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Mormonbasics.com is humbled to bring you a commentary on the hymns published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This commentary is presented in a two-column format. The original text, as presented in the hymnbook published by the LDS Church, is in the left column. The comments on the right are provided by mormonbasics.com. We have even changed the color of the text so there won't be any question as to who wrote what.

Personal note from the commentator:

The hymns of the Church are sacred text. The Lord has made it very clear to us through his prophets that the singing of hymns is a form of prayer, and as such is sacred communication. Much of the sacred Spirit and reverence we experience in our meetings, especially Sacrament Meeting, comes from the Spirit that accompanies the singing of the hymns.

The hymns are written in poetic form, and as such are able to take certain licenses and liberties with the English language that cannot normally be expressed in any other way. It is certainly not the aim of this commentary to improve on the beauty of the poetic expressions found in our sacred hymns. As a teacher of English to those who speak other languages, I have found that many of the hymns have expressions that are difficult for some people to understand.

Because hymns are written to fit a set rhythmic pattern or meter, often the expression has to be condensed to fit in a small space, but still convey its intended meaning. It is the combination of the rhythm, text, and music that create such a powerful Spiritual experience when singing the hymns. My attempts to explain some of the meaning behind the text should not detract from the original meaning, nor should it replace the original meaning. Hymns, like parables, take on different meanings as the circumstances of our lives change. My commentary is only a starting point for (hopefully) a better understanding of the overall meaning of the hymn in this work. Anyone else writing this same commentary would have different perspectives and points to make. That is the nature of a commentary. I pray that what I say will, in some way, help in your understanding of this hymn. Since this is a personal study of the hymns, I will sometimes use the first person when writing the commentary.

Kelly P. Merrill

Come, All Ye Saints of Zion

1. Come, all ye Saints of Zion,
 And let us praise the Lord;
 His ransomed are returning,
 According to his word.
 In sacred song and gladness
 They walk the narrow way
 And thank the Lord who brought them
 To see the latter day.

2. Come, ye dispersed of Judah,
 Join in the theme and sing
 With harmony unceasing
 The praises of our King,
 Whose arm is now extended,
 On which the world may gaze,
 To gather up the righteous
 In these the latter days.

3. Rejoice, rejoice, O Israel,
 And let your joys abound!
 The voice of God shall reach you
 Wherever you are found
 And call you back from bondage,
 That you may sing his praise
 In Zion and Jerusalem,
 In these the latter days.

4. Then gather up for Zion,
 Ye Saints thruout the land,
 And clear the way before you,
 As God shall give command.
 Tho wicked men and devils
 Exert their pow'r, 'tis vain,
 Since He who is eternal
 Has said you shall obtain.

MUSIC

John E. Tullidge, 1806-1873

TEXT

William W. Phelps, 1792-1872. Included in the first
 LDS hymnbook, 1835.

This hymn is about the gathering of Israel in the latter days. It makes references to past prophecies about the Lord's people being brought back into the lands of their inheritance, but it doesn't specify which prophecies.

Come, all ye Saints of Zion (the pure in heart), and let us praise the Lord; those he purchased with his blood (the ransomed) are returning (implying they are coming home again), according to the Lord's promises (his word). Those who are returning sing hymns (sacred song) and are glad as they keep the commandments (walk the narrow way), and give thanks to God who brought them back in the latter days.

The Jews (those of the House of Judah) were scattered (dispersed) shortly after Christ's resurrection. The day of their gathering back to their lands of inheritance have come. Come, ye dispersed of Judah, join in the theme (rejoicing and gladness for God's blessings) and sing with unending harmony the praises of our King. The arm is represented as the source of strength in the scriptures, so it points out that the arm of the Lord is extended, which means He is about to accomplish something wonderful with his strength and power. The world may look upon (gaze) his power as he gathers up the righteous around the world in these, the latter days.

Rejoice Israel (God's people) and let your joys be abundant! No matter where you are, the voice of God will find you and call you back from your spiritual bondage, so you can sing praises to Him in both Zion (on the American continent) and in Jerusalem in the latter days.

Begin to gather to Zion all you Saints throughout the land, and begin to clear a path to Zion as the Lord shall give commandments to do so. Wicked men and devils may try to exercise their power over you, but it will be in vain, since God who is eternal has decreed that you will be successful in gaining the victory.

SCRIPTURES

Jeremiah 31:10-14, Isaiah 35:10, Isaiah 52:7-10