It is another great day at BYU-Idaho, and I am grateful to be with you. For the last few months I have been thinking about you, and I have been thinking about Zion. I pray that the Holy Ghost will be with us today as I talk to you about what we need to do to build Zion together. The Prophet Joseph taught:

“The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; ... but ... we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; ... We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object.”

In the 133rd section of the Doctrine & Covenants, the Lord has given us two great commandments about the building up of Zion:

“Yea, verily ... the voice of the Lord is unto you: Go ye out of Babylon. And behold, and lo, this shall be their cry, and the voice of the Lord unto all people: Go ye forth unto the land of Zion.”

And so, these are the two great commandments: 1) go out from Babylon; and 2) go forth to Zion. These commandments are in force in our day. We are to flee Babylon and gather to the covenant people of the Lord in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are to leave the towers and the great and spacious buildings of spiritual Babylon, and we are to come to Zion.

As we think about what we need to do to flee Babylon and come to Zion, it may be helpful to think of Babylon as a great city. In its core, where the neon lights shine bright, there is much wickedness-violence, gross immorality, terrible abuse, and all the values and attitudes that support wickedness on a grand scale. It is the center of debauchery and evil. Outside the core of the city lie the suburbs of Babylon; here there is also sinfulness and wickedness, but they are more subtle. Here we find pornography, drugs, alcohol, love of money and power, and corruption. As we move further, we come to the rolling hills of Babylon. Here, too, there is sin; but it is in the form of selfishness, laziness, contention, entitlement, and pride.

The command to go out from Babylon is a command to leave not only the core of the city, but the suburbs and the rolling hills.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson said this about fleeing Babylon and coming to Zion:

“To come to Zion, it is not enough for you or me to be somewhat less wicked than others. We are to become not only good but holy men and women. Recalling Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s phrase, let us once and for all establish our residence in Zion and give up the summer cottage in Babylon.”

—D. Todd Christofferson
abuse. But many of the attacks are disguised temptations to adopt the doctrines, attitudes, and behavior of the rolling hills of Babylon.

Behavior and attitudes that violate God’s commandments are presented in the doctrines of popular culture with words and images that camouflage their true nature. Attitudes that could lead to wickedness—for example, selfishness and immodesty—are held up as enlightened and advanced, acclaimed in society and popular media. Practices that weaken the family are cloaked in the language of career success, personal pride, and self-realization.

These are the great challenges of Babylon—it is all around us, and its most insidious elements that fight against Zion are hidden and disguised. If you and I are to establish Zion, we must help each other see and flee Babylon and recognize and embrace Zion.

In the words of Elder Christofferson:

“Zion is Zion because of the character, attributes, and faithfulness of her citizens. Remember, “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” (Moses 7:18)...We cannot wait until Zion comes for these things to happen—Zion will come only as they happen.”

I want to use these three characteristics to frame our discussion of what you and I must do to help each other flee from Babylon, and come to Zion.

1. Unity: The people of Zion are of one heart and one mind-united in Christ. They are one, and they are His.

2. Pure in heart: The people of Zion are the pure in heart. They dwell in righteousness; the laws of the celestial kingdom prevail in Zion. The people of Zion are a holy people.

3. No poor among them: There are no poor among the people of Zion, neither in food and clothing, nor in spiritual strength and support. Among the people of Zion, “Every man [seeks] the interest of his neighbor.”

At the heart of each of these characteristics are patterns of doctrines, attitudes, and actions that help us build Zion. We can’t build Zion by passively waiting for someone else to build it for us. We build Zion by acting in faith under the direction of the Holy Ghost to understand, internalize, and apply the doctrines of salvation and to recognize and flee from the corresponding attitudes and practices of Babylon that fight against Zion.

Let me illustrate what I mean with a few examples connected to each of the three characteristics of Zion. Let’s begin with “Unity.”

Unity

Pattern #1: Forgiveness

We are commanded to forgive all men. Forgiveness is essential to establishing Zion. We all sin; we all make mistakes. If we do not forgive one another, we deny the power of the Atonement. Those hurts fester and become resentments and anger. They destroy unity and dissolve the bonds of charity that are essential to Zion.

In Babylon people always feel like victims. In their pride the people of Babylon are easily offended. They seek blame, punishment, and vindication for even the slightest inconvenience. There is no forgiveness in Babylon.

Pattern #2: Humility; Cooperation

An attitude of humility is central to a life centered in Christ. The people of Zion are of one heart and mind because they are humbly united in Christ. Each seeks the interest of his neighbor, so there is in Zion an attitude and practice of humble cooperation.

Pride rules in Babylon. The basic attitude is: What is in it for me? Babylon thrives on competition, envy, and comparisons with others. Selfishness and materialism breed self-promotion and contention. In modern Babylon we hear the echo of Korihor: “...every man prosper[s] according to his genius, ...every man conquer[s] according to his strength.”

Pattern #3: Obedience to God

Obedience to God is the foundation of Zion. It is the pathway to purity of heart and becoming a holy people. An attitude of obedience is essential to building Zion. In its highest form, obedience comes from feeling Christ’s love, loving Him, acting in faith in Him, and submitting our will to His.

~Kim B. Clark

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In Babylon the countervailing pattern is rebellion: “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god.”

**Pattern #4: Modesty**

The people of Zion are modest-in dress, in behavior, in language. They know and live the doctrine that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. The modest people of Zion avoid sensuality in dress and arrogance and brashness in behavior. Immodesty in dress, language, and behavior is the way of Babylon. For men this is the world of low-slung pants; unbuttoned shirts; undisciplined grooming; arrogant, suggestive language; and immoral behavior.

**Pattern #5: Personal Responsibility**

We have the Light of Christ, and we have moral agency. Each of us is personally accountable and responsible for our actions and our thoughts according to the light and knowledge we have received. Personal responsibility is essential to repentance and, thus, to the building of Zion.

In Babylon the attitude is: Rules don’t apply to me; I am special. The culture of Babylon teaches: “My behavior is not my responsibility. It is socio-economic forces or someone else that makes me do what I do.” In Babylon, no matter what you do, it is always someone else’s fault.

*No Poor Among Them*

I now turn to the third characteristic of Zion, that there are no poor among them.

**Pattern #6: Sacrifice**

In Zion, each person “esteem[s] his brother as himself” and “seek[s] the interest of his neighbor” even if it means a sacrifice of time, resources, or convenience. Following the example of the Son of God, a willingness to sacrifice so that others may be blessed is a hallmark of Zion.

An attitude of entitlement permeates Babylon. Bred by pride and feelings of “victimhood,” the people of Babylon feel that what they have is theirs by right. Not only do they not have to share what they already have, they have a right to get more of what they want. They are entitled.

**Pattern #7: Work**

“Be aware of those around you. Someone you know may be lonely, or discouraged, or lost. Someone you know may be struggling with the patterns of Zion. A friend, a roommate, a classmate may still be caught up in Babylon. Be aware of those around you, and talk to them. Go into the wilderness after the one that is lost. Walk the Jericho Road and help those who are alone and wounded.”

~Kim B. Clark

In Zion, work is essential. It is the way we create things of value and take care of each other. It is ennobling and good. In Zion, “the laborer[s] . . . labor for Zion,” and they work hard.

In Babylon, the ideal is something for nothing. Working hard is denigrated. Gambling is celebrated. The people of Babylon look for deals where they can take advantage of someone and get something for nothing.

Be aware of those around you. Someone you know may be lonely, or discouraged, or lost. Someone you know may be struggling with the patterns of Zion. A friend, a roommate, a classmate may still be caught up in Babylon. Be aware of those around you, and talk to them. Go into the wilderness after the one that is lost. Walk the Jericho Road and help those who are alone and wounded.

Before you go, prepare with prayer listening to the Spirit. Trust the Lord, but don’t wait and don’t turn away. Go in faith that the Lord will go before you, that He will guide you to love and set high standards so that your friend will find strength, forgiveness, and healing power in Christ.

When you go to someone who is struggling, your purpose is to help that person come unto Christ. You will feel a sense of responsibility, and love, and hope. But your friend must choose. If your friend is defensive and will not listen, you may need to find others to go with you. If that does not work and the matter is serious, you may need to get the bishop involved. As the Savior taught in Matthew 18:

“If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother [or sister]. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.”

Brothers and sisters, when we take the nurture and admonition of the Lord to those who are wounded, who are
struggling with sin or discouragement, who are confused and lost, we do a great work. It is not an easy work, but it is right and it is good. It is the Lord’s work. It is the work we covenant to do all of our lives.

This is how we build Zion together. We pray for help and then we reach out to help and strengthen each other, share testimony and doctrine, and invite each other to act in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I know this happens often on this campus. The Lord wants it to happen for each one of you. He wants you to flee Babylon, every bit of it. He wants you to come to Zion, to build Zion here and now. It is in part so that this university will accomplish its divinely appointed mission and destiny.

But the Lord’s purposes in your lives extend far beyond this campus. Brothers and sisters, I bear witness to you that God our Father lives. His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the Savior and Redeemer. This is His Church and kingdom. He is preparing His kingdom and us for His return in power and glory. This is His promise I will make to you: If you are true to your covenants, if you will act in faith to help your roommates and your friends, you will learn how to build Zion together. The spirit of Zion and the patterns of Zion will get into your hearts, and you will build Zion wherever you go. You will do it in your families with your own children. You will reach out to people who are less active, to the lost, the struggling. You will share the gospel and open the gates of salvation to those who are seeking the truth. You will be in the temple often; and Zion will be in your heart, in your home, in your wards and branches. And the blessings of Zion—the blessings of unity, holiness, righteousness, peace, joy, happiness, and power—will flow into your life and into the lives of your family forever.

I leave you with this promise and invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you as we seek to build Zion together.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes:

1) Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society Course of Study, 2007], 186
2) D&C 133:7, 9
3) D. Todd Christofferson, “Come to Zion,” Ensign, Nov 2008, 39
   (see Neal A. Maxwell, “A Wonderful Flood of Light,” 1990, 47)
4) Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “Come to Zion,” Ensign, Nov 2008, 38
5) D&C 82:19
6) Alma 30:17
7) D&C 1:16
8) D&C 38:24
9) D&C 82:19
10) 2 Nephi 26:31
12) Matthew 18:15-17

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