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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

O Saints of Zion

1. O Saints of Zion, hear the voice
Of Him from courts on high.
Prepare the pathway of the Lord;
His reign on earth is nigh.
Prepare the supper of the Lamb;
Invite the world to dine.
Behold, the mighty Bridegroom comes
In majesty divine.

2. Entreat the Lord in humble prayer
That all the sons of men
His righteous kingdom will receive
And shout the glad "amen."
The sacred keys are now restored;
Declare the gospel plan.
Make known the wondrous words of truth
Revealed again to man.

3. Behold, the glory of the Lord
Sets Zion's mount aglow,
For Zion is an ensign pure;
All nations to her flow.
O Saints of Zion, tread the paths
Your faithful fathers trod.
Lift up your hearts in gratitude
And serve the living God!

MUSIC

Robert P. Manookin, 1918-1997.

TEXT

Ed M. Rowe, 1878-1951.

SCRIPTURES

Doctrine and Covenants 58:5-12, Doctrine and
Covenants 64:41-42

This is a missionary hymn encouraging the members of the Church to prepare for the Lord's coming and to help others prepare as well.

The voice of God is speaking to the members of the Church. His time to reign or rule on the earth is close at hand. We need to be preparing the supper of the Lamb, which is the spiritual feast of the gospel message and doctrines of salvation. All the world needs to be invited to this feast. The Savior, the bridegroom is coming in his divine majesty.

To entreat is to beg or plead. We need to plead with the Lord in humble prayer that all the people on earth will receive the gospel message (his righteous kingdom), and agree with him. The word "amen" means "I agree," or "so be it."

We need to declare or announce the gospel, the plan of happiness and all the words of truth given through the modern prophets to mankind.

This section makes multiple vague references to things it doesn't directly address (hence the term vague). Zion's mount often refers to the Church and temples being established in the tops of the mountains, which is interpreted as being the Saints settling in Utah, in the tops of the Rocky Mountains. The glory of the Lord or the purity of His message creates an ensign, a banner for all to see, hence the mount being made to glow.

All nations will flow or come to Zion, the center of the Saints. We need to follow in the footsteps of our forefathers (tread the paths) and with gratitude in our hearts we need to serve the living God.