

Introduction

The hope of all righteous parents is that their descendants will come to know God for themselves and be faithful to Him. God promised Abraham and his descendants that in the latter days their posterity would have the blessings of the gospel and would be gathered to places of safety. The Father commanded the Savior to teach these promises to the Nephites.

The principle of gathering involves more than assembling people together on certain lands. It also includes a spiritual gathering that occurs when someone comes in contact with and joins the Church. In their scattered condition, Israel lost the knowledge of their God, His gospel, the priesthood, the temple, and the truths of salvation. The Father promised, however, that He would reach out to Israel in the last days and offer them His gospel, His priesthood, the temple, and the path to eternal life. Heavenly Father wants to offer the blessings of the gospel to all of His children and is helping to bring about this latter-day gathering.

Commentary

3 Nephi 20:1. We Should Continually Pray in Our Hearts

- After their prayer had ended, the Savior gave the Nephites important counsel to keep a prayer continually in their hearts. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles similarly declared:

“Prophets have long told us to pray humbly and frequently. . . .

“Prayers can be offered even in silence. One can *think* a prayer, especially when words would interfere” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 5; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 7).

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught:

“Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart. Pray on your knees. . . .



“Prayer is *your* personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil [see Revelation 3:20]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 76–77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 59).

3 NEPHI 20:8–9

What does the Savior promise those who partake of the sacrament? Why is this promise so significant?

3 Nephi 20:8–9. The Sacramental Promise of Being Filled with the Spirit

- Concerning the blessings associated with partaking of the sacrament, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Attendance at church each week provides the opportunity to partake of the sacrament, as the Lord has commanded us (see D&C 59:9). If we act with the right preparation and attitude, partaking of the sacrament renews the cleansing effect of our baptism and qualifies us for the promise that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. A mission of that Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is to testify of the Father and the Son and to lead us into truth (see John 14:26; 2 Nephi 31:18). Testimony and truth, which are essential to our personal conversion, are the choice harvest of this weekly renewing of our covenants. In the day-to-day decisions of my life and in my personal spiritual growth, I have enjoyed the fulfillment of that promise” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 38; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 34).

- Elder Oaks also counseled: “To those brothers and sisters who may have allowed themselves to become lax in this vital renewal of the covenants of the sacrament, I plead in words of the First Presidency that you ‘come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints’ (‘An Invitation to Come Back,’ *Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, 3). Let us qualify ourselves for our Savior’s promise that by partaking of the sacrament we will ‘be filled’ (3 Nephi 20:8; see also 3 Nephi 18:9), which means that we will be ‘filled with the Spirit’ (3 Nephi 20:9). That Spirit—the Holy Ghost—is our

comforter, our direction finder, our communicator, our interpreter, our witness, and our purifier—our infallible guide and sanctifier for our mortal journey toward eternal life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 82; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 61).

3 Nephi 20:11–13. Isaiah Wrote of the Gathering of Israel

- Jesus commanded the Nephites, as well as us, to search the words of Isaiah. As we see the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies, we will know that God is keeping His covenant with the house of Israel. The Bible Dictionary explains that “the bulk of Isaiah’s prophecies deal with the coming of the Redeemer” (“Isaiah,” 707). The scattering and the gathering of Israel are also two of Isaiah’s major themes.

Teachings of the Redeemer and the gathering of Israel are closely related. God scattered Israel because they sinned and rejected Him. The Atonement, however, provides them a chance to be reconciled to God, to have their sins remitted, and to be gathered to Him both spiritually and physically.

- For more information on the gathering of Israel, refer to “The Gathering of Israel” in the appendix (p. 416).

3 NEPHI 20:11–13

What is the key to knowing the timing of the gathering? (see 3 Nephi 21:1–7). What role do we play in the gathering? (see D&C 88:81).

- The Savior spoke of fulfilling His Father’s covenant to gather scattered Israel. Who is Israel and why were they scattered? The Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would have the gospel and the priesthood and that through them all the families of the earth would be blessed (see Abraham 2:9–11). This promise was renewed with Abraham’s son Isaac (see Genesis 26:3–5), with Isaac’s son Jacob (see Genesis 28:12–15), and with Jacob’s descendants, the children of Israel.

Sadly, the children of Israel sinned against God and forfeited these promises. Eventually, in fulfillment of God’s warnings, they were expelled from their

promised land and scattered throughout the earth. However, the Lord has not forgotten them. Heavenly Father promised that they would one day be taught the gospel and gathered to lands of promise. This promise is part of the covenant He made that He would gather and teach the children of Israel.

- President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained that by accepting the gospel covenant, we comply with the law of the gathering: “Now, the gathering of Israel consists of joining the true church and their coming to a knowledge of the true God. . . . Any person, therefore, who has accepted the restored gospel, and who now seeks to worship the Lord in his own tongue and with the Saints in the nations where he lives, has complied with the law of the gathering of Israel and is heir to all of the blessings promised the Saints in these last days” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 439).

- In the early days of the Church, leaders encouraged converts to join with the Saints in central places, such as Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Utah. Today the Saints are instructed to build up the Church where they live. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency explained:

“In our day, the Lord has seen fit to provide the blessings of the gospel, including an increased number of temples, in many parts of the world. Therefore, we wish to reiterate the long-standing counsel to members of the Church to remain in their homelands rather than immigrate to the United States. . . .

“As members throughout the world remain in their homelands, working to build the Church in their native countries, great blessings will come to them personally and to the Church collectively” (First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1999)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 106; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 102).

- Elder Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy described the purposes and processes of Israel’s gathering in the last days: “Our present gathering is primarily spiritual, not geographic. Christ declared that in the latter-days He would ‘establish [His] church,’ ‘establish [His] people,’ and ‘establish . . . among them [His] Zion’ (3 Ne. 21:22; 3 Ne. 20:21; 3 Ne. 21:1). As He establishes His Church in our day, people can be taught the gospel

and be 'brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God' (3 Ne. 20:13) without leaving their homes. In contrast to the pronouncements during the early days of the restored Church, our leaders have decreed that now the gathering should take place within each land and among every tongue. Our need to be physically near large numbers of Saints is less than it was a century ago because Church magazines and satellite transmissions bridge distance and time, creating a sense of oneness throughout the entire Church. All have access to the same keys, ordinances, doctrine, and spiritual gifts" ("Book of Mormon Principles: The Gathering of the Lord's Faithful," *Ensign*, Oct. 2004, 59).

3 Nephi 20:14, 22. A Land of Inheritance

- Jesus taught the Nephites that Heavenly Father gave them the land of America as an inheritance. Lehi also had received this promise when he arrived in the promised land (see 2 Nephi 1:5). This confirmed the blessing that Jacob gave to Joseph when he said, "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills" (Genesis 49:26). The phrase "utmost bound of the everlasting hills" refers to the Western Hemisphere. President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) explained: "The Lord gave . . . America, as an everlasting possession to Joseph, the son of Jacob. His posterity, when cleansed from sin, and when they come forth in the resurrection, shall inherit this part of the earth. This land shall be theirs forever" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 1:88).

3 Nephi 20:21–22; 21:23–29. The New Jerusalem Will Be Built in America

- Zion, the New Jerusalem, is to be a place of safety, both physically and spiritually. The Savior, in speaking of the last days, counseled us to "stand in holy places" (see D&C 45:32) and promised us safety in Zion and in her stakes (see D&C 115:6). The Savior taught



His disciples that the city of Zion, the New Jerusalem, would be "a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety" in the time leading up to the Second Coming (see D&C 45:66–71).

The tenth article of faith states: "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."

On another occasion, the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) taught: "The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; . . . it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory, 'the dispensation of the fullness of times. . . .' A work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family" (*History of the Church*, 4:609–10).

3 Nephi 20:22. God Will Dwell in Our Midst

- While teaching the Nephites about Zion or the New Jerusalem, the Savior promised that He would "be in the midst" of His people (3 Nephi 20:22). The Lord used a similar phrase in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"But behold, verily, verily, I say unto you that mine eyes are upon you. I am in your midst and ye cannot see me;

"But the day soon cometh that ye shall see me, and know that I am; for the veil of darkness shall soon be rent, and he that is not purified shall not abide the day.

"Wherefore, gird up your loins and be prepared" (D&C 38:7–9).

The promise that God will dwell in the midst of Zion can have reference to Him being in the temple in Zion (the New Jerusalem) and that "all the pure in heart that shall come into [the temple] shall see God" (see D&C 97:16).

3 Nephi 20:23–24. “A Prophet Shall the Lord Your God Raise Up”

- In Deuteronomy 18:15 Moses prophesied that one day in the future “the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto” Moses. In 3 Nephi 20:23–24 the Savior identified Himself as that Prophet. This is such a significant prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah that it can be found in the Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price (see Deuteronomy 18:15–19; Acts 3:22; 3 Nephi 20:23–24; D&C 133:63; Joseph Smith—History 1:40).

3 Nephi 20:25–27. Becoming Children of the Covenant

- Jesus identified the Nephites as “children of the covenant” (3 Nephi 20:26). Elder Russell M. Nelson explained what covenant the Savior was referring to and how this phrase applies to us:

“The covenant that the Lord first made with Abraham and reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob is of transcendent significance. . . .

“We are also children of the covenant. We have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are our ancestors. We are of Israel. We have the right to receive the gospel, blessings of the priesthood, and eternal life. Nations of the earth will be blessed by our efforts and by the labors of our posterity. The literal seed of Abraham and those who are gathered into his family by adoption receive these promised blessings—predicated upon acceptance of the Lord and obedience to his commandments” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 42–43; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 33).

3 Nephi 20:29. Prophecy Concerning the Restoration of Jerusalem

- The restoration of the tribe of Judah and the city of Jerusalem appears as an important theme in Old Testament and Book of Mormon prophecy. In our dispensation, the Lord has declared:

“Let them, therefore, who are among the Gentiles flee unto Zion.

“And let them who be of Judah flee unto Jerusalem, unto the mountains of the Lord’s house” (D&C 133:12–13).



Concerning the restoration of Judah, the Prophet Joseph Smith testified: “Judah must return, Jerusalem be rebuilt, and the temple, and water come out from under the temple, and the waters of the Dead Sea be healed. It will take some time to rebuild the walls of the city and the temple, &c.; and all this must be done before the Son of Man will make His appearance” (*History of the Church*, 5:337).

3 Nephi 20:29–33. The Jews Will Believe and Be Gathered

- On October 24, 1841, Elder Orson Hyde (1805–78) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered an apostolic prayer from the summit of the Mount of Olives on behalf of the Jewish people who were scattered throughout the world. At the time of his prayer there were few Jews living in Palestine, and the political climate was such that there was not much hope that they would ever be allowed to gather there. Since that time a number of remarkable events have occurred as the modern country of Israel was born and became a “homeland” for the Jewish people. While it is evident that the Lord’s blessings have attended this “gathering,” it is clear that this is not the fulness of the gathering of the Jews that was prophesied of by the prophets in the Book of Mormon.



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Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the current gathering of the Jews to their homeland is not a

fulfillment of this prophecy, but a political gathering. “As all the world knows, many Jews are now gathering to Palestine, where they have their own nation and way of worship, all without reference to a belief in Christ or an acceptance of the laws and ordinances of his everlasting gospel. Is this the latter-day gathering of the Jews of which the scriptures speak? No! It is not; let there be no misunderstanding in any discerning mind on this point. This gathering of the Jews to their homeland, and their organization into a nation and a kingdom, is not the gathering promised by the prophets. It does not fulfill the ancient promises. Those who have thus assembled have not gathered into the true Church and fold of their ancient Messiah” (*The Millennial Messiah* [1982], 229).

- President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) of the First Presidency spoke of the gathering of Judah. He read selections from the Book of Mormon that teach what the Jews must do before the Father will gather them to the land of their inheritance. From these selections we learn that when the Jews “no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel” (1 Nephi 19:15); when they “come to the knowledge of their Redeemer” (2 Nephi 6:11); when they “shall be restored to the true church and fold of God” (2 Nephi 9:2); when they “believe in me, that I am Christ” (2 Nephi 10:7); when they believe that Christ is the Son of God and believe in the Atonement and “worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah” (2 Nephi 25:16); when “the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them” and they “shall pray unto the Father in [the Savior’s] name” (3 Nephi 20:30–31), *then* they will be gathered to Jerusalem, the land of their inheritance.

“These predictions by the Book of Mormon prophets make it perfectly clear that the restoration of the house of Israel to the lands of their inheritance will signal their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, to which I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 21; see also pp. 19–20; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 17; see also p. 16).

3 Nephi 20:35. God Will Make Bare His Holy Arm

- What is the meaning of the phrase “the Father hath made bare his holy arm”? (3 Nephi 20:35). “In ancient times, men prepared for battle by throwing their cloak away from the shoulder of their fighting arm (Ps. 74:11). At the second coming of Christ, God will make bare his arm when he shows forth his power for all to see (D&C 133:2–3)” (Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* [1998], 466).

- In our day the Lord reveals His power in the great latter-day work of the Restoration. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that this is true today just as it was during the great events of the early days of the Church: “Now, my brethren, ‘these are [your] days’ (Helaman 7:9) in the history of the Church. Mark well what kind of days they will be, days when, with special visibility, the Lord will ‘make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations’ (D&C 133:3). God will also ‘hasten’ His work (D&C 88:73). He will also ‘shorten’ the last days ‘for the elect’s sake’ (Matthew 24:22); hence, there will be a compression of events (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:20). Furthermore, ‘all things shall be in commotion’ (D&C 88:91). Only those in the process of becoming the men and women of Christ will be able to keep their spiritual balance” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 39).

3 Nephi 20:36–37. “Put on Thy Strength” and “Loose Thyself from the Bands of Thy Neck”

- Doctrine and Covenants 113 explains that the phrase “put on thy strength” means that latter-day priesthood holders will “put on the authority of the priesthood, which [they have] a right to by lineage” (D&C 113:7–8). “The bands of [thy] neck are the curses of God upon her, or the remnants of Israel in their scattered condition among the Gentiles” (D&C 113:10).

Speaking of the eventual movement toward the millennial era, Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the Savior’s words: “We have already seen that Jesus put chapter 52 of Isaiah in a millennial context. In it is found the cry: ‘Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall

no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.’ In the day of which we speak there will be none who are unclean in the telestial sense of the word, for the wicked will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. And there will be none who are uncircumcised, as it were, for all who seek the blessings of the Holy City will be in harmony with the plans and purposes of Him whose city it is” (*Millennial Messiah*, 315).

3 NEPHI 20:36–37, 41

What is the Savior’s counsel for us in these verses? How can you follow that counsel?

3 Nephi 20:40. “How Beautiful upon the Mountains”

• Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that this wonderfully descriptive phrase, “how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings unto them, that publisheth peace,” refers to those who spread the Lord’s gospel, but that it more specifically refers to the Savior Himself: “These familiar passages, written first by Isaiah but spoken of and inspired by Jehovah himself, are often applied to anyone—especially missionaries—who bring the good tidings of the gospel and publish peace to the souls of men. There is nothing inappropriate about such an application, but it is important to realize—as the prophet Abinadi did—that in its purest form and original sense, this psalm of appreciation applies specifically to Christ. It is he and only he who ultimately brings the good tidings of salvation. Only



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through him is true, lasting peace published. To Zion, in both the old and new Jerusalems, it is Christ who declares, ‘Thy God reigneth!’ It is his feet upon the mountain of redemption that are beautiful’ [3 Nephi 20:40]” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 286).

3 Nephi 20:41. “Be Ye Clean That Bear the Vessels of the Lord”

• Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught what it means for priesthood holders to be clean: “As priesthood bearers, not only are we to *handle* sacred vessels and emblems of God’s power—think of preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament, for example—but we are also to *be* a sanctified instrument. Partly because of what we are to *do* but more importantly because of what we are to *be*, the prophets and apostles tell us to ‘flee . . . youthful lusts’ and ‘call on the Lord out of a pure heart.’ They tell us to be clean” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 51–52; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 39).

The injunction “be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (3 Nephi 20:41), given to those in ancient times who handled sacred vessels of worship, applies to modern priesthood holders as well. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) reminded a gathering of the priesthood of this important command when he said: “‘Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord’ (D&C 133:5). Thus has He spoken to us in modern revelation. Be clean in body. Be clean in mind. Be clean in language. Be clean in dress and manner” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 48).

President Hinckley further counseled: “A tattoo is graffiti on the temple of the body. Likewise the piercing of the body” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 52).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled young men and women “to avoid evil talk, to choose your friends wisely, to stay away from pornography and illicit drugs, to not attend evil concerts and dangerous parties, to respect your bodies and keep yourselves morally clean in every way” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 86; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 66).

3 Nephi 21:1–9. The Latter-day Gathering of Israel

- Jesus told the Nephites He would give them “a sign” (3 Nephi 21:1) so they would know when the gathering of Israel had begun. He then foretold the Restoration of the gospel, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the establishment of a free nation in America, and the taking of the gospel to their seed (see vv. 1–7). He called the Restoration of the latter days “a great and a marvelous work” (see v. 9). In the early days of the Restoration, the Savior said “a marvelous work is about to come forth” (see D&C 4:1).

President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke of the miracle of the Restoration and of our responsibility to help move the work forward:

“This glorious gospel was ushered in with the appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph. The dawn of the dispensation of the fulness of times rose upon the world. All of the good, the beautiful, the divine of all previous dispensations was restored in this most remarkable season. . . .

“Do we really comprehend, do we understand the tremendous significance of that which we have? . . .

“We of this generation are the end harvest of all that has gone before. It is not enough to simply be known as a member of this Church. A solemn obligation rests upon us. Let us face it and work at it.

“We must live as true followers of the Christ, with charity toward all, returning good for evil, teaching by example the ways of the Lord, and accomplishing the vast service He has outlined for us” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 84–85; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 83–84).

- For more information on the gathering of Israel, refer to “The Gathering of Israel” in the appendix (p. 416).

3 Nephi 22. Isaiah Used Sacred Imagery to Teach of the Gathering

- The Savior quoted Isaiah 54 in its entirety to further teach concerning the gathering of Israel. Using imagery that is common in prophetic writing, Isaiah personified Israel as a woman whose husband is the Lord. Though forsaken for a time because of wickedness, the day will come when she shall be reconciled to her “Husband” with great mercy. Using this imagery, Isaiah portrayed

beautifully the unfolding miracle of the Restoration. He promised that as the number of her children increased, her tent would need to be enlarged and her stakes strengthened to accommodate her growing family (see 3 Nephi 22:1–3). The sacred commitment of the marriage covenant is brought to mind as the Lord declared the depth of His commitment to Israel (see vv. 4–10). Israel is promised places of safety and beauty (see vv. 11–12) and protection from her enemies (see vv. 13–17).

3 Nephi 22:13. “Thy Children Shall Be Taught of the Lord”

- While serving as the general president of the Primary, Sister Patricia P. Pinegar explained how 3 Nephi 22:13 is used in our day to guide us in teaching our children: “The world is not a safe place.



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It is not a place where children will feel peace, hope, and direction unless they are taught to love and follow the Savior. Please help them know that these great blessings can be theirs, and show them what they need to do to receive these

blessings” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 68).

3 Nephi 22:17. “No Weapon That Is Formed against Thee Shall Prosper”

- There have always been those who have fought against the work of the Lord. As Isaiah promised, they have not prospered in their efforts against us. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that their works would come to naught:

“As surely as this is the work of the Lord, there will be opposition. There will be those, perhaps not a few, who with the sophistry of beguiling words and clever design will spread doubt and seek to undermine the foundation on which this cause is established. They will have their brief day in the sun. They may have for a brief season the plaudits of the doubters and the skeptics and the critics. But they will fade and be forgotten as have their kind in the past.

“Meanwhile, we shall go forward, regardless of their criticism, aware of but undeterred by their statements and actions” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 76; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 60).

Points to Ponder

- The Savior promised that He would gather Israel to fulfill the covenant Heavenly Father made with their fathers (see 3 Nephi 16:5, 11; 20:12–13). This is a global promise with very personal implications. What do you know about the experiences of the first convert Latter-day Saints in your extended

family? What sacrifices did they make to gather with the Saints?

- When have you felt Heavenly Father reach out and touch your heart to draw you to Him?

Suggested Assignments

- Create a plan on how to make the sacrament more meaningful in your daily life. Share your plan with someone who could help you accomplish your goal.
- Make a list of at least three activities you could do to assist in the gathering of Israel in these latter days.