Almost all of it is internal to us. The five prepared virgins and the strangers who brought a wedding garment will be those who keep the covenant. It is designed to give birth to a new society, new culture, and permit a new civilization to be founded.

The Lord's civilization will require His tabernacle at the center. Through it, a recovered religion will be fully developed. God's house will include a higher law—an education about the universe—and a divine university will be established. It will be an ensign in the mountains, and people from all over the earth will say: Come, let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us; we will learn of his paths, to walk in them (see Isaiah 1:5; 2 Nephi 8:4 RE). That place will house a new civilization. There will be no hermit gurus proud of their enlightenment.

No one will offer himself or herself up as some great idol to follow. It will be a place of

equality, where people are meek and lowly, serving one another without any attempt to compete for “chief seats.”

Christ’s apostles competed to be greater than one another. In the New Covenants, Luke 13:6, Christ’s reaction is recorded:

*There was also a strife among them: who of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they who exercise authority upon them are called benefactors, but it ought not...be so with you. But he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who is chief, as he who does serve. For whether is he greater who sits at [the] meal, or he who serves? I am not as he who sits at a meal, but I am among you as he who serves.*

Christ is the great example. Christ would have fit into Enoch’s city, would have been welcomed among Melchizedek’s people, and could have dwelt in peace with the Nephites of Fourth Nephi. Has He, as once before between Jerusalem and Emmaus, walked among them unnoticed to enjoy their peaceful company?

I cannot keep the covenant. You cannot keep the covenant. Only we can keep the covenant.

The path to Zion is so far beyond the reach of mankind that we know of only two successful times in scripture where heaven and earth united in Zion. One was at the time of Enoch; the other, the city of Melchizedek. In Eden, heaven and earth were united—but Eden fell. Following the visit of Christ to the Nephites, there were several hundred years of peace. But Christ’s visit was temporary, and they did not reunite with heaven as a people.

We face a challenge to become something very rare, godly—even holy. It’s perplexing how people were able to lay aside all envy, strife, ambition, selfishness, and enmity between one another—yet that is exactly what **we** are asked to do.

The saints in Joseph Smith’s day failed. The Lord, speaking of that, said:

*"Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed, even now. But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I require at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becomes saints, to the poor and afflicted among them, and are not united according to the union required by the law of the Celestial Kingdom. And 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. And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be by the things which they suffer." (T&C 107:1)(D&C 105:2)*

This building up of Zion, according to the principles of the law of the Celestial Kingdom, does not initially involve the law of consecration. Joseph Smith ended that practice. He said, “...that the law of consecration could not be kept here and that it was the will of the Lord

that we should desist from trying to keep it, and if persisted in, it would produce a perfect abortion, and that he assumed the whole responsibility of not keeping it until proposed by himself" (*History of the Church*, 4:93; cf. 105:34). And Joseph died, of course, without ever proposing again the keeping of that law, although there were subsequent attempts made which proved to be a perfect abortion.

Consecration will eventually follow, but like everything that is distant and above this fallen world, it is not a single step. It is a stepped-process and cannot be done in haste nor in a single instant. We have to grow, degree by degree, measure by measure, in order to attempt.

This is another revelation:

*"Therefore, in consequence of the transgression of my people, it is expedient in me that my elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion that they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and **know** more perfectly concerning their **duty** and the things which I require at their hands. And this cannot be brought to pass until my elders are endowed with power from on high, for behold, I have prepared a great endowment and [the] blessing to be poured out upon them, inasmuch as they are faithful and continue in humility before me. Therefore, it is expedient in me that my elders should wait a little season for the redemption of Zion."* (T&C 107:3)(D&C 105:9)

It is clear, at least to me, that the temple is where the Lord intends for people to be taught more perfectly and have experience and know more perfectly concerning their duty and the things which He requires at our hands. He calls that an endowment with power. Knowledge is power, but to qualify to receive that endowment, we're required to be like Abraham, who described himself in these words:

*"Having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge..."* (Abraham 1:1 RE)(Abraham 1:2)

All of those things go together. These are not disconnected thoughts. They are also not thoughts that are unrelated to "returning knowledge and understanding that reaches back into the creation itself, and before the creation," and then goes forward to the end of this cycle of creation. So, he desired to possess:

*"...great knowledge...to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge [those things go together], ...to be a Father of many nations [he was situated at a time where that was **necessarily** one of the things that followed from obtaining what he sought after], a prince of peace, and desiring to **receive instructions** and to keep the commandments of God [We tend to think that instructions and commandments from God can be burdensome. Abraham viewed it as an opportunity to gain greater knowledge, greater understanding, and therefore, with a better perspective and understanding of what God expected of us, to be a greater follower of righteousness, to fit into a pattern], "I became a rightful heir, a*

*high priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers: it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning (or before the foundations of the earth) to the present time, even the right of the firstborn (or the first man — who is Adam — or [the] first Father) through the Fathers unto me.” (Abraham 1:1 RE)(Abraham 1:2-3)*

This is what God has in mind for the Restoration to be completed. This is what God intended for us to inherit as our endowment, as our greater knowledge, and enabling us to be greater followers of righteousness.

“Promises made to the fathers” are covenants that God made with them concerning the last days’ work, in which there would again be on the earth those who are connected to the Fathers in a way that avoids the earth becoming utterly wasted at His coming. This is something that has to be attended to through the restoration and construction of an authentic temple conforming to the pattern of heaven, in which these things can be attended to and the knowledge and understanding imputed, in order for people to comprehend what it means to be a “greater follower of righteousness.”

This was a revelation given in March 2015: “Hence, the great need to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to the children—and this too by covenant and sealing through the Holy Spirit of Promise” (*Plural Marriage*, Denver C. Snuffer, Jr. March 22, 2015). This is to restore **us**—as God restored Abraham—to the original religion.

Abraham came into this world uniquely different from the fathers that had gone before. There was an unbroken chain that continued from father to son and father to son, from the time of Adam, down through the generations until the time of Melchizedek. All of them were participants in an unbroken familial line. Abraham came into an apostate family in which his father worshipped—indeed made—dumb idols as the god to be worshipped. Therefore, Abraham is the first one that will join this line, who emerges from apostasy into possession of the original holy order. In that sense, Abraham is representative of **all** who would follow after, that seek after righteousness, in a world that is **constantly** overcome by apostasy.

Before Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden (into the world in which death would enter, and Adam would be obligated to succumb to that death), there was an anointing oil prepared in Eden itself that was designed to be used in order to help the Descendant of Adam who would come to crush the head of the serpent—that, once He was anointed, would equip Him to come back from the grave and be resurrected. And that was entrusted into Adam’s care before he was cast out of the Garden, as something to be preserved and handed down until the time that the Messiah comes. And as circumstances would have it, that got passed from those that had the responsibility, down through the generations—until finally, Melchizedek turned it over to father Abraham, who, in turn, handed it down through his lineage. And subsequently, there was a line—entrusted not only with possession of the anointing oil that came from Eden but also knowledge about the signs that would be given when the moment came for the oil to be delivered.

And so it was that the sign was given. They recognized and interpreted it correctly. They went to the place where it had been stored by their ancestors. They retrieved it, and then they traveled to find Him who was born the King of the Jews. And upon finding the family (with a sign that signified—from above, according to their understanding and interpretation of the signs—that this was the child, this was the family), they delivered the gifts, which were, in turn, used.

But the oil for anointing was kept. And that oil was handed down, until finally, the moment came when the Savior intended to go up and to provoke His crucifixion. And preliminary to that moment, Mary (the mother) instructed Mary (the consort of Christ) in the manner by which this was to be done. And so, He was anointed—in preparation for His death and His burial and His rising again—with what had been set out and kept (originating in Eden), to be used in order to complete the process of qualifying Him to return again, to have strength in the loins and in the sinews, and the power to rise again from the dead and to lay hold upon all of the faculties of the immortal, physical body.

And so, He was anointed—at the end—with the oil that had been entrusted, originally, to Adam and handed down with an obscure and small body of believers (who were dying out and who were older—and the last of their tradition, it seemed). But the Messiah came, and they discharged the obligation; and the blessing was able to be given, and the Savior was able to rise from the dead. And so, He opened the way, then, for the return from the grave of **everyone** who has faith on His name and accepts (on condition of repentance) the terms to have His atonement applied to us.

So, ask yourself:

- Do the Gentiles now qualify?
- Have they met this standard?
- Have the Gentiles repented of their iniquity and become clean before the Lord?
- Do the Gentiles now exercise faith in the Lord even as the brother of Jared did?
- Have the Gentiles now become sanctified in Christ? or
- Do the foolish Gentiles still fall victim to lying spirits that interfere with and compromise the work of preparing to establish Zion?

Economic realities and legal obligations must be dealt with. The path to Zion does not go **through** consecration. Consecration comes **after** there is a Zion. Even Father Abraham did not live the law of consecration. He was sanctified and qualified to receive all the blessings of the Fathers and now sits on a throne, but he paid **tithes** to Melchizedek.

When Joseph Smith restored Enoch's record (now found in Genesis), Joseph learned about the last days' Zion. It revealed, *And the Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart, and...one mind, and [dwelt] in righteousness, and there [was] no poor among them* (Genesis 4:14 RE).

I do not believe this was their ancient goal, but it was a byproduct. Such a society cannot be organized but can be gathered. Individuals rarely are able to persuade one another through arguing to expose the other man's error.

Even among people who keep their eyes on the Lord and pay no heed to their neighbor's failure still must grow to become:

- People who refuse to judge and belittle others;
- Those who are humbled by the opportunity to build a house of God;
- Those who refuse to become an accuser.

Even among humble people the Lord can use to restore His house, there will be many things on which to disagree. Therefore, we should ask ourselves:

- What if I don't need to always be right?
- What if you don't need to be wrong?
- What if we don't need to debate?
- Can people with different backgrounds be of one heart?
- Can we have different ideas, value one another, and be of one mind?
- Is it possible to disagree with one another about meanings of Scriptures and still dwell in righteousness?
- Can we explore, consider, and respectfully discuss incomplete or inaccurate ideas?
- What if *no poor among us* includes sharing the wealth of diverse and interesting ideas?

This path of sober, thoughtful, open welcoming of differences is the only way first steps can be taken. We cannot jump into Zion. We must crawl there on bended knee, asking the Lord to bring us there.

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The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's conference talk titled "Civilization", given in Grand Junction, CO on April 21, 2019
- Denver's conference talk titled "The Book of Mormon Holds the Covenant Pattern for the Full Restoration" given in Boise, ID on September 22, 2019
- The Q&A session at the Keeping the Covenant Conference in Boise, ID on September 22, 2019; and
- Denver's conference talk titled "The Heavens are Open", given in Hurricane, UT on March 22, 2020