**The Story of the Church of Christ**

**XII. Zion and The Temple**

The Book of Ether 6:1-8 in the Book of Mormon gives an account of many things the prophet Ether saw about future events. He saw the days of Christ, and he spoke of “**a new Jerusalem** upon this land.” He also saw that **old** Jerusalem from which Lehi later came, and which was destroyed shortly after Christ would be rebuilt as a holy city of the Lord. The **New** Jerusalem that would be built upon this land - (the Americas) - would be the inheritance of the remnant of Joseph here. It would be an actual city, and it would have a holy temple of the Lord.

It was made known to both the early missionaries who had been sent to Missouri and Joseph Smith, that Independence, Missouri should be the center place of **Zion -** the **New** Jerusalem. It would also be the location of a temple. This temple would be built by the descendants of Joseph and those who are heirs by their covenant with God. This land - the Americas - has been called Joseph’s land. So we have the revelation given to Ether in ancient times and the revelation given to the Church of Christ in latter days in agreement.

In August, 1831 Joseph Smith and members from Colesville, New York laid foundation logs for the first house to be built in the land of Zion -- a few miles from present day Independence, Missouri. The land was consecrated as the land of Zion. The following day eight elders, including Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon met together where the temple was to be built. Sidney Rigdon dedicated the land where the city would be located, and Joseph Smith laid a corner stone where it was planned one day the temple would stand. The precise spot for the temple had been given by revaluation. This ground was dedicated to the Lord forever.

At this time people began to establish themselves on the land of Zion. At the time of the dedication the Church did not own the land that was to be the Temple Lot site. They were, however, able later to buy the land.

W. W. Phelps, a printer was told to establish a printing office in Independence for the Church. In Ohio it had been decided to print in book form some of the revelations that had been given. The book would be titled **The Book of Commandments**. The first thing W. W. Phelps printed was a monthly newspaper titled “The Evening and Morning Star”. There were only fourteen numbers printed before the printing office and printing press were destroyed by a mob opposed to the Church.

Zion and the Temple (cont.)

Before the destruction of the printing press, several copies of the Book of Commandments had been printed. Joseph Smith had reviewed the revelations before they were printed. He asked at a special conference in November that those carrying the sacred writings to Zion and those writings be dedicated to the Lord. Not only had the Book of Commandments been completed, it had been copyrighted, and David Whitmer possessed one of the circulated copies.

When the people of the Church continued to arrive in Missouri and set up a printing press, it became plain they planned to stay permanently. This aroused the anger of the people already living there. The question of slavery may have influenced some of the opposition since Missouri was a slave state and most of the Church members were from the Northern State and opposed to slavery. However, the main cause of the persecution which drove the people from Missouri was the religious beliefs of the Church. These teachings were neither understood nor accepted by the population living there when Church members arrived.

After the destruction of the print shop and a general store in July, the persecution never let up. That winter twelve hundred people were driven from their homes. In late November these people were camped on the banks of the Missouri River. Many of them died from exposure to the cold and illness. For awhile some of the people found peace in another county. Soon talk from their old enemies followed them and the persecution began again. Finally, a friend of the Church, Alexander Doniphan, was able to get the state government to create a new county where the Church people could live by themselves. They settled in the new county (Caldwell) and established a new town named Far West. Soon the number of Church members moving in from the East greatly increased. The new county couldn’t hold them all, and they spread out into neighboring counties. When their enemies became angry again, General Alexander Doniphan advised them to arm themselves in self defense. Fighting broke out, and one of the twelve apostles, David Patten, was killed. All of the leaders of the Church were captured and imprisoned. Those in jail were sentenced to be shot. The imprisoned leaders escaped that winter and went to the neighboring state of Illinois hoping to find their families and other Church members who had fled there earlier.