

Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants

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Author's Introduction

The idea for this book arose from a personal need. Years ago, I determined to read the Doctrine and Covenants from cover to cover. I had not previously ignored the book but had spent many years memorizing a few of its verses, searching through its pages for talk material, and discussing its teachings in Sunday School classes. I had never before made a front-to-back study of this book of scripture on my own. I was determined to succeed. However, I found the reading often difficult. I frequently failed to understand the significance of verses, longer passages, and even whole sections—many of which seemed dull, repetitive, and even uninspiring. I found my enthusiasm for the project waning. It was sometimes even difficult to get back to my reading. I was in danger of failing in my commitment to finish the book!

Why was I having difficulty understanding and staying interested in this important book of scripture? I considered myself at least average in my understanding of church history and gospel principles. I loved to read, and yet I seemed to lack the necessary background and tools to make this particular book of scripture really come alive for me. I did not seem to possess an adequate framework of knowledge onto which I could hang the facts I was reading. Consequently they didn't fit anywhere, and they were detached and lifeless. I found the available commentaries to be helpful but somehow disjointed and not sufficiently comprehensive to fulfill my particular needs.

Wouldn't it be marvelous, I thought, if only I had access to a learned and sensitive friend who understood the Doctrine and Covenants and also perceived my particular needs, so that he might help me as I approached this book? He might say, "Let me tell you what you need to know before you begin this particular section. I'll tell you when and why and where this section was written. And as you read it, be sure to notice this . . . and that. You're going to find it fascinating!" I have worked hard to try to create just such a "friend." It is this book—*Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants*.

I have intended to write for the supposed *typical* member of the Church, which label is in no wise intended to be derogatory. It is assumed that this typical member has a basic understanding of the Church and of the gospel principles. I will not assume, however, that he has a prior knowledge of church history. I have tried to include materials in this study guide that not only facilitate an understanding of the book but also enrich and enliven the time spent studying it. I have attempted to avoid a repetitive retelling of facts and principles that our typical member already knows. If I have succeeded, then you should find a study of this work an exciting, educationally satisfying, and spiritually uplifting experience.

In addition to the historical background, I have, in the most recent updating, included rather extensive verse commentary. For this verse commentary I have drawn

heavily and quoted extensively from the four-volume series, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants* by Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett. I am deeply indebted to these authors for their thoughtful and comprehensive work.

The confirmatory influence of the Spirit is more likely felt when we have done our homework and have earned an understanding and an interest in the scripture we are studying. It would seem unlikely that the Spirit would bear witness to us of scriptures that we read drowsily and half-heartedly and with a low level of comprehension.

The history of our Church is a vital foundation for understanding the Doctrine and Covenants. For the most part the revelations were received in a chronological sequence, and most all of them were given by the Lord at a time and in a setting where they were needed by the saints. To facilitate your being able to place the scripture onto a historical framework, I have written and included a brief history of the Church entitled, somewhat facetiously because of its brevity, the *Two-Hour History of the Church*. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive summary of this period of time but rather a manageable, concise summary. It begins with Joseph Smith's birth in 1805 and ends with the saints' entry into the Great Basin in 1847. Into this history I have inserted each of the sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. Each is referred to by its number and by an assigned title—the latter of my own making. Parts of this same history have been interjected, when appropriate, between the sections for convenience of study and to provide a smoothly flowing historical story line throughout the book. When the history of the Church is particularly pertinent and warrants further amplification, that added emphasis will be found in the commentary materials for the individual sections. At times, some minor repetition will be found between the history inserted between the sections and that in the section commentaries. This has been unavoidable, and it is hoped it will not be offensive.

This book was first published under the title *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants* in 1988. Since then, there has been considerable updating of its content.

Throughout the book, references will be made to certain supplemental articles and other reference materials. These may be found in either this work or in a companion work, *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. This latter book is a four-volume discussion of the most basic doctrines of the Church.

There are several brief Character Vignettes that are intended to introduce the characters into the Doctrine and Covenants story but not necessarily provide a complete profile of their sojourn in the early Church. A directory of these is not contained in the table of contents. Rather they can most easily be accessed by searching for the name of the character introduced in the vignette.

The scripture and any quotations taken directly from the scripture will be displayed in bold blue type. Longer block quotes will be displayed in red. The commentary materials are all displayed in black type.

Each section is assigned a suggested title. These titles should prove to be an important help in learning to relate the number of a section to its contents. A convenient summary of the section numbers and their corresponding titles may be found in the table of contents. It may be helpful for the reader to record these titles in your Doctrine and Covenants to the right of each section number. This will aid in your eventually memorizing them. We should henceforth in our lives never be without our scriptures in any gospel-related meeting, and we should never hear reference made to any section of the Doctrine and Covenants without turning to that section, reviewing its title, and recalling what we know about the section's messages. Thus, we commence a life-long program of studying the book. As an example, let us assume you hear reference made, over the pulpit, to a verse in Section 58. You then may turn to the section and recall that its title is "Instructions Concerning Zion." You may then further recall that it was received during Joseph Smith's first trip to Missouri. In this way the verse fits onto your framework of knowledge, and you will be more apt to find and refer to that verse in the future.

My hope is that you will come to regard the Doctrine and Covenants as a familiar friend with which you are well acquainted. May you come to regard it as a dynamic, vital book, and may you come to love it and know that it is of God. I have certainly come to that knowledge.

Explanatory Introduction

Previous editions of the Doctrine and Covenants called the explanatory pages the “preface,” such as in the earliest edition in 1835. Since section 1 has always been referred to as the Lord’s preface, this seeming discrepancy of two prefaces has led to some confusion over the years. To resolve the confusion, in the 1921 edition the preface was renamed the “Explanatory Introduction.”

This Explanatory Introduction for the 1981 edition was completed under the direction of President Spencer W. Kimball, with Elders Thomas S. Monson (acting as chair), Bruce R. McConkie, and Boyd K. Packer supervising the work of Ellis T. Rasmussen and Robert J. Matthews. It is noteworthy that this introduction was authored by general authorities of the Church who sought the spirit of revelation as they wrote it.

The text of this Explanatory Introduction (in bolded blue text) will be interrupted on a few occasions by a few words of commentary (in regular black text).

The Doctrine and Covenants is a collection of divine revelations and inspired declarations given for the establishment and regulation of the kingdom of God on the earth in the last days. Although most of the sections are directed to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the messages, warnings, and exhortations are for the benefit of all mankind, and contain an invitation to all people everywhere to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to them for their temporal well-being and their everlasting salvation.

Most of the revelations in this compilation were received through Joseph Smith, Jun., the first prophet and president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Others were issued through some of his successors in the Presidency. (See headings to Sections 135, 136, and 138, and Official Declarations 1 and 2.)

The book of Doctrine and Covenants is one of the standard works of the Church in company with the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price. However, the Doctrine and Covenants is unique because it is not a translation of an ancient document, but is of modern origin and was given of God through his chosen prophets for the restoration of his holy work and the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth in these days. In the revelations one hears the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in the dispensation of the fulness of times; and the work that is initiated herein is preparatory to his second coming, in fulfillment of and in concert with the words of all the holy prophets since the world began.

With few exceptions, the speaker in the revelations is the resurrected Jesus Christ. On occasion, Christ speaks as if he were the Father by the principle of divine investiture of authority. The language of the revelations, with the exception of a few words by heavenly angels (see D&C 2; 7; 13), is the language of Joseph Smith. As the inspired ideas and thoughts came into his mind, he composed the revelatory language from his own linguistic background (see D&C 1:24).

Joseph Smith, Jun., was born December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont. During his early life he moved with his family to Manchester, in western New York. It was while he was living near Manchester in the spring of 1820, when he was fourteen years of age, that he experienced his first vision, in which he was visited in person by God, the Eternal Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. He was told in this vision that the true Church of Jesus Christ that had been established in New Testament times, and which had administered the fulness of the gospel, was no longer on the earth. Other divine manifestations followed in which he was taught by many angels; it was shown to him that God had a special work for him to do on the earth, and that through him the Church of Jesus Christ would be restored to the earth.

In the course of time Joseph Smith was enabled by divine assistance to translate and publish the Book of Mormon. In the meantime he and Oliver Cowdery were ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist in May 1829 (D&C 13), and soon thereafter they were also ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood by the ancient apostles Peter, James, and John (D&C 27:12). Other ordinations followed in which priesthood keys were conferred upon them by Moses, Elijah, Elias, and many ancient prophets (D&C 110; 128:18, 21). These ordinations were, in fact, a restoration of divine authority to man on the earth. On April 6, 1830, under heavenly direction, the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Church, and thus the true Church of Jesus Christ is once again operative as an institution among men, with authority to teach the gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation. (See Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:1-75; D&C 20.)

These sacred revelations were received in answer to prayer, in times of need, and came out of real-life situations involving real people. The Prophet and his associates sought for divine guidance, and these revelations certify that they received it.

A number of the revelations are directed to specific individuals. There are 136 individuals mentioned by name in the Doctrine and Covenants. From these revelations, a number of personal instructions, warnings, commands, and counsels emerge. The revelations warn against murder, theft, dishonesty, adultery, pride, and idleness—to name a few. Also included is counsel on Sabbath-day observance, loving the Lord and

one's neighbor, treating others as equals, supporting one's family, seeking an education, and teaching one's children. Though these revelations and instructions are to specific individuals, they hold great importance in that many of them are expressions of gospel principles from which all can benefit. As the Lord said, "What I say unto one I say unto all" (D&C 93:49). Readers should therefore each apply the principles included in the Lord's instructions to themselves.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we observe the pattern of how the Lord deals with his people, particularly in helping them solve their problems. He insists that we reach out to him in order to obtain his counsel and blessings: "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 4:7).

In the revelations one sees the restoration and unfolding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Beginning with the First Vision, we can follow—in the Doctrine and Covenants—the unfolding of the restoration of the Church and gospel to the earth. We read of such seminal events as the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; the calling of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon; the restoration and reestablishment of the order of the priesthood (including the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods, the keys of the priesthood, and the extending of the blessings of the priesthood to all men regardless of race); and the establishment of the Church organization.

The westward movement of the Church from New York and Pennsylvania, to Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, and finally to the Great Basin of western America, and the mighty struggles of the saints in attempting to build Zion on the earth in modern times, are also shown forth in these revelations.

The westward movements of the Church, as detailed in this section, all took place in the spirit of the doctrine of gathering (see D&C 29:8).

Several of the earlier sections involve matters regarding the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon (see Sections 3, 5, 10, 17, 19). Some later sections reflect the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith in making an inspired translation of the Bible, during which many of the great doctrinal sections were received (see, for example, Sections 37, 45, 73, 76, 77, 86, 91, and 132, each of which has some direct relationship to the Bible translation).

The Joseph Smith Translation (actually Joseph's inspired revision) of the Bible had a substantial influence on the content of the Doctrine and Covenants, particularly on those revelations received during the years 1830-33. Joseph's translation of the Bible was a primary source for many of the doctrinal statements in the Doctrine and Covenants. Often Joseph's work on the Bible was the "trigger" that resulted in his inquiring of the Lord about certain doctrines. See the supplemental article, *Joseph*

Smith's Inspired Revision of the Bible—The JST. The Doctrine and Covenants also contains counsel from the Lord to Joseph on the project of doing this translation. Joseph was told when to begin (see D&C 9:1-2), when to pause (see D&C 37:1-4), when to recommence translation (see D&C 41:7), who the scribe was to be (D&C 35:20:47:1), and the time in which the parts of the Bible should be translated (see D&C 45:60-62). These came with the exhortation to move more rapidly (see D&C 73:3-4; 93:53) and to make plans for publication (see D&C 94:10; 124:89).

In the revelations the doctrines of the gospel are set forth with explanations about such fundamental matters as the nature of the Godhead, the origin of man, the reality of Satan, the purpose of mortality, the necessity for obedience, the need for repentance, the workings of the Holy Spirit, the ordinances and performances that pertain to salvation, the destiny of the earth, the future conditions of man after the resurrection and the judgment, the eternity of the marriage relationship, and the eternal nature of the family.

The Doctrine and Covenants teaches the doctrines of salvation. This is seen in part in the 598-page Topical Guide to the Doctrine and Covenants, Book of Mormon, and Pearl of Great Price. In fact, every doctrine taught by the Church is found or referred to in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is the most important doctrinal book we have in the Church, teaching some doctrines that are not taught in the other books of scripture.

Likewise the gradual unfolding of the administrative structure of the Church is shown with the calling of bishops, the First Presidency, the council of the Twelve, and the Seventy, and the establishment of other presiding offices and quorums.

The Doctrine and Covenants instructs the small initial body of priesthood holders how to act in the administrative affairs in the kingdom. The revelations teach of the nature, the offices, and the ordinances of the priesthood of God. Examples of the latter include blessings of children, healing the sick, baptism, the sacrament, the endowment, baptism for the dead, and dedicatory prayers for a new temple. The revelations teach the necessity of membership records, the keeping of a history of the Church, and the conduct of meetings. In short, these revelations constitute the first handbook of instructions for Church leaders.

Finally, the testimony that is given of Jesus Christ—his divinity, his majesty, his perfection, his love, and his redeeming power—makes this book of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth.

A number of the revelations were published in Zion (Independence), Missouri, in 1833, under the title *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ*. Concerning this publication the elders of the Church

gave solemn testimony that the Lord had borne record to their souls that these revelations were true. As the Lord continued to communicate with his servants, an enlarged compilation was published two years later in Kirtland, Ohio, with the title *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*. To this publication in 1835, the written testimony of the Twelve Apostles was attached as follows:

**TESTIMONY OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES TO THE TRUTH OF THE
BOOK OF DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS**

The Testimony of the Witnesses to the Book of the Lord's commandments, which commandments He gave to His Church through Joseph Smith Jun., who was appointed by the voice of the Church for this purpose:

We, therefore, feel willing to bear testimony to all the world of mankind, to every creature upon the face of the earth, that the Lord has borne record to our souls, through the Holy Ghost shed forth upon us, that these commandments were given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for all men and are verily true.

We give this testimony unto the world, the Lord being our helper; and it is through the grace of God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, that we are permitted to have this privilege of bearing this testimony unto the world, in the which we rejoice exceedingly, praying the Lord always that the children of men may be profited thereby.

The names of the Twelve were:

Thomas B. Marsh	Orson Hyde	William Smith
David W. Patten	Wm. E. McLellin	Orson Pratt
Brigham Young	Parley P. Pratt	John F. Boynton
Heber C. Kimball	Luke S. Johnson	Lyman E. Johnson

In successive editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, additional revelations or other matters of record have been added, as received, and as accepted by competent assemblies or conferences of the Church.

Beginning with the 1835 edition a series of seven theological lessons was also included; these were titled the "Lectures on Faith." These had been prepared for use in the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1834-1835. Although profitable for doctrine and instruction, these lectures have been omitted from the Doctrine and Covenants since the 1921 edition because they were not given or presented as revelations to the whole Church.

In the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants [1989] three documents have been included for the first time. These are Sections 137 and 138, setting forth the fundamentals of salvation for the dead; and Official Declaration 2, announcing that all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.

It is evident that some errors have been perpetuated in past editions, particularly in the historical portions of the section headings. Consequently this edition contains corrections of dates and place names and also a few other minor corrections when it seemed appropriate (such as discontinuing the unusual names beginning with Section 78). These changes have been made so as to bring the material into conformity with the historical documents. Other special features of this latest edition include maps showing the major geographical locations, in which the revelations were received, plus improvements in cross references, section headings, and subject-matter summaries, all of which are designed to help readers to understand and rejoice in the message of the Lord as given in the Doctrine and Covenants.

The Doctrine and Covenants is a challenging book to comprehend because it reads more like a compilation of random historical accounts and doctrinal dissertations. Unlike the Book of Mormon, there is no story line other than the history of the Church. Reading the Doctrine and Covenants is more like reading the letters of Paul. Each one has its own topic containing its own insights and background. Yet, the reader must persist, and he will learn, as the Explanatory Introduction explains, that the Doctrine and Covenants is “of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth.”

Brief Historical Setting

1805

Joseph Smith, Jr., was born in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, December 23, 1805, the fourth son and fifth child of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith. His eldest brother had died during childbirth, but he had two living older brothers, Alvin and Hyrum, and an older sister, Sophronia. He would yet have four more brothers and two sisters. His younger brothers were Samuel Harrison, Ephraim, William, and Don Carlos. Little Ephraim died shortly after his birth. His younger sisters were Catherine and Lucy.

Joseph was born into a family of modest means. His father had lost a considerable sum of money some years prior on an investment that turned sour. The family did not lack industry, but were relegated by their lack of funds to becoming tenant farmers and were forced to move frequently during Joseph's childhood in order to find sufficient work and earn an adequate living.

1812

In 1812, when Joseph was six years old, a typhoid fever epidemic swept through Lebanon, New Hampshire, the area where the Smiths were then living, and all of the Smith children fell ill. Joseph developed, as a result of the infection, a large abscess under his arm which was drained of a large amount of pus. He later developed a serious osteomyelitis, or bone infection, involving his left shin. In those days, when no antibiotics were available, the only hope of cure was either amputation of the affected extremity or surgical removal of the infected bone. Both young Joseph and his mother Lucy refused to consider amputation, and it was decided to proceed with excision of the diseased bone. Joseph refused wine or brandy to dull the pain and assured the doctors that tying him down was unnecessary. Thus, with Joseph held in the arms of his father, but having the benefit of no anesthetic, the doctors proceeded to bore holes in his leg bone and chip away pieces of that diseased bone. Afterward, Joseph lay on the bed "pale as a corpse, and large drops of sweat were rolling down his face, whilst upon every feature was depicted the utmost agony" (Lucy Smith, *Biographic Sketches*, 65). As the incision healed over the next several weeks, some fourteen additional pieces of bone worked their way to the surface (Joseph Smith "History," Book A-1, 131-32, LDS Church Historian's Office).

After three months of constant pain, Joseph had passed the crisis, and the leg bone began to mend. The disease and pain so wasted his body that his mother and his brother Hyrum easily carried him about in their arms. Convalescence dragged on for three years. Until the family moved to New York in 1816, he hobbled about on crutches. To the end of his life he limped slightly, as the trauma had stunted the growth of the affected leg.

1816

The medical bills incident to the typhoid epidemic and Joseph's illness left the Smith family close to destitution. After unsuccessfully trying farming back in Vermont, they finally moved to the more fertile land of New York in 1816. They settled first in the village of Palmyra. Within two years they had raised enough money to begin purchasing a one-hundred acre farm two miles south of the center of Palmyra in the township of Farmington. In 1821 or 1822 the village and township of Manchester were formed and the Smith farm was then located in Manchester Township immediately adjacent to the line between Palmyra and Manchester Townships. Before moving from the village of Palmyra, the Smiths built a small four-room log cabin on this farm, and in 1818 all ten members of the Smith family—eight children and two parents—moved into this snug log house.

1820

In western New York the years from 1799 to 1820 were marked by a series of religious revivals among the Protestant churches in the area. These included the Baptists, the Methodists, the Society of Friends, and particularly the Presbyterians. The ministers were rallying to halt the infidelity, or unbelief, they perceived was rampant in the area. All of the ministers pressed for new members. Because of the ministers' enthusiastic preaching, the question "What must I do to be saved?" was on everyone's mind. The Smith family was caught up in the spirit of revivalism. Joseph was later to remark that there was an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. Mother Lucy, Hyrum, Sophronia, and Samuel Harrison joined the Presbyterian Church. Joseph, Sr., and all the other sons held back. Joseph, Jr., was partial to the Methodists but could not overcome his reservations. Between ages twelve and fifteen, he seriously studied the scriptures, but was confused by the disparities between his interpretation of the scriptures and the teachings of the churches in the area. He wondered, "Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If anyone of them shall be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" (*HC*, 1:3-4).

In this state of mind, he came across the Bible verse, James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally . . . and it shall be given him." "Never did any passage of scripture," he later recalled, "come with more power to the heart of man than this did . . . to mine. . . . If any person needed wisdom from God, I did. . . . At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is ask of God" (*HC*, 1:34).

Accordingly in the early spring of 1820, Joseph went to a place in the woods near the family cabin and prayed out his dilemma. After wrestling with satanic power, he was favored to converse personally with God the Father and Jesus Christ (see Joseph's account of his vision in *JSH* 1:15-20). He asked which of all the churches he should join, and he was instructed to join none of them. The reader may wish to review *Joseph*

Smith's First Vision in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 10. This chapter provides a history of the evolution of the account of Joseph's vision.

Meanwhile, this vision did not interrupt the necessity of daily back-breaking work on the farm by all able members of the Smith family, including Joseph. The work, however, did not deter him from what seemed to be a normal childhood and teenage upbringing, including "light-minded pleasure with his friends," "all kinds of temptations," "mingling with all kinds of society," "many foolish errors," "weaknesses of youth," "the foibles of human nature," and "levity and [associating] with . . . jovial company." He was doubtless guilty of only the normal frivolity of youth, but he did not measure up to his own perceptions of "that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been" (*HC*, 1:9-10).

1823

His remorse came to a head in the fall of 1823. On September 21, after the other family members had fallen asleep in the crowded little cabin, Joseph remained awake to pray "for forgiveness of all of my sins and follies" (*HC*, 1:11). While praying, he noticed the room growing brighter than broad daylight. A heavenly messenger named Moroni appeared to him and taught him of the vital mission and responsibilities which lay ahead. Moroni informed him of a book written on gold plates that gave an account of the former inhabitants of a certain portion of the American continent and contained the fulness of the everlasting gospel. These plates were buried in a hill later named Cumorah, three miles from the Smith farm. The site where the plates were buried was shown to Joseph in vision. Moroni also paraphrased the Old Testament quotation of Malachi (4:5-6) that predicted the coming of the Prophet Elijah [**D&C 2 - Elijah the Prophet**]. The vision ended but recurred twice more the same night.

It is interesting that Joseph experienced these visits from Moroni in the crowded family cabin without disturbing his sleeping family. Perhaps the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon them or perhaps this type of heavenly vision is a private experience discerned only by the person for whom it is intended.

The same vision was repeated a fourth time on the following day when Joseph, who had insufficient strength to work in the fields after his experience of the previous night, fainted as he was returning to the family cabin, having been sent home by his father. This time Moroni commanded Joseph to return to the fields and inform his father of the visions. Joseph, Sr., expressed no skepticism but counseled his son to do exactly as the angel had instructed. Moroni had commanded that Joseph go to the place where the plates were deposited, and later that day Joseph went to the site he had seen in vision. He uncovered and pried the lid off the stone box which contained the plates, and he beheld the plates and also two stones in silver bows fastened to a breast plate. These stones, known as the Urim and Thummim, were seers in ancient times which God had prepared for the purpose of translating the plates. As Joseph

touched the plates, Moroni again appeared and informed him that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived. Joseph was then commanded to return to this site yearly on September 22 to receive instructions. For a more detailed description of the Urim and Thummim, see "Two Instruments Used in the Translation" in *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon*, in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, Appendix A.

Joseph's first visit to the site of the plates' burial may have been somewhat more colorful than the above paragraph (from Joseph Smith's *HC*, 1:16) suggests. The prophet's mother gives the following account of that first visit:

Having arrived at the place, he put forth his hand and took them up, but, as he was taking them hence, the unhappy thought darted through his mind that probably there was something else in the box besides the plates, which would be of some pecuniary advantage to him. So, in the moment of excitement, he laid them down very carefully, for the purpose of covering the box, lest some one might happen to pass that way and get whatever there might be remaining in it. After covering it, he turned round to take the Record again, but behold it was gone, and where he knew not, neither did he know the means by which it had been taken from him.

At this, as a natural consequence, he was much alarmed. He kneeled down and asked the Lord why the Record had been taken from him; upon which the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and told him that he had not done as he had been commanded, for in a former revelation he had been commanded not to lay the plates down, or put them for a moment out of his hands, until he got into the house and deposited them in a chest or trunk, having a good lock and key, and contrary to this, he had laid them down with the view of securing some fancied or imaginary treasure that remained.

In the moment of excitement, Joseph was overcome by the powers of darkness, and forgot the injunction that was laid upon him.

Having some further conversation with the angel on this occasion, Joseph was permitted to raise the stone again, when he beheld the plates as he had done before. He immediately reached forth his hand to take them, but instead of getting them, as he anticipated, he was hurled back upon the ground with great violence. When he recovered, the angel was gone, and he arose and return to the house weeping for grief and disappointment (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* [Liverpool: 1853] 85-86).

Joseph Knight, Sr., would later record his version of this incident:

He went and found the place and opened it and found a plain box. He uncovered it and found the Book and took it out and laid it down by his side and thought he would cover the place over again thinking there might be something else here. But he was told to take the Book and go right away. And after he had covered the place he turned round to take the Book and it was not there and he was astonished that the Book was gone. He thought he would look in the place again and see if it had not got back again.

He had heard people tell of such things. And he opened the box and, behold, the Book was there. He took hold of it to take it out again and, behold, he could not stir the Book any more than he could the mountain. He exclaimed, "Why can't I stir this Book?" And he was answered, "You have not done right; you should have took the Book and gone right away. You can't have it now." Joseph says, "When can I have it?" The answer was the 22nd day of September next if you bring the right person with you. Joseph says, "Who is the right person?" The answer was "Your oldest brother [Alvin]" (From an original holograph by Joseph Knight, Sr., reported by Dean C. Jessee in "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History" in *BYU Studies* 17:1, spelling and punctuation changes added for clarity.)

Regarding the gold plates, Hugh Nibley wrote:

Nothing in the Book of Mormon itself has excited greater hilarity and derision than Joseph Smith's report that the original record was engraved on gold plates, the account being condensed from much fuller records on bronze plates. Today scores of examples of ancient historical and religious writings on sacred and profane plates of gold, silver, and bronze make this part of Joseph Smith's story seem rather commonplace. But it was anything but commonplace a hundred years ago, when the idea of sacred records being written on metal plates was thought just too funny for words (*Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 245; see also Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 21-28).

Section 1 The Lord's Preface—the Voice of Warning

Scripture Mastery

D&C 1 The Lord's Preface—the Voice of Warning

D&C 1:24 Scriptures given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language.

D&C 1:30 The Lord bears testimony of Church.

D&C 1:31-33 For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.

D&C 1:37 The Lord bears testimony of D&C.

D&C 1:38 Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

Section 1 is one of the few sections in the Doctrine and Covenants that is out of temporal sequence. Chronologically it was received between sections 66 and 67 in Hiram, Ohio, on November 1, 1831. It was originally placed at the front of the Book of Commandments, and it has retained that position in all subsequent editions of the

Doctrine and Covenants. It is the Lord's preface to this book of scripture. This is the only book in existence that has the honor of having a preface given by the Lord himself.

By the time this revelation was received the Church had been organized just over eighteen months. During the summer of 1830, within a few months of the organization of the Church, the Prophet and others began to compile the revelations of the Lord that had been received up to that time and also to edit these revelations in preparation for future publication. By November 1831, these revelations were collected and ready for publication. A council of the elders of the Church was convened in Hiram, Ohio, on November 1, 1831 to consider plans for publishing the revelations that had already been received. Following the first session of the conference in which a decision was made to publish the revelations, Joseph inquired of the Lord to receive divine confirmation of their resolve. This confirmation (section 1) was received in a marvelous manner. The Lord not only approved the work but gave a revelation as his own preface to the book. For more information on the historical setting for section 1, review the pertinent materials in the supplement entitled *A Brief History of the Evolution of Our Present-day Doctrine and Covenants*. Also, please read the background materials for section 67. Section 1 was first printed in *The Evening and Morning Star* in March 1833 and was subsequently placed at the beginning of the 1833 Book of Commandments as chapter 1.

At the conclusion of the conference of elders, Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer were directed to take a copy of the edited revelations with them to Independence, Missouri, where William W. Phelps, a member and printer by vocation, would do the actual printing. A printing press had been purchased by the Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, and shipped to Independence for this purpose.

This revelation names the book and announces its purpose or theme—it is a universal voice of warning crying unto the people of this dispensation. To the righteous it is a voice of gladness and celebration. The gospel has been restored! To the unbelieving it is a voice of warning that unless they repent of their sins and adhere to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the judgment of God shall befall them.

As Moses led the doubting Israelites through forty years of wanderings in the wilderness, an interesting means of communication was developed. A trumpet was sounded that could be heard throughout the entire camp (Leviticus 25:9). This trumpet was loud and was the alarm that roused Israel and called her to action in times of war and danger (Numbers 10:9; Ezekiel 33:3) and in times of jubilee and celebration (Leviticus 25:9). The Lord has used the symbol of sounding the trumpet as a signal of the restoration of gospel truths. It is a voice of gladness and a voice of warning. Its message to the righteous is one of celebration and gladness, but to the wicked it is a terrible trumpet of warning, alerting them to the perils that await the unrepentant. The message of the Doctrine and Covenants is that the warning trumpet will warn the camp (the world) one last time. It is not merely the Lord's *wish* that the voice of warning be

sounded to the world; it is his divine *command*. The voice of warning is delivered to the saints in scripture, then the Lord commands that the saints deliver the warning to all the world.

What is there in section 1 that sets it apart and justifies its removal from the midsection of the compiled revelations and renders it appropriate to become section 1, the preface? Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote: “A good preface should prepare the reader for the contents of the book. It should help him understand the book. It should display in a concentrated manner the full contents of the book. Section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants is one of the great prefaces in the possession of mankind” (*The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], 11-12).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has made the point that the importance of section 1 lies not only in its content—what it says—but also in the historical context in which it was received—what the section is. In a very real way, when this section was received, the faith of the early brethren and their commitment to the Prophet Joseph and to these revelations as divine communication hung in the balance. Those brethren who gathered at Hiram, Ohio, for the conference of the elders of the Church in early November 1831 simply had to come to know that these revelations were not simply manufactured from Joseph’s vivid and fruitful imagination. The new Church’s future was on the line. Michel de Montaigne wrote: “The births of all things are weak and tender, and therefore we should have our eyes intent on beginnings” (“Of Managing the Will,” *Essays*, trans. Charles Cotton, ed. William Carew Hazlitt [London: Reeves & Turner, 1877]). Elder Holland wrote:

This may seem a minor thing to fourth-and-fifth-generation Latter-day Saints, but I suspect it was no minor thing to the Prophet Joseph and no minor thing to either the faithful or the skeptical who had to muscle through it and make peace with their own conscience and with the Lord. Indeed, we sense a painful poignancy in the Prophet Joseph’s phrase written on that day, “It was an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord” (*HC*, 1:226). Surely it was, and now William E. McLellin and the others understood it also [see a summary of the experience of William McLellin in the introductory commentary for section 67]. Perhaps here once again we see the Lord’s wisdom in choosing virtually an unlettered lad to be the vessel through which he would speak. In light of the educated McLellin’s failure, it seemed compellingly clear that neither the Prophet Joseph nor any other man was capable, on his own, of revealing prophecies that come true or of writing revelations that bear the familiar spirit of divinity. Elder Orson F. Whitney once noted that a vain boaster, ridiculing the proverbs of Solomon, had said, “Anybody can make a few proverbs.” The reply was simply, “Try a few.”

So both in terms of its internal message and the brief but dramatic confrontation out of which it came, section 1 establishes for the rest of the book and the rest of our

reading the prophetic role, the divine process, the reality of revelation from the Almighty, and the virtual impossibility of pretense and posing and chicanery. Any man who is only a man will be found out soon enough in this business (*Sperry Symposium Classics, The Doctrine and Covenants, 23-34*).

1 Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

verse 1 “Hearken, O ye people of my church” This section sounds a rather ominous note right here at the beginning. The Lord here is warning, not only ungathered Israel, but also those who are already in his Church. There is no room for complaisance in the kingdom of God on earth!

To “hearken” is not only to hear, but to obey as well.

“Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea” The phrases “ye people from afar” and “ye that are upon the islands of the sea” are scriptural phrases that usually refer to scattered Israel.

The origin of the expression “islands of the sea” is particularly interesting. This expression can mean any place to which one journeys by water (see Isaiah 20:6; 60:9; 2 Nephi 10:20-21), and so this phrase includes what we call continents as well as true islands.

2 For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.

verse 2 The “Lord” is Jesus Christ who is the author and source of all of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. The Father has seldom dealt with man directly since the fall of Adam, and he has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son.

“there is none to escape” Joseph Smith wrote, “You cannot go anywhere but where God can find you out” (*HC, 6:366*).

3 And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed.

verse 3 The “unbelieving” are those who reject the gospel (see verse 8). The “rebellious” are those who come out in open, willful, resistance against the Lord, and who might also act in defiance of God’s authority.

“and their secret acts shall be revealed” What a man truly is in his heart will inevitably be revealed in his thoughts and words and behaviors. The real truth about a man cannot be long hidden—it cannot be kept secret.

4 And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

verse 4 The world has not seen a more critical need for the saving truths of the gospel since the days of Noah than this final dispensation. Increased numbers of missionaries are being called to go to take the message of the restoration to every people. The missionaries, and indeed every man who has been warned, must lift up the trump and sound the warning (D&C 88:81-82) so that (1) the wicked will be left without excuse; (2) the member will free himself from the blood and sins of his generation; and (3) the righteous will be gathered from all nations to enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

“the voice of warning shall be unto all people” Joseph Fielding Smith taught that the Doctrine and Covenants “belongs to all the world, to the Catholics, to the Presbyterians, to the Methodists, to the infidel, to the non-believer. . . It belongs to all the world, not only to the Latter-day Saints. . . They will be judged by it, and you will be judged by it” (*CR*, October 1919, 146).

The warning voice cannot be silenced. The Prophet Joseph said, “No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (*HC*, 4:540).

5 And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them.

verse 5 These newly-called disciples are charged by the Lord with an overwhelming task—that of sharing the message of the restored gospel with all inhabitants of the earth (see the following verse). Just imagine for a moment what an overwhelming task this was! After all, it was a time of no television, telephones, radios, or other means of modern mass communication except newspapers with limited circulation. There were no automobiles, airplanes, or even railroads available. Transportation was basically limited to horse back, carriages, riverboats, or ships, and often great distances had to be covered on foot. And in all this they will go safely. Could such a monumental challenge be accomplished by such a small band of disciples? As this verse indicates, the Lord knew it could.

6 Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the book of my commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth.

verse 6 The Lord places his stamp of approval and gives his authority for the publication of the Book of Commandments and even designates this revelation as his “preface unto the book of my commandments.” Further, the Lord provides the divine

credentials to Joseph Smith and his associates in the ministry to preach the gospel and warn the world.

7 Wherefore, fear and tremble, O ye people, for what I the Lord have decreed in them shall be fulfilled.

verse 7 “fear and tremble, O ye people” Though it is usually considered politically incorrect and perhaps a bit insensitive to say so, those who reject the gospel do indeed have something to fear. They well ought to be terrified at the thought of one day meeting the Lord and having to make an accounting of their sojourns here on earth.

8 And verily I say unto you, that they who go forth, bearing these tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth, to them is power given to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious;

9 Yea, verily, to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure—

verses 8-9 These verses refer to the sealing power of the priesthood. See a discussion of the sealing power in the commentary for Helaman 10:7 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

These verses help explain D&C 24:15 and other verses wherein the Lord commands the missionary to dust off or wash his feet as a testimony against those who reject him. In D&C 75:19-22, the Lord explains that on the day of judgment, those who bear their testimonies will help in the judgment of those who rejected them. When we combine these scriptures with D&C 1:8, we get the impression that there is real power in testimony—power enough that those who reject it will find that it is part of their condemnation on judgment day. How poignant and formidable is the role of the Church's latter-day missionaries in the history of this earth!

“to them is power given to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious” This “sealing” concerns the “unbelieving,” those who refuse to accept the gospel message; and the “rebellious,” those who turn against the servants of the Lord, especially those who do so after having enjoyed the privileges and blessings of membership in the Church. Those who have not yet had the opportunity to hear the gospel would not be classified, here in this verse, as “unbelieving.” Both the unbelieving and the rebellious ought to fear and tremble in view of what is coming to them and about which they have been duly warned.

10 Unto the day when the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man.

verse 10 This verse is a reminder of the profound principle that the very essence of the commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ is selflessness and

concern for others—the command to be charitable. The expressions “every man” and “fellow man,” of course, refer to all mankind and include all men and all women.

11 Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear:

12 Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh;

verse 12 “Prepare ye” is a major theme of the Doctrine and Covenants. The command appears some ninety times in the book. Man is warned to ready himself for the Lord’s second coming. Here, the command “Prepare ye” is repeated twice for emphasis.

13 And the anger of the Lord is kindled, and his sword is bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth.

verse 13 The world has reached such a state that even the patient and long-suffering Lord Jesus Christ is angry. The “sword” symbolizes Christ’s authority and power to destroy and eventually triumph over Satan and the forces of evil. Until now the Lord has allowed good and evil to exist together in the world, but at the last day—the day of his coming in glory—anything or anyone who cannot tolerate his glorious presence will be cut off and removed by the sword, which is about to fall.

“his sword is bathed in heaven” Smith and Sjodahl suggest that “this is a very expressive term from Isaiah 34:5, where it is used to signify the pouring out of the indignation of the Lord upon all nations and His fury upon their armies, delivering them to destruction and slaughter” (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 7). Another possible interpretation is that the Lord will bathe (wash or clean) his sword in preparation for its use.

“the inhabitants of the earth” The terms *earth* and *world* do not usually describe the same things in scripture. The earth is the physical planet upon which we live. The world is all of the worldly influences present here on earth—Satan’s kingdom. At the day of Christ’s second coming, the earth will continue, but the world and all its wickedness will abruptly end.

14 And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people;

verse 14 The “arm of the Lord” is symbolic of the strength or power of God. Here the Lord lifts his arm in anger. The imagery of the Lord’s arm is not always used in the sense of negative power. For example, D&C 29:1 speaks of the Lord’s “arm of mercy,” which has atoned for sins. The Lord will tell Joseph Smith, after the loss of 116 pages of Book of Mormon manuscript, that he would have “extended his arm” and

supported him against the temptations. Thus the Lord lifts his arm other than just in anger.

To be “cut off from among the people” is to be severed from the community of believers, or excommunicated.

15 For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant;

verse 15 An *ordinance* can be understood either as a decree or as a set procedure, ritual, or ceremony. Laws passed by municipalities are often referred to as city ordinances. The term ordinances here includes the rules and commandments as well as the rituals of the gospel.

“mine everlasting covenant” This expression refers to the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ restored in this latter day.

16 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, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.

verses 15-16 The Lord enumerates the world's major sins. The world has: (1) “strayed from mine ordinances,” (2) “broken mine everlasting covenant”—broken the laws of the gospel, and (3) succumbed to the worship of idols. Idol worship? Today? Idol worship was a common problem in Moses's day, but certainly not today! Or, is it? Idol worship is very common today but takes a little different form from that of Moses's day. Idolatry is to love the creation more than the creator (see Romans 1:25). Men today commonly worship the idols of bodily appetites, materialism and other forms of worldliness. Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god. The first commandment on Sinai is the commandment to avoid idolatry in any form: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Closely related is his commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

“Babylon” is the symbol of the world—wickedness and depravity among men and nations. Babylon is the world of things as our carnal selves might wish them to be rather than of things “as they really are” (Jacob 4:13). Ancient Babylon was viewed by God and the people of Judah as the epitome of wickedness and godlessness and therefore the archenemy of Zion. Thus, the prophets of old issued the frequent cry to come out of Babylon and to leave her practices and values behind (see also D&C 133:7).

17 Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

verse 17 “the calamity” The calamity consists of all the unpleasant events associated with Christ’s second coming and the end of the world. The gospel has been restored in the latter days to protect those who will receive it from the coming calamity. Many judgments are mentioned by the prophets that will occur before the Lord’s second coming, including pestilence, storm (rain, winds, and hail), fires, plagues, earthquakes, famines, lightning, wars, and floods. These will cleanse the earth of wickedness prior to the Lord’s advent. Apparently one may escape these destructive forces only through faithfully living the gospel and gathering to the safety of Zion about which we will be reading much more as we study the Doctrine and Covenants.

Does this mean that if we live righteously we will be guaranteed escape from the vicissitudes of any and all natural disasters? The answer is, no. The Prophet Joseph said, “It is a false idea that the saints will escape all judgments, whilst the wicked suffer; for all flesh is subject to suffer Many of the righteous shall fall prey to disease, to pestilence, etc. . . .” (*HC*, 4:11). Another author added, “It would be wrong to assume that the more righteous one is . . . the less he will suffer He will be blessed even though his blessings may be strength to endure the suffering The difference is that the wicked must suffer the consequences of their sins in addition to the suffering that is part of life Those who live faithful to their covenants can be assured that they will not have to suffer in vain” (*Book of Mormon Student Manual*, 2nd ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981], 185).

“I the Lord . . . called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun.” The Lord chose him! Of the millions out of every nation who could have been called to head this last and greatest of all gospel dispensations, the Lord chose a New York farm boy. But certainly Joseph was more than that. Is there any doubt that he was one of the “noble and great ones” in the premortal councils? (Abraham 3:22-25). Is there any doubt that he was foreordained to his high calling? Elder Stephen L. Richards said, “My grandfather [Willard Richards] was a close friend and companion of this man. He knew him as intimately as one man may know another. He had abundant opportunity to detect any flaws in his character and discover any deceit in his work. He found none, and he has left his testimony to his family and to all the world that this man was true, that he was divinely commissioned for the work he had to do, and that he gave his life to the fulfillment of his mission” (*CR*, October 1951, 117).

“and gave him commandments” All the revelations are commonly referred to as commandments, even though many of them are not commandments of the “thou shalt” or “thou shalt not” type.

18 And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets—

verse 18 The Lord also called prophets of other ages.

19 The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh—

verse 19 The phrase “arm of flesh” refers to the weakness, frailty, and imperfections of men—in other words, to merely human resources and capacities. The admonition not to trust in man’s power is a common one throughout the scriptures (see D&C 3:7; 2 Nephi 28:31; Mosiah 23:14; 2 Chronicles 32:8).

20 But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world;

verses 19-20 President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

The Lord called Joseph Smith and others from among the weak things of the world, because he and his associates were contrite and humble. The great and mighty ones in the nations the Lord could not use because of their pride and self-righteousness.

The Lord’s ways are not man’s ways, and he cannot choose those who in their own judgment are too wise to be taught. Therefore he chooses those who are willing to be taught, and he makes them mighty even to the breaking down of the great and mighty. . . . When we think of our missionary system, we can see how the weak have gone forth among the strong ones and have prevailed. The mighty and strong ones have been broken down by the humble elders of the Church (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:255).

verses 21-23 The following three verses outline what might be considered to be the goals of the missionary effort of the Church today.

21 That faith also might increase in the earth;

22 That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

23 That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

verse 23 “the fulness of my gospel” This phrase has two separate meanings:

1. In scripture it always refers to those principles necessary for entrance into the celestial kingdom of God—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. For example, the scriptures state over and over again that the fulness of the gospel is found in the Book of Mormon (see D&C 20:9; 27:5; 42:12; 135:3; JS-H 1:34), yet the temple ordinances are not found there. Neither are the three degrees of glory nor a clear description of the interval between mortal life and resurrection. Also, the Doctrine and Covenants speaks repeatedly of the early saints as already having the

fulness of the gospel, even before the ordinances of the temple were revealed to them, beginning around 1842 (see D&C 35:12, 17; 39:11; 66:2; 118:4).

2. In the Church today, however, the phrase “fulness of the gospel” is often used to mean all that the Lord has ever revealed—including the ordinances of the temple—and the complete plan of salvation. Hence, the proper interpretation of this phrase in scripture depends on the audience to whom the scripture is directed.

“by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world” In the eyes of the unbelieving and rebellious, the servants of the Lord are “weak and simple” when compared to kings, rulers, or scholars. That is, their message is considered by the unbelieving and rebellious to be insipid and not pertinent. The Lord cannot call those who in their own judgment are too wise to be taught. The Lord promises that these supposed weak and simple persons will prevail over those whom the world considers mighty and strong.

24 Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding.

verse 24 “Behold, I am God” In this, as in all the revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants, the divine speaker is Jesus Christ.

“in their weakness, after the manner of their language” This phrase is important in helping us to understand one characteristic of the revelatory process. When the Lord reveals his words through a prophet, that prophet’s mind is imbued with divine thoughts; but when those thoughts are written down, they are clothed in human words. All the frailties of the prophet’s vocabulary, literary skills, and level of sophistication will be evident as the revelation is read by others. William McLellin lacked understanding of this concept when he questioned the divine authenticity of Joseph’s revelations (see the introductory commentary for section 67).

25 And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known;

26 And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed;

27 And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent;

28 And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time.

verses 24-28 In these verses the Lord gives us some specific and personal reasons for reading these revelations:

1. so we might “come to understanding” (verse 24). For example, consider the many lofty concepts we are brought to understand in section 76.

2. so we might detect errors in our lives (verse 25). We might, for example, be making unintentional mistakes. As a specific example, section 20:69 teaches us that

others ought to be able to tell that we are saints by the way we deport ourselves. If they cannot, then we must change or be guilty of sin.

3. so we can gain wisdom by being instructed (verse 26). Consider, for example, the several divine instructions we are given in section 93.

4. so we can be chastened concerning our sins, thus motivating us to repent (verse 27). For example, D&C 64:9-11 teaches us concerning the necessity of forgiving others.

5. so we can gain knowledge (verse 28). We gain valuable knowledge, for example, as we study section 86—the interpretation of the parable of the wheat and tares.

29 And after having received the record of the Nephites, yea, even my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., might have power to translate through the mercy of God, by the power of God, the Book of Mormon.

verse 29 “the record of the Nephites” It is reasonable to assume that this expression refers to the Book of Mormon even though it is also a record of the Jaredites.

When one becomes informed as to exactly how Joseph was able to “translate” the Book of Mormon record, one may conclude that saying it was translated “through the mercy of God” is an understatement (*The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, Appendix A).

30 And also those to whom these commandments were given, might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually—

verses 30 The Lord himself proclaims the divine authenticity of the Church! Other churches are not without some truth—some have much of the truth and many adherents who practice the virtues of Christianity. All other churches are, nonetheless, incomplete. The Lord is well pleased with the Church “collectively,” but not “individually.” The reason is that some in the Church are still sinning, and according to verse 31 he “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.” What a succinct statement by the Lord on the subject of sin!

The Church may be said to be a “living church” because it is connected continuously to God, the source of life and light, by continuing revelation and by the direct bestowal of priesthood authority. The Church has direct and living links with the divine in the chain of priesthood authority from Jesus Christ, to Peter, to Joseph Smith, and eventually to each priesthood holder.

31 For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

verse 31 The Lord is beholden to the law of justice: He who commits even one sin is unworthy to live in the presence of God. No unrepentant sinner will be allowed into the celestial kingdom—or into any kingdom of glory, for that matter. There will be no exceptions.

But the Lord also avers, in the following verse, that the law of mercy is operational because of the Savior's atoning sacrifice.

32 Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven;

33 And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.

verse 33 Regardless of the state of spiritual development and attainment a man may earn, he will backslide spiritually if he ceases to obey.

“for my Spirit shall not always strive with man” What does it mean to strive? It means to try hard or to exert oneself vigorously. But in this phrase it is the Spirit who is striving! The Spirit wrestles or struggles with all of us. He wrestles against our carnal selves to tug and pull and prod us in the right direction. However, there is a degree of disobedience that will cause the Spirit to cease his work of coaxing us toward the light. In other words, we must be striving to obey in order for the Spirit to strive with us.

The Lord teaches that the process of keeping or maintaining the influence of the Spirit of the Holy Ghost in one's life is an active and ongoing process. Failure to maintain a constant righteous and diligent striving will result in a loss of the influence of the Spirit and a regression in one's spiritual progress. There are no plateaus in spiritual growth.

34 And again, verily I say unto you, O inhabitants of the earth: I the Lord am willing to make these things known unto all flesh;

verse 34 The expression “all flesh” here refers to all human beings.

35 For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.

verse 35 “For I am no respecter of persons” The Lord is impartial and grants to each man, on conditions of repentance, the same privileges and opportunities of salvation and exaltation.

“when peace shall be taken from the earth” “The beginning of the fulfillment of this day when peace was taken from the earth appears to be at the commencement of the Civil War” (Smith and Sjodahl, *Commentary*, 10). President Wilford Woodruff wrote: “God has held the angels of destruction for many years, lest they should reap

down the wheat with the tares. But I want to tell you now, that those angels have left the portals of heaven, and they stand over this people and this nation now, and are hovering over the earth waiting to pour out the judgments. And from this very day they shall be poured out. Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things. . . . If you do your duty, and I do my duty, we'll have protection" (*Young Woman's Journal*, 5 [9 July 1853]: 512-13).

36 And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon Idumea, or the world.

verse 36 "Idumea," also called Edom, was a nation south of the Dead Sea. The Idumeans were a wicked people. Hence, traveling through their country symbolized the pilgrimage of men through a wicked world. In Jesus's day Idumea had produced King Herod, the evil usurper who tried to murder the infant Jesus and succeeded in killing the babies in Bethlehem. Figuratively, the term Idumea, like the term Babylon, is used in scripture as a symbol for worldliness and wickedness.

37 Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

verse 37 The Lord also pronounces the truth and divinity of the Doctrine and Covenants and commands us not just to casually read this book but instead to "search" it.

For a definition of the word *commandments* here, see the commentary for verse 17 of this section.

38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

verse 38 What power is afforded those who preach the Lord's word! "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."

39 For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. Amen.

Section 2 Elijah the Prophet

Scripture Mastery

D&C 2 The words of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith: Behold, I will reveal unto you the priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet.

This section consists of Joseph Smith's inspired recollection of some of the words of Moroni when he visited Joseph on the night of September 21, 1823. The vision occurred twice more during the night of September 21-22, and again a fourth time on the morning of September 22 when Joseph, who found that he had insufficient strength to work in the fields after his experience of the previous night, fainted as he was returning to the family cabin. During those visits, Moroni paraphrased the Old Testament quotation of Malachi which predicted the coming of the Prophet Elijah:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Malachi 4:5-6).

The prophet Malachi had been the last of the Old Testament prophets, writing around 430 BC to a nation that was already declining into apostasy (see Malachi 1-2). He reproved his people for their sins, and then in closing his prophecy (and, as it turns out, closing the entire Old Testament), he foretold the comings of John the Baptist (see Malachi 3:1) and the coming again of the prophet Elijah (see Malachi 4:5-6—Elijah lived on earth just after 900 BC at the time of King Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel) to prepare the way for the Savior. John the Baptist held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, and Elijah held the keys of the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Actually, Malachi foresaw and foretold the missions of both John the Baptist and Elijah in preparing the way for *both* of the comings of the Savior—his first and his second comings. These prophecies have been fulfilled relative to both the Lord's mortal ministry and his second coming. Because Joseph Smith was to be instrumental in the latter-day work preparatory to the Lord's second coming, it was fitting that Moroni should quote this passage to the young prophet as an example of those things that were about to be fulfilled.

It should be noted that Moroni's version of Malachi 4:5-6 (in D&C 2) is somewhat different than the version found in the King James Version of the Bible. Moroni's version is also found in Joseph Smith—History 1:38-39 in the Pearl of Great Price, where Joseph describes Moroni's visit. However, D&C 110:14-15; 128:17-18; 3 Nephi 25:5-6; and JST Malachi 4:5-6 all agree with the wording of the King James Version rather than with section 2 or JS-H 1:38-39. This indicates that we are dealing here not with

“correct” and “incorrect” versions of the biblical passage but rather with different shades or levels of meaning reflected in the different versions.

Section 2 was first published in the 15 April 1842 *Times and Seasons*. Although it is chronologically the oldest of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants (it is the words of Moroni when he appeared to Joseph Smith on the evening of September 21, 1823), it was not added to that book of scripture until 1876 by Orson Pratt under the direction of President Brigham Young.

Our feeling for this section is enhanced as we learn something about the Prophet Elijah. He was the prophet of the ninth century BC, whose story is told in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2, and who was the last of the Old Testament prophets to hold the keys of the sealing power. Elijah was “an hairy man with a girdle of leather about his loins,” and a commanding figure in the religious development of the Hebrew people. He was one of the few important biblical prophets who left us no written record. If any of Elijah’s writings ever existed, they have been lost through time.

Elijah lived at a time when the Israelites were divided into two kingdoms: the southern Kingdom of Judah and the northern Kingdom of Israel. He lived in the latter which was ruled by the wicked King Ahab and his equally wicked wife Jezebel. The people of the Kingdom of Israel were largely a spiritually degenerate group who worshiped several pagan gods, particularly one called Baal.

Elijah is remembered for his role in the following stories:

1. He prophesied of a devastating drought and famine in the land. He was sustained during the famine initially by drinking from the Brook of Cherith and by being fed “bread and flesh” by the ravens. Later he was fed by a widow whose barrel of meat and cruse of oil did not fail all of the time she supplied him with food.

2. He confronted 450 prophets of Baal and challenged them to call down fire from their god to consume the offering of a bullock. When they failed, he called down fire from the God of Israel which consumed the bullock, even after soaking the wood under the offering with water.

3. He called down fire from heaven to consume his detractors.

4. He spoke with the Lord on Mount Horeb (Sinai) on the same spot where the Lord had previously visited with Moses.

5. He parted the waters of the River Jordan.

6. He was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind and in a chariot of fire.

After Elijah’s being caught up into heaven (2 Kings 2:1-12), the legend grew that the great Prophet would come again and that his return would announce a greater coming—that of the Messiah. In fact, Old Testament scripture literally ends with this promise (Malachi 4:5-6 are the final two verses in the Old Testament record). Even today the Jewish people look forward to the return of Elijah. “This belief is manifested in rites attendant upon the celebration of the Passover: at the Passover meal a cup of wine is placed at the table for the Prophet, and the door is left open in the anticipation

that he will select that day and that occasion to announce the Messiah's coming" (David C. Gross, *Judaism*, 183). President Joseph Fielding Smith made an interesting observation regarding this custom: "It was on [Easter Sunday] the third of April 1836, that the Jews, in their homes at the Passover [season], opened their doors for Elijah to enter. On that very day Elijah did enter—not in the home of the Jews . . . but he appeared in the house of the Lord in Kirtland and there bestowed his keys to bring to pass the very things for which these Jews, assembled in their homes, were seeking" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:100-101). Thus, this prophecy was fulfilled on April 3, 1836, when the Prophet Elijah did appear to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple.

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett have offered a minor correction to the correlation between the Jewish expectation and the appearance of the prophet Elijah in the Kirtland Temple: "It has often been noted that April 3, 1836, fell during the Jewish Passover in that year, and that during the Passover meal modern Jews save a place at the table in expectation of the return of Elijah as promised in Malachi (4:5-6). All of this is correct. However, it has also been claimed that this expectation of Elijah during the Passover feast would have occurred in Jewish homes at exactly the same time Elijah was actually appearing to Joseph and Oliver in the Kirtland Temple, and this needs some correction. Passover is observed for eight days, and in 1836, the first day of Passover—the day of the Passover meal—lasted from sundown on Friday, April 1 until sundown on Saturday, April 2. Elijah appeared to Joseph and Oliver on the afternoon of Easter Sunday, April 3, more than a full day after the Passover Feast but still clearly during the Passover Week. However, the remarkable synchronism between Elijah and the Passover and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple is not appreciably less significant because of this" (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 66-67).

The Lord has decreed that each of us must make a concerted effort in helping to forge a welding link or a complete and perfect union which will bind all of God's children together (D&C 128:18) from Adam to the present time. No one of us can be exalted without doing our part to form this union and becoming a part of the union ourselves. This welding link is formed as we in families are sealed to one another, as we seek out the names of our dead ancestors, and as we do proxy endowments, baptismal work, and sealing ordinances for them. To man's frail intuition it is not obvious why this union must be formed, but there is no mistaking the Lord's intent regarding this work. It is obviously of central and supreme importance. The reader should note that in the celestial heaven, there will be only one family in which each and every one of the celestial inhabitants will be sealed to one another.

There is more to the sealing power than sealing families together. For a more complete discussion of the sealing power, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 11, *The Sealing Power*. See also the commentary for verse 1 below.

1 Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

verse 1 “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet” The King James Version of the Bible renders this, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet.” This change in wording pointed out to Joseph Smith his future role in the latter-day work of Elijah. In other words, Joseph would hold the keys of the priesthood and do the preparatory work of Elijah.

“by the hand of Elijah” Presumably, Joseph would receive this Priesthood by the literal laying on of Elijah’s hands.

What did Elijah actually restore when he came to the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836? It wasn’t the priesthood since that had already been restored by John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John. He restored a vital part of the keys of the priesthood—the keys of the “sealing power.” Elijah was the last prophet of the Old Testament to hold all the keys of the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood (ca. 900 BC). This is the same Elijah who appeared to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration to give them the same priesthood keys.

And what is the sealing power? We know that at least in part, it is the power by which families can be sealed together forever—husband to wife, parent to child, etc.—but it is also more. Consider carefully President Joseph Fielding Smith’s explanation of the power and authority Elijah came to restore:

The keys that Elijah held were the keys of the everlasting priesthood, the keys of the sealing power, which the Lord gave unto him. And that is what he . . . gave to the prophet Joseph Smith; and that included a ministry of sealing for the living as well as the dead—and it is not confined to the living, and it is not confined to the dead, but includes them both. . . .

Elijah’s mission was the sealing power. He held the keys by which the parents could be sealed together and children sealed to parents. He bestowed these keys upon the prophet Joseph Smith. . . .

But what was the nature of his mission to the earth in these latter days? It was to restore power and authority which once was given to men on the earth and which is essential to the complete salvation and exaltation of man in the kingdom of God. In other words, Elijah came to restore to the earth, by conferring on mortal prophets duly commissioned of the Lord, the fulness of the power of priesthood. This priesthood holds the keys of binding and sealing on earth and in heaven of all the ordinances and principles pertaining to the salvation of man, that they may thus become valid in the celestial kingdom of God (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:111-12, 117).

In other words, the authority that Elijah restored was the complete power to render valid in the eternal heavens all ordinances and blessings of the priesthood performed on this earth having to do with the spiritual progression and advancement of man. This would include the ordinances of baptism, eternal marriage, the endowment,

the sacrament, priesthood ordinations, and all others. Under the direction of a prophet holding these keys, all priesthood ordinances are regarded as valid for all eternity providing they are participated in with righteous intent.

For a more complete discussion of the three components of the sealing power, see the commentary for Helaman 10:7.

The Holy Ghost has a vital role here. He also possesses the sealing power. Since he knows the hearts of men, he is able to certify the validity of all ordinances. In this role he is known as the Holy Spirit of Promise. The necessity of sealing by the Holy Ghost is emphasized in the following passage: “All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, . . . are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead” (D&C 132:7). Earthly representatives of the Lord, such as bishops and elders may be deceived by an unworthy person, but no one can deceive the Holy Spirit, who will not ratify an ordinance received unworthily. This safeguard is attached to all blessings and covenants associated with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Why was Elijah, rather than some other prophet, sent to restore the sealing power? Apparently, as already mentioned, it was because he was the last prophet to hold the keys of the priesthood before the dispensation of the meridian of time. Certainly others held the keys and could have come including Peter, James, and John.

The coming of Elijah is an event to take place, according to the plain prediction, shortly preceding the great and dreadful day of the Lord. The great and dreadful day of the Lord, this prophecy proclaims, is the day of the second coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven in great glory and when he shall take vengeance upon the ungodly. It is to be a day dreadful to all who are unrepentant and full of sin, but to the just it shall be a day of peace and salvation. However, before it comes there is to be some mighty work performed by the restoration of Elijah’s authority, which is so potent that it will save the earth from destruction, or from being smitten with a curse (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:112-13).

“the great and dreadful day of the Lord” This day is the day of the Lord’s coming in glory. It will be “great” or “dreadful” depending on who you are—righteous or wicked. For the righteous it will be great. They shall be delivered from all their enemies, be united with Christ, and live on a millennial earth that will have been raised to a level of paradisiacal glory. On the other hand, the day will be dreadful for the wicked, for they shall be consumed by fire and delivered into spirit prison where their debts will be paid to the uttermost farthing.

2 And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

verse 2 “The fathers” are the patriarchs, the first fathers of the house of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. “The children” are the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, either by lineage or by adoption, who, through the restoration of the new and everlasting covenant, receive from God the same promises that the patriarchs did.

Elijah came to “plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers” whereby the “hearts of the children [should] turn to their fathers” What is the meaning of this rather enigmatic verse?

First, the Prophet Joseph explained: “The word *turn* here should be translated bind or seal” (*TPJS*, 330). In other words, through the sealing power, binding covenants may be entered into which bind families into secure units that are safe from spiritual destruction.

Through the temple ordinances, God’s promises to the fathers, the tenets of the Abrahamic covenant, are extended to—“planted in the hearts of”—all God’s children. For the convenience of the reader the tenets of the Abrahamic covenant are summarized: They include: (1) Abraham will become the “father of many nations” (Genesis 17:19), and his posterity will be exceedingly numerous—even “as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore (Genesis 17:2; 22:17-18). (2) The posterity of Abraham will be blessed with certain lands as an eternal inheritance. This is the land of Canaan (Genesis 17:8) extending from the Nile River to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18). (3) Abraham’s posterity will prove to be a blessing to all families of the earth (Genesis 12:3). They will do this by bearing the priesthood and preaching the gospel to them. Thus, will every family have the opportunity, through the posterity of Abraham, to enjoy the blessings of the gospel, which include the “blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:9-11). (4) All of these blessings of the gospel and the priesthood will be offered to all of Abraham’s mortal posterity. These covenants were renewed with Isaac (Genesis 26:1-4,24) and again with Jacob (Genesis 28; 35:9-13; 48:3-4).

The hearts of the children turn to the ancient fathers because the children are now participants in and recipients of the blessings of the fathers. Being profoundly grateful for such privileges, members of the Church (motivated by the “Spirit of Elijah”) also find their hearts turning to their more immediate fathers, and they do all within their power (through genealogical research and subsequent temple work) to insure that the blessings of the ancient fathers are enjoyed by ancestry as well as posterity.

On another level, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith answered the questions—What were the promises made to the Fathers? Who made them? When?—as follows: “This expression has reference to certain promises made to those who died without a knowledge of the gospel, and without the opportunity of receiving the sealing ordinances of the priesthood in matters pertaining to their exaltation. According to these promises, the children in the latter days are to perform all such ordinances in behalf of the dead” (*Improvement Era*, volume 25, July 1922, 829).

One illustration of the fulfillment of the Lord's promises in connection with the powers revealed by Elijah, was described by President Wilford Woodruff:

I will here say, before closing, that two weeks before I left St. George, the spirits of the dead gathered around me, wanting to know why we did not redeem them. Said they, "You have had the use of the Endowment House for a number of years, and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we never apostatized from it, but we remained true to it and were faithful to God." These were the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and they waited on me for two days and two nights. I thought it very singular, that notwithstanding so much work had been done, and yet nothing had been done for them. The thought never entered my heart, from the fact, I suppose, that heretofore our minds were reaching after our more immediate friends and relatives. I straightway went into the baptismal font and called upon brother McCallister to baptize me for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and fifty other eminent men, making one hundred in all, including John Wesley, Columbus, and others; I then baptized him for every President of the United States, except three; and when their cause is just, somebody will do the work for them (*JD*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 19: 229 - 230).

3 If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

verse 3 "If it were not so [that is, if Elijah had not come to restore the sealing power], the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his [Christ's] coming." "Wasted" means "made waste" or "destroyed." The King James Version says "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Thus, we learn that the "curse" of the KJV is the wasting or destruction of the earth.

Why would the earth be destroyed at the Lord's second coming? Simply because the earth would not have accomplished its foreordained purpose—to establish on its face a family system patterned after the order of heaven and individuals in that system fully individually prepared to inherit eternal glory. If there were no binding and sealing powers whereby God's children could be readied to enter back into his presence and those same children cemented forever in an eternal family unit, then the purposes and designs of this earth shall have been frustrated, and there would be no reason for the earth to continue to exist.

Because of an occasional haste to associate Elijah's mission primarily with work for the dead, President Harold B. Lee reminded us that "it applies on this side of the veil as well as on the other side" (*Church News*, 11 August 1973, 14). By that President Lee meant that the sealing power is essential for all spiritual growth. Without it we cannot be granted the gifts of the Spirit or increments of the attributes of Christ which are the sum and substance of our spiritual growth. Of what use would this mortal experience be were we unable to grow spiritually through our obedience? See a more complete discussion of the concept of the sealing power in the commentary for

Helaman 10:7 (this same commentary is repeated in the commentary for D&C 110:14-15). Also, as mentioned above, see the discussion in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine* as referenced above.

Once the reader understands the expanded application of the concept of the sealing power, the following comments by the prophet Joseph Smith make sense. Joseph taught that the “spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelation, ordinances, oracles, powers, and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, even those who are in heaven” (*HC*, 6:251).

Brief Historical Setting

Joseph and his family drew great comfort from the fact that the Lord, by sending the messenger Moroni, had manifest his continued acceptance of Joseph as the instrument through which the gospel would be restored. This feeling of peaceful tranquility, however, was soon to end. On November 1, 1823, Alvin, Joseph’s eldest brother, became seriously ill. He died less than three weeks later of what was thought to be an intestinal obstruction resulting from a large dose of calomel. The loss of Alvin was a terrible blow to the Smith family. Not only had he been a stabilizing influence to all of them, but his industry and consistent hard work were great assets to the family’s finances. Without Alvin, the one hundred dollar annual contract payment for the farm became increasingly burdensome. The responsibility fell to Hyrum and Joseph to roam the countryside looking for work.

Character Vignette

Alvin Smith

Alvin Smith was born on February 11, 1798 in Tunbridge, Vermont and was thus nearly eight years older than the Prophet Joseph. He was the first-born of Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. His was a pleasant and loving disposition, and he always sought out opportunities to aid the family in their continual financial struggles. Joseph Jr. later described his oldest brother as one in whom there was no guile (*HC*, 5:126). “He was a very handsome man, surpassed by none but Adam and Seth” (*HC*, 5:247). Lucy Mack writes that on the morning of November 15, 1823, “Alvin was taken very sick with the bilious colic.” One physician hurried to the Smith home and administered calomel to Alvin. The dose of calomel “lodged in his stomach,” and on the third day of sickness, Alvin became aware of the fact that death was near. He asked that each of the Smith children come to his bedside for his parting counsel and final expression of love. As his mother later recalled, “When he came to Joseph, he said, ‘I am going to die, the distress which I suffer, and the feelings that I have, tell me my time is very short. I want you to

be a good boy, and do everything that lies in your power to obtain the Record [Joseph had been visited by Moroni less than three months before this time]. Be faithful in receiving instruction, and in keeping every commandment that is given you” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, Preston Nibley, ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958], 86-89). Alvin died on November 19 at age 25. Lucy Mack Smith wrote of the pall of grief surrounding his passing: “Alvin was a youth of singular goodness of disposition—kind and amiable, so that lamentation and mourning filled the whole neighborhood in which he resided” (*Ibid.*, 88). Alvin’s brother Joseph wrote many years later: “I remember well the pangs of sorrow that swelled my youthful bosom and almost burst my tender heart when he died. He was the oldest and noblest of my father’s family. . . . He lived without spot from the time he was a child. . . . He was one of the soberest of men, and when he died, the angel of the Lord visited him in his last moments” (*HC*, 5:126-26).

It was in this setting that Joseph went to work for Josiah Stowell of South Bainbridge, New York, and Joseph Knight of Colesville, New York. Josiah Stowell believed he had located the site of an ancient Spanish mine. When his hired hands failed to find it, he hired the Smiths—Joseph and his father—to help. Apparently, Joseph, Jr., had a reputation for being able to discern the unknown using a seer stone which he had found in 1822. After less than a month of working in the dig, Joseph prevailed upon Stowell to give up his vain pursuit.

1826

Not only did the Smiths have to make payments on the farm, but in 1822, before Alvin died, they had started construction of a larger frame home which was completed in late 1825 or early 1826. The carpenter who did the work on this home began pressing them for his money. Indeed, he had designs on the Smith farm. His plan was to force them into foreclosure and buy the land and home for himself. In spite of the Smiths’ best efforts they did lose the farm. However, it was purchased by a friendly party who allowed them to rent the farm and continue to live on it until 1829 when the parents and five children moved in with Hyrum and his wife.

At this point it seems appropriate to digress briefly and address some charges which will be brought against the Smith family some years later in 1834. For this material I am indebted to Daniel C. Peterson and Donald L. Enders and their article, “Can the 1834 Affidavits Attacking the Smith Family Be Trusted?” in the FARMS publication, *Insights* [September 1993].

Eber D. Howe, in 1834, published the original anti-Mormon book, *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic] which featured affidavits gathered from former Smith neighbors by the excommunicated and bitter Philastus Hurlbut describing the Smith family as, among many other derogatory things, “lazy” and “indolent.” Joseph Capron, for example,

declared that the Smiths' "great object appeared to be, to live without work." "It was a mystery to their neighbors," said David Stafford, "how they got their living."

In 1993, Donald L. Enders, a senior curator at the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City, published hard evidence that dealt a serious blow to the credibility of the Hurlbut-Howe affidavits (see "The Joseph Smith, Sr., Family: Farmers of the Genesee," in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, edited by Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr., 213-25). Utilizing land and tax records, farm account books, soil surveys, horticultural studies, surveys of historic buildings, archaeological reports, and interviews with agricultural historians and other specialists—sources not generally used by scholars of Mormon origins—Enders concludes that, on questions of testable fact, the affidavits cannot be trusted.

The Smiths' farming techniques, it seems, were virtually a textbook illustration of the best recommendations of the day, showing them to have been, by contemporary standards, intelligent, skilled, and responsible people. And they were very hard working. To create their farm, for instance, the Smiths moved many tons of rock and cut down about six thousand trees, a large percentage of which were one hundred feet or more in height and from four to six feet in diameter. Then they fenced their property, which required cutting at least six or seven thousand ten-foot rails. They did an enormous amount of work before they were able even to begin actual daily farming.

Furthermore, in order to pay for their farm, the Smiths were obliged to hire themselves out as day laborers. Throughout the surrounding area, they dug and rocked up wells and cisterns, mowed, harvested, made cider and barrels and chairs and brooms and baskets, taught school, dug for salt, worked as carpenters and domestics, built stone walls, and fireplaces, flailed grain, cut and sold cordwood, carted, washed clothes, sold garden produce, painted chairs and oil-cloth coverings, butchered, dug coal, and hauled stone. And, along the way, they produced between one thousand and seven thousand pounds of maple sugar annually. "Laziness" and "indolence" are difficult to detect in the Smith family.

What resulted from the Smith's hard work? The 1830 tax records for Manchester Township appraise the family's holdings at the average level per acre for farms in the vicinity. Of the ten farms owned by the Staffords, Stoddards, Chases, and Caprons—residents of the neighborhood who affixed their signatures prominently to affidavits denigrating the Prophet's family—only one was assessed as more valuable per acre than the Smiths'. The others received lower appraisals—and, in some cases, significantly lower ones.

The conclusion to be drawn? If the Hurlbut-Howe affidavits cannot be trusted on matters that can be quantified and tested, there seems little reason to trust their judgments in the less tangible matter of character. Clearly, they reflect religious hostility and perhaps envy from their less successful neighbors. As the Prophet's brother William expressed it, "We never knew we were bad folks until Joseph told his vision.

We were considered respectable till then, but at once people began to circulate falsehoods and stories in a wonderful way.”

1827

During the treasure hunting expedition, working for Josiah Stowell, Joseph and his father boarded at the Isaac Hale home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. While there, Joseph met Isaac's daughter, Miss Emma Hale. The relationship between Joseph and Emma flourished, and, in spite of stiff opposition from Emma's father, the couple was married in South Bainbridge on January 18, 1827, at the home of Josiah Stowell.

1827 September

Joseph's fifth annual visit to Cumorah was on September 22, 1827. Joseph was twenty-one years of age at the time. Instead of going during the day as had become his annual custom, he arrived there just after midnight of September 21, in the first hours of September 22. This was done to throw off meddlers who knew of the date. On this visit he was given possession of the plates, the breastplate, and the Urim and Thummim. Rather than taking the plates home immediately, he concealed them in the woods in a hollow birch log. When he finally did pick them up the following day, he quickly learned that it was necessary to maintain a constant vigil in order to keep the plates safe, since many evil and conspiring men sought almost continually to wrest the plates from him. Joseph himself wrote: "I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charges to keep them safe, and why it was that the messenger had said that when I had done what was required at my hand, he would call for them. For no sooner was it known that I had them, than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me. Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose. The persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible (*HC*, 1:18).

Lucy Mack Smith described a specific group who had designs on the plates:

My husband soon learned that ten or twelve men were clubbed together, with one Willard Chase, a Methodist class leader, at their head; and what was still more ridiculous, they had sent sixty or seventy miles for a certain conjuror, to come and divine the place where the plates were secreted.

We supposed that Joseph had taken the plates, and hid them somewhere, and we were apprehensive that our enemies might discover their place of deposit. Accordingly, the next morning, after hearing of their plans, my husband concluded to go among the neighbors to see what he could learn with regard to the plans of the adverse party. The first house he came to, he found the conjuror and Willard Chase, together with the rest of the clan. Making an errand, he went in and sat down near the door, leaving it a little ajar, in order to overhear their conversation. They stood in the yard

near the door, and were devising plans to find “Joe Smith’s gold bible,” as they expressed themselves. The conjuror seemed much animated, although he had traveled sixty miles the day and night previous (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, [Liverpool: 1853] 102- 03).

Brigham Young probably had this “conjuror” in mind when he wrote:

I well knew a man who, to get the plates, rode over sixty miles three times the same season they were obtained by Joseph Smith. About the time of their being delivered to Joseph by the angel, the friends of this man sent for him, and informed him that they were going to lose that treasure, though they did not know what it was. The man I refer to was a fortune-teller, a necromancer, an astrologer, a soothsayer, and possessed as much talent as any man that walked on the American soil, and was one of the wickedest men I ever saw. The last time he went to obtain the treasure he knew where it was, and told where it was, but did not know its value. Allow me to tell you that a Baptist deacon and others of Joseph’s neighbors were the very men who sent for this necromancer the last time he went for the treasure. I never heard a man who could swear like that astrologer; he swore scientifically, by rule, by note. To those who love swearing, it was musical to hear him, but not so to me, for I would leave his presence. He would call Joseph everything that was bad, and say, “I believe he will get the treasure after all.” He did get it, and the war commenced directly.

When Joseph obtained the treasure, the priests, the deacons, and religionists of every grade, went hand in hand with the fortune-teller, and with every wicked person, to get it out of his hands, and, to accomplish this, a part of them came out and persecuted him (*JD*, 2:180-81).

Joseph soon realized that he would never find peace in the Palmyra area, so he sent word to Alva Hale, Emma’s brother, to come up from Harmony with a wagon to transport them and their belongings back to Harmony. With some financial help from his wealthy neighbor, Martin Harris, Joseph was able to pay his debts and travel to Harmony in the late fall of 1827. During the trip the plates were hidden in a barrel of beans. Joseph and Emma moved into a small two-room house on Isaac Hale’s land, about 150 yards from the main house. Here the translation of the plates could begin, and here the two of them lived for the next two and one half years. Joseph would later purchase this house and thirteen acres of land for two hundred dollars.

1828

Joseph spent the first two months in Harmony simply copying characters and translating a few of them. In February 1828 Martin Harris arrived in Harmony. Some time between December 1827 and February 1828, Martin Harris had received a vision affirming the divinity of Joseph’s calling (Dean Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:9). With Joseph’s permission Martin carried some of the characters and their translation to a few Middle East experts for confirmation of the authenticity of the characters and their

translation. The most important encounter was with Dr. Charles Anthon, professor of classical studies at Columbia College. After presenting the characters and Joseph's translation, Martin came away satisfied that Dr. Anthon had confirmed their authenticity. Dr. Anthon later, however, denied that he had confirmed their validity and called them a hoax.

History shows that Professor Charles Anthon could not have read the characters anyway. In 1821-22 Jean-Francois Champollion had begun a series of studies on the Rosetta Stone, which culminated many years later in his Egyptian Grammar and Dictionary. By 1829 a few of Champollion's studies from the Rosetta Stone had been published in Europe, but no Egyptian dictionary or grammar was yet available anywhere in the world. Surely Professor Anthon could not have read a reformed Egyptian text with any degree of confidence in 1829, nor could he credibly have pronounced someone else's translation either correct or incorrect.

Section 3 The Lost Manuscript

Scripture Mastery

D&C 3:2 Joseph rebuked for losing 116 pages of manuscript—For God doth not walk in crooked paths.

After showing the characters and their translation, which Joseph had copied from the gold plates, to Professor Charles Anthon and others, Martin Harris returned to his home in Palmyra. He told his wife, Lucy, he was satisfied as to the authenticity of the plates and that he was planning to help Joseph translate them. This announcement made Lucy determined to see the plates for herself and settle the question once and for all as to their existence. She thus insisted on traveling to Harmony with Martin. The two of them left Palmyra for Harmony in March 1828. Once in Harmony, Joseph of course refused to allow her to see the plates. Not to be denied, she searched the Smith cabin and even the grounds outside the cabin. Anticipating Lucy's obnoxious behavior in advance, Joseph had hidden the plates somewhere outside his property. Frustrated and angry, she accused Joseph of trying to cheat her husband by encouraging him to contribute to the project financially and to serve as scribe. The Harrises returned to Palmyra after two weeks, and Lucy did her best to dissuade Martin from assisting in the translation. Seeds of doubt were planted in his mind, not only by his wife, but also by some of his Palmyra friends who told him they thought he was foolish for getting involved in this venture.

Martin traveled back to Harmony in early April 1828, and for the first time the translation started in earnest. Joseph and Martin worked steadily from April 12 until June 14, 1828. Martin wrote down the text as it was dictated by Joseph. A curtain separated them to prevent Martin's seeing the plates.

Even as he was translating, clouds of doubt continued to enter his mind. To interrupt the tedious process of translation, Joseph and Martin would sometimes go down to the banks of the Susquehannah River to throw stones. On one occasion, Martin found a stone that resembled the seer stone that Joseph was using in the translation process. He surreptitiously switched the two stones, substituting the one he had found for Joseph's stone. When they resumed the translation, Joseph paused for a long time and finally exclaimed, "Martin! What is the matter? All is as dark as Egypt." Martin confessed to Joseph that he merely had wished "to stop the mouths of fools, who had told him that the Prophet had learned the sentences and was merely repeating them" (*Millennial Star*, 44 [1881]:78-79, 86-87).

By June 14, 1828, they had translated sufficient text to fill 116 pages of foolscap paper (inexpensive, legal-size, lined, yellow paper bound together in tablet form). Doubts, particularly those of his wife and friends, still continued to plague Martin. If only

he could show his wife and his friends the 116 pages of manuscript! If only he could see the plates! Martin asked again to see the plates and was again denied. Failing that, he asked if he might at least take home the 116 pages of manuscript. Joseph asked the Lord through the interpreters, and the answer was no. Martin continued to petition the Prophet, and Joseph continued to inquire of the Lord until finally it was Joseph's impression that the Lord had relented, but that he would hold both Martin and Joseph accountable for the safety of the manuscript. Rigid restrictions were placed upon Martin's freedom to show the manuscript. He was allowed to show the manuscript only to his brother Preserved Harris, his wife, his father and mother, and his wife's sister, Abigail Cobb. Joseph was uncomfortable with the whole arrangement, and he required Martin to bind himself in a solemn covenant to comply with these restrictions before leaving for Palmyra.

Joseph didn't have much time to worry after Martin left because he had serious problems of his own there in Harmony. On the day after Martin left, June 15, Emma gave birth to the couple's first child, a boy. Named Alvin, after Joseph's older brother, the baby died on the day of his birth. The exhausting labor and the tragic loss of her baby were almost too much for Emma, and for a while she seemed close to death. Joseph attended her night and day for two weeks, and Emma began to improve. Joseph then turned his attention to the manuscript. Sensing his anxiety, Emma suggested that he go to Palmyra to check up on Martin and to make sure the manuscript was safe. Emma's mother agreed to watch after her daughter, and Joseph caught the first stagecoach to Palmyra.

The stage let Joseph off about twenty miles from the Smith house. Emotionally and physically exhausted, Joseph probably would not have been able to make the long walk to his parents' house, save for the help of a benevolent stranger who, seeing Joseph's condition, offered to accompany him home. They reached the Smith farm at dawn. As soon as it was light, someone was sent to get Martin Harris.

Joseph expected Martin to come immediately, but the morning hours dragged by, and he did not come. Lucy Mack Smith tells the next part of the story well in her book *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*.

We waited till nine, and he came not—till ten, and he was not there—till eleven, still he did not make his appearance. But at half past twelve we saw him walking with a slow and measured tread towards the house, his eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the ground. On coming to the gate he stopped, instead of passing through, and got upon the fence, and sat there some time with his hat drawn over his eyes. At length he entered the house. Soon after which we sat down to the table, Mr. Harris with the rest. He took up his knife and fork as if he were going to use them, but immediately dropped them. Hyrum, observing this, said "Martin, why do you not eat; are you sick?" Upon which Mr. Harris pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out in a tone of deep anguish, "Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!" Joseph who had not expressed

his fears till now, sprang from the table, exclaiming, "Martin, have you lost that manuscript? Have you broken your oath, and brought down condemnation upon my head as well as your own?" "Yes, it is gone," replied Martin, "and I know not where." "Oh, my God!" said Joseph, clinching his hands. "All is lost! All is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned—it is I who tempted the wrath of God. I should have been satisfied with the first answer which I received from the Lord; for he told me that it was not safe to let the writing go out of my possession." He wept and groaned and walked the floor continually. At length, he told Martin to go back and search again. "No," said Martin, "it is all in vain; for I have ripped open beds and pillows, and I know it is not there." "Then must I," said Joseph, "return with such a tale as this? I dare not do it. And how shall I appear before the Lord? Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?" I besought him not to mourn so, for perhaps the Lord would forgive him, after a short season of humiliation and repentance. But what could I do to comfort him, when he saw all the family in the same situation of mind as himself; for sobs and groans, and the most bitter lamentations filled the house. However, Joseph was more distressed than the rest, as he better understood the consequences of disobedience. And he continued pacing back and forth, meantime weeping and grieving, until about sunset, when, by persuasion, he took a little nourishment. The next morning, he set out for home. We parted with heavy hearts, for it now appeared that all which we had so fondly anticipated, and which had been the source of so much secret gratification, had in a moment fled, and fled forever (129).

According to Pomeroy Tucker (*Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1867, 45-46), a prominent resident of Palmyra and Lucy Mack Smith, Martin Harris's wife played a key role in the theft of the manuscript. "There is no doubt but Mrs. Harris took it from the drawer [where Martin had placed it], with the view of retaining it until another translation should be given," wrote Lucy Mack Smith, "then to alter the original translation, for the purpose of showing a discrepancy between them, and thus make the whole appear to be a deception" (*HC*, 131).

Regardless of who took the manuscript and for what purpose, it was gone and would never be recovered. Joseph was inconsolable, and every member of the Smith family felt his despair.

We know by revelation (D&C 10) that the manuscript did fall into the hands of wicked people who altered the wording. They were waiting for Joseph to retranslate so they could reveal the discrepancies between the two versions.

For the indiscretion of allowing Martin Harris to borrow the manuscript, the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from Joseph. In July 1828, Moroni returned the Urim and Thummim to Joseph briefly to allow him to receive section 3. Of this event Joseph wrote: "After my return home [to Harmony], I was walking out a little distance, when, behold, the former heavenly messenger appeared and handed to me the Urim and Thummim again—for it had been taken from me in consequence of my having

wearied the Lord in asking for the privilege of letting Martin Harris take the writings, which he lost by transgression—and I inquired of the Lord through it, and obtained [section 3]" (*HC*, 1:21-22). The Urim and Thummim were then taken back by Moroni.

Section 3 is a scathing rebuke of Joseph for allowing himself to be led astray by the persuasions of men. Martin Harris is also rebuked for his role in losing the manuscript.

After Joseph repented and humbled himself before the Lord, the plates and Urim and Thummim were returned to him on September 22, 1828.

The reader should be aware that after section 3 the next revelation received by Joseph Smith was section 10. Reading the revelations in the order in which they were received—section 3, 10, and then 4—gives the reader an understanding of the historical events surrounding the receiving of these revelations.

1 The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught.

verse 1 Notice that the Lord is angry. He starts right off without any kind of introduction.

2 For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

verse 2 "his course is one eternal round" This phrase refers to a concept which is a rich and vital one. We are governed by God's law. That law is absolute, completely reliable, unvarying, and its consequences are inescapable. For every action there is an identical result. These results follow without respect to person. It has always been thus, in Adam's day just as in ours and in the eternities to come. Thus, "his course is one eternal round." The direct opposite of this concept is also stated in the verse: "God doth not walk in crooked paths."

Yet another meaning has been suggested for the phrase "his course is one eternal round." It is that there is a circular aspect to God and his course. Humanity starts in a celestial (premortal) world, descends through a terrestrial Eden to a fallen, telestial earth, there to be redeemed and restored—first to a paradisiacal or terrestrial glory during the Millennium and thence back to a celestial glory once again.

Even a third meaning has been suggested: God's course is an eternal round since, from a human perspective, he and his works are without beginning or end, like a ring or a circle.

3 Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men;

verse 3 "Remember, remember" Note the repetition for emphasis.

God's power is sufficient that no one or no force or happening can frustrate or prevent him from accomplishing his designs. He will fulfill all his purposes and promises, including his promise of eternal life for all who obey him.

4 For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him.

verse 4 Do we ever “set at naught the counsels of God” when he commands us in such matters as Sabbath-day observance, birth control, cleanliness of speech, and honesty in our daily activities? Do we obey willingly or do we follow the dictates of our own “carnal” desires?

5 Behold, you have been entrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember also the promises which were made to you, if you did not transgress them.

verse 5 “these things” The plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the manuscript.

Perhaps the Lord has reference here to the warnings and promises delivered to Joseph by the prophet Moroni on the occasion of Moroni's first visit on the evening of September 21, 1823 (see JS-H 1:59).

6 And behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men.

verse 6 “how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God” Joseph was human, and he made mistakes and committed human transgressions. We must remember that on the absolute scale of God's perfect righteousness, each of us is guilty of these same charges (Roman 3:23); so this is not to be taken as evidence of any particular wickedness on Joseph's part. Joseph himself stated: “No one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature” (JS-H 1:28).

7 For, behold, you should not have feared man more than God. Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words—

verse 7 “behold, you should not have feared man more than God” Joseph apparently believed that Martin Harris was indispensable not only as a scribe but also in providing the financial means for publishing the finished book to the world. It was natural that Joseph might fear losing the support of such an important man as Martin Harris, and that fear may have led him to make a wrong decision in the affair of the 116 pages.

The use of the word “feared” does not refer to the fear of a coward, but was more probably caused by the fact that Joseph was but a youth and was inexperienced. In the case of Martin Harris, Joseph was dealing with a man over twenty-two years his senior, a prominent and wealthy farmer and one of the few who believed Joseph’s story and supported him with both money and labor. There would have been tremendous inner pressure for Joseph to want to show his appreciation to Martin Harris.

8 Yet you should have been faithful; and he would have extended his arm and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble.

verses 7-8 “Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words—yet you should have been faithful” Joseph, with his experiences and his knowledge, is held to a higher standard than other men (D&C 82:3).

verse 8 “he would have been with you in every time of trouble” The Lord reassures Joseph that even without the help of Martin Harris, the Lord would have not forsaken Joseph. It is interesting to note that the Lord refers to himself in the third person here.

“fiery darts of the adversary” This phrase is, of course, figurative. Fiery means burning and indicates a poison that has penetrated a person’s soul.

9 Behold, thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall.

verse 9 “Behold, thou art Joseph” This provocative statement implies that Joseph was foreordained to his calling for good reason. He was chosen by the Lord in the premortal council in heaven for his specific assignment. This fact notwithstanding, he could lose it all if he is not obedient.

10 But remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you, and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work;

verse 10 The rebuke in section 3 must have been very hard on Joseph, particularly since he had just lost his firstborn son and had nearly lost his wife as well. But this verse offers comfort as well.

11 Except thou do this, thou shalt be delivered up and become as other men, and have no more gift.

verse 11 “have no more gift” The specific gift referred to here is the gift of translation.

12 And when thou deliveredst up that which God had given thee sight and power to translate, thou deliveredst up that which was sacred into the hands of a wicked man,

verse 12 It must have been a sobering experience for Martin Harris to have been called a “wicked man” by the Lord. However, in 1829 a common use of the word wicked was someone of slight or little blame, such as a wicked child. Certainly his loss of the manuscript was unintentional, and less than a year after this unfortunate episode, the Lord was willing that Martin should become one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

13 Who has set at naught the counsels of God, and has broken the most sacred promises which were made before God, and has depended upon his own judgment and boasted in his own wisdom.

14 And this is the reason that thou hast lost thy privileges for a season—

verse 14 “thou hast lost thy privileges for a season” These privileges include possession of the plates and the Urim and Thummim and the right and power to translate the sacred scriptures.

15 For thou hast suffered the counsel of thy director to be trampled upon from the beginning.

verse 15 “thy director” This term likely refers to Moroni or perhaps to the Lord himself.

Others have insisted that “thy director” is the Urim and Thummim (Smith and Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 20). However, elsewhere in scripture (see D&C 17:1; Mosiah 1:16; Alma 37:38, 45) and in early LDS usage, “director” or “directors” always referred to the Liahona rather than the Urim and Thummim. Because there is no evidence that Joseph had possession of the Liahona “from the beginning” of his work, this reference is more likely to him who ultimately directed Joseph—again, either to Moroni or to the Lord himself.

16 Nevertheless, my work shall go forth, for inasmuch as the knowledge of a Savior has come unto the world, through the testimony of the Jews, even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people—

verse 16 “testimony of the Jews” The Bible.

“even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people” The expression “my people” here might seem to refer to the descendants of those who wrote the Book of Mormon. The following verse, however, seems to differentiate between “my people” and the descendants of the Book of Mormon people. We know also that the Book of Mormon was received by the “Gentiles” of the Great Gentile nation who were largely descendants of the house of Israel. To these and by these, the gospel would be

restored and the Book of Mormon be given. The non-Jews of the house of Israel, then, are certainly considered by the Lord to be what he calls “my people.”

17 And to the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites, through the testimony of their fathers—

verse 17 Are there descendants of the Nephites alive in this final dispensation? Weren't they all killed by the Lamanites? Following the Savior's visit to the New World, there followed a two-hundred-year period of peace, the Zion society described in 4 Nephi, when the people joined together into one unified group in which there were no “ites.” After this so-called “mini-millennium” the people broke up into Nephite and Lamanite groups again. This time the division was not according to lineage but by righteousness or unrighteousness. The “Nephites” were those that wanted to live the commandments of God, and the “Lamanites” were those that did not (see 4 Nephi 1:38). Therefore, there were descendants of Nephi, Jacob, Joseph, and Zoram in both groups, and undoubtedly some of their descendants are among the native inhabitants of the Americas—probably largely of Central America. Thus, the terms *Nephites* and *Lamanites* both refer to all of the descendants of the Book of Mormon peoples.

18 And this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites, who dwindled in unbelief because of the iniquity of their fathers, whom the Lord has suffered to destroy their brethren the Nephites, because of their iniquities and their abominations.

19 And for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people;

20 And that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved. Amen.

verses 19-20 “the promises of the Lord” One specific purpose of the Book of Mormon is to bring the descendants of Lehi to a knowledge of their fathers and of the religion of their fathers, in fulfillment of God's promises to their fathers.

verse 20 “rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ” This phrase means to trust in the atonement of Jesus Christ and his consequent ability to save imperfect mortals.

Section 4 Joseph Smith Senior's Call to Labor

Scripture Mastery

D&C 4 Joseph Smith Senior's call to labor

By late fall of 1828, Joseph, now in Harmony, was making preparations for winter and struggling to get the translation started again. He and Emma did a little translating over the next few months, but most of Joseph's time was spent trying to prepare for winter and gather a living for Emma and himself. On August 25th Joseph had purchased thirteen acres of land from his father-in-law, Isaac Hale, and he began to farm it. He needed to support his family. By then his wife's family had rejected him and Emma, and there was not much support available to them. Joseph Knight, Sr., described Joseph's family situation during the winter of 1828-29: "Now, he could not translate but little, being poor and [having] nobody to write for him but his wife, and she could not do much and take care of her house, and he being poor and [having] no means to live but work. . . . I let him have some little provisions and . . . a pair of shoes and three dollars in money to help him a little" (Dean Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection," 35).

Back on the Smith farm, Joseph, Sr., and Lucy were anxious about Joseph since they had heard nothing from him since his departure from there under such gloomy circumstances in July 1828. In October they set off to travel the 130 miles to Harmony to see Joseph and Emma. They were relieved to learn that Joseph had the plates and the Urim and Thummim back and that he had not lost his gift to translate. They enjoyed meeting with Joseph and Emma and with Isaac and Elizabeth Hale and the rest of their children. After spending almost three months in Harmony, they returned to Manchester, arriving on January 22, 1829.

Joseph, Sr., did not stay home long, however. In late January he and Samuel left again for Harmony. On the way they stopped at Colesville, New York, at the home of Joseph Knight, and the three of them traveled the rest of the way to Harmony by sleigh. During this visit, Joseph, Sr., asked his son to inquire of the Lord on his behalf. The senior Smith wanted to know what the Lord would have him do. Section 4 is the Lord's instructions to Joseph Smith, Sr.

Though this revelation was given for Joseph's father, it is addressed to all people who would serve God. It served the early Church and continues to be today our creed or standard of behavior and commitment. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith pointed out that this section—consisting of only seven verses:

[It] . . . contains sufficient counsel and instruction for a lifetime of study. No one has yet mastered it. It was not intended as a personal revelation to Joseph Smith Sr., but to be of benefit to all who desire to embark in the service of God. It is a revelation to

each member of the Church, especially to all who hold the priesthood. Perhaps there is no other revelation in all our scriptures that embodies greater instruction pertaining to the manner of qualification of members of the Church for the service of God, and in such condensed form than this revelation. It is as broad, as high, and as deep as eternity. No elder of the Church is qualified to teach in the Church, or carry the message of salvation to the world, until he has absorbed, in part at least this heaven-sent instruction (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:35).

Section 4 may be classified as one of the six sections of the Doctrine and Covenants that fit into the “call to labor” category. The others are sections 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16. In these sections the Lord gives to each of these men the same basic message.

1 Now behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.

verse 1 “a marvelous work” Remember that this revelation was a prophecy at the time it was given. It refers to the revelation of the fulness of the gospel, the restoration of the priesthood, the organization of the true Church, the gathering of Israel, and the establishment of Zion and the millennial kingdom. Today we are seeing much of this prophecy fulfilled in a marvelous way.

Later in 1829, Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Joseph Knight, and David Whitmer will also be informed of this same event by Joseph Smith the prophet, but with added emphasis—calling it “a great and marvelous work” (D&C 6:1; 11:1; 12:1; 14:1). This marvelous work had been foretold much earlier by Isaiah, as a work necessitated by the spiritual state of the Christian world. The Christian people would do lip service to the Lord but would not be worshiping him correctly. They would be taught by the precepts of men (Isaiah 29:13-14).

2 Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

verse 2 We must serve the Lord with our “heart”—emotions and feelings, “might”—our spiritual strength, “mind”—our mental capacities, and our “strength”—our physical abilities.

The Lord obviously wants a total commitment. We must serve him with all of our capacities. Only then can we be said to be magnifying our callings. Only then can we report our stewardship to the Lord in a way that will allow us to stand blameless before him.

3 Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work;

verse 3 “if ye have desires . . . ye are called” The term *called* here is used in its less specific sense. The Church had not even been organized yet. We do not need to wait for a vision or other authorization to engage in God’s work.

Does this injunction apply only to full-time missionaries, or does it apply to every member of the Church? Elder George Albert Smith pointed out: “It is not necessary for you to be called to go into the mission field in order to proclaim the truth. Begin on the man who lives next door by inspiring confidence in him, by inspiring love in him for you because of your righteousness, and your missionary work has already begun” (CR, October 1916, 50-51).

President David O. McKay taught of section 4:

[A] . . . significant feature of this revelation, and others given about the same period, is the naming of essential qualifications of those who were to participate in the bringing about of this marvelous work. These qualifications were not the possession of wealth, not social distinction, not political preferment, not military achievement, not nobility of birth; but a desire to serve God with all your “heart, mind, and strength”—spiritual qualities that contribute to nobility of soul. I repeat: No popularity, no wealth, no theological training in church government—yet a marvelous work was about to come forth among the children of men. Manifestly, some higher power was operating to bring about this marvelous work other than mere human and material means (CR, April 1954, 22-23).

4 For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;

verse 4 “For behold the field is white already to harvest” Wheat is green as it grows but loses its color as it matures. The paler the stalks, the closer they are to an optimal ripeness.

The term “already” here means *all ready* or *now ready*.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his famous Divinity School Address at Harvard—shortly after the restoration—stated:

The need was never greater of new revelation than now. . . . The Church seems to totter to its fall, almost all life extinct. . . . I look for the hour when the supreme Beauty, which ravished the souls of those eastern men, and chiefly of the Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the West also (In Sidney E. Ahlstrom, ed., *Theology in America* [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967], 306, 315-16).

A number of Latter-day Saint leaders spoke of their own quest for truth and the frustrations they felt before they encountered Joseph Smith. Brigham Young stated: “My mind was open to conviction, and I knew that the Christian world had not the religion that Jesus and his apostles taught. I knew that there was not a Bible Christian on the earth within my knowledge” (JD, 5:75). Wilford Woodruff said: “I did not join any

church, believing that the church of Christ in its true organization did not exist upon the earth” (*JD*, 4:99). Willard Richards became “convinced that the sects were all wrong, and that God had no church on earth, but that he would soon have a church whose creed would be the truth” (*HC*, 2:470).

This marvelous work and wonder, to which the Lord referred, was, of course, heralded by the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

5 And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

verse 5 “faith, hope, charity” See a discussion of these three principles in “The Fruits of Faith” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 11, *Other Notes on Faith*.

“charity and love” We might assume that the use of *and* between charity and love implies that they are not exactly synonyms. “Charity” is the divine selfless love that God has for all men; whereas “love” may refer to a more earthly brotherly predisposition.

“with an eye single to the glory of God” A man cannot serve two masters (Mathew 6:24; Moroni 7:11-14).

6 Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence.

7 Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.

verse 7 This promise applies, most likely, only if we have paid the price of obedience to all else the Lord asks us to do in this section.

Brief Historical Setting

The translation work proceeded slowly with Emma and her brother Reuben Hale acting as scribes.

Section 5 Martin Harris—Witness of the Book of Mormon

After being rebuked by the Lord for losing the 116 pages of Book of Mormon manuscript (section 3) in June of 1828, the persistent Martin Harris came to Joseph Smith in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in March 1829 probably seeking the assurance that he was still accepted of the Lord. He probably also wanted to reassure himself once again that Joseph did indeed have the plates which he claimed to have. Martin wanted to actually see them that all doubt might be erased. Section 5 is the Lord's answer to Martin Harris's petition. The Lord informed him that if he would humble himself and repent, he would one day be privileged to be one of the three special witnesses of the Book of Mormon and be allowed to view the plates.

verses 1-22 These verses are directed to Joseph and not to Martin Harris.

1 Behold, I say unto you, that as my servant Martin Harris has desired a witness at my hand, that you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., have got the plates of which you have testified and borne record that you have received of me;

verse 1 “my servant Martin Harris has desired a witness at my hand”

Though Martin Harris seems rather stubborn, inclined to doubt, and easily swayed by the opinions of his family and friends, it would seem that he was basically honest and simply wanted to be very certain of the validity of everything he undertook. Martin wanted to actually see the plates and the Urim and Thummim, since in his mind this would be the surest way to satisfy himself that Joseph still had them. But Joseph did not have control over these sacred items. Rather, the Lord did, and the Lord forbade Joseph to show them to Martin or anyone else except at the Lord's specific command. At this point in time, not even Joseph's immediate family was allowed to view the plates.

2 And now, behold, this shall you say unto him—he who spake unto you, said unto you: I, the Lord, am God, and have given these things unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and have commanded you that you should stand as a witness of these things;

verse 2 “you should stand as a witness of these things” The Lord is speaking here to the Prophet Joseph. Joseph's calling was not to display the sacred objects to others, but only to testify of them. Only God could authorize them to be shown, and after the episode of the lost 116 pages, Joseph was not about to disobey the Lord on this point. We probably do not fully appreciate the emotional burden put on Joseph by his not being allowed to show the plates to others—not even to his wife and family.

3 And I have caused you that you should enter into a covenant with me, that you should not show them except to those persons to whom I commanded you; and you have no power over them except I grant it unto you.

4 And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished.

verse 4 The “gift” spoken of in this verse is the gift of translation. The reader simply cannot begin to understand this incredible and astonishing gift until he or she comes to understand the process by which Joseph will soon translate the Book of Mormon. Please see *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon*, in volume 2, Appendix A, of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. In time, after the translation is completed, other gifts, including the priesthood of God, will be added.

5 Verily, I say unto you, that woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words;

6 For hereafter you shall be ordained and go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men.

7 Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I have committed unto you.

8 Oh, this unbelieving and stiffnecked generation—mine anger is kindled against them.

9 Behold, verily I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations;

10 But this generation shall have my word through you;

verse 10 “this generation” In one sense this designates Joseph’s own generation (1805-44). Future generations of saints will receive additional revelation through their own prophets. But in a larger sense, “Joseph’s generation” is the whole present dispensation of the gospel from the opening of the dispensation down to the second coming of Christ, which dispensation enjoys the fulness of the gospel only through the work of the prophet Joseph Smith.

“shall have my word through you” The Lord’s message to the world, the gospel of Jesus Christ, will come through the Prophet Joseph and through the Book of Mormon.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has defined the expression “my word:”

The *word* is the gospel of salvation; the word is the plan of salvation; the word is the mind and will and purposes of the Lord as pertaining to his children on earth; the word is all the truths and rights and powers and doctrines and principles that are

needed by men so they can take the souls they possess and transform them into the kind of souls that can go where God and Christ are (“This Generation Shall Have My Word Through You” in *Sperry Symposium Classics, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 35).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has placed the calling of Joseph Smith in a particularly poignant perspective. Please see the supplemental article, *Joseph Smith and the Gospel Dispensation*.

11 And in addition to your testimony, the testimony of three of my servants, whom I shall call and ordain, unto whom I will show these things, and they shall go forth with my words that are given through you.

verse 11 (see also verses 15, 18) The Lord is still speaking to the Prophet Joseph. The Lord’s law of witnesses is introduced. Joseph’s testimony was not to stand alone, in keeping with the law revealed to Moses and also taught by Jesus during his earthly ministry: “At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses,” was a matter to be established or verified (Deuteronomy 17:6, Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1). The three witnesses of the Book of Mormon will be Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. These three witnesses had been prophesied of by the prophet Moroni some fourteen hundred years previously (Ether 5:2-4).

12 Yea, they shall know of a surety that these things are true, for from heaven will I declare it unto them.

verse 12 “they shall know of a surety” The three witnesses will experience the plates with their own physical senses. They will see and converse with the angel Moroni, and will hear the voice of God bear witness from heaven. They will no longer have to depend upon their faith.

**13 I will give them power that they may behold and view these things as they are;
14 And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.**

verses 12-14 The witnesses are to be given much more than the privilege of physically viewing the plates. They will also receive a spiritual witness of the divine authenticity of the book (see also D&C 17:3). The physical experience alone would likely have been denied or rationalized away by the witnesses. But the spiritual witness burned into their souls was never forsaken even to the end of their lives. No other person on earth will be allowed the privilege of obtaining a testimony in the same way. The eight witness saw and handled the plates but were not favored with the visit of a heavenly messenger. All the rest of us must earn our testimonies in the manner prescribed in Moroni 10:3-5.

The term “coming forth of my church out of the wilderness” refers to symbolism used by John the Apostle in the book of Revelation (Revelation 12:6). The woman who “fled into the wilderness” (Revelation 12:6) is the Church of Christ which deteriorated into a state of apostasy in the first few centuries AD. In 1830 the Church will be restored or come “out of the wilderness”—out of a state of apostasy. See the commentary on D&C 33:5.

In scripture, the “wilderness” might also be a place of safe retreat—separate from the world or “Babylon.” Thus, Joseph went into the woods, Moses up onto the mountain, and Jesus into the wilderness of Judea to encounter or commune with God. John the Baptist is a voice “that crieth in the wilderness” (Isaiah 40:3). The saints are often called out of Babylon to go into the wilderness to avoid God’s punishments upon the world, as was Israel under Moses, Lehi before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the modern saints in their trek to the mountain West.

Here in verse 5 perhaps both of these concepts of “the wilderness” apply. In the time following Jesus’s mortal sojourn, the Church was metaphorically driven out of “the world” into “the wilderness” (see Revelation 12:6, 14; JST Revelation 12:5-7). That is, it was no longer found in the wicked and apostate world of men, but was taken to God. Thus, the Church’s being called forth out of the wilderness to take the gospel “into all the world” (D&C 18:28) here symbolizes the restoration of the true Church to the earth in the latter days.

The expression “clear as the moon, and fair as the sun and terrible as an army with banners” is used here to describe the restored gospel. The expression is taken from the Old Testament book, the Song of Solomon, which, interestingly, Joseph did not consider inspired writing.

15 And the testimony of three witnesses will I send forth of my word.

16 And behold, whosoever believeth on my words, them will I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit; and they shall be born of me, even of water and of the Spirit—

verse 16 “manifestation of my Spirit” A spiritual witness may be received by all human beings in answer to their honest prayers. Still, this does not mean they have received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

“they shall be born of me” That is, born of Christ. When we are “born again” in the gospel covenant, we are born spiritually as the sons and daughters of Christ who has given us life through his suffering.

“even of water and of the Spirit” This phrase refers to the ordinance of baptism, part of which is receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. It also refers to spiritual rebirth. For a better understanding of the profoundly important ordinance of baptism, see *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth*, chapter 18, volume 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

17 And you must wait yet a little while, for ye are not yet ordained—

verse 17 Joseph has not yet received the priesthood—the authority to baptize and to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery will receive this authority about two months later.

18 And their testimony shall also go forth unto the condemnation of this generation if they harden their hearts against them;

19 For a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming.

verses 18-19 These two verses read differently in the 1833 Book of Commandments. The changes were made by the Prophet Joseph himself in the 1835 edition, perhaps because of the inflammatory effect the original words had on the enemies of the Church. In the 1833 Book of Commandments, these two verses were numbered as verses 5-6. The 1833 wording, though not now officially the scripture of the Church, is as follows:

5 And thus, if the people of this generation harden not their hearts, I will work a reformation among them, and I will put down all lyings, and deceivings, and priestcrafts, and envyings, and strifes, and idolatries, and sorceries, and all manner of iniquities, and I will establish my church, like unto the church which was taught by my disciples in the days of old.

6 And now if this generation do harden their hearts against my word, behold I will deliver them up unto satan, for he reigneth and hath much power at this time, for he hath got great hold upon the hearts of the people of this generation: and not far from the iniquities of Sodom and Gomorrah, do they come at this time: and behold the sword of justice hangeth over their heads, and if they persist in the hardness of their hearts, the time cometh that it must fall upon them.

verse 19 “For a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth” A *scourge* is literally “a whipping” or “a flogging” and refers here figuratively to the punishment that is about to be poured out upon the nations. It is difficult to identify this scourge with any particular disease or disaster. Section 87 teaches that this scourge or punishment is to come in many forms—war, famine, plague, earthquake, and so on—“until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations” (D&C 87:6). It is a “desolating” scourge because it will culminate with the Lord’s second coming in glory and leave the world empty or desolate of all telestial inhabitants and elements. As it was in the days of Noah, even so in our own dispensation, as the second coming approaches, all who will not repent will be erased. It is either

repentance or destruction. In giving us this choice the Lord is treating our dispensation no differently than he treated the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem, or the Nephites, or the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The world in our dispensation will find the Lord's ultimatum just as unavoidable as it was anciently (see verse 20).

In agreement with verse 6 of the 1833 Book of Commandments (reproduced above), it is likely that the great scourging will begin with the Civil War: "The sword of justice hangeth over their heads." Brigham Young clearly believed this: "The war now raging in our nation [the Civil War] is in the providence of God, and was told us years and years ago by the Prophet Joseph; and what we are now coming to was foreseen by him, and no power can hinder" (*JD*, 10:294).

"utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming" At the Lord's second coming, the energy that will consume the wicked will be the very glory of the resurrected Christ himself. That glory will burn away all things that cannot abide at least a terrestrial law. Thus, the earth will "be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory" (Articles of Faith 1:10).

20 Behold, I tell you these things, even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem; and my word shall be verified at this time as it hath hitherto been verified.

verse 20 "even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem" Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 BC by the Babylonians and again in AD 70 by the Romans. In the former case the people were warned by Jeremiah and Lehi among others (1 Nephi 1:18). In the latter case they were warned by the Savior himself (*JS-M* 1:4-20).

21 And now I command you, my servant Joseph, to repent and walk more uprightly before me, and to yield to the persuasions of men no more;

verse 21 "repent and walk more uprightly" Even prophets like Joseph Smith must repent when they err.

22 And that you be firm in keeping the commandments wherewith I have commanded you; and if you do this, behold I grant unto you eternal life, even if you should be slain.

verse 22 "even if you should be slain" Note that even as early as March 1829, the Lord gives an intimation of Joseph's future martyrdom (see also *D&C* 6:30).

23 And now, again, I speak unto you, my servant Joseph, concerning the man that desires the witness—

verse 23 "the man that desires the witness" The Lord is referring to Martin Harris.

24 Behold, I say unto him, he exalts himself and does not humble himself sufficiently before me; but if he will bow down before me, and humble himself in mighty prayer and faith, in the sincerity of his heart, then will I grant unto him a view of the things which he desires to see.

verse 24 “then will I grant unto him a view of the things which he desires to see” Martin is promised that he will become one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates (see D&C 17).

25 And then he shall say unto the people of this generation: Behold, I have seen the things which the Lord hath shown unto Joseph Smith, Jun., and I know of a surety that they are true, for I have seen them, for they have been shown unto me by the power of God and not of man.

verse 25 “and I know of a surety that they are true” Again, Martin will see and hear with his own physical senses. He will know as Joseph knew with no further need of faith. The spiritual witness he received and the covenant he entered into at the time he saw the plates would be indelibly burned into his soul. He will know of himself with no need of any other witness.

26 And I the Lord command him, my servant Martin Harris, that he shall say no more unto them concerning these things, except he shall say: I have seen them, and they have been shown unto me by the power of God; and these are the words which he shall say.

verses 25-26 “and these are the words which he shall say” Notice how the Lord boxes in Martin Harris and the testimony he is to bear. Martin had the nasty habit of preaching his own pet ideas and theories. When it was appropriate, he had to say what he was commanded to say and no more, or else he would break his covenant with God and stand condemned (see verse 27).

27 But if he deny this he will break the covenant which he has before covenanted with me, and behold, he is condemned.

verse 27 The covenant spoken of in this verse is defined by the Lord in verses 2-3 of this section.

28 And now, except he humble himself and acknowledge unto me the things that he has done which are wrong, and covenant with me that he will keep my commandments, and exercise faith in me, behold, I say unto him, he shall have no such views, for I will grant unto him no views of the things of which I have spoken.

29 And if this be the case, I command you, my servant Joseph, that you shall say unto him, that he shall do no more, nor trouble me any more concerning this matter.

verses 28-29 Martin was wealthy and impetuous, and despite the witnesses he had received, was not yet sufficiently humble, even after losing the manuscript. This was Martin's last chance. If he would not repent and humble himself, the Lord did not want to be troubled again concerning him in the process of restoring the gospel to the earth. In this respect, Doctrine and Covenants 5:28-29 may be called Martin Harris's "wake up call."

30 And if this be the case, behold, I say unto thee Joseph, when thou hast translated a few more pages thou shalt stop for a season, even until I command thee again; then thou mayest translate again.

verses 30, 34 Joseph is commanded to stop translating "for a season" until the Lord provides "means" by which the translation may be accomplished. The "means" will be explained in section 6.

31 And except thou do this, behold, thou shalt have no more gift, and I will take away the things which I have entrusted with thee.

32 And now, because I foresee the lying in wait to destroy thee, yea, I foresee that if my servant Martin Harris humbleth not himself and receive a witness from my hand, that he will fall into transgression;

verse 32 If Martin Harris will not accept a quiet witness of the Spirit but continues to demand more dramatic proof, then he will fall.

33 And there are many that lie in wait to destroy thee from off the face of the earth; and for this cause, that thy days may be prolonged, I have given unto thee these commandments.

34 Yea, for this cause I have said: Stop, and stand still until I command thee, and I will provide means whereby thou mayest accomplish the thing which I have commanded thee.

verse 34 See verse 30 and its commentary.

35 And if thou art faithful in keeping my commandments, thou shalt be lifted up at the last day. Amen.

verse 35 "thou shalt be lifted up at the last day" To be *lifted up* is to be resurrected with a celestial body and be admitted into the celestial kingdom of God. This expression seems to have originated from the idea of being lifted up from the earth at the second coming of Christ when all wickedness is left behind and burned (see D&C 88:96; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

“at the last day” This expression refers to the last day of Babylon, or the world, which is the present telestial earth. It will also be the day of Jesus’s return to earth in glory.

Section 6 Confirmation of Oliver Cowdery's Testimony

In the winter of 1828-29 the twenty-two year old Oliver Cowdery was a school teacher in Manchester, New York, and he was boarding at the home of the Joseph Smith, Sr., family. It was the custom of the day for teachers to board in the homes of their pupils, and since the Smiths had children in Oliver's school, he came to stay with them. Through the Smith family he had heard of the Prophet Joseph and the gold plates. He had also learned of the plates from a friend whom he had met in Palmyra, a man from Fayette, New York, named David Whitmer. Oliver had been moved to pray and ask the Lord concerning the authenticity of Joseph's calling. As Oliver explained, "The subject . . . seems working in my very bones, and I cannot, for a moment, get it out of my mind" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 139). Oliver had been granted a spiritual witness of Joseph's mission, and he was convinced that the Lord wanted him to assist in the work of translation. According to an 1832 history of Joseph Smith, Oliver had actually seen the Lord and the plates in vision before seeking out the Prophet Joseph (Dean Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 8).

Oliver was the youngest of eight children and was born October 3, 1806 in Wells, Vermont. Thus, he was nearly a year younger than Joseph. In 1825 he moved to New York where he worked successively as a clerk in a general store, as a blacksmith, and as a farmer. In 1828 he entered the teaching profession in Manchester, New York.

In April 1829 Oliver traveled to Harmony, Pennsylvania, with Samuel Smith arriving on April 5. Lucy Mack Smith reported that about three days before the arrival of Oliver and Samuel (2 April), Joseph had called upon the Lord to send him a scribe, and that Joseph had been informed that the scribe should be forthcoming in a few days (*History of Joseph Smith*, 141).

Of course Joseph knew immediately why Oliver had come. Shortly after Oliver's arrival in Harmony, Joseph inquired of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim and received section 6 which consists of instructions and counsel to Oliver Cowdery. By April 7, he and Joseph were working full time on the Book of Mormon translation.

While Joseph translated, Oliver acted as scribe. By July 1, 1829, they finished the translation of the entire Book of Mormon. They moved from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to Fayette, New York, before the translation was completed. See *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon*, volume 2, Appendix A of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 6 Confirmation of Oliver Cowdery's Testimony

D&C 6:7 Seek not for riches but for wisdom.

D&C 6:16 Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart.

D&C 6:22-23 Oliver Cowdery's secret prayer.

D&C 6:33 The law of the harvest: Fear not to do good, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward.

D&C 6:34, 36 Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

D&C 6:37 Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.

verses 1-9 These verses in this section are identical to verses 1-9 of section 11, a revelation given to Hyrum Smith, the prophet's brother. Also verses 1-5 of this section are identical to verses 1-5 of section 12, a revelation to Joseph Knight and to verses 1-5 of section 14, a revelation given to David Whitmer. Further, D&C 6:6 is also very similar in substance to D&C 14:6, and section 4 is similar in substance to the opening verses of sections 6, 11, 12, and 14. Why the repetition? It should not be understood as a divine "form letter" implying less than personal or individual concern for the recipients. Rather, it emphasizes the importance of the calling made to these servants and to all who have followed them in the Lord's service. The sacred ordinances of the gospel, while creating an individual, personal bond between the Lord and each person who enters into the covenants, often employ the same words for all who receive them. That the Sermon on the Mount was repeated on more than one occasion, for example (see Matthew 5-7; Luke 6; 3 Nephi 12-14), emphasizes the tremendous importance of the sermon.

1 A great and marvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men.

2 Behold, I am God; give heed unto my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my words.

verse 2 "quick" The word of the Lord is "quick." *Quick* here does not mean swift but rather means something living and alive. Thus, to be quickened by the Spirit means to be given spiritual life. The word of the Lord is quick and powerful because it is a source of life, energy, and real power.

"sharper than a two-edged sword" How might we explain the symbolism here? This refers not to a one-handed foil or a saber, but to a heavy, two-handed broadsword that is sharpened on both its edges. This two-edged sword is highly effective and can cut in any direction regardless of the direction in which the blow was

struck. Thus, just as a two-edged sword can cut deep enough to sever joints and cleave bone, so might the Lord's word bring spiritual death to those who do not give heed to it. Also, the word of God has power to pierce the soul as a sword and penetrate to the inmost parts of man. Also, it can cut through error and falsehood with particular efficiency. The two-edged sword will cut regardless of which way it is swung. There is no place that a person may touch it without feeling the effect it has or could have. Likewise, the word of God will have a positive or a negative effect upon whomever it contacts.

3 Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God.

4 Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God.

5 Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you.

verse 5 Joseph Fielding Smith, in a conference address taught, "There is no reason in the world why any soul should not know where to find the truth. If he will only humble himself and seek in the spirit of humility and faith" (*CR*, April 1951, 59).

6 Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion;

verse 6 "as you have asked" The Lord is speaking to Oliver Cowdery. Oliver had requested a revelation from the Lord. He wanted to know what the Lord had in mind for him to do relative the Book of Mormon plates. Other sections of the Doctrine and Covenants (4, 11, 12, and 14) were all given in response to individuals' requests that Joseph inquire of the Lord in their behalf.

"keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion" Here it is in a nutshell. Here is all one must do in this life to inherit eternal life. Keep the commandments and work to establish Zion in this final dispensation! Keep in mind that the Church had not yet been organized.

"Zion" Let us briefly review the concept of Zion.

Literally, Zion is the kingdom of God upon the earth, a society that governs itself by celestial principles. Because of ancient scriptural prophecy we have greatly embellished the concept of Zion using various metaphors. Figuratively, Zion is that glorious city or land which will be established in the latter days some time prior to the Lord's second coming. It is represented figuratively as a city with high thick walls and an impenetrable gate. This safe refuge will serve as a place of gathering and security to those who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. Zion is often metaphorically compared to a tent that covers the earth. This tent is anchored by a center pole and stakes.

Zion will be the abode of Jesus as he administers the government of the earth during the Millennium. It will not be a secret place. Rather, all will know of it, even those who do not dwell there. Zion is described in scripture as “Fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and . . . terrible unto all nations; [such] that the kingdoms of this world [will be] constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (D&C 105:31-32).

In the latter days two places will be called the center places of Zion. The first is the city of Jerusalem itself which will be restored to its holy position of grandeur and beauty. It will serve as a gathering place for the tribe of Judah. The second is the New Jerusalem to be built upon the western hemisphere with its center pole in Jackson County, Missouri. To Zion on the western hemisphere will gather the rest of Israel and those Gentiles without the house of Israel who accept the gospel and are “adopted” into the house of Israel.

Zion is not limited just to the city of Jerusalem and Jackson County, Missouri. In the latter days, wherever there are saints of God who have embraced the restored gospel, there is Zion. These are found in stakes all over the world.

Zion may also be something other than a place. Zion may also be an attitude of acceptance of the gospel, a spirit of obedience, a purity of heart. Just as the title *Babylon* may refer in a specific way to an ancient city or in a general way to the evil which exists in the world, so may the word Zion represent either a city or label used to describe all that is truly righteous, wholesome, and in tune with the Spirit of the Lord and his eternal plan.

Those who assist in the cause of Zion in the latter days will be exalted.

7 Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich.

verse 7 Here is a priceless verse well-worth committing to memory!

“Seek not for riches but for wisdom” *Wisdom* may be defined as the ability to view any situation, person, or object in an eternal perspective. It is spiritual common sense.

“the mysteries of God” Harold B. Lee taught that a *mystery* is a spiritual truth that may be grasped only through divine revelation—a fact or concept that can truly be understood only with the help and influence of the Spirit of God. It is this type of mystery referred to in this particular verse. All spiritual truths are “mysteries” to those who are “hard-hearted” or “stiff-necked,” as they simply are unable to understand them (*Ye Are the Light of the World*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974], 211).

Today we might use the word “mystery” in an additional context: A mystery may be a point of doctrine that is unusually sacred or esoteric, and one should not speak

freely about it. Usually the Lord has not given a complete revealed explanation of this type of mystery, nor is it necessarily his intent to do so.

8 Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be unto you; and if you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation.

9 Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed.

verse 9 “**Say nothing but repentance unto this generation.**” This is not to say that the Lord’s servants should not say anything about the other principles of the gospel such as baptism and obedience to the commandments, but all that the missionaries do and say should be in the spirit of bringing the people to repentance.

10 Behold thou hast a gift, and blessed art thou because of thy gift. Remember it is sacred and cometh from above—

verse 10 “**thou hast a gift**” The *gift* here is Oliver’s calling to be the scribe of Joseph, to assist in the translation of the Book of Mormon, and to establish Zion. See also the commentary for verses 10-12. This gift, together with its attendant blessings of revelation, was lost by Martin Harris through his carelessness and lack of faith.

11 And if thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous; therefore thou shalt exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, convince them of the error of their ways.

verse 11 “**thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous**” Anything that is known to God and not known to man is a mystery to man. One of the promises made to Oliver and others in this dispensation is that if they seek, they can know mysteries. At the time of this revelation, the content of the Book of Mormon was a mystery, and much of what we take for granted today as basic principles of the restored gospel was still a mystery to Oliver and Joseph in 1829.

12 Make not thy gift known unto any save it be those who are of thy faith. Trifle not with sacred things.

verses 10-12 Oliver’s *gift* was a talent for receiving divine revelation (see D&C 8:1-5). We will learn that Oliver had other special gifts (see D&C 6:25-28 and D&C 8:6-9).

To what extent does each member of the Church have the gift of revelation? Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out:

It is the privilege and the right of every member of the Church to receive revelation and to enjoy the gifts of the Spirit. When we are confirmed members of the

Church, we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead, based on faithfulness. . . .

Religion comes from God by revelation and deals with spiritual things; and unless and until a man has received revelation, he has not received religion, and he is not on the path leading to salvation in our Father's kingdom (*CR*, April 1971, 100-01).

Joseph Smith said: "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them" (*TPJS*, 149).

"Make not thy gift known" Is the Lord advising Oliver to keep the fact of his calling relative to the Book of Mormon secret? It would seem more likely that the Lord here is cautioning Oliver to treat as sacred the divine revelations and mysteries to which he will be privy in this new calling (Matthew 7:6).

13 If thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation.

verse 13 "there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation" At that time the words "salvation" (verse 13) and "exaltation" were used interchangeably. What a spiritual pearl is contained in this verse: The "greatest of all the gifts of God" is the gift of exaltation or eternal life (see also D&C 14:7). Though some would try to take credit for "working out their own salvation," we are reminded that salvation is ultimately a gift of God—not a purchase, reward, or wage. Salvation is a gift, through the mercy of God and the atonement of Christ.

14 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, blessed art thou for what thou hast done; for thou hast inquired of me, and behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit. If it had not been so, thou wouldst not have come to the place where thou art at this time.

verse 14 This revelation to Oliver helped put his doubts to rest. In this verse (and also in verses 15, 22, and 23) the Lord reminds Oliver about two experiences that Oliver had never shared with Joseph. The first was Oliver's practice of inquiring of the Lord for direction and the fact that he had "received instruction" of the Spirit. The second was Oliver's specific inquiry about Joseph and the plates. On the particular night that Oliver had inquired of the Lord in prayer, the Lord, through the Spirit, provided Oliver with a witness as to the divine nature of Joseph's mission and the authenticity of the plates. Oliver had told no one, including Joseph, about these experiences, and they were known only to God and to himself.

15 Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind; and now I tell thee these things that thou mayest know that thou hast been enlightened by the Spirit of truth;

16 Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart.

verse 16 How private are our thoughts? “Men’s thoughts are secret and cannot be pried into by other men, or for that matter by devils” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 777). Elder James E. Faust taught, “He [Satan] cannot know our thoughts unless we speak them” (CR, October 1987, 43). Only God knows our thoughts and feelings: “Thou, [even] thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men” (1 Kings 8:39). This verse is Solomon’s prayer to the Lord.

17 I tell thee these things as a witness unto thee—that the words or the work which thou hast been writing are true.

18 Therefore be diligent; stand by my servant Joseph, faithfully, in whatsoever difficult circumstances he may be for the word’s sake.

19 Admonish him in his faults, and also receive admonition of him. Be patient; be sober; be temperate; have patience, faith, hope and charity.

verse 19 “Admonish him in his faults” Even prophets have faults. Oliver is commanded to admonish Joseph in his faults; which means to counsel, advise, and caution Joseph against his faults.

20 Behold, thou art Oliver, and I have spoken unto thee because of thy desires; therefore treasure up these words in thy heart. Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.

verse 20 “Behold, thou are Oliver” As D&C 3:9 does for Joseph Smith, this statement does for Oliver Cowdery. This provocative statement implies that Oliver was foreordained to his calling for good reason.

21 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the same that came unto mine own, and mine own received me not. I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

22 Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.

23 Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?

24 And now, behold, you have received a witness; for if I have told you things which no man knoweth have you not received a witness?

verses 22-24 Joseph Smith reported:

After we had received this revelation [D&C 6], Oliver Cowdery stated to me that after he had gone to my father's to board, and after the family had communicated to him concerning my having obtained the plates, that one night after he had retired to bed he called upon the Lord to know if these things were so, and the Lord manifested to him that they were true, but he had kept the circumstance entirely secret, and had mentioned it to no one; so that after this revelation was given, he knew that the work was true, because no being living knew of the thing alluded to in the revelation, but God and himself (*HC*, 1:35).

Oliver had also informed his close friend David Whitmer of the remarkable witness he had received. According to Whitmer, Oliver "wrote me that Joseph had told him his [Oliver's] secret thoughts, and all he had meditated about going to see him, which no man on earth knew, as he supposed, but himself, and so he stopped [at Harmony] to write for Joseph" (Jenson, "Three Witnesses," 208).

verses 25-30 Oliver is the "means," spoken of in section 5, provided by the Lord to enable the translation process to proceed.

In these verses Oliver is given the keys of the gift of translation conjointly with the Prophet Joseph. This is likely the beginning of power given to Oliver to be the second witness of this dispensation. Later he will be given the apostleship and be called as the Second Elder of the Church. Note in verses 29 and 30 the intimation that this might even lead him to a martyr's crown.

25 And, behold, I grant unto you a gift, if you desire of me, to translate, even as my servant Joseph.

26 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that there are records which contain much of my gospel, which have been kept back because of the wickedness of the people;

verse 26 "records . . . which have been kept back because of the wickedness of the people" These likely include the sealed portion of the plates of Mormon which contained an account of the vision seen by the brother of Jared. Other records would also include parts of Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible (see D&C 35:20), the book of Moses (revealed June 1830-February 1831), and also the book of Abraham. Undoubtedly, there are yet other records still waiting to be brought forward.

27 And now I command you, that if you have good desires—a desire to lay up treasures for yourself in heaven—then shall you assist in bringing to light, with your gift, those parts of my scriptures which have been hidden because of iniquity.

28 And now, behold, I give unto you, and also unto my servant Joseph, the keys of this gift, which shall bring to light this ministry; and in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

verses 25-28 Another of Oliver Cowdery's gifts is the gift of translation.

verse 28 **“in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established”** Oliver was to be a second witness of the restoration, Joseph Smith being the first witness. Oliver will be involved with every major restoration event—the translation of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the restoration of priesthood keys in the Kirtland Temple. It would be Oliver's duty and right to bear witness of these events. Joseph would no longer stand alone.

29 Verily, verily, I say unto you, if they reject my words, and this part of my gospel and ministry, blessed are ye, for they can do no more unto you than unto me.

30 And even if they do unto you even as they have done unto me, blessed are ye, for you shall dwell with me in glory.

verses 29-30 **“even if they do unto you even as they have done unto me, blessed are ye”** President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote the following concerning Oliver Cowdery and the martyrdom of Hyrum Smith:

Had Oliver Cowdery remained true, had he been faithful to his testimony and his calling as the “Second Elder” and Assistant President of the Church, I am just as satisfied as I am that I am here that Oliver Cowdery would have gone to Carthage with the prophet Joseph Smith and laid down his life instead of Hyrum Smith. That would have been his right. Maybe it sounds a little strange to speak of martyrdom as being a right, but it was a right. Oliver Cowdery lost it and Hyrum Smith received it. According to the law of witnesses—and this is a divine law—it had to be” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:221-22).

31 But if they reject not my words, which shall be established by the testimony which shall be given, blessed are they, and then shall ye have joy in the fruit of your labors.

32 Verily, verily, I say unto you, as I said unto my disciples, where two or three are gathered together in my name, as touching one thing, behold, there will I be in the midst of them—even so am I in the midst of you.

verse 32 **“where two or three are gathered together in my name”** At this point in church history there were just a handful of disciples who knew the truth of the work. It was indeed a “little flock” (see verse 34).

33 Fear not to do good, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward.

verse 33 This verse is a succinct statement of the Law of the Harvest (“whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”—Galatians 6:7).

34 Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.

35 Behold, I do not condemn you; go your ways and sin no more; perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you.

36 Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

37 Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

verses 36-37 The Lord reminds us to remember him always and keep him and his purposes in our minds continuously. His reference to the “wounds” and “prints” is only figurative. We “behold the wounds which pierced [his] side, and also the prints of the nails in [his] hands and feet” when we prayerfully ponder his atoning sacrifice and death.

Brief Historical Setting

From April 7, the translation proceeded steadily until early July 1829, when it was completed. This period of translation was a colorful and important period in our church history as the following pages will relate.

Section 7 Translation of the Parchment of John

As Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon, they came to references of translated beings such as Alma and Moses in the Book of Alma and the three Nephites in 3 Nephi. The beloved apostle John was also mentioned. Joseph and Oliver had occasion to discuss this ancient apostle. Perhaps discussion between the two of them was also stimulated by one of the most frequently misunderstood passages in all the scripture, John 21:20-23, in which the resurrected Lord indicated that his beloved apostle John will not taste of death but instead will be translated. This passage of scripture has been debated for centuries among the various Christian sects with some scholars saying that he indeed died and was buried at Ephesus; while others believe he still walks the earth. A third school of thought states that even though he was buried at Ephesus, he is not really dead but simply sleeps in the grave until the second coming of the Savior. A difference of opinion arose between Joseph and Oliver as to whether John did or did not actually die. Oliver felt that he did die, and Joseph held that he did not. In order to resolve this question, Joseph inquired of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim and received this magnificent revelation. Joseph recorded that “during the month of April, I continued to translate, and he to write, with little cessation, during which time we received several revelations. A difference of opinion arising between us about the account of John the Apostle, mentioned in the New Testament [John 21:20-23] as to whether he died or continued to live, we mutually agreed to settle it by the Urim and Thummim and the following is the word which we received” (*HC*, 1:35-36).

Joseph had splashed onto his consciousness an actual parchment, handwritten by John himself. Joseph did not actually have possession of the parchment, but rather, through the process of revelation he discerned the parchment and was given the translation of it. Joseph learned that John did not die but was translated.

The historical setting for the conversation recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 7 is the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, or Galilee. According to the New Testament, on this occasion the Savior ate fish with the disciples and instructed Peter to feed his sheep (see John 21:9-17). Peter then asked the Savior what the apostle John would do and received an ambiguous answer—at least it is ambiguous as it is now recorded in John’s gospel (see John 21:20-23).

For a more thorough discussion of translated beings than is found here, see *Doctrine of Translation in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 17.

A shorter version of section 7 was first published in the 1833 Book of Commandments with a heading that stated it was “translated from parchment, written and hid up” by John the Revelator. Verses 6 and 7 were added to the text of section 7 in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants under the supervision of the prophet

Joseph Smith, and the wording of other verses was revised at that time by the Prophet. Because Joseph worked on the Joseph Smith Translation after section 7 was received, it may be that he obtained additional insights on John 21:20-23 from that labor, which he then added to this revelation in the 1835 edition.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 7 Translation of the parchment of John

1 And the Lord said unto me: John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you shall ask what you will, it shall be granted unto you.

verse 1 Section 7 explains that in the episode recorded in John 21, Jesus had asked his apostles what they desired of him in much the same way that he later asked his American disciples (see 3 Nephi 28:1-12). While Peter asked to come speedily to Christ in his kingdom, John wanted to keep working on the earth to bring more souls to Christ. John was therefore allowed to remain upon the earth until the second coming to minister to those who would be heirs of salvation.

“John, my beloved” The Bible nowhere explicitly identifies the “beloved disciple” as the apostle John, though that has been the traditional understanding of the term for centuries. Only here and in 3 Nephi 28:6 is that identification made explicit in the scriptures.

2 And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee.

verse 2 To possess “power over death” does not, of course, mean that a person will never die. All must die (see 1 Corinthians 15:22). For one who has power over death, death is held in abeyance according to the will of God.

3 And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people.

verses 1-3 It is interesting to note the similarities between this conversation between John and Jesus and the conversation between the Savior and the three Nephite apostles who also wished to “tarry” (see 3 Nephi 28:1, 4-7).

4 And for this cause the Lord said unto Peter: If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? For he desired of me that he might bring souls unto me, but thou desiredst that thou mightest speedily come unto me in my kingdom.

verse 4 Peter’s desire was to pass through both death and the spirit world to become a resurrected, celestial being in the kingdom of God. It was in this glorious condition that Peter later appeared to Joseph and Oliver (see D&C 27:12).

5 I say unto thee, Peter, this was a good desire; but my beloved has desired that he might do more, or a greater work yet among men than what he has before done.

verse 5 “I say unto thee, Peter, this was a good desire” Sometimes people read jealous motives into Peter’s question about John’s future, when it is perhaps more likely that Peter was afraid he had asked for the wrong thing. The Lord reassured Peter that his request was a good one, but that John desired to do a greater work upon the earth before he came to Christ in his kingdom.

“a greater work” John’s desire to do “a greater work” does not necessarily mean a greater work than Peter’s in some competitive sense. It may simply mean a greater work than John himself had done so far, without any implied comparison to Peter’s request.

6 Yea, he has undertaken a greater work; therefore I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel; he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth.

verse 6 “he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth” John’s extended ministry will be to those who live on this earth, including the lost tribes of Israel (see D&C 77:11, 14). This should dampen any speculation that the lost tribes may not be upon the earth (see also 110:11). How has John accomplished this grand prophecy? John’s written prophecy has gone forth widely among the nations. He is the author of five books of the Bible including the Gospel of John, three epistles, and the book of Revelation. And who are “those who shall be heirs of salvation”? These are the descendants of Abraham who are faithful in keeping the Lord’s commandments. Also included are those not of Abraham’s descent who are brought into Abraham’s family by adoption. That is, they are allowed into the House of Israel through baptism and by remaining faithful to their covenants.

Joseph Smith gave us further insight concerning John’s ministry. Joseph taught that John’s mission was to prepare the ten tribes of Israel for the final gathering (see D&C 77:14). At a conference of the Church held in June 1831, Joseph Smith said that, “John the Revelator was then among the ten tribes of Israel who had been led away by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion” (*HC*, 1:176). It is not necessary to assume, however, that the ten tribes know who they are or that they know John by his biblical identity. It is only certain that wherever they are and whatever they know, he is among them and is working to prepare them to receive the fulness of the gospel and to witness the second coming of the Savior. John also ministered to the Prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery in 1829 when he assisted Peter and James in the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood (D&C 27:12). In addition, Heber C. Kimball recorded an appearance of John in the Kirtland Temple:

When the Prophet Joseph had finished the endowments of the First Presidency, the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishops, the First Presidency proceeded to lay hands upon each one of them to seal and confirm the anointing; and at the close of each blessing the whole of the quorums responded to it with a loud shout of Hosanna! Hosanna! etc.

While these things were being attended to, the beloved disciple John was seen in our midst by the Prophet Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and others (*Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball, 91-92*).

7 And I will make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James; and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come.

verse 7 “I will make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James”

The Lord is still speaking to Peter, who will minister for John and James in some unspecified manner. The three of them together will hold the keys of the priesthood unto the second coming. When one who holds the keys bestows them upon another, the former does not cease to hold them. Rather, he lengthens the chain of authority by another link. Christ presently holds all the keys, but so do Peter, James, and John, on whom Christ bestowed them, and so also does the prophet Joseph Smith, on whom these three bestowed the same keys.

There is an apparent error in this verse. The Lord is addressing Peter and refers to James as Peter’s brother. James was the brother of John. Peter’s brother was Andrew. This is either a mistake, or perhaps James is referred to as Peter’s brother in the gospel sense.

“unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry” Exactly what are the keys held by Peter, James, and John? “The keys of the ministry which John says were given to Peter, James, and himself constituted the authority of Presidency of the Church in their dispensation. These keys were given at the transfiguration to these three apostles, and they in turn gave them to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in this dispensation (D&C 2;7:12-13; 128:20)” (Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation, 1:49*).

8 Verily I say unto you, ye shall both have according to your desires, for ye both joy in that which ye have desired.

Section 8 Oliver Cowdery Given Permission to Translate

While Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon in April 1829, Oliver asked if he might try his hand at translating. Joseph inquired of the Lord, and section 8 is the Lord's answer. It was received sometime in the latter half of April 1829. The answer was that Oliver would be allowed to translate if he would prepare himself and ask in faith. In D&C 6:25-28, Oliver Cowdery had already been given the gift of translation. Since he had been given this gift, he quite naturally wondered if he could succeed in translating.

Some intriguing questions are raised by this incident. Did Oliver use the Urim and Thummim or Joseph's seerstone? Did he use the plates? Did Joseph copy some of the characters off the plates for him to use? Why did Joseph consent to such a thing? Didn't he explain to Oliver how much he had been taught by Moroni and others in order that he might become properly prepared to translate?

Scripture Mastery

D&C 8 Oliver Cowdery Given Permission to Translate

D&C 8:2-3 I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost.

1 Oliver Cowdery, verily, verily, I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your Redeemer, even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive a knowledge concerning the engravings of old records, which are ancient, which contain those parts of my scripture of which has been spoken by the manifestation of my Spirit.

verse 1 Here the Lord reiterates a promise to Oliver Cowdery that is available to all faithful saints. The Lord will give liberally to the spiritually prepared if they will only "ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:6). It is important for us to pause for a few moments over the phrase, "ask in faith." What does that actually mean? Our intuitive notion is to believe it means simply that we must deliberately suspend any inclination for disbelief. We must ask with full expectation that we will receive. It is important to acknowledge another crucial aspect of asking in faith, perhaps *the* most crucial aspect. It is that we must deliberately *do* anything that is required to allow the Lord to grant our request. This type of deliberate faith is not merely something we hold in our mind. Deliberate faith is a principle of action. After requesting anything of the Lord, we must then rise from our knees and deliberately set about to make the thing happen. Then and only then can we expect the Lord to grant our request. We would suppose that Oliver was willing to deliberately suspend any disbelief, yet he will fail in his efforts to

translate. It will be because he was unwilling to do the requisite things in order to prepare himself to translate.

For a discussion of the different types of faith, including deliberate faith, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapters 9-11. These chapters are *Revealed Faith, Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith, and Other Notes on Faith*.

“engravings of old records” This expression refers to the Book of Mormon plates and possibly to other records. Oliver would be able to translate them if he so desired and if he properly prepared himself to do so.

2 Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

verse 2 “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart” Here is a reminder that the Lord works with both aspects of man—the mind (the intellect), and the heart (our feelings). The translation process would involve both Oliver’s intellect and his feelings.

Revelation is neither emotion devoid of logical sense nor intellect without feeling, but a combination of both working together in harmony. Revelation can never be “mindless” or illogical; nor can it ever be pure dispassionate logic or reason.

3 Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground.

verse 3 “the spirit of revelation” The spirit of revelation is a characteristic of deserving individuals. It is a gift of the Spirit earned incrementally by those who prove themselves, over time, to be diligently obedient to the Lord’s commandments. The spirit of revelation is the ability to perceive and respond to revealed information from the Holy Ghost.

4 Therefore this is thy gift; apply unto it, and blessed art thou, for it shall deliver you out of the hands of your enemies, when, if it were not so, they would slay you and bring your soul to destruction.

verse 4 “this is thy gift” This gift is the gift of revelation, the spirit of revelation (see verse 2). To possess such a gift, however, is not the same as knowing how to use it. In order to successfully exercise his gift, Oliver would have to himself supply an added ingredient—real effort (see D&C 9:7-9). When Oliver learned to “apply unto” the gift of revelation the Lord had given him, it would deliver him in times of need.

“apply unto it” Each of us comes into this mortal existence with unique latent and potential abilities. These were acquired in the old fashioned way (incrementally—line upon line, precept upon precept) in the premortal world. However, there is nothing of entitlement here. The veil clouds and partially obscures our gifts. In order to actually exercise those gifts here in mortality—though we doubtless did what was necessary in

the premortal world to acquire them—we must rediscover and redevelop them. And this requires real effort. A talent is wasted unless we “apply unto it.”

“and bring your soul to destruction” A “soul” or an individual cannot actually be destroyed to the point of annihilation. This phrase then means to be cut off from the presence of God, banished from his presence, to die spiritually. Any individual who neglects his native gifts is in danger of suffering spiritual death. Our talents or gifts are a stewardship for which each of us is responsible. We will be added upon if we seek out our talents and work to redevelop them. The prophet Nephi wrote: “For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have” (2 Nephi 28:30).

Such a person (“them that shall say, We have enough”) is in danger of losing the influence of the Spirit and eventually suffering spiritual death.

5 Oh, remember these words, and keep my commandments. Remember, this is your gift.

verses 1-5 There is only one way to receive revelation—through the Holy Ghost. Whether you are a prophet of God receiving revelation for the Church or an individual praying for personal guidance, the Holy Ghost is instrumental in the revelatory process. Oliver already had the gift of revelation (see D&C 6:10-13).

These verses contain the formula for revelation. The key to proper asking is: Ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that an answer will come. Also you must then “study it out in your mind” (D&C 9:8). This “studying” may take many forms. The seeker must be willing to do anything required of him to obtain the desired blessing. If the proper steps are followed, the Holy Ghost will deliver the answer in the form of ideas and feelings.

6 Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron; behold, it has told you many things;

verse 6 Oliver’s special gifts, then, included the gift of revelation (D&C 6:10-13) and the gift of translation (D&C 6:25-28). This verse refers to yet another of Oliver’s gifts. This is the “gift of Aaron.” It was referred to in the original manuscript of this revelation (the 1833 Book of Commandments) as “the gift of working with the rod.” Ancient Aaron was the elder brother of Moses, and with his rod in his hand he went before Moses as a spokesman. God had instructed that Moses’s rod (originally his shepherd’s staff—see Exodus 4:2-4) was to be the instrument by which he and Aaron would perform signs and wonders. This rod was then carried by Aaron, and was sometimes called the rod of God (see Exodus 4:20; 17:9) and sometimes the rod of

Moses (see Exodus 9:23; 10:13; 17:5), but usually it was called the rod of Aaron (see Exodus 7:10, 12, 19; 8:5, 16). It was a tangible symbol of Aaron's authority and stewardship, of his relationship to Moses and to God, and an instrument by which he accomplished what God commanded him through the mouth of Moses.

The use of such special rods was quite common in New England and New York at the time for such practical tasks as finding water and minerals. Perhaps Oliver had a rod and a gift for using it for practical or even for spiritual things (see verses 8-9).

It is clear, however, that Joseph and Oliver occupied the role in the modern Church once held by Moses and Aaron anciently. They were a modern Moses and Aaron (see D&C 28:2-3). Later in 1833, Sidney Rigdon will be given a commission similar to Oliver's—that of spokesman (see D&C 100:9-11).

7 Behold, there is no other power, save the power of God, that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you.

8 Therefore, doubt not, for it is the gift of God; and you shall hold it in your hands, and do marvelous works; and no power shall be able to take it away out of your hands, for it is the work of God.

9 And, therefore, whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, and you shall have knowledge concerning it.

10 Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not.

11 Ask that you may know the mysteries of God, and that you may translate and receive knowledge from all those ancient records which have been hid up, that are sacred; and according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

verse 9-11 “whatsoever you shall ask . . . ask in faith” “Ask that you may know the mysteries of God” In these verses, the Lord emphasizes the necessity of asking for what we want. Apparently this message did get across to Oliver, as he did ask if he might translate.

It would seem that the Lord was perfectly willing that Oliver should, along with Joseph, become a translator of the Book of Mormon plates. Possibly also he was to receive mysteries that would be revealed to the Church through him and Joseph. The Lord did, however, outline the qualifications which would be necessary to become successful in that enterprise. Oliver must possess sufficient faith. We will learn that Oliver failed to exert sufficient effort to accomplish those things for which he had the gift.

verse 11 “mysteries of God” It is appropriate, now that Oliver had been given the gift of revelation, that he also be encouraged to ask questions of the Lord and exercise his gift in receiving answers. As explained previously, the term *mystery* is used two ways in the modern Church. Used positively, it means necessary or useful information that can be obtained only by revelation from God. In this sense, Oliver was encouraged to seek “the mysteries of God.” The scriptures always use “mysteries” in

this positive sense. On the other hand, the term *mysteries* is used more commonly in the contemporary Church in a negative sense to mean information unnecessary for our salvation or for our personal progress, information which the Lord has chosen, for whatever reason, to withhold from us. A preoccupation with such things can distract us from the really important truth that has been revealed and often leads to a loss of spiritual balance, then to contention, doubt, and apostasy.

12 Behold, it is I that have spoken it; and I am the same that spake unto you from the beginning. Amen.

Section 9 Why Oliver Cowdery Failed in His Attempt To Translate

Before studying this section, make certain you have studied section 8 and its commentary. Shortly after receiving permission from the Lord to translate, Oliver attempted to translate with Joseph acting as scribe. He was initially successful, but then failed in his attempt. In this section the Lord tells Oliver that he was not properly prepared, he was improperly motivated, and he exercised insufficient faith. It seems probable that Oliver wanted to translate largely because he was impatient at having to sit and act as scribe. He wanted to be the equal of the Prophet, and he failed to anticipate the spiritual and mental preparation necessary to qualify him to translate.

Oliver is further instructed to continue functioning as scribe for Joseph and to be patient. He is assured that the opportunity to translate records, other than the Book of Mormon, may yet be his in the future if he continues faithful. We know that he never did translate other records, but that may have been because of his eventual apostasy.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 9 Why Oliver Cowdery Failed to Translate

D&C 9:7-9 Study it out in your mind, and I will cause your bosom to burn within you.

1 Behold, I say unto you, my son, that because you did not translate according to that which you desired of me, and did commence again to write for my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., even so I would that ye should continue until you have finished this record, which I have entrusted unto him.

verse 1 “you did not translate according to that which you desired of me”

Oliver desired to translate just as Joseph had been translating. He desired that the Lord would allow that. But he did not fully meet the Lord’s requirements to translate at that level.

“you . . . did commence again to write for my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun.”

It is apparent that this revelation was received after Oliver had resumed his former position as scribe.

Oliver is instructed not to worry further about translating but to continue to act as scribe for Joseph until the Book of Mormon translation is completed. Most of the Book of Mormon manuscript is written in the hand of Oliver Cowdery, a measure of his obedience to this command.

2 And then, behold, other records have I, that I will give unto you power that you may assist to translate.

verse 2 “other records have I, that I will give unto you power that you may assist to translate” These “other records” might include the book of Abraham, which

was later “translated” by Joseph with the assistance of Oliver, and the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon plates. Parenthetically, we really don’t know in detail the process by which Joseph was able to write the Book of Abraham. It is possible that he had writings of Abraham on the Egyptian papyri, but it is also possible that he received the Book of Abraham by a revelatory process similar to the way in which he “translated” the Book of Mormon.

Referring particularly to the sealed portion of the plates of Mormon, President Joseph Fielding Smith provided us with interesting insight into why we have not as yet received a knowledge of what is on that sealed record:

It is possible that some of them might have been translated had the people received the Book of Mormon with full purpose of heart and had been faithful to its teachings. This was the promise the Lord made through Mormon. He said he would try the faith of lesser things (i.e., the Book of Mormon) then he would make known to them the greater things. That we have failed in this is very apparent, we have not accepted the revelations in the Book of Mormon, neither in the Doctrine and Covenants, with that faith and willingness to know the will of the Lord which would entitle us to receive this greater information. Oliver Cowdery was a party to this failure by turning away from the Church for a number of years when it needed his service. He therefore lost his privilege to translate through his own disobedience and the people have lost the privilege of receiving the “greater things” spoken of by the Lord to Mormon (3 Nephi 26:8-11) until the day shall come when they are willing to be obedient in all things and will exercise faith such as was had by the brother of Jared. It should be remembered that such faith has rarely been seen on the earth. It appears, therefore that we must wait until the reign of unrighteousness is at an end before the Lord will give to the people these writings, containing “a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof” (2 Nephi 27) (Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:52-53).

Oliver did act as scribe for Joseph for parts of the JST and for the book of Abraham.

3 Be patient, my son, for it is wisdom in me, and it is not expedient that you should translate at this present time.

4 Behold, the work which you are called to do is to write for my servant Joseph.

verses 3-4 It is sometimes difficult to realize that our calling may be to assist rather than to preside, or to record rather than to translate. Oliver’s calling was to assist Joseph, like Aaron assisted Moses, and not to become equal to him.

5 And, behold, it is because that you did not continue as you commenced, when you began to translate, that I have taken away this privilege from you.

verse 5 “**you did not continue as you commenced**” Oliver did begin to translate. He commenced well, but when the task was more difficult than he had

anticipated, he failed to do what was required of him and lost his opportunity to continue.

Why did the Lord take away Oliver's right to translate? The likely key reason was Oliver did not possess faith sufficient to allow him to translate. Most likely the faith required at this stage was the practical preparations necessary for the task. This lack of faith would later manifest itself in the form of apostasy. He was also inadequately mentally prepared and inappropriately motivated. He had not paid the price in terms of spiritual and mental effort to properly prepare himself. He wanted to be a translator and not merely a scribe to satisfy his own ego. Joseph did need a scribe, and perhaps the Lord allowed Oliver to try to translate and fail in the attempt in order to quell his dissatisfaction at being only a scribe.

6 Do not murmur, my son, for it is wisdom in me that I have dealt with you after this manner.

verses 6 "it is wisdom in me that I have dealt with you after this manner"

Though Oliver may have thought of his unsuccessful attempt as a "failure," there was some reason why the Lord allowed this to happen. His "failure" somehow served God's purposes. No doubt it was a learning experience for Oliver. Perhaps it was important for him to understand the gift of translation so he could function more effectively as a scribe or serve as a more informed witness to the translation process.

7 Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

verse 7 The revelations of heaven are not granted to one in a mindless stupor. Rather, they embrace the complete use of all heavenly given endowments. A man cannot expect the Lord to answer his prayers in the form of writing on the wall. But after the man pays in full the tuition of effort, then—and only then—he has claim upon the answer.

8 But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

9 But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me.

verses 7-9 It is important to understand that the contrast described here between a burning of the bosom and a stupor of thought (and a forgetting) applied specifically to the process of translation. While these verses may also contain important keys for all in the Church who would seek for personal revelation, we must be cautious in this application.

“if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you” Each individual must learn to recognize the promptings of the Spirit of God. Some, indeed, may receive a burning in the bosom. Others may recognize the Spirit’s promptings in other ways. Elder Mark E. Petersen once remarked that he had never experienced a “burning” in his bosom (personal communication). Whatever the specific feeling, it will be experienced as a peaceful, wonderful, and most positive experience.

Perhaps one key point to these verses is that receiving revelation is an active rather than a passive process. The receiver must think, must work to understand, must come up with a plan, a proposal, a theory—in short must do as much of the work as possible to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown. It is then that our mental and spiritual efforts are most likely to be rewarded with understanding and confirmation.

10 Now, if you had known this you could have translated; nevertheless, it is not expedient that you should translate now.

verse 10 Completing the work of the Lord is more important than satisfying the individual wishes and preferences of those called to do it.

11 Behold, it was expedient when you commenced; but you feared, and the time is past, and it is not expedient now;

verse 11 “you feared” Fear is the enemy of faith. Perhaps our secular definition of fear, however, is in some circumstances inadequate to fully explain that scriptural emotion that prevents us from exercising faith. In the scripture, fear is that controlling emotion—certainly the product of our natural-man self—that makes us decide not to act on our inclination to be obedience. It is the reluctance to do the more difficult thing. Caught in the clutches of this *fear*, we gravitate to doing the safer, less stressful, more comfortable, easier thing instead.

This verse tells us that timing is also important in the Lord’s scheme of things. Sometimes we need to do what the Lord wants us to do when he wants us to do it, otherwise, by the time we get around to it, it may no longer be necessary, profitable, or needed by the Lord.

12 For, do you not behold that I have given unto my servant Joseph sufficient strength, whereby it is made up? And neither of you have I condemned.

verse 12 “whereby it is made up” Joseph’s sufficient gift and strength in translating will “make up” or compensate for Oliver’s not being allowed to translate.

13 Do this thing which I have commanded you, and you shall prosper. Be faithful, and yield to no temptation.

14 Stand fast in the work wherewith I have called you, and a hair of your head shall not be lost, and you shall be lifted up at the last day. Amen.

verses 12-14 Note that the Lord did not condemn Oliver for his inability to translate, and neither should we. As with Peter, who because of fear walked on water for only a moment, that moment was a great deal more than most others can manage. The Lord does not reject Oliver for doing with difficulty what most others could not do at all. This was not the right time, however, to make further attempts. The work was more important than the private wishes of the workers. Oliver was called to be a scribe, not a translator. The Lord kindly indulged his private desire to translate, but now wanted him to resume his intended role of assisting Joseph that the work might move forward rapidly.

Brief Historical Setting

1829 May

By May 1829, Joseph and Oliver had finished the translation of the Plates of Mormon (see the supplemental article, *Those Confusing Book of Mormon Plates*). Joseph now had to decide what to do to fill in the gap left by the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript—from the time of Lehi to the reign of Mosiah I. In May he received a revelation telling him not to re-translate the first part of the Plates of Mormon, but rather to translate in its place the small Plates of Nephi [**D&C 10 - Fate of the 116 Pages**].

Section 10 Fate of the 116 Pages

The Lord explains that the 116 pages had fallen into the hands of evil men who had altered the manuscript. If Joseph were to re-translate the first part of the Plates of Mormon, the evil men could reveal to the world supposed discrepancies between the two versions. In this way, they hoped to discredit the work by causing people to believe that Joseph was a pretender and not a real prophet. Thus, Joseph is instructed to translate instead the unabridged small plates of Nephi.

The date given for this revelation is confusing. Even though our present Doctrine and Covenants gives the date as “summer of 1828,” some materials were probably given in May of 1829 (see especially verse 41). It seems likely that part was given in the summer of 1828 and part in May 1829. Joseph described the circumstances of his receiving that part of section 10 received in the summer of 1828: “After I had obtained the above revelation [section 3], both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from me again; but in a few days they were returned to me, when I inquired of the Lord, and the Lord said thus unto me: [section 10]” (*HC*, 1:23). It has also been suggested that the “summer of 1828” was late in September, after the plates had been returned to him on September 22, 1828. It would seem that for the large part of section 10, it is out of its proper chronological order. It probably should be placed following section 3, and the reader is thus encouraged, for the sake of continuity, to read the sections in that order: 3, 10, then 4.

Don't try to understand this section, and particularly verse 41, without studying the supplemental article entitled *Those Confusing Book of Mormon Plates*. The “plates of Nephi” referred to in section 10 are the same as the “small plates of Nephi” referred to in the supplemental article.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 10:5 Pray always, that you may come off conqueror.

1 Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings which you had power given unto you to translate by the means of the Urim and Thummim, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them.

verse 1 “Urim and Thummim” For a discussion of the two instruments used by Joseph in translating the Book of Mormon, see “Two Instruments Used in the Translation” in *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, Appendix A. See Also the commentary for Mosiah 8:13 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

“you delivered up those writings . . . into the hands of a wicked man” This “wicked man” is Martin Harris who had “set a naught the counsels of God, and . . .

broken the most sacred promises which were made before God, and . . . depended upon his own judgment and boasted in his own wisdom” (D&C 3:13).

2 And you also lost your gift at the same time, and your mind became darkened.

3 Nevertheless, it is now restored unto you again; therefore see that you are faithful and continue on unto the finishing of the remainder of the work of translation as you have begun.

4 Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you to translate; but be diligent unto the end.

verse 4 The Lord suggests that speed and overzealousness is less important than diligence, wisdom, and patience (see also Mosiah 4:27). In Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church* (1:28), he informs us that upon receiving the advice in section 10, even though the work of translating was important, and though the plates had been returned to him, he put off translating for a time and began to work his farm in order to provide for his family. Even prophets can go only as fast as they have the resources to go.

5 Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work.

verse 5 “Pray always” President Joseph F. Smith taught that prayer is not so much words as it is feelings: “It is not the words we use particularly that constitute prayer. Prayer does not consist of words, more in the feeling that rises from the heart and from the inward desire of our spirits to supplicate the Lord in humility and in faith, that we may receive his blessings” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 219). The apostle Paul wrote: “Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). Perhaps a feeling of gratitude and love for the Lord and a constant yearning to please him and to be with him for eternity constitutes a ceaseless prayer. Amulek counseled: “Let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you” (Alma 34:27). We should maintain a continuously prayerful attitude.

“that you may come off conqueror” The secret to overcoming the obstacles and threats of darkness and overcoming the always dangerous natural self is to be constantly touching base through prayer with the Father and the Son. Some of this constant prayer can be vocal, but it is more often an attitude of communion with the divine—a constant awareness and acknowledgment of God’s hand in our life. It is granted to us incrementally as a gift of the Spirit in return for our consistent obedience to the Lord’s commands. And what of the “conqueror”? He or she has achieved eternal life.

6 Behold, they have sought to destroy you; yea, even the man in whom you have trusted has sought to destroy you.

verse 6 Those who had taken the manuscript were hoping to “destroy” Joseph by demonstrating that he was not a true prophet, to nullify his influence among men. Thus, to “destroy” here means to negate or bring to naught. This same meaning applies in verses 7, 12, 19, 23, 25, 43, 52, and 54.

“even the man in whom you have trusted has sought to destroy you” Apparently Martin’s guilt and complicity in the affair of the lost 116 pages extended beyond just foolishly losing the manuscript, but it is impossible to know at this time exactly how far beyond. Martin may not have known or agreed with the whole conspiracy, but apparently he was not simply negligent. He was culpable in some degree beyond passive foolishness. He had broken the covenant he had made with God (see D&C 3:12-13). Still, Martin’s subsequent repentance and faithful service to the end of his life should also be mentioned here.

7 And for this cause I said that he is a wicked man, for he has sought to take away the things wherewith you have been entrusted; and he has also sought to destroy your gift.

8 And because you have delivered the writings into his hands, behold, wicked men have taken them from you.

verse 8 The Lord held Joseph accountable for the fate of the manuscript: “Wicked men have taken them *from you*” (italics mine). Though the plot was hatched and carried out by others, Joseph may not blame the loss of the 116 pages on them. He put the manuscript into their hands, and he did it against the Lord’s advice.

9 Therefore, you have delivered them up, yea, that which was sacred, unto wickedness.

verse 9 Do we ever deliver up sacred things unto wickedness? For example, do we ever fail to nourish our minds continually with uplifting and wholesome thoughts? Do we ever carelessly fail to treat our bodies as the home of our spirits and avoid potentially harmful activities?

10 And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands.

11 And behold, I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you translated and caused to be written;

verses 10-11 The Lord here warns Joseph of a conspiracy on the part of those who had stolen the 116 pages of the book of Lehi. It was their intent to discredit Joseph as a prophet and the Book of Mormon as scriptures by forging parts of the manuscript

so that they read differently from the original. Their plan was to wait until Joseph had retranslated the 116 pages. Then they would bring forth the altered copy with the claim that Joseph could not translate the plates the same way twice and must therefore be a fraud. But the warning and instructions given him in section 10 enabled Joseph to avoid this trap.

Note that Satan was the source of the idea to alter the words of the manuscript. He can put ideas into the hearts of the wicked, whether they realize the ultimate source of those ideas or not. Satan is also the master counterfeiter. Artificial values, false arguments, lying testimony, and bogus documents are his stock in trade.

12 And, on this wise, the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work;

13 For he hath put into their hearts to do this, that by lying they may say they have caught you in the words which you have pretended to translate.

14 Verily, I say unto you, that I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing.

15 For behold, he has put it into their hearts to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God, in asking to translate it over again.

verse 15 “he has put it into their hearts to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God” To “tempt” means to “put to the test.” To tempt the Lord is to try to make him jump through our hoops so that we may pass judgment upon him. It is to make God perform for us. After all, it is not Joseph who is really being put to the test here, but the Lord—to see if he can give Joseph the same translation twice. This is a presumptuous sin. It is one form of “seeking a sign.” On the other hand, the Lord invites us to prove him by keeping his commandments and then receiving the promised blessings, for example by reading and praying about the Book of Mormon (Moroni 10:4) or by paying tithing (Malachi 3:10).

16 And then, behold, they say and think in their hearts—We will see if God has given him power to translate; if so, he will also give him power again;

17 And if God giveth him power again, or if he translates again, or, in other words, if he bringeth forth the same words, behold, we have the same with us, and we have altered them;

18 Therefore they will not agree, and we will say that he has lied in his words, and that he has no gift, and that he has no power;

19 Therefore we will destroy him, and also the work; and we will do this that we may not be ashamed in the end, and that we may get glory of the world.

verses 17-19 Those who stole the manuscript were not interested in providing a test whereby they could learn if Joseph was really a prophet. It really didn’t matter to them whether he was a true prophet or not. If Joseph had re-translated the first part of

the Plates of Mormon, these detractors would have claimed discrepancies regardless of what Joseph had written.

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that Satan has great hold upon their hearts; he stirreth them up to iniquity against that which is good;

21 And their hearts are corrupt, and full of wickedness and abominations; and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; therefore they will not ask of me.

verse 21 “therefore they will not ask of me” The proper way to find out if the Book of Mormon or the work of the prophet Joseph Smith are true is to ask God. The wicked, like Laman and Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 15:8-11), will not ask. They prefer subjecting God to their own little tests, thus tempting God. But God will not comply with such demands. He, not we, makes the rules and sets the terms. Knowledge of the truth of the restored gospel comes only one way: by asking God in faith if it is true.

22 Satan stirreth them up, that he may lead their souls to destruction.

verse 22 “Destruction” here means spiritual death.

23 And thus he has laid a cunning plan, thinking to destroy the work of God; but I will require this at their hands, and it shall turn to their shame and condemnation in the day of judgment.

verse 23 “I will require this at their hands” Even though Satan laid a “cunning plan,” those mortals who responded to his promptings and sought to destroy the latter-day work will be held accountable. They will have to pay for stealing the manuscript and preparing their trap for Joseph.

24 Yea, he stirreth up their hearts to anger against this work.

verse 24 “he stirreth up their hearts to anger” The carnal self loves to be angry. It is a self-indulgence that Satan plays upon to keep us distracted from finding the truth.

25 Yea, he saith unto them: Deceive and lie in wait to catch, that ye may destroy; behold, this is no harm. And thus he flattereth them, and telleth them that it is no sin to lie that they may catch a man in a lie, that they may destroy him.

verse 25 “And thus he flattereth them” It is flattery because Satan tells them that what is ugly and base about them is actually admirable and a virtue.

26 And thus he flattereth them, and leadeth them along until he draggeth their souls down to hell; and thus he causeth them to catch themselves in their own snare.

verse 26 “he causeth them to catch themselves in their own snare”

Anytime we respond to our natural or carnal self at the encouragement of Satan, we are more likely to again give in to Satan’s proddings on the next occasion of temptation. We thus gradually become captive to the devil—we gradually become ensnared in the “chains of hell” (Alma 12:9-11).

27 And thus he goeth up and down, to and fro in the earth, seeking to destroy the souls of men.

verse 27 To “destroy the souls of men” means to bring about their spiritual death.

28 Verily, verily, I say unto you, wo be unto him that lieth to deceive because he supposeth that another lieth to deceive, for such are not exempt from the justice of God.

verse 28 “for such are not exempt from the justice of God” The end does not justify the means. To use the tactics of wickedness to fight against wickedness is still wickedness, and it will be punished by God. This verse seems to indicate that we belong to the one whose methods we adopt and use.

29 Now, behold, they have altered these words, because Satan saith unto them: He hath deceived you—and thus he flattereth them away to do iniquity, to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God.

30 Behold, I say unto you, that you shall not translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands;

31 For, behold, they shall not accomplish their evil designs in lying against those words. For, behold, if you should bring forth the same words they will say that you have lied and that you have pretended to translate, but that you have contradicted yourself.

32 And, behold, they will publish this, and Satan will harden the hearts of the people to stir them up to anger against you, that they will not believe my words.

verse 32 “Satan will harden the hearts of the people” To have a *hardened* heart is to be unresponsive to the promptings of the Spirit of God. Those who choose to believe bad publicity will develop anger and a condemning spirit which is antithetical to the Lord’s Spirit.

33 Thus Satan thinketh to overpower your testimony in this generation, that the work may not come forth in this generation.

verse 33 In this final dispensation the gospel has been restored in its fulness. The priesthood has been returned to the earth. The Book of Mormon has come forth. Israel is being gathered for the final time. Zion is being established. And the earth is being prepared for the Lord’s second coming and the millennial reign of the Savior.

How much is at stake for Satan? Does he feel strongly about frustrating the purposes of God in this latter-day? Never before have the stakes been so high! Indeed, the mission of the Prophet Joseph represents the eventual triumph of God's kingdom over that of Satan. We can expect Satan to spare nothing in his attempts to thwart the work!

34 But behold, here is wisdom, and because I show unto you wisdom, and give you commandments concerning these things, what you shall do, show it not unto the world until you have accomplished the work of translation.

verse 34 Satan's plan for discrediting Joseph and thwarting the work relative to the Book of Mormon was based on the assumption that Joseph would retranslate the lost 116 pages a second time. God, in his infinite knowledge, destroyed Satan's plans by providing an alternate set of plates (the unabridged small plates of Nephi) and instructing Joseph to use them in place of the lost 116 pages.

“show it not unto the world until you have accomplished the work of translation” Joseph is commanded not to show the translated Book of Mormon to anyone until it is completed. This applies to those who are perceived by Joseph to be “righteous” (see verses 36-37). This is because Joseph would not always be able to tell friend from foe, or the wicked from the righteous, as he learned from his “friend” Martin Harris. God does not always warn church leaders or members of imposters and false friends.

35 Marvel not that I said unto you: Here is wisdom, show it not unto the world—for I said, show it not unto the world, that you may be preserved.

36 Behold, I do not say that you shall not show it unto the righteous;

37 But as you cannot always judge the righteous, or as you cannot always tell the wicked from the righteous, therefore I say unto you, hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known unto the world concerning the matter.

38 And now, verily I say unto you, that an account of those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands, is engraven upon the plates of Nephi;

verse 38 The “plates of Nephi” in this and subsequent verses refers to the small plates of Nephi. The reader is again referred to the supplemental article, *Those Confusing Book of Mormon Plates*.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “In the episode involving the lost manuscript from the Book of Mormon, we see the interplay of the foreknowledge of God and the agency of man (with our freedom to fail) and the perfect foresight of a loving Lord who 1,500 years before the emergency was ready with an alternative” (“Doctrine and Covenants, The Voice of the Lord,” *Ensign*, December, 1978, 6). It is interesting to note that when Nephi wrote his account on the small plates, he indicated he did not know why the Lord

had commanded him to prepare it except that it was “for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not” (1 Nephi 9:5-6).

39 Yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi.

verse 39 Obviously Joseph and Oliver had learned of a second account, a “more particular account,” on the small plates of Nephi as they translated the book of Lehi from the plates of Mormon. The expression “more particular account” seems compatible with the fact that the account on the small plates of Nephi is less secular than the book of Lehi on the plates of Mormon and more focused on the spiritual aspect of the Nephite experience.

40 And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account—

verse 40 The Lord feels that the more spiritual account of the Nephite saga contained on the small plates of Nephi is more appropriate for the people of this dispensation who will become the audience for the Book of Mormon (see also verse 45). This verse reads a bit more smoothly if we replace the last three words in this verse with “at this time.”

41 Therefore, you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained;

verse 41 The Lord therefore gives the instruction that Joseph should replace the lost book of Lehi (the 116 pages of lost manuscript) with the material contained on the small plates of Nephi. After Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had completed the translation of the plates of Mormon (through Moroni 10), they then sought the Lord’s counsel as to what they should do to replace the lost 116 pages. This was in May of 1829. The Lord then gave them the instructions contained in this verse and in the few that follow. Thus, while the foregoing parts of section 10 were likely revealed to Joseph in the late summer of 1828, these few verses are “anachronistic”—that is, out of place temporally speaking. It is likely these verses were not received until almost a year following Joseph’s receiving the rest of the section.

42 And behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words.

verse 42 The material contained on the small plates of Nephi is referred to here by the Lord as the “record of Nephi.” In other words the book of Lehi is replaced by the more doctrinal record of Nephi—those materials contained on the small plates of Nephi.

Satan can never stop the work of the Lord. God will always anticipate his every move and stratagem (see also verse 43).

43 I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

44 Behold, they have only got a part, or an abridgment of the account of Nephi.

verse 44 This verse indicates that the small plates of Nephi provide a more comprehensive account of the ministry of the prophet Nephi than did the book of Lehi—the first part of the abridged plates of Mormon.

45 Behold, there are many things engraven upon the plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work.

46 And, behold, all the remainder of this work does contain all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people.

verse 46 “all the remainder of this work” This phrase refers to rest of the plates of Mormon—Mosiah through Moroni. It was this part of the plates of Mormon that Joseph and Oliver will translate first when they begin translating on April 7, 1829.

“my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people” The ancient Nephite disciples (apostles) and prophets prayed that the gospel and the Book of Mormon would eventually come to “this people”—the modern day remnants of the Book of Mormon people and to other peoples that might inhabit the American continent in the future (see verses 48-49).

47 And I said unto them, that it should be granted unto them according to their faith in their prayers;

verse 47 “I said unto them” The Lord said to his Book of Mormon prophets that the Book of Mormon will come forth in the latter days according to those Book of Mormon prophets’ faith.

48 Yea, and this was their faith—that my gospel, which I gave unto them that they might preach in their days, might come unto their brethren the Lamanites, and also all that had become Lamanites because of their dissensions.

49 Now, this is not all—their faith in their prayers was that this gospel should be made known also, if it were possible that other nations should possess this land;

50 And thus they did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel in this land might have eternal life;

verses 48-50 The Nephite prophets have prayed for and left a blessing upon not just their own descendants, but also on others among the future generations of the inhabitants of the Americas. God has honored those prayers and that blessing by giving us, in the great Gentile nation of the latter days, political freedom, the fulness of the gospel, and the true Church of Jesus Christ.

51 Yea, that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue, or people they may be.

verse 51 “that it might be free” The ancient Book of Mormon prophets prayed that “it”—eternal life—might be freely available to those who receive the Book of Mormon and accept its teachings. The word “free” in this verse does not mean without cost. Rather it means freely available to those willing to extend the effort to learn the truth.

52 And now, behold, according to their faith in their prayers will I bring this part of my gospel to the knowledge of my people. Behold, I do not bring it to destroy that which they have received, but to build it up.

verse 52 “this part of my gospel” This phrase may well refer to the writings in the Book of Mormon.

“I do not bring it to destroy that which they have received, but to build it up” The fulness of the restored gospel is not hostile to the truths found in other churches or in other religions of the latter days. It is not intended to take away people’s light, but rather to add to it.

53 And for this cause have I said: If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them.

verse 53 “If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them” “This generation” refers to the generation to whom the Book of Mormon was initially made available—the early members who followed the prophet Joseph even before the Church was organized. Keep in mind that at the time of this revelation the Church had not yet been organized.

54 Now I do not say this to destroy my church, but I say this to build up my church;

verse 54 Here the Lord seems to say that he does not want to downplay the idea of the establishment of his Church, but rather enhance the possibility its being organized.

55 Therefore, whosoever belongeth to my church need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.

verse 55 Here, the Lord speaks of the future members of his Church following its organization. Will all members of the Church be exalted in the kingdom of heaven? Obviously not. How might we explain this verse then? The answer is provided later on in this section. In verse 67 we will learn that the true members of his Church are “whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church.” Then in verse 69 we learn further that all who endure to the end “will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.”

56 But it is they who do not fear me, neither keep my commandments but build up churches unto themselves to get gain, yea, and all those that do wickedly and build up the kingdom of the devil—yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that it is they that I will disturb, and cause to tremble and shake to the center.

verse 56 “they who do not fear me” To *fear* the Lord is not to be frightened by him but rather to reverence him—to stand in awe of him and respect him.

“build up churches unto themselves to get gain” This phrase refers to those involved in priestcraft. Priestcraft is involvement in religion for the purpose of winning material gain, popularity, or power over people.

Those who do not fear him in the sense of reverencing him will experience his wrath and may come to fear him in sense of being terrified of him.

57 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not.

58 I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

verses 57-58 During his mortal ministry in the Old World, Jesus preached to his own people, the Jews, and they rejected him.

The phrase “the darkness” refers to those on the earth who are not inclined to respond to the Lord’s message of salvation. The Lord intends to make his gospel available to them (“the light which shineth in darkness”), but they will not accept it—they “comprehendeth it not.”

59 I am he who said—Other sheep have I which are not of this fold—unto my disciples, and many there were that understood me not.

verse 59 See John 10:14-16 and 3 Nephi 15:21.

60 And I will show unto this people that I had other sheep, and that they were a branch of the house of Jacob;

verse 60 “This people” are those to whom the gospel is about to be restored and the Book of Mormon made available.

61 And I will bring to light their marvelous works, which they did in my name;

verse 61 The pronoun “they” refers to the Book of Mormon people.

To reiterate: By means of the restoration of the gospel, “this people”—the inhabitants of America during this final dispensation—are about to learn, in the pages of the Book of Mormon, that they are a remnant of the house of Israel. Also they will learn their fathers, the prophets and righteous peoples of the Book of Mormon, had the fulness of the gospel and did many marvelous works in the name of Jesus Christ.

62 Yea, and I will also bring to light my gospel which was ministered unto them, and, behold, they shall not deny that which you have received, but they shall build it up, and shall bring to light the true points of my doctrine, yea, and the only doctrine which is in me.

verses 62 The Lord now paints an optimistic picture of the early saints of this dispensation. The Lord will bring to light his gospel—the same gospel that was had among “them”—the Book of Mormon people. “They”—the early saints of this dispensation will not deny this gospel, but, even more, they will build it up and bring to light many fine points of the Lord’s doctrines.

63 And this I do that I may establish my gospel, that there may not be so much contention; yea, Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the scriptures and do not understand them.

verse 63 The Lord expresses his wish that the restoration of the gospel will decrease the “contention” in the world. He points out that contention—the anger of those who involve themselves in contending against a supposed enemy—are under the influence of Satan, who uses religion to increase hatred and ill-will in the world. This is not true, however, of those who respond to the true gospel and enter the fellowship of the Spirit of God (John 13:34-35).

The word “wrest” means distort. To *wrest* the scriptures, in the context of this verse, is to use them as a weapon.

64 Therefore, I will unfold unto them this great mystery;

verse 64 “**this great mystery**” Anything that can be understood only by revelation is a mystery. The Lord is about to unfold the great mystery of the gathering of Israel in this latter day.

65 For, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts;

verse 65 The Lord announces for the first time, his intention to gather Israel, for the last time, in this latter day.

66 Yea, if they will come, they may, and partake of the waters of life freely.

verse 66 The phrase “waters of life” is symbolic of all the blessings of God’s redeeming love, including ultimately exaltation in the kingdom of heaven.

67 Behold, this is my doctrine—whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church.

verse 67 It is not enough to have one’s name on the membership records of the Church. Repentance and obedience to the Lord’s commandments are the watchwords.

68 Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church.

verse 68 “Whosoever declareth more or less than this” To say either more or less than the Lord has said or commanded us to say—either to put words in the Lord’s mouth or take them out—is to distort his message. We are not justified in preaching as doctrine that which we have added to the Lord’s word, neither are we justified in ignoring or failing to preach and practice what the Lord has clearly revealed.

69 And now, behold, whosoever is of my church, and endureth of my church to the end, him will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

verse 69 To endure in the gospel has a richer meaning than merely to avoid backsliding. It means to continue to progress in one’s obedience and overcoming the natural man.

70 And now, remember the words of him who is the life and light of the world, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Amen.

verse 70 For a discussion of how Jesus Christ is quite literally the “life and light of the world,” *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

Brief Historical Setting

By mid-May Joseph and Oliver had reached, in their translating, the book of 3 Nephi, and they came upon the concept of baptism. Their interest was piqued. They recognized that the proper authority for performing this ordinance was not upon the earth. This matter was sufficiently important that they paused in their translating and went down to the Susquehannah River on May 15, so they might be alone. There they prayed for guidance. They were visited by the resurrected John the Baptist who conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood [**D&C 13 - Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood**]. The Baptist also promised them that in due time they would receive the

higher or Melchizedek Priesthood. Accordingly, some time later on an uncertain date, Peter, James, and John, the Lord's ancient apostles, came to Joseph and Oliver on the banks of the Susquehannah River and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood.

During the latter part of May, Joseph and Oliver were visited by Hyrum Smith, Joseph's brother, and by Joseph's former employer, Joseph Knight, Sr. The latter made more than one trip from Colesville to Harmony to bring food and other provisions which enabled Joseph and Oliver to spend their full time translating rather than having to worry about temporal things. While in Harmony, both Hyrum Smith and Joseph Knight, Sr., asked for and were given revelations from the Lord **[D&C 11 - Hyrum Smith's Call to Labor]** **[D&C 12 - Joseph Knight's Call to Labor]**.

Section 11 Hyrum Smith's Call to Labor

While Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon in May of 1829 in Harmony, Pennsylvania, only a month or so after they had begun the translation, Joseph's younger brother Samuel Harrison Smith came again to Harmony to visit and observe. Within a short period of time, Joseph and Oliver convinced Samuel to pray concerning the truth of their work, and in answer to his prayers Samuel received a witness that the work was indeed divine. He was baptized by Oliver on May 25, 1829, and returned to his home in Manchester full of enthusiasm for the restoration. Shortly thereafter Joseph's elder brother Hyrum traveled the 130 miles from Manchester to Harmony. Hyrum came to Harmony in response to the news brought to the Smith family in Manchester by Samuel that the authority to baptize had been returned to the earth. Thus, this section was received after section 13. Since Hyrum's visit followed the return of his younger brother Samuel to Manchester, section 11 must have been received at least several days after Samuel's baptism in Harmony on the 25th of May. This estimate allows time for Samuel's return to New York and Hyrum's subsequent journey to Harmony. This revelation should therefore be dated to the last few days in May 1829 and should follow section 13.

On arriving in Harmony, Hyrum became deeply interested in the work Joseph and Oliver were doing. Almost immediately he wanted to make copies of what had been translated so far and to begin preaching and teaching from it in the surrounding areas.

Hyrum eventually asked Joseph what the Lord would have him do. Using the Urim and Thummim, Joseph inquired of the Lord concerning what part Hyrum should play in the restoration, and section 11 is the Lord's answer. Hyrum became converted, was baptized in June 1829, was allowed to become one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon, and became one of the six charter members of the Church on April 6, 1830. He remained a stalwart church member and leader until his martyrdom with the Prophet in June 1844 in Carthage jail.

Section 11 directs Hyrum to prepare himself for the Lord's service, but to wait until the translation is finished to begin his work rather than to start out only partially prepared.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 11 Hyrum Smith's Call to Labor

D&C 11:12 Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously.

D&C 11:21 Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word.

verses 1-9 These verses are identical to the corresponding nine verses in section 6. Verses 1-6 are identical to the first six verses in sections 6, 12, and 14. The message in each of these sections is the same to each of the individuals involved, and it is a universal message to all saints: repent, get converted, get committed, and then go out and share what you have with others.

For commentary for verses 1-9 of this section, see the commentary for D&C 6:1-9 and D&C 4:1-4.

1 A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.

2 Behold, I am God; give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my word.

3 Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God.

4 Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God.

5 Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you.

6 Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.

7 Seek not for riches but for wisdom; and, behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich.

8 Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be done unto you; and, if you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation.

9 Say nothing but repentance unto this generation. Keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed.

verse 9 “Say nothing but repentance unto this generation.” If one comes to understand fully the principle of repentance, one may realize that it is all that ever needs to be taught. Repentance means not only to stop doing those things which are wrong but also to start doing those things which are right. The principle of repentance is virtually the same as obedience and is at the very foundation of each step of spiritual progress we make here on earth. For a discussion of the processes by which we grow spiritually and become sanctified, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 7, *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit*, chapter 8, *The Blessings of Spiritual Gifts*, and chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*.

verses 10-25 These verses, as pointed out by Dan Ludlow, outline the important steps to preparing to serve the Lord on a mission or in any other church calling: (1)

Desire to serve the Lord (verses 10, 17). (2) Keep the commandments of the Lord to remain worthy to receive the Spirit of the Lord (verses 13, 18, and 20). (3) Be willing to serve in any capacity in which you might be called (verse 19). (4) Seek to obtain the word of the Lord through studying the scriptures (verses 21-22) (*A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, 1:108-09).

10 Behold, thou hast a gift, or thou shalt have a gift if thou wilt desire of me in faith, with an honest heart, believing in the power of Jesus Christ, or in my power which speaketh unto thee;

verse 10 “Behold, thou hast a gift” One possibility for the gift possessed by or promised to Hyrum is the gift of the Holy Ghost, which will “enlighten your mind” and “fill your soul with joy” (verse 13). Actually the gift is promised to Hyrum on certain conditions, which suggests a covenant arrangement. If Hyrum will seek the Lord in faith and an honest heart, he will be able to use his gift in the service of God.

President Joseph Fielding Smith suggested an alternate possibility for this gift:

The Lord declared that Hyrum Smith had a gift. The great gift which he possessed was that of a tender, sympathetic heart; a merciful spirit. The Lord on a later occasion said: “Blessed is my servant Hyrum Smith; for I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me, saith the Lord” (D&C 124:15). This great gift was manifest in his jealous watch care over the Prophet lest some harm come to him (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:57).

11 For, behold, it is I that speak; behold, I am the light which shineth in darkness, and by my power I give these words unto thee.

verse 11 “For, behold, it is I that speak” It is the Lord—not Joseph Smith—who is speaking here.

12 And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

13 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;

14 And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive.

verses 12-14 If you have wondered whether or not you are being guided by the Holy Ghost, you might study these verses. They contain criteria by which to judge. In Winter Quarters, Brigham Young had a dream wherein Joseph Smith appeared to him. From what Brigham learned during that visit, he was able, subsequently, to enlarge on these verses. He taught that a person can tell the Holy Ghost from all other spirits

because it will remove all hatred, malice, and evil desires from his heart, and he will be consumed by a desire to do good and build up the kingdom of God.

15 Behold, I command you that you need not suppose that you are called to preach until you are called.

verse 15 “you need not suppose that you are called to preach” Hyrum was mistaken in thinking that one can become a minister of the restored gospel by self-appointment. His desire to preach is not so much evil as it is naive and premature, and he has much to learn about priesthood, callings, ordination, stewardship, lines of authority, and accountability. It was important for Hyrum and the early members of the Church to learn this lesson, for they lived in an environment where itinerant, self-appointed preachers were the norm.

A man must be called by proper authority and possess the proper authority in order to serve. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “No man is authorized to act in the name of the Lord, or to officiate in any ordinance, unless he has been properly called” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:57).

16 Wait a little longer, until you shall have my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel, that you may know of a surety my doctrine.

verse 16 “Wait a little longer” Hyrum is advised to wait yet a little while before embarking in the service of the Lord. He is advised to first learn the doctrine. In verses 18 and 22 the Lord will counsel him to “hold your peace” which is to say, “Don’t speak yet; wait until you are fully prepared.” This advice should also apply to modern missionaries in the months and years before they receive their call.

17 And then, behold, according to your desires, yea, even according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

18 Keep my commandments; hold your peace; appeal unto my Spirit;

verse 18 “hold your peace” See the commentary for verse 16.

19 Yea, cleave unto me with all your heart, that you may assist in bringing to light those things of which has been spoken—yea, the translation of my work; be patient until you shall accomplish it.

verse 19 “cleave unto me with all your heart” The verb *cleave* has two contradictory meanings: “to split or separate” and “to bond or stick to.” Obviously the latter meaning applies here.

“that you may assist in bringing to light those things of which has been spoken” Hyrum remained in Harmony to help Joseph and Oliver with their work. A few weeks later he was privileged, back in Manchester, to become one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates.

20 Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength.

verse 20 What is the major work of God? What is the major work of man? Moses 1:39 explains the major work of God: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” This verse succinctly explains or at least implies the major work of man. It is to obey the Lord’s commands.

“with all your might, mind and strength” It is unrealistic and humanly impossible to be absolutely obedient to all of the commandments. To “keep my commandments” is to desire, strive, and work to do so with all your might, mind, and strength. This effort is to be the focus of our lives. Yet the Lord knows we will fail in some degree, and so he has prepared repentance and the sacrament for us to renew our commitments on a regular basis and thus avoid losing our covenant relationship and its blessings through our human weakness.

21 Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.

verse 21 Hyrum was so eager to become involved in the work that the Lord had to caution him about moving ahead too fast. Herein lies an important fact. As we endeavor to teach the precepts of the gospel, we cannot do so effectively without the help of the Spirit of God. And the Spirit cannot give us help with and access to those principles in a timely fashion unless we have learned them. A simple reading or a re-reading of the principle is not enough. We must learn them so that we fully understand them and have comfortable mental access to them; or, as the scripture says, we must “treasure up in your minds continually” the principles and precepts of the gospel. And then what does he promise us? “And it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man” (D&C 84:85).

22 But now hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating, yea, until you have obtained all which I shall grant unto the children of men in this generation, and then shall all things be added thereto.

verse 22 “hold your peace” See the commentary for verse 16.

“my word which hath gone forth” This phrase refers to the Bible.

“my word which shall come forth” This phrase refers to the Book of Mormon which was then in the process of being translated..

In this verse, which is related to verse 21, the Lord commands Hyrum to study the Gospel.

“all which I shall grant unto the children of men in this generation” This refers to all of the revelations that will yet be given to the Prophet Joseph: The Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, the Joseph Smith Translation, and the Doctrine and Covenants.

“and then shall all things be added thereto” Hyrum is promised that if he will be diligent in learning what the Lord has given and will yet give, he will then be given additional precious truths.

There is a grammatical error in this verse. As it reads, the Book of Mormon was translating itself. “Now translating” should be understood to mean “now being translated.”

23 Behold thou art Hyrum, my son; seek the kingdom of God, and all things shall be added according to that which is just.

verse 23 “Behold thou art Hyrum, my son” This rather provocative statement seems more than simply a formal address by the Lord. One cannot help but wonder if it does not imply that Hyrum was foreordained to a great work in the premortal world. Following his baptism, he will become a “son” of Jesus Christ. It is not possible to note the unwavering support Hyrum offered to his younger brother Joseph without being deeply moved. Hyrum was a pure, guileless, and loving soul whose steadfast and untiring support, doubtless, was key in the life and mission of his brother Joseph.

24 Build upon my rock, which is my gospel;

verse 24 “Build upon my rock” The term *rock* is used in scripture with a few different meanings. While it is true that “the rock” sometimes refers to the rock of revelation, Christ is also the Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4; Helaman 5:12). In one context, Peter (or Cephas), whose name both in Greek and in Aramaic means “rock,” is referred to by the Savior as the rock. Peter was the last one to hold all the keys anciently (see D&C 27:12; see also Matthew 16:18-19, where “rock” has more than one meaning).

In this particular verse, the gospel is the rock, as it is also in D&C 18:5 and 3 Nephi 11:32-39.

25 Deny not the spirit of revelation, nor the spirit of prophecy, for wo unto him that denieth these things;

verse 25 Be careful lest you fail to acknowledge that revelation and divine guidance is being meted out to the Church constantly. Any person with the spirit of discernment can readily see that the hand of the Lord has guided this people from the beginning.

The act of denying the Spirit of the Holy Ghost occurs in various degrees. In one extreme, denying the Spirit can result in banishment to outer darkness (Matthew 12:31-32). In lesser degrees, denying the spirit of revelation cuts us off from the heavens and

banishes the influence of God and interaction with his Spirit from our daily lives (D&C 59:21).

In the religious environment of Hyrum's day, without the fulness of the gospel, it was common for preachers to deny even the possibility of additional revelation or prophecy, and Hyrum was warned against this common error.

26 Therefore, treasure up in your heart until the time which is in my wisdom that you shall go forth.

verse 26 “treasure up in your heart” The implication of this phrase is “Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life [the scriptures], and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man” (D&C 84:85).

27 Behold, I speak unto all who have good desires, and have thrust in their sickle to reap.

verse 27 The information and advice given to Hyrum in this revelation is intended not for Hyrum alone, but for all who might subsequently have the same desires Hyrum has to serve God and to build his kingdom.

28 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world.

29 I am the same who came unto mine own and mine own received me not;

30 But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. Amen.

verse 30 “[to] as many as receive me . . . will I give power to become the sons of God” Those who come to Christ become his children and are born again in the gospel covenant as sons and daughters of Christ. This status empowers us to follow the path of the Savior, to become what Jesus Christ—our spiritual Father—is, and to inherit what he inherits (see Mosiah 5:7; Romans 8:14-17; D&C 84:38), thus becoming exalted beings like him. This is the same power given to Jesus's disciples anciently (see John 1:12) and is explained in D&C 25:1.

Section 12 Joseph Knight's Call to Labor

As early as 1826, Joseph Smith had worked near Colesville, New York, a town about twenty miles from Harmony, Pennsylvania, for a farmer and mill owner named Joseph Knight, Sr. This old gentleman had subsequently become a close friend of Joseph's and had assisted him on several occasions. Brother Knight lent the prophet his horse and buggy the day Joseph married Emma Hale.

While Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Knight, Sr., visited them repeatedly to bring them food and other provisions which allowed them to continue translating. The friendship between the elder Knight and Joseph was such that Joseph had kept him apprised of the developments in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon plates, and Knight was obviously interested and involved. On the day Joseph obtained the plates in September 1827, Knight was visiting in the Smith home in Manchester. According to Lucy Smith, her son used Knight's horse and carriage as his means of conveyance on that occasion (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, [Liverpool: 1853], 99-101).

Joseph Knight wrote a charming account of helping Joseph and Emma in the winter of 1828 when the latter two lived in Harmony and were trying to scratch out a living and yet find time to work on the translation of the Book of Mormon:

Now he could not translate but little, being poor and nobody to write for him but his wife, and she could not do much and take care of her house, and he being poor and no means to live but work. His wife's father and family were all against him and would not help him. He and his wife came up to see me the first of the winter 1828 and told me his case. But I was not in easy circumstances, and I did not know what it might amount to, and my wife and family [were] all against me about helping him. But I let him have some little provisions and some few things out of the store—a pair of shoes and three dollars in money to help him a little. In January his father and Samuel [Smith] came from Manchester to my house when I was busy a drawing lumber. I told him they had traveled far enough. I would go with my sleigh and take them down tomorrow. I went down and found them well, and they were glad to see us. We conversed about many things. In the morning I gave the old man a half a dollar and Joseph a little money to buy paper to translate, I having but little with me. The old gentleman told me to come and see him once in a while as I could. I went home followed teaming [sic] till the last of March, the sleighing being good. I told my wife I must go down and see Joseph again. "Why do you go so soon, for," said she. Says I, "Come go and see." And she went with me. Next morning we went down and found them well and were glad to see us. Joseph talked with us about his translating and some revelations he had received and from that time my wife began to believe and continued a full believer until she died, and that was the 7th day of August 1831 (from an original holograph by

Joseph Knight, Sr., reported by Dean C. Jessee in "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History" in *BYU Studies*, 17:1, spelling and punctuation changes added for clarity.)

A few months later, after Oliver Cowdery had joined Joseph in the translating, the elder Knight's help was again needed:

Now Joseph and Oliver came up to see me if I could help him to some provisions, [they] having no way to buy any. But I was [away] to Catskill. But when I came home my folks told me what Joseph wanted. But I had engaged to go to Catskill again the next day, and I went again and I bought a barrel of mackerel and some lined paper for writing. And when I came home I bought some nine or ten bushels of grain and five or six bushels taters and a pound of tea, and I went down to see him and they were in want. Joseph and Oliver were gone to see if they could find a place to work for provisions, but found none. They returned home and found me there with provisions, and they were glad for they were out. Their family consisted of four, Joseph and wife, Oliver, and his [Joseph's] brother Samuel. Then they went to work and had provisions enough to last till the translation was done (*Ibid.*).

Joseph Knight was born November 3, 1772, and was thus more than thirty-three years older than the Prophet Joseph. In spite of their age difference, he remained a remarkably faithful friend of the prophet. Joseph would later say of him:

[He] was among the number of the first to administer to my necessities, while I was laboring in the commencement of the bringing forth of the work of the Lord, and of laying the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For fifteen years he has been faithful and true, and even-handed and exemplary, and virtuous and kind, never deviating to the right hand or to the left. Behold he is a righteous man, may God Almighty lengthen out the old man's days; and may his trembling, tortured, and broken body be renewed, and in the vigor of health turn upon him if it be Thy will, consistently, O God; and it shall be said of him, by the sons of Zion, while there is one of them remaining, that this was a faithful man in Israel; therefore his name shall never be forgotten (*HC*, 4:124-25).

Joseph Knight had been a Universalist and tended to believe that no one church was the true church, but that there was good to be found in all churches. In section 23, Brother Knight will be instructed to join the Church. He was baptized in June of 1830, and his family formed the nucleus of a small branch of the Church in Colesville, New York. In 1831 he moved with the Colesville saints to Kirtland, Ohio, and a few months later continued with them to Independence, Missouri where he helped pioneer the Latter-day Saint settlement of that state. He died on February 3, 1847 at Mount Pisgah, Iowa, during the Mormon exodus from Illinois. His son, Newel Knight, became even better known in church history. Newel Knight will be mentioned in sections 52, 54, 56, and 124).

During one visit to Harmony, Joseph Knight asked the Prophet to inquire of the Lord on his behalf. Section 12 resulted.

verses 1-6 Herein is reiterated what the Lord had taught Joseph Smith, Sr., in section 4. For commentary on verses 1-6, see the commentary on D&C 6:1-9 and D&C 4:1-4.

1 A great and marvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men.

2 Behold, I am God; give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore, give heed unto my word.

3 Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God.

4 Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God.

5 Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you.

6 Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.

7 Behold, I speak unto you, and also to all those who have desires to bring forth and establish this work;

verse 7 See the commentary for section 11, verse 27.

8 And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care.

verse 8 “humble” Without a knowledge of our utter dependence upon God, we cannot serve him effectively. It is his plan, his gospel, his Spirit, his work, and his glory.

“full of love” Joseph Smith wrote, “Love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race” (*HC*, 4:227).

“being temperate” This is to exercise moderation or self-control and to resist the carnal urge to indulge in extremes, particularly in personal and physical habits and in physical indulgences. Examples of intemperance would be not getting enough sleep, or getting too much sleep; not eating enough, or eating too much; not exercising enough, or exercising too much. Geographically speaking, the temperate zones are those latitudes which maintain a moderate climate. A temperate individual is one in whom extremes are similarly not often manifested, but who maintains a moderate “climate” in his personal life.

9 Behold, I am the light and the life of the world, that speak these words, therefore give heed with your might, and then you are called. Amen.

Section 13 Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

For some of this introductory material for section 13 I am indebted to Charles R. Harrell (“The Restoration of the Priesthood” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 86-99).

During the angel Moroni’s appearances to Joseph Smith in September 1823, Moroni foretold of the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods in connection with the translation of the gold plates. “When they are interpreted,” said the angel, “the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some, and they shall begin to proclaim this gospel and baptize by water, and after that they shall have power to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands” (Oliver Cowdery in *Messenger and Advocate*, volume 2 [October 1835]:199). As the translation of the Nephite record commenced, the Lord began preparing the minds of the early saints to receive the priesthood, outlining the qualifications for labor in the ministry (D&C 4, 6, 11, 12). In section 5, dated March 1829, the Lord declared: “For hereafter *you shall be ordained* and go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men” (D&C 5:6, italics added).

It was mid-May of 1829 in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had been engaged without stopping since April 7th on the translation of the Book of Mormon. As they came to the instructions of the Savior to the Nephites (probably 3 Nephi 11 or 3 Nephi 12:1) on the necessity of authority and baptism, Oliver relates that it became apparent to them that “none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel” (*Messenger and Advocate*, volume 1 [October 1834]:15).

On Friday, May 15, 1829, Joseph and Oliver retired to a nearby wooded area near the banks of the Susquehanna River in fulfillment of the prophecy of Joseph of old, the son of Jacob, that the lesser priesthood would be restored in the latter days by the administration of an “angel in the bush.” According to Joseph Smith, this ancient patriarch prophesied of blessings that “should come upon the seer of the last days and the scribe that should sit with him, and that should be ordained with him, by the hands of the angel in the bush, unto the lesser priesthood” (Cited in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City, Bookcraft, 1954-56], 3:101). In this natural surrounding they knelt in humble prayer to “inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that [they] found mentioned in the translation of the plates” (JS-H 1:68). It was not a casual interest to know “the Lord’s position on this issue” that drove them into the woods that day, but a heartfelt personal desire to know “His will concerning [them]” (*TPJS*, 335). As Oliver Cowdery recollected, “our souls were drawn out in mighty prayer, to know how we might obtain the blessings of baptism and of the Holy Spirit according to the order of God; and we diligently sought for the right of the fathers, and the authority . . . to administer the same; for we desired to be followers of righteousness, and the possessors of greater knowledge, even the

knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:100). In answer to their petition, John the Baptist, now a resurrected being, was sent to restore the Aaronic Priesthood on the earth. Oliver Cowdery eloquently captured the grandeur of this heavenly manifestation that followed their humble supplication:

After we had called on Him in a fervent manner, aside from the abodes of men, [He] condescended to manifest to us His will. On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance. What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world was racked and distracted while millions were groping as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld, our ears heard, as in the “blaze of day;” yes, more—above the glitter of the May sunbeam, which then shed its brilliancy over the face of nature! Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, “I am thy fellow-servant,” dispelled every fear. We listened, we gazed, we admired! ‘Twas the voice of an angel from glory, ‘twas a message from the Most High! And as we heard we rejoiced, while His love enkindled upon our souls, and we were wrapped in the vision of the Almighty! Where was room for doubt? Nowhere; uncertainty had fled, doubt had sunk no more to rise, while fiction and deception had fled forever! (*Messenger and Advocate*, volume 1 [October 1834]: 15.)

Joseph Smith’s less flowery but more informative account (although omitting the “voice of the Redeemer” that Oliver said spoke peace to them at the outset of the angel’s visit—*ibid.*, 16) related:

A messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying: Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me. Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded.

The messenger who visited us on this occasion, and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which priesthood he said would in due

time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second (JS-H 68-72).

Although John is here mentioned as having conferred “the Aaronic Priesthood,” Joseph was later specific in outlining the twofold nature of this confirmation saying, “he laid his hands upon my head, and [1] ordained me to a Priest after the order of Aaron, and [2] to hold the keys of this Priesthood” (*TPJS*, 335). Differentiating between the authority and the keys conferred on this occasion, Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted, “When John came, he did two things: He conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the Aaronic Priesthood—he gave them authority. The second thing that he did was to give them the keys of the priesthood, the keys of presidency, the right to preside in the Aaronic Priesthood, and the right to authorize either themselves or someone else to use the priesthood, within the field and scope that people are entitled to use that particular priesthood” (Bruce R. McConkie, “The Keys of the Kingdom” [address to Wilford Stake Priesthood Meeting, February 21, 1955], 3, typescript, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University). As keys are not always conveyed when priesthood is conferred, President Joseph F. Smith emphasized that, “a distinction must be carefully made between the general authority and the directing of the labors performed by that authority [i.e., keys]” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th edition [Salt Lake City, Deseret Book Company, 1939], 136).

For John to have conferred the authority and keys of the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph and Oliver, he had to have possessed them himself. These powers he received in mortality, being the firstborn son in the lineage of Aaron (see D&C 84:27-28). While the tribe of Levi had a hereditary right to the Aaronic Priesthood, only the firstborn of the sons of Aaron had a legal right to the presidency or the keys of this priesthood. In speaking of the presidency of this priesthood a revelation in our day states: “No man has a legal right to this office, to hold the keys of this priesthood, except he be a literal descendant and the firstborn of Aaron” (D&C 68:18; cf. 107:16). In reference to John’s authority, President Joseph Fielding Smith observed that “by divine right of descent, he was the rightful presiding priest of the Aaronic order in Israel. This authority had come to him by lineage. . . . Had the Church of God been in existence with the Jews in that day, instead of the Jews being in a dreadful state of apostasy, then John the Baptist would have taken his proper place as the presiding priest of the Aaronic order” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:89). It would seem that John’s authority and keys were not simply determined by his being the first born in his family, but that he was senior and presided in some other way.

With the coming of John the Baptist, Joseph and Oliver received all of the rights of the Aaronic Priesthood that were vested in Aaron and were thus literally “called and ordained even as Aaron” (D&C 27:8). Joseph and Oliver had both the right to function as priests themselves and the keys or power of presidency in the Aaronic Priesthood. These keys gave Joseph and Oliver the right of administration or control, the right to

ordain others, and also the right to direct how and when those others would be allowed to use their priesthood.

Actually, the last man to hold the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood anciently was John the Baptist. Because the major function of the Aaronic Priesthood is to prepare Israel for receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, it is entirely fitting that John should prepare the way for Christ, who holds the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Thus, John goes before the Savior and prepares the way for him—the preparatory priesthood preceding the higher priesthood. John prepared the way for the Savior in his mortal ministry and in the restoration of the gospel in the latter days before Jesus’s second coming (see Matthew 17:11-13).

In his book the *History of the Church*, in 1838, Joseph Smith recorded his recollection of the statement of John the Baptist made during the ordination. In 1876 Orson Pratt extracted this statement and placed it in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 13:1).

At the time John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood on May 15, the Prophet’s brother Samuel was in Harmony. He had traveled to Harmony with Oliver, having arrived there on April 5. He then returned home to Manchester, but about a month later turned around and came back to Harmony. The *History of the Church* says that Joseph and Oliver baptized him on May 25, but his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, claimed that Samuel was baptized the day of John the Baptist’s visit, on the 15th. Regardless of the date, after his baptism, Samuel left and returned to Manchester and reported to his family what had taken place. At that point, Hyrum came to Harmony to investigate, and section 11 was given to him. Thus we see that section 13 is out of chronological sequence. The proper sequence should be 9,10, 13, then 11 and 12.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 13 Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist

1 Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

verse 1 “in the name of Messiah” Note that John refers to Jesus by using the anglicized form of the Hebrew title *meshiach*, which is equivalent to the more familiar Greek form *christos*, both of which mean “Anointed One” or “Christ.” Note that John uses the title Messiah more as a name than a title—he says, “in the name of Messiah” rather than “in the name of the Messiah.”

“Priesthood of Aaron” This is the same priesthood given anciently to Aaron and his descendants (see D&C 84:25-27; 107:13-15). Aaron was of the tribe of Levi, the son of Jacob or Israel. Thus, his priesthood is also called the levitical priesthood.

“which holds the keys of the ministering of angels . . . of the gospel of repentance . . . of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” As already mentioned above, it is important to differentiate between the rights and privileges afforded by receiving the priesthood and receiving the *keys* of that priesthood—the right of presidency. In this phrase, the word “keys” has an additional meaning. It does not only refer to the keys of presidency or the right to preside. In stating here that the Aaronic Priesthood “holds the keys” of the gospel of repentance, etc., reference is made to the special enabling powers associated with the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood and not to the directing keys of the priesthood. This is a second and more general usage of the word “key” as used in the scriptures. See *Keys of the Priesthood* in volume 2, chapter 22 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. It is with this broader sense of the word “key” in mind that, in response to the question “What is a key?” Joseph F. Smith explained, “It is the right or privilege which belongs to and comes with the Priesthood. . . . It is the right to enjoy the blessing of communication with the heavens (to receive the assistance of heavenly messengers, and to minister as an angel ministers), and the privilege and authority to administer in the ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to preach the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. That is a key. . . . We ordain boys . . . to that Priesthood which holds the keys of the ministering of angels and of the gospel of repentance and baptism by immersion for the remission of sin” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 142). Thus every holder of the Aaronic Priesthood has certain rights and privileges (i.e., “keys”) according to his calling in that priesthood.

It is also true that John the Baptist delivered to Joseph and Oliver on this occasion the directing keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, but that is not mentioned in D&C 13:1.

The Aaronic priesthood is referred to elsewhere as the “preparatory gospel” because it prepares an individual to receive the fulness of the gospel (see D&C 84:26-27; 107:20), membership in the Church, and the blessings of the higher Melchizedek Priesthood.

“and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” The word “this” refers to the Aaronic Priesthood.

The statement here of Joseph Smith that the Aaronic Priesthood is to remain on the earth “until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” may suggest to some that the Aaronic Priesthood is only temporary—that it will be taken from the earth following some specific event involving the sons of Levi. The problem arises from the use of the word *until* in this phrase. Oliver

Cowdery's earlier account (*Messenger and Advocate*, volume 1 [October 1834]: 16) is perhaps a bit more precise, using the word "that" instead of "until." He said, "Upon you, my fellow servants, in the name of the Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, *that* the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness!" (Quoting from a letter to W. W. Phelps, September 7, 1834, italics added.) In a special conference held October 21, 1848 in Kanessville, Iowa (now Council Bluffs), Oliver Cowdery, who had been excommunicated April 11, 1838, arose to seek forgiveness of the Church and bore this testimony: "I was present with Joseph when an holy angel from God came down from heaven and conferred on us, or restored the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood, and said to us at the same time, that it should remain upon the earth while the earth stands" (*Journal of Reuben Miller*, 21 October 1848 [Church Historian's Library]). This statement is consistent with the Lord's declaration that the Aaronic Priesthood "continueth and abideth forever with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God [the Melchizedek Priesthood]" (D&C 84:18).

There are several ways in which the Aaronic Priesthood may be considered eternal in duration. In one respect everyone who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood also holds the Aaronic Priesthood for the following reasons: (1) The greater comprehends the lesser—that is, is completely contained within the Melchizedek Priesthood—so that all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood ipso facto hold the Aaronic Priesthood. (2) When a person receives the Aaronic Priesthood and subsequently receives the Melchizedek Priesthood, none of the former authority is taken away. (3) In another respect it has been taught that the Church on earth, down to the office of Deacon, has been organized after the pattern of the Church which exists in Heaven. This would imply that somewhere in our Father's house, there is a place for the ministration of this lesser order of the priesthood. At least one realm in which this priesthood will minister is in the earths that will always be passing through a temporal existence. With respect to the functioning of the Aaronic Priesthood on this earth after it has "passed away" and become celestialized, Joseph Fielding Smith has explained, "As long as we have temporal things on the earth this priesthood is necessary. Eventually, when the earth is celestialized, I suppose all priesthood will be of the higher order" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:92). President Joseph Fielding Smith also wrote: "We may be sure that the Aaronic Priesthood will never be taken from the earth while mortality endures, for there will always be need for temporal direction and the performance of ordinances pertaining to the 'preparatory Gospel'" (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:62).

But just who are the Levites, and what kind of offering will they make? When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, it was with the intention that they should become a Zion people, enjoying the blessings of the fulness of the gospel and of the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood. When Israel sinned in the wilderness, God

took the fulness of the gospel, and the Melchizedek Priesthood away from them but left the lesser priesthood, the Levitical priesthood, in their midst. The law of carnal commandments and performances functioned under this priesthood, and, with the law of Moses, constituted a training program to prepare immature and rebellious Israel for the fulness of the gospel. The Aaronic priesthood cannot, however, administer the fulness. As a lesser or preparatory priesthood, it is limited in its authority and prerogatives (see D&C 84:23-28; JST Exodus 34:1-2).

After the return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, the priestly Levites became lax in their religious obligations, and because of their bad example, the rest of the nation became remiss in their duties. Malachi pointed out that the sacrifices they offered to the Lord were the worst of the flocks or even stolen animals, rather than the best. Thus, because the priests were unrighteous, their sacrifices were unacceptable, and the Lord promised that when he comes again, he will purge the Levites that they may yet offer an offering in righteousness (Malachi 3:1-3).

The promise that the sons of Levi would offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness is an allusion to the prophecy found in Malachi which the angel Moroni quoted to Joseph Smith saying, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple. . . . And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:1, 3). It was in partial fulfillment of this promise that, according to Joseph Fielding Smith, "John the Baptist came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and gave them his priesthood, thus preparing the way for the coming of the Lord" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:12.) The messenger spoken of by Malachi has also been interpreted as having reference to the mission of John the Baptist in mortality, (*Ibid.*, 1:193). When the Lord suddenly comes to his yet future temple in Jackson County, Missouri, he will purify the sons of Levi so that all of their offerings will be done in righteousness. Section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants reveals that all who receive and honor the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods "become the sons of Moses and Aaron" (verse 34), thereby becoming in effect the sons of Levi (Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi). Thus, one view holds that the Levites are all of the present-day priesthood holders in the Church. These present-day priesthood holders, the "sons of Levi," whether they be literal sons who receive the priesthood by right of descent or sons "according to the Holy Priesthood" (verse 6), "shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, upon Mount Zion in the Lord's house" (verse 32) where they "shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord" (verse 31).

Joseph Smith taught that the sacrifice to be offered by the sons of Levi will be, at least initially, an offering of the firstlings of the flock such as was practiced prior to the law of Moses. "These sacrifices," he observed, "as well as every ordinance belonging to the priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi

be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings” (*TPJS*, 173). Joseph envisioned that the temple to be built in the city of Zion would be a complex consisting of twelve temples, some of which would be dedicated to the lesser priesthood where ordinances such as blood sacrifice might be performed (*HC*, 1:357-59). As to whether blood sacrifices will be permanently reinstated, President Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

We are living in the dispensation of the fulness of times into which all things are to be gathered, and all things are to be restored since the beginning. Even this earth is to be restored to the condition which prevailed before Adam’s transgression. Now in the nature of things, the law of sacrifice will have to be restored, or all things which were decreed by the Lord would not be restored. It will be necessary, therefore, for the sons of Levi, who offered the blood sacrifices anciently in Israel, to offer such a sacrifice again to round out and complete this ordinance in this dispensation. Sacrifice by the shedding of blood was instituted in the days of Adam and of necessity will have to be restored.

The sacrifice of animals will be done to complete the restoration when the temple spoken of is built; at the beginning of the millennium, or in the restoration, blood sacrifices will be performed long enough to complete the fulness of the restoration in this dispensation. Afterwards sacrifice will be of some other character (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:94).

An alternate view as to the proper interpretation of the identity of the sons of Levi is that the descendants of Levi, who still exist among the Jews throughout the world, are still rightful heirs to the priesthood of Aaron. They are now outside of the covenants of the gospel, which are found only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thus, these Levites are unable to fill the role to which their family had been chosen by revelation and set apart in ancient times. As part of the restoration of all things, the tribe of Levi once again will fill a priesthood function in the Lord’s kingdom—after they become converted, are purified at the Lord’s coming, join the Church, and are born again of the Spirit.

Brief Historical Setting

The exact date of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood is unknown. The Prophet records that he and Oliver “were forced to keep secret the circumstances of having received the priesthood . . . owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood” (*JS-H* 1:74). In 1878, Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith visited David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses who was closely associated with the Prophet during this period. The first question Pratt asked Whitmer was, “Can you tell the date of the bestowal of the apostleship upon Joseph, by Peter, James, and John?” David’s answer was, “I do not know, Joseph never told me” (“Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,” *Deseret Evening News*, 11.302 [16 November

1878)).

The earliest explicit reference to the priesthood's having been restored is found in D&C 18, given in June 1829. Joseph mentioned that this revelation was intended to "illustrate the nature of our calling to this priesthood, as well as that of others who were yet to be sought after" (*HC*, 1:61-62). In this revelation directed to Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer the Lord said: "I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called" (D&C 18:9).

Because this revelation (section 18) is dated simply June 1829, it has been difficult to establish the date of the restoration with any more precision than sometime between 15 May and the end of June, 1829. Recent research (Larry C. Porter, "Dating the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood," *Ensign*, June 1979, 5-10) shows evidence, however, that this event very likely occurred sometime between the 15th and 29th of May, 1829. The evidence in support of this conclusion is as follows:

1. Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter to Hyrum Smith dated 14 June 1829 which contained a considerable amount of wording identical to that found in section 18, strongly suggesting that the revelation contained in section 18 had been given by that time.

2. David Whitmer affirmed that Joseph and Oliver spent the month from 1 June to 1 July 1829 at the Whitmer farm, which is about three days journey from where the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored. We know the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored to Joseph and Oliver "in the wilderness [woods] between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome County, on the Susquehanna River" (D&C 128:20). Being busily occupied in the translation of the Book of Mormon, it is unlikely that they would have taken nearly a week sometime between the 1st and 14th of June to make a round-trip journey to Harmony.

3. With the likelihood that the priesthood was restored before Joseph and Oliver moved to Fayette where they arrived approximately 1 June, coupled with the fact that the distance was about three days, the probable time of the restoration is narrowed to between 15 May and 29 May.

Regrettably, there exists no detailed first-hand account of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood other than to mention that it was restored by the two resurrected beings Peter and James, together with John the Beloved who had been translated.

An interesting secondhand description of what transpired comes from Addison Everett in a letter he wrote in 1881. Brother Everett relates that he overheard a conversation between Joseph and his brother Hyrum a few days before their martyrdom in which Joseph told how he and Oliver had been arrested at Colesville for preaching and were being held at the home of the Justice of the Peace. Their attorney, Mr. Reid, helped them escape through a window as a mob had begun to gather in front of the house. Everett goes on to say, "it was night and they traveled through brush and water

and mud, fell over logs, etc., until Oliver was exhausted; then Joseph helped him along through brush and water, almost carrying him. They traveled all night, and just at the break of day Oliver gave out entirely and exclaimed, "O Lord! Brother Joseph, how long have we got to endure this thing?" They sat down on a log to rest and Joseph said that at that very time Peter, James, and John came to them and ordained them to the Apostleship. They had 16 or 17 miles to go to get back to Mr. Hales, his father-in-law's, but Oliver did not complain any more of fatigue" (Letter of Addison Everett to Oliver B. Huntington, reproduced in *Young Woman's Journal*, 11 [November 1890]: 75-76).

Elder Erastus Snow gave a similar account of Joseph and Oliver's experience in a conference address delivered in 1882: "It was at a period when they were being pursued by their enemies and had to travel all night, and in the dawn of the coming day when they were weary and worn who should appear to them but Peter, James, and John, for the purpose of conferring upon them the Apostleship, the keys of which they themselves had held while upon the earth, which had been bestowed upon them by the Savior (*JD*, 23:183).

Enlarging on the events attending the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Joseph Fielding Smith explained (alluding to D&C 128:20) that Satan "appeared on the banks of the Susquehanna River to oppose the restoration of keys, and was detected by Michael, and his plans were thwarted" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 volumes [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-66], 1:177). That Michael, or Adam, should have played a major role in the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood is supported by the fact that he holds "the keys of salvation" (D&C 78:16) for this earth. According to the Prophet's teachings (*HC*, 3:386; 4:207-08), whenever messengers are sent from heaven to establish a gospel dispensation and restore the priesthood it is by Adam's authority.

Similar to the procedure followed in the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, in which Joseph and Oliver were commanded to ordain each other to the Aaronic Priesthood after having received it from John the Baptist, Oliver Cowdery testified, "I was also present with Joseph when the Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred by the angels of God . . . which we then confirmed on each other by the will and commandment of God" (*Journal of Reuben Miller*, October 21, 1848). This ordination was in fulfillment of John the Baptist's instruction that, after receiving the higher priesthood, Joseph was to be called the first Elder in the Church and Oliver the second Elder.

This ordination was also possibly related to that rather enigmatic passage in D&C 128:21: "And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette." This relationship is suggested by the following quote from the Prophet Joseph who was writing on events occurring the latter part of June, 1829 (presumably after the visit from Peter, James, and John):

We now become anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the angel that conferred upon us the Aaronic Priesthood had given us, viz., that provided we continue faithful, we should also have the Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the chamber of Mr. Whitmer's house, in order more particularly to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired; and here, to our unspeakable satisfaction, did we realize the truth of the Savior's promise—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"—for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the word of the Lord came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ, and that he also should ordain me to the same office; and then to ordain others, as it should be made known unto us from time to time. We were, however, commanded to defer this our ordination until such times as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together, when we must have their sanction to our thus proceeding to ordain each other, and have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers or not; when also we were commanded to bless bread and break it with them, and to take wine, bless it, and drink it with them; afterward proceed to ordain each other according to commandment; then call out such men as the Spirit should dictate, and ordain them; and then attend to the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, upon all those whom we had previously baptized, doing all things in the name of the Lord (*HC*, 1:60-61).

It seems obvious that the above paragraph was not written by Joseph until after the visit of Peter, James, and John. And that had likely occurred near the last of May 1829. Obviously also the principle of common consent in the Church was also beginning to take shape. Accepting the premise that Peter, James, and John had already conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood on Joseph and Oliver, but that their ordination was not complete until they ordained each other, may help explain why the Lord gave these instructions.

The revelations and accounts frequently speak of Joseph and Oliver as having been ordained to the apostleship under the hands of Peter, James, and John. The Lord told Joseph, "I have sent [Peter, James, and John] unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them" (*D&C* 27:12). Regarding Joseph and Oliver's ordination to the apostleship, Joseph Fielding Smith made this clarification: "These men were not ordained to the specific office in the priesthood, but received the priesthood itself out of which the offices come" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:147, Brigham Young held the view that Joseph's ordination to the apostleship signified that he was given the keys of the kingdom which are inherent in

the apostleship—*JD*, 1:134-35). Since the offices are appendages to and grow out of the priesthood (D&C 107:5, 8), there would be no need for these messengers to ordain them to the office of apostle.

With the Melchizedek Priesthood restored, Joseph and Oliver could administer the higher ordinances of the gospel which communicate the spiritual blessings of the Church by which members can ultimately become sanctified and inherit eternal life (see D&C 84:20 and 107:18-19). In addition to the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood which was restored, there were special keys and powers which the Lord gave Peter, James, and John and which were subsequently conferred by them on Joseph and Oliver. The Lord revealed, “I have committed [unto Peter, James, and John] the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times” (D&C 27:13). Thus, when these ancient apostles appeared to Joseph and Oliver, they declared themselves “as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 128:20). Having received the keys of the kingdom, Joseph and Oliver could preside in the Melchizedek Priesthood and build up the Church or Kingdom upon the earth. The conferral of the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times was an appointment for Joseph and Oliver to preside jointly over this last and most glorious dispensation. Aside from these keys’ being taken from Oliver when he lost his standing in the Church and given to Joseph’s older brother Hyrum, these keys were not passed on to others, but continue to reside with Joseph and Hyrum. Presiding under Adam, who holds the keys of all dispensations under the direction of Jesus Christ, they will stand throughout eternity at the head of this dispensation.

With the coming of John the Baptist to restore the Aaronic Priesthood, and Peter, James, and John to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Lord declared: “The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth” (D&C 65:2). The impact that these priesthoods are destined to have on the earth has only begun to be realized. In a letter to his brother-in-law while yet out of the Church, Oliver Cowdery wrote this sober confession:

I have cherished a hope, and that one of my fondest, that I might leave such a character as those who might believe in my testimony, after I should be called hence, might do so, not only for the sake of the truth, but might not blush for the private character of the man who bore that testimony. I have been sensitive on this subject, I admit, but I ought to be so; you would be, under the circumstances, had you stood in the presence of John with our departed brother Joseph, to receive the lesser priesthood, and in the presence of Peter, to receive the greater and looked down through time, and witnessed the effects these two must produce—you would feel, what you have never felt, were wicked men conspiring to lessen the effects of your testimony

to man, after you have gone to your long sought rest (Letter of Oliver Cowdery to Phineas H. Young, Tiffin, Ohio, 23 March 1846, Church Archives).

The restoration of the priesthood was more than simply one small part of the overall restoration “of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). It established the channel through which the Lord will continue to bring to pass all of his holy purposes until the earth and all therein that are righteous are ultimately restored to the glory from which they fell (see *Priesthood in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 12).

As the translation process continued, some neighbors in Harmony were taking notice and beginning to murmur and threaten Joseph and Oliver. By this time Isaac Hale had been won over to the point of feeling that the two should at least have the right to translate without being bothered or molested by the neighbors. Thus, for a time, he used his influence to protect them. In the latter part of May, however, his protection crumbled, and in fact he actually turned against the two translators. Joseph and Oliver were thus brought under increasing pressure. They had to find a safer place where they might finish the translation. Oliver wrote to his friend David Whitmer in Fayette, New York, asking if he and Joseph might come to Fayette and live and work in the house of David Whitmer’s father, Peter Whitmer, Sr. The Whitmer farm lay between Seneca Lake and Lake Cayuga. Oliver had met David Whitmer in Palmyra in 1828 when the two were just beginning to learn about the gold plates. Oliver had stopped off at the Whitmer farm on the way from Manchester to Harmony earlier in the spring. He later had written to David Whitmer from Harmony, telling him that he was sure that Joseph had the plates. The Whitmers extended an invitation for Joseph and Oliver to come to their home and finish the translating. The Whitmers were obviously intrigued by the gold plates and by the process of translating them.

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Oliver wrote again to ask David to come to Harmony with his wagon to carry Joseph and him back to Fayette. This request came at a difficult time, as the Whitmers were in the middle of spring plowing, and David Whitmer couldn’t really spare the five or six days required for that round trip. He was able to take the time, however, because of what seemed to be miraculous intervention. Plowing that should have taken two days was accomplished in one. Three unknown strangers prepared and plowed the Whitmer land without the Whitmers’ requesting any help. Joseph and Oliver were brought from Harmony to Fayette in early June by David Whitmer in a two-horse wagon, while the plates were transported by the Lord. Joseph received them when he arrived in Fayette.

The Whitmer’s proved to be a great help to the young prophet as he translated the Book of Mormon. Joseph wrote:

Upon our arrival, we found Mr. Whitmer’s family very anxious concerning the work, and very friendly toward ourselves. They continued so, boarded and lodged us

according to arrangements; and John Whitmer, in particular, assisted us very much in writing during the remainder of the work. In the meantime, David, John, and Peter Whitmer, Jun. became our zealous friends and assistants in the work; and being anxious to know their respective duties, and having desired with much earnestness that I should inquire of the Lord concerning them, I did so through the means of the Urim and Thummim, and obtained for them in succession the following revelations [Doctrine and Covenants 14, 15, and 16] (*HC*, 1:49).

The Whitmers had seven children in all. Three were married and lived close by (Christian, Jacob, and Catherine). Four still lived at home (Peter Jr.—age 19, David—age 24, John—age 26, and 14-year-old Elizabeth Ann). Oliver still did most of the transcribing, but he was relieved on occasion by Emma or one of the Whitmers—Christian or John. Actually, the entire Whitmer family was helpful in the process of translation.

It took about a month to finish translating the Book of Mormon after Joseph and Oliver moved from Harmony to the Whitmer farm in Fayette, New York.

Section 14 Revelation to David Whitmer

Sections 14, 15, and 16 all consist of counsel to members of the Whitmer family.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 14, 15, and 16 Counsel to the Whitmers

D&C 14:7 Eternal life . . . is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

verses 1-6 For a discussion of these verses, see the commentary on sections 6:1-9 and 11:1-9.

1 A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.

2 Behold, I am God; give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my word.

3 Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God.

4 Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God.

5 Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you.

6 Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion. Keep my commandments in all things.

7 And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

verse 7 “**eternal life**” It is, of course, fundamental that the phrase “eternal life” means life in God’s celestial presence while the related word, *immortality*, means simply living forever. The former must be earned, while the latter is a free gift to all of God’s creatures.

“**eternal life . . . is the greatest of all the gifts of God**” If, through our obedience to gospel law, we *earn* our celestial resurrection, why is it a gift? It is very much a gift for two reasons. First, no one fully qualifies for the celestial heaven completely on their own merits, though we do participate in the process to the degree we are able. In spite of our best efforts, every human being falls short. It is only available to us through the Savior’s atoning sacrifice. Second, the gift of eternal life far exceeds in magnificence our paltry efforts exerted in obeying the commandments; so much so that exaltation is indeed a gift—“the greatest of all the gifts of God.”

8 And it shall come to pass, that if you shall ask the Father in my name, in faith believing, you shall receive the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance, that you may stand as a witness of the things of which you shall both hear and see, and also that you may declare repentance unto this generation.

verse 8 “that you may stand as a witness” Note the foreshadowing of David Whitmer’s role as one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. To function in this role, he would first need to be worthy of the Holy Ghost by whose promptings all spiritual impressions come.

9 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who created the heavens and the earth, a light which cannot be hid in darkness;

verse 9 “I am Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God” The phrase “living God” in the scriptures may be applied to both the Father, as here, and the Son. The term “living” means “truly and eternally living” or “resurrected,” in an immortal state.

10 Wherefore, I must bring forth the fulness of my gospel from the Gentiles unto the house of Israel.

verse 10 To initiate the gathering of the house of Israel in the latter days, the Lord will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles—the United States of America. Missionaries will go out from this great gentile nation to Israel—to the Lamanites, to the Jews, and to Israelites in all the world. Thus, this nation will become an ensign to the world and to all Israel. These missionaries may be referred to in the scripture as “Gentiles” even though many of them are, by descent, of the house of Israel. They are “Gentiles” by virtue of the fact that culturally they belong to the “mighty nation among the gentiles” (1 Nephi 22:7).

We thus see a reversal of the order of gathering compared to that which took place in the meridian of time. Then, the gospel was taken to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. Thus, in our dispensation “the last [the Gentiles] shall be first, and the first [the Jews] shall be last” (1 Nephi 13:42; see also Luke 13:30).

We now live in the “times of the Gentiles” when the gospel is being taken to every Gentile nation, kindred, tongue, and people (D&C 45:25-30). See the commentary for 1 Nephi 14:32.

11 And behold, thou art David, and thou art called to assist; which thing if ye do, and are faithful, ye shall be blessed both spiritually and temporally, and great shall be your reward. Amen.

verse 11 “thou art David” Again, we see the expression we have come to recognize as suggesting that David Whitmer was foreordained to his callings in the Church. Though we have come to admire and respect him for never having denied his testimony of the Book of Mormon—which he acquired as one of the three special

witnesses of the Book of Mormon—he did leave the Church which was an unfortunate development for both him and the Church.

Section 15 Revelation to John Whitmer

Sections 14, 15, and 16 were all received by Joseph Smith at the same time—June 1829—and share the same historical setting. For historical background pertinent to sections 15-16, please refer to the introductory material for section 14. Sections 15 and 16 are identical except for the names in verse 1 and the one word, *unto*, which was added in section 16 verse 5. Apparently this difference occurred because of a copying error in the 1844 edition.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 15:6 (also 16:6) The thing which be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people.

1 Hearken, my servant John, and listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer.

2 For behold, I speak unto you with sharpness and with power, for mine arm is over all the earth.

verse 2 “with sharpness and with power” See the commentary for D&C 6:2. These words are related to what the Lord told Oliver Cowdery in that verse. There the Lord’s words are referred to as both “powerful” and “sharper than a two-edged sword.”

“mine arm is over all the earth” The “arm” of God represents his power and authority—to his ability to put into effect what he intends. For different ways this phrase is used see the following references: D&C 1:14; 3:8; 35:8; Isaiah 52:10; John 12:38; 3 Nephi 9:14.

3 And I will tell you that which no man knoweth save me and thee alone—

4 For many times you have desired of me to know that which would be of the most worth unto you.

verses 3-4 Both John Whitmer and Peter Whitmer Jr. asked the Lord repeatedly and privately what he would have them do. Here, the Lord reveals to John Whitmer (and to Peter Jr. in section 16), as he did to Oliver Cowdery in section 6 and also anciently to Nathanael (see John 1:47-51), that he knows the thoughts of their hearts. In verse 6 both receive their answer.

verse 4 Elder Ruder Clawson, of the Quorum of the Twelve, commented on the significance of this verse:

Cast your minds back to the early days of this Church, and there stood this man John Whitmer, recently come into the Church of Christ. Various occupations in which he might engage were before him. He had the opportunity to labor upon the farm, to engage in merchandising, to follow mining, to study the profession of medicine or law,

or to adopt one of the many other occupations in which men employ themselves. The question he asked himself at that time was, What would be of the most worth to him? . . . I say, these opportunities were before him because the country is full of opportunities, which are within the reach of all. We live in a free country, and the way is open to you and to me, as it was to this man. He stood there in this situation, not having been trained long in the gospel of Christ, and I say to you—for it is on record here—that a voice came to that man from the eternal worlds, and that voice set at rest in him every doubt, every dubiety, every fearful anticipation. At a critical time in his life, when he must choose which way to go, that voice said unto him that that which would be of most worth unto him was to declare repentance unto the people and bring souls unto Christ [see verse 6]. The message was of such importance that it came to him with “sharpness and with power.” It was the voice of Jesus Christ (*CR*, April 1901, 7).

5 Behold, blessed are you for this thing, and for speaking my words which I have given you according to my commandments.

verse 5 John Whitmer (and Peter Jr. in the following section) are “blessed” for asking God what he desired of them and for speaking God’s word according to the commandments they had already received from the Bible and perhaps from revelations through the Prophet Joseph.

6 And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father. Amen.

verse 6 “that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” The celestial kingdom is often referred to as a place of rest when the struggles of mortality are over, the contest with Satan and with our own carnal nature is won, and our place in the kingdom is secured. However, there is ample reason to believe that the eternal celestial experience will hardly be one of rest. Judging by what we know of the position, experiences, and responsibilities of our Father in heaven, we may surely conclude that there will be abundant challenge, excitement, and joy in the celestial heaven.

The term *rest* is also used to refer to the state of being sealed up to exaltation in the celestial kingdom and receiving God’s oath that we shall inherit that kingdom, even while we remain in mortality. To see and converse with God while still in the flesh and receive his personal promise of exaltation would also, then, be considered entering “into his rest” (D&C 84:24—see the commentary for this verse).

Section 16 Revelation to Peter Whitmer, Jr.

1 Hearken, my servant Peter, and listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer.

2 For behold, I speak unto you with sharpness and with power, for mine arm is over all the earth.

3 And I will tell you that which no man knoweth save me and thee alone—

4 For many times you have desired of me to know that which would be of the most worth unto you.

5 Behold, blessed are you for this thing, and for speaking my words which I have given unto you according to my commandments.

6 And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

In June 1829, as the Book of Mormon translation was nearing completion, Joseph learned, from the text of the Book of Mormon itself, that there were to be three special witnesses of the Book of Mormon who would be allowed to see the plates (Ether 5:2-4; see also 2 Nephi 11:3; 27:12). About this time a repentant and chastened Martin Harris had come again from Palmyra to Fayette to see how the work was progressing. David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris repeatedly petitioned Joseph to see if they might become the witnesses. As a result of their importuning, Joseph inquired of the Lord and was given a revelation which named the three as the witnesses [**D&C 17 - Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon**].

Shortly thereafter, the Book of Mormon witnesses received a revelation charging them with the responsibility of choosing, when the appropriate time arrived, those who would comprise the first Quorum of Twelve Apostles in this dispensation [**D&C 18 - Book of Mormon Witnesses to Choose Twelve Apostles**]. Martin Harris was excluded from this calling initially, but by 1835, when the time came to choose the Twelve, Martin had repented, and he participated in making those callings.

Section 17 Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon

Almost immediately after Joseph discovered that three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon would be designated (see Ether 5:2-4; see also 2 Nephi 11:3; 27:12), Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were each inspired with a desire to become one of the three special witnesses. As we learned in section 5 (verses 11-13; 24-28), Martin Harris had already been told by the Lord that he might be one of those special witnesses if he would humble himself. Similarly, Oliver Cowdery (D&C 6:25-28) and David Whitmer (D&C 14:8) had received the same promise from the Lord. They all urged Joseph Smith to inquire of the Lord to see if they might be granted this honor. Joseph did so, and through the Urim and Thummim in June 1829 he received section 17. For some reason, section 17 was not printed in the Book of Commandments in 1833 but was added to the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (as were several other sections). It had been recorded in the Kirtland Revelation Book, a collection of revelations recorded in Kirtland during 1831-34—the early years there.

The three are told in this section that if they continue faithful, they will see the plates, the breast plate, the sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim, and the Liahona. The three are also commanded to testify of the reality and divine purpose of the plates and the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 17 The Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon

D&C 17:6 The Lord's swears an oath that the Book of Mormon is true—As your Lord and your God liveth it is true.

1 Behold, I say unto you, that you must rely upon my word, which if you do with full purpose of heart, you shall have a view of the plates, and also of the breastplate, the sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim, which were given to the brother of Jared upon the mount, when he talked with the Lord face to face, and the miraculous directors which were given to Lehi while in the wilderness, on the borders of the Red Sea.

verse 1 There are two grammatical problems in this verse. First, "Urim and Thummim" can take either a singular or plural verb. In this verse, a plural verb is used. Anyone reading it might surmise that the plates, breastplate, sword of Laban, and the Urim and Thummim were all given to the Brother of Jared. The verse intends to say, however, that only the Urim and Thummim once belonged to the Brother of Jared (see Ether 3:28).

The other problem is the term “miraculous directors.” This should be “miraculous director . . . was given” since the Liahona was never used in the plural in the Book of Mormon.

This verse makes the point that it is not just the text or the doctrine of the book that is true, but the historical account of events as well. Not only did the witnesses know that the book was of God, they also knew that it was based on real history and real people who really did what the book claims they did, for they saw for themselves the artifacts associated with that history. Thus, the testimony of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon renders untenable the idea that the Book of Mormon may be inspired without being historical.

2 And it is by your faith that you shall obtain a view of them, even by that faith which was had by the prophets of old.

3 And after that you have obtained faith, and have seen them with your eyes, you shall testify of them, by the power of God;

verse 3 It is, of course, notable that all three men, following their special experience near the Peter Whitmer farm, bore individual witness to the book and its message for the rest of their lives. See the commentary for verse 5.

4 And this you shall do that my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., may not be destroyed, that I may bring about my righteous purposes unto the children of men in this work.

verse 4 One purpose of having the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon was to spread the burden of testifying among a few individuals that thus, the prophet Joseph was kept from being the single focus of the wrath of the world. Also, since God has provided three witnesses to the truth of his work, the hearers are left without excuse should they reject the testimony of multiple witnesses (see D&C 42:80; Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16).

5 And ye shall testify that you have seen them, even as my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., has seen them; for it is by my power that he has seen them, and it is because he had faith.

verse 5 “And ye shall testify” Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris never faltered in bearing testimony of the truthfulness of the book of Mormon. As history attests, however, they did falter in other church-related areas. David Whitmer left the Church and never came back. Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris both left the Church but were eventually rebaptized and died in full fellowship. But ever while they were out of the Church, all three continued to bear solemn witness of the reality of their experience on that day. They undoubtedly felt the weight of the Lord’s warning to them to keep his commandments or the gates of hell would prevail against them.

The Richmond Democrat carried the following account of David Whitmer's last moments on earth:

On Sunday evening, at 5:30 (January 22, 1888), Mr. Whitmer called his family and some friends to his bedside, and addressing himself to the attending physician, said: "Dr Buchanan, I want you to say whether or not I am in my right mind, before I give my dying testimony." The doctor answered: "Yes, you are in your right mind, for I have just had a conversation with you." He then addressed himself to all around his bedside in these words: "Now you must all be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all, the Bible and the record of the Nephites (Book of Mormon) is true, so you can say that you have heard me bear my testimony on my death-bed. All be faithful in Christ, and your reward will be according to your works. God bless you all, my trust is in Christ forever, worlds without end. Amen" (Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:270).

The last testimony of Martin Harris was given to William Harrison Homer, who was with him at the time of his death. Brother Homer recorded:

The next day, July 10, 1875, marked the end. It was in the evening. It was milking time, and Martin Harris, Jr., and his wife, Nancy Homer Harris, had gone out to milk and to do the evening's chores. In the house with the stricken man were left my mother, Eliza Williamson Homer, and myself. . . . I stood by the bedside holding the patient's right hand and my mother at the foot of the bed. Martin Harris had been unconscious for a number of days. When we first entered the room the old gentleman appeared to be sleeping. He soon woke up and asked for a drink of water. I put my arm under the old gentleman, raised him, and my mother held the glass to his lips. He drank freely, then he looked up at me and recognized me. He said, "I know you. You are my friend." He said, "Yes, I did see the plates on which the Book of Mormon was written; I did see the angel; I did hear the voice of God; and I do know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, holding the keys of the Holy Priesthood." This was the end. Martin Harris, divinely-chosen witness of the work of God, relaxed, gave up my hand. He lay back on his pillow and just as the sun went down behind the Clarkston mountains, the soul of Martin Harris passed on (*New Witness for Christ*, 1:253-54).

verses 3-5 The three witnesses fulfilled an important law established by the Lord. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Whenever the Lord has established a dispensation by revealing his gospel and by conferring priesthood and keys upon men, he has acted in accordance with the law of witnesses which he himself ordained. This law is: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:15-16; John 8:17-18).

Never does one man stand alone in establishing a new dispensation of revealed truth, or in carrying the burden of such a message and warning to the world. In every dispensation, from Adam to the present, two or more witnesses have always joined their

testimonies, thus leaving their hearers without excuse in the day of judgment should the testimony be rejected (*Mormon Doctrine*, 436).

6 And he has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him, and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true.

verse 6 The Lord bears simple and powerful testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

One of the most solemn oaths ever given to man is found in these words of the Lord relative to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon [verse 6 is quoted].

This is God's testimony of the Book of Mormon. In it Deity himself has laid his Godhood on the line. Either the book is true or God ceases to be God. There neither is nor can be any more formal or powerful language known to men or Gods (*Ensign*, May 1982, 33).

The Lord's solemn oath does not mean that the text of the Book of Mormon is inerrant. Inerrant means infallible and free from error. There might be printer's errors, copyists' errors, or other human errors. The book itself, however, both in its historical claims and in its doctrines, remains true.

7 Wherefore, you have received the same power, and the same faith, and the same gift like unto him;

verse 7 The testimony that the three witnesses would have for themselves would have the same fundamental bases as Joseph Smith's testimony. They would have a witness beyond faith. They would know with their physical senses.

8 And if you do these last commandments of mine, which I have given you, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; for my grace is sufficient for you, and you shall be lifted up at the last day.

verse 8 **"these last commandments of mine"** This phrase refers to the commandments just delivered to them in verses 3-6. These three men are promised that if they would do all that they were instructed in this revelation, the Lord's grace would be sufficient to ensure their exaltation.

"you shall be lifted up at the last day" To be "lifted up" is to receive one's celestial resurrection. The term "lifted up" might also refer either to the living who will be caught up to meet the Lord on his return to this earth or to the "dead in Christ" who will be resurrected and raised up to the celestial heaven.

9 And I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it unto you, that I might bring about my righteous purposes unto the children of men. Amen.

Section 18 Book of Mormon Witnesses to Choose Twelve Apostles

This revelation was given in June 1829, probably between the 1st and the 14th, in the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr., in Fayette, New York, to Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer. The Lord withheld, for the time being, the blessing of this revelation from Martin Harris.

Section 18 is closely associated with the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. No specific date for the receipt of section 18 is known. Joseph and Oliver received the Aaronic Priesthood on May 15, 1829 (see D&C 13), and they left Harmony and moved to Fayette, New York, to stay with the Whitmer family around the 29th or 30th of May. Because the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored to Joseph and Oliver “in the wilderness [woods] between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome County, on the Susquehanna River” (D&C 128:20), it is likely that the restoration took place before May 30, by which time Joseph and Oliver had left the area where it is reported to have occurred (see Porter, “Dating the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood,” 5-10; also Porter, “Restoration of the Priesthood,” 3-7). If this is correct, then the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored within about two weeks of the Aaronic Priesthood and before the move to Fayette which began on either the 29th or 30th of May. The 18th section, then, was received sometime between the 1st and 14th of June. On June 14, 1829, Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter to Hyrum Smith, which indicates from its many parallels to section 18 that this revelation had already been received by that date.

The revelation given at the Whitmer home occurred as follows. After arriving at the Whitmer’s on June 1, 1829, the Prophet Joseph and some of his associates gathered in prayer “when the word of the Lord came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office; and then to ordain others, as it should be made known unto us from time to time. We were, however, commanded to defer this our ordination until such time as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together, when we must have their sanction to our thus proceeding to ordain each other, and have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers or not; . . . The following commandment [section 18] will further illustrate the nature of our calling to this priesthood, as well as that of others who were yet to be sought after” (*HC*, 1:60-62).

In this revelation Joseph and Oliver are directed in how to proceed in ordaining one another and also in ordaining other prospective elders. Also Oliver and David are given the honor and commandment to choose those who would comprise the first Quorum of Twelve Apostles in this dispensation. The actual selection of the Twelve did

not occur until six years later in 1835. By that time Martin Harris had placed himself in the position to be allowed by the Lord to be included with the other two witnesses in choosing the apostles.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 18 Book of Mormon Witnesses to Choose Twelve Apostles

D&C 18:10 The worth of souls is great in the sight of God.

D&C 18:15-16 And if . . . you should labor all your days and bring save it be one soul unto me.

D&C 18:23 There is none other name given whereby man can be saved.

1 Now, behold, because of the thing which you, my servant Oliver Cowdery, have desired to know of me, I give unto you these words:

verse 1 Oliver Cowdery wrote a document known as the *Articles of the Church of Christ* in 1829. Much of what is in that manuscript is now contained in D&C section 20, and the relationship between the two is unmistakable. It is likely that Joseph assigned Oliver to write this document, and that at the time section 18 was received, Oliver was making plans and preparations for writing this manuscript. Oliver had prayed to know what to include, and he had also approached the Prophet for his counsel as well. See further discussion of this project of Oliver's in the introductory commentary for section 20.

2 Behold, I have manifested unto you, by my Spirit in many instances, that the things which you have written are true; wherefore you know that they are true.

verse 2 The Lord responds to Oliver's prayer in these verses of section 18 by reminding him that through the Spirit, Oliver had received a testimony that the things which he had previously written as a scribe for Joseph in translating the Book of Mormon (D&C 6:22-23; 13:1; 17:1).

3 And if you know that they are true, behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you rely upon the things which are written;

4 For in them are all things written concerning the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my rock.

verses 3-4 The Lord then tells him to rely, for his proposed manuscript, on what he had written in the Book of Mormon, because the Book of Mormon contains everything concerning the foundation of the Church.

5 Wherefore, if you shall build up my church, upon the foundation of my gospel and my rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

verse 5 “my church . . . my gospel . . . my rock” When the Lord refers to his “church,” he is referring to the assembled believers and disciples who have taken upon themselves his name and covenanted to be obedient to his gospel (see D&C 10:67). The Church, of course, has not yet been organized so the Lord speaks in the future tense—“if you shall build up my church.”

The Lord defined his “gospel” in D&C 39:6: “And this is my gospel—repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.”

His gospel is essentially the “first principles and ordinances of the gospel,” faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We should not speak of repentance without reminding ourselves that repentance is essentially obedience. When we want to emphasize obedience following a period of disobedience, we call it repentance.

The term “rock” is used in scripture with a few different meanings. While it is true that “the rock” sometimes refers to the rock of revelation, Christ is also the Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4; Helaman 5:12). In one context, Peter (or Cephas), whose name both in Greek and in Aramaic means “rock,” is referred to by the Savior as the rock. Peter was the last one to hold all the keys anciently (see D&C 27:12; see also Matthew 16:18-19, where “rock” has more than one meaning). In this particular verse, the gospel is the rock, as it is also in D&C 11:24 and 3 Nephi 11:32-39.

“the gates of hell shall not prevail against you” If Oliver’s document is written from the truths in the Book of Mormon, then the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church (verse 5).

6 Behold, the world is ripening in iniquity; and it must needs be that the children of men are stirred up unto repentance, both the Gentiles and also the house of Israel.

verse 6 One major purpose for restoring the gospel to the earth is to call the world to repentance.

7 Wherefore, as thou hast been baptized by the hands of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., according to that which I have commanded him, he hath fulfilled the thing which I commanded him.

verse 7 The Lord tells Oliver that Joseph is so far doing just what he (the Lord) has commanded him to do.

8 And now, marvel not that I have called him unto mine own purpose, which purpose is known in me; wherefore, if he shall be diligent in keeping my commandments he shall be blessed unto eternal life; and his name is Joseph.

verse 8 “and his name is Joseph” In Hebrew the name *Joseph* means “added.” The prophet Lehi, just before his death gathered his family and quoted from writings of ancient Joseph who was sold into Egypt. In these writings, ancient Joseph prophesied that in the latter days a branch of the tribe of Joseph would be raised up to gather scattered Israel. They would be led by a choice seer named Joseph (2 Nephi 3:5-15).

9 And now, Oliver Cowdery, I speak unto you, and also unto David Whitmer, by the way of commandment; for, behold, I command all men everywhere to repent, and I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called.

verse 9 For the remainder of this section, the Lord will speak to both Oliver and to David Whitmer.

“I command all men everywhere to repent” A call to repentance is a call to obey. It is not just a plea or a request of God. It is an ongoing commandment given to the greatest and to the least; to the righteous and to the wicked; to members of the Church and to nonmembers alike.

“for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called” What does it mean to be called “with the same calling with which [Paul] was called”? It means to be called to be an apostle.

Brigham Young taught that “Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer were the first apostles of this dispensation, though in the early days of the Church David Whitmer lost his standing, and another took his place” (*JD*, 6:320). To these, according to Heber C. Kimball, Martin Harris was later added (*JD*, 6:29). These men will be instructed in verse 37 to find and ordain twelve others who will form the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

10 Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

verse 10 A verse and scriptural reference worth memorizing! The Savior was willing to pay an infinite price to provide us an opportunity to return to our celestial home.

11 For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

verse 11 “wherefore he suffered the pain of all men” Men commit sin because they fall prey to their natural selves (Mosiah 3:19). We are naturally inclined to seek for social acceptance, for physical comfort and security, for material comfort, for

respect, for self-esteem, for financial security. We are driven to satisfy our sexual cravings. The influences of the world are powerful and immediate and difficult to resist. These temptations of the world are amplified by the sufferings of men, particularly discouragement, despair, physical pain, addictions, and others of life's vicissitudes. In order for Jesus Christ to possess perfect empathy for all men, he had to experience first hand every combination of temptations and hardships ever experienced by any man (Alma 7:11-12; Hebrews 2:18). It would certainly take a miracle for him to experience all of this in the space of less than twenty-four hours. It was a miracle. This miracle was the infinitely excruciating ordeal he undertook in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. It was orchestrated by the Father (3 Nephi 11:11; D&C 76:107). It was the atonement of Jesus Christ.

12 And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

13 And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!

14 Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people.

15 And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

16 And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!

verses 15-16 Another scriptural passage and scriptural reference well worth memorizing! Contemplate these two verses for a few moments. Indeed, "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God."

17 Behold, you have my gospel before you, and my rock, and my salvation.

18 Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men.

19 And if you have not faith, hope, and charity, you can do nothing.

verse 19 "faith, hope, and charity" These three virtues are not listed together by accident. Faith is initially deliberate obedience. We receive in turn for our obedience, through personal revelation, increments of the attributes of Christ in the form of gifts of the Spirit, which refine us and incline us toward further and less difficult obedience. Most of God's commands define for us how we should treat one another and how we should place the interests of others ahead of our own. As we obey these commands, initially deliberately, our hearts are softened toward others; we come to have spiritual insight into the hearts of others. We come to sense their true identity stripped of all of their earthly defenses; we come to truly understand and love them.

This love also comes to us in the form of gifts of the Spirit—incremental bits of that charity which Christ possesses for us all. Gradually, we come to place others first and ourselves second. A side benefit of this spiritual progress is the quiet growing assurance that our efforts are acceptable to the Lord and that we are okay—we are headed to our celestial home. This assurance, this hope is whispered to our souls by personal revelation. This is the gift of hope.

20 Contend against no church, save it be the church of the devil.

verse 20 We are commanded to avoid contention (arguing, fighting, or “bashing”) in our dealings with other churches. The Lord taught his missionaries: “And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:28-30).

The prophet Joseph Smith taught the same principle:

The elders would go forth, and each must stand for himself . . . to go in all meekness, in sobriety, and preach Jesus Christ and him crucified; not to contend with others on account of their faith, or systems of religion, but pursue a steady course. This I delivered by way of commandment; and all who observe it not will pull down persecution upon their heads, while those who do, shall always be filled with the Holy Ghost; this I pronounced as a prophecy, and sealed with hosanna and amen (*HC*, 2:431).

“**save it be the church of the devil**” What is the “church of the devil”? It is no individual denomination. Our enemies are not the Methodists, or the Baptists, or the Catholics, for there are many people among these denominations and all others who love light and seek to serve God as far as their understanding allows them. The church of the devil is wickedness. It is those who love darkness more than light—those who would attack other denominations. It is Satan’s kingdom, the sphere of his influence and power. It is the same as the “great and abominable church” defined in 1 Nephi chapter 14. See the commentary for that chapter.

21 Take upon you the name of Christ, and speak the truth in soberness.

22 And as many as repent and are baptized in my name, which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved.

23 Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved;

verse 23 **“there is none other name given whereby man can be saved”** Just as there is but one true God, so is there but one true name endowed by him with saving power—Jesus Christ. That name was confirmed in the days of Adam as “the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men” (Moses 6:52). All other names, titles, and epithets applied to other supposed deities are spiritually impotent.

The restoration of the gospel—of necessity—involved the restoration of the saving name of Jesus Christ. Not, of course, the literal person/name familiar to all Christians, but the correct understanding of the personality behind that name, together with that authority and those doctrines and ordinances encompassed by it. For just as there are false gods, so are there false Christs or, rather, false concepts associated with him. Christ condemns those “who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority” (D&C 63:62). Therefore, we cannot receive Christ and validly take his name upon us without committing ourselves to the gospel as restored through Joseph Smith. The Lord made this clear to James Covill, a Baptist minister: “He that receiveth my gospel receiveth me; and he that receiveth not my gospel receiveth not me” (D&C 39:5).

24 Wherefore, all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father, for in that name shall they be called at the last day;

25 Wherefore, if they know not the name by which they are called, they cannot have place in the kingdom of my Father.

26 And now, behold, there are others who are called to declare my gospel, both unto Gentile and unto Jew;

27 Yea, even twelve; and the Twelve shall be my disciples, and they shall take upon them my name; and the Twelve are they who shall desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart.

verse 27 This verse portends the eventual calling in 1835 of the twelve apostles. In February of that year the Quorum of the Twelve was organized. Note that in the following verse this priesthood calling was initially intended to be a traveling missionary calling.

28 And if they desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart, they are called to go into all the world to preach my gospel unto every creature.

29 And they are they who are ordained of me to baptize in my name, according to that which is written;

verse 29 **“According to that which is written”** in the newly translated Book of Mormon and in the revelations to the Prophet Joseph.

30 And you have that which is written before you; wherefore, you must perform it according to the words which are written.

31 And now I speak unto you, the Twelve—Behold, my grace is sufficient for you; you must walk uprightly before me and sin not.

verse 31 “And now I speak unto you, the Twelve” Again, the Lord speaks to the Twelve six years before they are called.

32 And, behold, you are they who are ordained of me to ordain priests and teachers; to declare my gospel, according to the power of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and according to the callings and gifts of God unto men;

33 And I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it.

34 These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man;

35 For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another; and save it were by my power you could not have them;

36 Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words.

verses 34-36 These verses contain the reason why an apostle, or any of us for that matter, can testify that he has heard the voice of Christ. When we read the scriptures, we hear the voice of Christ.

37 And now, behold, I give unto you, Oliver Cowdery, and also unto David Whitmer, that you shall search out the Twelve, who shall have the desires of which I have spoken;

verse 37 The question might well be raised: Is not apostolic authority necessary before a man can call and ordain another apostle? Did Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer possess such authority? Were they apostles? B. H. Roberts suggested that the three special witnesses of the Book of Mormon were indeed “three very special witnesses” not only of the Book of Mormon, but of the Lord’s work in general. Brother Roberts suggested that it was “pre-eminently proper” that the Twelve should be chosen by the three witnesses (*HC*, 2:187). The implication is that the calling of the Three Witnesses was an apostolic one.

Again, only Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer are mentioned here (see D&C 19:15, 20), but in 1835 Joseph Smith directed that Martin should also assist in choosing the Twelve.

38 And by their desires and their works you shall know them.

39 And when you have found them you shall show these things unto them.

40 And you shall fall down and worship the Father in my name.

41 And you must preach unto the world, saying: You must repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ;

42 For all men must repent and be baptized, and not only men, but women, and children who have arrived at the years of accountability.

verse 42 This is the first mention of the concept of accountability, which was later clarified by revelation to be eight years of age (see D&C 68:25; JST Genesis 17:11; see also D&C 20:71).

43 And now, after that you have received this, you must keep my commandments in all things;

44 And by your hands I will work a marvelous work among the children of men, unto the convincing of many of their sins, that they may come unto repentance, and that they may come unto the kingdom of my Father.

45 Wherefore, the blessings which I give unto you are above all things.

46 And after that you have received this, if you keep not my commandments you cannot be saved in the kingdom of my Father.

verse 46 Those who have been given the greater blessings are held to a higher standard (see D&C 82:3). Those who have received the blessings that are “above all things” (see the previous verse), will surely be dealt with severely in the eternities, especially if they then rebel against God.

47 Behold, I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, and your Redeemer, by the power of my Spirit have spoken it. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1829 July

One morning in early July 1829, the three witnesses and Joseph retired to a secluded spot in a pasture between two roads on the Whitmer farm. They took turns praying, not once, but twice, and nothing happened. Before making a third attempt, Martin Harris withdrew, perceiving that he was the obstacle. The remaining three prayed again, and this time they were granted the glorious experience of having an angel appear and show them the plates of the Book of Mormon, the brass plates, the plates of the book of Ether, the plates containing the records of the wickedness and secret combinations of the people of the world down to the time of their being engraved, and many other plates. There appeared as it were, a table with many records or plates upon it. They also saw the breastplate, the Liahona, the Urim and Thummim, and the sword of Laban. David Whitmer later said, “I saw them just as plain as I see this bed (striking the bed beside him with his hand), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life, declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God.” When asked if he

saw the angel at that time, Brother Whitmer replied, “Yes; he stood before us, our testimony as recorded in the Book of Mormon is strictly and absolutely true, just as it is there written” (“Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,” 771-72).

Joseph then left Oliver and David and found Martin Harris engaged in prayer, as he had previously been instructed by the Lord (see D&C 5:24). Joseph and Martin prayed together, and at length, Martin was favored with the same experience. See the Testimony of the Three Witnesses and its commentary in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

Another account of the experience of the three witnesses further enriches our understanding of this remarkable incident:

Not many days after the above commandment was given, we four, viz., Martin Harris, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself, agreed to retire into the woods, and try to obtain, by fervent and humble prayer, the fulfilment of the promises given in the above revelation—that they should have a view of the plates. We accordingly made choice of a piece of woods convenient to Mr. Whitmer's house, to which we retired, and having knelt down, we began to pray in much faith to Almighty God to bestow upon us a realization of these promises.

According to previous arrangement, I commenced prayer to our Heavenly Father, and was followed by each of the others in succession. We did not at the first trial, however, obtain any answer or manifestation of divine favor in our behalf. We again observed the same order of prayer, each calling on and praying fervently to God in rotation, but with the same result as before.

Upon this, our second failure, Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw himself from us, believing, as he expressed himself, that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for. He accordingly withdrew from us, and we knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates which we had been praying for these to have a view of. He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly. He then addressed himself to David Whitmer, and said, “David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps His commandments;” when, immediately afterwards, we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, “These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.”

I now left David and Oliver, and went in pursuit of Martin Harris, whom I found at a considerable distance, fervently engaged in prayer. He soon told me, however, that he had not yet prevailed with the Lord, and earnestly requested me to join him in prayer, that he also might realize the same blessings which we had just received. We accordingly joined in prayer, and ultimately obtained our desires, for before we had yet

finished, the same vision was opened to our view, at least it was again opened to me, and I once more beheld and heard the same things; whilst at the same moment, Martin Harris cried out, apparently in an ecstasy of joy, "'Tis enough; 'tis enough; mine eyes have beheld; mine eyes have beheld;" and jumping up, he shouted, "Hosanna," blessing God, and otherwise rejoiced exceedingly (HC, 1:54-55).

Joseph was greatly relieved that the Lord had allowed others to see the plates so that they might now share with him the responsibility of witnessing to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon record. Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet's mother, gave the following account describing Joseph's feelings after he returned home from the manifestation to the three witnesses:

When they returned to the house it was between three and four o'clock p.m. Mrs. Whitmer, Mr. Smith, and myself were sitting in a bedroom at the time. On coming in, Joseph threw himself down beside me, and exclaimed, "Father, mother, you do not know how happy I am: the Lord has now caused the plates to be shown to three more besides myself. They have seen an angel, who has testified to them, and they will have to bear witness to the truth of what I have said, for now they know for themselves, that I do not go about to deceive the people, and I feel as if I was relieved of a burden which was almost too heavy for me to bear, and it rejoices my soul, that I am not any longer to be entirely alone in the world. Upon this Martin Harris came in: he seemed almost overcome with joy, and testified boldly to what he had both seen and heard. And so did David and Oliver, adding that no tongue could express the joy of their hearts, and the greatness of the things which they had both seen and heard (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 152-53).

Shortly thereafter, back in Manchester, New York, eight additional witnesses were allowed to see and handle the plates. These included four Whitmer brothers (Christian, Jacob, John, and Peter, Jr.), their brother-in-law, Hiram Page, Hyrum and Samuel Harrison Smith, and Joseph Smith, Sr. They were shown the plates by Joseph, rather than an angel, and they did not see the artifacts (see the Testimony of the Eight Witnesses and its commentary, again in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*).

Character Vignette

David Whitmer

David Whitmer was born a Pennsylvania German and carried into adulthood a hint of a German accent. He was about the same age as the Prophet Joseph. He was an outspoken rugged individualist and this quality verged on stubbornness. This utterly honest personality would have been the first to detect fraud and expose it. If Joseph had been intending to perpetrate some type of fraud, David Whitmer is not one he would have picked as a partner in his conspiracy. Throughout his eight years in the Church and his fifty years strictly separated from it, he never wavered regarding his testimony of the Book of Mormon.

In addition to being one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses, he became prominent in the leadership of the Church, serving as the “president of the Church in Missouri” which would be comparable to a stake president in terms of the current church organization.

Tragic events culminated in David Whitmer’s excommunication in April 1838. In the previous year of doctrinal and financial trial, prominent dissenters moved in open council to depose the Prophet Joseph and replace him with David Whitmer, a commentary on the public stature of the man. Long afterward he gave his own version of the processes of his thinking. In summary, he resisted change and was jealous of the power and suspected influence of Sidney Rigdon: “Rigdon was a thorough Bible scholar, a man of fine education, and a powerful orator. He soon worked himself deep into Brother Joseph’s affections, and had more influence over him than any other man living” (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, [Richmond, Missouri, 1887], 35). At his excommunication, the main charge was “possessing the same spirit with the dissenters” (Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record, Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844*, Salt Lake City, 1983, 177). This meant that he was skeptical of the new policies of the Kirtland era and had declared doctrinal and economic independence. But David really sought to recreate the intimate days of 1829-30 at his father’s home in Fayette. His later writings idealize this period when he felt closest to God and the Prophet. So David Whitmer is really a man who declined to grow with the Church. He accepted the founding divine guidance of the Church, and then he became skeptical of further revelations. This position plus opposition to polygamy characterized his feelings.

Following his excommunication he moved to Richmond, Missouri, where he lived in a society hostile to his religious views, a situation that continually highlighted his rugged independence. There he ran a livery stable and haulage business. He remained in Richmond for fifty years until his death in 1888 at the age of 85.

David earned the solid respect of his non-Mormon townsmen through a half century of private integrity and doing business with them. He was also active in civil government. This is the critical issue of the life of David Whitmer. During fifty years in non-Mormon society, he insisted with the fervor of youth that he knew that the Book of Mormon was divinely revealed. Relatively few people in Richmond could accept such testimony, but none doubted his intelligence or complete honesty. No one summarized this view more clearly than Hiram Parker, a prominent businessmen, who lived near David Whitmer for a decade: “No one could know Uncle Davy and not like and trust him. . . . Children like him, men respected him and trusted him, and I never heard a word from anyone during my ten years’ acquaintance with him and those who had known him intimately for years that spoke a harsh word or uttered a doubt as to his truthfulness and general kindness of heart” (“Mormon Reminiscences,” published letter of Hiram Parker, Detroit, uncertain date). Parker had obviously reflected a good deal on

how one might admire the man without accepting his message. Few of his townsmen could accept his Book of Mormon testimony, but “on any other subject or statement of fact neither myself or others could doubt.” Hiram Parker spent most of his life in selling in several states but had never met “a more honest guileless man”—“How one can account for the delusion that must have possessed this old man is beyond me” (*Ibid.*).

The story of the episode in 1833 in the public square at Independence, Missouri was told by New York convert John P. Greene:

When the mob assembled they went to the houses of several of the leading Mormons. And taking Isaac Morley, David Whitmer, and others, they told them to bid their families farewell, for they would never see them again. Then driving them at the point of the bayonet to the public square, they stripped and tarred and feathered them, amidst menaces and insults. The commanding officer then called twelve of his men. And ordering them to cock their guns and present them at the prisoners’ breasts, and to be ready to fire when he gave the word, he addressed the prisoners, threatening them with instant death unless they denied the Book of Mormon and confessed it to be a fraud; at the same time adding that if they did so, they might enjoy the privileges of citizens. David Whitmer, hereupon, lifted up his hands and bore witness that the Book of Mormon was the Word of God. The mob then let them go (*Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons*, [Cincinnati, 1839]: 17).

David became widely known as “the last surviving witness,” and consequently he was interviewed far more extensively than the others. He claimed that thousands came to inquire, and more than fifty of these conversations are reported in reasonable detail in contemporary diaries, letters, and newspapers, supplemented by later recollections. These reports furnish us with a detailed historical record. So, today an investigator can test David Whitmer’s convictions almost as well as the visitor of the past century who talked with him personally. The following replies are taken from the better recorded interviews of about the last decade of his life. This composite interview has been constructed by the historian Richard Lloyd Anderson and reported in his book, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (80-82).

Q: Is your published testimony accurate?

A: “As you read my testimony given many years ago, so it stands as my own existence, the same as when I gave it, and so shall stand throughout the cycles of eternity” (Letter of David Whitmer to Dr. James N. Seymour, December 8, 1875).

Q: When did this event take place?

A: “It was in June, 1829, the very last part of the month” (*Life of Joseph F. Smith*, [Salt Lake City, 1938], 242).

Q: What was the approximate time of day?

A: “It was about 11 AM” (*Journal of Edward Stevenson*, December 22, 1877).

Q: What were the circumstances of the vision?

A: “[We] went out into the woods nearby, and sat down on a log and talked awhile. We then kneeled down and prayed. Joseph prayed. We then got up and sat on the log and were talking, when all at once a light came down from above us and encircled us for quite a little distance around, and the angel stood before us” (Letter of William H. Kelley to *Saints’ Herald*, January 16, 1882, Coldwater, Michigan).

Q: Describe the angel.

A: “He was dressed in white, and spoke and called me by name and said, ‘Blessed is he that keepeth His commandments.’ This is all that I heard the angel say” (*Ibid.*).

Q: Did the angel have the Book of Mormon plates?

A: “[He] showed to us the plates, the sword of Laban, the Directors, the Urim and Thummim, and other records. Human language could not describe heavenly things and that which we saw” (*Journal of George Q. Cannon*, February 27, 1884, cit. Instructor 80 [1945]:520).

Q: Did the vision take place under natural circumstances?

A: “The fact is, it was just as though Joseph, Oliver, and I were sitting right here on a log, when we were overshadowed by a light. It was not like the light of the sun, nor like that of a fire, but more glorious and beautiful. It extended away round us. I cannot tell how far, but in the midst of this light, immediately before us, about as far off as he sits (pointing to John C. Whitmer, who was sitting 2 or 3 feet from him) there appeared, as it were, a table, with many records on it—besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the sword of Laban, the Directors, and the Interpreters. I saw them as plain as I see this bed (striking his hand upon the bed beside him), and I heard the voice of the Lord as distinctly as I every heard anything in my life declaring that they were translated by the gift and power of God” (*Journal of Joseph F. Smith*, cit. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, [Salt Lake City, 1938], 242).

Q: Can you explain the supernatural power that surrounded you?

A: “All of a sudden I beheld a dazzlingly brilliant light that surpassed in brightness even the sun at noonday, and which seemed to envelop the woods for a considerable distance around. Simultaneous with the light came a strange entrancing influence which permeated me so powerfully that I felt chained to the spot, while I also experienced a sensation of joy absolutely indescribable” (*Omaha Herald*, October 17, 1886).

Q: “Did you see the Urim and Thummim?”

A: “I saw the Interpreters in the holy vision; they looked like whitish stones put in the rim of a bow—looked like spectacles, only much larger” (Interview notes of Zenas H. Gurley, Jan. 14, 1885, also cit. *Autumn Leaves* 5 (1892):452).

Q: Did you see an actual table?

A: “You see that small table by the wall? . . . Well, there was a table about that size, and the heavenly messenger brought the several plates and laid them on the table

before our eyes, and we saw them” (Letter of James H. Hart to *Deseret News*, August 23, 1883, Seneca, Missouri, cit. *Deseret Evening News*, September 4, 1883).

Q: Did you handle the plates?

A: “I did not handle the plates—only saw them” (*Journal of James H. Moyle*, June 28, 1885).

“Joseph, and I think Oliver and Emma, told me about the plates, and described them to me, and I believed them, but did not see except at the time testified of” (*Journal of Nathan Tanner, Jr.*, April 13, 1886).

Q: How clearly could you see the plates?

A: “The angel stood before us, and he turned the leaves one by one” (Letter of P. Wilhelm Poulson to *Deseret News*, August 13, 1878, Ogden, Utah, cit. *Deseret Evening News*, August 16, 1878). “He held the plates and turned them over with his hands, so that they could be plainly visible” (*Chicago Times*, October 17, 1881).

Q: “Did the angel turn all the leaves before you as you looked on it?”

A: “No, not all, only that part of the book which was not sealed, and what there was sealed appeared as solid to my view as wood” (*Journal of Edward Stevenson*, December 22, 1877).

Q: “Can you describe the plates?”

A: “They appeared to be of gold, about six by nine inches in size, about as thick as parchment, a great many in number and bound together like the leaves of a book by massive rings passing through the back edges. The engraving upon them was very plain and of very curious appearance” (*Kansas City Daily Journal*, June 5, 1881).

Q: Is it possible that you imagined this experience?

A: “Our testimony is true. And if these things are not true, then there is no truth; and if there is no truth, there is no God; and if there is no God, there is no existence. But I know there is a God, for I have heard His voice and witnessed the manifestation of his power” (Letter of James H. Hart to *Deseret News*, August 23, 1883, Seneca, Missouri, cit. *Deseret Evening News*, September 4, 1883).

Q: “Do you remember the peculiar sensation experienced upon that occasion?”

A: “Yes, I remember it very distinctly. And I never think of it, from that day to this, but what that spirit is present with me” (Letter of William H. Kelley to *Saints’ Herald*, January 16, 1882, Coldwater, Michigan, cit. *Saints’ Herald* 29 [1882]:68).

More than one person appealed privately to the last-surviving witness to disclose deceit if it existed. James H. Moyle was later Assistant Secretary of Treasury in two U.S. administrations. Graduating with legal training at the University of Michigan in 1885, he determined to cross-examine the remaining Book of Mormon witness before returning to Utah. Young Moyle journeyed to Richmond, secured an appointment with David Whitmer, and spent some time recounting the persecutions and sacrifices of his family because of belief in Mormonism. He further contrasted his own situation with Whitmer’s. He was just beginning his own life’s career, and Whitmer was not far from

death: “And so I begged of him not to let me go through life believing in a vital falsehood.” The thoughtful law student requested not confirmation, but disclosure: “Was there any possibility that he might have been deceived in any particular?” All of his life Moyle remembered the “unequivocal” affirmation of the testimony: “There was no question about its truthfulness” (James H. Moyle, “A Visit to David Whitmer,” *Instructor* 80 [1945]:401).

He said himself toward the end of his life, “Those who know me best, well know that I have always adhered to that testimony” (David Whitmer, *A Proclamation* [Richmond, Missouri, 1881]).

Character Vignette

Egbert Bratt Grandin

A Palmyra, New York, publisher who printed the first edition of the Book of Mormon.

Grandin was born in Freehold, Monmouth County, New Jersey, on March 30, 1806. At age four (in 1810) he moved with his family to northern Ontario County, New York (later Wayne County). The Grandins located at Pultneyville, town of Williamson, on the shore of Lake Ontario. At about age sixteen or seventeen (ca. 1822-23), E. B. Grandin entered into an apprenticeship with a printer Pomeroy Tucker in the village of Palmyra, New York.

Brief Historical Setting

1829 June

Toward the end of June 1829, and having secured the copyright on June 11, 1829, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, and Martin Harris sought the services of Egbert B. Grandin of Palmyra to publish the manuscript. Negotiations began in June 1829. A momentary delay was experienced when Grandin initially refused on moral and religious grounds to print the volume. Eventually, Grandin’s primary concerns were satisfied, and he consented to publish the work.

Grandin asked that John H. Gilbert, an experienced printer, assist him in estimating the cost. Gilbert stated, “A few pages of the manuscript were submitted as a specimen of the whole, and it was said there would be about 500 pages” (ultimately there were 590 pages from the title page to the two-page testimonials of the Three and Eight Witnesses at the back of the 1830 edition). Gilbert further explained, “The size of the page was agreed upon, and an estimate of the number of ems [an ‘em’ is the unit measure of type, the width of the letter M] in a page which would be 1000, and that a page of manuscript would make more than a page of printed matter, which proved to be correct.” The resulting contract specified that Grandin would print and bind in leather five thousand copies for the sum of \$3,000 (“Memorandum, made by John H. Gilbert Esq, Sept 8th, 1892,” *King’s Daughters’ Free Library*. Palmyra, New York).

Payment for the job was secured in a mortgage agreement between Martin Harris and E. B. Grandin on August 25, 1829. Harris was to pay the sum of \$3,000 for the requisite copies within eighteen months “from the date hereof.” Should he fail to do so, his land would be sold at public auction to meet the demand. The press was situated in E. B. Grandin’s printing shop on the third story of the west bay of the newly constructed (1827-28) “Thayer & Grandin’s Row” (later “Exchange Row,” 1831). Grandin rented his quarters from his brother Philip Grandin and his partners. The binding process was to be conducted by Egbert Grandin’s partner, Luther Howard, on the second story of that same bay. Copies could then be made available for sale in Grandin’s Palmyra Bookstore on the first level.

In an 1847 publication, Frederick Follett quoted Pomeroy Tucker as contending that “the largest printing job ever done in it [Wayne County], was the first edition of Joe Smith’s ‘Book of Mormon,’ or the ‘Golden Bible.’ This was done at the office of the ‘Wayne Sentinel,’ by E. B. Grandin . . . in 1829-30 (*History of the Press of Western New York*. Rochester: Jerome & Brother, Daily American Office, 1847). The printing of five thousand copies was unusually large as press runs were ordinarily from five hundred to two thousand copies.

Preparations were made by Grandin to ready his printing shop. He went to New York to purchase the type and paper. To print and bind five thousand copies of the book required an increase in the number of workers at the press. Among the known members of the printing shop crew assembled by Grandin were (1) Pomeroy Tucker, “foreman of the office,” reader of the proof sheets, and a brother-in-law to Grandin; (2) John H. Gilbert, chief compositor (one who sets type, makes up pages and forms, and does some presswork); (3) William Van Camp, compositor; (4) Daniel Hendrix, periodic compositor and proofreader; (5) Jacob H. Bortles, presswork; (6) Thomas McAuley, or “Whistling Tom,” presswork; and (7) Franklin P. Rogers, a nine-year-old boy and youngest brother of Grandin’s wife Harriet, who was reported to have assisted in the typesetting process. Lucy Smith said that “a young Mr. Robinson son of our friend Dr. [Gain C.] Robinson,” was also involved in the printing shop. Luther Howard operated the bookbindery. One of Howard’s assistants was sixteen-year-old Albert Chandler, who recalled, “I was an apprentice in the bookbindery connected with the Sentinel office. I helped to collate and stitch the Gold Bible” (Linne, William Alexander. *The Story of the Mormons*. New York: Macmillan, 1902).

About the middle of August 1829, the printer was ready to begin typesetting. Martin Harris was notified. Hyrum Smith then brought the first installment of twenty-four pages from the larger “printer’s manuscript.” He had them buttoned under his vest and coat for security.

The Prophet remained in Palmyra through September 1829. Assured that the details of the publication had been arranged, he returned to Emma and his home in Harmony, Pennsylvania, on October 4. Oliver Cowdery was left to oversee their

interests in the proofing and printing of the work with the assistance of Hyrum Smith and Martin Harris. Gilbert specified that “Oliver Cowdery was not engaged [employed] as a compositor on the work—was not a printer. He was a frequent visitor to the office, and did several times take up a ‘stick’ and set a part of a page—he may have set 10 or 12 pages, all told” (letter February 10, 1879). Gilbert also stipulated: “Cowdery held and looked over the manuscript when most of the proofs were read. Martin Harris once or twice, and Hyrum Smith once, Grandin supposing that these men could read their own writing as well, if not better, than anyone else; and if there are any discrepancies between the Palmyra edition and the manuscript these men should be held responsible” (“Memorandum, made by John H. Gilbert Esq, Sept 8th, 1892.” *King’s Daughters’ Free Library*. Palmyra, New York).

Most available information about the role of the compositor John Hulburt Gilbert (1802-1895) in the printing of the Book of Mormon comes from two letters written by Gilbert to James Cobb (10 February and 16 March 1879), and an 8 September 1892 memorandum. In these documents Gilbert stated that after Grandin agreed to publish the Book of Mormon, Hyrum Smith and Martin Harris brought him each morning the pages he was to set in type that day. Each night they retrieved the pages to guard against possible theft. Gilbert also noted that the prophet Joseph Smith entered the print shop only once, for a few minutes, during the entire course of the work.

The pages Hyrum and Martin brought Gilbert were nearly always pages from a second copy of the manuscript, called the printer’s copy, which Joseph had asked Oliver Cowdery to prepare. The original dictated manuscript was to remain in their keeping. In producing the printer’s copy, Oliver was to correct grammar and spelling errors found in the original manuscript, apparently because it had been written very rapidly. Gilbert could not merely replicate the printer’s copy but divided it into sentences and paragraphs because “every chapter, if I remember correctly, was one solid paragraph, without a punctuation mark, from beginning to end” (Wood, Wilford C., *Joseph Smith Begins His Work* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1963], 29). Both the original and printer’s copies show each chapter to be a solid paragraph with a period only at the end. When Gilbert asked Hyrum and Martin about sentences and paragraphs, they instructed him to make them as needed but not to change any words.

Gilbert’s claim of no punctuation is not entirely true because Oliver did add some punctuation, as an examination of the original translation copy shows. Pomeroy Tucker asserted that Gilbert “was given a limited discretion in correcting, which was exercised in the particulars of syntax, orthography, punctuation, capitalizing, paragraphing, etc.” (*Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1867, 35).

It was no easy task to set the type, punctuate, and make the paragraphs for a five-hundred-page manuscript that Gilbert was permitted to see only in segments (the first segment was twenty-four pages long and included the title page). The whole

procedure was ripe for error. But the most significant challenge Gilbert faced was his total ignorance of the book he had to set in type. Nearly all the people, places, and circumstances were totally unfamiliar to him. He had never heard of Moroni, or the Lamanites, or the Jaredites. He did not know who they were or what relationship any might have had to any other. Examination of the title page, which was reproduced from the printer's copy, illustrates the difficulty. The entire page was written with indiscriminate capital letters and no periods. Slash marks indicated the ends of lines. Gilbert had to decide what words to place in the title, which in the subtitle, and what sizes of type he should set them in. When modern readers look at the printed page, it all seems so simple, but creating the printed page from a handwritten account without punctuation was no easy matter.

In his attempt "to make it read as I supposed the author intended" (*Ibid.*, 29), Gilbert made a major error on the title page. Because he had not yet been able to read the book of Ether, he did not know that it was the record of the Jaredites, so he placed the statements about those people in two different paragraphs, as if they referred to two different records. This error was printed on the title page of the first edition of the Book of Mormon but was changed in the second edition printing in 1837. Finally, Gilbert requested and received permission to take the manuscript home and punctuated it at night so he could "get along faster in the day time," for, as he explained, "now I have frequently to stop [setting type] and read half a page to find how to punctuate it" ("Memorandum, made by John H. Gilbert, September 8th, 1892." *King's Daughters Library*, Palmyra, New York). Gilbert promised to protect the pages and not leave them at the shop overnight.

Gilbert said he worked from August 1829 until early March 1830 before he had the Book of Mormon all set and printed. It went then to the bindery, and some bound copies became available for sale 26 March 1830.

John H. Gilbert performed an extremely valuable service to the Church in setting the type, punctuating the sentences, and building the paragraphs for the first edition of the Book of Mormon. All his obituaries note that Gilbert was most widely known as the typesetter for the first Book of Mormon.

Gilbert described the actual printing process: "The Bible [Book of Mormon] was printed 16 pages at a time, so that one sheet of paper made two copies of 16 pages each, requiring 2,500 sheets of paper for each form of 16 pages. There were 37 forms of 16 pages each—570 [590] pages in all" ("Memorandum, made by John H. Gilbert Esq. Sept 8th, 1892." *King's Daughters' Free Library*. Palmyra, New York). A further explanation specified that "the 'matter' was 'paged' so that 32 pages could be printed at a time on one of Hoe's 'Smith' six-column hand presses. After the sheets had been run through once and properly dried, they were reversed and printed on the other side. The bookbinder then folded them by hand and severed them with an ivory paper cutter. The result was that the 2,500 large sheets made 5,000 small sheets with 16 pages printed

on each side” (*New York Times*, 26 February 1888, 16). The 37 forms of 16 pages each, having printing on both sides, made up eighteen and a half signatures in each book. Every form required 2,500 sheets of paper, for a total of 47,500 sheets of paper to print the consignment. It is estimated that the printer made 95,000 pulls of the lever during the seven months it took to print the volume.

Joseph had to return to Palmyra twice during the printing, in the late fall of 1829 and early in 1830 when he traveled to Palmyra to prevent a man named Abner Cole, using the pseudonym of Obadiah Dogberry Jun., from violating the copyright laws by publishing parts of the Book of Mormon in his weekly periodical, *The Reflector*. The unfinished work was still at the Grandin press, and *The Reflector* was printed at the same office. This provided ease of access to printed pages of the Book of Mormon.

Cole stated in his December 9, 1829 issue: “As much curiosity has been excited in this section of the country on the subject, and as the work itself will not be ready for delivery for some months to come, at the solicitation of many of our readers we have concluded to commence publishing extracts from it on or before the commencement of the second series” (57).

1830

In the January 2, 1830 issue of *The Reflector*, Cole printed a portion of “The First Book of Nephi. His Reign and Ministry, Chapter 1,” containing the copy found in the first eleven paragraphs of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. And in the January 13 issue he printed the next four paragraphs. This was followed on January 22 by copy from the book of Alma (Alma 43:22-40).

Hyrum Smith, in company with Oliver Cowdery, became aware of Cole’s actions and requested that he desist. Cole, even with the threat of copyright violation, refused to comply. Joseph Smith, Sr. went to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to inform Joseph Smith, Jr. of the situation. The Prophet and his father returned to New York to stop the pilfering. Cole, a lawyer and former justice of the peace, finally acknowledged his vulnerability when Joseph again confronted him with his intrusion on the copyright. Lucy Smith said, “He made us no further trouble” in that regard (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, Lucy Mack Smith. Edited by Preston Nibley. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958, 166). But Cole continued to satirize the Book of Mormon and the Mormons in succeeding issues.

Lucy Smith said that “a party of restless religionists” (*Ibid*, 158) sponsored a boycott of the Book of Mormon during the printing process. They held a mass meeting, organized into a committee, and appointed persons to wait on E. B. Grandin and urged “the necessity of his putting a stop to the printing” (*Ibid*, 167). Grandin became concerned that the boycott may prevent his being paid. The Prophet was again summoned from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to allay Grandin’s fears (*Ibid.*, 158, 167). The boycott eventually proved effective in curtailing sales of the work within the community.

Because of this boycott, Martin Harris was forced to sell his property to pay the debt to Grandin. It is not known for a certainty if Martin Harris ever recovered the cost of printing the book.

1830 March

Finally, on March 26, 1830, the Book of Mormon was finished and offered for sale. To Martin Harris's dismay, initial sales of the book were slow, as the Palmyra residents had boycotted it. Martin was consequently worried about the security of his investment. When Joseph came up from Harmony shortly after the publication, Martin was dejected and declared that he "must have a commandment." After asking Joseph several times for a commandment, Joseph finally received a revelation on Martin's behalf [**D&C 19 - Eternal and Endless Punishment—Atonement**].

Section 19 Eternal and Endless Punishment—the Atonement

On March 26, 1830, E. B. Grandin announced that the Book of Mormon was ready for sale. The first edition consisted of 5,000 copies which were offered for sale at \$1.75 per copy, but this price was soon adjusted to \$1.25 because of lagging sales. The citizens of Palmyra, hoping to limit sales of the book, had placed a boycott on the book and refused to buy any copies. As a result, initial sales of the book were slow. This was of great concern to Martin Harris since he was worried about the security of his \$3,000 investment.

The debt for the printing of the book came due on February 5, 1831. Unable to pay off the contractual agreement with proceeds from the sale of the Book of Mormon, Martin Harris arranged a private sale of 150 1/4 acres of his Palmyra farm on April 7, 1831 at twenty dollars per acre. Following a series of sales of Martin Harris's land, E. B. Grandin finally received his \$3,000 in January or February of 1832. By the time the debt was paid, Martin had sold a little over half of his entire farm.

It is interesting also to note that the building which housed the E. B. Grandin printing establishment was purchased by the Church in December of 1978. The agreement allowed the Church to take occupancy of the space in March 1979. Following two and one-half years of exacting reconstruction, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the "Book of Mormon Historic Publication Site" in services conducted at the Palmyra Ward meetinghouse on the commemorative date of March 26, 1998, 168 years after the publishing of the Book of Mormon.

In late March 1830, Joseph Knight brought Joseph up from Harmony. As they approached the Hyrum Smith farm in Manchester, where the Smith family was now living, they spotted Martin crossing the road with a pile of books in his arms. "The books will not sell, for nobody wants them," Martin reported dejectedly. "I think they will sell well," Joseph replied encouragingly. "I want a commandment," Martin said, presumably wanting a revelation assuring him he was doing the right thing. Joseph was initially reluctant to seek another revelation for Martin since he had not fulfilled the commandments he had been given in prior revelations. Martin insisted three or four times, however, that he wanted a revelation. The next morning after a night at the Smiths, Martin repeated his demand. Later that day Joseph sought and received a revelation on Martin's behalf—section 19 (Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 110-11).

Basically, section 19 is a reprimand of Martin Harris. It is also one of the great doctrinal revelations given in this dispensation. The Lord's exposition of the doctrines of the atonement and eternal and endless punishment are here set forth. The section also deals with repentance and the nature of hell.

The churches of Joseph's day generally taught that the punishments of God last forever and that sinners will suffer endless burning in fire and brimstone. In section 19, the Lord clarifies the doctrine of hell by explaining that the condemned do not suffer forever, though the scriptures sometimes give that impression for the sake of increased effect (see verse 7).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 19 Eternal and Endless Punishment—Atonement

D&C 19:10-12 Eternal punishment is God's punishment, endless punishment is God's punishment.

D&C 19:15-19 I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent. Which suffering caused myself . . . to bleed at every pore.

D&C 19:21-22 Milk and meat.

D&C 19:23 Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.

D&C 19:28 Pray vocally as well as in thy heart, before the world as well as in secret.

1 I am Alpha and Omega, Christ the Lord; yea, even I am he, the beginning and the end, the Redeemer of the world.

verse 1 **"I am Alpha and Omega"** Alpha and Omega are respectively the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Christ is both the beginning (the creation) and the end (the judgment) of our mortal existence, and he is the point of everything in between.

"the Redeemer of the world" The word *redeem* comes from the Latin *re(d)-emo*, which means literally "buy back."

2 I, having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father, concerning me—having done this that I might subdue all things unto myself—

verse 2 **"I, having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father"** We must remember that the Father orchestrated the atoning experience of Jesus in Gethsemane and on the cross (3 Nephi 11:11; D&C 76:107).

"having done this that I might subdue all things unto myself" If there had been no atonement, Jesus would have been bound by the law of justice. He would have been unable to exercise his mercy in blessing mankind. The reason for this is simple. When the Lord exercises his mercy and grace, he provides blessings over and above what a man or woman might merit. This is possible because of his atoning sacrifice. Those who enforce the law of justice allow him *carte blanche* in mercifully

providing whatever blessings he deems appropriate. He thus has “subdue[d] all things unto [him]self.” He has removed all obstacles to his encouraging and enabling all people to return and live with forever. He also is enabled to exercise all of the powers itemized in the following three verses.

3 Retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the world, and the last great day of judgment, which I shall pass upon the inhabitants thereof, judging every man according to his works and the deeds which he hath done.

verse 3 “Retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works” Christ and the truth will ultimately prevail over Satan’s power and influence. But what is the nature of God’s (both Father’s and Son’s) ultimate control over Satan? Generally God, in dealing with his children, is loath to interfere in any way with their agency. He places his offspring in a setting where they may learn the law and then decide to obey or not to obey all on their own. Has he dealt with Satan and his minions in this manner, or has he at times had to place arbitrary restrictions on their agency? Satan and his supporters, who total a third of all the hosts of heaven, will not have the privilege of receiving a mortal body. Satan will be bound during the millennium. Ultimately their “falling and rejection” has been made sure—they will not inherit a kingdom of glory. Rather, they will be cast into outer darkness. Are these restrictions the natural consequence of their recalcitrance—simply the result of failure to grow spiritually in the premortal world? Or has God, by his purposeful and deliberate decision placed limitations upon them? It would seem that we have not been given to know the answer to this question. We do know, however, that God’s judgments are inevitably perfectly fair and just. According to the law of the harvest (D&C 6:33), Satan and his angels have harvested what they have sown. We are taught that ultimately Satan will not be able to come where God is because he has insufficient power (D&C 29:27-29). In an analogous way, no individual will have the power to inherit a higher glory than that which they have earned through their obedience. While each man is given agency free of charge, agency is the right and ability to choose among *available* alternatives. The blessing of having *many* available alternatives is not agency. Rather, it is *freedom*. Freedom must be earned and is not given free of charge. At the final judgment a degree of glory will not be an available alternative to Satan and his friends. See *Agency and Freedom* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 13.

“at the end of the world” The Hebrew word for *world* is ‘*olam*, meaning “age.” The end of the world is therefore the end of an age or an era. The “end of the world” is the end of the telestial mortal world and not the end of the earth. It marks the beginning of the Millennium which follows a period of destruction of the wicked, telestial elements of the earth. At that time there will be “a new heaven and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17-25;

D&C 101:23-24). The earth will receive its terrestrial or paradisiacal glory (see Articles of Faith 1:10).

“last great day of judgment” There is a “last day of judgment” for this telestial world. It will be at Christ’s second coming when the wicked who are alive will be burned and when the righteous, both living and dead, will be raised up. The reference in this verse, however, is probably to the last day of judgment at the end of the millennial age, which is also the end of the earth’s *terrestrial* existence or age. This judgment is also known as the judgment from the great white throne (see Revelation 20:5-7, 11-15)—when all who have not previously been resurrected will be raised up and consigned finally either to some degree of glory or to outer darkness, and when the earth shall also receive its celestial glory.

4 And surely every man must repent or suffer, for I, God, am endless.

verse 4 The doctrine of eternal and endless punishment states that if a man sins (breaks the eternal law—the law of God), he has only two choices. He must either repent or suffer a punishment called “God’s punishment.” The unrepentant will go to a place called hell, which is the spirit world, to suffer the required punishment. Here they will suffer torment of mind and spirit (there will be “weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth”—verse 5) as they are disciplined and taught those things they failed to learn on earth. By this process they are cleansed and readied to be admitted into a degree of glory. When they are sufficiently prepared, figuratively, the prison doors will open, they will be resurrected, and there will be rejoicing among those who welcome them to a better state. Thus the words “endless” and “eternal” do not describe the duration of the punishment in hell. Rather “endless” and “eternal” are other words for God. Therefore the punishment men suffer in the spirit world—in hell—is “endless” and “eternal” in that it is God’s punishment. The Lord’s explanation that such terms as endless, eternal, and everlasting punishment are to be interpreted qualitatively rather than quantitatively is a marked departure from the widespread belief of many Christians that the wicked are doomed to suffer in a hell of infinite duration. Happily, such is not the case.

Repentance is a better alternative. Through the process of the atonement, the Savior acquired the ability to spare man some of the pain associated with overcoming one’s natural tendencies and obeying. It is always painful to overcome our natural self and obey, but much less so when we accept Christ and his atoning sacrifice.

5 Wherefore, I revoke not the judgments which I shall pass, but woes shall go forth, weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, yea, to those who are found on my left hand.

verse 5 “Those who are found on my left hand” are those who die unrepentant and are assigned a state called prison in the spirit world.

6 Nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written endless torment.

verse 6 As we learned in the commentary for verse 4 above, the words “endless” and “eternal” are other names or titles for God. Thus, “eternal punishment” or “endless punishment” or “endless torment” are not terms which mean punishment that goes on forever. Rather, they mean God’s punishment which is defined in the commentary for verse 4. The punishment is limited in its duration—it does have an end.

7 Again, it is written eternal damnation; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name’s glory.

verse 7 Elder Bruce R. McConkie has defined the expression “eternal damnation” as being the state of all those who are not exalted in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. They are damned eternally in that their progress is limited forever. Spirit children are denied them for all eternity (*Mormon Doctrine*, 234).

The phrase “eternal damnation” or eternal condemnation might, however, be interpreted by others as applying only to those who are condemned to outer darkness.

8 Wherefore, I will explain unto you this mystery, for it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles.

verse 8 “I will explain unto you this mystery” For a discussion of the term *mystery*, see the commentary for D&C 6:7. In this verse, the Lord is likely referring to the information in section 19 that allows us to properly understand the phrases “endless punishment,” “eternal punishment,” and “endless torment.”

“for it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles” “Meet” means suitable, fitting, proper. The Lord states that it is important for his apostles to know the mysteries taught in section 19. The only ones with apostolic office, or special witness status, at this point in time include Joseph, Oliver, and the other two Book of Mormon witnesses—David Whitmer and Martin Harris.

9 I speak unto you that are chosen in this thing, even as one, that you may enter into my rest.

verse 9 It would seem that the Lord is not sealing anyone up to eternal life. Rather, he is simply expressing his hope that the special witnesses will one day be exalted. For further discussion on the concept of the rest of the Lord, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 21:10.

10 For, behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore—

11 Eternal punishment is God's punishment.

12 Endless punishment is God's punishment.

verses 10-12 See the commentary for verse 4.

verses 13-41 These verses contain instructions to Martin Harris. In spite of his many experiences with the Book of Mormon, he was still tormented by doubts. A degree of skepticism is probably healthy in that it may motivate one to investigate and learn. However, continued disbelief when there has been ample opportunity to receive the promptings of the Spirit is a sin.

13 Wherefore, I command you to repent, and keep the commandments which you have received by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., in my name;

verse 13 “Wherefore, I command you to repent” The Lord is speaking to Martin Harris. Perhaps the Lord has in mind Martin’s persistent tendency to doubt and his need for repeated reassurance which borders on asking for a sign.

14 And it is by my almighty power that you have received them;

verses 15-18 These verses contain a graphic description of the sufferings Christ endured during the atonement process and which the unrepentant will suffer in hell. We are not to understand that we will be nailed to a cross, but we are assured there will be plenty of mental anguish. It is suggested that the reader review the discussion in “The Atonement Principle” in *The Roles of Suffering in Our Lives*, chapter 2, volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

15 Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

verse 15 “repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth” The rod or stick with which the unrepentant are metaphorically smitten will be the judgment pronounced on them at the day of the final judgment.

“how sore you know not” The suffering in hell will be worse than anything the unrepentant would have suffered here on earth.

16 For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

verse 16 This is not to say that the repentant do not suffer, but their burden of suffering is more tolerable than for the unrepentant.

17 But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

verse 17 “they must suffer even as I” The reader should be reminded that the unrepentant are simply the disobedient. No unrepentant individual will, of course, even begin to duplicate the experience of the Savior in Gethsemane, but they will suffer the pains of self-denial and repentance unmitigated by the Savior’s atonement—just as did the Savior. The Savior has already suffered all the pains of hell to a near infinite degree.

The negative approach of this verse is instructive and serves to remind us that while the Jesus, on the one hand, is a merciful Savior who has assumed the moral burden of every soul, on the other hand he is a just but demanding Judge whose wrath will be poured out without measure upon those who reject his sacrifice and refuse to repent.

18 Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

verse 18 This verse and Mosiah 3:7 are the only verses in the four standard works that definitely declare that Christ did bleed from every pore. Luke 22:44 is somewhat ambiguous as it declares, “And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood.”

Elder James E. Talmage wrote:

Christ’s agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. . . . He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so; for his human organism would have succumbed” (*Jesus the Christ*, 613).

“would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” *Would* here means “I wish” or “I desire.” The suffering or the anticipation of the suffering was so overwhelming that it caused even the Savior to request of the Father that he might not have to suffer it further: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

19 Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

verse 19 The Savior’s “preparations unto the children of men” consist of his part in the implementation of the plan of salvation, which required his infinite suffering and atoning sacrifice.

20 Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit.

verse 20 “yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit” When Martin Harris lost the 116 pages of manuscript, he experienced the loss of the Spirit and alienation from God which was but a tiny foretaste of what he would experience were he to fail to completely repent.

21 And I command you that you preach naught but repentance, and show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me.

verse 21 “I command you that you preach naught but repentance” “Repentance” here is used to indicate the whole process of entering the gospel covenant—the baptismal covenant.

“show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me” The Lord cautions that the world around Joseph and Martin, steeped in traditions about hell as an endless furnace, was not yet ready to be taught such things as the temporary nature of “endless punishment.” Martin should start with the more basic principles such as “naught but repentance.”

22 For they cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish.

verse 22 We may divide gospel teachings, though somewhat arbitrarily, into two categories, the milk and the meat. The milk consists of those fundamentals of the gospel doctrines, the “nuts and bolts” or the “whats” of the doctrine. The meat, on the other hand, consists of the “whys”—the deeper and more complex teachings. The Lord warns that “spiritual indigestion” might result when a person is taught too much too soon (Matthew 7:6). To “perish,” you will recall, does not mean to cease to exist. Rather it means to perish spiritually—to be cut off from the presence of God and die a spiritual death.

23 Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.

verse 23 To have “peace” in the Lord is to achieve a calm assurance that all will be well in the eternity that follows this earth life. Here we learn that to have that peace we must listen humbly to the teachings of the Savior and to “walk in the meekness of [his] Spirit—to obey his commandments (see also D&C 59:23.)

24 I am Jesus Christ; I came by the will of the Father, and I do his will.

25 And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife; nor seek thy neighbor's life.

verse 25 It is unclear whether this commandment was meant in its original context specifically for Martin in his own personal situation, or for the whole Church generally, or both.

26 And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God—

verse 26 Martin Harris is commanded to impart freely of his resources for the printing of the Book of Mormon.

A good scriptural example of coveting one's own property is found in the story of Ananias and Sapphira who covenanted to sacrifice everything for the kingdom if necessary, but then, coveting their own property, withheld part of their consecration from the Lord and lied to Peter to hide that fact (see Acts 5:1-11).

27 Which is my word to the Gentile, that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant, that they may believe the gospel, and look not for a Messiah to come who has already come.

verse 27 The Book of Mormon and the gospel, in this dispensation, will go first to the Gentiles—the citizens of the great Gentile nation, the United States of America. We are currently living through a period of time known as the “times of the Gentiles” (see D&C 45:28) which began at the time of the restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith. Then it will go to the Jews. The descendants of Lehi are referred to as “Jews” in that Lehi was a citizen of the land of Judah. Therefore politically he was a Jew even though he was a blood descendant of the tribe of Joseph through Manasseh.

“look not for a Messiah to come who has already come” This phrase refers to the Jews who do not, as yet, acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, and they still await a Messiah who has not yet come to earth.

28 And again, I command thee that thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private.

verse 28 We are commanded to pray both privately and publicly. The spirit of prayer must be in our hearts unceasingly.

verses 29-32 In the four following verses, the Lord again places limits on what Martin Harris can say as he preaches the gospel (see also the commentary for D&C 5:24-26).

29 And thou shalt declare glad tidings, yea, publish it upon the mountains, and upon every high place, and among every people that thou shalt be permitted to see.

verse 29 The “glad tidings” are the good news that the gospel has been restored and that the kingdom of God is on the earth again. “Publish” here is used in the archaic sense of “make available” by means of any medium, not just in print.

30 And thou shalt do it with all humility, trusting in me, reviling not against revilers.

verse 30 “reviling not against revilers” The Lord commands Martin and all of us not to abuse or attack those anti-Mormons who attack the Church.

31 And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost.

verse 31 “of tenets thou shalt not talk” A *tenet* is a point of doctrine or dogma. It would seem that the Lord is counseling not to become involved in arguments over points of doctrine—rather bear testimony and preach repentance.

32 Behold, this is a great and the last commandment which I shall give unto you concerning this matter; for this shall suffice for thy daily walk, even unto the end of thy life.

verse 32 “this is a great and the last commandment which I shall give unto you” Martin Harris had demanded a commandment, or revelation, and here he received it—the last revelation that will be addressed directly and exclusively to him in the Doctrine and Covenants. In General the Lord’s instruction to Martin, in section 19, is to restrict himself for the rest of his life to declaring the basic message of the restoration and to leave the fine points of the doctrine alone. As a special witness to the Book of Mormon, Martin’s duty to bear apostolic witness of the restoration was even greater than that of some others.

33 And misery thou shalt receive if thou wilt slight these counsels, yea, even the destruction of thyself and property.

verse 33 The Lord warns Martin that if he does not do as he is commanded, he will not only suffer spiritual destruction, but lose all of his property.

34 Impart a portion of thy property, yea, even part of thy lands, and all save the support of thy family.

35 Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage.

verses 34-35 The Lord further counsels Martin to mortgage a portion of his property in order to pay the three thousand dollar debt to the printer. This was actually a great sacrifice to ask of him, considering it was not Martin's understanding at the beginning of the project that the publishing costs would come out of his pocket. Originally, payment of the printing costs was supposed to come from the proceeds of book sales, and Martin's property merely guaranteed payment should the book not sell as expected. Eventually, the book did sell well, but not in time to save Martin's farm. It should be noted that Martin later claimed he got all his money back and more (see Gunnell, "Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor," 40). It is a tribute to Martin that he did as the Lord commanded him and settled the entire debt out of his own pocket.

**36 Leave thy house and home, except when thou shalt desire to see thy family;
37 And speak freely to all; yea, preach, exhort, declare the truth, even with a loud voice, with a sound of rejoicing, crying—Hosanna, hosanna, blessed be the name of the Lord God!**

verses 36-37 Martin is called on a mission to preach the gospel.

verse 37 "**Hosanna, hosanna**" The word "Hosanna" is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that literally means "save now." Its meaning might be extended to something like "grant us salvation." It is often associated with the arrival of the Lord at his temple, whether Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to visit the temple there, or the arrival of the divine presence at a temple dedication in the modern Church. We might also shout "Hosannah" whenever the word, Spirit, or presence of God is manifested among us.

"blessed be the name of the Lord God" The name of the Lord God is Jesus Christ (see also 3 Nephi 11:17). This name is blessed because this is the name by which all things are done for our salvation and exaltation. It is the power of Jesus's name that makes all prayers, ordinances, and performances valid, and anything that is to last beyond this terrestrial world must be done, asked, or sealed in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

38 Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing—yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of earth and corruptibleness to the extent thereof.

verse 38 "Corruptibleness" is a colorful word indeed for what we might be more inclined to day to call corruptness—that quality that characterizes the individual whose heart is set on things of the world.

39 Behold, canst thou read this without rejoicing and lifting up thy heart for gladness?

verse 39 In section 19 the Lord has counseled Martin to repent (verse 15), make sacrifices for the kingdom (verses 34-35), pray (verses 28, 38), humble himself and be wise and meek (verse 41), and follow counsel (verse 33). These things, if followed, will bring him joy and rejoicing.

40 Or canst thou run about longer as a blind guide?

verse 40 If the Lord's counsel in this section is not followed, on the other hand, Martin will be a "blind guide," who is unable to find his own spiritual direction and unable to lead others correctly in spiritual things.

41 Or canst thou be humble and meek, and conduct thyself wisely before me? Yea, come unto me thy Savior. Amen.

Character Vignette

Martin Harris

Martin Harris was a farmer and rancher of great ability. For two decades prior to 1829, he had managed over 240 acres of productive land, together with associated interests. He had obvious ability in raising animals, particularly sheep, and he won prizes for his textile manufacturing. He produced linen, cotton and woolen ticking, blankets, and worsted and flannel fabrics. He was involved in a few different local civic activities and was mustered out for the War of 1812 when the British threatened to attack his region.

By 1829 it was well known in Palmyra that Martin Harris believed in Joseph Smith and the gold plates. Martin was twenty-three years older than the Prophet. He was therefore 46 years old when he became a witness of the Book of Mormon while the other two witnesses were half his age. He had already achieved considerable prestige in his community before accepting Mormonism. He was generally considered an industrious, hard-working farmer who was shrewd in his business calculations and frugal in his habits. He was not particularly noted for personal brilliance or leadership qualities.

He was skeptical by nature but when convinced, he was unshakable in his convictions. He was not surpassed in doubt by Thomas nor in absolute assurance by any apostle. His examination of Mormonism proceeded with methodical care. This is evidenced by his first talking to several members of the Smith family about the Book of Mormon plates to see if their stories coincided and his taking a copy of the characters from the plates to Charles Anthon of Columbia College. Joseph Smith's claims were taken seriously by this mature man conditioned by life to use his analytical powers in all circumstances, but he had difficulty suppressing his doubts.

His doubts were even evident on that day in late June of 1829 in Fayette where he saw the angel and the plates. Earlier in the day, upon failure of repeated prayers of

Joseph Smith and the witnesses, Martin acknowledged that his attitude was probably the cause of their failure to obtain the promised revelation, and he withdrew. His revelation came somewhat afterward in company with Joseph Smith who remembered Martin's cry of conviction: "'Tis enough; mine eyes have beheld!" (Joseph Smith, "History of Joseph Smith," *Times and Seasons*, 3 [1842], 898). The ecstasy of that experience was indelibly stamped upon the mind of the former doubter. Lucy Mack Smith especially remembered the return of Martin Harris to the Whitmer home immediately after the vision: "He seemed almost overcome with joy, and testified boldly to what he had both seen and heard" (*Biographical Sketches*, 139). The force of his conviction never diminished in nearly a half-century's ideological transitions and personal trials.

His conversion to the claims of Joseph Smith caused former friends to ridicule him and produced intense domestic conflict that resulted in a separation from his wife. A survivor of this period later wrote that no early resident of Palmyra "received so many rebuffs" and endured "so many unfeeling comments" as did Martin Harris (*Palmyra Courier*, May 24, 1872). His association with Mormonism was generally deplored by his fellow townsmen. Many felt that it was truly phenomenal that such a dignified man as Martin Harris was involved in it. Yet none of his townsmen exceeded his established reputation as a responsible and honest individual. He lacked the polish of intellectual training, but he was admired for the solidity of his character by many educated men.

Pomeroy Tucker, who later gained considerable stature in western New York as a politician and editor for forty years, summarized the enigma that was Martin Harris: "How to reconcile the act of Harris in signing his name to such a statement [his testimony of the Book of Mormon], in view of the character of honesty which had always been conceded to him, could never be easily explained" (*Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, [New York, 1867], 71).

Martin's father, Nathan Harris, was admired as a rugged hunter and fisherman who loved the sociability of the frontier gatherings. The elder Harris was universally honored by his neighbors for his kindness of heart and willingness to assist those in need.

Martin's exodus from Palmyra in 1831 occasioned a touching tribute written by E. B. Grandin, editor of the *Wayne Sentinel* during the years 1827-32. Interestingly Grandin perhaps knew Martin more intimately than any other non-Mormon. Grandin wrote: "Mr. Harris was among the early settlers of this town, and has ever borne the character of an honorable and upright man, and an obliging and benevolent neighbor. He had secured to himself by honest industry a respectable fortune—and he has left a large circle of acquaintances and friends to pity his delusion" (*Wayne Sentinel*, May 27, 1831).

Although Martin Harris was honored by appointment to the first high council of the Church, his main contribution was in the missionary service of formal journeys and

private conversations. He and his brother Emer baptized a hundred converts in a few weeks (*The Evening and the Morning Star*, 1 [February, 1833]: 70), and Martin was imprisoned for his forthrightness in proclaiming the restored gospel. But when the trials of Job descended upon the Latter-day Saints community of Kirtland, and Martin was affected. The first steps toward plural marriage rankled him, and unlike Job he felt that the loss of property in the failure of the church bank was inconsistent with divine favor. Consequently, as he explained in 1855, he “lost confidence in Joseph Smith” and “his mind became darkened” (Letter of Thomas Colburn to Erastus Snow, May 2, 1855, Saint Louis cit. *St. Louis Luminary*, May 5, 1855).

He and other prominent dissenters in the Church were formally excommunicated in December 1837. These men, who shared Martin Harris’s skepticism on church policy, admired the sweep of Mormon doctrine and were talking of forming a reorganized church that would retain the great doctrinal concepts but jettison what to them was irrational. In a private meeting in early 1838, several former leaders insisted that the Book of Mormon was “nonsense.” “Martin Harris then bore testimony of its truth and said all would be damned that rejected it” (Letter of George A. Smith to Josiah Fleming, March 30, 1838, Kirtland, Ohio).

Although the Mormons moved from Kirtland, following his excommunication, Martin remained at Kirtland for the next thirty years in the condition of a fossil embedded in an earlier layer of sediment. His constant and vocal testimony to scores of visitors is all the more remarkable in the light of the psychology of the man in this period. No other Book of Mormon witness remained in Kirtland, and he had practically lost touch with them after 1840. Not only had the Latter-day Saints deserted him (according to his point of view) by moving away, but his second wife, Carolyn Young, immigrated to Utah in 1856 with their children. As the years passed in Kirtland, Martin was increasingly a solitary figure in non-Mormon society, which only ridiculed him for his persistence in declaring that he had seen the angel and the plates. He also felt strong resentment against church leaders, in large part stemming from the blow to his ego in never being given a major office in the Church. If such thinking is obviously immature, it was nevertheless real to the man who had sacrificed domestic peace, fortune, and reputation to bring about the printing of the Book of Mormon and the founding of the Church. Though such feelings were clearly held, in the face of them Martin insisted that the Mormon cause was founded on objective truth as he had experienced it in his vision of 1829.

In this Kirtland period of his life he changed his religious position eight times, including a rebaptism into the Church by a Nauvoo missionary in 1842. Every affiliation of Martin Harris was with some Mormon group, except when he accepted some Shaker beliefs, a position not basically contrary to his Book of Mormon testimony because the foundation of that movement was acceptance of personal revelation from heavenly

beings. The only constancy of this period is his witness of the Nephite record and his unshakable testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

Throughout the Ohio residence, Martin Harris was a forceful missionary for the Book of Mormon. Some two years after Joseph Smith's death the unstable Kirtland branch was largely converted to the pretensions of James J. Strang. Apparently at first a disciple of Strang's, Martin embarked for England with the Strangite leader Lester Brooks. But private correspondence from Brooks shows that Martin was not committed to the Strangite cause, and he was hastened back to the States. George Mantle later recalled attending a Strangite conference in which Martin Harris unsuccessfully demanded the right to speak and was publicly repudiated by the presiding officer, Cyrus H. Wheelock. Mantle recorded in a letter: "When we came out of the meeting Martin Harris was beset with a crowd in the street, expecting that he would furnish them with material to war against Mormonism; but when he was asked if Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, he answered yes; and when asked if the Book of Mormon was true, this was his answer: 'Do you know that is the sun shining on us? Because as sure as you know that, I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, and that he translated that book by the power of God'" (Letter of George Mantle to Marietta Walker, December 26, 1888, Saint Catherine, Mo., cit. *Autumn Leaves* 2 [1889]: 141).

In 1870, at age 87, he moved to Utah and lived with his eldest son by his second wife Carolyn, Martin Harris, Jr. in Smithfield, Utah, and then Clarkston, Cache County. Listened to by thousands in two Tabernacle speeches in Salt Lake City, and in talks in wards and in many private conversations, the aged Harris never tired of repeating his story. President Brigham Young also spent some time with him discussing his experiences with the Book of Mormon.

He died July 10, 1875 at the age of 92. Perhaps Martin Harris's words in a private letter best summarize his mission as a modern witness: "No man ever heard me in any way deny the truth of the Book of Mormon, the administration of the angel that showed me the plates, nor the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints under the administration of Joseph Smith, Jun., the prophet whom the Lord raised up for that purpose in these the latter days, that he may show forth his power and glory" (Letter of Martin Harris, Sr., to Hanna B. Emerson, Jan., 1871, Smithfield, Utah Territory, cit. *Saints' Herald* 28 [1881]: 43).

Brief Historical Setting

1830 April

Now that the Book of Mormon, which had a fundamental and vital role in the restored gospel, was published, the time was right for organization of the Church. Some time between April first and early June 1830, Joseph received a revelation which has functioned as the constitution of our Church [**D&C 20 - Constitution of the Church**].

Section 20 Constitution of the Church

Robert J. Woodford has written a fascinating account of the origin of section 20 (“The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ and the Book of Mormon” in *Sperry Symposium Classics, The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Craig K. Manscill, 103-16). This introduction to section 20 contains much of the material in Brother Woodford’s article—some of it quoted and some merely summarized.

In 1959 Brenda Daily and her brother Bill attended Ravenna High School in Ravenna, Ohio. They had recently moved there with their family from the Canal Zone, where their father, William D. Daily, served in the military. While in the Canal Zone, these two young people had learned conversational Spanish. They were anxious to study the language at their new school. Unfortunately, the school was not large enough for a regular Spanish class. However, the principal, Wayne E. Watters, had experience teaching Spanish. He was willing to teach a class before school if Brenda and Bill could also get some other students to attend. They found several willing classmates, and soon they had an enthusiastic class functioning.

During the year, Mr. Watters found out that Bill and Brenda were Latter-day Saints. Once he knew that, he had several discussions with them about the Church. On one occasion he mentioned that his wife’s father had a set of early LDS documents in his possession. He told them that the family had preserved these documents through four generations. His wife’s maiden name is Virginia Ryder, and she is a great-great-granddaughter of Symonds Ryder. He was an 1831 convert to the Church from Hiram, Ohio (see the commentary for D&C 52:37). The Lord called Symonds Ryder on a mission. Unfortunately, Joseph Smith’s scribe who wrote the letter notifying him of the call misspelled his name. Symonds Ryder complained about the Spirit that called him on a mission. If it could not spell his name correctly, then perhaps it erred in calling him on a mission. And so he refused to go. He left the Church in 1831 and became a vicious enemy of the Church, even playing a leading role in the cruel mobbing of Joseph and Sydney Rigdon in Hiram Ohio in the spring of 1832.

Ironically and almost comically, his name is still not spelled correctly in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and other church publications. His tombstone and his signature give the spelling as *Symonds Ryder*, not Symonds Rider or Simonds Ryder.

Before proceeding further in this account, please review D&C 18:1 and its commentary. This commentary refers to a document called “Articles of the Church of Christ” that Oliver Cowdery was assigned by Joseph to write in 1829 in preparation for the organization of the Church. This article of Oliver Cowdery’s was one of the items contained in the set of documents in the possession of the family of Virginia Ryder Watters.

How Symonds Ryder obtained this set of documents is an interesting story. In 1868, just two years before he died, Symonds Ryder told an acquaintance that when Joseph Smith and the other church authorities visited Zion (Independence, Missouri) in the summer of 1831, they “left their papers behind,” and they came into the possession of some of the new converts to the Church. And they eventually came into the possession of Symonds Ryder. While not specifically identifying himself as one of those “new converts,” Symonds described how the “new converts [took] an opportunity to become acquainted with the internal arrangement of their church” (Symonds Ryder to A. S. Hayden, February 1, 1868, published in A. S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio* [Cincinnati: Chase & Hall Publishers, 1876], 221). In addition to Oliver Cowdery’s 1829 document, Symonds Ryder had in his possession manuscript copies of the following revelations: sections 20, 35, 36, 42, 52, and 56. This listing was noted by then LDS Church archivist Earl Olson in his May 27, 1960 statement, in the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as Church Archives), that accompanied the documents to Salt Lake City. It seems that Ryder was particularly concerned about the recent revelation of the law of consecration (D&C 42:30-39) and that his farm in Hiram might be taken from him for church use. It is interesting to note that Ryder ended up with manuscript copies of Cowdery’s 1829 article, the 1830 “Articles and Covenants” (section 20), and the law of the Church (section 42). These documents were passed down in the Ryder family and ended up in the possession of Virginia Ryder Watters’ father who was still alive in 1959, the year Brenda Daily and her brother Bill started attended Ravenna High School in Ravenna, Ohio.

Later in the year 1959, during a serious illness, Wayne and Virginia Watters feared her father would soon die. They thought that he had no more use for the document, and so they gave it to Brenda. They felt it would be of greater value to a member of the Church than it was to them. Brenda took it to her father, and he immediately realized that it was a record of some worth. He conveyed it to the mission president in Ohio, who sent it to church headquarters with the next missionary returning to Utah. The Church historian placed it in the Archives of the Church, where researchers can have access to it today. It is interesting to note, parenthetically, that Virginia Ryder Watters’ father recovered and was upset that they had given the documents away. The Church Archives did supply him with a set of photocopies.

The 1829 article is in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery and is three pages in length. It begins, “A commandment from God unto Oliver how he should build up his Church & the manner thereof.” It ends, “Written in the year of our Lord & Saviour 1829—A true copy of the Articles of the Church of Christ &c.” [“&c” is an archaic abbreviation for “etc.”]. The body of the document is composed of scriptures from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants interspersed with inspired commentary by Oliver Cowdery. Through these, Oliver Cowdery established several

important doctrinal truths. First, because the world is becoming a more wicked place, there is a great need to repent and be baptized. He then explained the procedures for proper baptism. Second, he established that men are to be ordained to the priesthood, and he demonstrated the proper method of performing these ordinations. Those who are so ordained are to pray for the Church and teach the members the truths of the gospel. Third, he explained the doctrine concerning the sacrament. The members are to meet together often to partake of it. He related from the scriptures the form of the ordinance, including the prayers and should be said. He also included the warning from 3 Nephi about partaking of the sacrament unworthily. Fourth, he taught that the church members should meet together often to tell each other of their progress toward eternal life, and he explained a standard of moral conduct which every member should live. He also explained that those who will not repent must be cast out of the Church. Finally he issued a call for all people to come to Christ and take Christ's name upon them. If they will walk uprightly before the Lord, then his grace is sufficient for them.

There is a close connection between this 1829 manuscript of Oliver Cowdery and section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The title of section 20 in the surviving manuscripts and early published copies is "The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ." The title of section 20 as it was published in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, in the June 1832 issue, is the same, and it is similar to the title of Oliver Cowdery's early manuscript, "The Articles of the Church of Christ." Section 20 also contains some of the Book of Mormon scriptures quoted by Oliver Cowdery in his manuscript. Oliver Cowdery's manuscript, then, is an early forerunner to the more comprehensive section 20. The following is an attempt to reconstruct the events leading to the composition of both Oliver's 1829 article and our present section 20.

Oliver Cowdery had wanted to know what material to put into the "Articles of the Church" and approached the Prophet for help. Joseph Smith prayed about the matter and received the revelation known as section 20. In verse 1 of section 18 we learned that the Lord gave this revelation (section 20) because of "the thing" that Oliver Cowdery desired to know. Oliver Cowdery wanted to know what to write in his 1829 article. The Lord told Oliver Cowdery he had manifested to him many times that the things he had written were true (see D&C 18:2). Oliver Cowdery was the principal scribe for the Book of Mormon as the Prophet dictated it. The Lord told Oliver Cowdery to rely on the things he had written (the text of the Book of Mormon) that he already knew were true (see D&C 18:3). In summary, he was told to get the information he needed for the 1829 "Articles" of the Church from the Book of Mormon. The Lord said he placed "all things . . . concerning the foundation of [his] church" in the Book of Mormon (D&C 18:4). The Lord had already inspired prophets to put in the Book of Mormon the basic principles Oliver Cowdery needed for the earliest procedural statement or handbook of the Church of Christ. He told Oliver further to "build up my church, upon the foundation of my gospel" (D&C 18:5). If he did, the gates of hell could

not prevail against him. Oliver Cowdery included the phrase “build up my church” in the introduction of his 1829 article. Oliver Cowdery then composed his three-part version of the articles of the Church from Book of Mormon scriptures. This is the same document that Symonds Ryder acquired.

Oliver Cowdery must have submitted his manuscript to Joseph Smith, and doubtless Joseph’s inspired thinking in producing section 20 was influenced by Oliver’s manuscript. Joseph spoke as if section 20 had been given in advance of the organization of the Church when he wrote: “We obtained of him [Jesus Christ] the following, by the spirit of prophecy and revelation; which not only gave us much information but also pointed out to us the precise day upon which . . . we should proceed to organize his Church once more here upon the earth” (*HC*, 1:64-70). However, some have speculated that section 20 was probably not finalized in its present form until after April 6, 1830. They offer as evidence the fact that verse 1 refers to the organization of the Church in the past tense: “it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country . . .” Also, in the Book of Commandments, this section was dated June 1830. Since it was presented to the conference held on June 9, 1830, for approval, it must have been written sometime between April 1 and June 9 (Woodford, *The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 286).

We may thus summarize the origins of section 20 by saying that it is a composite that evolved over a period of time. The main portions were written in April 1830, and Joseph drew upon the materials written by Oliver Cowdery in 1829. Some finalizing and editing were done in preparation for the June 1830 conference. Verses 65 through 67 were later added and included in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. One interesting point regarding the form of this section is that it differs from the previous nineteen sections. In section 20 the Lord is not speaking as the first person. Verse 16 shows that the speaker is “we, the elders of the Church.” The first thirty-six verses take the form of a testimony of the two elders, Joseph and Oliver. From verse 37 to the end, straightforward directions are given, but never in the voice of the Lord.

In all editions of the Doctrine and Covenants published between 1835 and 1869, section 20 was printed just after the preface as some indication of its importance (*Ibid.*, 299).

The purpose of section 20 seems to have been to identify and introduce the new organization—the restored Church—to the Christian world as a respectable Christian church holding to established gospel principles. “[Section 20] presented the Church as no cult or sect with eccentric beliefs or bizarre forms of worship, but as a church among churches, stable, disciplined, and orthodox” (Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 158).

Section 20 resembles the statements or confessions of faith of Christian denominations, both in its language and in the topics covered: the fall, the nature of

man, the atonement, resurrection, redemption, justification, and sanctification. Verses 65 through 67 were obviously added some time later as Joseph's knowledge regarding priesthood organization grew. After section 20 was accepted by the June 9 conference, the missionaries often carried personal copies for teaching purposes. While section 20 made public announcement of the new Church as a conventional Christian church, to the members themselves it was obviously much more than simply another church among churches.

Section 20, which is made up largely of revelatory material received before the Church was organized and was known to the early Church as the "Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ." It was the first summary statement of the history, doctrines, policies, and procedures of the Church. At the first conference of the Church held in Fayette, New York, on June 9, 1830, section 20 was read to the members and unanimously sustained as the Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ, thus making it the first revelation of this dispensation to be formally presented to and sustained by the members. The importance attached to section 20 by early members of the Church is obvious from the many historical accounts of its use. Several other revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants refer to section 20, including 28:12, 14; 33:14; 42:13; 51:4; 68:24; and 107:12, 63. The Lord in each of these passages, requested the saints to remember the articles and covenants and to obey the principles revealed there. The importance of section 20 has not diminished over the years. According to statistics kept personally by Robert J. Woodford, the General Authorities since 1974 cite only sections 84, 88, and 121 from the Doctrine and Covenants more often than they cite section 20.

Certainly, this section served as the first priesthood manual or handbook for the Church, and it was read verbatim to the members at many early Church conferences. Section 20, along with sections 21-22, are foundational documents for the organization of the restored Church.

Section 20 contains some passages of scripture quoted directly from the Book of Mormon. Several other passages are paraphrased or summarized. The sacrament prayers are probably the most widely known of these scriptures. Moroni recorded them in Moroni chapters 4 and 5, and Joseph Smith published them as verses 77 and 79 of section 20. Verse 73 of section 20 contains the baptismal prayer from 3 Nephi 11:25. Joseph included the instruction in Moroni 6:5-6 to partake of the sacrament frequently as verse 75 in section 20. Moroni taught, in Moroni 3:4, how men are to be ordained to the priesthood. Joseph included these same instructions in verse 60. He also placed in verse 37 the prerequisites for baptism that are given in Moroni 6:2-4. The elders are to conduct church meetings as the Holy Ghost directs them. This teaching comes from Moroni 6:7, and Joseph included this material in verses 80-83. In D&C 20:10, the Lord uses the testimony of the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses to declare to mankind that the Book of Mormon is true. Verse 11 of section 20 adds two additional

truths concerning the Book of Mormon. First, the Book of Mormon proves to the people of the world that the Bible is true (Moroni 7:8-9). Second, we learn in D&C 20:11 that the Book of Mormon establishes the actuality of prophets in our own day. It does this by the fact that the irrefutable truth of the Book of Mormon establishes Joseph Smith as a latter-day prophet. Section 20 integrates the teachings of the Book of Mormon into the Church of this dispensation. It emphasizes the eternal covenants and commitments required by the Lord of the Nephites and also of us. It sets the same standard of conduct for us that the Savior set during his ministry to the Book of Mormon people.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 20 Constitution of the Church—The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ.

D&C 20:22 He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.

D&C 20:37 Requirements for membership in Church—All those who humble themselves and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits.

D&C 20:73 Baptismal prayer.

D&C 20:77, 79 Sacramental prayers.

1 The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April—

verse 1 “the Church of Christ” The name of the Church is given: “the Church of Christ.” This name was used from 1830 to 1834. In 1834, the name “Church of the Latter-day Saints” was given (*HC*, 2:63). Finally, in 1838 the Church was given its present name, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (D&C 115:4).

“being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh” Much has been made over this wording. Specifically it has been repeatedly suggested that the Savior was born on April 6 in the year 1 BC. The question remains as to whether or not such a specific implication was intended by the Lord or by the Prophet Joseph.

On April 6, 1833, the third anniversary of the Church’s organization, Joseph Smith himself wrote, “The day was spent in a very agreeable manner, in giving and receiving knowledge which appertained to this last kingdom—it being just 1800 years since the Savior laid down his life that men might have everlasting life, and only three years since the Church had come out of the wilderness, preparatory for the last dispensation” (*HC*, 1:337). Again, we wonder if Joseph Smith felt that he was revealing divine knowledge as to the exact birth year of the Savior.

At least two presidents of the Church, Harold B. Lee and Spencer W. Kimball, have affirmed that April 6 is the actual birthday of the Savior as well as the anniversary of the organization of the Church (see Lee, in the *Ensign*, July 1973, 2; Kimball, in the *Ensign*, May 1980, 54; see also Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 16-17).

On the other hand, some writers, including some modern apostles and prophets, have urged caution in interpreting this verse as an exact date. Among these are Hyrum M. Smith, J. Reuben Clark Jr., and Bruce R. McConkie (see Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 138; Clark, *Our Lord of the Gospels*, vi-vii; McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:349-50). Elder McConkie's summary is helpful: "We do not believe it is possible with the present state of our knowledge—including that which is known both in and out of the Church—to state with finality when the natal day of the Lord Jesus actually occurred" (*Mortal Messiah*, 1:349-50, n. 2).

It seems highly likely that the Savior's birth was in 4 or 5 BC (See the commentary for 3 Nephi 1:1 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*).

"it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country" To what law does this statement refer? By 1830, the United States Constitution had been ratified and its first amendment was in force, protecting the freedom of religion. The specific laws under which the Church was incorporated, however, seem to have been the laws of New York State. In 1784 the state of New York enacted a procedure for incorporating religious societies. This statute was updated in 1813 and was in effect on April 6, 1830.

Although the law did not require a group of worshipers to incorporate themselves in order to exist as a church, certain legal privileges, such as the right to acquire and hold property and perform marriages would flow from the act of incorporation. In summary, the statute required a church or congregation to elect from three to nine trustees to take charge of church property and transact business affairs. Two elders of the congregation were to be selected to preside over the election. Fifteen days' notice, given for two successive Sabbaths, was required. A certificate establishing a name for the church and evidencing completion of the organizational events was to be recorded in the county or counties where the church was located (see *Laws of the State of New York*, 214). Interestingly, all of these requirements were met by the Church, but the certificate for the incorporation of the Church in April 6, 1830, has never been located (John K. Carmack, "Fayette: The Place the Church was Organized" in *Sperry Symposium Classics, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 48-55). Six people became "trustees" on that day in Fayette, and Joseph and Oliver were the two presiding elders at the incorporation proceeding.

2 Which commandments were given to Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church;

verse 2 “Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ” In May of 1829 Joseph and Oliver had received both the Melchizedek Priesthood and the apostolic keys under the hands of Peter, James, and John (see D&C 27:12).

“Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called . . . to be the first elder of this church” In order to avoid organizational confusion, it was important that Joseph be designated the “first elder” or head of the Church. The designation “first elder” was a Church administrative designation and does not refer to a special office in the priesthood. Oliver Cowdery was designated the “second elder.” Joseph and Oliver were already apostles and thereby also elders (see verse 38). In exercising their authority as apostles and elders, Joseph was to have administrative precedence over Oliver. Their designation as first and second elders had nothing to do with the sequence of their ordination, but rather with their authority. In the infancy of the Church there was no First Presidency, only a first and second elder who held the keys of the apostleship. Joseph would later write: “I will inform you that it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instructions for those in authority, higher than themselves” (*HC*, 1:338).

3 And to Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the second elder of this church, and ordained under his hand;

4 And this according to the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be all glory, both now and forever. Amen.

5 After it was truly manifested unto this first elder that he had received a remission of his sins, he was entangled again in the vanities of the world;

verse 5 What time period is being referred to here when Joseph “was entangled again in the vanities of the world”? At the time of the first vision, Joseph received a remission of his sins. Between the time of the first vision and the time of Moroni’s first visit on September 21, 1823, by Joseph’s own description his conduct did not live to the Lord’s expectations. Joseph wrote:

During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty-three—having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends, and to have treated me kindly, and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me—I was left to all kinds of temptations; and mingling with all kinds of society. I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial

company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. But this will not seem very strange to any one who recollects my youth, and is acquainted with my native cheery temperament (*HC*, 1:9-10).

6 But after repenting, and humbling himself sincerely, through faith, God ministered unto him by an holy angel, whose countenance was as lightning, and whose garments were pure and white above all other whiteness;

verse 6 The “holy angel” was, of course, Moroni.

7 And gave unto him commandments which inspired him;

verse 7 For a detailed account of the commandments given to Joseph by Moroni, see JS-H 1:33-42.

verses 8-16 The importance of the Book of Mormon is emphasized.

8 And gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon;

verse 8 The “means which were before prepared” were the Urim and Thummim.

9 Which contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also;

verse 9 “Which contains . . . the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” For a discussion of the concept of the fulness of the gospel, see the commentary for D&C 1:23. The Book of Mormon contains all of the gospel principles sufficient to lead to the exaltation of any individual who adheres to those principles.

“to the Gentiles” In this dispensation, which is the “times of the Gentiles” (from the time of the restoration to the Lord’s second coming), the Book of Mormon and the gospel are to go to the Gentiles first and then to the Jews. This order of things fulfills the ancient declaration that “the last [the Gentiles] shall be first, and the first [the Jews] shall be last” (1 Nephi 13:42; Luke 13:30).

10 Which was given by inspiration, and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and is declared unto the world by them—

verse 10 “and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels” The “others” here are the three witnesses and the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon.

11 Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old;

verse 11 “Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true” It is the Lord’s intent that the Book of Mormon be used to prove that the Bible is true. Indeed, the Book of Mormon provides the keys by which the Bible should be interpreted. For example, some biblical scholars deny that Jesus himself could have composed or taught the Sermon on the Mount (see Funk, *Five Gospels*). The Book of Mormon shows that Jesus did teach the Sermon on the Mount—that it was his sermon (3 Nephi 12-14). Also, many Bible scholars theorize that much of the book of Isaiah was not written by Isaiah but by other writers after the Babylonian conquest in 586 BC. The Book of Mormon shows this theory to be false. Lehi left the Old World with the brass plates before the fall of Jerusalem. Because the brass plates at the time already contained a nearly complete copy of Isaiah—and if the Book of Mormon is true—then Isaiah cannot have been written after 587 BC.

The way in which the Book of Mormon “proves” the Bible true is not scientifically but by the logic of the Spirit. The Book of Mormon testifies of the Bible. If a person learns by the Spirit’s witness that the Book of Mormon is true, then he or she also knows that the Bible is true (Mormon 7:8-9).

Also, the very existence of the Book of Mormon testifies to the world that the heavens are still open and that the Lord of heaven who spoke to the prophets and apostles anciently continues to do so today. The pattern of the Lord’s giving the Old Testament and then the New Testament is consistent with the pattern of the Lord’s giving the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The Lord has not changed his mode of operation. He is still the same—yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8—and see also the following verse).

12 Thereby showing that he is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. Amen.

13 Therefore, having so great witnesses, by them shall the world be judged, even as many as shall hereafter come to a knowledge of this work.

verse 13 The “so great witnesses” are Joseph Smith and the three and eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon.

14 And those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life;

verse 14 Here the Lord re-emphasizes the importance of both faith and works (2 Nephi 25:23).

15 But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation—

16 For the Lord God has spoken it; and we, the elders of the church, have heard and bear witness to the words of the glorious Majesty on high, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

verse 16 The “elders of the church” are Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

verses 17-36 The basic doctrines or creed of the Church is stated. To understand these verses one must have a feeling for the Protestant doctrines of grace, justification, and sanctification, which were prevalent in 1830. This declaration of the Church’s creed was intended at least in part for a nonmember audience, and it is couched in somewhat Protestant phraseology. The terms *grace*, *justification*, and *sanctification* are, of course, perfectly valid and important concepts in our Church doctrine today.

The term *grace* refers the Lord’s love for man, especially that aspect of the Lord’s love that inclines him to bestow upon man blessings that the man does not completely deserve. By his grace, he extends to us the opportunity for eternal life in his presence in spite of our being unworthy to enter his presence. Grace particularly refers to the blessings which have to do with salvation from sin. Christ is the complete expression of grace. He is the chosen means whereby God shows his favor and blessings to sinful man. To receive this grace, according to the Protestant concept, one must simply declare a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. Then one is “in a state of grace.” To be in a state of grace is to be sealed up to one’s salvation and to be fully aware that ultimately one’s relationship with God is determined not by merit or works or obedience to the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ’s merciful love.

In order to understand the concept of justification, one must first come to understand the law of justice. Stated succinctly, this law holds that for every violation of God’s law a penalty is assessed. This penalty renders the individual “guilty of sin.” This law is very exact. If even one sin is committed, and the penalty is not removed, the individual guilty of the sin cannot qualify for entry back into God’s presence. Hence the scriptural statement to the effect that “no unclean thing can enter into the kingdom of God” (1 Nephi 10:21; 15:34; Alma 11:37; 40:26; 3 Nephi 27:19; Moses 6:57). A man is said to be “justified” or “reconciled to God” when all a man’s penalties are removed. We may say, then, that his sins are forgiven or removed. He is then brought into perfect harmony with God to the point where he can be exalted. The following statement is absolute and must be understood to be absolute: No man can be exalted in the celestial kingdom without being justified. If a man is justified he is regarded as being righteous by God. If God were to judge man strictly based on adherence to the law, then no man would be regarded as righteous—every man would fall short. Each and every man is guilty of sin (Romans 3:23). To become justified, then, every man needs help. This help comes, of course, from our Savior. He will remove the penalty of sin—forgive the sinner—if the sinner will qualify himself by accepting Christ and striving diligently to live his commandments.

Sanctification implies a lofty state of spiritual refinement. The process of sanctification is an incremental process of refinement, extending over our mortal lives,

during which our “natural man” inclinations, our carnal proclivities, are preferentially purged from our souls; and they are replaced by gifts of the Spirit—increments of the attributes of God and Christ. We are in this way, made “holy.” To be *sanctified* means to be made holy. God is holy, and as we are sanctified over time, we become more like him. It is the result of continuous self introspection, and repeated repenting of our sins and imperfections. The Spirit of God has a vital role in this process, as it is he who purges us of our sins and imperfections (“as if by fire”) as we evidence satisfactory effort to change ourselves. And he also grants those gifts of the Spirit—those increments of spiritual growth—when he judges man to be worthy. Sanctification is required of all those who would enter into the celestial kingdom of God. No one will return to his presence who has not progressed on the road to becoming like him through the process of sanctification. For a more complete discussion of justification and sanctification, see the chapter by that name in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine* (volume 1, chapter 17).

17 By these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them;

verse 17 “By these things” refers to the Book of Mormon and the witnesses of the Book of Mormon.

“infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting” We in the Church find no conflict between the ideas that God has a tangible, physical body, and that he is an infinite God.

“the same unchangeable God” God is unchanging. The God of the orthodox Christians, however, no longer reveals his will to apostles or prophets, and seems rather to have changed from the biblical pattern.

18 And that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them;

verse 18 Note that Eve as much as Adam is created in the image of God. Hence, the concept of “God” has an even richer significance in connection with the Spirit birth of mankind than it does in other contexts. The First Presidency, in 1925, declared, “All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally sons and daughters of Deity” (Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:244). The male God and the female God are sealed together eternally and act as one in the process of eternal procreation. This may be one of several reasons for the plural noun form *Elohim* in the Hebrew word for the Father.

19 And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship.

verse 19 The fulness of the gospel was given to Adam and Eve, and they taught it to their children (see Moses 5).

20 But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man.

verse 20 There are perhaps two problems with this verse:

1. First, it implies that the “sensual and devilish” tendency within each of us—our “natural self”—is brought about by our transgressing the laws of God. Man’s dual nature (“natural” and “spiritual”) is fundamental and intrinsic to each member of the family of man. These two qualities have always existed in each individual. They did not have a beginning. They are not created. We have always had this dual nature even from the time we existed as unembodied intelligences and later as spirits in the premortal world. We have been exposed to the law and have exercised our agency to obey or disobey even before we were born spiritually in the pre-existent phase. Certainly we see evidence of “natural man” behavior in the premortal world. Sin did not create the natural tendencies of man. Rather, those natural tendencies result in sin.

The natural self certainly was not created by Satan though he delights in and exploits man’s “natural-man” inclinations and encourages the exercise of them to the exclusion of man’s spiritual side.

Pride is the most fundamental sin of the natural man. Pride is the excessive giving in to the natural pulls of man. Was not Lucifer guilty of obvious pride as he put himself forward to be the savior of the worlds? The Father reported this incident to Moses: “Satan . . . came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.

For a more complete discussion of the natural and spiritual tendencies in each individual, see the *“Natural Self” and “Spiritual Self”* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5.

2. Secondly, the verse implies that we mortals became fallen man as a result of our “transgression of these holy laws.” This is only partly true. We came to be in a “fallen state”—outside the presence of God in a telestial world—because of the transgression of Adam and Eve through no fault of our own. At the moment of our birth into mortality, we exist in a fallen state. It is also true that once he is in the world, each man transgresses the law and “falls” on his own.

A general misconception has grown up in the Church to the effect that our coming into this earth in a “fallen state” has resulted in the “natural man” tendency within each of us. The word *man* in the expression *natural man*, is often used with the connotation of mortal man or fallen man. It seems clear that this mortal experience here on earth is particularly designed to test our abilities to exist in the world but not become of the world. Mortality is particularly designed to test our natural self in ways we were

not tested in the premortal world. Every man and woman is forced to interact intimately with things of the world as they obtain an education, prepare themselves to be fathers, mothers, and breadwinners, and arm themselves to succeed in the world. Yet they must maintain their spiritual connections as their primary loyalty. The world is an enticing and most dangerous place to the man seeking one day to return to his eternal celestial home. Here in mortality we are especially inclined toward being “carnal, sensual, and devilish,” because of the pulls of our mortal body.

It would seem that the label “natural man” ought to be most correctly used to describe the natural self of an individual who is here on earth navigating this mortal experience. “Natural self” is an appropriate term for that same inclination of each individual in all settings (premortals, mortals, and post mortals).

21 Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him.

22 He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.

verse 22 There is no suffering that has been experienced or which ever will be experienced by mortal man that the Savior does not understand perfectly because he somehow personally experienced all suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross. Likewise, there is nothing of temptation which he does not understand perfectly because he also experienced all temptations.

23 He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day;

24 And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father;

25 That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved—

verse 25 To be “saved,” of course, means to receive a celestial salvation.

26 Not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who truly testified of him in all things, should have eternal life,

verse 26 “meridian of time” One of the definitions for the word *meridian* is “midday” or “noon.” Thus we speak of ante-meridian (a.m.) or post-meridian (p.m.). The meridian of time therefore might suggest the idea of the middle of the earth’s existence. We know that the period of the Savior’s mortal ministry, the meridian of time, was not the chronological middle of the earth’s temporal existence, but rather the spiritual middle. Is the point that everything before looks ahead to, and that everything after looks back at—the high point of the earth’s temporal existence. The atonement of

Christ is the reference point in time, like noon, that determines the before and after of all things.

“all those from the beginning . . . should have eternal life” Here is a reminder that one of the ways in which the atonement of Jesus Christ is infinite is that it applies to and was active in the lives of those that accepted Christ even before the Savior’s experience in Gethsemane and on the cross.

27 As well as those who should come after, who should believe in the gifts and callings of God by the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and of the Son;

28 Which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end. Amen.

verse 28 President Joseph Fielding Smith has explained this verse by teaching us that the word “God” in this verse actually means *Godhead*.

It is true there are three divine and separate beings in the Godhead. But they are obligatorily united in ways that we are not given to fully understand. If the Son and the Holy Ghost were not obedient to the Father, or if they deviated from being one with him in mind, thought, and purpose, they would cease to be divine (see Alma 42:13, 22, 25).

29 And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

verse 29 “worship the Father in his name” We worship God by emulating him and following his course. Just as imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so also it is the truest form of worship. True worship of the Father is to imitate the Son of God and conform to his example. In this way we worship the Father in the name (and example) of the Son.

30 And we know that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true;

verse 30 See the commentary for verses 17-36 above regarding the principles of justification and grace.

“justification” Justification is a judicial or legal term, and it means being acquitted or being declared innocent of all charges. In spite of the fact that each of us has sinned, each of us can also be declared innocent (we can be forgiven of our sins) through the Savior’s appealing for us before the demands of justice. He will do this if we strive diligently to obey him. And he is qualified to do this because of his atoning sacrifice.

The scriptures describe us variously as being justified by Christ (Acts 13:39; Mosiah 14:11), by faith (Acts 26:18; Romans 3:28, 30), by grace (Romans 3:24), by

works (James 2:27-30), by Christ's blood (Romans 5:9), and by the Spirit (Moses 6:60). A useful exercise for the reader is to consider each of the items on this list and briefly explain the role of each in your becoming justified.

“justification . . . is just and true” Justification is both a *just* and a *true* principle. It is *just* because Christ is the perfect judge and, by virtue of his atoning death, he has satisfied the demands of justice. It is *true* because it exists—it truly *is*.

31 And we know also, that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their might, minds, and strength.

verse 31 See also the commentary for verses 17-36 above regarding the principle of sanctification.

“sanctification” Just as with justification, the scriptures describe us variously as being sanctified by Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 2:11), by the grace of God (Moroni 10:33), by the truth (John 17:17, 19), by the word of God (1 Timothy 4:5), by God the Father (Jude 1:1), by law (D&C 88:21, 34), by water (Ephesians 5:26), by the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; Alma 5:4; 13:12; 3 Nephi 27:20), and by blood (Hebrews 9:14; Moses 6:60). Again, don't fail to review the more complete discussion of justification and sanctification in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*.

32 But there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God;

verse 32 In the Protestant world in the early nineteenth century, some creeds held to the idea of Irresistible grace which is attributed to John Calvin. This was the idea that God designated or predestined some individuals for salvation (and also some for damnation), and that once so designated, those individuals could never fall from that secure state—they possessed irresistible grace. In this verse the principle of irresistible grace is struck down in favor of the idea of agency and personal responsibility. We “fall from grace” when we, through our disobedience, render ourselves unworthy and unqualified for the Savior to plead our case before the demands of justice. For a more complete discussion of this issue, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 4, chapter 11, *Grace and Works*.

33 Therefore let the church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation;

34 Yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also.

verse 34 “those who are sanctified” What is required before an individual is sanctified? What are the criteria? It is not possible to precisely define a concrete endpoint. An individual is sanctified (and justified—the two processes occurring

together) when he is satisfactorily (as judged by the Spirit—the Holy Spirit of Promise) striving to overcome his natural self and obeying the Lord’s commands. The processes of justification and sanctification are ongoing. One does not suddenly arrive at that point where one is irreversibly justified and sanctified. At some times in our lives we are progressing well—our offering of obedience is satisfactory to the Lord—and we might be said to be justified and sanctified. We are regularly being cleansed by the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost (see the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31). At other times we may find ourselves drifting downward spiritually, and those moments we may struggle to be found worthy—and therefore unworthy to become justified. We may even lose some of the spiritual gifts that we had already acquired, and therefore we may become less sanctified than we were. Each of us has moved and will continue to move through these up and down cycles. When our mortal trial is over, the Lord will judge if our spiritual growth, given our premortal gifts and our earthly circumstances, has been adequate. If the Savior chooses to appeal for our exaltation, we will finally be declared justified and sufficiently sanctified, and we will be allowed access to our celestial home.

35 And we know that these things are true and according to the revelations of John, neither adding to, nor diminishing from the prophecy of his book, the holy scriptures, or the revelations of God which shall come hereafter by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the voice of God, or the ministering of angels.

verse 35 This verse deals with the charge that Joseph’s revelations added to the Bible, contrary to the warning in the Book of Revelation (22:18) not to add to the words of the Bible. The idea is implied that Joseph’s revelations neither add nor detract from biblical writings but are contained within the Bible.

“his book, the holy scriptures” These phrases refer to the book of Revelation and to the Bible.

36 And the Lord God has spoken it; and honor, power and glory be rendered to his holy name, both now and ever. Amen.

37 And again, by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism—All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church.

verse 37 “by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism” Requirements for membership in the Church are outlined.

“come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits” We must be motivated to repent by a more pure motive than sorrow for one’s own sins which might be wrought through being caught sinning or because of peer pressure. It would seem that to truly acquire a “broken heart” and “contrite spirit” one must be blessed by the Spirit of God with a deep, godly sorrow for one’s sins, a profound realization of our dependence upon the Savior, a desire for forgiveness, a loss of any desire to deliberately sin, a propensity to be wounded even by the sins of others, and an enthusiastic willingness to abide by all the covenants and obligations which the gospel entails. A “broken heart and contrite spirit” is clearly a gift of the Spirit. Our hearts are broken perhaps for two reasons. One is that we feel remorse for our sinful ways. The other reason is that, as we contemplate the atoning sacrifice of the Savior, our hearts are broken because of how much he suffered on our behalf. See also the commentary for D&C 97:8.

“are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ” To take upon us his name is to (1) join the Church bearing his name; (2) to become one of his children, fully committed to subject our will to his; (3) to willing be owned by him—to have his name “written” upon us; (4) to actively represent him and his gospel before those who do not have it; and (5) to assume his identity and therefore gradually becoming what he is.

“that they have received of the Spirit of Christ” The phrase “Spirit of Christ” has various meanings including: (1) It is a name or title of the Holy Ghost. (2) It may refer to that spiritual entitlement given to each individual at their birth (Moroni 7:16-17; D&C 93:2). (3) It may refer to the light or the influence of Christ. This latter definition seems to apply here.

verses 38-59 Duties of church officers are outlined—apostles, elders, priests, teachers, and deacons.

Seventies and high priests are not mentioned in verse 38 because there were none in the Church at the time. High priests were added in June 1831 and seventies in February 1835. The organization revealed to the Church at this time was sufficient and expedient for the government of the Church at the time of its organization.

38 The duty of the elders, priests, teachers, deacons, and members of the church of Christ—An apostle is an elder, and it is his calling to baptize;

verse 38 “An apostle is an elder” The difference between an elder and an apostle is not a difference in the level of priesthood which they hold. When a man is ordained to the higher or Melchizedek priesthood, he holds all of the priesthood which he will ever receive on this earth. Within that priesthood there are six offices to which a Melchizedek Priesthood holder may be called. Can you name them? They are elder, seventy, high priest, apostle, patriarch, and president of the high priesthood (prophet president of the Church). In the early Church, there was, for a time, a seventh office in the Melchizedek Priesthood which was Assistant President of the Church. A man is

ordained to these offices. The calling of an apostle is to hold, in concert with his quorum, the keys of the kingdom and he has an additional, special calling to be a personal and special witness for Jesus Christ.

There are other positions in the priesthood that may be classified as callings within the priesthood. These might include an assignment to be president or group leader of a priesthood quorum, a counselor in a quorum presidency or group leadership, and a member of a special quorum such as the Quorum of Twelve Apostles or the Quorum of the First Presidency. To these assignments a man is set apart and not ordained. Thus, a new apostle is ordained an apostle and then set apart as a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

It is appropriate to address an apostle or seventy or anyone holding the Melchizedek priesthood as “Elder.” The use of this designation makes it unnecessary to use the more sacred terms such as “Apostle,” “Patriarch,” “High Priest,” etc. The term “President” in addressing a member of the First Presidency is another appropriate term (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:95).

verses 39-44 The duties of the apostle are outlined.

39 And to ordain other elders, priests, teachers, and deacons;

40 And to administer bread and wine—the emblems of the flesh and blood of Christ—

41 And to confirm those who are baptized into the church, by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures;

verse 41 “baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost” For a discussion of the ordinance of baptism with its three separate parts, see the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31 (In Learning to Love the Book of Mormon) or in *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth* in volume 1, chapter 18 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

42 And to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church;

43 And to confirm the church by the laying on of the hands, and the giving of the Holy Ghost;

44 And to take the lead of all meetings.

verse 44 To “take the lead of all meetings” means to preside.

45 The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God.

verses 46-59 The duties of those holding the Aaronic Priesthood are outlined. There are four offices in the Aaronic Priesthood. Can you name them? They are

deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop. While the calling of bishop is a calling within the lesser priesthood, he is also the presiding high priest of a ward.

46 The priest's duty is to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament,

47 And visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties.

48 And he may also ordain other priests, teachers, and deacons.

49 And he is to take the lead of meetings when there is no elder present;

50 But when there is an elder present, he is only to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize,

51 And visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties.

52 In all these duties the priest is to assist the elder if occasion requires.

53 The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

54 And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

55 And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty.

56 And he is to take the lead of meetings in the absence of the elder or priest—

57 And is to be assisted always, in all his duties in the church, by the deacons, if occasion requires.

58 But neither teachers nor deacons have authority to baptize, administer the sacrament, or lay on hands;

59 They are, however, to warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ.

60 Every elder, priest, teacher, or deacon is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him; and he is to be ordained by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is in the one who ordains him.

verse 60 There are no self-appointments in the priesthood (Hebrews 5:4-6). A man must be called and ordained by one who is properly authorized.

“he is to be ordained by the power of the Holy Ghost” The Holy Ghost is the Communicator whose stewardship is all information and gifts which pass between heaven and earth. The worthy earthly administrators of the Lord's kingdom minister by virtue of special gifts which belong to the priesthood. The Holy Ghost has stewardship over these special gifts. See *Priesthood* in volume 2, chapter 12 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

verses 61-62, 81 Elders of the Church are commanded to meet together periodically in conferences. In the early days of the Church, the conferences were mainly general priesthood conferences, and the sole participants in these quarterly conferences of the Church were the elders—male members of the Church. As the Church has expanded there has arisen a need for other conferences involving all members of the Church, male and female. These include stake, ward, general, regional, and area conferences. President Harold B. Lee taught that the purpose of conferences in the Church is to convey to the saints those things that the Lord would have them know at the time of the conference (*CR*, October 1973, 168).

61 The several elders composing this church of Christ are to meet in conference once in three months, or from time to time as said conferences shall direct or appoint;

62 And said conferences are to do whatever church business is necessary to be done at the time.

verses 63-64, 82-84 In the early days of the Church, the method employed to certify the membership, priesthood authority, and good standing of individuals was to give them certificates of ordination and membership. A person carried this certificate with him from his old branch and presented it to the presiding elder of the new one. Then, by sustaining vote of the new branch, the priesthood holder would be given a license to function in the new branch. Also membership lists were presented at the various conferences for entrance in the general records of the Church. These usually also included a list of those who had been removed from the Church since the last conference.

63 The elders are to receive their licenses from other elders, by vote of the church to which they belong, or from the conferences.

64 Each priest, teacher, or deacon, who is ordained by a priest, may take a certificate from him at the time, which certificate, when presented to an elder, shall entitle him to a license, which shall authorize him to perform the duties of his calling, or he may receive it from a conference.

verses 65-67 At the time section 20 was received in 1829-30, there were no such offices in the Church as high priest, bishop, or high councilor. As the structure of the Church continued to unfold, section 20 was revised to include the newly revealed offices. Verses 65-67 were added to section 20 at the Prophet's direction in 1835. Verse 65 also reflects the law of common consent (see D&C 26).

65 No person is to be ordained to any office in this church, where there is a regularly organized branch of the same, without the vote of that church;

66 But the presiding elders, traveling bishops, high councilors, high priests, and elders, may have the privilege of ordaining, where there is no branch of the church that a vote may be called.

67 Every president of the high priesthood (or presiding elder), bishop, high councilor, and high priest, is to be ordained by the direction of a high council or general conference.

verses 68-70 Some duties of church members after their baptism are outlined.

68 The duty of the members after they are received by baptism.—The elders or priests are to have a sufficient time to expound all things concerning the church of Christ to their understanding, previous to their partaking of the sacrament and being confirmed by the laying on of the hands of the elders, so that all things may be done in order.

verse 68 In the early days of the Church, the Lord required that baptized members be taught the basics of the gospel and have an understanding before being confirmed and before partaking of the sacrament.

69 And the members shall manifest before the church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures—walking in holiness before the Lord.

verse 69 Members of the Church are to manifest a “godly walk and conversation.” This means that others should be able to recognize that Mormons are genuine Christians by the way they behave and the way they talk.

verses 70-79 The methods of specific ordinances are outlined: blessing of children (verse 70), baptism (verses 72-74), and sacrament—including the specific sacramental prayers (verses 77, 79).

Verse 76 implies that congregations of the saints knelt during the sacrament prayers. Even from the early days of the Church, the members of the Church did not kneel with those officiating at the sacrament table, except in the smallest congregations, and many times not even then.

70 Every member of the church of Christ having children is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name.

verse 70 While fathers holding the Melchizedek Priesthood can bless their children whenever the need arises, here we learn that it is a commandment of the Lord to bless our children in front of the members of the Church. President John Taylor taught that parents who bring their child before the Church to be blessed publicly manifest their faith in God and in his promises. Also the child benefits from the united faith of the assembled saints (*Millennial Star*, 15 April 1978, 235).

71 No one can be received into the church of Christ unless he has arrived unto the years of accountability before God, and is capable of repentance.

verse 71 Joseph resolves the Church's position on the question of infant baptism. In D&C 68:25-27 the Lord will define the age of accountability as eight years of age. This age was prefigured in the law of Moses by circumcision of male children at eight days of age (see JST Genesis 17:11) and is perhaps also alluded to in 1 Peter 3:20-21.

72 Baptism is to be administered in the following manner unto all those who repent—

73 The person who is called of God and has authority from Jesus Christ to baptize, shall go down into the water with the person who has presented himself or herself for baptism, and shall say, calling him or her by name: Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

verse 73 “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ” It is interesting to note that the phrase “having authority given me of Jesus Christ” (identical to that found in 3 Nephi 11:25) appears in all sources of section 20 before 1835. Joseph Smith altered the phrase to read “having been commissioned of Jesus Christ” in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and covenants, which is, of course the form of the prayer we use today.

74 Then shall he immerse him or her in the water, and come forth again out of the water.

verse 74 The consensus of biblical scholars is that Jewish and Christian baptism in the first century was also by immersion. In fact, the verb *baptize* in Greek is normally translated as “to immerse” or “to dip.”

75 It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus;

verse 75 Bread, of course, is made from crushed wheat, and wine is made from the crushed grapes. Thus, bread and wine are ideal symbols for the body and blood of

Christ whose life was crushed out of him in the press of Gethsemane. His body was bruised and his blood shed for us that we might live.

In ancient Israel, under the Law of Moses, part of the ordinance of sacrifice or blood offerings was the partaking of the sacrificed animal. Bringing an animal to be sacrificed brought to the individual ritual cleansing and spiritual security. They then ate the sacrificed animals. Accordingly, we partake symbolically of the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed to bring us cleansing and salvation. Also, when we partake of the bread and water, in faith and repentance, we receive the same blessings and restore the same covenants as at our baptism. And just as those who are baptized are then given the gift of the Holy Ghost, so those who partake of the sacrament in good faith will then “always have his Spirit to be with them” (verses 77, 79).

76 And the elder or priest shall administer it; and after this manner shall he administer it—he shall kneel with the church and call upon the Father in solemn prayer, saying:

verse 76 “he shall kneel with the church” It appears that in the early days of the Church the entire Church knelt when the sacrament was blessed, just as in the Book of Mormon (see Moroni 4:1-2). This is largely impractical in modern congregations, though we must still have an attitude of humility and bend the “knees” of our hearts as the priest offers the prayers. It should be noted that all such changes in practice have been inspired, with prophetic authorization.

77 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

78 The manner of administering the wine—he shall take the cup also, and say:

79 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

80 Any member of the church of Christ transgressing, or being overtaken in a fault, shall be dealt with as the scriptures direct.

verses 81-84 See the commentary for verses 61-64.

81 It shall be the duty of the several churches, composing the church of Christ, to send one or more of their teachers to attend the several conferences held by the elders of the church,

verse 81 The expression “several churches” means several congregations. Today we would say several wards.

82 With a list of the names of the several members uniting themselves with the church since the last conference; or send by the hand of some priest; so that a regular list of all the names of the whole church may be kept in a book by one of the elders, whomsoever the other elders shall appoint from time to time;

83 And also, if any have been expelled from the church, so that their names may be blotted out of the general church record of names.

verse 83 The Lord from the very beginning of the Church has allowed for the excommunication of those who violate their covenants and refuse to repent. When an excommunication takes place, the name of the excommunicated person is removed from the records of the Church. By this action they are mercifully released from covenants they will not keep, and they are returned to “the world.”

84 All members removing from the church where they reside, if going to a church where they are not known, may take a letter certifying that they are regular members and in good standing, which certificate may be signed by any elder or priest if the member receiving the letter is personally acquainted with the elder or priest, or it may be signed by the teachers or deacons of the church.

Brief Historical Setting

1830 April

The Lord had commanded that the Church be organized on Tuesday, April 6, 1830, and the Church of Christ was accordingly organized, according to the state law of New York, at the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York. The six official organizers, for legal purposes, were Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Samuel H. Smith, and David Whitmer. Later that day the Lord gave additional instructions to the infant Church **[D&C 21 - The Prophet Is the Mouthpiece of God]**. On the following Sunday, April 11, 1830, Oliver Cowdery preached the first sermon.

Later in April, someone applied for membership in the Church who had already been baptized by immersion in the Baptist Church. They did not want to be rebaptized. The Lord made it clear by revelation that even those who had been previously baptized into other churches needed to be baptized again by proper authority **[D&C 22 - Rebaptism]**. He also gave instructions to specific members of the Church **[D&C 23 - Counsel to Five Individuals]**.

Section 21 The Prophet Is the Mouthpiece of God

Section 21 consists of various instructions given to the nascent Church on the day the Church was organized at the Peter Whitmer farm in Fayette, New York.

The Church of Jesus Christ had been “in the wilderness” (Revelation 2:14) for over seventeen hundred years. On Tuesday, April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York, a small group of people convened in the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr. No heads of state or prominent religious leaders attended. No newspapers reported what happened there. But in heaven the angels rejoiced.

The meeting was opened by solemn prayer. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were sustained as leaders in the kingdom of God and were given unanimous approval to organize the Church of Christ. The prophet Joseph Smith recorded the events that followed:

I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery, and ordained him an elder of the Church Christ; after which he ordained me to the office of elder of said Church. [Although they had been ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood earlier, they were told to defer ordaining each other to the office of elder until the Church was organized (see *HC*, 1:61.) We then took bread, blessed it, and brake it with them; also wine, blessed it, and drank it with them. We then laid our hands on each individual member of the Church present, that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and be confirmed members of the Church of Christ. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree—some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord, and rejoiced exceedingly. Whilst yet together, I received the following commandment [section 21]. (*HC*, 1:77-78.)

Joseph Knight Sr. also described this same meeting:

Now in the spring of 1830, I went with my team and took Joseph out to Manchester to his father. When we were on our way he told me that there must be a Church formed, but did not tell when. . . .

On the Sixth day of April 1830, he began the Church with six members and received the following revelation [section 21]. They all kneeled down and prayed, and Joseph gave them instructions how to build up the Church and exhorted them to be faithful in all things, for this is the work of God (Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection,” 36-39; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization standardized.)

It should be noted that there were more than six individuals present at this meeting. On April 6, 1830, there were believers in New York State—some of them already baptized but not confirmed—in Manchester/Palmyra, mainly Smiths; Fayette, mainly Whitmers; and Colesville, mainly Knights. Six of these signed the certificate of incorporation as responsible parties on April 6 to satisfy New York state law. More than twenty individuals were actually present at the organization meeting, however, with

some of these others also receiving confirmation into the Church. Thus, the number six does not represent the actual number of members confirmed on that day, but rather the number of members who signed the document as legal representatives of the Church to the state of New York.

1 Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

verse 1 “there shall be a record kept among you” Joseph was commanded on the day the Church was organized to keep a record. This commandment likely provided the impetus to keep a record of his revelations and to regularly record the events which would later comprise Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*.

“thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church” Joseph is named by the Lord: Seer, Translator, Prophet, Apostle, and Elder. These are the titles for what was then the First Elder of the Church. They are now applied to the President of the Church.

Let us define these terms:

Seer. Elder John A. Widtsoe defined a seer as “one who sees with spiritual eyes. He perceives the meaning of that which seems obscure to others; therefore he is an interpreter and clarifier of eternal truth. He foresees the future from the past and the present. This he does by the power of the Lord operating through him directly, or indirectly with the aid of divine instruments such as the Urim and Thummim. In short, he is one who sees, who walks in the Lord’s light with open eyes (Mosiah 8:15-17)” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 1:205-6; see also Moses 6:36). If reality were compared by analogy to visible light, then a seer perceives the visible spectrum like the rest of us, but he also sees the infra-red and the ultra-violet bands, those spiritual wavelengths the rest of us cannot see.

Translator. The title “translator” may refer to one who has received two blessings through the Spirit of God:

1. The power to convert the written or spoken word from one language into another (see D&C 20:8).

2. The power to give a clearer meaning to any given language

Through the gift of translation a translator does not merely convey, in the language of the reader, the words that were recorded by the writer but by revelation preserves for the reader the thoughts or intentions of the original writer. The translator does not translate intellectually, as scholars do, but by the gift and power of God. Thus, Joseph Smith not only “translated” the Book of Mormon record from reformed Egyptian to English, but he also “translated” the King James English into clearer, more understandable English—the Joseph Smith Translation.

Prophet. According to Elder Widtsoe:

A prophet is a teacher. That is the essential meaning of the word. He teaches the body of truth, the gospel, revealed by the Lord to man; and under inspiration explains it to the understanding of the people. He is an expounder of truth. Moreover, he shows that the way to human happiness is through obedience to God's law. He calls to repentance those who wander away from the truth. He becomes a warrior for the consummation of the Lord's purposes with respect to the human family. The purpose of his life is to uphold the Lord's plan of salvation. All this he does by close communion with the Lord, until he is "full of power by the Spirit of the Lord."

In the course of time the word "prophet" has come to mean, perhaps chiefly, a man who receives revelations and directions from the Lord. The principal business of a prophet has mistakenly been thought to foretell coming events, to utter prophecies, which is only one of the several prophetic functions" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 1:204-5).

A prophet is a teacher of known truth. A seer is a perceiver of hidden truth. A revelator is a bearer of new truth. In the widest sense, the one most commonly used, the title *prophet* includes the other titles and makes of the prophet a teacher, a seer, and a revelator.

Apostle. An apostle is a special witness of Jesus Christ to all the world (see D&C 107:23). The prophet Joseph Smith explained the important calling of an apostle by asking a question and then giving the answer:

What importance is there attached to the calling of these twelve apostles, different from the other callings or officers of the Church? . . .

They are the twelve apostles, who are called to the office of the Traveling High Council, who are to preside over the churches of the saints, among the Gentiles, where there is a presidency established; and they are to travel and preach among the Gentiles, until the Lord shall command them to go to the Jews. They are to hold the keys of this ministry, to unlock the door of the kingdom of heaven unto all nations, and to preach the gospel to every creature. This is the power, authority, and virtue of their apostleship (*HC*, 2:200).

Elder. The name of an office in the Melchizedek priesthood, elder is also the general title used to address one who bears this higher priesthood. Elder Bruce R. McConkie added that an elder is a representative of the Lord: "What is an elder? An elder is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. He holds the holy Melchizedek priesthood. He is commissioned to stand in the place and stead of his Master—who is the Chief Elder—in ministering to his fellow men. He is the Lord's agent. His appointment is to preach the gospel and perfect the saints" ("Only an Elder," *Ensign*, June 1975, 66).

2 Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith.

verse 2 “to lay the foundation thereof” To lay the foundation of the Church. Most all of the small group gathered on April 6, 1830 could not really have understood the great movement that was beginning on that date. The true Church of Jesus Christ, the stone “cut out of the mountain without hands” (D&C 65:2), which was ultimately to fill the whole earth, was beginning to roll forth (see Daniel 2:44-45).

“to build it up unto the most holy faith” The word “faith” here refers to the doctrines and ordinances that characterize and are available in the Lord’s Church. “The most holy faith” refers to the unprecedented fulness of this final dispensation restoration of the gospel.

3 Which church was organized and established in the year of your Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April.

verse 3 Just as they have with D&C 20:1, some have interpreted this verse to mean that the Savior was born on April 6, and that the Church was also organized on the 1830th anniversary of his birth (see the commentary for D&C 20:1).

4 Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

verse 4 “meaning the church” The Lord makes it clear that “thou” in this verse refers to the members of this nascent Church.

The antecedent of the phrase “walking in all holiness before me” is *you* (the members of the Church) and not *he* (Joseph). This verse does not mean to say that the Church is to obey Joseph only when, in their opinion, Joseph is walking in holiness.

5 For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

verse 5 This is perhaps the most radical verse in this revelation, because it lays out what it truly means to be founded on the principle of living revelation. It is especially radical since the mind set of the Christian churches of Joseph’s day was that the heavens were silent—the day of revelation and prophets was past. This verse makes it clear that when the Prophet speaks, it is as though the Lord had said it himself. The Prophet is literally the Lord’s mouthpiece.

The Prophet, as the Lord’s mouthpiece, will never be permitted to lead the Church astray. This important principle has been taught by more than one prophet in this dispensation. For example:

I say to Israel, the Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the program. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so he

will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty. God bless you. Amen (Wilford Woodruff, *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 212-13).

The ultimate safety and security that we have available to us on this earth is to do exactly what the prophet says to do. We may not always like what he says, and his counsel may interfere with our social life or contradict our political views. However, if we obey in patience and faith, we will emerge victorious from this mortal phase of our existence and inherit eternal life.

6 For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory.

verse 6 “the gates of hell shall not prevail against you” Hell is the part of the spirit world we call prison. To “prevail” is to win a contest or struggle. The metaphor here is of the righteous wrestling with the power of hell and trying not to be pulled in through its gates (or “jaws” in D&C 122:7). Through the atonement of Christ, the faithful will “win” their struggle with hell and not be pulled in to suffer inside its gates under Satan’s power. Elder Bruce R. McConkie gave the following explanation of the concept of the gates of hell: “The gates of hell are the entrances to the benighted realms of the damned [in the spirit world] where the wicked go to await the day when they shall come forth in the resurrection of damnation. Those beckoning gates prevail against all who pass through them. But those who obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel have the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against them” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:388-89).

On the other hand, if hell here is to be understood as a larger term for the entire spirit world, then the promise is that we will not be captives there permanently. Ultimately, the atonement of Christ will prevail over the gates of the spirit world, and all who are held captive there will be released through redemption in Christ and the power of the resurrection.

7 For thus saith the Lord God: Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard.

verse 7 “to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good” This means to work to establish a Zion place and a Zion people. Joseph Smith attempted to establish both a Zion place and a Zion people during his lifetime.

8 Yea, his weeping for Zion I have seen, and I will cause that he shall mourn for her no longer; for his days of rejoicing are come unto the remission of his sins, and the manifestations of my blessings upon his works.

verse 8 Joseph Smith, even at this early stage in the history of the Church, had plead for the Lord's help in establishing Zion. Joseph's sins had been remitted by the Lord, and the Lord stood ready to bless him in this work as first Elder and prophet.

9 For, behold, I will bless all those who labor in my vineyard with a mighty blessing, and they shall believe on his words, which are given him through me by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea, for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart.

verse 9 "by the Comforter" The Comforter is the Holy Ghost functioning in his role to bring peace, comfort, and security to those who are keeping their gospel covenants. He assures the righteous that they are right with God, that they are worthy of a celestial reward.

10 Wherefore it behooveth me that he should be ordained by you, Oliver Cowdery mine apostle;

verse 10 Both Joseph and Oliver already held the Melchizedek Priesthood and the keys of apostleship. These were bestowed upon them by ordination under the hands of Peter, James, and John. In this verse, the Lord refers to a specific office, first elder, in the Church which did not even exist before April 6, 1830. Joseph and Oliver already had the authority to ordain anyone to any office in the Church, but only on this occasion did the Church actually come into existence. Everyone who holds a priesthood office in the Church must be ordained to that office. Joseph Smith was no exception, and so he was ordained to his church office by Oliver Cowdery.

11 This being an ordinance unto you, that you are an elder under his hand, he being the first unto you, that you might be an elder unto this church of Christ, bearing my name—

verse 11 "This being an ordinance unto you" This phrase refers to the instructions that follow. The term "ordinance" here is used to mean a rule or commandment, as in a city or county ordinance.

"he being the first unto you" The Lord explains the priesthood line of authority and relative stewardships of Joseph and Oliver in clear and unmistakable terms: Joseph had the priority, and Oliver was his subordinate. This is something Oliver later had trouble accepting (see D&C 28:3, 5-7).

12 And the first preacher of this church unto the church, and before the world, yea, before the Gentiles; yea, and thus saith the Lord God, lo, lo! to the Jews also. Amen.

verse 12 In this verse, "first" refers to Oliver Cowdery. As stated previously, Oliver Cowdery will deliver the Church's first sermon on Sunday, April 11, 1830.

Several times in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lamanites are termed “Jews.” In D&C 19:27 the Lamanites are called a “remnant of the Jews.” In D&C 57:4 the Indian frontier was called the line running directly between “Jew” and Gentile. Since Oliver Cowdery is called in this verse to be the first preacher to the Jews, and since he will be called in section 28 to be the first missionary to the Indians (“Lamanites”), it is likely that “Jew” in this verse really means American Indian.

Section 22 Rebaptism

The Church was organized on Tuesday, April 6, 1830. Shortly thereafter, some sincere investigators to the Church approached Joseph Smith in his family's home in Manchester. They believed the Book of Mormon was true, and they wanted to become members of the Church. Some of these converts had belonged previously to churches that believed in baptism by immersion. They themselves believed that immersion was the proper mode of baptism, and they had already been baptized in this manner. After joining the Church of Christ, a group of ex-Baptists wondered why it was necessary for them to be baptized again. Joseph inquired of the Lord on their behalf and section 22 was received.

In section 22 the Lord explains that all old covenants are done away, and that all must be baptized again into the new and everlasting covenant by someone holding proper priesthood authority.

Section 22 appeared combined with section 21 in *The Evening and Morning Star* in June 1832 under the title "Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ." In all other publications of sections 20, 21, and 22, only section 20 was labeled the "Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ."

William E. McLellin's journal contains a very early copy of section 22 with the following appended: "April 16th 1830 Joseph Smith" (Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 236). This would put the reception of this revelation only ten days after the organization of the Church.

1 Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning.

verse 1 "all old covenants have I caused to be done away" "Old covenants" here are apostate covenants entered into without proper priesthood authority. Many Christians have little or no understanding of priesthood authority. Accordingly, because little or no importance is placed on priesthood, in their view almost anyone may baptize, and baptisms performed in one church are quite generally accepted in another. This was the hope of those who came to Joseph in April 1830, desiring to unite with the Church by virtue of their previous baptisms. Many sincere persons would seek and have sought to come to God and even submit to ordinances or make covenants to serve him while they are members of other faiths. These ordinances and covenants, though they may be sincerely entered into, and though God may be pleased with the righteous desires of these individuals and bless them accordingly, are still of human origin. They are merely human attempts to reach God, and all such attempts are

superseded by the covenant that has its origin in God and is entered into by authority of his priesthood.

“this is a new and an everlasting covenant” The term “new and everlasting covenant” is used frequently throughout the Doctrine and Covenants. President Joseph Fielding Smith gave the following definition of it:

The new and everlasting covenant is the fulness of the gospel. It is composed of “All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations” that are sealed upon members of the Church by the Holy Spirit of promise, or the Holy Ghost, by the authority of the president of the Church who holds the keys. The president of the Church holds the keys of the Melchizedek priesthood. He delegates authority to others and authorizes them to perform the sacred ordinances of the priesthood.

Marriage for eternity is a new and everlasting covenant. Baptism is also a new and everlasting covenant, and likewise ordination to the priesthood, and every other covenant is everlasting and a part of the new and everlasting covenant which embraces all things (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:65).

“that which was from the beginning” Keep in mind that this section was received in answer to Joseph’s question which centered on the ordinance of baptism. How could something which was “from the beginning” be “a new and everlasting covenant?” Baptism by proper authority in this dispensation is a new covenant when compared to the apostate forms of baptism which were extant in 1830, but it is the same covenant given to Adam in the beginning. Baptisms performed by ministers without the priesthood are merely dead works—purely human attempts to reach God, and of no avail. The issue is not sincerity but authority. All who enter his Kingdom must enter through the gate of baptism by one having the proper authority, even Jesus Christ himself required baptism.

2 Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works.

verse 2 “you cannot enter in at the strait gate” See the supplemental article, *Strait and Straight in the Book of Mormon in Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

The law of Moses was given to Israel in hopes of lifting them from a telestial to a terrestrial level. But the law of Moses, by itself, can save no one in the celestial heaven. The “strait” or narrow gate leads to the celestial kingdom. This requires the “new and everlasting covenant”—the gospel of Jesus Christ with its priesthood authority. Just as the law of Moses, with its emphasis on works, cannot save any man, neither can religion, even Christian religion, that originates with man and not with God. Without divine priesthood authorization and power, these religions represent human attempts to find God—human works rather than Christ’s saving work done in our behalf. They are

called “dead works” because without God’s priesthood, they cannot bestow eternal life but are merely human efforts to manipulate God.

3 For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old.

verse 3 Because the Christian world had degenerated into a state of apostasy and in 1830 consisted of only human attempts to imitate the covenants and ordinances of Christ’s true gospel, the Lord caused this “last covenant”—the new and everlasting covenant—to be restored and his Church to be established, as it had been in times past.

4 Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.

verse 4 “enter ye in at the gate” Be baptized.

“seek not to counsel your God” According to President Marion G. Romney we “counsel” God when we “disregard his counsel, either knowingly or unknowingly, and in place thereof substitute our own counsel or the persuasions of men” (*Ensign*, August 1985, 2).

In some of the more democratic Christian denominations it is acceptable for the membership to instruct the leaders by vote or otherwise. But in the true Church of Jesus Christ, with continuing revelation and the priesthood line of authority, and where the words of the prophet are to be received as if from God’s own mouth (D&C 1:38), to counsel our leaders uninvited is to seek to “counsel our God.”

Character Vignette

Oliver Cowdery

Oliver was about a year younger than the Prophet Joseph. He was a small man, being about 5 feet 5 inches tall and of a slight build. He married Elizabeth Whitmer, a daughter of Peter Whitmer, Sr. His role in the early Church was obviously extraordinary. He was a key figure many of the most important founding experiences of the early Church, including the translation and printing of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, the conversion of Sidney Rigdon, and the vision of the Savior and the Old Testament prophets in the Kirtland Temple. As one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, he had participated in the selection of the first quorum of twelve apostles in 1835.

Probably no one gives such a brutally candid view of an executive or author as does a secretary or scribe. That is the view Oliver had of the prophet Joseph, and Joseph passed this severe test. Five years after the translation of the Book of Mormon, Oliver’s memory of this time was still vivid: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the

utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites would have said, ‘interpreters,’ the history, or record called ‘The Book of Mormon’” (*Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, 1[1834]:14). It should be noted, parenthetically, that both the two-lens device Joseph found buried with the plates in September 1827 and Joseph’s seerstone were both referred to at times as the Urim and Thummim. It seems likely that the device Joseph employed most commonly during the translation of the Book of Mormon with Oliver in 1829 was the seerstone, rather than the ancient Urim and Thummim.

The pinnacle of his church career was in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836, when he was a trusted “assistant president” to Joseph Smith and was involved on many practical fronts in the expanding Church.

He was excommunicated on April 12, 1838. He had been personally hurt in his relationship with Joseph Smith, and he had allied himself with his Whitmer relatives in serious differences with the Church as it was gathering in the area of Far West Missouri. The Whitmers were in local leadership and also had become involved in land promotion which might be considered either self-serving private enterprise or—as it was interpreted by Missouri members—the exploitation of the saints. Six of the nine charges against him involved his economic affairs and his part in filing collection suits against members of the Church. He wrote a spirited letter of resignation from the Church in which he defined his conflicts with the leaders of the Church—“the outward government of this Church” (*HC*, 3:18). He never repudiated his basic beliefs.

Following his excommunication, he experimented with living in Missouri briefly but then moved back to Kirtland Ohio where he taught school to support himself while he was studying law. From 1840 to 1847 he practiced law in Tiffin, Ohio. While in Tiffin he also served as a newspaper columnist and a member of the county Board of School Examiners. He also became active in the Democratic Party and in civil government affairs.

He was described by his non Mormon associates as gentlemanly, polite, soft spoken, modest in his habits, polite, dignified, courteous, kind and friendly, never spoke ill of anyone, and never complained. One of his colleagues said of him, “There was a certain degree of sadness that seemed to pervade his whole being” (Lang, *History of Seneca County*, 365).

He was also regarded as a first-class attorney. A Colleague said of him, “His addresses to the court and jury were characterized by a high order of oratory, with brilliant and forensic force” (*Ibid.*).

The cessation of Oliver’s activity in the Church meant a suspension of his role as Book of Mormon witness. Evidently it did not violate his conscience to be an inactive witness, but he would not accept the role of a denying witness in a direct confrontation where silence would strongly imply a denial. One courtroom incident has prompted

much controversy as to the accuracy of the reporting of the incident. Probably the most reliable report of the incident was written by George Q. Cannon:

When I was a boy I heard it stated concerning Oliver Cowdery, that after he left the Church he practiced law, and upon one occasion, in a court in Ohio, the opposing counsel thought he would say something that would overwhelm Oliver Cowdery, and in reply to him in his argument he alluded to him as the man that had testified and had written that he had beheld an angel of God, and that angel had shown unto him the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. He supposed, of course, that it would cover him with confusion, because Oliver Cowdery then [at that time] made no profession of being a “Mormon,” or a Latter-day Saint; but instead of being affected by it in this manner, he arose in the court, and in his reply stated that, whatever his faults and weaknesses might be, the testimony which he had written, and which he had given to the world, was literally true (*JD*, 22:254).

In 1847 he moved briefly to Elkhorn, Wisconsin and practiced law with his brother Lyman. By this time he had significant chronic health problems. Then in October 1848 he traveled to Council Bluffs or Kaneshville, Iowa, the “eastern” headquarters of the Church and humbly asked for rebaptism. Reuben Miller recorded Oliver’s testimony at the time in his journal: “I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet, as he translated it by the gift and power of God, by means of the Urim and Thummim, or as it is called by that book, Holy Interpreters. I beheld with my eyes, and handled with my hands, the gold plates from which it was translated. I also beheld the Interpreters. That book is true” (*Journal of Reuben Miller*, October 21, 1848. For an insight into Miller’s competence as a diarist, see Richard L. Anderson, “Reuben Miller, Recorder of Oliver Cowdery’s Reaffirmations,” *BYU Studies* 8 [1968]: 277-93).

Because of ill health and depleted finances, he was unable to migrate to Utah. Hence, he moved to Richmond, Missouri, to be near his wife’s relatives. He died March 3, 1850, only sixteen months following his reconciliation at Kaneshville, probably of tuberculosis.

Of all of the people in his life, the person with the most intimate knowledge of all his actions and attitudes was his wife, Elizabeth Whitmer Cowdery. Thirty-seven years after her husband’s death she wrote in a letter to her brother David Whitmer: “From the hour when the glorious vision of the Holy Messenger revealed to mortal eyes the hidden prophecies which God had promised his faithful followers should come forth in due time, until the moment when he passed away from earth, he always, without one doubt or shadow of turning, affirmed the divinity and truth of the Book of Mormon” (Letter of Elizabeth Cowdery to David Whitmer, March 8, 1887).

Section 23 Counsel to Five Individuals

Shortly after the Church was organized on April 6, Joseph returned to his family's home in Manchester. There, five persons, of whom four had just been baptized, sought to know the will of the Lord and their respective duties in the Church. Joseph inquired of the Lord and received section 23. The five were: Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr., and Joseph Knight Sr. All of these brethren, except Joseph Knight, had been baptized into the Church. In the 1833 Book of Commandments these instructions were separated into five different chapters, but in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants published in 1835, they were combined into this one section.

1 Behold, I speak unto you, Oliver, a few words. Behold, thou art blessed, and art under no condemnation. But beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation.

verse 1 “thou art under no condemnation” This statement is made to four of the five men. It likely implies that they are currently on a favorable path that will lead to their exaltation. Joseph Knight is given no such assurance, perhaps because he had not yet submitted to covenant of baptism.

“beware of pride” At the time of this revelation, Oliver Cowdery was doing well spiritually, but this warning sounds an ominous note of what is to come. In a day of great tribulation for the Church in Kirtland, Oliver will fail to humble himself and lose his membership in the Church.

2 Make known thy calling unto the church, and also before the world, and thy heart shall be opened to preach the truth from henceforth and forever. Amen.

verse 2 “Make known thy calling unto the church” This phrase suggests the idea of: “Magnify thy calling.”

3 Behold, I speak unto you, Hyrum, a few words; for thou also art under no condemnation, and thy heart is opened, and thy tongue loosed; and thy calling is to exhortation, and to strengthen the church continually. Wherefore thy duty is unto the church forever, and this because of thy family. Amen.

verse 3 In a previous section (D&C 11:21), Hyrum was promised that if he would seek to obtain the word of God, then his tongue would be “loosed.” Note that in verse 3 we now learn that his tongue is loosed, and he is called to help strengthen the Church, a calling which he will faithfully do for the rest of his life.

“Wherefore thy duty is unto the church forever, and this because of thy family” It is notable that Hyrum's line remained faithful in the Church—the patriarchal

line. Joseph's line did not. The office of Patriarch was Hyrum's duty and that of his family to whom it would be passed along.

4 Behold, I speak a few words unto you, Samuel; for thou also art under no condemnation, and thy calling is to exhortation, and to strengthen the church; and thou art not as yet called to preach before the world. Amen.

verse 4 Samuel Smith was the third person baptized in this dispensation. He was also one of the first to be ordained to the office of elder.

“and thou art not as yet called to preach before the world” Samuel, at age 22, was not yet called to preach, but it was not long after this revelation that he was sent forth as the first missionary of this last dispensation. As a missionary he was remarkably successful. One of the under-appreciated founding members of the Church, Samuel was one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon. He is generally credited with being the first full-time traveling missionary in this dispensation, serving at least five missions in the succeeding fourteen years. He helped build the Nauvoo Temple, served as an alderman in Nauvoo, served as bishop of the Nauvoo Ward, was a member of the Nauvoo Legion, and served in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church. Faithful to the end, Samuel died on July 30, 1844, one month after his brothers were martyred on June 27.

5 Behold, I speak a few words unto you, Joseph; for thou also art under no condemnation, and thy calling also is to exhortation, and to strengthen the church; and this is thy duty from henceforth and forever. Amen.

verse 5 The Lord speaks to Joseph Smith, Sr.

“thy duty from henceforth and forever” Joseph Smith, Sr. was the first patriarch of the Church in this dispensation. When he was ordained to that calling, he was blessed that this calling was to come upon his head “and his seed after him, to the uttermost” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:164).

6 Behold, I manifest unto you, Joseph Knight, by these words, that you must take up your cross, in the which you must pray vocally before the world as well as in secret, and in your family, and among your friends, and in all places.

verse 6 “you must take up your cross” What does it mean to “take up your cross”? This phrase is found in the New Testament (Matthew 16:25-26) and in modern scripture (D&C 23:6; 56:2; 112:14). When an individual “takes up his cross” he denies his natural-man self, particularly in times of suffering and adversity—however painful and difficult that may be. He attempts to eschew all worldly inclinations and gives heed to the Lord's counsel.

“you must pray vocally before the world as well as in secret” Evidently, one of the challenges that Joseph Knight, Sr. faced was praying in front of other people.

Perhaps he was one of those painfully shy individuals for whom humbling themselves and taking up their cross means, despite their fear, to reveal and share their inner feelings and their faith in God by praying, testifying, or declaring his word publicly before the world. Newel Knight, the son of Joseph Knight, also found it difficult to pray in public. There are many in the Church for whom praying or speaking in front of the congregation is a heavy cross to bear.

7 And, behold, it is your duty to unite with the true church, and give your language to exhortation continually, that you may receive the reward of the laborer. Amen.

verses 6-7 “it is your duty to unite with the true church” Joseph Knight was a “Universalist”—one who believed that all religions were correct and that there was not just one true church. Here the Lord commands him to commit himself to the Church of Christ and be baptized. Though a believer and a staunch supporter of the restoration, he was fairly liberal in his theology and apparently did not yet grasp the importance of baptism. In obedience to this direct command, he was baptized in June 1830.

Brief Historical Setting

In the summer of 1830, Joseph and Emma still lived in the cabin in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Joseph, however, shuttled among the various clusters of believers who formed the nucleus of the Church: the Smiths in Manchester, the Whitmers in Fayette, and Joseph Knight and his son Newel and their families in Colesville, New York. Most of the early converts were other family members and friends of these families.

The first quarterly conference of the Church was held on June 9, 1830. Following the conference Joseph returned to his own home in Harmony. A short time later, together with his wife Emma, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, and David Whitmer, he again visited Colesville, New York, about twenty miles north of Harmony, to see the Joseph and Newel Knight families and to arrange for the baptism of a number of believers in the Colesville area.

The formal organization of the Church seemed to inflame persecution of the fledgling Church and its Prophet. In June 1830 Joseph was arrested and harassed when he traveled to Colesville to baptize new converts. In July the Lord comforted Joseph with a revelation **[D&C 24 - Be Patient in Persecution]**. Emma also had suffered the hardships of persecution and was similarly favored of the Lord **[D&C 25 - An Elect Lady—Emma Smith]**.

Also in July 1830, the Lord revealed an important principle of church government **[D&C 26 - Common Consent]**.

Section 24 Be Patient in Persecution

By June 1830 a number of Knight family members in Colesville, New York, were ready to join the Church. Along with the growing interest in the Church shown by the Knight family, there was also found a growing animosity among some of their neighbors in Colesville, largely due to the efforts of local ministers.

In late June Joseph, Emma, Oliver, and David and John Whitmer traveled to Colesville to baptize the new converts. A small stream was dammed up to make a pond for baptisms. Some antagonistic Colesville residents tore down the dam, and it had to be rebuilt. Finally the baptism was held, and Joseph Knight, his wife Polly, Newel Knight's wife Sally, several other members of the Knight family, and Emma Smith were all baptized.

Enraged at the proceedings, a mob of about fifty people gathered and surrounded the home of Joseph Knight, Sr., where the Prophet Joseph had a confrontation with them. Before the newly baptized members could be confirmed, Joseph was arrested at the Newel Knight home and taken into custody on trumped-up charges of "disturbing the peace." After a grueling day in court, he was acquitted but then immediately arrested again by a constable from another county. Eventually he was cleared of all charges, and he returned to Harmony.

Joseph and Oliver tried to steal back to Colesville a few days later to complete the confirmations, but their enemies were alert. They had no sooner arrived at the Knights' when a mob began to gather, and Joseph and Oliver had to flee immediately. They were forced to travel all night, with their enemies in hot pursuit, to reach Harmony.

During this period of time, July 1830, while Joseph was at his farm in Harmony, he received the "vision of Moses" now found in the Pearl of Great Price (see Moses 1). He also received sections 24 through 26 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Section 24 was given to Joseph and Oliver in July 1830 to strengthen and encourage them after the persecution they had endured.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 24 Be patient in persecution

D&C 24:8 Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many.

D&C 24:12 At all times and in all places he shall open his mouth . . . and I will give unto him strength such as is not known among men.

1 Behold, thou wast called and chosen to write the Book of Mormon, and to my ministry; and I have lifted thee up out of thine afflictions, and have counseled thee, that thou hast been delivered from all thine enemies, and thou hast been delivered from the powers of Satan and from darkness!

verse 1 “**thou hast been delivered from all thine enemies, and thou hast been delivered from the powers of Satan and from darkness**” Certainly the Lord was not blessing Joseph here with a temporal blessing that would guarantee him freedom from any further persecution, as we know Joseph would yet experience much persecution. It is true that none of the plots or stratagems against Joseph succeeded in stopping his work, so doubtless the Lord’s protective hand was over Joseph.

It seems more likely that this is a spiritual blessing that seems to seal him up to eternal life.

2 Nevertheless, thou art not excusable in thy transgressions; nevertheless, go thy way and sin no more.

verse 2 “**thou art not excusable in thy transgressions**” It is interesting to note that Joseph was honest in recording for posterity even those portions of his revelations that reflect badly on him even though he could easily have edited them out. Joseph was not perfect, but he was nevertheless eminently worthy to translate the Book of Mormon, receive the keys of the kingdom, restore the gospel, and build up the kingdom of God.

verses 3-4, 7, 9 Apparently it was difficult for Joseph himself (and the rest of the Church for that matter) to understand Joseph’s role as full-time prophet and leader of the Church. The Lord here commands him to quit trying to work the land as a means of support and rely instead on the church members for his support. He is called to full-time labor in the kingdom. The Lord even says he will not bless Joseph in temporal labors since they are not his calling. “The laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish” (2 Nephi 26:31).

The obligation of the saints was to support him in this, temporally as well as spiritually, with material sacrifice as well as with prayer. If they keep this commandment they will be blessed. The situation is the same today. There are those who labor full time for the kingdom, and it is necessary for them to be supported by the kingdom. Today these include many of the general authorities and, to some extent, mission and temple presidents, and others. This is not a form of divine extortion. If the kingdom is to be built, there will be those who must work full time in the kingdom.

3 Magnify thine office; and after thou hast sowed thy fields and secured them, go speedily unto the church which is in Colesville, Fayette, and Manchester, and they shall support thee; and I will bless them both spiritually and temporally;

verse 3 “**Magnify thine office**” To magnify is to “make it great” or make it greatly effective, so that no one in our stewardship can shift responsibility for their sins from their own choices to our negligence. Conversely, failing to magnify our calling is to neglect our duty, so that blame for the sins of others is due in part to our own

negligence (see Jacob 1:19). To magnify a calling or an office in the Church is to accept pro-actively all of the responsibilities of the calling and to perform the duties of the calling enthusiastically and completely.

“after thou hast sowed thy fields” This revelation was given in July, which is not a good time to plant in Harmony, Pennsylvania, but Joseph had been too busy planting and nurturing the Church and the saints to plant his own fields at the appropriate time. The Lord’s advice is to go ahead and plant his crops late, and then rely on the saints for additional help if he should need it.

4 But if they receive thee not, I will send upon them a cursing instead of a blessing.

verse 4 The Lord’s warning to withhold blessings from those saints who failed to provide support, both material and spiritual, to the Prophet Joseph.

5 And thou shalt continue in calling upon God in my name, and writing the things which shall be given thee by the Comforter, and expounding all scriptures unto the church.

verse 5 Joseph was already involved in revising the Bible—producing what we know call the Joseph Smith Translation (the JST)—and this verse seems to refer, at least in part, to that project.

6 And it shall be given thee in the very moment what thou shalt speak and write, and they shall hear it, or I will send unto them a cursing instead of a blessing.

verse 6 Another warning to the Church as to how they should regard the teachings and writings of the Prophet Joseph.

7 For thou shalt devote all thy service in Zion; and in this thou shalt have strength.

8 Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days.

verse 8 A rather ominous warning to Joseph from the Lord, but at the same time a comforting promise. One of the ironies of afflictions experienced by those in the Lord’s service is that the more good one does, the more persecution he will provoke and the more afflictions he is likely to experience.

9 And in temporal labors thou shalt not have strength, for this is not thy calling. Attend to thy calling and thou shalt have wherewith to magnify thine office, and to expound all scriptures, and continue in laying on of the hands and confirming the churches.

verse 9 “in temporal labors thou shalt not have strength” The Lord reminds Joseph that his strengths lie in his spiritual calling. Church members sometimes assume that church service implies increased chances of temporal success. This may not be true. Members all share the conditions and risks of mortal life with everyone else.

10 And thy brother Oliver shall continue in bearing my name before the world, and also to the church. And he shall not suppose that he can say enough in my cause; and lo, I am with him to the end.

11 In me he shall have glory, and not of himself, whether in weakness or in strength, whether in bonds or free;

verse 11 Oliver receives here another gentle reminder that he is to glory in God and not in himself. He should trust in and glory in the Lord regardless of whether he finds himself in positions of weakness or bondage or in positions of strength or freedom. This is perhaps another hint of the wedge of pride in Oliver’s character that will later almost destroy him and will cause him to lose many blessings.

verses 12-19 These verses, at least in part, constitute an apostolic commission for the last pruning the vineyard in the latter days. Note the similarities of these verses to Matthew 10:7-15 and Mark 16:15-18. These verses are directed primarily to Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith both of whom have apostolic authority (see the commentary for verse 14). Though they are intended for those with apostolic office, certainly those with other priesthood callings might also find sound counsel in these verses.

12 And at all times, and in all places, he shall open his mouth and declare my gospel as with the voice of a trump, both day and night. And I will give unto him strength such as is not known among men.

verse 12 “declare my gospel as with the voice of a trump” As Moses led the doubting Israelites through forty years of wanderings in the wilderness, an interesting means of communication was developed. A trumpet was sounded that could be heard throughout the entire camp (Leviticus 25:9). This trump was loud and was the alarm that roused Israel and called her to action in times of war and danger (Numbers 10:9; Ezekiel 33:3) and in times of jubilee and celebration (Leviticus 25:9). The Lord has used the symbol of sounding the trump as a signal of the restoration of gospel truths. It is a voice of gladness and a voice of warning. Its message to the righteous is one of celebration and gladness, but to the wicked it is a terrible trump of warning, alerting them to the perils that await the unrepentant. The message of the Doctrine and Covenants is that the warning trump will warn the camp (the world) one last time. It is not merely the Lord’s wish that the voice of warning be sounded to the world. It is his

divine command. The voice of warning is delivered to the saints in scripture, then the Lord commands that the saints deliver the warning to all the world.

13 Require not miracles, except I shall command you, except casting out devils, healing the sick, and against poisonous serpents, and against deadly poisons;

verse 13 “Require not miracles” The Lord continues to counsel Oliver (and the rest of the Church as well). As Oliver opens his mouth to do missionary work, he is commanded to “require not miracles.” This means that Oliver (as well as the rest of us) is counseled by the Lord to do missionary without trying to convert people through the working of miracles. Miracles of themselves do not convert people and therefore should not be used as a missionary tool. The purpose of miracles is to bless and reassure those who are already converted rather than to convert.

14 And these things ye shall not do, except it be required of you by them who desire it, that the scriptures might be fulfilled; for ye shall do according to that which is written.

verse 14 It is felt that verses 13-19 of section 24 are addressed to both Oliver and Joseph rather than just to Oliver. The reason is that the pronoun ye is the second person plural form of the pronoun you.

verses 13-14 We should not seek to perform miracles, with but few exceptions. Why these exceptions? These are the signs that follow all believers (see D&C 84:65-72) which are also summarized in verse 13. They are gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon those who accept Christ and his gospel and are obedient to the Lord’s commandments.

A request to perform a healing should be granted if those requesting really desire to be healed rather than merely to witness a miracle. It is usually wise to require the person who is in need of a miracle to request a priesthood blessing rather than preemptively offer him one. In this way the scriptures are fulfilled, that is, the miracle is performed in behalf of one who believes, and his request for a blessing is a sign of his faith. It is probably not prudent for priesthood holders to visit hospitals uninvited, soliciting opportunities to give blessings.

15 And in whatsoever place ye shall enter, and they receive you not in my name, ye shall leave a cursing instead of a blessing, by casting off the dust of your feet against them as a testimony, and cleansing your feet by the wayside.

verse 15 Cursings as well as blessings may be administered by the power and authority of the priesthood (see D&C 124:93) and include the sealing up of the unbelieving and rebellious to punishment (see D&C 1:8-9). The act of cleansing the feet as a testimony against those who reject the servants of the Lord is an ordinance less of cursing and more a witness or demonstration that a witness of the truth has been given and has been rejected. Through this cleansing ordinance, those who rejected the

truth are on their own, and those who preached the gospel to them are no longer responsible for them before the Lord (see D&C 88:81-82). The responsibility for their rejection is on their own heads. It is apparent in this and other scriptures given later in the Doctrine and Covenants that this ordinance is to be performed only when the Lord expressly commands it (see also D&C 75:20-22) and only under unusual and extreme conditions. It would likely be commanded only when individuals willfully and maliciously oppose the truth when the truth is authoritatively presented.

16 And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall lay their hands upon you by violence, ye shall command to be smitten in my name; and, behold, I will smite them according to your words, in mine own due time.

17 And whosoever shall go to law with thee shall be cursed by the law.

verses 16-17 The Lord avows that whatever men do to Joseph and Oliver will be done also to them. If men are violent toward them, God will smite them in return, in his own due time. If men use the law and the courts to attack the apostles and prophets, they will suffer themselves by the law and the court. “Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein” (Proverbs 26:27).

18 And thou shalt take no purse nor scrip, neither staves, neither two coats, for the church shall give unto thee in the very hour what thou needest for food and for raiment, and for shoes and for money, and for scrip.

verse 18 A purse is a coin-pouch. Many have taken the word “scrip” to mean the scriptures. This is not correct. Scrip was a small bag that shepherds carried at their side with a strap over their shoulder. It was filled with extra clothing and some food. The Lord is saying not to take any luggage, but rather depend upon the Lord, the Church, and the good people they contacted and taught for their temporal support.

19 For thou art called to prune my vineyard with a mighty pruning, yea, even for the last time; yea, and also all those whom thou hast ordained, and they shall do even according to this pattern. Amen.

verse 19 In this final dispensation the Lord’s missionaries are going forth to gather scattered Israel before the appointed day of burning when the vineyard will be purified of corruption. The imagery in this passage is similar to that used in the allegory of the olive tree. Pruning is the cutting off of evil individuals and preserving the righteous for spiritual instruction.

Section 25 An Elect Lady—Emma Smith

By July of 1830 it had been three and one half years since Joseph and Emma had married. They were married on January 18, 1827. Joseph was now twenty-four years old and Emma just turning twenty-six. Emma was born the seventh of nine children to Isaac and Elizabeth Hale on July 10, 1804, in Harmony, Pennsylvania. It is reported that Emma was a beautiful woman with an attractive personality, and she had the reputation of being a refined and dignified individual who was an excellent housekeeper and cook. Her Methodist upbringing had helped her develop a great love of music.

Emma married Joseph knowing that if she became his wife, she would share in the persecution. She was a woman of faith and courage. As persecution was heaped upon the Church from its inception, Emma, of course, experienced it also. Even apart from the harassment, however, life had been difficult for Emma. Three and a half years of marriage had afforded few moments of uninterrupted domestic peace. She had nearly perished herself when her firstborn son died in childbirth in June 1828. Joseph was gone from their home in Harmony more than half of the time, beginning in the winter of 1829-30, seeing to the publication of the Book of Mormon, organizing the Church, preaching, and baptizing. She had accompanied Joseph to Colesville and had seen him arrested and tried twice and a mob threaten to tar and feather him. When Joseph and Oliver had to flee home from Colesville to Harmony, she had been pregnant with twins. Also adding to her stress was the fact that her parents and other members of her family never did believe in Joseph's mission. Of Emma, the Prophet's mother Lucy Mack Smith, wrote:

I have never seen a woman in my life, who would endure every species of fatigue and hardship, from month to month, and from year to year, with that unflinching courage, zeal, and patience, which she has ever done; for I know that which she has had to endure. . . . She has breasted the storms of persecution, and buffeted the rage of men and devils, which would have borne down almost any other woman (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 190-91).

She passed through many trials and shared them in an admirable way, as did the faithful wives of other church leaders. Of course she was also human and possessed emotions found in all of us. Being the wife of the man whom the Lord had blessed, she felt she was entitled to some special considerations. It was, for example, difficult for her to understand why she could not view the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and other sacred things. At times this altogether human thought caused her to murmur and question Joseph as to why she was denied this privilege.

Section 25 was given to Emma in July 1830, after Joseph and Emma had returned to their home in Harmony. Perhaps it was received near the time of her

birthday, to encourage and instruct her. Section 25 is unique because it is the only section that is addressed to a woman. This revelation to Emma includes many elements that we might find in a patriarchal blessing. Some of the instructions, admonitions, and promises to Emma pertain to the present and others to the future. The promised opportunities and blessings are predicated upon faithfulness and obedience.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 25 An Elect Lady—Emma Smith

D&C 25:12 My soul delighteth in the song of the heart; the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me.

1 Hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, while I speak unto you, Emma Smith, my daughter; for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom.

verse 1 “Emma Smith, my daughter” This is not God the Father addressing Emma as his spirit-daughter. Rather, this is Jesus Christ referring to her as a spiritually begotten daughter, born again as his child through her baptism and his atonement.

“all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom”

The scriptures teach the doctrine that all those who make the covenants of baptism can be born again into the kingdom of God and become sons or daughters of the Savior because they are “spiritually begotten” by him (see Mosiah 5:7; 4 Nephi 1:17; Mormon 9:26; Ether 3:14; Ephesians 1:5; Moses 6:64-68). Such persons are distinguished from all the other children of God who live on this earth through the reception of these covenants. Those who will not enter into such covenants are called the sons and daughters of men (see Moses 8:14-15), and others who sin to the extent that Cain did are called sons of perdition (Moses 5:24; D&C 76:31-32).

Those who are “sons and daughters in my kingdom” are members of the kingdom of God on earth. How do we maintain our positions as sons and daughters of God? We endure to the end. And what does that mean? It does not mean to hang on to your spiritual progress for dear life hoping that death will get you before you begin to backslide. Rather it means to continue to progress spiritually by pro-actively seeking the Spirit’s counsel as to how you might improve—of what you might repent—and then continuing to deny your natural self and obeying the Lord’s commands.

2 A revelation I give unto you concerning my will; and if thou art faithful and walk in the paths of virtue before me, I will preserve thy life, and thou shalt receive an inheritance in Zion.

verse 2 “I will preserve thy life” The Lord here may well be referring to her mortal life. This promise was literally fulfilled for Emma in the years following this

revelation. Each time the mobs attacked Joseph, Emma and their children were also in danger. The conflict in Missouri with its extermination order and winter exodus killed many of the saints and proved very difficult for Emma, but through all these afflictions the Lord did preserve her life.

3 Behold, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou art an elect lady, whom I have called.

verse 3 “thou art an elect lady, whom I have called” Elect does not mean “special” or “superior” but is a synonym for “called.” For example, elected officials are not intended to be special or superior citizens, but rather citizens called by vote of the people to serve the people. God’s called or elect people are those selected by God to serve him in doing his work upon the earth. They are called or elected in the premortal world because of the spiritual qualifications which they possessed at the time of their election. Can there be any doubt that Emma was especially valiant in the premortal world and that she was foreordained while in that realm to be the companion of the prophet of the restoration?

In March 1842 Joseph will explain that this verse has been partially fulfilled by Emma’s calling to preside over the newly organized Relief Society. At that time, “Joseph read to his wife the revelation given in July 1830, wherein she was called an elect lady and told the sisters that this appellation meant that she was to be elected to a certain work; this revelation was fulfilled in her election to the presidency of the Society” (Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration*, 506. Citing *HC*, 4:552-53).

The well-known scriptural passage “there are many called, but few are chosen” (D&C 121:34) is worth mentioning here. In this verse (D&C 121:34), the word *called* means “elected.” In the same verse (again, D&C 121:34) the word *chosen* means sealed up to eternal life or “exalted.”

4 Murmur not because of the things which thou hast not seen, for they are withheld from thee and from the world, which is wisdom in me in a time to come.

verse 4 As mentioned previously, Emma had wondered why she had not been allowed to view the plates and the Urim and Thummim (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:125). The Lord admonishes her and tells her that it is for a wise purpose to be made known in time to come, why she and the world were deprived of this privilege.

5 And the office of thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., thy husband, in his afflictions, with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness.

verse 5 “the office of thy calling” The Lord explains that Emma’s stewardship at present is to support her husband. While Joseph was engaged in the sublime work,

he continually had to fend off the ignorant and the vicious. How needful, how wonderful, to have a wife—his closest friend and companion—to help, comfort, and console him.

6 And thou shalt go with him at the time of his going, and be unto him for a scribe, while there is no one to be a scribe for him, that I may send my servant, Oliver Cowdery, whithersoever I will.

verse 6 When Joseph traveled, if possible, Emma was to accompany him and function as his scribe—secretary, clerk, recorder. Emma was a literate and intelligent woman who had already served as scribe for portions of the book of Mormon translation. The reference here is to her later service as a temporary scribe for the Joseph Smith Translation—Joseph’s revision of the Bible.

7 And thou shalt be ordained under his hand to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church, according as it shall be given thee by my Spirit.

verse 7 In March 1842, in Nauvoo, Emma will be “ordained” or set apart as the first president of the Relief Society by Elder John Taylor.

We have subsequently developed a distinction between being “ordained” and being “set apart.” Men are ordained to offices in the priesthood and set apart to preside over stakes, wards, branches, missions, and auxiliary organizations. The sisters are set apart—not ordained—as presidents of auxiliary organizations and to other offices in those organizations. In this verse the word “ordained” is used in a general, generic sense to mean set apart.

“and to exhort the church” Is this calling of Emma’s to “exhort the church” consistent with the apostle Paul’s statement that women are not to “speak” in church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)? The Prophet Joseph provided us with a correct interpretation of this statement of Paul’s in Joseph’s inspired revision of the Bible. Joseph changed this verse to say that women are not to “rule” in the Church. The implication is that women are to be directed in the Church by the priesthood. This principle was stated by the Prophet Joseph to the members of the first Relief Society:

You will receive instructions through the order of the priesthood which God has established, through the medium of those appointed to lead, guide and direct the affairs of the Church in this last dispensation; and I now turn the key in your behalf in the name of the Lord, and this Society shall rejoice, and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time henceforth; this is the beginning of better days to the poor and needy, who shall be made to rejoice and pour forth blessings on your heads (HC, 4:607).

8 For he shall lay his hands upon thee, and thou shalt receive the Holy Ghost, and thy time shall be given to writing, and to learning much.

verse 8 At the time of this revelation, Emma had been baptized but not confirmed. She will be confirmed by her husband at a small, informal sacrament meeting held at the Smith home in Harmony in early August.

9 And thou needest not fear, for thy husband shall support thee in the church; for unto them is his calling, that all things might be revealed unto them, whatsoever I will, according to their faith.

verse 9 “thou needest not fear” Apparently Emma had been concerned about how Joseph could support a family by farming if he spent his full time in building the Church. The answer was that Joseph would support her, but not by farming. The support would rather come from the Church for which he labored (see D&C 24:3). The pronouns “them” and “their” in this verse refer to the saints—the members of the Church.

In the earliest printings of this revelation, the phrase “support thee in the Church” was rendered “support thee from the Church.” Here then was further evidence that Joseph and Emma were to receive their subsistence from the members of the Church and not be engaged in temporal labors themselves.

10 And verily I say unto thee that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better.

verse 10 This verse reminds me of a statement of Hugh Nibley’s. Referring to this mortal life, he said, “It isn’t the real life . . . this is not the real world” (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon—Semester 1: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, 1988-90* [Provo: FARMS], 461). It would seem to me that the essence of spirituality is to live in this world and to succeed in it, but allow your overriding priority to be issues of the eternal life which follows this life.

11 And it shall be given thee, also, to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church.

12 For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.

verse 12 “my soul delighteth in the song of the heart” Singing is an act of worship and of communion with God, and it delights him. Again, the pronoun “their” refers to the church members.

verses 11-12 Emma was a gifted musician with a particular talent for singing. With the help of William W. Phelps, Emma went to work, and a selection of hymns was made and finally published in February 1836. It contained ninety selections. In this collection were found many sectarian hymns and also a goodly number (thirty four) by Latter-day Saints, especially William W. Phelps, Parley P. Pratt, and Eliza R. Snow.

Among these were some of the “classic” LDS hymns including “The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning,” “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” “Redeemer of Israel,” and “How Firm a Foundation.” The book was small in size and included the words of the hymns, but not music. The second collection of hymns was published in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1841 and contained 340 selections. A third edition was planned at Nauvoo, but never printed.

13 Wherefore, lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made.

verse 13 “cleave unto the covenants” For a brief discussion of the interesting word *cleave*, see the commentary for D&C 11:19. Here the Lord is admonishing Emma to keep, or adhere to, the covenants she had made.

14 Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride. Let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory which shall come upon him.

verse 14 Pride is inevitably self-serving, while the Lord would command us to seek for the welfare, spiritual and physical, of others and not concentrate on ourselves (Matthew 10:39).

15 Keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive. And except thou do this, where I am you cannot come.

verse 15 “Keep my commandments continually” Here is an apt definition of enduring to the end (see the commentary for verse 1). The Lord is no respecter of persons. No one is given the greatest gift of all, the gift of eternal life, because of the good deeds of someone else. Ancestry, family name, church position, or the faithfulness of loved ones cannot guarantee eternal life. Eternal life can only be obtained by one who abides the covenants made personally by the Lord.

16 And verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my voice unto all. Amen.

verse 16 “this is my voice unto all” This should be understood to mean the Lord’s counsel to Emma herein applies to all women in the Church.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught of women and their importance in the Lord’s plan:

We know so little, brothers and sisters, about the reasons for the division of duties between womanhood and manhood as well as between motherhood and priesthood. These were divinely determined in another time and another place. We are accustomed to focusing on the men of God because theirs is the priesthood and leadership line. But paralleling that authority line is a stream of righteous influence reflecting the remarkable women of God who have existed in all ages and dispensations, including our own. Greatness is not measured by coverage in column

inches, either in newspapers or in the scriptures. The story of the women of God, therefore, is, for now, an untold drama within a drama. . . .

Just as certain men were foreordained from before the foundations of the world, so were certain women appointed to certain tasks. Divine design—not chance—brought Mary forward to be the mother of Jesus. The boy prophet, Joseph Smith, was blessed not only with a great father but also with a superb mother, Lucy Mack, who influenced a whole dispensation.

In our modern kingdom, it is no accident that women were, through the Relief Society, assigned compassionate service. So often the service of women seems instinctive, while that of some men seems more labored. It is precisely because the daughters of Zion are so uncommon that the adversary will not leave them alone. . . .

So often our sisters comfort others when their own needs are greater than those being comforted. That quality is like the generosity of Jesus on the cross. Empathy during agony is a portion of divinity!

When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistices made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and neighborhoods? Will what happened in cradles and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses? When the surf of the centuries has made the great pyramids so much sand, the everlasting family will still be standing, because it is a celestial institution, formed outside telestial time. The women of God know this.

No wonder the men of God support and sustain you sisters in your unique roles, for the act of deserting home in order to shape society is like thoughtlessly removing crucial fingers from an imperiled dike in order to teach people to swim. . . .

Finally, remember: When we return to our real home, it will be with the “mutual approbation” of those who reign in the “royal courts on high.” There we will find beauty such as mortal “eye hath not seen;” we will hear sounds of surpassing music which mortal “ear hath not heard.” Could such a regal homecoming be possible without the anticipatory arrangements of a heavenly mother? (*CR*, April 1978, 13-15).

Emma Smith was at the Prophet’s side until his death at Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844. She married Lewis Bidamon in December 1847. She lived the remainder of her life in Nauvoo. She was 75 years old when she died in the mansion house on April 30, 1879.

Section 26 Common Consent

This section, given in July 1830, in Harmony. Joseph offered no information in the *History of the Church* about the circumstances in which section 26 was received.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 26 Common Consent

D&C 26:2 All things shall be done by common consent in the church.

1 Behold, I say unto you that you shall let your time be devoted to the studying of the scriptures, and to preaching, and to confirming the church at Colesville, and to performing your labors on the land, such as is required, until after you shall go to the west to hold the next conference; and then it shall be made known what you shall do.

verse 1 “you shall let your time be devoted to the studying of the scriptures” Joseph is instructed to continue his work in correcting the King James Bible. See the supplemental article *Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision of the Bible—The JST*.

“and to confirming the church at Colesville” Colesville, New York, is about twenty miles north of Harmony, Pennsylvania. The branch at Colesville consisted mainly of the Joseph and Newel Knight families, but there were other interested persons in the area. As the foregoing historical summaries have made clear, Joseph is having trouble getting the newly baptized Colesville saints confirmed members of the Church because of persecutions in that town. Joseph is counseled by the Lord to complete that assignment.

“until after you shall go to the west to hold the next conference” Going “to the west” meant going northwest to Fayette, New York, a distance of about a hundred miles. The “next conference” will be held at Fayette on September 26 and 27, 1830.

2 And all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith. Amen.

verse 2 Our church government is neither a theocracy nor a democracy. That is to say, the Lord exercises his sovereign authority through his authorized servants, but it is the privilege of the people to accept or reject—to agree or disagree. Church members do not have the power to nominate or elect, but they do have the right to decide whether they will sustain and support. This form of government has been called a theo-democracy, and it is the form of government that will exist during the Millennium. Should a majority of the saints refuse to sustain a name or a proposed action, it must be withdrawn. Elder Charles W. Penrose taught, “The voice of the people should respond

to the voice of the Lord. It is the voice of the Lord and the voice of the people together in this Church that sanctions all things therein. . . . The Lord designs that every individual member shall take an interest therein, shall bear a part of the responsibility, and shall take upon him or her the spirit of the Church, and be an active living member of the body” (*JD*, 21:45-46).

A theo-democracy is the law of heaven as well as the law of his Church. The Lord said of his power, “Behold, I am from above, and my power lieth beneath” (D&C 63:59). That is, he doesn’t govern by some power or authority which comes from elsewhere. Rather, he governs by divine directive but acknowledges the agency or those governed and awaits their consent. His very power derives from those he governs who, by and large, love and obey him (Abraham 4:18)—thus he is powerful.

Should a member of the Church ever cast a negative vote for an individual being sustained to an office in the Church? President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

I have no right to raise my hand in opposition to a man who is appointed to any position in this Church, simply because I may not like him, or because of some personal disagreement or feeling I may have, but only on the grounds that he is guilty of wrong doing, or transgression of the laws of the Church which would disqualify him for the position which he is called to hold (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:124).

When we do sustain an individual to a calling, we are not simply giving our passive consent. We are instead obligated to actively support and sustain that individual.

Brief Historical Setting

1830 August

The Knights, Sally and Newel, who became close friends of Joseph and Emma, visited the Smiths in Harmony in early August 1830. The four held a confirmation service for the purpose of confirming Sally and Emma. Both had been baptized in Colesville but not confirmed. Joseph went out to purchase wine for the sacrament to be administered at that service. As he did so he was met by an angel representing the Lord who instructed him concerning the sacrament [**D&C 27 - The Sacrament Emblems**].

Section 27 The Sacrament Emblems

The first four verses of this section were received in August 1830, and the remaining verses were received the following month, in September 1830 while Joseph was in Fayette in connection with a church conference being held there. To be more precise, those materials that were received in August 1830 included the first four verses, verse 5 through the word “Moroni,” the first part of verse 13 through the word “rejoice,” verse 14, and finally, these words from verse 18: “and be faithful until I come.”

Early in August 1830 Newel Knight and his wife, Sally, visited Joseph and Emma in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Both Sally Knight and Emma had been baptized June 28, 1830, in Colesville, but a mob had broken up the service, and they were unable to be confirmed members of the Church at that time. Therefore, during the visit in Harmony, plans were made for their confirmation service. During a confirmation service the sacrament was administered. As part of their preparation for this event, Joseph set out to procure wine to be used in the sacrament service. On his way he was met by a heavenly messenger who instructed him that it was not necessary to purchase wine from those in Harmony who were persecuting him, and that it really did not matter what was used for the emblems of the sacrament so long as they were partaken with an eye single to the glory of God and in remembrance of him. Joseph was further instructed to make his own wine with grape juice.

The story of what then happened is interesting. Joseph did obtain some grapes and squeezed them himself. This was in August, and grapes aren't really ripe until October. The juice that Joseph thus obtained was so bad that water was used for the confirmation service. In addition to the Smiths and the Knights, John Whitmer was also present at the service.

Fermented grape juice or wine continued to be used as the sacramental emblem. Even section 89, the Word of Wisdom, condones the use of wine for the sacrament. Over the years we have evolved to the use of water, particularly after the turn of the century, because water is plentiful, available, inexpensive, and easy to prepare. Since 1906 the Church has used water exclusively.

During the second part of this section the Lord promises that in the future there will be a great meeting during which the sacrament will be administered. This meeting will be attended by the Lord, Joseph, and several great prophets. Presumably this meeting will take place at the second coming of the Lord. Perhaps it is the meeting to occur at Adam-ondi-Ahman (see commentary for section 45).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 27 The Sacrament Emblems

D&C 27:15-18 The full armor of God.

1 Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer, whose word is quick and powerful.

verse 1 “whose word is quick” *Quick* here does not mean swift but rather means something living and alive. Thus, to be quickened by the Spirit means to be given spiritual life. The world of the Lord is quick and powerful because it is a source of life, energy, and real power.

2 For, behold, I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory—remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins.

verse 2 “it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament” Because the emblems of the sacrament are symbolic rather than mystically connected to the physical body and blood of the Lord, any food or liquid may, with permission of priesthood leaders, be used as the emblems by which we remember him. Some Christians believe that the bread and the wine actually become the body and blood of Christ, which the believers then really eat and drink. This is the doctrine of transubstantiation, a doctrine which the Church does not accept. In the Latter-day Saint view, after the emblems have been blessed, the bread is still bread and the water is still water, although they have been consecrated for a particular use as symbols of Christ’s flesh and blood, and in that capacity they are treated with respect.

3 Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, that you shall not purchase wine neither strong drink of your enemies;

4 Wherefore, you shall partake of none except it is made new among you; yea, in this my Father’s kingdom which shall be built up on the earth.

verses 3-4 The commandment in these verses is not against using wine for the sacrament, which practice continued for some time, but against buying sacramental wine from the enemies of the Church. Apparently the Lord’s warning here was intended to protect Joseph from designing persons who would adulterate the wine and therefore attempt to poison Joseph and the other saints who partook of it. Joseph is counseled to use only wine that was made by the saints—“made new among you.” Some have interpreted this as a commandment to use only grape juice rather than fermented wine for the sacrament, but this cannot be correct, because the Church continued to use fermented sacramental wine both in Kirtland and in Nauvoo.

verses 5-14 We have records indicating that each of the great prophets mentioned in these verses (with the possible exception of those mentioned in verse 10) ministered to the Prophet Joseph and restored some aspect of the gospel through him—particularly keys of authority. Perhaps these are the prophets who, at the meeting

to be held at Adam-ondi-Ahman, will return their keys to Adam, who will in turn give them to the Savior. Then Christ will hold all of them, and he will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords during the Millennium.

5 Behold, this is wisdom in me; wherefore, marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth, and with Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim;

verse 5 “I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth” When Jesus blessed the wine at the Last supper, he told his disciples, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). Most translators take “new” in this passage to mean “anew” or “again.” Elder John Taylor noted, “In partaking of the sacrament we not only commemorate the death and sufferings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but we also shadow forth the time when he will come again and when we shall meet and eat bread with him in the kingdom of God” (*JD*, 14:185). This great sacrament meeting, or perhaps this series of sacrament meetings, following the second coming is sometimes referred to as “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9; D&C 58:11; 65:3), and it may be similar to the sacrament meeting the resurrected Lord held with the Nephites when he visited them (3 Nephi 20:1-9).

This could refer to several visitations that the Savior will make to the saints as the time of the Millennium nears. For instance, there is the grand gathering at Adam-ondi-Ahman at which Adam will preside over his family (D&C 116). Perhaps there are other such meetings at which the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper will be administered and the Savior will be present.

“Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon” We have discussed previously the fact that the prophet Moroni holds the keys for our dispensation for the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the record of the stick of Ephraim or the stick of Joseph (Ezekiel 37:15-19).

“Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of the everlasting gospel” See the commentary for D&C 1:23.

“the stick of Ephraim” This phrase refers to Ezekiel 37:15-17. There is a fine point of distinction which should be made here. Technically, the two “sticks” are symbolic of the descendants or “houses” of Ephraim and Judah who had divided into two separate kingdoms and were, in Ezekiel’s time, bitter enemies. The “sticks” are not, technically, symbolic of the records of the two kingdoms. Thus, Ezekiel’s prophecy, on one level at least, is about the prophesied gathering and reconciliation of the houses of Ephraim and Judah, the northern and southern kingdoms, which together comprise all of Israel, including the Book of Mormon people and the Jews. Moroni is correctly said

here to hold “the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim,” that is, the record of the house of Ephraim, which is the Book of Mormon.

In contemporary LDS usage this fine distinction has been lost, and it is customary to speak of the Book of Mormon itself as the stick of Ephraim, rather than as the record of the stick of Ephraim. This usage is perhaps defensible, however, for the Bible and the Book of Mormon, as separate histories now joined, may themselves symbolize the two houses that have been separated but are soon to be joined as the union of their records foreshadows. Moreover, the term sticks, or writing tablets, makes no sense as a symbol for houses or descendants without some connection to their written records.

Speculation over how a “stick” could be thought of as scripture has led some to think the term refers to scrolls or tally sticks. Others note that in ancient Babylonia, where Ezekiel prophesied, scribes typically wrote not only on clay tablets and parchments but also on boards covered with wax. Wax writing boards were so easy to make and so practical to use that scribes used them for many different kinds of records, including business, religious, literary, military, and so forth. Scholars further note that the “stick” upon which Ezekiel wrote is translated from the Hebrew word *ets*, which means literally a tree, wood, or something wooden and could therefore be referring to a wax writing board. Other actions by Ezekiel seem to parallel what Babylonian scribes did when they wrote on writing boards. For example, he followed the Babylonian practice of writing the owner’s name on each board: “For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions; then . . . for Joseph, the stick [board] of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions” (Ezekiel 37:17).

6 And also with Elias, to whom I have committed the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, concerning the last days;

verse 6 Whenever the name Elias is mentioned in any of our scripture, consider three possible meanings:

1. There is a specific person named Elias—the prophet Noah. His name is Elias in the same sense that Adam’s name is Michael. This knowledge comes from a sermon Joseph gave to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1839 (*HC*, 3:386). In this sermon he taught that Gabriel is Noah. In D&C 27:7 we will learn that Elias is the messenger who visited Zacharias to announce that his wife, Elisabeth, would bear a son. Hence, Elias is Gabriel is Noah.

2. The name Elias may be used as a title. The Prophet Noah accomplished one of the most important feats of restoration in the history of the earth following the Flood. Noah was thus given the keys of restoration or of preparing the way for the Savior and for the gospel. Hence when anyone does restorative or preparative kinds of work, he is really doing the work of Noah and may be called an Elias. An example is John the

Baptist whose major role was in preparing the way for Christ and in setting the stage for the restoration of the gospel. Thus he is accorded the title—an “Elias.” Other examples of Eliases in this final dispensation include Moroni, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah, Raphael, and Michael (D&C 13; 110; 128:19-21).

3. The Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Elijah is *Elias*. Generally, in the New Testament when the name Elias is used it refers to the prophet Elijah.

In this particular verse the Lord refers to “Elias” as one who will bring “to pass the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.” There is no single Elias who fits this description regardless of how we define Elias. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has taught us that the Elias referred to in D&C 27 is not one man, but rather a composite group of Eliases whose combined mission it was to restore all keys and powers of the priesthood in this final dispensation (*Mormon Doctrine*, 221).

7 And also John the son of Zacharias, which Zacharias he (Elias) visited and gave promise that he should have a son, and his name should be John, and he should be filled with the spirit of Elias;

verse 7 This verse refers to Gabriel or Noah as Elias, the angel who visited Zacharias.

8 Which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron;

9 And also Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, that the whole earth may not be smitten with a curse;

10 And also with Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain;

verse 10 Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are often called “the fathers” (D&C 2:2) or “the patriarchs” (Greek for “first fathers” or “ruling fathers”).

“the promises remain” The promises of the Lord are extended to the house of Israel by virtue of the Abrahamic covenant, made originally with Abraham and extended through Isaac and to Jacob and the house of Israel. For the particulars of the Abrahamic covenant see the commentary for 1 Nephi 14:8 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

11 And also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days;

verse 11 This is an important verse in that it is the first to make clear that Michael is Adam and is also called the “ancient of days.” Michael is Hebrew for “who is like God.”

12 And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them;

verse 12 This verse summarizes the separate items that Peter, James, and John restored to earth. All of it is easily understandable—the Melchizedek Priesthood and the keys of that priesthood including the keys of the apostleship—except for the phrase “and of the same things which I revealed unto them.” The ambiguity of this phrase has led some to speculate that this phrase may refer to sacred ordinances.

13 Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;

verse 13 Herein we are taught that we do have the appropriate keys, the authority to preside, and that this is the last or final dispensation—the dispensation of the “fulness of times.” David W. Patten, one of the first apostles and martyrs of this dispensation, said of the “dispensation of the fulness of times” that it “is made up of all the dispensations that ever have been given since the world began . . . in the which all things shall be fulfilled that have been spoken of since the earth was made” (*HC*, 3:51).

“for the last times; and for the fulness of times” These two phrases, both of which refer to our present dispensation, have a shade of different meaning. The phrase “last times” emphasizes the character of this as the last in a series of many basically similar dispensations. The phrase “fulness of times” emphasizes the unique nature of this dispensation as the one in which all things will be restored, the final gathering and restoration of Israel will take place, and all the words and promises of the Lord to other dispensations will be fulfilled.

14 And also with all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world.

verse 14 Those who have entered into the gospel covenant and hence are sons and daughters of Christ. They have gathered out of the world to the Lord’s earthly kingdom. This may well refer to all of us in the Lord’s latter-day kingdom. Perhaps we too will have the opportunity to partake of the sacrament with the Savior in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman!

verses 15-18 These verses deal with the metaphor of taking upon ourselves the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17). The loins, heart, feet, and head represent those four parts of the body and four realms of human activity in which we are most at risk from evil influence. The loins symbolize procreative power. The heart symbolizes our conduct and what we love. The feet symbolize our course, our objectives, and our goals, and the head symbolizes our thoughts. When truth girds our loins, we are modest and virtuous, knowing the true significance and purpose of these powers. When the breastplate of righteousness covers our heart, our desires will be proper at all times and we will love righteousness. When our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, we will walk in holy paths. And when our head is covered with the helmet of salvation, our thinking will be enlightened by knowledge of the Lord's great plan. Additionally, the shield of faith will deflect the doubts that scoffers and critics will throw our way. Finally, our only weapon, and the only one we need, will be the sword of the Spirit, with which we can reach, touch, and cut to the quick those with whom we come in contact (see, *Feet Shod With the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace*, 2-7; Reeve, "Whole Armor of God," 193).

15 Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.

verse 15 "gird up your loins" See the commentary for D&C 36:8.

16 Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;

verse 16 "mine angels" The word *angel* (Greek *angelos* or Hebrew *malach*) in the Bible is simply the generic word for a messenger. So anyone authorized to bring a message from the presence of God is an "angel," whether they are spirits, translated, or resurrected beings.

17 Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;

18 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen.

verse 18 "ye shall be caught up" At the time of the Lord's second coming, the righteous who are still on the earth, and some of the dead who will come forth on the earth in a resurrected state, will be physically caught up from the earth before it is cleansed by fire (see D&C 88:96-98; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). The purpose for being

caught up is not to be taken away to heaven or anywhere else, but to avoid the conflagration which will consume the wicked (who are not caught up) and everything else that is celestial upon the earth. Christ is coming here to rule and reign upon a cleansed earth. Compare that to Matthew 6:10: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." After the great cleansing by fire, mortal saints will live out their appointed days upon the earth and then be changed to resurrected glory in the blink of an eye (see D&C 63:50-51). For further discussion of the Millennium, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 30, *The Millennium*.

According to Joseph Smith, "Christ and the resurrected saints will reign over the earth during the thousand years. They will not probably dwell upon the earth, but will visit it when they please, or when it is necessary to govern it" (*TPJS*, 268).

Section 28 Only the Prophet Receives Revelation for the Church

In addition to Sally Knight, there were other Colesville members who had been baptized, but because of the persecutions they had not been confirmed. Joseph received word that they awaited his return. Thus, on August 29, 1830, Joseph (in company with Hyrum Smith, John Whitmer, and David Whitmer) made the treacherous trip after praying mightily to the Lord to protect them. Joseph's enemies had advertised a five-dollar reward to anyone who reported Joseph's appearance in town.

On the way, the party of Mormons came upon a road crew that included some of Joseph's bitterest enemies. To the amazement of the foursome, "they looked earnest[ly] at us, but not knowing us, we passed on without interruption" (*HC*, 1:108-9). The group, led by the Prophet Joseph, were able to confirm the Colesville members and slip away without being noticed.

By late August 1830, persecution of Joseph and Emma in Harmony had intensified. Even Isaac Hale had turned against Joseph, and without Isaac's protection, Joseph and Emma were defenseless. Peter Whitmer, Sr., once again offered his house for a refuge, and in the last week of August, Newel Knight moved Joseph and Emma in a wagon to Fayette.

Joseph's presence was needed in Fayette for other reasons. Through the summer, Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family, including Hiram Page (see Character Vignette on Hiram Page following the commentary on this section), had begun to perceive themselves as independent authorities with the right to correct Joseph and receive revelation. Actually this belief came about quite naturally as all of these people were converts from congregational-type churches. In those churches, anyone could declare doctrine, and if the rest of the congregation agreed, the doctrine became a tenet of their faith. The Whitmers and Oliver Cowdery were as willing to believe revelations from Hiram Page as from Joseph Smith because of their background.

When Joseph arrived in Fayette, the Whitmers and Oliver were studying some revelations that Hiram Page had received. It seems that Hiram had obtained a stone that was four inches wide and a quarter of an inch thick. It had a hole in it so it could be hung around his neck. It was grayish-greenish in color and had light wavy lines running through it. He had used this seer stone to receive some revelations. Apparently one of these revelations pertained to the location of Zion.

In reading Ether 13 in the Book of Mormon, it was learned that the New Jerusalem or Zion was to be built upon the American continent. This caused much speculation in the Church as to the location of Zion. Hiram Page endeavored to settle the question by means of a revelation through his stone. At this point in church history, the members had not yet learned that there was but one appointed of the Lord to receive revelations for the Church.

Earlier in the summer, Oliver had written to Joseph about a mistake in section 20, verse 37. This verse outlines the requirements which a candidate for baptism must fulfill before being received in baptism: “And again, by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism—All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church.”

Apparently Oliver felt that these requirements for membership placed too much power in the hands of whoever might interview an individual in order to assess his or her worthiness for baptism. He saw in verse 37 the seeds of priestcraft (*HC*, 1:104-5). The Whitmers had sided with Oliver, and it was only with much difficulty and after much anguish that Joseph was able to convince them of their error.

Oliver’s attempted correction of Joseph’s mistake also may have a plausible explanation. Verse 37 of section 20, without the part Oliver Cowdery objected to, is found in a manuscript written by Oliver Cowdery titled *The Articles of the Church of Christ* (see the commentary materials for section 20). Since much of that document was included in section 20, Oliver was probably upset that Joseph had made what he thought was an unwarranted insertion into something he had written. Joseph had inserted the phrase “and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins.” Given Oliver’s Protestant background, which included the doctrine of salvation by and through the grace of God and not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:19), perhaps Oliver felt that Joseph’s insertion placed too much emphasis on salvation by a man’s works. For a discussion of the issue of grace and works, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 4, chapter 11, *Grace and Works*.

Probably this incident, as well as the matter of Hiram Page’s revelations, were natural events caused by new converts’ trying to find their way in this new organization. If they had been left unchecked by Joseph, Satan certainly would have used them to his advantage, but let us not be too hard on these early members by thinking they were in some way deliberately trying to subvert Joseph and the Church.

At first Joseph was going to wait for the conference scheduled for September 26, 1830, to address this problem, but when he realized how far the error had spread among the saints, he decided to confront Hiram Page immediately. Initially Joseph was strongly resisted by Oliver Cowdery. Finally, however, he was able to convince Oliver and the Whitmers privately that Hiram Page’s revelations were not genuine. Hiram Page, Oliver, and the others, after becoming convinced of their errors, renounced the revelations as not being of God, and acknowledged that Satan had sought to overthrow their beliefs in the true plan of God.

Then Joseph petitioned the Lord for further direction and received section 28. This revelation came through Joseph to Oliver Cowdery and not to Hiram Page because Oliver was believing in the revelations which his brother-in-law was receiving. The Lord is therefore putting both Oliver and Hiram in their proper places. Oliver is told that he is to declare and teach the revelations and commandments of the Church but not write commandments or scripture. Only Joseph is authorized to receive revelations for the whole Church. Oliver is instructed further to tell Hiram Page that his revelations are not of God but are of Satan. The new converts in Kirtland will later be required to learn this same lesson (see D&C 43).

Newel Knight, who was an eyewitness to this affair, added a few notes of interest: “On my arrival [in Fayette for the conference] I found Brother Joseph in great distress of mind on account of Hyrum [Hiram] Page. . . . That night I occupied the same room that he did and the greater part of the night was spent in prayer and supplication” (Woodward, “Historical Development,” 404-05).

On September 26, 1830, the first item on the agenda for the conference was a discussion of the Hiram Page affair and the reading of section 28. Perhaps Oliver had talked privately with Hiram Page before the conference, according to the Lord’s command (verse 12). At any rate, to Joseph’s great relief, all present at the conference, including Hiram Page, renounced the stone and its “revelations” (*HC*, 1:115).

Another important aspect of this section is that Oliver is called on a mission to the “Lamanites” or Indian peoples. He is also told that the exact location of Zion will be revealed later.

1 Behold, I say unto thee, Oliver, that it shall be given unto thee that thou shalt be heard by the church in all things whatsoever thou shalt teach them by the Comforter, concerning the revelations and commandments which I have given.

verse 1 As a leading authority of the Church and an apostle of the Lord, Oliver Cowdery had the right to be heard by the Church, but he did not have the right to receive revelation for the Church on his own authority. In the priesthood line of authority, Joseph stood between Oliver and the Lord (see D&C 30:7).

2 But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses.

verse 2 The members already understood that the prophet Joseph received revelations from the Lord, but they did not yet understand that Joseph was the only one who could receive revelation for the Church. Many of these saints had been converted from churches with a very democratic structure, where church governance had been run more like a New England “town meeting”—from the bottom up—than by priesthood authority—from the top down. This religious background made it somewhat difficult for

these saints to learn the correct order of the priesthood and made them vulnerable to movements, proposals, and revelations that had no divine authority. Joseph Smith stated the principle this way, “It is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instructions for those in authority, higher than themselves; therefore you will see the impropriety of giving heed to them” (*HC*, 1:338).

We will learn that within six months, the new members in Kirtland will have to be taught this same lesson all over again (see D&C 43:3-7).

3 And thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him, even as Aaron, to declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations, with power and authority unto the church.

verses 2-3 “even as Moses . . . even as Aaron” Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were to the Latter-day Saints as Moses and Aaron were to Israel. Joseph was to receive the revelations, as did Moses; Oliver was to preach and make them known, as did Aaron (see D&C 21:12). Joseph Fielding Smith wrote, “It was very necessary that Oliver Cowdery should receive this admonition, for he was inclined to take issue with the Prophet even in regard to matters of revelation. Much good came out of this unpleasant incident, for the members were taught that there was order in the Church and only one appointed to receive commandments and revelations for their guidance, and he was the one God had called” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:135).

4 And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the church, thou mayest do it.

5 But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom;

verse 5 Oliver is told that he may give counsel and advice to the saints, but he is not to establish church doctrine or policy. The latter is the prerogative of the prophet only.

6 And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church;

verses 2-6 Joseph, not Oliver, is head of the Church, and only Joseph is authorized to receive revelations for the Church. Through this incident the members were taught that there is order in the Church.

7 For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead.

verse 7 The word “mystery” comes from the Greek *mysterium* which means a secret. Chauncey Riddle has taught that it means to “seal your lips.” Thus, one definition of a mystery is something of a sacred nature, and one should be cautious about sharing with others. This certainly agrees with Alma 12:9: “It is given unto many

to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart, only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the need and diligence which they give unto him.”

As early as September of 1830, the Lord alludes to the fact that one day Joseph will be replaced by another holding the keys of the kingdom.

8 And now, behold, I say unto you that you shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them; and inasmuch as they receive thy teachings thou shalt cause my church to be established among them; and thou shalt have revelations, but write them not by way of commandment.

verse 8 Oliver is the first to be appointed as a member of the missionary party to the “Lamanites.” Others will follow including Peter Whitmer, Jr., (section 30), and then Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson (section 32).

By the term “Lamanites,” of course, Joseph had reference to the American Indians.

9 And now, behold, I say unto you that it is not revealed, and no man knoweth where the city Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites.

verse 9 This is the first clue we have as to the location of Zion—it is “on the borders by the Lamanites.” The specific location “shall be given hereafter.”

10 Thou shalt not leave this place until after the conference; and my servant Joseph shall be appointed to preside over the conference by the voice of it, and what he saith to thee thou shalt tell.

verse 10 This conference will be held September 26, 1830.

11 And again, thou shalt take thy brother, Hiram Page, between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him;

verse 11 It is interesting that Hiram Page could use a seer stone, which is a legitimate medium of revelation from the Lord, and yet receive revelations from Satan. Brigham Young said Joseph Smith taught him that it was intended that all men should have their own seer stones, but they were “kept from them in consequence of their wickedness, and most of those who do find one make an evil use of it” (*Millennial Star*, 26:118).

12 For, behold, these things have not been appointed unto him, neither shall anything be appointed unto any of this church contrary to the church covenants.

verse 12 “contrary to the church covenants” This phrase likely has reference to section 20, the “articles and covenants of the Church” which specifies who presides over the Church (see D&C 20:2-3).

13 For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith.

14 And thou shalt assist to settle all these things, according to the covenants of the church, before thou shalt take thy journey among the Lamanites.

15 And it shall be given thee from the time thou shalt go, until the time thou shalt return, what thou shalt do.

16 And thou must open thy mouth at all times, declaring my gospel with the sound of rejoicing. Amen.

Character Vignette

Hiram Page

He was about five years older than the Prophet. He studied medicine at a young age and traveled considerably in New York and Canada practicing medicine. He married Catherine Whitmer in 1825. He left the Church in 1838 when the Whitmers were excommunicated.

Brief Historical Setting

1830 September

Oliver was asked not to depart on his mission to the Lamanites until after an important conference of the elders of the Church to be held on September 26, 1830. At this conference Joseph was appointed by the voice of the conference as the only one authorized to receive revelations for the Church. Also Joseph presented at this conference another important revelation concerning the Lord’s second coming and calamities to occur at his advent **[D&C 29 - The Millennium]**.

Following the conference, another revelation was given to the Whitmer brothers, David, John and Peter, Jr. **[D&C 30 - More Counsel to the Whitmers]**. Peter, Jr., was called to accompany Oliver on his mission to the Lamanites. A new convert, Thomas B. Marsh, also received a revelation **[D&C 31 - Thomas B. Marsh]**, and two additional missionaries were added to Oliver’s missionary group, Ziba Peterson and Parley P. Pratt **[D&C 32 - Mission to the Lamanites]**.

Section 29 The Millennium

The Church was born into a period of intense millennialism—a time when the Savior’s second coming was thought to be imminent by many of America’s Christians. There was no lack of interest within the new Church of Christ. In fact, there seemed to even exist in the Church the feeling and belief and hope that the Savior’s advent might occur during the life span of the charter members of the Church in this dispensation. So expectant were the early Mormons that these were indeed the last days that they eventually began to constantly search for signs that might give further evidence that the winding up scenes had begun. Later developments in church history testify to this enthusiastic anticipation. For example, in the *Millennial Star*, a publication the Church will establish in England, Parley P. Pratt regularly published a column in which he reported news of disasters such as an earthquake in Scotland, a plague in the Middle East, volcanic eruptions in the West Indies, and other “supernatural” occurrences which signified the last days before the Lord’s second coming. The final event preceding the second coming was to be the restoration of Israel. Parley P. Pratt wrote of this restoration:

Thus, all things seem preparing, in a political point of view, for the great restitution of Israel; and it is a matter of certainty that when the Jews gather home and rebuild Jerusalem, the second coming of Christ and the Millennium are just at the door. . . . We feel that the Second Advent is near, with the same assurance which we feel in regard to the near approach of summer when we see the trees put forth their leaves and blossom (*Millennial Star*, 1:75).

Predicting the coming of the great apocalyptic calamity, in which corrupt secular governments would be replaced by the kingdom of God on earth, Wilford Woodruff will later write:

It seems as though the nations at the present time were insane and their kings, presidents and senators entirely destitute of all wisdom. But they will all soon learn there is a God in Israel who is about to take peace from the earth and cut off nations not a few for great Babylon is about to come, in remembrance before God (*Woodruff Journal*, 17 February 1841, spelling and punctuation changes made for clarity).

While on a mission in England in 1841, Wilford Woodruff will write to Willard Richards, “I feel as though it will be day of warning and not of many words to England. I think that what we do, we shall do quickly” (letter of February 3, 1840). As brother Woodruff was preparing to leave his mission in England, he wrote that “the saints universally felt that the judgments of God are near in this land and are anxious to gather with the saints in Nauvoo as soon as possible” (*Woodruff Journal*, March 15, 1841).

A spirit of urgency surrounded the Church’s plan to prepare the earth for the Millennium. This grand plan consisted of three essential parts:

1. Conversion of the Indians—gathering this “lost remnant of the House of Israel” who had dwindled in unbelief. The tool to be used in this gathering was the Book of Mormon—the “testimony of their fathers.”

2. Establishing the city called New Jerusalem, as prophesied by John the Revelator (Revelation 21:2) and the Book of Mormon prophets (Ether 13). The New Jerusalem is a city that must serve as a refuge for the believers, against the terrors that will precede the one thousand year reign of the Lord. It is also a place where the temple of God will be built to which the Savior will come.

3. Gathering the scattered elect of God unto the New Jerusalem. Section 29 was given a few days before an important conference of the Church held on September 26, 1830. This revelation was given by the Lord in anticipation of that gathering.

The Lord had commanded Oliver to tarry until after this conference before departing on his mission to the Lamanites. The doctrines contained in this section are of such importance that it was considered vital by the Lord that Oliver and his companions know them and be able to teach them to those to whom they preached during their great mission.

Section 29 is essentially a miscellany on the second coming of the Lord, the Millennium, and the preparation of the earth for the Lord’s advent. It is the first large revelation dedicated primarily to eschatological themes (*Eschatology* is the study of last or final matters such as the Lord’s second coming, the final judgment, and the life hereafter). It is likely that the prophetic passages in the inspired revision of Genesis (which was in progress at the time) led Joseph to inquire of the Lord for more revelation concerning the last days.

For a more complete discussion of the Millennium, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 30, *The Millennium*.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 29 The Millennium

D&C 29:7-9 Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect.

D&C 29:12 Mine apostles who were with me in Jerusalem will judge Israel.

D&C 29:22-24 End of millennium . . . a new heaven and new earth.

D&C 29:27-29 Fate of the sons of perdition—where I am they cannot come, for they have no power.

D&C 29:34-35 All thing unto me are spiritual—not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal.

D&C 29:36-37 The devil rebelled against God, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency; and they were thrust down, and thus came the devil and his angels.

D&C 29:46-47 Little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world—for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children.

1 Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, the Great I AM, whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins;

verses 2, 7-9 In these verses for the first time the Lord introduces the concept of gathering.

2 Who will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will hearken to my voice and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer.

verse 2 “as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings” This expression is used in two additional places in the Doctrine and Covenants (see also D&C 10:65 and D&C 43:24). It evokes a poignant image of a mother hen gathering her chicks about her in a time of danger. It is obvious that the Savior is motivated, even driven, to gather his people Israel about him. Another analogy that helps us to understand the Lord’s infinite love and concern is that of a mother who is happiest when her children are gathered about her. She is thus able to see them and touch them and nurture and teach them and assure herself that they are safe.

Note also in this verse the Lord’s description of those scattered Israelites who will be qualified to gather in this last dispensation.

3 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that at this time your sins are forgiven you, therefore ye receive these things; but remember to sin no more, lest perils shall come upon you.

4 Verily, I say unto you that ye are chosen out of the world to declare my gospel with the sound of rejoicing, as with the voice of a trump.

5 Lift up your hearts and be glad, for I am in your midst, and am your advocate with the Father; and it is his good will to give you the kingdom.

verse 5 “it is his good will to give you the kingdom” It is the Father’s good will or good pleasure to restore his kingdom to the saints.

6 And, as it is written—Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, being united in prayer according to my command, ye shall receive.

7 And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts;

verse 7 “the gathering of mine elect” Who are the Lord’s elect? They are those individuals in and out of the Church who by the purity of their lives and thoughts maintain a high level of responsiveness to the Spirit of God. They readily perceive and comprehend spiritual truths.

8 Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked.

verses 7-8 In 1830 the Lord commanded that the saints physically gather to a single place—Zion—which will later be designated to be in Jackson County, Missouri. Today the Lord still commands that the saints should gather to Zion, but Zion has been redefined as being wherever the saints are in the world. The doctrine that the center pole of the “tent” of Zion will one day be in Jackson County, Missouri, is still apparently true doctrine. The “stakes” of this tent are found all over the world.

The role of Zion in the lives of those saints who gather to Zion is here set forth. It is “to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked.”

For a discussion of the phenomena of scattering and gathering, see the introductory discussion to 1 Nephi 20 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

9 For the hour is nigh and the day soon at hand when the earth is ripe; and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth;

verse 9 “they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up” Apparently this “burning” of the wicked is to be taken literally and not just figuratively. (Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:238.) The scriptures also talk about the time when “devouring fire” will be poured out upon the wicked (D&C 29:21; 35:14; 1 Nephi 22:17, 23; Ezekiel 38:22; 39:6). This will, of course, occur at the time of the Lord’s second coming to the earth in glory.

10 For the hour is nigh, and that which was spoken by mine apostles must be fulfilled; for as they spoke so shall it come to pass;

verse 10 The time is near at hand for the great destruction of the wicked to begin.

11 For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand.

12 And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, and it hath gone forth in a firm decree, by the will of the Father, that mine apostles, the Twelve which were with me in my ministry at Jerusalem, shall stand at my right hand at the day of my coming in a pillar of fire, being clothed with robes of righteousness, with crowns upon their heads, in glory even as I am, to judge the whole house of Israel, even as many as have loved me and kept my commandments, and none else.

verse 12 The original Twelve whom Christ called during his mortal ministry in the Old World will have a role in judging those of the house of Israel. Several unanswered questions remain concerning the judgment of mankind. We have discussed previously the concept that the essence of the judgment will be evident at the instant of our resurrection since we will be resurrected with a celestial, terrestrial, or telestial body. What part of the judgment then remains? It will be exciting to learn exactly what role these original twelve apostles will have in the judgment of the house of Israel.

13 For a trump shall sound both long and loud, even as upon Mount Sinai, and all the earth shall quake, and they shall come forth—yea, even the dead which died in me, to receive a crown of righteousness, and to be clothed upon, even as I am, to be with me, that we may be one.

verse 13 These are they who are resurrected with celestial bodies, the “first fruits.”

verses 14-21 We encounter for the first time in the Doctrine and Covenants the concept of the divinely orchestrated signs of the Lord’s second coming. These may be referred to as “signs of the times” or “signs of the coming of the Son of Man.” For a discussion of this subject, please see three chapters in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3. These are chapter 24, *Sign’s of the Lord’s Second Coming—Introduction*, chapter 25, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Warn*, and chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*. The commentary notes in this section will only be those not included in those chapters.

The Prophet Joseph said, “I will prophesy that the signs of the coming of the Son of Man are already commenced. One pestilence will desolate after another. We shall soon have war and bloodshed. The moon will be turned into blood. I testify of these things, and that the coming of the Son of Man is nigh, even at your doors” (*HC*, 3:390).

14 But, behold, I say unto you that before this great day shall come the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and there shall be greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath;

verse 14 “this great day” This expression refers to the great day of the coming of the Lord which will be a day of great destruction on the earth when all telestial elements will be destroyed from off the earth. Charles A. Callis, in General Conference said, “Now brethren and sisters, the great day of the Lord is coming. It is going to be a terrible day. The wicked are going to be destroyed, and when I say the wicked I do not mean everybody outside the Mormon Church. There will be countless millions of

people not of this Church spared because they are not ripe in iniquity and to them we will preach the everlasting Gospel and bring them unto Christ” (CR, April 1935, 18).

“there shall be greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath”

When the natural signs (those that warn) shall lose their effect on humankind, they will be superseded by even greater signs in heaven and earth—signs that certainly will get our attention and will teach a stronger and more pointed message than their predecessors. These are the signs and punish and cleanse. Among these greater signs will be the pestilences and disasters that will precede the Lord’s coming, as described in verses 15-21. If humanity will not listen to the quiet natural signs we have already been given, the Lord will speak to us more loudly as the end approaches.

15 And there shall be weeping and wailing among the hosts of men;

16 And there shall be a great hailstorm sent forth to destroy the crops of the earth.

verse 16 “there shall be a great hailstorm” John the Revelator described this hailstorm in Revelation 16:21 and informed us that the hailstones will weigh about a talent each or somewhere between 50 and 100 pounds. Because there were several different weights of talents in the ancient world, more information would be needed to give an exact weight, but these are the broad limits.

17 And it shall come to pass, because of the wickedness of the world, that I will take vengeance upon the wicked, for they will not repent; for the cup of mine indignation is full; for behold, my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not.

verse 17 “I will take vengeance upon the wicked” Vengeance is the application of punishment to wrongdoers. The Lord has said that “vengeance is mine” (Romans 12:19). The Lord’s vengeance is neither wrong nor unjust. It is the punishment the Lord metes out to satisfy the demands of justice so that the wicked may be forgiven and eventually receive some degree of glory. What form does the Lord’s vengeance or punishment take? It obviously causes suffering by those who receive it. Is this suffering for a good purpose, or is it purely punitive and meted out by the Lord to the unrepentant as punishment of discipline for their recalcitrance? We have previously discussed that there is nothing of purely punitive or arbitrary suffering in the Lord’s universe.

“the cup of mine indignation is full” This figurative cup symbolizes the accumulated iniquities of the wicked. After the death of the wicked, justice will demand that they drink that which they have prepared for themselves (see D&C 43:26; 103:3; Revelation 14:10). It is a bitter cup, figuratively full of the indignation, wrath, or anger of God at their failure to repent. This bitterness can be removed only by drinking the cup themselves and paying the full penalty for their sins (D&C 19:15-19).

“my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not” There are only two possibilities for fallen and sinful man: either he gets clean or he stays filthy. The only way to get clean is through the blood—the atonement—of Jesus Christ. Thus, those in the gospel covenant are sometimes said to be “washed in the blood of the lamb” (Ether 13:11; see also Alma 13:11; Revelation 7:14). Those few who steadfastly refuse to repent and accept the atonement of Christ, either in this life or in the spirit world, will be raised up “filthy still” to stand before God at the final judgment, and they will be cast out into outer darkness (D&C 88:35).

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “But if we do not repent, then the Lord clearly lets us know that there will be discipline and a denial of blessings and advancement. The Lord teaches that he cannot forgive people ‘in’ their sins. He can only save them ‘from’ their abandoned sins” (*Ensign*, October 1982, 5).

verses 18-20 Those divinely orchestrated signs of the Lord’s second coming may be divided generally into two categories: those that warn and those that punish and cleanse (purge and destroy). The following three verses generally describe the category of signs that punish and cleanse. The sufferings these verses describe may be intended to be figurative (symbolic) or literal.

18 Wherefore, I the Lord God will send forth flies upon the face of the earth, which shall take hold of the inhabitants thereof, and shall eat their flesh, and shall cause maggots to come in upon them;

19 And their tongues shall be stayed that they shall not utter against me; and their flesh shall fall from off their bones, and their eyes from their sockets;

20 And it shall come to pass that the beasts of the forest and the fowls of the air shall devour them up.

21 And the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall be cast down by devouring fire, according as it is spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet, who spoke of these things, which have not come to pass but surely must, as I live, for abominations shall not reign.

verse 21 “the great and abominable church” This is the only occurrence of this phrase in the Doctrine and Covenants, though the great and abominable is probably identical to the churches built up “to get gain” in D&C 10:56 and “the church of the devil” in D&C 18:20.

The phrase “great and abominable church” does not refer to any particular denomination, neither Roman Catholics, nor Jews, nor Baptists, nor any other individual church. In its broadest definition, the great and abominable church is the collective term for all who oppose or fight against Zion. It is also a general term for any manifestation of Satan’s form of religion—religion practiced for money, gain, or pleasure, or religion that seeks to justify wickedness. For this reason the great and abominable church is

called the whore of all the earth, because for her, everything is negotiable (all values, standards, and principles) and because anything can be bought or arranged for with enough money. All who qualify under the label of great and abominable church will be part of the telestial carnage at the time of the Lord's second coming.

“as it is spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet” See Ezekiel 5:9-11.

22 And again, verily, verily, I say unto you that when the thousand years are ended, and men again begin to deny their God, then will I spare the earth but for a little season;

verse 22 “when the thousand years are ended” After the end of the Millennium, some mortals upon the terrestrial earth will once again rebel against God. This rebellion will be allowed to go on for a little while, but then there shall be another end—this time the end of the terrestrial world. This is often referred to as the “end of the earth,” as opposed to the “end of the world” which occurs at the beginning of the Millennium. Other scriptures tell us that after the Millennium, Satan will again get power over mortals and will gather all his forces for one final contest, the battle of the Great God, which Satan will lose (see D&C 88:110-16; Revelation 20:7-21:1). This is sometimes called the battle of Gog and Magog (see Revelation 20:8; Ezekiel 38-39). Then the earth itself will experience a change comparable to death and resurrection, passing away as a terrestrial world and being born again or resurrected as a celestial world (see D&C 88:26). A “new heaven and a new earth” (verse 23) are promised by the Lord and recorded by the sacred writers. Or, in other words, the planetary systems are to be changed. Could it be that the earth will be moved and take up its place in a new planetary system as a celestial planet?

23 And the end shall come, and the heaven and the earth shall be consumed and pass away, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth.

verse 23 “there shall be a new heaven and a new earth” Just as man dies and is resurrected with a new eternal body, so will the earth die (at the end of the one thousand-year millennial period) and be resurrected. The earth will be resurrected with a celestial body. All of the matter upon the earth will be celestial matter. The earth will become the home of all those who lived upon the earth who are worthy of an eternal celestial reward.

24 For all old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new, even the heaven and the earth, and all the fulness thereof, both men and beasts, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea;

verse 24 All things shall be resurrected: the earth, man, animals, birds, fish, etc. Those who inherit the earth will be resurrected with a celestial body, and those who inherit lesser degrees of glory will be resurrected with terrestrial or telestial bodies.

25 And not one hair, neither mote, shall be lost, for it is the workmanship of mine hand.

verse 25 The earth and all things in it will be resurrected with eternal “perfect” bodies.

26 But, behold, verily I say unto you, before the earth shall pass away, Michael, mine archangel, shall sound his trump, and then shall all the dead awake, for their graves shall be opened, and they shall come forth—yea, even all.

verse 26 “Michael, mine archangel” Although Jewish and Christian tradition make Michael one of several archangels, the scriptures themselves refer predominantly to Michael, the archangel (see D&C 88:112; 107:54; Jude 1:9). *Archangel* in Greek means “first angel,” or “ruling angel,” or “presiding angel.” Though there may be other angels in positions of authority, there is only one angel who presides over all the others, and that is Michael who was first of all the angels of God and who presides over all who came after him. D&C 128:21 seems to give priority to Michael the archangel over Gabriel, Raphael, and other angels who were also in positions of authority in the premortal life. Christian tradition credits Gabriel with the trumpet blast that will wake the dead and bring them to judgment—as in “Gabriel, blow your horn!”—but this verse tells us that Michael will sound that great blast.

Resurrection is a priesthood ordinance, and the individual who holds all the priesthood keys of all of the dispensations of the earth is Adam. Apparently he has some role, perhaps a central role in the process of the resurrection of mankind. He likely holds the keys of the resurrection, which keys have not been given the prophets of the earth.

All of mankind, save for Satan and the third part of the hosts of heaven who followed him, will be resurrected under the supervision of Adam. Some will come forth with celestial bodies; some with terrestrial; others with telestial bodies; and a few with bodies destined for outer darkness. The reader may wish to review the sequence of the resurrection in the commentary for Alma 40:16-20 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

After the earth is cleansed and purified and becomes a celestial globe, Adam will preside over the children of men, who are of his posterity (D&C 107:54-57).

“then shall all the dead awake, for their graves shall be opened” Everyone who has ever lived on this earth will be resurrected. This includes the wicked and even those who will be cast into outer darkness at judgment. No one who has ever been born into this earth and received a mortal body will be denied resurrection.

27 And the righteous shall be gathered on my right hand unto eternal life; and the wicked on my left hand will I be ashamed to own before the Father;

28 Wherefore I will say unto them—Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

29 And now, behold, I say unto you, never at any time have I declared from mine own mouth that they should return, for where I am they cannot come, for they have no power.

verses 26-29 The judgment scene alluded to here is the judgment from the great white throne (see Revelation 20:11-15) that occurs after the second resurrection—that is, after all have been resurrected. This is the only judgment that involves all the dead at once. The “wicked” spoken of here are those who still at that time stubbornly refuse to repent, even after suffering the pains of hell in the spirit world. These are they who suffer the second death and who cannot be given any glory, because they will not come to Christ. They are to be cast out with the devil and his angels into outer darkness—spoken of figuratively in verse 28 as “everlasting fire”—and are called sons of perdition (D&C 76:31-38; see also McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 280-81).

The “righteous,” on the other hand, are all those who have repented, whether in mortality or in the spirit prison, and have turned to Christ to be saved. They include all who will be given some degree of glory, whether celestial, terrestrial, or telestial. For Jesus Christ saves and glorifies “all the works of his hands” (see D&C 76:43, 88). This is different from the earlier judgment scene at the second coming, where those on the Savior’s right hand are limited to those who repented in mortality, or would have repented, given the opportunity, and who will inherit the celestial kingdom.

30 But remember that all my judgments are not given unto men; and as the words have gone forth out of my mouth even so shall they be fulfilled, that the first shall be last, and that the last shall be first in all things whatsoever I have created by the word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit.

verse 30 “**all my judgments are not given unto men**” This phrase means that man is not given to know or completely understand the judgments of the Lord. Though we do not understand all the reasons for his actions, we may be certain that all of God’s judgments are just and right.

The Prophet Joseph wrote:

He [God] holds the reins of judgment in his hands; he is a wise lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, “according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil.” . . . He will judge them “not according to what they have not, but according to what they have,” those who have lived without law, will be judged without law, and those who have a law, will be judged by that law. We need not doubt the wisdom and intelligence of the Great Jehovah; he will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and his inscrutable designs in relation to

the human family; and when the designs of God shall be made manifest, and the curtain of futurity be withdrawn, we shall all of us eventually have to confess that the Judge of all the earth has done right (*HC*, 4:595-96).

“the first shall be last, and . . . the last shall be first in all things” The beginning of Christ’s work—creation—is to get us here to earth, to bring us from the spiritual realm to the temporal. The end of Christ’s work—redemption—is to get us home again, from the temporal realm back to the spiritual. So in this instance, as in many others, the first will be last and the last will be first—the end of Christ work will then be of primal importance.

“word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit” Both the phrases “word of my power” and “power of my Spirit” refer to Jesus Christ.

31 For by the power of my Spirit created I them; yea, all things both spiritual and temporal—

32 First spiritual, secondly temporal, which is the beginning of my work; and again, first temporal, and secondly spiritual, which is the last of my work—

verses 31-32 All things have a spiritual as well as a temporal creation. That is all intelligences were first embodied with spirit matter (spirit bodies), and subsequently they were embodied with mortal matter (mortal bodies). The sequence apparently also applies to all things of the earth including animals, plants, and even the so-called “inanimate” things of the earth.

33 Speaking unto you that you may naturally understand; but unto myself my works have no end, neither beginning; but it is given unto you that ye may understand, because ye have asked it of me and are agreed.

verse 33 “that you may naturally understand” That we may understand with our limited, mortal, natural minds. Actually, the reference points of “the beginning” and “the end” are artificial and are used by the Lord only so that we mortals can make sense of his words. From God’s perspective, there is no beginning and no end, a concept that is impossible for us mortals to completely understand.

Likewise the division of things into temporal and spiritual is also an artificial human way of looking at things, for from God’s perspective all things are spiritual—all things have spiritual implications—and all that God does and says has eternal, spiritual significance.

34 Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam, your father, whom I created.

verse 34 An important verse stating clearly that none of God’s laws is purely temporal. Smith and Sjodahl in their *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* wrote:

Man makes a distinction between temporal and spiritual laws, and some are very much concerned about keeping the two separate. To the Lord every thing is both spiritual and temporal, and the laws he gives are consequently spiritual, because they concern spiritual beings. When he commanded Adam to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, or Moses to strike the rock that the people might drink, or the Prophet Joseph to erect the Nauvoo House, or the saints in Utah to build fences and roads, such laws were for their spiritual welfare, as well as physical. To obey such laws, when given, is a spiritual duty. One who performs his daily labor “as to the Lord, and not to men” (Ephesians 6:7) derives spiritual benefit from whatever his duties are (156).

“neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam, your father” The Lord emphasizes the fact that no purely temporal commandment has ever been given to any man.

“Adam . . . whom I created” We know that the speaker here is the Lord Jesus Christ, and he speaking as though he were the Father by the principle of divine investiture of authority.

35 Behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him, for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.

verse 35 “Him,” in this verse of refers to all mankind.

verses 36-39 From the second line in verse 36 to the end of verse 39 (the material between the two dashes) we find a parenthetical interruption to the original line of thought, which expands upon the origin and function of the devil. The subject begun in verse 36, the temptation of Adam, resumes in verse 40.

36 And it came to pass that Adam, being tempted of the devil—for, behold, the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency;

verse 36 A very important verse! The only verse of scripture in all four standard works that states clearly that one-third of the hosts of heaven rebelled.

“being tempted of the devil” The word *devil* is from the Greek *diabolos*, meaning “one who separates or divides.”

“for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power” Herein lies an important clue as to the very basis of God’s power. God has taught us that his power does not come from above; but from beneath (see D&C 63:59). That is, he would not, nor indeed can he, force any individual to do anything against that individual’s will. Agency is the law of heaven which God will not ever and cannot violate

or abrogate. The great majority of God's creations hold him in high esteem and are inclined to obey him. When he commands, he does not force, rather he requests, and all of his creations are inclined to obey him because they hold him in the highest honor. See the discussion in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 14, *The Power of God*.

A scriptural example of God's use of his power occurred during the creation of this world, the Lord and those assisting him did not authoritatively command that the creation take place. Rather, they requested of the intelligences that they organize themselves. Then, they were obliged to "watch those things which they had ordered until they obeyed" (Abraham 4:18).

Satan, knowing the basis of God's power, made the laughable request of the Father "Give me thine honor." Satan knew that if all of the intelligences in God's kingdom honored him as they honor God, then Satan would possess the same power that God possesses—the intelligences would be inclined to obey him as they obey God. That Satan's request is completely ludicrous is obvious to all.

37 And they were thrust down, and thus came the devil and his angels;

verse 37 Satan and his adherents, one-third of the hosts of heaven, were thrust down to earth, never to receive a mortal body and never to be resurrected.

38 And, behold, there is a place prepared for them from the beginning, which place is hell.

verse 38 Generally, the word *hell* in scripture refers to the spirit world, especially that part of the world of spirits we call prison. Here, however, hell is used to refer to the awful fate of the sons of perdition—outer darkness. There is no indication in scripture that there will ever be a redemption for these unfortunate souls.

39 And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet—

verse 39 Is the devil's influence essential in order for a man to be able to use his agency to decide between right and wrong? If the devil and his minions were not here on earth, would our existence be all sweetness without any of the bitterness of temptation to do evil? It would not, as we would still experience adversity in the form of our natural self. But certainly the moral challenges of this world are greatly enhanced through Satan's skillful manipulations.

40 Wherefore, it came to pass that the devil tempted Adam, and he partook of the forbidden fruit and transgressed the commandment, wherein he became subject to the will of the devil, because he yielded unto temptation.

verse 40 There may be some connection between section 29 and Joseph's work on the King James Bible revision. He had started in June 1830 with Genesis. Section 29 contains reference to Adam, the Garden of Eden, the Creation, the Fall, etc.

“because he yielded unto temptation” Here is a pertinent reminder that whenever we give in to our natural self and to the promptings of Satan, we experience an automatic incremental increase in our inclination to give in to his promptings again and again. Contrariwise, when we are able to overcome our natural self and obey, we earn an incremental increase in an enhanced responsiveness to the promptings of the Spirit and a greater inclination to overcome our natural inclinations again. In short, obedience leads to protection from Satan's evil influences.

41 Wherefore, I, the Lord God, caused that he should be cast out from the Garden of Eden, from my presence, because of his transgression, wherein he became spiritually dead, which is the first death, even that same death which is the last death, which is spiritual, which shall be pronounced upon the wicked when I shall say: Depart, ye cursed.

verse 41 “he became spiritually dead, which is the first death” The “he” here refers to Adam. The first death is that temporary spiritual death which Adam and all of us experience because of the transgression of Adam. To become “spiritually dead,” as is written in this verse, does not imply that our spirit is destroyed or ceases to function. Rather this phrase simply means that we are separated from God. Through Christ's atonement and resurrection, he completely overcame this spiritual death (as well as physical death) for all people. That is, no one will ever suffer permanently because of Adam's transgression.

The second or “last” death is a permanent separation of man from God caused by a man's own sins and his persistent refusal to repent and be saved by the Savior's atonement. These are those who, in the final judgment following the Millennium, will be condemned by the Lord to outer darkness for eternity. He will say, “Depart, ye cursed.”

This verse suggests that these two deaths are the same—“even that same death which is the last death”—but they are the same only in that they are both spiritual deaths, that is, a separation of man from God.

42 But, behold, I say unto you that I, the Lord God, gave unto Adam and unto his seed, that they should not die as to the temporal death, until I, the Lord God, should send forth angels to declare unto them repentance and redemption, through faith on the name of mine Only Begotten Son.

verse 42 Apparently, the lives of Adam and his children before the Flood were lengthened so that no one died during Adam's dispensation without first having had the opportunity to accept or reject the gospel (see 2 Nephi 2:21). Further, it would seem that in Noah's pre-flood dispensation the Lord was particularly inclined to send to the

earth angels to preach his gospel (Moses 5:58; 7:27). This longevity changed with the Flood (see Genesis 6:3), and it then became possible for people to die in ignorance. Perhaps that is why preaching the gospel to spirits in prison is often described as beginning with those “which sometime were disobedient [not ignorant], when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah” (see D&C 138:9; 1 Peter 3:20). Thus, through the preaching of Adam, Enoch, Noah, angels from heaven, and even God himself (see Moses 5:58), no one who died before the Flood died in ignorance.

43 And thus did I, the Lord God, appoint unto man the days of his probation—that by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, even as many as would believe;

verse 43 “the days of his probation” This term means the days of our mortal lives. However, for those who are not blessed to be placed, at their mortal death, in a state of paradise in the spirit world, it also includes the experience in spirit prison. No one can be said to have utterly and permanently failed their test or probation until their resurrection takes place, when any change in glory is no longer possible and when those who have refused to repent will be “filthy still” and the Lord will command them to depart.

44 And they that believe not unto eternal damnation; for they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall, because they repent not;

verse 44 God does not condemn anyone to outer darkness except those who steadfastly refuse to repent and allow Christ to extend to them the blessings of the atonement.

45 For they love darkness rather than light, and their deeds are evil, and they receive their wages of whom they list to obey.

verse 45 To “list” to obey is to prefer, choose, or want to obey.

46 But behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten;

verse 46 The plan of salvation has made merciful provisions for those who die before the age of accountability and for the mentally handicapped.

47 Wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me;

verse 47 Unaccountable children and the mentally handicapped are not assessed a penalty by the law of justice when they inadvertently sin. Should they never have a chance to live in mortality as accountable individuals, they will be judged by a merciful and all knowing Savior who will see to their eternal happiness and welfare.

48 For it is given unto them even as I will, according to mine own pleasure, that great things may be required at the hand of their fathers.

verse 48 This verse contains two ideas joined by the conjunction “that” which implies a relationship between the two.

“For it is given unto them even as I will, according to mine own pleasure”

One is tempted to interpret this phrase as meaning that the eternal reward of the unaccountable is meted out by the merciful Lord at his own good pleasure. But this meaning is difficult to connect to the second phrase in the verse. Hence, we must wonder if the Lord might be intending to say here that the premature deaths of some children or the mental handicaps of some individuals might be even orchestrated by the Lord “even as I will, according to mine own pleasure.” This is difficult doctrine, as we know that much of adversity here on earth is simply the result of the built-in nature of mortality. Most adversities are what we might term “mortal accidents.” I personally find it difficult to believe that all premature deaths and congenital handicaps are individually orchestrated by the Lord. See a discussion of this matter in chapter 1, volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine, Adversity and Suffering*. Particularly see the section titled “How Might We Categorize Adversities and Sufferings.” See also chapter 2 of that same volume, *The Roles of Suffering in Our Lives*.

“that great things may be required at the hand of their fathers” In the teaching of unaccountable children and in the rearing of mentally handicapped children there are great obligations and great challenges. Could it be that this verse is teaching us that the Lord may allow or even cause that some children may die before the age of accountability or that some children are born with mental handicaps so that their parents might be tested? During the period of time before children are accountable, “fathers” (parents) are to teach them correct principles. Otherwise, the “sin [will] be upon the heads of the parents” (D&C 68:25). Perhaps a similar obligation may bear upon those parents rearing mentally handicapped children.

49 And, again, I say unto you, that whoso having knowledge, have I not commanded to repent?

verse 49 The phrase “whoso having knowledge” refers to those who are accountable for their own sins.

50 And he that hath no understanding, it remaineth in me to do according as it is written. And now I declare no more unto you at this time. Amen.

verse 50 “he that hath no understanding” This phrase applies to those who are mentally deficient or to those who are too young to be accountable before the Lord. The Lord will judge them perfectly fairly according to what will make them happy and fulfilled for all eternity.

Section 30 More Counsel to the Whitmers

This is another revelation given to the Whitmer brothers: David, Peter, Jr., and John (see also sections 14, 15, and 16). At the time Joseph was still living in the Whitmer home in Fayette. Section 30 was received in September 1830 at the close of the quarterly conference of the Elders of the Church in Fayette, New York, but before anyone had returned home. Like section 23, this section is another composite revelation in that this material was printed as three different chapters in the Book of Commandments as chapters 30-32. In the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants these three were joined together to form one section. David is reminded to be obedient to those in authority over him and to stay at home. Peter is called to serve a mission to the Lamanites with Oliver Cowdery, and John is commanded to preach in the nearby area of Seneca Falls, New York, where lived a convert named Philip Burroughs.

1 Behold, I say unto you, David, that you have feared man and have not relied on me for strength as you ought.

verse 1 “you have feared man” This phrase refers to an over-concern with what people think and with political or social consequences. David had given too much weight to the opinions and feelings of people around him, particularly Hiram Page. Like David Whitmer, many of us worry too much about how our peers, colleagues, friends, neighbors, or family might react if we make a “big deal” of our religious convictions, yet we aren’t concerned enough about how God will react if we abandon or adjust those convictions in order to “get along.” The desire of some people to be considered broad-minded, intellectual, flexible, or non-dogmatic by the world is greater than their desire to be deemed faithful by the Lord—they cannot bring themselves to offend the idols of Babylon. It is true that people who are absolutely committed to the gospel are often also irritating to their more worldly neighbors because they will not negotiate or compromise their beliefs for the sake of better relations with others.

2 But your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of me, your Maker, and the ministry whereunto you have been called; and you have not given heed unto my Spirit, and to those who were set over you, but have been persuaded by those whom I have not commanded.

verses 1-2 David Whitmer had been a strict Presbyterian and was always a man of high principles. It would be a mistake to think from these verses that he was worldly. He was engaged in farming about the time of his revelation, so “things of the earth” probably has reference to these farming activities, which may have prevented him from doing the work of the ministry. Since this revelation was received at harvest time, there is added reason for supposing that the Lord is referring to farming rather than

worldliness. It is also possible that he is being rebuked at least in part for his role in the Hiram Page seerstone affair. David had been one of Hiram Page's chief supporters in that affair. It is understandable that the Lord was displeased with David Whitmer. David, after all, had been one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He had stood in the presence of an angel and had heard a voice from heaven testify to the truthfulness of the book and the divine calling of Joseph Smith. Yet when the first counterfeit revelations came along little more than a year later, David Whitmer was among the first to be misled.

“you have not given heed unto my Spirit, and to those who were set over you” The two things that would have kept David (or any or us) from erring were the promptings of the Holy Ghost and the counsel of church leaders, but he did not listen to either of these in the Hiram Page affair.

“those whom I have not commanded” This phrase refers to those outside the priesthood line of authority.

3 Wherefore, you are left to inquire for yourself at my hand, and ponder upon the things which you have received.

4 And your home shall be at your father's house, until I give unto you further commandments. And you shall attend to the ministry in the church, and before the world, and in the regions round about. Amen.

5 Behold, I say unto you, Peter, that you shall take your journey with your brother Oliver; for the time has come that it is expedient in me that you shall open your mouth to declare my gospel; therefore, fear not, but give heed unto the words and advice of your brother, which he shall give you.

verse 5 Note that Peter, Jr., is not rebuked. Apparently he was innocent in the matter of the Hiram Page seerstone. He is called to serve as a missionary to the Lamanites in the capacity of a “junior companion.” Along with Oliver Cowdery, Parley Pratt, and Ziba Peterson, Peter traveled by foot across New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Missouri to the federal Indian lands then beyond the borders of the United States. Peter remained faithful until his death in Missouri in 1836.

6 And be you afflicted in all his afflictions, ever lifting up your heart unto me in prayer and faith, for his and your deliverance; for I have given unto him power to build up my church among the Lamanites;

7 And none have I appointed to be his counselor over him in the church, concerning church matters, except it is his brother, Joseph Smith, Jun.

8 Wherefore, give heed unto these things and be diligent in keeping my commandments, and you shall be blessed unto eternal life. Amen.

9 Behold, I say unto you, my servant John, that thou shalt commence from this time forth to proclaim my gospel, as with the voice of a trump.

verse 9 John Whitmer is called to undertake a mission in his own neighborhood in Seneca County, New York.

10 And your labor shall be at your brother Philip Burroughs', and in that region round about, yea, wherever you can be heard, until I command you to go from hence.

verse 10 Apparently Philip Burroughs was a member of the Church in Seneca Falls, New York, which was just a few miles north of Fayette.

11 And your whole labor shall be in Zion, with all your soul, from henceforth; yea, you shall ever open your mouth in my cause, not fearing what man can do, for I am with you. Amen.

verse 11 “your whole labor shall be in Zion” Perhaps this is a foreshadowing of John Whitmer’s still future call to replace Oliver Cowdery as church historian (see D&C 47).

This verse contains the first mention of the concept of “Zion” in the Doctrine and Covenants. For a discussion of the concept of Zion see the introductory comments for section 101.

Section 31 Thomas B. Marsh

This is a general revelation to this new convert to the Church received at the close of the conference of the elders of the Church in September 26, 1830, in Fayette. It was received at the same time as section 30.

Born in Massachusetts November 1, 1799, Thomas Marsh was six years older than the Prophet. In his early twenties he joined the Methodist Church. However, on comparing its doctrines with scripture, he was unable to make them correspond. Thus he withdrew from all organized religion. He expected and, indeed, predicted the rise of a new church which would promulgate the pure truth.

At age 29, in 1829, he was moved by the Spirit to make a journey west during which he heard of the Book of Mormon. He then traveled to Palmyra and met Martin Harris at the office of E. B. Grandin. He was given some proof sheets containing sixteen pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. On studying these few pages, he and his wife Elizabeth received a testimony of the Spirit.

He was a obviously one of the Lord's elect, prepared for the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the words of Joseph Smith, "Here indeed was a man called to greatness by the Lord" (*HC*, 1:117). He later met Oliver Cowdery and remained with him two days, receiving from him the full story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

After returning to his home near Boston, he kept up a correspondence with the Prophet and Oliver for the next year. Upon learning of the organization of the Church, he moved to Palmyra in September of 1830 and stayed for a while with the Smith family in Manchester. He was baptized by David Whitmer in Cayuga Lake, one of the Finger Lakes near Fayette, on September 3, 1830, and "in a few days" was ordained an elder by Oliver Cowdery. This ordination must have taken place before the September conference began, since Thomas B. Marsh was listed as one of the elders in attendance. His family accompanied him to Palmyra and joined the Church some time later.

He will be ordained an apostle April 25 or 26, 1835, at Kirtland, Ohio. In August, 1838, a year of tragic apostasy in Kirtland, he became disaffected and turned traitor to his brethren. At that time he had been president of the Quorum of the Twelve for more than three years.

In August 1838 the oft-quoted "cream strippings" incident occurred. Strippings are the last extra-rich bit of milk pressed from the cows udder when milking. Thomas's wife, Elizabeth, and George W. Harris's wife, Lucinda, desired to make cheese, and, as George A. Smith explained, "neither of them possessing the requisite number of cows, they agreed to exchange milk. . . . It was agreed that they should not save the strippings, but that the milk and strippings should all go together. . . . Mrs. Marsh,

wishing to make some extra good cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Mrs. Harris the milk without the strippings” (*JD*, 3:283). From small beginnings the issue over the strippings escalated. Eventually a church trial was held. The bishop concluded that Elizabeth had defrauded Lucinda. Thomas appealed to the high council. When their decision affirmed the previous decision, he appealed to the First Presidency of the Church, who affirmed that Elizabeth was guilty. George A. Smith said that “Thomas B. Marsh then declared that he would sustain the character of his wife, even if he had to go to hell for it” (*JD*, 3:84). The Lord sought to change the course that Thomas was pursuing by giving him a revelation: “In it God told him what to do, and that was to sustain Brother Joseph. . . . But no, he took a course to sustain his wife and oppose the prophet of God, and she led him away.” After leaving the Church Thomas and Lucinda went to Richmond, Missouri, and, as Joseph Smith wrote, “made affidavit . . . to all the vilest slanders, aspersions, lies and calumnies towards myself and the Church that he could invent. . . . Now he has fallen, lied and sworn falsely, and is ready to take the lives of his best friends” (*History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-51], 3:167). Among other things, Marsh made an affidavit to the effect that the “Mormons” had a company called “Danites,” organized for the purpose of murdering “enemies”—a statement he certainly knew to be false. He was eventually cut off for apostasy, at Quincy, Illinois, March 17, 1839. After that he became a vagabond, without resting-place, without peace, for many years.

In 1857, after the death of his wife Elizabeth, for whose sake he had left the Church, Thomas was rebaptized at Winter Quarters in Florence, Nebraska. He never again was restored to his standing among the Twelve. He then traveled to Salt Lake City, and asked forgiveness and reinstatement in the Church. President Young introduced him to the audience in the Bowery, on the 6th of September. He told the congregation that he had suffered greatly during his absence from the Church, but that he acknowledged the hand of the Lord in the chastisement he had received. He made the following significant remark concerning the beginning of his apostasy:

I became jealous of the Prophet, and then I saw double and overlooked everything that was right, and spent all my time in looking for the evil. I saw a beam in Brother Joseph’s eye, but it was nothing but a mote, and my own eye was filled with the beam. I talked with Brother Brigham and Brother Heber, and I wanted them to be mad like myself; and I saw they were not mad, and I got madder still because they were not. Brother Brigham, with a cautious look, said, “Are you the leader of the Church, Brother Thomas?” I answered, “No!” “Well then,” said he, “Why do you not let that alone?” Well, this was about the amount of my hypocrisy. I meddled with that which was not my business” (*JD*, 5:207).

At the conclusion of his address he was by unanimous vote received into full fellowship as a member of the Church. Had Thomas Marsh remained faithful after

1838, he would have been senior to Brigham Young and might have succeeded Joseph Smith as President of the Church when the Prophet was murdered in 1844 (see D&C 112).

1 Thomas, my son, blessed are you because of your faith in my work.

verse 1 The Lord commends him for his uncommon faith. From the moment he had read just sixteen pages of the Book of Mormon, he had evidenced his willingness to do whatever it took to join with the saints become a worker in the kingdom.

2 Behold, you have had many afflictions because of your family; nevertheless, I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones; and the day cometh that they will believe and know the truth and be one with you in my church.

verse 2 **“Behold, you have had many afflictions because of your family”** The reference here is probably to Thomas’s extended family rather than his immediate family, for at this time his wife was an enthusiastic believer in the restored gospel, and their children were still quite small and unlikely to offer their parents much affliction.

“the day cometh that they will believe and know the truth and be one with you in my church” Thomas is promised that his children would eventually join the Church although, like most such blessings, this was conditioned upon Thomas’s continuing faithfulness (see 58:31-33).

3 Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission is come; and your tongue shall be loosed, and you shall declare glad tidings of great joy unto this generation.

verse 3 **“and your tongue shall be loosed”** Brother Marsh was a powerful speaker. At the time of the troubles in Clay County, Missouri, in 1836, he was a member of a committee selected to lay grievances of the saints before the authorities of the state. On one occasion at a meeting at the city of Liberty, he spoke of the persecution the saints had suffered, so eloquently that General Atchinson, in attendance at the meeting, and others wept. The meeting passed resolutions to assist the saints in finding a new location.

“glad tidings of great joy” The good news of the gospel.

4 You shall declare the things which have been revealed to my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun. You shall begin to preach from this time forth, yea, to reap in the field which is white already to be burned.

verse 4 **“You shall declare the things which have been revealed to my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun.”** Thomas is reminded of the difference between what had been revealed to Joseph Smith and what had not. Certainly the Lord hoped to avoid another Hiram Page affair.

“already to be burned” This phrase should be understood as “all ready to be burned.” We might expect to read, “already to harvest” (D&C 4:4), but shortly after the harvest comes the burning of the fields to remove all the leftover stubble and chaff. Thomas was to harvest those who would listen to the gospel so they will not be burned with the stubble and other useless debris (see D&C 86:7; Matthew 13:24-30).

5 Therefore, thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your back, for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Wherefore, your family shall live.

verse 5 “your sins are forgiven you” When a covenant individual in the Lord’s kingdom is earnestly striving to overcome his natural self and obey the commandments, the Lord will regularly justify (remove the penalties of sin) and sanctify (burn out of his soul—as if by fire—increments of the natural self and reveal to his heart increments of his attributes—gifts of the Spirit) him.

“you shall be laden with sheaves upon your back” The “sheaves” of grain are the people Thomas would “harvest” through teaching them the gospel.

“Wherefore, your family shall live.” Thomas Marsh is promised that though he was to spend his time in missionary service, his family would be provided for. Those who labor full time for the Lord deserve and will receive appropriate compensation for their services, whether in form of money or compensating blessings or both.

6 Behold, verily I say unto you, go from them only for a little time, and declare my word, and I will prepare a place for them.

verse 6 “go from them only for a little time” Marsh’s family was dependent upon him for their support, hence he was not required to be gone from them for very long.

7 Yea, I will open the hearts of the people, and they will receive you. And I will establish a church by your hand;

verse 7 “I will establish a church by your hand” That is, establish a branch of the Church.

8 And you shall strengthen them and prepare them against the time when they shall be gathered.

verse 8 “prepare them against the time when they shall be gathered” The concept of the literal gathering was taken seriously by the early Church. In 1832, Marsh led a group of saints from Kirtland, Ohio, to Jackson County, Missouri, as part of that literal gathering to Zion.

verses 9-13 The Lord gives special instructions to Brother Marsh. The Lord knows the spiritual dangers facing Thomas Marsh, and warns him of them.

9 Be patient in afflictions, revile not against those that revile. Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast.

verse 9 “revile not against those that revile” To adopt Satan’s methods, even in opposition to Satan, is to leave holy ground and fall under Satan’s power. The end does not justify the means, and those who serve the Lord must employ the Lord’s methods in doing so. Reviling and contending are Satanic behaviors, even when done in defense of the Church.

“Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast.” Thomas Marsh did neither. It was largely his inability to govern his household that led to his apostasy between 1838 and 1857 (see D&C 112).

10 Behold, I say unto you that you shall be a physician unto the church, but not unto the world, for they will not receive you.

verse 10 Brother Marsh was, at one time, a grocer. In those days a grocer was a dealer in herbs, spices, and wort (a liquid which is fermented to make beer). He had apparently acquired some skill in using herbs to treat some of the common illnesses of his day. His ability as a physician by today’s standards would be considered sadly lacking, but in his day the person who could use herbs skillfully to bring about healings was highly respected in his field. In this verse he is admonished to be a spiritual physician to the Church. In his sojourn in the Church he solved problems, resolved conflicts, and answered many questions for the members of the Church. When he was faithful, he had a reputation for receiving frequent and specific revelations in answer to his prayers. His calling as “physician unto the Church” was primarily to help heal the hearts, minds, and spirits of the members rather than their bodies.

11 Go your way whithersoever I will, and it shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do and whither you shall go.

12 Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward.

verse 12 If an individual fails to maintain regular communication with the Lord, his relationship with him will inevitably diminish over time.

13 Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you. These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, by the will of the Father. Amen.

Section 32 Mission to the Lamanites

Section 32 was received within three weeks of the conference in Fayette on September 26-28, 1830, though the exact date is not known. Joseph reported that some time close to the September conference, the elders manifested a great desire to know if additional missionaries couldn't be sent with Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer Jr., so that the Lamanites might enjoy the blessings of the gospel all the sooner (*HC*, 1:118). In consequence of their urging, Joseph inquired of the Lord and received in reply section 32. Section 32 was not printed in the Book of Commandments but was recorded in the Kirtland Revelation Book, and was included in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

It must be understood that today, few, if any, of the American Indians are believed to have descended from the people of Book of Mormon. In 1830, however, it was generally believed, even by Joseph Smith, that most, if not all, of the Native Americans originated from the Book of Mormon people. There was consequently much interest among the saints in the proposed mission to the Lamanites. It was hoped that the time had come for the redemption of the scattered remnant of the Book of Mormon peoples prophesied in the Book of Mormon. In section 32, two additional men are called to accompany Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, Jr., on their mission to the Lamanites. These are Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson.

As soon as this revelation was received, Emma Smith and other sisters began collecting and making clothes and procuring other necessities for the four missionaries, since some of the four were not able to cover the costs themselves.

1 And now concerning my servant Parley P. Pratt, behold, I say unto him that as I live I will that he shall declare my gospel and learn of me, and be meek and lowly of heart.

verse 1 “learn of me, and be meek and lowly of heart” Because Parley was an ordained Baptist minister and missionary when he joined the Church, one might have expected him to have an agenda of his own, independent of Joseph or Hyrum or Oliver. Throughout his life of incredible service to the Church and in some of its highest offices, he remained for the most part “meek and lowly of heart.”

2 And that which I have appointed unto him is that he shall go with my servants, Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, Jun., into the wilderness among the Lamanites.

verse 2 “into the wilderness among the Lamanites” According to Elder Spencer W. Kimball: “Wilford Woodruff, president of the Lord’s Church, identified many of the larger [North American] tribes as ‘Lamanites’ . . . as have all the presidents and

leaders of the Church since. So we look upon the name as proper and dignified and fully acceptable” (Kimball, *Lamanites*, 3).

It is important for the student of the scriptures to know that many truths have been revealed, and will continue to be revealed, by the Lord to his Church gradually and incrementally. The Lord did not in 1830 and does not now give all truths to his prophets as “writing on a wall.” Often, seeking and questioning over a period of many years is necessary for some revealed truths to finally become clear. The truths about the genealogical origins of the American Indians is a prime example of this principle. Other examples have included the Lord’s desire that polygamy be practiced in his Church, the church’s policy of Blacks and the priesthood, and the concept of Zion. This does not mean that Wilford Woodruff, Spencer Kimball, and the other latter-day prophets were not true prophets of God. They certainly were. This pattern of gradual revelation—always in response to prayerful and persistent wondering and questioning—is simply the nature of the Lord’s dealing with the prophets of his kingdom here in this mortal, telestial world.

3 And Ziba Peterson also shall go with them; and I myself will go with them and be in their midst; and I am their advocate with the Father, and nothing shall prevail against them.

verse 3 Ziba Peterson had been baptized on April 18, 1830, by Oliver Cowdery, and now as a member for less than six months he was called to the Lamanite mission. Ziba left the Church in 1833.

4 And they shall give heed to that which is written, and pretend to no other revelation; and they shall pray always that I may unfold the same to their understanding.

verse 4 “pretend to no other revelation” Coming so soon after the affair of Hiram Page and his “seer stone,” in which even Oliver had been deceived, it seems reasonable that the Lord would warn the elders here to stick to the scriptures and make no pretense of receiving other revelations.

“pray always” It is vital to maintain a constant attitude of prayer in order that we might conquer Satan and escape his servants (D&C 10:5), have the Spirit poured out upon us (see D&C 19:38), avoid temptation (see D&C 20:33; 31:12), keep our reward (see D&C 31:12), and receive understanding of the scriptures (see D&C 32:4).

5 And they shall give heed unto these words and trifle not, and I will bless them. Amen.

verse 5 “trifle not” To trifle is to deal lightly without appropriate seriousness or respect.

Character Vignette

Parley Parker Pratt

He was born in 1807 and was eighteen months younger than the Prophet. He grew up in Canaan, New York, and learned to work hard on a farm. As a boy, he became associated with the Baptist Church. At age nineteen he set out for the frontier, but got as far as the Kirtland area and decided to stay. There he laid the foundation of a home in the wilderness. At age twenty he returned to Canaan, his boyhood home, and married Thankful Halsey. The newly married couple then returned to their wilderness home in the Ohio territory.

About this time, Parley heard Sidney Rigdon preach. The Campbellites' version of the "ancient gospel in pure form" appealed to Parley. Still missing in Parley's mind was the authority or the proper priesthood line, however.

He determined to take up the ministry as his life's work, and in August 1830 he sold his property in Ohio and commenced his mission, which was to travel and preach to anyone who would listen, especially to the Indians. He traveled with his wife toward his boyhood home in Canaan. On arriving in Buffalo, he felt inspired to send his wife on ahead, and he remained in the area of Wayne County. From an old Baptist deacon named Hamlin, he heard of a strange new book, the Book of Mormon. He obtained a copy and eagerly read it. He then traveled to Palmyra and met with Hyrum Smith—talking with him all one night. He was almost immediately converted, and he and Hyrum traveled on foot to Fayette where he was baptized by Oliver Cowdery. He was also confirmed and ordained an elder.

He then joined his wife and family in Canaan. On telling them about the Restoration, his nineteen-year-old younger brother Orson Pratt was immediately converted. Parley returned to Palmyra. Orson also traveled to Fayette to inquire as to his duty in the kingdom.

Parley was called to the first group of missionaries sent out from Fayette to preach to the American Indians. He was the only member of the missionary group who was married.

Character Vignette

Sidney Rigdon

He was born in Pennsylvania in 1793 and was thus about thirteen years older than Joseph Smith. At age twenty-five he joined the Baptist Church, and a year later he obtained a license as a Baptist minister. He was given charge of a Baptist congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

While engaged in the ministry, he became convinced that some of the Baptist doctrines were not scriptural. He was particularly concerned about the doctrine pertaining to the fate of unbaptized infants. He resigned his position and went into the

tanning business. He then became acquainted with Alexander Campbell, the founder of the sect known as the Disciples or Campbellites. This sect held to the basic principles of the ancient gospel. He became a Campbellite minister and moved to the Kirtland area. He had many adherents in his congregation.

Brief Historical Setting

1830 October

In October 1830 the four missionaries called to preach to the Lamanites set out for the West and Indian territory. They began their work with the Catteraugus tribe near Buffalo, New York. Here they were fairly well received, and after leaving copies of the Book of Mormon they continued their journey west. On the way to Missouri, they stopped near Kirtland, Ohio, and taught the restored gospel to Sidney Rigdon, a Campbellite minister and former religious mentor of Parley P. Pratt. Sidney was the minister to several congregations of Reformed Baptists in the Kirtland area, and had been greatly influenced by the early teachings of Alexander Campbell, a well-known Protestant theologian and minister who was a leader of the Reformed Baptist or Disciple movement. These Protestant “Disciples,” eventually to be called “The Disciples of Christ,” in 1832 were ardently looking for a restoration of the New Testament gospel. When Sidney Rigdon formed a communal Christian society called “The Family” in August of 1830, however, it caused a break between Sidney and Alexander Campbell. The missionaries presented Sidney with a copy of the Book of Mormon, which he studied carefully for about two weeks. At the end of that time he concluded the book was of God, and he was baptized on November 14, 1830, in Mentor, Ohio. In addition to Sidney, more than one hundred of his congregation also believed and were baptized. Sidney’s joining the Church and accepting the Book of Mormon as inspired scripture caused the break with Alexander Campbell to become irreparable.

One of the converts was Frederick G. Williams, a practicing physician in the Kirtland area. Dr. Williams was forty-three years old at the time of his baptism. Also converted was Lyman Wight, a Campbellite and leader of a small group of families in the Kirtland area that were living in a type of united order on a small scale—the so-called “common stock family.” In a short time 130 people were baptized into the Church. Although this preaching to Sydney Rigdon and his followers may seem today like a diversion from the primary objective of this mission to the Indians, it resulted in one of the missionaries’ most significant accomplishments—the conversion of Reverend Rigdon and many of his followers.

The missionaries had been called, after all, to go to the Indian territory, and winter was coming. So about November 1, they left the congenial Kirtland area, and, joined by a fifth companion, the new Campbellite convert, Dr. Frederick G. Williams, they continued westward. Dr. Williams unhesitatingly gave up his profession on hearing the restored gospel and asked if he might join the missionaries. Their missionary labors

were temporarily delayed with the arrest of Parley P. Pratt on trumped-up charges. This was an attempt by those who would conspire against them to thwart their missionary successes.

On the way, they proselyted and left copies of the Book of Mormon here and there. Then the severe winter of 1830-31 descended upon them. The Mississippi River was frozen over, and the usual carriage and horse-back travel were impossible. But despite the weather, under great suffering, they walked through snow and ice for 300 miles to the frontier village of Independence, Missouri. Upon arriving at Independence, two of the missionaries took work to help finance their mission while the other three continued a short distance to the Indian lands. Here it appeared they would have their greatest success among the Delaware Indians who lived just across the frontier in what is now the state of Kansas. Although the Indians were at first suspicious of the missionaries because they had been exploited by some previous Christian missionaries, their suspicion was soon alleviated by a moving address delivered by Oliver Cowdery. Chief Anderson of the Delaware tribe was very impressed and asked the missionaries to remain during the winter and teach them the Book of Mormon. Success appeared imminent, but their hopes were dashed when antagonistic Protestant missionaries influenced the Indian agent to evict the Mormon elders from Indian lands.

Meanwhile, turning our attention back to the missionaries in Missouri, since they had little access to the Indians, they preached loud and long to the Missouri settlers. At this point, Parley P. Pratt was selected to return east to get a new supply of copies of the Book of Mormon and to report on the mission's progress to Joseph Smith.

In order to support themselves in Missouri, the missionaries did such work as was available. They set up a tailor shop in Independence, and some of their patrons later became defenders of the Mormons when persecution raged. One of their customers, however, would later become an infamous enemy of the Church. This was Lilburn W. Boggs. Tradition has it that Peter Whitmer, Jr., made a suit for him on the occasion of his inauguration as Lieutenant Governor of Missouri.

What had this mission to the Lamanites actually accomplished? Although probably no Indians had been baptized, the work of preaching to the Lamanites had nevertheless begun. A large number of converts had been made, including such future leaders as Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge (see D&C 36). The missionaries had also provided the first contact with the Kirtland area and had laid the foundation of the future Zion in Independence, Missouri. Both Kirtland and Independence were to become important centers in the later history of the Church.

In October of 1830, the Lord gave a revelation to two little-known members of the Church, Ezra Thayre and Northrop Sweet, in which he called them to labor and emphasized the imminence of his eventual second coming **[D&C 33 - The Eleventh Hour]**.

Ezra Thayre and Northrop Sweet were residents of Palmyra who were baptized in October 1830 by Parley Pratt before Parley and the other Lamanites missionaries departed at the end of that month. Shortly thereafter, still in October, these two visited the Prophet Joseph in Fayette to ask concerning the will of the Lord for them. In answer, they were instructed to preach the gospel, though it does not appear that they were called to leave Palmyra and their families to do so.

Northrop Sweet did not last long in the Church. He was ordained an elder within eight months after section 33 was received, and he moved to Ohio in compliance with the commandment given in section 37. Soon after arriving there, however, Northrop had false revelations instructing him to become the prophet for the Church. Before the end of 1831 he had left the Church and with others formed "The Pure Church of Christ," a venture that did not succeed.

Ezra Thayre, on the other hand, remained relatively faithful to the Church until after Joseph Smith's death. In May of 1831 Joseph will receive a revelation directing Ezra to prepare for a mission to Missouri, "even unto the borders by the Lamanites," which he will be formally called to undertake a month later on June 7 (see D&C 52:22). Because Ezra delayed so long after receiving this call, he was finally instructed to stay behind in Ohio, and Selah J. Griffin was sent to Missouri in his place. It is likely that Ezra Thayre's lack of diligence in obeying his call to Missouri grew out of his role in certain problems of the Thompson, Ohio, branch of the Church (see the introductory commentary for D&C sections 54 and 56). Ezra was at the time of his Missouri call already somewhat out of harmony with the Church and in need of repentance for pride, selfishness, and disobedience (see D&C 56:8). Apparently, Ezra Thayre later did repent and participated in the Zion's Camp march, eventually becoming a prominent member of the Church in Nauvoo. After the death of Joseph Smith, however, Ezra did not support Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve, and eventually joined the Reorganized Church.

Section 33 The Eleventh Hour

Section 33's importance lies in its theme, which is the imminence of the Lord's second coming. In this section, the Lord uses the symbolism contained in the parable of the ten virgins as related in Matthew 25:1-13.

Jewish wedding customs of Jesus's day called for the bridegroom and his friends, after a bachelors' party of sorts, in processional array, to call for the bride who waited with her friends and attendants to be taken to the wedding feast. As the wedding celebration was held at night, friends and attendants of the bride sometimes grew weary and sleepy with waiting. When word was received that the bridegroom was coming, the bride's party would go out and meet them. Each member of the bride's party was expected by tradition and practical need to carry a lamp to find her way in the dark.

In the parable of the ten virgins, the bridegroom is Jesus. The ten virgins are those who profess a belief in Christ and are awaiting his second coming. Those attending the "wedding feast" are those who have received his gospel and have persisted in righteousness until his coming. They will celebrate as they receive the rewards promised the righteous. "Midnight" represents the unlikely and unexpected hour of his coming. The expression "the bridegroom tarried" refers to the fact that his coming is delayed to a time more distant than the saints expected. The "eleventh hour" is now—the time just before his return—when each of us must stay constantly prepared lest we lose our reward. When the hour of the bridegroom's coming arrived, the virgins arose and trimmed, or prepared, their lamps. It was then that the five foolish virgins discovered they had no oil.

Regarding the application of this parable to our day, President Spencer W. Kimball has explained:

I believe that the ten virgins represent the people of the Church of Jesus Christ and not the rank and file of the world. All of the virgins, wise and foolish, had accepted the invitation to the wedding supper; they had knowledge of the program and had been warned of the important day to come. They were not the Gentiles or the heathens or the pagans, nor were they necessarily corrupt and reprobate, but they were knowing people who were foolishly unprepared for the vital happenings that were to affect their eternal lives.

They had the saving, exalting gospel, but it had not been made the center of their lives. They knew the way but gave only a small measure of loyalty and devotion. . . . They had heard of his [the bridegroom's] coming for so long, so many times, that the statement seemingly became meaningless to them. Would he ever come? So long had it been since they began expecting him that they were rationalizing that he would never appear. Perhaps it was a myth.

Hundreds of thousands of us today are in this position. Confidence has been dulled and patience worn thin. It is so hard to wait and be prepared always. But we cannot allow ourselves to slumber. The Lord has given us this parable as a special warning. . . .

The foolish asked the others to share their oil, but spiritual preparedness cannot be shared in an instant. The wise had to go, else the bridegroom would have gone unwelcomed. They needed all their oil for themselves; they could not save the foolish. The responsibility was each for himself. This was not selfishness or unkindness. The kind of oil that is needed to illuminate the way and light up the darkness is not shareable. How can one share obedience to the principle of tithing; a mind at peace from righteous living; an accumulation of knowledge? How can one share faith or testimony? How can one share attitudes or chastity, or the experience of a mission? How can one share temple privileges? Each must obtain that kind of oil for himself.

In the parable, oil can be purchased at the market. In our lives, the oil of preparedness is accumulated drop by drop in righteous living. Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity—these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps.

Midnight is so late for those who have procrastinated (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 256).

1 Behold, I say unto you, my servants Ezra and Northrop, open ye your ears and hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, whose word is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, soul and spirit; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

verse 1 “whose word is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword” See the commentary on this phrase in D&C 6:2.

“and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” The Lord is perfectly perceptive of your heart and mind. It is impossible to hide anything from him. Ultimately each of us will be judged by him according to this perfect knowledge. The scriptures teach that we each will be rewarded by the Lord according to our “desires” (Alma 29:4; D&C 137:9). But the scriptural word *desires* means more than that which we may prefer, choose, or elect. Your *desires* are what you really are in your heart of hearts. Ultimately we each will be judged according to what we truly are at the very center of our mind and heart and not according to what we may say that we want.

2 For verily, verily, I say unto you that ye are called to lift up your voices as with the sound of a trump, to declare my gospel unto a crooked and perverse generation.

verse 2 “to declare my gospel unto a crooked and perverse generation”

Even those on the earth who are considered by human standards to be “good people” are controlled largely by their natural self until they accept Christ and his atonement and become new creatures through the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God. By the standards of heaven they are “crooked and perverse” and “enemies to God” until they come to Christ.

3 For behold, the field is white already to harvest; and it is the eleventh hour, and the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard.

verse 3 “it is the eleventh hour”

The Lord confirms that this dispensation is the final one—the last one before the Savior’s second coming. This is the eleventh hour of the Lord’s “day,” and the crew of laborers of this final dispensation is the last. The Lord’s reference here is to the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16).

4 And my vineyard has become corrupted every whit; and there is none which doeth good save it be a few; and they err in many instances because of priestcrafts, all having corrupt minds.

verse 4 “my vineyard has become corrupted every whit”

Elder Hyrum M. Smith explained the special use of the term “corrupt” in this passage:

Let me explain, when I use the term “corrupt” . . . that I use it in the same sense that I believe the Lord used it when he made that declaration to Joseph Smith, the prophet, in answer to the prophet’s prayer. He did not mean, nor do I mean, that the ministers of religion are personally unvirtuous or impure. I believe as a class they, perhaps, in personal purity, stand a little above the average order of men. When I use the term “corrupt” I mean, as I believe the Lord meant, that they have turned away from the truth . . . and have turned to that which is false. A false doctrine is a corrupt doctrine; a false religion is a corrupt religion; a false teacher is a corrupt teacher. Any man who teaches a false doctrine, who believes in and practices and teaches a false religion is a corrupt professor, because he teaches that which is impure and not true (*CR*, October 1916, 43).

This same counsel might also apply to those within the Church who preach false doctrine. President Joseph F. Smith said:

Among the Latter-day saints, the preaching of false doctrines, disguised as truths of the gospel, may be expected from people of two classes, and practically from these only. They are:

First—the hopelessly ignorant, whose lack of intelligence is due to their indolence and sloth, who make but a feeble effort, if indeed any at all, to better themselves by reading and study; those who are afflicted with a dread disease which may develop into an incurable malady—laziness.

Second—the proud and self-vaunting ones, who read by the lamp of their own conceit; who interpret by rules of their own contriving; who have become a law unto themselves, and so pose as the sole judges of their own doings. These are more dangerously ignorant than the first.

Beware of the lazy and the proud! Their infection in each case is contagious. It would be better for them, and for all, that they be compelled to display the yellow flag of warning, that the clean and uninfected may be protected (*Juvenile Instructor*, volume 41, 178).

“they err in many instances because of priestcrafts” If a man represents himself as a priesthood or church leader, yet his primary motive is personal popularity, power, or financial gain rather than the selfless serving of his fellow man, then he is guilty of practicing priestcrafts or priestcraft. In other words, if his primary motive is worldly—the stuff of pride—then he is guilty of priestcraft. Might this occur within the Church of Jesus Christ as well as without the Church?

5 And verily, verily, I say unto you, that this church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness.

verse 5 “this church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness” This imagery is drawn from the book of Revelation where the Church of Jesus Christ, symbolized as a woman, is driven into the wilderness, or apostasy, by the great dragon who is Satan (see Revelation 12:1-17). Hence, to call the Church from out of the wilderness refers to the restoration of the Church upon the earth after centuries of apostasy.

6 And even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice.

verse 6 “I will gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth” This phrase—“the four quarters of the earth”—along with the phrase “the isles of the sea” are scriptural phrases, found especially in the book of Isaiah, that refer to the locations of scattered Israel (see also the commentary for D&C 29:7-9). The phrase “four quarters of the earth” is a metaphor meaning over the entire surface of the earth.

7 Yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that the field is white already to harvest; wherefore, thrust in your sickles, and reap with all your might, mind, and strength.

verses 8-10 It is sobering for the young missionary, newly arrived in the mission field, to contemplate the idea that the Lord has commanded them to open their mouths—and particularly that it is a sin to fail to do so (see D&C 60:2).

8 Open your mouths and they shall be filled, and you shall become even as Nephi of old, who journeyed from Jerusalem in the wilderness.

verse 8 “and you shall become even as Nephi of old” In 2 Nephi 1:27, Lehi states that Nephi had the power of God with him when he taught his rebellious brothers. It was not Nephi who spoke, but “it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it.”

9 Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you.

verse 9 “you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs” See the commentary for D&C 31:5. Remember that the “sheaves” of grain are the people whom these missionaries will “harvest” through teaching them the gospel.

10 Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;

verse 10 “make his paths straight” In their Doctrine and Covenants commentary, Smith and Sjodahl explained:

Eastern potentates, when traveling from one part of the kingdom to another, would proclaim their coming and order their subjects to prepare the way for them, by building roads where there were none; if necessary by leveling hills and filling up depressions, and straightening out the winding paths. . . . To prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight is to acknowledge his sovereignty and to make all necessary preparations for his reception. He will not come to reign until all necessary preparations for his coming have been made. Joseph Smith said, “Hear this, O earth! The Lord will not come to reign over the righteous in this world . . . until everything for the Bridegroom is ready (*HC*, 5:291)” (174).

11 Yea, repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.

verse 11 “and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost” For a discussion of this important concept, see the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31.

12 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and remember that they shall have faith in me or they can in nowise be saved;

verse 12 “I say unto you, this is my gospel” The Lord teaches that faith, repentance, the baptism of water, and the baptism of the Spirit comprise the essence of his gospel. They are not merely the introductory or initial first principles of the gospel. Rather, they are the gospel.

“they shall have faith in me” Please never read this commandment of the Lord without reminding yourself that to have faith in the Lord is to *obey* his commandments. Faith is not merely something you hold and ponder in your mind. Rather, it is something you *do*. It is a principle of action.

13 And upon this rock I will build my church; yea, upon this rock ye are built, and if ye continue, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

verse 13 “upon this rock I will build my church” For a discussion of the word *rock* in the scriptures, see the commentary for D&C 11:24.

14 And ye shall remember the church articles and covenants to keep them.

verse 14 “the church articles and covenants” These instructions and procedures are found in section 20.

15 And whoso having faith you shall confirm in my church, by the laying on of the hands, and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them.

verse 15 “you shall confirm . . . and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost” This verse teaches that those who lay hands on the head of a newly baptized individual to confirm them a member of the Church do not actually bestow the Holy Ghost. They perform the ordinance of confirmation, but the Lord alone bestows or withholds the gift of his Holy Spirit.

16 And the Book of Mormon and the holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction; and the power of my Spirit quickeneth all things.

verse 16 The Lord bears his testimony again of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon (see also D&C 17:6). It is notable that the Lord prioritizes the scriptures in this verse—first, the Book of Mormon, and then the others.

“the power of my Spirit quickeneth all things” The Lord’s Spirit gives life to all things, that is, the Spirit makes the scriptures come to life in our hearts and minds.

17 Wherefore, be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom—

verse 17 Here is clear warning for the saints to maintain a state of spiritual readiness as the coming of the Lord draws ever closer. The Lord’s warning here to “pray always” is the sixth time in the first thirty-three sections of the Doctrine and

Covenants that the Lord has repeated this instruction. It would seem that prayer is most important. The Lord's reference here is to the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.

President Spencer Kimball wrote:

In our lives the oil of preparedness is accumulated drop by drop in righteous living. Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity—these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 256).

18 For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that I come quickly. Even so. Amen.

verse 18 “I come quickly” This is the first time the Lord uses the expression “I come quickly.” This phrase will be repeated several times more in the remainder of the Doctrine and Covenants. Intuitively we are usually inclined to understand this statement of the Lord to mean that his second coming is near, that he will be coming soon. President Joseph Fielding Smith provided an alternate interpretation:

“I come quickly.” This is a scriptural expression that occurs frequently, especially in the book of Revelation. This is “speaking after the manner of the Lord” (D&C 63:53). This does not mean that immediately the Lord will make his appearance, but when he does come he will come suddenly, when he is least expected. He told his disciples that the day would come when men were unawares, as the thief in the night. For this reason we should watch and pray, “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:34-35). There is no excuse for any of us, then, not to be prepared, for we have been fully and frequently warned (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:157).

Brief Historical Setting

Fall 1830

In the late fall of 1830, a few important new converts to the Church and an investigator traveled to Fayette to meet Joseph. These men were given personal revelations. They included Orson Pratt, who had been converted by his older brother Parley P. Pratt [**D&C 34 - Orson Pratt**], Sidney Rigdon [**D&C 35 - Sidney Rigdon Called as Scribe**], and a former follower of Sidney Rigdon's, a successful hatter from Kirtland named Edward Partridge [**D&C 36 - Edward Partridge**]. Sidney Rigdon had already been baptized in Kirtland, but Edward Partridge waited until he met Joseph and then was baptized by him.

Character Vignette

Orson Pratt

Shortly after his arrival in Fayette, Orson was called to preach the gospel with his brother Parley in Missouri (see D&C 34; 52:26). After their mission, Orson became the first man in this dispensation to serve as an elders quorum president. He set the example for priesthood brethren by serving another mission (see D&C 75:14), for which he traveled “on foot near 4,000 miles, attended 207 meetings . . . baptized 104 persons and organized several new branches of the church” (*Orson Pratt Diaries*, 2 February 1833, as cited in Breck England’s *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985], 31). After returning to Kirtland he worked on the limestone foundation of the temple before becoming a member of Zion’s Camp (see D&C 103:40).

While reading the *Messenger and Advocate* Orson learned that he was requested to be in Kirtland for a meeting on April 26, 1835. Within two days of reading the notice he arrived at the temple site and was ordained to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. During the time of his service in the Quorum he earned a “Certificate of Proficiency” in Hebrew and taught English grammar. He earned a certificate qualifying him to teach Hebrew as well.

Orson had begun his teaching career in December 1835. It was interrupted as religious persecution drove the Saints from Ohio to Missouri and from there to Illinois. In Illinois he led the department of literature and mathematics at the University of Nauvoo. Unfortunately, as his educational abilities soared, his faith wavered. He was excommunicated on August 20, 1842. Wilford Woodruff wrote the reason for the apostasy: “John C. Bennett was the ruin of Orson Pratt” (*Wilford Woodruff Journals*, August 1842, as cited in Breck England’s *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985], 81). Within a few months, Orson confessed his sins and manifested deep repentance. He was rebaptized by the Prophet on January 20, 1843, and he received back the priesthood and the same power and authority as in former days.

After the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, Orson was confident in the leadership of Brigham Young and followed him to the temporary encampments of Iowa Territory and on to the Rockies (see D&C 136:13). Orson kept a meticulous log of the miles traveled and astronomical and other scientific observations, and he calculated the latitude and longitude of prominent sites. He was one of two Latter-day Saints to first view the Salt Lake Valley: “We could not refrain from a shout of joy” (Orson Pratt, extracts from journal, in *Millennial Star* 12 [15 June 1850]: 178).

After traversing Emigration Canyon he dedicated the Valley and then helped plat the city of the Great Salt Lake. He returned to the Camps of Israel in Iowa and from there journeyed east to England. His literary contributions in England include a booklet, “The Kingdom of God,” and a pamphlet, “New Jerusalem, or the Spirit of Modern

Prophecy,” and he served as editor of the newspaper *The Millennial Star*. He returned to America in the 1850s. Orson would eventually cross the Atlantic Ocean some sixteen times to share the gospel with those in the British Isles.

His Church service dramatically changed when he publicly announced the doctrine of plural marriage in 1852. His remaining years were spent defending the doctrine, and Mormonism in general. His philosophical writings led to tension between himself and Brigham Young. For Orson this was most disturbing, as writing was not always joyous to him: “Writing has always been tedious to me, but seeing the good that may be accomplished, I have whipped my mind to it, till I am nearly baldheaded, and grey-bearded, through constant application. I almost envy the hours as they steal away. . . . I wish to accomplish something ere I die, that shall not only be esteemed great by good and holy men, but that shall be considered great in the sight of God” (Orson Pratt letter to Parley P. Pratt, 2 November 1853, as cited in Breck England’s, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985], 197-98).

Brigham Young chose to differ, saying to Orson, “You have been like a mad stubborn mule” (*Ibid.*, 210). He counseled, “I want you to do just as you have done in your Apostleship, but when you want to teach new doctrine, to write those ideas, and submit them to me, and if they are correct I will tell you” (*Ibid.*, 215). In spite of strong counsel, Brigham was very supportive of Orson Pratt. Upon overhearing another deride the Apostle he remarked, “If Brother Orson were chopped up in inch pieces, each piece would cry out Mormonism was true” (*Ibid.*, 217).

The goodness that Orson accomplished in his life proclaimed his testimony. He presided over the territorial legislature, served as a regent of the University of Deseret, and debated the Reverend John Phillip Newman, chaplain of the United States Senate and pastor of the Metropolitan Church of Washington, D. C. He and his family were baptized over twenty-six hundred times for deceased kindred dead. In 1874 he was appointed historian and general church recorder, which position he held at the time of his death.

In 1875 when President Young reorganized the Quorum of the Twelve according to seniority in service, Orson, who had been ranked second in the Quorum, was now ranked fifth. John Taylor became the senior Apostle. Orson later published an affidavit in the *Deseret News* affirming his support for the change: “I unreservedly endorse John Taylor” (*Deseret News*, 1 October 1877).

Near the end of his life he suffered from severe diabetes. On September 19, 1880 he announced in a Tabernacle address that it was fifty years to the day since he had joined the Church. After the speech was concluded, Wilford Woodruff addressed the congregation: “We are not in the habit of flattering any man, but I want to say a few words concerning Brother Pratt. . . . I never saw a man in my life that I know of that has spent as few moments idly as he has. I have never seen a storm at sea so heavy-even when shipping seas over the bow, side and stern, but what he would read his book. . . .

He has improved his time. . . . I feel to thank God that we can still hear his voice” (*JD*, 21:314, 315).

Orson’s last speech was given in the Tabernacle on September 18, 1881. “Tomorrow—if I live till tomorrow—I shall be seventy years of age,” he said. “They are the years appointed to man. . . . I know what my hopes are. I know the plan of salvation” (*Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Church Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 18 September 1881).

Orson Pratt was the last surviving member of the original Council of the Twelve Apostles. He filled a total of seven missions and earned a life-long reputation as one of the most capable defenders of the faith.

On October 3, 1881, after telling Joseph F. Smith the inscription he wanted on his tombstone—“My body sleeps for a moment, but my testimony lives and shall endure forever”—Orson died.

Section 34 Orson Pratt

Shortly after Parley Pratt was baptized in Palmyra in early September 1830, he traveled to his family home in Canaan, Columbia County, New York, where some of his immediate family were sympathetic to the gospel message, though most were not. He did, however convert and baptize his younger brother, Orson Pratt, on September 19, 1830, which was Orson's nineteenth birthday. Parley then hurried back to Fayette for the church conference there on September 26, at which conference he was called to the Lamanite mission.

About six weeks after being baptized, Orson Pratt settled his affairs in Canaan and also traveled to Fayette to meet the Prophet Joseph and to be with the main body of the Church and to inquire of the Lord what his duties were to be. Orson wrote the following concerning his meeting with the Prophet on that occasion:

In October, 1830, I traveled westward over two hundred miles to see Joseph Smith the prophet. I found him in Fayette, Seneca Country, New York, residing at the home of Mr. Whitmer. I soon became intimately acquainted with this good man, and also with the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. By my request, on the 4th of November, the Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord for me and received the revelation published in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 34 (*Journal History*, November 1830, 1).

Orson was one of the more capable and faithful men in the early history of the Church. This revelation foreshadows his faithfulness and his life of service in the Church.

1 My son Orson, hearken and hear and behold what I, the Lord God, shall say unto you, even Jesus Christ your Redeemer;

verse 1 "My son Orson" The Lord has taught many times that all mankind may come unto him and become his sons and daughters (see D&C 25:1; Mosiah 5:7-8; 15:10-16; 3 Nephi 9:17-22; Moses 1:4-6; 6:68; Romans 8:14-18; 1 John 3:1-3). As spiritual sons and daughters of the Savior eternally, we have the promise that if we remain faithful, we will grow up to be like our heavenly parents, to be what they are and have what they have.

2 The light and the life of the world, a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

verse 2 Jesus Christ is the "light and the life of the world" (John 8:12). For a thorough discussion of the concept of *light* in the scriptures, see *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

3 Who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God. Wherefore you are my son;

verse 3 “Who so loved the world” Jesus speaks of himself in the third person. This is a paraphrase of John 3:16-17.

“Wherefore you are my son” See the commentary for verse 1.

4 And blessed are you because you have believed;

5 And more blessed are you because you are called of me to preach my gospel—

verses 4-5 Believing is good, but preaching what we believe to others is even better.

6 To lift up your voice as with the sound of a trump, both long and loud, and cry repentance unto a crooked and perverse generation, preparing the way of the Lord for his second coming.

verse 6 “lift up your voice . . . both long and loud” The phrase “long and loud” is a perfect description of Orson Pratt’s ministry. He was a powerful and vigorous apologist for the Church to the time of his death in 1881.

“cry repentance unto a crooked and perverse generation” President Brigham Young said, “I wish we had more Elders to go and preach . . . ‘I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, and this is the gospel of salvation, and if you do not believe it you will be damned, every one of you.’ When a man teaches that doctrine . . . it is one of the loudest sermons that was ever preached . . . because the Spirit bears testimony to it” (*JD*, 4:298-99).

In the Church, we are often embarrassed to teach the hard truth of the gospel straight on, fearing that it is offensive or untactful. We think we will have better success if we “soften” the truth a little and teach it obliquely. The Holy Ghost will testify to the straight and undiluted truth with greater power and greater motivation for change than he will to modified truths taught “tactfully.” The pure and undiluted gospel is offensive to the world. It always has been, but if we don’t sometimes risk offending others with the hard, straight truth, we won’t convert them either. These “offensive” proclamations include: Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. All must repent and be baptized in Christ or they cannot be saved. Baptism by proper priesthood authority is the only gate into the kingdom of God. Only The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints enjoys the fulness of the gospel and priesthood authority in these latter days.

7 For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, the time is soon at hand that I shall come in a cloud with power and great glory.

8 And it shall be a great day at the time of my coming, for all nations shall tremble.

9 But before that great day shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood; and the stars shall refuse their shining, and some shall fall, and great destructions await the wicked.

verse 9 If the reader wishes to read a thorough discussion of the signs of the times, please study three chapters in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3. They are chapter 24, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Introduction*, chapter 25, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Those that Warn*, and chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

10 Wherefore, lift up your voice and spare not, for the Lord God hath spoken; therefore prophesy, and it shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.

verse 10 Orson Pratt would later remark that this command of the Lord to prophesy seemed to him at the time “almost too great for a person of as humble origin as myself ever to attain to” (*JD*, 17:290-91). Orson Pratt possessed the gift of prophecy to an extraordinary degree.

11 And if you are faithful, behold, I am with you until I come—

12 And verily, verily, I say unto you, I come quickly. I am your Lord and your Redeemer. Even so. Amen.

verse 12 “I come quickly” See the commentary for D&C 33:18.

Section 35 Sidney Rigdon Called as a Scribe

In early December 1830, shortly after his conversion, Sidney Rigdon traveled the 300 miles from Kirtland to Fayette to meet the Prophet. He brought with him Edward Partridge. Sidney Rigdon had already been baptized by Parley P. Pratt in Kirtland, but Edward Partridge, a prosperous hatter and fellow Campbellite pastor with Sidney Rigdon, wanted to shake hands with the Prophet and feel good about him before finally committing to baptism. Rigdon and Partridge also wanted to persuade Joseph to come to Kirtland so that the new Ohio converts might meet him and catch his spirit.

There is some confusion regarding the date on which Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge arrived in Fayette. Section 35 was addressed to Sidney Rigdon and was received shortly after their arrival in Fayette. Two early versions of section 35 were printed in the *Ohio Star*, on January 5, 1832 and in the *Painesville Telegraph* on January 17, 1832. These both give the date of this revelation as December 7, 1830. Lucy Mack Smith, however, states that Sidney and Edward Partridge arrived at the Smith's new home in East Waterloo, near Fayette, the day before Edward was baptized. Since Partridge was baptized in December 11, 1830, Lucy's account has them arriving on December 10, thus conflicting with the December 7 date. The date of section 35 in all LDS printings has been given simply as December 1830.

In this revelation Sidney Rigdon is compared to John the Baptist as one who helped prepare the way for the Restoration. Even before he became a member of the Church, he was doing the Lord's work in preparing a group of people to receive the gospel.

At the time Joseph Smith was translating or writing his inspired revision of the King James Bible. Oliver Cowdery had been a scribe for the prophet in this project, but he was serving a mission to the Lamanites. Thus Joseph was without one of his trusted scribes. Sidney is called to act as scribe for Joseph. Sidney is also reminded that Joseph, even in his "weakness" or lack of sophistication, is the one who holds the keys for this dispensation.

1 Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever.

verse 1 "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" See the commentary for D&C 19:1.

"whose course is one eternal round" The concept contained in this phrase is a rich and vital one. We are governed by God's law. That law is absolute, completely reliable, unvarying, and its consequences are inescapable. For every action there is an identical result. These results follow without respect to person. It has always been

thus, in Adam's day just as in ours and in the eternities to come. Thus, "the course of the Lord is one eternal round." For a more complete discussion of this phrase, see the commentary for D&C 3:2.

2 I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one.

verse 2 "even one in me as I am one in the Father" President Brigham Young once asked an interesting question: "How is it that the Latter-day Saints feel and understand alike, are of one heart and one mind, no matter where they may be when they receive the gospel?" (*JD*, 18:259). He then continued on to answer his own question. He taught that it is the influence of the Spirit of God who is the great unifier, whose mind is the mind and will of God the Father who brings us all to a "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). Indeed, we can all exclaim in the beautiful language of Ruth, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!" (Ruth 1:16).

For a more thorough discussion of the concept of the oneness of the Father and the Son, see the commentary for D&C 93:3.

3 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto my servant Sidney, I have looked upon thee and thy works. I have heard thy prayers, and prepared thee for a greater work.

verse 3 "I have . . . prepared thee for a greater work" Sidney Rigdon did much good as a Protestant minister in imparting to many people a preparatory understanding of faith, repentance, and baptism by immersion. The work he is called to here, however, to preach the fulness of the gospel, was an even "greater work."

4 Thou art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah which should come, and thou knewest it not.

verse 4 "thou wast sent forth, even as John" In his labors as a Baptist minister and later as a Campbellite minister the hand of the Lord was over Sidney to direct him in the gathering of many earnest souls who could not accept the teachings of the sects of the day. He had prayed for further light. He was instrumental in preparing a number of intelligent and forceful men who later were to become leaders in the Church.

This passage gives one of several reasons why ministers and members of other churches cannot be labeled as "apostates" or even necessarily as opponents. This is because many of them have some gospel light with which, as servants of God, they prepare the world for greater light to come—even though they may not accept the fulness of the gospel themselves.

In many foreign lands the LDS Church now reaps the harvest sown by non-LDS missionaries who sometimes gave their lives to bring a little light to those who did not know Christ at all. Those noble souls will not lose their reward. In Sidney Rigdon's case, his preaching as a Protestant minister had prepared scores of people to recognize the restored gospel when it arrived in Ohio with the Lamanite missionaries. Sidney's groundwork also preceded the coming of Elijah the prophet to the Kirtland Temple in 1836 to restore the keys of the sealing power, and he prepared many Saints to receive the blessings of the temple. Those Latter-day Saints who can see other Christian churches and their members only as adversaries do not understand the difference between having some light and having the fulness thereof, and they apparently disregard the witness of section 35.

5 Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost;

6 But now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old.

verses 5-6 In Sidney's prior ministry, he had lacked authority. Now, as a priesthood holder Sidney will baptize with authority and be able to lay hands on those baptized, and they will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

7 And it shall come to pass that there shall be a great work in the land, even among the Gentiles, for their folly and their abominations shall be made manifest in the eyes of all people.

verse 7 "even among the Gentiles" This present dispensation of the gospel has consisted of what the Lord has called the times of the Gentiles (see D&C 45:25-30)—a period during which every (Gentile) nation, kindred, tongue, and people will have the opportunity to hear and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ (see also the commentary for 1 Nephi 13:42) in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

8 For I am God, and mine arm is not shortened; and I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name.

verse 8 "mine arm is not shortened" My power is not limited, and I will make it felt.

"I will show miracles, signs, and wonders unto all those who believe on my name" Only the faithful will perceive and recognize the miraculous works of God in the latter days. Those without faith either will not see them at all or will not recognize them as miraculous until the unmistakable destructive signs of the end, when it may be too late.

9 And whoso shall ask it in my name in faith, they shall cast out devils; they shall heal the sick; they shall cause the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk.

verse 9 The restored gospel, with its divine priesthood, is characterized by and may be recognized by manifesting those gifts of the Spirit enjoyed by saints in other dispensations. This does not mean that every devil will be cast out, or that every sick person will be healed. It does mean that these miracles will at times be manifested among the faithful.

10 And the time speedily cometh that great things are to be shown forth unto the children of men;

11 But without faith shall not anything be shown forth except desolations upon Babylon, the same which has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

verse 11 “without faith shall not anything be shown forth except desolations upon Babylon” When there is not faith in the world there are not miracles or spiritual gifts. There is only God’s justice and punishment directed against Babylon.

Babylon is the world of the natural man, unrefined by the Spirit of the Lord. It is Satan’s world. The Lord often compares Babylon to a prostitute from whom anything can be bought for money. She willingly desecrates whatever is holy for money, power, immorality, or other carnal satisfactions. Her fornication is her willing desecration of whatever is holy—the sacred things of God such as religion, standards, values, and ethics. Like a whore, she sells or betrays for money that which is most sacred. Examples of her fornications include the illegal drug trade, the pornography business, or the abortion industry. These are promoted to the nations of the world by Satan and his servants with the promise of money and power to those who sell and with the promise of unhindered physical or sexual gratification to those who buy.

“drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” This interesting phrase is also found in the book of Revelation (14:8; 18:3; see also 17:2) and in two other places in the Doctrine and Covenants (86:3; 88:94). The “wrath of her fornication” is God’s anger over Babylon’s behavior. The “wine of the wrath of her fornication” is the bitter cup or the punishment prepared for her and her adherents to drink in order to answer the demands of God’s justice—destruction in this life, and the pains of hell in the life to come.

12 And there are none that doeth good except those who are ready to receive the fulness of my gospel, which I have sent forth unto this generation.

verse 12 “there are none that doeth good” What humans consider good and what God defines as good are often different. Since God “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31), then *good* or *just* from his celestial perspective

must mean “perfectly good,” “absolutely innocent,” or “completely just and worthy.” Because humans can become completely just and worthy, absolutely innocent, or perfectly good only through the atonement of Christ, it then follows that the “good” can be only those who have entered into the gospel covenant or who are looking for it. Conversely, the “bad” are those who reject Christ or his covenant, however admirable their personal habits might be by relative human standards. Without the atonement, no one’s behavior qualifies as “good” before the Lord. With the cleansing power of the atonement, however, anyone can be made “good” (see D&C 76:69; 3 Nephi 27:16).

13 Wherefore, I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thrash the nations by the power of my Spirit;

verse 13 “I call upon the weak things of the world” Why does the Lord choose the “weak things,” or the weak men, of the earth through whom to perform his works? One answer is that the “weak” men are more likely to be humble and teachable and responsive to the Lord’s directions. In addition it is vital that man learn to lean upon the true source of power, instead of leaning upon themselves or other men. A truly forceful, charismatic, and persuasive prophet or agent of the Lord might draw a following, but his adherents might be inclined to be attracted to him and his worldly charms rather than seeking for the Spirit of the Lord. People might become dependent upon the magnetic and dynamic leader himself and not realize that they need the Lord and his Spirit. Thus, the Lord chooses people as his agents who could not possibly succeed on their own resources. He does this to demonstrate that the agent is not as important as the Lord’s word. In Judges 7:2 we read: “Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.” Paul recorded: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (1 Corinthians 1:19). Of those whom the Lord calls to labor in his vineyard, Paul wrote: “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

“to thrash the nations” *Thrash* is the same as *thresh*. See the commentary for verses 13-14 below.

14 And their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield and their buckler; and I will gird up their loins, and they shall fight manfully for me; and their enemies shall be under their feet; and I will let fall the sword in their behalf, and by the fire of mine indignation will I preserve them.

verses 13-14 In spite of their “weakness” (lack of worldly sophistication or worldly intellectual attainments), the Lord’s servants in this final dispensation will “thrash the nations.” Threshing of grain in biblical times was done by treading out the grain on a threshing-floor. The valuable kernels are gathered and the straw or chaff is left to be burned or simply blown away by the wind. The meaning of this analogy in the context of missionary work is obvious.

verse 14 A “buckler” is a shield or a defense. Every missionary should take heart from the metaphors the Lord uses here to describe how he will enable and protect his missionaries: “Their enemies shall be under their feet,” “I will let fall the sword in their behalf,” and “by the fire of mine indignation will I preserve them.”

15 And the poor and the meek shall have the gospel preached unto them, and they shall be looking forth for the time of my coming, for it is nigh at hand—

verse 15 “**the poor and the meek shall have the gospel preached unto them**” These are those who are unimportant in a worldly way in Babylon. They may have little money or little power or influence over others. “Poor” may also refer to those who are poor in spirit or poor in self-adulation as well as those who are poor in money. The “poor and the meek” are not usually so distracted by the world that they lose their place in the better one that is coming.

16 And they shall learn the parable of the fig-tree, for even now already summer is nigh.

verse 16 “**the parable of the fig-tree**” “And as [Jesus] sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3). Jesus responded by speaking of certain signs that would indicated the nearness of his coming. Among these signs was the “parable of the fig-tree.” “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [the Savior’s second coming] [is] nigh” (Matthew 24:32). Using the parable of the fig-tree, President Spencer W. Kimball made a prophetic pronouncement: “The leaves are commencing to show on the fig tree” (*Ensign*, May 1976, 74).

17 And I have sent forth the fulness of my gospel by the hand of my servant Joseph; and in weakness have I blessed him;

verse 17 All of the gospel principles to which man is allowed access are being restored through Joseph in this final dispensation—“the fulness of my Gospel.” Wilford Woodruff wrote of the Prophet Joseph: “He lived until he received every key, ordinance and law ever given to any man on the earth, from father Adam down, touching this dispensation” (*JD*, 16:267).

“in weakness have I blessed him” Joseph Smith accumulated little money or formal education, and he never became a popular figure in the eyes of the world. Yet he stands as one of the twenty or so most important priesthood leaders in the history of the world—the head of the dispensation of the fulness of times.

18 And I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, even things which were from the foundation of the world, and the things which shall come from this time until the time of my coming, if he abide in me, and if not, another will I plant in his stead.

verse 18 “I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed” Joseph Smith, as head of the dispensation of the fulness of times, holds the keys of all the heavenly information that will be revealed to the earth during this dispensation. Examples of his exercising these keys include his translation of the Book of Mormon, his inspired revision of the Bible, his translating the Book of Abraham, his revealing the ordinances of the temple, and his receiving and writing the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. Apparently he still holds these keys and continues to exercise them from the other side of the veil (see D&C 90:3).

19 Wherefore, watch over him that his faith fail not, and it shall be given by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, that knoweth all things.

verse 19 “watch over him that his faith fail not” Sidney is given charge to look out for Joseph’s spiritual welfare and to give him advice, counsel, and strength as directed by the Holy Ghost. Even prophets need the counsel of their priesthood brethren and the love, support, and service of those over whom they preside.

20 And a commandment I give unto thee—that thou shalt write for him; and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect;

verse 20 “thou shalt write for him” Joseph’s two scribes, Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer had been called on missions (D&C 28:8; 30:9-11). John Whitmer was later dispatched to Kirtland to watch over the group of new converts there. Joseph, therefore, needed a reliable scribe. Sidney Rigdon is called to fill that need, and he will become a major scribe for the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

“the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom” The reference here is to the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (the “JST”). This does not necessarily mean that the JST will simply restore the original texts of the biblical books. The purpose of the JST goes beyond that. The texts will be rendered as God himself wants us to understand them—corrected, adapted, edited, revised, and supplemented especially for use of the saints in the latter days. See the supplemental article, *Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision of the Bible—The JST*.

21 For they will hear my voice, and shall see me, and shall not be asleep, and shall abide the day of my coming; for they shall be purified, even as I am pure.

verse 21 “For they will hear my voice” Here is a sweeping promise to those elect who accept the restored gospel. They will hear and see the Lord, will not be caught asleep or unprepared when he comes, and will survive the great and terrible day of the Lord.

22 And now I say unto you, tarry with him, and he shall journey with you; forsake him not, and surely these things shall be fulfilled.

verse 22 “And now I say unto you, tarry with him” Sidney is not to return home to Ohio, but is to remain with Joseph.

23 And inasmuch as ye do not write, behold, it shall be given unto him to prophesy; and thou shalt preach my gospel and call on the holy prophets to prove his words, as they shall be given him.

verse 23 “And inasmuch as ye do not write” Sidney is warned that it is not his calling to write scripture. There is no doubt that Sidney is better educated and more experienced than Joseph. There is also no doubt that despite these differences, Joseph is the Lord’s anointed prophet. Just as was Oliver Cowdery (see D&C 28:2-7), Sidney is warned to use his talents to sustain Joseph and not try to control or eclipse him. It is Sidney’s calling to support Joseph and to preach and expound upon the things Joseph receives and to use the Bible (“call on the holy prophets”) to support Joseph’s teachings.

24 Keep all the commandments and covenants by which ye are bound; and I will cause the heavens to shake for your good, and Satan shall tremble and Zion shall rejoice upon the hills and flourish;

25 And Israel shall be saved in mine own due time; and by the keys which I have given shall they be led, and no more be confounded at all.

verse 25 “And Israel shall be saved” In the narrow sense, Israel is the infant Church that will survive and thrive to be caught up at the Savior’s coming. In the broader context, Israel is all the posterity of Jacob, including the Jews, the Book of Mormon peoples, the lost tribes, and the Gentiles who are adopted into the house of Israel. All these who believe shall be led to salvation by the keys of the priesthood held by the apostolic leaders of the latter-day Church.

26 Lift up your hearts and be glad, your redemption draweth nigh.

27 Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold, I come quickly. Even so. Amen.

verses 26-27 The Lord's admonitions in these verses are often disobeyed among the faithful Latter-day Saints. Often even the most faithful members have difficulty obeying the commandment of the Lord to rejoice, be glad, and fear not. There is a tendency for the members to resist the joy that should already be theirs, and they continue to fear for their place in the kingdom. The Lord does not say that the kingdom "may be yours" or even "will be yours" (see D&C 25:1). As long as church members are faithful, they should know that the kingdom is already theirs. The physical reality of the Lord's millennial kingdom and his eventual heavenly kingdom is not visible yet, but they are coming, and the faithful saints already own a piece of them.

verse 27 "**Behold, I come quickly.**" Remember that this expression does not mean that the Lord will come *soon*. Rather, it means he will come at a moment when he is not expected. See the commentary for D&C 33:18.

Section 36 Edward Partridge

See the introductory commentary for section 35. Edward Partridge was not yet quite converted to the restored gospel when he left Ohio with Sidney Rigdon to visit Joseph. He, like Sidney Rigdon, had first been introduced to the gospel by the missionaries to the Lamanites as they preached in the Kirtland area. Apparently, Edward Partridge was so well respected by others in his congregation that he was asked to investigate the claims of the restoration for them as well. He was so honest and humble, they felt, that he would not be deceived in spiritual things.

Lucy Mack recorded:

In December of the same year [1830], Joseph appointed a meeting at our house. While he was preaching, Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge came in and seated themselves in the congregation. When Joseph had finished his discourse, he gave all who had any remarks to make, the privilege of speaking. Upon this, Mr. Partridge arose, and stated that he had been to Manchester, with the view of obtaining further information respecting the doctrine which we preached; but, not finding us, he had made some inquiry of our neighbors concerning our characters, which they stated had been unimpeachable, until Joseph deceived us relative to the Book of Mormon. He also said that he had walked over our farm, and observed the good order and industry which it exhibited; and, having seen what we had sacrificed for the sake of our faith, and having heard that our veracity was not questioned upon any other point than that of our religion, he believed our testimony, and was ready to be baptized, "if," said he, "Brother Joseph will baptize me."

"You are now," replied Joseph, "much fatigued, brother Partridge, and you had better rest today, and be baptized tomorrow." "Just as Brother Joseph thinks best," replied Mr. Partridge, "I am ready at any time." He was accordingly baptized the next day (*History of Joseph Smith*, 191- 92).

Partridge was baptized by Joseph Smith and confirmed by Sidney Rigdon on the day following his arrival in Fayette. Joseph said of Edward Partridge that he is "a pattern of piety, and one of the Lord's great men" (*HC*, 1:128).

This revelation, section 36, was received about the same time as section 35. It is directed to Edward Partridge and calls him to the work.

1 Thus saith the Lord God, the Mighty One of Israel: Behold, I say unto you, my servant Edward, that you are blessed, and your sins are forgiven you, and you are called to preach my gospel as with the voice of a trump;

verse 1 "the Mighty One of Israel" The titles for Jehovah-Christ which emphasize his strength are more characteristic of the Old Testament period and the early Book of Mormon. These include such titles as one "strong and mighty," "the

mighty one,” the “mighty God,” the God with a “mighty hand” or “strong hand” (see Genesis 49:24; Joshua 14:11; Isaiah 9:6; 10:21; 28:2-27; Mosiah 13:34).

“your sins are forgiven you” See the commentary for D&C 31:5.

2 And I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon, and you shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom;

verse 2 “And I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon” Here is a poignant reminder that when one of the Lord’s appointed and authorized servants puts his hands upon the head of one to perform an ordinance, it is as though the Lord himself was placing his hands on that person to perform the ordinance. Edward Partridge was baptized by Joseph Smith and confirmed a member of the Church and given the gift of the Holy Ghost by Sidney Rigdon

“the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom” Just prior to his crucifixion, Jesus promised his disciples the gift of peace (John 14:27). This peace is not the peace of the world but the inner peace that comes from the knowledge that one has found the truth, has had his sins remitted, and is on the path that leads to eternal life. This knowledge and assurance comes from the Holy Ghost, who is appropriately called the Comforter. Thus, all saints may, in this world of strife and turmoil, receive peace from Christ by the Holy Ghost and the assurance that the course they are pursuing is correct (see D&C 19:23; 59:23).

3 And you shall declare it with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna, blessed be the name of the most high God.

verse 3 “saying: Hosanna, blessed be the name of the most high God”
See the commentary for D&C 19:37.

4 And now this calling and commandment give I unto you concerning all men—

verse 4 This verse alerts the hearer to the following four verses, verses 5-8, which are directed to the church leadership and concern church policy in dealing with all men.

5 That as many as shall come before my servants Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, Jun., embracing this calling and commandment, shall be ordained and sent forth to preach the everlasting gospel among the nations—

verse 5 “this calling and commandment” The calling is the one just given to Edward Partridge in verse 1 “to preach my gospel.” The commandment is the commandment in verse 3 to declare the kingdom “with a loud voice.” In other words, whoever wants to be a missionary and preach the kingdom of God may, from this time on, be ordained and sent out by church leaders—provided they are worthy.

6 Crying repentance, saying: Save yourselves from this untoward generation, and come forth out of the fire, hating even the garments spotted with the flesh.

verse 6 “this untoward generation” The language here cites the King James translation of Acts 2:40 where the Greek word *skolia*—translated “untoward”—means “crooked” or “perverse.” Something that is crooked or perverse will not go straight towards its proper object, and is therefore untoward.

“hating even the garments spotted with the flesh” This is an allusion to Jude 1:23. Both Jews and Jewish Christians in Jesus’s day, largely due to rules in the law of Moses, had a tremendous aversion to bodily fluids and discharges (see Leviticus 13:47-59; 15). Garments spotted by disease or by the reproductive organs and their discharges were considered unclean and had to be either washed, torn, or burned depending upon the source and circumstances of the pollution.

Similarly, in the gospel covenant our aversion to moral disease or pollution ought to be so strong that we respond sharply and negatively to even the slightest indication of it. “Garments spotted with flesh are garments defiled by the practices of carnal desires and disobedience to the commandments of the Lord” (Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:163).

President Smith added: “We are commanded to keep our garments unspotted from all sin, from every practice that defiles. We are therefore commanded to come out of the world of weakness and forsake the things of this world” (*Ibid.*, 1:150).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie also addressed this topic: “To stay the spread of disease in ancient Israel, clothing spotted by contagious diseases was destroyed by burning (Leviticus 13:47-59; 15:4-17). And so with sin in the Church, the saints are to avoid the remotest contact with it; the very garments, as it were, of the sinners are to be burned with fire, meaning that anything which has had contact with the pollutions of the wicked must be shunned” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:428).

7 And this commandment shall be given unto the elders of my church, that every man which will embrace it with singleness of heart may be ordained and sent forth, even as I have spoken.

verse 7 Even in Joseph Smith’s day, every worthy male member of the Church had at least some obligation to enter missionary service and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ (see also verses 4-5).

8 I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God; wherefore, gird up your loins and I will suddenly come to my temple. Even so. Amen.

verse 8 “gird up your loins” The Hebrews wore loose-fitting robes which were cumbersome if they had to work, run, or walk long distances. Hence, to prepare for any of these activities they would gather their loose clothing, bring it between their legs and

tuck it in their sash. In this way they were left unencumbered. Hence, in biblical language, to “gird up your loins” is to prepare for a journey, for work, or for battle. An equivalent modern expression might be “Roll up your sleeves.”

“I will suddenly come to my temple” This is the first time in this dispensation the temple is mentioned. There was no temple in the Church at this time. Perhaps the Lord is simply foreshadowing the construction of future temples in Kirtland and Nauvoo. Again, the word “suddenly” means that he will come when he is least expected.

Section 37 Commandment to Move to Ohio

When they traveled to Fayette in December 1830, Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge had hoped to convince Joseph that he ought to visit the newly converted saints in Kirtland. They got more than their wish when in December 1830 the Lord gave this revelation which commanded all the saints in New York to move to “the Ohio,” largely because of the persecution of the saints in New York. In those days, Ohio was not a state but only a territory referred to as “the Ohio,” the “Ohio Reserve,” or the “Western Reserve.”

Section 37 was given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon less than three weeks after Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge had arrived in Fayette from Kirtland.

By December 1830 the Church had grown to approximately two-hundred saints in the state of New York. As mentioned previously the Lamanite missionaries Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson, had baptized nearly 130 people in the Kirtland, Ohio, area in the two or three weeks they had spent there in October on their way to Missouri. While in the Kirtland area, the Lamanite missionaries had ordained several elders, but apparently they left no single individual to preside over the new saints. Lyman Wight (see the “Brief Historical Setting for December 1830” at the conclusion of section 32) had acted as default leader, especially since Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge had traveled to New York to see the prophet Joseph Smith and inquire concerning the Lord’s will for them. Also, John Whitmer had been sent by Joseph from Fayette to preside over the Church in Kirtland. In spite of the efforts of Lyman Wight and John Whitmer, there was still some spiritual confusion that developed among these new members before Joseph Smith eventually arrived in February.

By the last week of January 1831, the first of the saints were ready for departure from New York. Sidney Rigdon delivered a parting sermon from the courthouse steps in Waterloo to the general populace, warning them to flee the wrath to come. Joseph traveled with Emma in a sleigh provided by Joseph Knight, Jr., and they arrived in Kirtland February 1, 1831.

Through the winter and spring, the New York saints made their way to Kirtland in small parties. By June 1831 the bulk of the New York converts had moved, many of them having sold their property in New York at a loss, to join the saints in Kirtland.

1 Behold, I say unto you that it is not expedient in me that ye should translate any more until ye shall go to the Ohio, and this because of the enemy and for your sakes.

verse 1 “it is not expedient in me that ye should translate any more until ye shall go to the Ohio” Joseph is commanded to pause in his efforts to write his inspired revision of the Bible.

The Lord gives two reasons for this commandment to move:

1. **“because of the enemy”** The opposition to the Church in New York had reached the point where at least some of their enemies had actually conspired to kill the saints. The saints were clearly in significant danger (D&C 38:13, 28-29, 31). Hence, it would seem that the move to the Ohio was at least in part to protect the saints.

2. **“for your sakes”** Apparently the Lord had something special in mind for the saints once they arrived in Kirtland. We will learn more of what the Lord had in mind in later sections.

2 And again, I say unto you that ye shall not go until ye have preached my gospel in those parts, and have strengthened up the church whithersoever it is found, and more especially in Colesville; for, behold, they pray unto me in much faith.

verse 2 “my gospel in those parts” They were to preach in New York one last time and strengthen the branches there, particularly Colesville, where the members had been faithfully praying for help and where the persecution of the saints and the schemes against them were the most severe.

3 And again, a commandment I give unto the church, that it is expedient in me that they should assemble together at the Ohio, against the time that my servant Oliver Cowdery shall return unto them.

verse 3 “a commandment I give unto the church” The Lord commands the saints to move to the Ohio. This was, in a way, the first gathering of the saints in this dispensation. Some of the New York saints looked on this exodus as a repetition of those of Lehi or Moses.

“against the time that my servant Oliver Cowdery shall return unto them” The New York saints are instructed to move to Kirtland in anticipation of Oliver’s return there. Oliver Cowdery was still the second elder of the Church and was a more important figure in its organization at this time than we sometimes acknowledge. The Church was genuinely looking forward to his return. Oliver was at this time in or near Jackson County, Missouri, on his Lamanite mission.

This particular phrase has reference to the fact that when Oliver returned to them from his mission to the Lamanites, he would have more information to give them regarding the location of the temple site in Zion. In other words, another reason for moving to the Ohio is to take the first step in gathering in the New Jerusalem.

Oliver did not arrive in Kirtland, however, until August 27, 1831, more than ten months after he left Fayette for Missouri, and about eight months after this revelation was received. Oliver, obedient to the Lord’s command, did not leave Missouri until

Joseph went there in the summer of 1831 (see D&C 28:8-15) and, at the instruction of the Lord, personally accompanied Oliver back to Kirtland (see D&C 58:58).

4 Behold, here is wisdom, and let every man choose for himself until I come. Even so. Amen.

verse 4 “let every man choose for himself” Again, a reminder of the absolute sanctity of the principle of agency for every individual. The Lord will not, and indeed cannot, abrogate this principle.

Brief Historical Setting

1831 January

Before the saints left New York, Joseph received three more revelations. In the first, the Lord explained to the saints other reasons why they were to leave New York **[D&C 38 - Reasons for the Removal of Church to Ohio]**. The other two were given to James Covill, a former Baptist minister who was converted and baptized into the Church of Christ but left the Church shortly thereafter **[D&C 39 - Revelation to James Covill]** **[D&C 40 - Judge Not]**. Section 41 would be received in Kirtland.

Section 38 Reasons for Removal of the Church to Ohio

“The winter of 1830-31 was one of the most severe recorded in the eastern United States. The December snows were soft and deep; what little melting occurred was soon covered over by storms that maintained a four-foot level through February. Freezing rains in January enabled the wolves to run on the crust while heavier game sank through helplessly. Deer and elk could not find browse of twigs and shrubs. That winter the elk disappeared from the plains of Illinois and Missouri—never to return. A storm covered the breadth of the United States, blizzards whirled snow until familiar landmarks disappeared, and streams could be recognized only by breaks in the forests. Newspapers suspended publication when the mails could not go out. Human life maintained a precarious balance” (*Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, Newell and Avery, 37).

On January 2, 1831, a quarterly conference of the Church was held in Fayette. Joseph briefly described the conference: “The year 1831 opened with a prospect great and glorious for the welfare of the kingdom; for on the 2nd of January, 1831, a conference was held in the town of Fayette, New York, at which the ordinary business of the Church was transacted; and in addition, the following revelation was received”—section 38 (*HC*, 1:140). Section 38 included reasons for the removal of the Church to the west.

The Lord’s command to move to the Ohio was upsetting to the saints, and when they assembled for the conference on January 2, they quizzed the Prophet about the revelation (section 37). There were hard feelings felt by some of them because of the sacrifices this move would require. Joseph had Sidney act as scribe, and he dictated section 38 to the conference as they sat watching and listening.

No official minutes of this conference were recorded, but fortunately some journal accounts exist describing the proceedings and the reception of Doctrine and Covenants 38. One is by John Whitmer:

The time had now come for the general conference to be held. Which was the first of January 1831 and according to this appointment the saints assembled themselves together. After transacting the necessary business, Joseph the Seer addressed the congregation and exhorted them to stand fast, looking forward considering the end [i.e., the object or goal] of their salvation. The solemnities of eternity rested on the congregation, and having previously received a revelation to go to the Ohio [section 37], they desired to know somewhat more concerning the matter. Therefore, the Seer inquired of the Lord in the presence of the whole congregation, and thus came the word of the Lord saying: [D&C 38].

After the Lord had manifested the above words, through Joseph the Seer, there were some divisions among the congregations, some would not receive the above as

the word of the Lord: but that Joseph had invented it himself to deceive the people that in the end he might get gain. Now this was because, their hearts were not right in the sight of the Lord, for they wanted to serve God and man; but our Savior has declared that it was impossible to do so.

The conference was now closed, and the Lord had manifested his will to his people. Therefore they made preparations to journey to the Ohio, with their wives, and children and all that they possessed, to obey the commandment of the Lord (Whitmer, *Early Latter-Day Saint History*, 32-34; see also Woodford, "Historical Development," 1:491).

It would seem that, as is usually the case, the majority of the members gladly accepted this revelation which had been so dramatically delivered to Joseph in the presence of them all, while a small minority were shocked at the prospect of leaving their homes and their livelihoods and accepted the commandment to do so only grudgingly or not at all.

It is helpful to keep in mind as you study section 38 that Joseph Smith had spent much of the previous month, December 1830, revising by inspiration the book of Genesis—specifically he had received by revelation the book of Enoch (Moses 6:26 through Moses 7). The story of Enoch recorded there describes the establishment of Zion by Enoch in the period before the great Flood. In the previous section, section 37, the Lord had commanded the member of the Church to leave their homes and farms in New York and gather to Ohio to prepare to establish a Zion like Enoch's in their own day.

Joseph's mind was therefore saturated with the thoughts and expressions contained in the book of Enoch. Many of these expressions are found in this section. For example, the word "eternity" is found for the first time in the Doctrine and Covenants and it is mentioned nine times in section 38. Other examples include "Zion of Enoch" in verse 4 (Moses 7), "chains of darkness" in verse 5 (Moses 7:57), "wo, wo, wo" in verse 6 (Moses 7:25), and "veil of darkness" in verse 8 (Moses 7:61). Also the beginnings of the concept of the law of consecration emerge, as was practiced in the City of Enoch.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 38 Reasons for the removal of the Church to Ohio

D&C 38:27 I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

D&C 38:30 If ye are prepared ye shall not fear.

1 Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I Am, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made;

verse 1 Given the setting in which section 38 was received (see the introductory commentary for this section), it was obviously expedient that the Lord reassure the gathered congregation that it was he, not Joseph, who was giving the revelation. He will continue this reassurance through verse 7.

“the Great I Am” One of the names Jehovah gave to himself is “I Am” (Exodus 3:14). Joseph Smith taught that the meaning of the name “I Am” is expressed in the saying that God is “omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell” (*Lectures on Faith*, number 2). The Lord also reminds the saints, by this title, that the God who is speaking to them and who desired to lead them by Joseph’s hand out of New York is the same God who led the children of Israel out of Egypt to a promised land by the hands of Moses and Aaron. Jesus Christ, the God of the Doctrine and Covenants, is Jehovah, God of the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, who has led his people “out of Egypt” to establish “Zion” many times in the past. The saints who traveled to the Ohio viewed their journey as an exodus from New York and a gathering in the Ohio territory.

“Alpha and Omega” These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The name suggests that in him all things are encompassed. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that this name was used figuratively to “teach the timelessness and eternal nature of our Lord’s existence, that is, ‘from eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail’ (D&C 76:4)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 31). Another idea expressed in the title “Alpha and Omega” is beginning and end—creation to final judgment.

“the wide expanse of eternity” Aside from this verse, the word *expanse* is found in scripture only in Abraham 4 and Facsimiles 1 and 2. In every case it is associated with the firmament, or atmosphere.

Presumably, God the Creator, before the creation took place, looked upon the vast expanse of space where creation was to be.

“all the seraphic hosts of heaven” Apparently there are animal-like creatures that reside in God’s presence called seraphs or seraphim (Isaiah 6:6). The singular form is seraph. Seraphim are apparently a high order of animals that serve the Lord in his heavenly court. Their name comes from the Hebrew root *sarap*, which means “to burn.” The name seraphim is plural and therefore means “the burning ones” or “bright, shiny ones” which likely refers to their glory.

Many animals and plants live in God’s presence, and it is likely that we have never heard of or seen many of them. John the Revelator saw and heard such animals in God’s presence (Revelation 5:8-14), and Joseph Smith recorded how these animals praised and glorified God (*TPJS*, 291-92).

In D&C 109:79, Joseph Smith describes Seraphs in God’s presence. Joseph refers to them as “bright, shining seraphs.” Joseph also taught that God dwells in

“everlasting burnings” and that righteous beings (human and animal) dwell with him in a state of continual burning or glory (*TPJS*, 372-73, 347, 361).

Another type of winged heavenly creature that deserves mention is the cherub (singular) or cherubim (plural). Ezekiel teaches that cherubim also have hands and faces (Ezekiel 10:7, 14). Mesopotamian tradition and art represent them as winged bulls with human faces, but this may be metaphor and need not necessarily correspond with the literal truth.

An alternate explanation of seraphim and cherubim is that they are angels in the celestial presence of God who belong to the human family. Based on the evidence contained in this verse, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Seraphs are angels who reside in the presence of God. . . . It is clear that seraphs include the unembodied spirits of pre-existence, for our Lord ‘looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made.’ Whether the name seraphs also applies to perfected and resurrected angels is not clear” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 702-03).

2 The same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes;

verse 2 “The same which knoweth all things” Certainly God has mental access to all facts—past, present, and future—“all things are present before mine eyes.” But the scriptural phrase *to know* is far richer than a mental accomplishment. To know is to have acquired a divine attribute. To know all things is to have acquired all divine attributes. For a discussion of this concept, see the section “What Does It Mean to ‘know’ a Spiritual Fact?” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 7, *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit*.

3 I am the same which spake, and the world was made, and all things came by me.

verse 3 Jesus Christ, under the direction of the Father, is the Creator of this earth and other worlds without number. He accomplished this by speaking to, or commanding, his intelligences, and then he waited to see if he was obeyed (Abraham 4:18).

4 I am the same which have taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom; and verily, I say, even as many as have believed in my name, for I am Christ, and in mine own name, by the virtue of the blood which I have spilt, have I pleaded before the Father for them.

verse 4 “I . . . have taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom” To be “in the bosom” of someone is a Hebrew idiom derived from the fact that anciently a man’s clothing consisted of large flowing robes wrapped around his person and fastened with a sash, forming a spacious repository above the waist in which things, including

children, were often carried. Something so carried was kept close to the chest or bosom, so the phrase “to be in the bosom of another” implied a very close and favored relationship. The Lord promises that all who have believed in his name shall also be taken into Christ’s bosom—a glorious promise indeed!

“the Zion of Enoch” The term *Zion* refers to a society of saints who have successfully gathered together to live the laws of the celestial kingdom among themselves here on the earth, who have actually succeeded in making God’s will “be done in earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). God expects all of his earthly saints who are gathered to him to live in a Zion society; he would have his Church on earth be a Zion society.

The prophet Enoch (the seventh generation from Adam) built a city called Zion, so named by the Lord because they were united, righteous, and prosperous. They were of “one heart and one mind,” they must dwell “in righteousness,” and there must be “no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). This city of Enoch flourished for three hundred and sixty-five years and then the Lord, by some process not known to us, took it with all its inhabitants, “to his bosom,” thus saving them from destruction in the Flood that was to come. “And from thence went forth the saying, Zion is fled” (Moses 7:18, 19, 68, 69). Other examples of the successful establishment of a Zion society here on earth are the people of Melchizedek (JST, Genesis 14:32-26), the Book of Mormon people following the Savior’s visit to them, and, as stated, the Lord expects his latter-day Church to be a Zion society. This Zion society will be called the New Jerusalem (see Articles of Faith 1:10; Ether 13:1-12). When this New Jerusalem is well established, the Lord will bring the Zion of Enoch physically back to the earth to be joined together with the “New Jerusalem” Zion of the Latter-day Saints (see D&C 133:24; Moses 7:62-64).

These references to Enoch and Zion, in section 38, clearly anticipate what the saints themselves did not really know yet—that they were going to be invited to establish Zion, the New Jerusalem, in Missouri in their own lifetime.

“by virtue of the blood which I have spilt, have I pleaded before the Father for them” What gives Christ the right to plead our case before the Father or before the demands of justice? It is the virtue or power of the blood he voluntarily spilt for us in Gethsemane and on the cross (D&C 45:3-5). Without his atoning sacrifice, even a perfect being like Christ could not protect us from the demands of justice.

5 But behold, the residue of the wicked have I kept in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day, which shall come at the end of the earth;

verse 5 “the residue of the wicked have I kept in chains of darkness”

Please review the commentary for D&C 29:42. In the period between Enoch and the Flood those who repented and accepted the gospel gathered to the Zion of Enoch. Later, when Zion had been taken up to heaven, converts were still taken physically from the earth and translated to Zion. This meant that the humanity they left behind was

constantly becoming more wicked, stubborn, and rebellious as the more righteous individuals were slowly being taken away (see Moses 7:27). Those wicked and rebellious souls who were left behind were like the “residue” left in a pan as the liquid is boiled off. When these wicked and rebellious dregs, who had had every chance to accept the gospel, perished in the Flood, their spirits were consigned to hell to suffer there until the resurrection. At that time they will have to answer for themselves before God—having rejected the advocate Jesus Christ who would have pleaded their case for them. Still, even these hard cases may be redeemed through Christ and receive some degree of glory if they will repent.

“at the end of the earth” The end of the earth will occur at the end of the Millennium when all the remaining dead will be resurrected and brought to judgment. This expression should be kept distinct from the expression end of the world which will occur at the Lord’s second coming when the wicked will be cleansed from the earth. On both occasions there will be “a new heaven and a new earth.”

6 And even so will I cause the wicked to be kept, that will not hear my voice but harden their hearts, and wo, wo, wo, is their doom.

verse 6 “even so will I cause the wicked to be kept” At the final judgment, those hard hearted individuals who steadfastly refuse to repent will be “kept,” or inextricably ensnared in the “chains of hell” (Alma 12:9-11) and will unavoidably spend eternity in outer darkness.

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

verse 7 “mine eyes are upon you” Here is a reminder that the Lord knows each of us individually and intimately.

8 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.

verse 8 This verse has reference to the second coming of the Savior—the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Only the celestial- and terrestrial-bound souls will abide that day.

9 Wherefore, gird up your loins and be prepared. Behold, the kingdom is yours, and the enemy shall not overcome.

verse 9 “the kingdom is yours” Note the practical meaning of this phrase emphasized by the present tense. In effect the Lord says, “The Kingdom of God on the earth and his heavenly kingdom are yours for the taking” (see also verse 15).

“the enemy shall not overcome” This is a comforting promise. The gospel has been restored to the earth. It will never again be removed or destroyed.

10 Verily I say unto you, ye are clean, but not all; and there is none else with whom I am well pleased;

verse 10 “ye are clean, but not all” The Lord says, in effect, “Generally, as a group, you are righteous and your motives are pure, but there are exceptions among you.” No doubt the reference here includes those members who questioned the integrity of the prophet Joseph, rejected his revelations, and accused him of trying to profit at their expense (see verse 14).

11 For all flesh is corrupted before me; and the powers of darkness prevail upon the earth, among the children of men, in the presence of all the hosts of heaven—

verse 11 “all flesh is corrupted before me” All are subject to their carnal or “natural-self” nature. We have always possessed this natural characteristic even as spirits in the premortal world and before, and this characteristic has always rendered it difficult to obey. But the fall of Adam with the resulting mortal bodies and this mortal setting has intensified this carnal or natural aspect of each of us.

12 Which causeth silence to reign, and all eternity is pained, and the angels are waiting the great command to reap down the earth, to gather the tares that they may be burned; and, behold, the enemy is combined.

verse 12 “Which causeth silence to reign” One of the signs of the times is a period of silence in heaven, a calm before the storm, just prior to the destroying angels’ being dispatched to earth to reap down the wicked. See the subtitle “Period of silence” in “Signs of the Seventh Seal—Prior to the Lord’s Second Coming” in *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 26.

“eternity is pained, and the angels are waiting” The wickedness of the world has reached the point where there are angels actually feeling pained over the situation, and they are awaiting the command to commence the final destruction of the earth. The world is fast becoming ripe in iniquity. The implication is that the destroying angels are anxious to get started (see Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43—the parable of the wheat and the tares)!

“the enemy is combined” As in a secret combination (see 3 Nephi 7:6-9; Moses 5:51). In other words, the enemies of the Church have combined together secretly to plan and effect the destruction of the saints.

13 And now I show unto you a mystery, a thing which is had in secret chambers, to bring to pass even your destruction in process of time, and ye knew it not;

verse 13 The Lord clearly warns the saints that they are in danger. The enemies of the Church have combined together to wreak havoc on the Church.

Regarding this verse and verse 28 in this section, Joseph Fielding Smith taught, “The Lord revealed that the wicked were plotting in ‘secret chambers’ the destruction of Joseph Smith and the Church” (*Essentials in Church History*, 1950, 121).

Elder Joseph F. Smith wrote:

The hatred of the wicked always has and always will follow the priesthood and the saints. The devil will not lose sight of the power of God vested in man—the Holy Priesthood. He fears it, he hates it, and will never cease to stir up the hearts of the debased and corrupt in anger and malice towards those who hold this power, and to persecute the saints, until he is bound (*JD*, 19:24).

It appears from the historical record that the center of this activity was the area around Colesville, New York. Sidney Rigdon had preached a strong sermon there just prior to the date of this revelation, and it had greatly increased the intensity of both pro- and anti-Mormon feelings. The existence and intent of the secret combinations, however, were still unknown to the saints.

14 But now I tell it unto you, and ye are blessed, not because of your iniquity, neither your hearts of unbelief; for verily some of you are guilty before me, but I will be merciful unto your weakness.

verse 14 The Lord is warning the saints in spite of the fact that some do not merit his merciful warning.

15 Therefore, be ye strong from henceforth; fear not, for the kingdom is yours.

verses 16-17 (also verses 24-27, 34-36) In these following verses the Lord gives two commandments that are essential to the establishment of Zion: (1) be united, and (2) take care of the poor and the needy. These two commandments were later required at their hand when the Lord revealed in section 106:9 that the reason Zion was not redeemed was because the saints had failed to obey them. These commandments must be lived by the saints as a people, or Zion will not be established. More than 150 years have elapsed since this revelation. Are we, as yet, a Zion people?

16 And for your salvation I give unto you a commandment, for I have heard your prayers, and the poor have complained before me, and the rich have I made, and all flesh is mine, and I am no respecter of persons.

verse 16 “I give unto you a commandment” This commandment will be defined in verse 32—it is the Lord’s command that the saints move to the Ohio. Generally the commandment is given for the temporal and spiritual salvation of the saints. The specific reasons for this commandment are to save the saints from those who plot their deaths, to answer the prayers of the poor and provide for their temporal needs, to give the saints God’s law, and to endow them with power from on high—the

blessing of power given to those who keep their highest commitments, those received in during the temple ordinances.

verses 17-20 In order to understand the Lord's promises in these next four verses it is necessary to have an understanding of the successive stages of the earth's existence both past and future. These include:

1. Spirit earth. The first creation of the earth involved the embodiment of all of the earth's intelligences with bodies made of spirit matter. This creation includes those intelligences honored to receive a body after the image of their heavenly parents and also those intelligences making up the animals and plants and the physical or "inanimate" substances of the earth. The earth's first stage of existence was thus as a "spirit earth."

2. Preparatory creation. The spirit earth was created physically as the intelligences assigned to this earth were embodied with physical mortal bodies. Prior to the habitation of the earth by the family of man, the earth was infused with a sequence of increasingly complex microbial, plant, and animal life forms as it was prepared to receive the family of man. The earth likely existed in this form for millions of years.

3. Edenic earth. When the earth reach the state of being fully prepared to receive the human family, the earth was pronounced good and it was blessed with a terrestrial or paradisiacal state. The first man and woman were placed upon the earth. There was no death or any opportunity for procreation.

4. Telestial earth. After the fall of Adam the earth took on its present telestial state, intended to be the abode of all mankind for the duration of their mortal probationary state. The procreation of man began.

5. Terrestrial earth. At the onset of the Millennium, the earth will be burned or baptized by fire and "be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory" (Articles of Faith 1:10). It will then be a new heaven and a new earth for the duration of the Millennium.

6. Celestial earth. Following the Millennium and an additional "little season" (D&C 29:22-25), the earth will die and be resurrected with a celestial eternal body. It will become like a sea of glass (D&C 130:7) and attain its sanctified and immortal state. It will be the celestial abode of exalted man forever and ever.

17 And I have made the earth rich, and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it.

verse 17 The Lord has provided the mortal earth with "enough and to spare" (D&C 104:17). Though the Lord will be absent from the mortal earth for a time, the day will come when he will again come to earth to govern—during the Millennium.

18 And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

19 And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

verses 18-19 These verses likely have a double meaning. The Lord may be applying them to the Ohio Territory where he promises physical abundance based on the righteousness of the saints. Just as the promised land of the children of Abraham was Canaan, or the promised land for Lehi was the New World, so shall the Ohio be a promised land for the saints. These temporal promised lands, however, are symbolic of a future event. In this case it may have application to the millennial, terrestrial earth.

Without the keys of the priesthood and the sealing power, the earth would be “utterly wasted” (D&C 2:3) or smitten “with a curse” (Malachi 4:6) at the Lord’s second coming. But not Zion. For the saints in Zion the day of the Lord’s second coming will be “great” and not “dreadful.”

20 And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away.

verse 20 Again, a verse with a dual meaning. The Lord offers a binding covenant: On one level, if the saints are completely faithful, the Zion City which they will found in the Ohio or in Jackson County, Missouri, will be a safe haven from which they will never be removed. On another level, the earthly Zion is symbolic of the celestial earth from which those who inherit celestial glory will never be removed.

21 But, verily I say unto you that in time ye shall have no king nor ruler, for I will be your king and watch over you.

22 Wherefore, hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people, and ye shall have no laws but my laws when I come, for I am your lawgiver, and what can stay my hand?

verses 21-22 These verses refer to the Millennium when Christ will be the crowned political ruler of the world. All governments will be subject unto his government. He will make an end to all nations. He will rule over what has been termed the political kingdom of God which will embrace all people whether they are members of the Church or not.

verses 23-28 In order for the gathering in the Ohio to be a success, that is, in order for it to result in both the temporal and spiritual salvation of the saints, there are conditions to be met by the saints which are outlined in these six following verses.

23 But, verily I say unto you, teach one another according to the office wherewith I have appointed you;

verse 23 In order for a Zion society to function as the Lord intends, each individual must do the work he is assigned (see D&C 84:109-110; 107:99-100; Romans 12:4-5).

24 And let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practise virtue and holiness before me.

verse 24 “let every man esteem his brother as himself” The importance of this command is illustrated by the Lord’s repeating the command in the following verse.

25 And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself.

verse 25 Temporal and spiritual salvation will come to the saints as they learn to love each other as themselves; as they share their goods with one another, thus living the celestial laws of sacrifice and consecration. For example, if I truly love you as I love myself, then I cannot be happy if you are in want, and your well-being becomes a condition of my well-being. There is something of pride and worldliness in most of us which includes an element of competition or the competitive seeking after things of the world. When we hear of an adverse happening in the life of our neighbor—a friend or associate—we may feel, on one level, distressed and empathetic, but on another level we may sense a subtle satisfaction because we have gained a notch on them in the prideful and worldly competitive race of life. This we must overcome.

These same celestial laws will later be taught to the saints in the Ohio (see D&C 42:30-40).

26 For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there—and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just?

verse 26 Obviously not all of the Lord’s parables are in the New Testament. Here is the “parable of the man with twelve sons” which is unique to the Doctrine and Covenants. In this parable the Lord postulates a man who has twelve sons all of whom are obedient to him, and he does not favor any one above the others. The Lord then poses a question: Would such a man consider himself just and yet favor one son by clothing him in robes and providing for him a favored place in his household, and, at the same time, clothe another in rags and set him an unfavorable location? The Lord’s message here is clear. A righteous man, including God himself, would not do such a thing, yet the Lord points out that the circumstances of mortality often result in just these circumstances. Some have abundant possessions in excess of what they need, while others suffer in poverty. The Lord’s implication here is that these widely diverse

economic circumstances are not always due to variations in the motivation, work ethic, or abilities of those involved. Hence, those with ample possessions must seek out those who suffer in poverty and come to their aid. Also, those who live with a paucity of possessions must not begrudge or resent those who have more.

27 Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

verse 27 “if ye are not one ye are not mine” Elder Harold B. Lee spoke in conference about this vitally important concept:

If we are not united, we are not his. Here unity is the test of divine ownership . . . If we would be united in love and fellowship and harmony, this Church would convert the world, who would see in us the shining example of these qualities which evidence that divine ownership. . . .

If we, in our wards and our branches, are divided, and there are factions not in harmony, it is but an evidence that there is something wrong. If two persons are at variance, arguing on different points of doctrine, no reasonable, thinking persons would say that both were speaking their different opinions by the Spirit of the Lord. . . .

If it is so important, then, that this people be a united people, we might well expect that upon this principle the powers of Satan would descend for their greatest attack. We might well expect, also, that if there be those of apostate mind among us, they would be inclined to ridicule and to scorn this principle of oneness and unity as being narrow-minded or as being unprogressive (CR, April 1950, 97-98).

28 And again, I say unto you that the enemy in the secret chambers seeketh your lives.

verse 28 See verse 13 and its commentary.

29 Ye hear of wars in far countries, and you say that there will soon be great wars in far countries, but ye know not the hearts of men in your own land.

verse 29 “Ye hear of wars in far countries” The Lord mildly chastises his people or at least points out and chides them for one of their wholly human characteristics. The saints can read newspapers and discern what is going on in Europe or in other places around the world, but they do not know that the people across town, or around the corner, or down their own street are conspiring together to put them to death.

“ye know not the hearts of men in your own land” At the time of this revelation a major civil disturbance was not even considered a possibility in the United States. Keep in mind that we are still pre-Civil War. But even then there were evil men hatching evil plans for the country generally and for the saints in particular. The Civil

War was one result of this hidden evil for the nation as a whole, while the expulsions from Missouri and Illinois were results for the saints in particular.

30 I tell you these things because of your prayers; wherefore, treasure up wisdom in your bosoms, lest the wickedness of men reveal these things unto you by their wickedness, in a manner which shall speak in your ears with a voice louder than that which shall shake the earth; but if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.

verse 30 “if ye are prepared ye shall not fear” This well-known phrase has wide application, but was likely intended here to encourage the saints to prepare for the calamities to occur before the Lord’s second coming. President Ezra Taft Benson provided us with the key to remaining prepared. He said, “Look to the prophets for the words of God, that will show us how to prepare for the calamities which are to come” (CR, October 1973, 89). If we do this, we need not fear our adversaries, even the schemes and plans of Satan himself.

31 And that ye might escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me a righteous people, without spot and blameless—

32 Wherefore, for this cause I gave unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high;

verse 32 The saints are promised that once they arrive in Kirtland, the Lord will give them: (1) “my law”—The law of the Lord to the Church (section 42 of the Doctrine and Covenants) which will be given to Joseph on February 9, 1831, only a few days after his arrival in Kirtland; and (2) an “endowment of power”—the blessings incident to temple work which will be received more than five years later on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110). See *The Temple in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 18. The word *endow* is originally from the Greek verb *enduo*, meaning “to be clothed.” This word has evolved in contemporary English to describe the bestowal of a gift of great proportions. In addition to the blessings incident to temple work, the saints will be blessed around the time of the dedication of the Kirtland Temple to receive a staggering outpouring of the Pentecostal gifts of the Spirit (see Acts 2:1-21).

33 And from thence, whosoever I will shall go forth among all nations, and it shall be told them what they shall do; for I have a great work laid up in store, for Israel shall be saved, and I will lead them whithersoever I will, and no power shall stay my hand.

verse 33 The Lord foreshadows the tremendous missionary effort, both domestic and international, that will take place in the Church.

34 And now, I give unto the church in these parts a commandment, that certain men among them shall be appointed, and they shall be appointed by the voice of the church;

verse 34 “certain men among them shall be appointed” The Lord foretells of certain men to be called to watch over the temporal affairs of the Church. This may well refer to the office of bishop under the law of consecration (see section 41).

35 And they shall look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer; and send them forth to the place which I have commanded them;

36 And this shall be their work, to govern the affairs of the property of this church.

37 And they that have farms that cannot be sold, let them be left or rented as seemeth them good.

verse 37 The Lord instructs those who are unable to sell their farms in time to leave New York in a timely manner as the Lord instructs. Many of the saints simply abandoned their lands in New York and traveled to the Ohio. Some, however, retained claim upon their lands and rented or leased them, to sell at a later date. An example of the latter was Joseph Knight Sr., who did not sell his land when he moved to the Ohio, but did so later when he got a better price.

38 See that all things are preserved; and when men are endowed with power from on high and sent forth, all these things shall be gathered unto the bosom of the church.

verse 38 Unbeknownst to the saints they will soon be instructed in the law of consecration and become a united order. Here the Lord urges them to preserve their material possessions so that they might later be contributed to the bishop’s storehouse—“gathered unto the bosom of the church”—and be utilized for the good of the members of the united order.

39 And if ye seek the riches which it is the will of the Father to give unto you, ye shall be the richest of all people, for ye shall have the riches of eternity; and it must needs be that the riches of the earth are mine to give; but beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old.

verse 39 “beware of pride” The essence of pride is an inappropriate seeking for the things of the world, the riches of the world, rather than for the riches of eternity. See “Pride” in *The “Natural Self” and “Spiritual Self in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5.

While wealth in itself is not evil, it is the natural course of things for the rich, or perhaps for their children or grandchildren, to become first proud and then unfaithful. If

the rich take no measures to keep this from happening, or if they just don't give it much thought, it will happen, just as surely as an untended garden will become overgrown with weeds. Therefore, wealthy saints must be aware of the natural effect wealth has on people and must work actively and creatively to keep those weeds from their gardens. The natural progression, whether in one generation or the next, is to pride, then to unfaithfulness, and thence to wickedness and destruction. This sequence was repeatedly evidenced among the Book of Mormon people—"the Nephites of old."

40 And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a commandment, that every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

41 And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness.

verse 41 Every member is a missionary, and every member is to warn his neighbor. Why warn? Why not just inform about the exciting message of the restored gospel? In a way the gospel is a warning to the world of its fallen state and of its need of repentance and of a Savior in order to escape the judgments of God, both at the second coming when the wicked will be burned and at the resurrection when those who are "filthy still" will be cast out with Satan and his angels (see 2 Nephi 9:16; D&C 88:102). We sometimes forget this necessary element of warning as we preach and teach the gospel. We are not, however, to pound the pulpit and preach "hellfire and damnation" in the usual sense or to loudly condemn or put down nonmembers, but to sound a warning to our neighbors in clarity and mildness and meekness.

42 And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Even so. Amen.

verse 42 "Save yourselves" We readily avow that we are totally dependent upon the atonement of Jesus Christ for our salvation and exaltation, we also recognize clearly that a pro-active obedience to the commandments of God and an overcoming of one's natural self is essential. This, we must do ourselves. "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

"Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord"

In ancient Israel, certain vessels (bowls, urns, vases, and other containers) and utensils were used in religious feasts and ceremonies. The vessels that were to be used in the temple had special significance and were handled only by those who were worthy and authorized and who had properly prepared themselves. In a somewhat similar manner, the Lord has indicated that his saints should come "out from among the wicked" and leave the worldliness of Babylon so that they will be worthy to "bear the vessels of the Lord" (Ludlow, Daniel H., *A Companion to your Study of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 2:317).

Section 39 Revelation to James Covill

Shortly after the conference of January 2, 1831, a man named James Covill came to the Prophet. His surname was actually Covell, but it is spelled Covill in most all of the church's literature. He had been a lay minister for the Baptist Church for about forty years. He was apparently converted to the Church and had entered into a covenant with the Lord to abide by any commandment which the Lord should give him through Joseph. He made this covenant known to Joseph. He was thus given this revelation. He is called to be baptized into the Lord's Church and to preach the gospel. To do so would have meant finding new employment. He would have had to leave the ministry in which he had been involved for forty years. He apparently never did obey the Lord's command to be baptized. He rejected this revelation from the Lord (see section 40).

1 Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I Am, even Jesus Christ—

verse 1 “the Great I Am” See the commentary for D&C 38:1.

2 The light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

verse 2 “The light and the life of the world” Just how is Jesus Christ the light and life of the world. The concept of light in the scriptures is a rich and exciting one. See *The Concept of Light*, volume 1, chapter 15 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

3 The same which came in the meridian of time unto mine own, and mine own received me not;

verse 3 “the meridian of time” See a discussion of this phrase in the commentary for D&C 20:26.

4 But to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons; and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons.

verse 4 The meaning of this interesting verse hinges on the tense of the verb *receive*. To *receive* Jesus Christ is to accept him as your Lord and Savior and also as your Master—to follow his example to obey him. We see in this verse an illustration of the working of the concepts of both grace and works. Keep in mind that God's grace is his love for us, particularly that aspect of his love that inclines him to extend blessings to us that we do not fully merit. Our works are simply the efforts we expend in striving to obey the Lord's commands—in seeking to follow his example.

The first statement, “but to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons,” suggests that to those who became converts to the Church and agreed to the baptismal covenant, the Savior mercifully (by his grace) gave the blessing of becoming his sons or daughters. This is a one-time merciful gift, given by the grace of God. However, in order to maintain that blessing, one must continue to strive diligently to obey—this is works: “even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons.” Thus we see the interaction between the Lord’s grace and our works.

5 And verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth my gospel receiveth me; and he that receiveth not my gospel receiveth not me.

verse 5 “he that receiveth my gospel receiveth me” The word “gospel” is often used in the Church. What exactly does it mean? The word gospel means literally good news or glad tidings. It is the good news about Jesus Christ—his atonement, the establishment of his earthly kingdom, and the possibility of living forever in his celestial presence. If we were to strip away everything from the gospel but its very essence, especially the essence of receiving the gospel, we would likely conclude that to receive his gospel (and hence to receive him) is to accept him as your Lord and Master—your exemplar—and strive diligently to obey him and his example. The gospel, then, is him, his example, his commandments. To accept him is to obey him.

6 And this is my gospel—repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.

verse 6 It would seem that members of the Church can read of the idea that the gospel is faith (implied in this verse), repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost and yet not completely comprehend why these “first principles and ordinances” are the very essence of the gospel. Please review the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*, particularly the discussion of the three parts of the ordinance of baptism. The most fundamental aspect of faith is a willingness to deliberately do, to deliberately obey, even when one is not certain (Alma 32:27-29). Repentance is fundamentally obedience. When an individual has established a pattern of disobedience and wishes to change, then we use the word repentance. Then there is baptism. It is by the three parts of the ordinance of baptism that we grow spiritually—that we progress to become like God. And this is the essence of our purpose here on earth. If we strive to obey and progress to become like him, then we may be blessed to live with him forever. And that is the essence of the gospel. See also *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18, *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth*.

7 And now, behold, I say unto you, my servant James, I have looked upon thy works and I know thee.

verse 7 James Covill was almost seventy-five years old when he met Joseph Smith, and he had been a Baptist minister for about forty years. Though not yet baptized, the Lord referred to Covill as “my servant James,” perhaps because of the preparatory ministry he had performed as a Baptist (see D&C 35:4), and the Lord had already blessed him greatly for his service in the past (see the following verse).

8 And verily I say unto thee, thine heart is now right before me at this time; and, behold, I have bestowed great blessings upon thy head;

verse 8 We already know the sad history of Covill’s failure to accept the gospel and labor in it. In this verse we see obvious conditional clauses such as “now” and “at this time.” The Lord knew his heart and knew that he would not obey the commandments given to him.

9 Nevertheless, thou hast seen great sorrow, for thou hast rejected me many times because of pride and the cares of the world.

verse 9 Little more is known about James Covill. It is therefore impossible to say what things he had done that caused the Lord to give him this solemn warning. Obviously the things of the world (pride) had been his nemesis in the past, and just as obviously they would continue to be so in the future.

10 But, behold, the days of thy deliverance are come, if thou wilt hearken to my voice, which saith unto thee: Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on my name, and you shall receive my Spirit, and a blessing so great as you never have known.

verse 10 “the days of thy deliverance are come” The Lord points out to Covill that this is indeed a watershed moment in his spiritual life. This is his chance. Unfortunately the moment came to naught.

11 And if thou do this, I have prepared thee for a greater work. Thou shalt preach the fulness of my gospel, which I have sent forth in these last days, the covenant which I have sent forth to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel.

verses 10-11 Notice the Lord’s uses of word “if” in these verses—again, a reminder that the Lord’s promises are conditional.

verse 11 “I have prepared thee for a greater work” By implication the Lord indicates that Covill’s service as a Baptist minister had been a great work. A greater work would be for him to accept and preach the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though coming from circumstances similar to those of Sidney Rigdon, Covill presents a

foil or contrast to Sidney's humility and obedience when he is presented with the same choices and when he is offered the same blessings.

“the covenant which I have sent forth to recover my people” This is the new and everlasting covenant of the gospel, by which the righteous descendants of Israel will be gathered back into the family, as will those adopted into Israel through their faith in Christ.

12 And it shall come to pass that power shall rest upon thee; thou shalt have great faith, and I will be with thee and go before thy face.

verse 12 “power shall rest upon thee” This phrase likely has reference to the gift of the Holy Ghost and the Melchizedek Priesthood.

13 Thou art called to labor in my vineyard, and to build up my church, and to bring forth Zion, that it may rejoice upon the hills and flourish.

14 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou art not called to go into the eastern countries, but thou art called to go to the Ohio.

15 And inasmuch as my people shall assemble themselves at the Ohio, I have kept in store a blessing such as is not known among the children of men, and it shall be poured forth upon their heads. And from thence men shall go forth into all nations.

verse 15 “I have kept in store a blessing such as is not known among the children of men” The blessings of the keys of the sealing power and other ordinances requiring a temple had not yet been restored to the earth, but they would be restored when the saints gathered to the Ohio as commanded (see D&C 110:11-16). The reader must guard against interpreting the concept of the sealing power in its narrowest sense. See the commentary for Helaman 10:7 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

16 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that the people in Ohio call upon me in much faith, thinking I will stay my hand in judgment upon the nations, but I cannot deny my word.

verse 16 Apparently the new converts in Ohio had been praying that the Lord would change his plans to destroy the wicked prior to his second coming. But God is just and unchanging, and all his words must be fulfilled. Thus the prayers of the Ohio saints, though fervent, faithful, and sincere, were in vain on this point.

17 Wherefore lay to with your might and call faithful laborers into my vineyard, that it may be pruned for the last time.

verse 17 The expressions “lay to” or “go to” are generally positive expressions of send-off and an encouragement similar to “God speed” or “good luck” or even “go to

work.” The metaphor of the world in this final dispensation as the Lord’s vineyard is, by now, a familiar one (Jacob 5).

18 And inasmuch as they do repent and receive the fulness of my gospel, and become sanctified, I will stay mine hand in judgment.

verse 18 “inasmuch as they do repent and receive the fulness of my gospel, and become sanctified” To become sanctified is to grow spiritually—to receive the incremental attributes of Christ by personal revelation which are contingent upon obedience to the gospel commands. Sanctification also includes the idea of having incremental pieces of the natural self burned out of the soul in consequence of a man’s obedience. See *Justification and Sanctification* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17.

19 Wherefore, go forth, crying with a loud voice, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand; crying: Hosanna! blessed be the name of the Most High God.

verse 19 “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” What event is being referred to here? The reader should be reminded to distinguish between the kingdom of God on earth (God’s earthly church or kingdom) and the kingdom of God in heaven, or the kingdom of heaven (God’s kingdom in heaven). This verse is somewhat problematic. See a discussion of the phrase “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” in the commentary for Alma 5:50 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

The phrase “at hand” might mean a few years or a few centuries.

In this particular verse the reference seems to be to the Lord’s second coming and the ushering in of the millennial kingdom of the Lord (see the following verse). There is always the possibility also that the phrase “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” may apply to each man who is never far from death. After death every man will return to God’s heavenly presence at least long enough to be judged (Alma 40:11-14).

“Hosanna!” See the commentary for D&C 19:37.

20 Go forth baptizing with water, preparing the way before my face for the time of my coming;

21 For the time is at hand; the day or the hour no man knoweth; but it surely shall come.

verse 21 The Lord obviously deliberately withholds from us the day and hour of his coming. He simply tells us to watch and be ready.

22 And he that receiveth these things receiveth me; and they shall be gathered unto me in time and in eternity.

verse 22 “in time and in eternity” “Time” refers to our present mortal lives. “Eternity” is that which extends beyond this present life. Thus, the phrase “in time and in eternity” is another way of saying both in this life and in the next.

23 And again, it shall come to pass that on as many as ye shall baptize with water, ye shall lay your hands, and they shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and shall be looking forth for the signs of my coming, and shall know me.

verse 23 “shall be looking forth for the signs of my coming” It is interesting to note that it is a direct command for each of his people to be observant and watch for the signs of his coming. See three chapters in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3: chapter 24, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Introduction*, chapter 25, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Warn*, and chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

That said, however, this has become a favorite subject of false teachers in the Church. For reasons that are not clear, when some contemporary saints approach this subject, they lose balance, discernment, and judgment. The only reliable guides on this subject are the scriptures and the prophets.

24 Behold, I come quickly. Even so. Amen.

Section 40 Judge Not

Within a few weeks of James Covill's "conversion" (see section 39), he fizzled out and left the Church, largely because of the fear of persecution and his unwillingness to leave his ministry and to his reluctance to obey the Lord's command to move to Ohio. He never was actually baptized into the Church.

Doubtless, the saints wondered how a man could be fully committed and have his heart right before the Lord one minute, and be out of the Church the next. The Saints' tongues likely wagged and passed judgment on their erstwhile Brother Covill. In one of the great verses of scripture, the Lord reminds us not to judge but to leave the judging to him: "It remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good" (D&C 40:3).

Section 40 was the last of the revelations now recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants to be received in New York.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 40 Judge Not

D&C 40:3 It remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good.

1 Behold, verily I say unto you, that the heart of my servant James Covill was right before me, for he covenanted with me that he would obey my word.

verse 1 Apparently at one time James Covill was truly convinced of the truth, and his intentions were pure.

2 And he received the word with gladness, but straightway Satan tempted him; and the fear of persecution and the cares of the world caused him to reject the word.

verse 2 "he received the word with gladness" The Lord's reference here is to the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23), particularly the man who received the word of God in stony places: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy [with gladness] receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:20-21).

Among all of the worldly influences that led James Covill away, the Lord particularly mentions "the fear of persecution." Again, the contrast between Covill and Sidney Rigdon is notable and informative.

3 Wherefore he broke my covenant, and it remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good. Amen.

verse 3 “he broke my covenant” Since he never was baptized, it is evident that the covenant which Covill had made with the Lord was personal. But the Lord had accepted it, and then Covill broke it.

“it remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good” There is only one who is qualified and authorized to judge a man; the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:22). This statement by the Lord contains a veiled warning to all of us. We should not judge (Matthew 7:1-5).

Character Vignette

Newell Kimball Whitney

It may be noted that Brother Whitney’s first name, Newell is spelled with two “l’s” in most of the LDS scholarly literature, but with one “l” in the Doctrine and Covenants. Perhaps we may conclude that it is of little importance how we spell it. Brother Whitney was born in Vermont on February 5, 1795, and was thus almost eleven years older than the Prophet. After fighting in the War of 1812, he became an Indian trader at Green Bay, Lake Michigan. He next settled in the Ohio where he met Algernon Sidney Gilbert, a merchant in Painesville, Ohio. Together they established a successful store in Kirtland.

In 1822 he married Elizabeth Ann Smith, who has come to be known in our church history as Mother Whitney. When Oliver Cowdery and his fellow missionaries came to Kirtland (see section 32) en route to Missouri, the Whitneys were Campbellites and members of Sidney Rigdon’s congregation. On hearing the gospel preached by these elders, the Whitneys were converted.

Mother Whitney told the story that one night prior to the arrival of Elder Cowdery and his companions, she and her husband were praying to the Lord to learn how they might obtain the gift of the Holy Ghost. They “saw a vision as a cloud of glory” resting upon their house, and heard a voice from heaven saying, “Prepare to receive the word of the Lord, for it is coming.” Shortly afterwards Oliver Cowdery and his associates came with the Book of Mormon and with the message of the restored gospel (*HC*, 2:486, footnote).

Brief Historical Setting

Late in January, Joseph, Emma, and others traveled the 300 miles from Fayette to Kirtland by sleigh, arriving in Kirtland on February 1, 1831. Joseph and Emma were invited to live with the Newell K. Whitneys, and they did so for five months. Newell Whitney was a co-owner of the Gilbert and Whitney store in Kirtland along with A. Sidney Gilbert. Shortly after their arrival in Kirtland, Joseph received a revelation calling Edward Partridge to serve as the first bishop of the Church in this dispensation [**D&C 41 - Edward Partridge Called as First Bishop**]. For an introduction to Edward Partridge, see the introductory commentary for sections 35 and 36. Less than one week later,

Joseph received a doctrinally important revelation introducing the law of consecration and other laws important to the conduct of church members in their everyday lives **[D&C 42 - The Law]**.

Section 41 Edward Partridge Called as First Bishop

The story of the arrival of Joseph Smith in Kirtland was passed along in the Whitney family tradition and was related by Orson Whitney in his book *Saturday Night Thoughts*, (1921), 42-43:

About the first of February 1831, a sleigh drew up in front of the mercantile store of Gilbert and Whitney [A. Sidney Gilbert and Newell K. Whitney]. A stalwart young man alighted and walked into the store. Approaching the junior partner and extending his hand cordially, as if to an old and familiar acquaintance, he saluted him thus: "Newell K. Whitney, thou art the man!" The merchant was astonished. He had never seen this person before. "Stranger," he said, "you have the advantage of me. I could not call you by name as you have me." "I am Joseph the Prophet" said the stranger, smiling. "You have prayed me here, now what do you want of me?"

Joseph had previously seen in vision Newell K. Whitney and his wife praying that Joseph would come to Kirtland. Thus he was able to recognize him. Joseph and Emma stayed the night with the Whitneys and remained with them about five months. On her arrival in Kirtland, Emma was about six months pregnant with twins.

Section 41 was given February 4, about three days after the arrival in Kirtland. In this revelation the Lord calls Edward Partridge to be the first bishop in this dispensation—verse 9. The Church had to have a bishop before "the law" could be given—section 42.

Even before their conversion to the gospel, some of the saints in the Kirtland area had been trying, under the leadership of Sidney Rigdon, to live primitive Christianity—the pure and original Christianity of the New Testament—by following the teachings of the New Testament and nothing else. They had read in Acts that the early saints were "of one heart and one soul" and that they had "all things in common" (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). They had formed a communal society called "the family" and practiced group ownership of all individual resources on the Isaac Morley Farm. They referred to this arrangement as having "common stock." When Sidney Rigdon joined the Church, he went to Fayette and invited the Prophet to Kirtland, but Joseph sent John Whitmer instead, and Sidney stayed in Fayette to act as scribe for the Prophet. Though most of "the family" in Kirtland had since joined the Church, they were still involved in living with "all things in common" when John Whitmer arrived from Fayette to preside over the community. Whitmer observed significant problems resulting from their attempting to live with the concept of "common stock," and he wrote to the Prophet and requested that he come to Kirtland. Joseph inquired of the Lord and was told to go quickly.

On his arrival in Kirtland, Joseph found a young and enthusiastic branch of the Church there which had grown to nearly one hundred members. His own observation

was that the members were “striving to do the will of God, so far as they knew it, though some strange notions and false spirits had crept in among them. With a little caution and some wisdom, I soon assisted the brethren and sisters to overcome them. The plan of ‘common stock’ which had existed in what was called ‘the family,’ whose members generally had embraced the everlasting Gospel, was readily abandoned for the more perfect law of the Lord; and the false spirits were easily discerned and rejected by the light of revelation” (*HC*, 1:146-47).

John Whitmer added the following information to Joseph’s account: “About these days Joseph and Sidney arrived at Kirtland to the joy and satisfaction of the saints. The disciples had all things common, and were going to destruction very fast as to temporal things; for they considered from reading the scripture that what belonged to a brother, belonged to any of the brethren. Therefore they would take each other’s clothes and other property and use it without leave which brought on confusion and disappointment, for they did not understand the scripture” (Whitmer, *Early Latter Day Saint History*, 37). For example, when Levi Hancock was visiting “the family,” Heman Bassett, one of its members, took Levi’s pocket watch and sold it. He later explained that he had thought “it was all in the family” (*Ibid.*).

For the Lord to give the true law of consecration to the Church and thus to correct the “common stock” ideas of the members of “the family,” he needed someone to act as his agent in administering properties according to his law. Consequently, Edward Partridge was called to become the first bishop in the latter-day Church. Section 41 was the first revelation received in the Ohio. Its purpose was essentially to prepare the saints for section 42, which was received five days later, on February 9, 1831.

1 Harken and hear, O ye my people, saith the Lord and your God, ye whom I delight to bless with the greatest of all blessings, ye that hear me; and ye that hear me not will I curse, that have professed my name, with the heaviest of all cursings.

verse 1 “the greatest of all blessings” This is exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God (D&C 14:7).

“ye that hear me not will I curse, that have professed my name” The verb *to hear* is used here in the sense of “hearkening” or “obeying.” The Lord warns the hypocrite, the person who makes in good faith a covenant and then departs from it.

“the heaviest of all cursings” Being a covenant member of the Church is a great blessing but also a great responsibility. Those who have joined themselves to the Lord’s earthly kingdom by covenant are candidates for the greatest of all blessings. But, they have left behind the luxury of being ignorant and neutral fence sitters relative to the Lord’s commandments. They are committed to the Lord, and therefore any disobedience among them can bring upon them the greatest of all cursings or penalties.

The system of covenants allows them to rise higher or sink lower than they could otherwise have done. There is no blessing higher than that received by faithful saints, and no cursing harsher than that received by willful apostates.

2 Hearken, O ye elders of my church whom I have called, behold I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall assemble yourselves together to agree upon my word;

verse 2 “I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall assemble yourselves together to agree upon my word” There is to be a special meeting of the elders in Kirtland to hear and ratify the Lord’s law. This meeting will take place five days later, on February 9, 1831, and the “law of the Church” (section 42) is to be given to the Church at that time.

“agree upon my word” According to the law of common consent (section 26), the elders must collectively agree to accept their responsibilities under the law of the Church (section 42) by their sustaining vote.

3 And by the prayer of your faith ye shall receive my law, that ye may know how to govern my church and have all things right before me.

verse 3 “by the prayer of your faith ye shall receive my law” In order for the elders, who will gather on February 9, 1831, to receive the law of the Lord given to his Church (section 42), they will be required to pray together in faith.

“that ye may know how to govern my church” The law that will be given is for the purpose of the governance of the Church and a standard for judging its members. It will be given specifically to the elders, whose place it was, at that time at least, to govern and judge the Church, because the first high priests were not ordained until June 3, 1831.

verses 2-3 To fully understand the significance of these verses, see the introductory commentary for section 42.

4 And I will be your ruler when I come; and behold, I come quickly, and ye shall see that my law is kept.

5 He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple; and he that saith he receiveth it and doeth it not, the same is not my disciple, and shall be cast out from among you;

verse 5 “My law” refers to section 42, which will be given February 9, 1831. It is typical of modern thought to define discipleship in terms of beliefs. When we want to know what this or that religion is, we ask, “What do you believe?” The Lord does not define discipleship in this way. Those who *do* the Lord’s will are his disciples. Those who profess belief in the gospel but will not live it are to be cast out, or

excommunicated. True discipleship is determined by our actions, not only by our words or beliefs.

6 For it is not meet that the things which belong to the children of the kingdom should be given to them that are not worthy, or to dogs, or the pearls to be cast before swine.

verse 6 “it is not meet” The word “meet” means proper, fitting, acceptable, permissible, right, necessary, or desirable.

President Joseph Fielding Smith discussed the limitations on sharing sacred things:

The things of the kingdom are not for the unworthy, whether they are in or out of the Church. It is the duty of the members to hold in the most solemn and sacred manner every commandment, every covenant, every principle of truth which the Lord has revealed for their salvation. He has given to the members, if they will humbly receive them, covenants and obligations which are not for the world. Things that are most holy and sacred, which are revealed to those who have made covenant to be “just and true,” and who have “overcome by faith,” things which are imparted to them as a means of bringing to pass their exaltation, should not be lightly treated, ridiculed, or spoken of before the world. “For it is not meet that the things which belong to the children of the kingdom should be given to them that are not worthy, or to dogs, or the pearls to be cast before swine.” Yet how often do we see the foolish, the ignorant and those who fail to comprehend the vastness of these sacred principles and covenants, treating them lightly and unworthily even before the world! (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:179-80).

Currently in the Church we have room for “less active” members. But when the Church as a whole begins again to live the law of consecration institutionally instead of individually as we now do, and we begin to establish Zion, there will quickly be no more middle ground for the passive and lukewarm to stand upon. Since Zion is a community of saints who are of one heart and one mind, who dwell in righteousness, and have no poor among them, the less active who will not dwell in righteousness, or who are not of one heart and one mind with the saints, must either repent or leave—otherwise Zion cannot be established.

Diversity is not necessarily a virtue in Zion, nor is Zion a pluralistic society. There will certainly be diversity of races and to a degree a diversity of cultures, of personalities, of interests, and of wants. But there will be no diversity of values, ethics, morals, or of religious beliefs and doctrine, for Zion will be of one heart and one mind in these essentials and will dwell in righteousness according to one law—the heart and mind of the Savior, which is the law of the Church.

7 And again, it is meet that my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., should have a house built, in which to live and translate.

verse 7 Joseph and Emma had just arrived three days earlier from New York and had no lodging. “In response to the Lord’s instructions a small home was built on the [Isaac] Morley farm for Joseph and Emma, where they lived for six months” (Dahl, “Joseph Smith Translation and the Doctrine and Covenants,” 107).

8 And again, it is meet that my servant Sidney Rigdon should live as seemeth him good, inasmuch as he keepeth my commandments.

verse 8 As a Protestant minister, Sidney Rigdon had had a fine home built for him by the several congregations to whom he ministered. When he joined the Church, however, the majority in those congregations requested that he leave the home they had built. Consequently, Sidney had no place for his family. The Lord instructs Sidney to take whatever measures he must in order to provide for his family, as long as he keeps the commandments. The implication is that he will be, at least in part, supported by the members of the church.

The “law of remuneration for services” is thus introduced in this verse and in the preceding verse, as the Lord specifies that the needs of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon should be met out of church funds.

9 And again, I have called my servant Edward Partridge; and I give a commandment, that he should be appointed by the voice of the church, and ordained a bishop unto the church, to leave his merchandise and to spend all his time in the labors of the church;

verse 9 “Edward Partridge” For an introduction to Edward Partridge, see the introductory commentary for sections 35 and 36.

“appointed by the voice of the church” The pattern of calling a bishop is illustrated. He is called by revelation received by one in authority, but he must be sustained publicly by the voice of the membership of the Church before he can be ordained.

Today, the procedure is essentially the same. A stake president seeks revelation to nominate a person to be bishop and sends that nomination to the First Presidency, who, in consultation with the Quorum of the Twelve, seek the Lord’s approval and then issue a call through the stake president. After a public sustaining vote of the ward members, the stake presidency, with approval of the First Presidency, ordains the individual to the office of bishop and sets him apart to preside over a particular ward.

10 To see to all things as it shall be appointed unto him in my laws in the day that I shall give them.

verses 10 Edward Partridge is called to be the first bishop of this final dispensation. It should be kept in mind that Edward Partridge was not a ward bishop. We didn't have wards or ward organizations until the Nauvoo period. He was a bishop of the Church under the law of consecration, and his duties were governed by that call. The ward bishop today may have a few of the same duties, but his role is by no means comparable. In the law of consecration, the bishop was the spiritual and temporal agent who directed the program, assigned stewardships, received properties and so on. The law of consecration was to be revealed shortly, so it was appropriate that Edward Partridge should be called as the first bishop in the Church before the law was revealed.

11 And this because his heart is pure before me, for he is like unto Nathanael of old, in whom there is no guile.

verse 11 “in whom there is no guile” See John 1:47. What a marvelous compliment is paid here to Edward Partridge! Guile is any form of deceit, fraud, hypocrisy, two-facedness, or otherwise presenting things as they are not. To be without guile is to be totally open and honest.

12 These words are given unto you, and they are pure before me; wherefore, beware how you hold them, for they are to be answered upon your souls in the day of judgment. Even so. Amen.

verse 12 “These words . . . are pure before me; wherefore, beware how you hold them” God's word is pure and holy and must not be taken (or “held”) lightly. We will be judged on how we treat God's holy word—with reverence, respect, and obedience—or with carelessness.

Section 42 The Law

When Joseph arrived in Kirtland from Fayette, he encountered a bunch of willing saints who were unskilled in the policies and doctrines of the Church. He first had to bring closure to the communal “family” and end its system of common stock. Then he had to put a stop to a sort of overly-emotional spiritual hysteria he found among some of the Kirtland saints. These excesses were of the sort that happen when people insist on increasing the intensity of their religious experience but lack the Spirit of God. In this situation, false spirits and human deceivers are only too happy to accommodate them.

Before the saints could seriously prepare to establish Zion, they had to be given the law of the Church, which, besides a high personal morality, included the celestial principles of sacrifice and consecration. Edward Partridge had been called as the first bishop in section 41, which office was needed in order to implement and administer the social and economic policies and principles of section 42. The law of the Church would also establish standards of personal behavior by which the saints would be judged by their new bishop, the common judge in Israel.

Section 42, which had been promised in D&C 38:32, was received February 9, 1831, in the presence of twelve elders, only eight days after Joseph’s arrival in Kirtland. The Lord had promised to reveal his law to the saints once they had moved to the Ohio (see D&C 38:32). However, after Joseph arrived in Kirtland, the Lord added one further stipulation. The elders had to agree upon the word of the Lord and were to unite in a prayer of faith. Only then would they receive the law designated to help the saints live peaceably together (see D&C 41:2-3). Accordingly, on February 9, 1831 twelve men were called together by Joseph, and they united in prayer and in faith and desire to receive the law. In response the Lord revealed his law to them (*HC*, 1:148).

We refer to this section as the law of the Church or the law of the Lord given to the Church. Only verses 1-73 were given at that time. The rest was received two weeks later on February 23. Verses 74-77 were recorded separately in the Kirtland Revelation Book, where they stood alone as a single revelation. This section was originally printed in the Book of Commandments as two chapters: verses 1 through 73 were chapter 44; verses 78 through 93 were chapter 47. It seems that some portions of section 42 may once have been introduced by specific questions asked of the Lord, much like we see in sections 77 (The Book of Revelation) or 113 (The Book of Isaiah). These questions and some other verses found in a few early copies do not now appear in section 42. All of these changes—the combining of originally separate parts and the omission of some elements—were made under the direction of Joseph Smith in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

It should perhaps be noted again that Latter-day Saints understand inspiration to lie primarily in the Prophet Joseph rather than in the text. That is, the divine revelation

was given through the Prophet and was often shaped by his vocabulary, thinking, and ability to express himself (D&C 1:24). As the Prophet's skills or understanding increased, he could edit and revise what had been written earlier as he saw ways of expressing the intent of the revelation more clearly or more exactly, and this has the effect of making such revisions even more inspired than the original—as, for example, in the Joseph Smith Translation. Uneasiness over these types of changes is a typically Protestant reaction, because Protestant thinking generally attributes inspiration primarily to the text. Thus, Protestants want to find the “earliest” text or the “most faithful” copies, while Latter-day Saints want to know the Prophet's latest and most mature judgment on how a revelation should be understood or expressed. The latest and most mature judgment of the prophet Joseph Smith and his successors on these early revelations is found in the present text of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Beyond the articles and covenants of the Church (section 20), which explain the duties of the members and the policies and practices of the Church, the law of the Church (section 42) will explain the standards of personal behavior and social organization upon which membership and fellowship in the Church and kingdom depends. This law of personal righteousness and consecration directly prepares church members to establish a Zion society, for if they live this law, they will be of one heart and one mind, will dwell in righteousness, and will have no poor among them (Moses 7:18). Receiving and living this law of the Church, including the law of consecration, is a necessary step, and a substantial one, in establishing Zion then or now.

Actually section 42 is a series of laws pertaining to many aspects of our lives. Let us summarize them in the order in which they appear in section 42:

1. The law of missionary work (verses 4-9, 63-69). The Lord summarizes the essentials of missionary work: (a) Go forth with the Spirit. (b) Preach only the gospel of Christ. (c) Go two by two. (d) Go forth in the name of Christ. (e) Lift up your voice enthusiastically.

2. The law of ordination or the law of authority to minister (verses 11-17). One must be ordained by recognized authority and teach only by the Spirit.

3. The law of moral conduct (verses 18-29, 74-93). The Lord gives anew to our dispensation commands not to kill, steal, lie, commit adultery, gossip, or do personal injury to your neighbor.

4. The law of consecration (verse 30-39, 53-55). The Lord commands that Zion be built up based upon the celestial law or the “law of consecration and stewardship.”

Let us first define some terms: The law of consecration is that law or principle which, if successfully lived by a group of people, will result in their becoming a unified, righteous people, a united order. Thus, the law of consecration is the principle, and the united order is what people become as they live the principle. The term *order of Enoch* was originally applied to the law of consecration. However, Joseph used this name for

the governing board of nine general authorities who oversaw all activities relative to the law of consecration.

There are five characteristics of the “law of consecration and stewardship” when it is practiced in its ideal form:

a. Consecration. This is the belief and practice that the earth is the Lord’s and that everything a man has or is or accomplishes is owed back to the Lord because it is all his anyway. To enter into the united order, a complete inventory of a man’s possessions is taken and everything he owns is deeded legally or consecrated to the Church.

b. Agency. A man is respected as a free agent. He may enter or leave the order at his own pleasure without coercion or stigma. He has the right to negotiate for his job or for those things which he requires to fill the needs of his family. Thus the united order differs vastly from Marxist Communism.

c. Storehouse. On entering the order, all of a man’s possessions are placed in the storehouse. Also goods that are produced in excess of the needs of the man’s family are placed in the storehouse. At the discretion of the bishop, materials are distributed from the storehouse. These include the stewardships (see below) and food and materials that are needed by those who are unable to work.

d. Stewardship. After a man joins the order, those possessions which he needs to do his work and care for his family are deeded back to him—thus he owns them. These materials are given to him by the bishop from the storehouse and are referred to as his stewardship or inheritance. Private ownership is thus a feature of the law of consecration.

Each person in the order is assigned work according to his abilities, education, talents, and according to the needs of the order. All types of work are considered of equal importance, i.e., the collection of garbage is as important as the practice of law or medicine. A regular accounting is held between each person and the bishop to assess his performance and progress. Is he happy? Should he be reassigned? Does he have enough for his family’s needs?

e. Governing Board. The government of the order is vested in a central agency, the members of which are sustained by members of the order. This agency is presided over by the bishop and his counselors, and it has the power to adjust disputes normally arising among strongly individualized human beings.

This remarkable economic order was tried out in Ohio and Missouri briefly in 1832-34. Though practiced only a short time, it did show some promise. However, in those pioneer days, under severe persecution from neighbors, and with the undisciplined selfishness of certain members, the people could not give the order a fair trial, and it failed.

We should all keep in mind, however, that the law of consecration in the Church is not dead. It still is in force. All endowed members of the Church have made a

covenant to live the law of consecration, and they will be held accountable for what they do with that law. President Spencer W. Kimball said:

Consecration is the giving of one's time, talents, and means to care for those in need—whether spiritually or temporally—and in building the Lord's kingdom. . . . We consecrate when we give of ourselves (*Ensign*, November 1977, 78).

5. The law of miscellaneous conduct (verses 40-43). The Lord commands us relative to pride, cleanliness, and industry.

6. The law of faith and healing (verses 43-52). The Lord divides people into three categories relative to faith and healing: (a) those who have faith to be healed and through ordination of the elders are healed; (b) those who have faith to be healed but are appointed unto death, so they are not healed; and (c) those who do not have the faith to be healed. They may have faith sufficient to call upon the elders but are not healed and must be treated by the ministrations of men. Are these categories all inclusive? Probably not. The Lord seems to allow even faithful people at times to suffer the vicissitudes and diseases and accidents of life without his intervention.

7. The law relative to scriptures (verses 56-61). We are commanded to learn the scriptures and use them in teaching others.

8. The law of remuneration for services (verses 70-73). All those who are required to spend their full time in church service including, of course, the General Authorities are provided funds sufficient for their needs.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 42 The Law

D&C 42:6-7 Lifting up your voices . . . like unto angels of God.

D&C 42:14 If ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.

D&C 42:17 The Comforter knoweth all things and beareth record of the Father and the Son.

D&C 42:22-25 Thou shalt love thy wife and cleave unto her and none else; thou shalt not commit adultery.

D&C 42:45-47 The law of mourning: Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection. And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them; And they that die not in me, wo unto them, for their death is bitter.

D&C 42:48 He that have faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed.

D&C 42:61 If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, who have assembled yourselves together in my name, even Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, the Savior of the world; inasmuch as ye believe on my name and keep my commandments.

2 Again I say unto you, hearken and hear and obey the law which I shall give unto you.

verse 2 “hearken and hear and obey the law” In this particular verse, the law to which the Lord refers is the “law of the Church” which will be the sum and substance of this revelation, section 42.

It is important to keep in mind the significance of “the law” in an eternal sense. The law of the Lord in a very real sense is a revelation of his character and attributes. The laws are given to assist man in his quest to become like the Father and the Son. No one can come unto the Father except through obedience to the laws which Christ has given (see D&C 132:12). The violation of these laws is what constitutes sin (see 1 John 3:4). The Lord in his infinite love and wisdom often gives laws to his children commensurate with their preparation to receive those laws. Hence, the law of Moses was to prepare the children of Israel for higher laws. The laws given in this section of the D&C were to enable the saints to purify their lives in preparation for the establishment of Zion.

3 For verily I say, as ye have assembled yourselves together according to the commandment wherewith I commanded you, and are agreed as touching this one thing, and have asked the Father in my name, even so ye shall receive.

verse 3 “according to the commandment wherewith I commanded you” The command given to the elders of the Church to assemble themselves together was given by the Lord in D&C 41:2-3.

“and are agreed as touching this one thing” According to the law of common consent, the twelve elders present agreed in advance to accept and live the law that the Lord would give them. It was an exercise of faith in God to agree to live a covenant before the Lord revealed exactly what it was. A modern parallel may be found in going to the temple for the first time. Before we actually attend the temple, we agree to abide by the covenants which we will enter into therein even though we don’t know exactly what they are.

“And have asked the Father in my name” Even though the Lord wanted and intended to give the Church his law, he still required that they ask him for it before it would be given to them. The lesson here is the importance and efficacy of our petitions to our Heavenly Father. Even though we may need a particular blessing, and even though he may be eager to give it to us, we might not receive that blessing until we finally ask him for it directly in fervent prayer.

verses 4-9 These verses, along with verses 63-69, explain the law of missionary work.

4 Behold, verily I say unto you, I give unto you this first commandment, that ye shall go forth in my name, every one of you, excepting my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon.

verse 4 “every one of you” This phrase refers specifically to the twelve elders who were present when this revelation was received. They are commanded to leave immediately on missions to the West.

5 And I give unto them a commandment that they shall go forth for a little season, and it shall be given by the power of the Spirit when they shall return.

verse 5 “And I give unto them a commandment that they shall go forth for a little season” Joseph and Sidney were also to go on missions at this time, but were to stay out only a short time until the Spirit indicated they should return to Kirtland.

6 And ye shall go forth in the power of my Spirit, preaching my gospel, two by two, in my name, lifting up your voices as with the sound of a trump, declaring my word like unto angels of God.

verse 6 “two by two” One may well ask why the Lord has his missionaries proselyte as a companionship rather than alone. It is likely that it is for physical and spiritual safety and to fulfill the law of witnesses (John 8:7-8; 2 Corinthians 13:1).

“like unto angels of God” This is not a gratuitous comparison by the Lord. There is little or no difference between righteous and diligent missionaries for the Lord and angels.

7 And ye shall go forth baptizing with water, saying: Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

verse 7 “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” For a discussion of this interesting phrase, see the commentary for D&C 39:19.

8 And from this place ye shall go forth into the regions westward; and inasmuch as ye shall find them that will receive you ye shall build up my church in every region—

verse 8 “he shall go forth into the regions westward” This statement refers largely to Missouri. In addition to gathering souls to the kingdom, the missionaries would prepare the area for the future gathering to Missouri.

9 Until the time shall come when it shall be revealed unto you from on high, when the city of the New Jerusalem shall be prepared, that ye may be gathered in one, that ye may be my people and I will be your God.

verse 9 “the city of the New Jerusalem” This is the first use of this phrase in the Doctrine and Covenants. The “city of the New Jerusalem” is Zion. It should be noted that Zion may be defined on two levels. On the first level, Zion is the Lord’s earthly kingdom, his Church. Zion has been established, and it is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Scripturally, it is compared to a tent with its “center pole” in Jackson County Missouri and the “stakes” of the tent scattered all over the world. On another level, Zion, or the New Jerusalem, has not yet been established. Zion cannot be established until the Lord’s people are living the law of consecration and stewardship, are a unified people, and have no poor among them (D&C 105:5).

In 1831 in the Church, it was anticipated that this latter Zion, the New Jerusalem, would soon be established. In this verse, the Lord promises that the location of the New Jerusalem will be revealed in the future (see D&C 57:1-3). We will learn that the New Jerusalem is to be located in Independence, Missouri.

Though the ancient Jerusalem will eventually be built up for the purposes of the Lord, it will not be called “New” Jerusalem because it has existed from ancient times (see Ether 13:5).

10 And again, I say unto you, that my servant Edward Partridge shall stand in the office whereunto I have appointed him. And it shall come to pass, that if he transgress another shall be appointed in his stead. Even so. Amen.

verses 11-17 These verses explain the law of ordination or the law of authority to minister.

11 Again I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.

verse 11 No one can preach the gospel as a missionary for the Church (“go forth to preach”) or as a teacher in the Church (“build up my church”) without having first been called, ordained, and set apart by the recognized authorities of the Church and sustained publicly by the membership. There are no secret callings or ordinations in the kingdom of God. This policy provides great protection against deception by those who have no authority.

President Harold B. Lee taught: “Now, if one comes claiming that he has authority, ask him, ‘Where do you get your authority? Have you been ordained by someone who has authority, who is known to the Church, that you have authority and

have been regularly ordained by the heads of the Church?’ If the answer is no, you may know that he is an imposter. This is the test that our people should always apply when some imposter comes trying to lead them astray” (CR, October 1972, 127).

12 And again, the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel.

verse 12 “the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon” At the time this revelation was received, the Pearl of Great Price had not yet been published. Additionally, those portions of the present Doctrine and Covenants known to the Church at that time were also implicitly included in the scriptures mentioned here in verse 12 by the wording of verse 13, since both the “covenants” and the “articles” that are to be taught by the Spirit refer specifically to the revelations of Joseph Smith. The term covenants was often used to mean “revelations,” as in the later title, Doctrine and Covenants, and “church articles” in verse 13 refers specifically to D&C 20.

13 And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit.

verse 13 “And they shall observe the covenants” The term *covenants* is likely used here to indicate the various commandments found in individual revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants. All commandments are also covenants because there is a promise and a blessing attached to each.

“church articles” This phrase is a reference to the rules and policies found in D&C 20, the articles and covenants of the Church of Christ. See the commentary on verse 12.

14 And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.

verse 14 This verse can be read either as a command or as a statement of fact, and either way the statement is true. If a person does not have the Spirit, he is commanded not to teach; and in the sense of true teaching, without the influence of the Spirit he cannot teach.

True teaching takes place only Spirit to spirit. An eternal principle cannot be implanted in the heart of another without the influence of the Spirit of God. Actually we may actually say that true teaching takes place only “Spirit to spirit to spirit.” That is, effective learning of spiritual truth can occur only as a three-cornered transaction between the Spirit of God, the spirit of the teacher, and the spirit of the student.

15 And all this ye shall observe to do as I have commanded concerning your teaching, until the fulness of my scriptures is given.

verse 15 “until the fulness of my scriptures is given” This phrase likely refers mainly to Joseph’s inspired revision of the Bible. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

When the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible—including in this revelation under the designation, “fulness of my scriptures”—came forth, then teachers were to use it and the various additional direct revelations. This, then, is a command to teach the changes and additions now found in the so-called Inspired Version (*BYU Symposium on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible*, November 3, 1984, 2-3).

We may also interpret the phrase differently and conclude that the “fulness of my scriptures” also includes the Pearl of Great Price, the future revelations to be included in the Doctrine and Covenants, the JST, and even the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon.

16 And as ye shall lift up your voices by the Comforter, ye shall speak and prophesy as seemeth me good;

17 For, behold, the Comforter knoweth all things, and beareth record of the Father and of the Son.

verse 17 We are often guilty of depersonalizing the man with the title Holy Ghost. We must always remember that he is a supremely intelligent, loving, and sensitive divine being who yearns and labors for the exaltation of all of the Father’s children.

verses 18-29 These verses, along with verses 74-93, explain the law of moral conduct.

18 And now, behold, I speak unto the church. Thou shalt not kill; and he that kills shall not have forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come.

verse 18 “I speak unto the church” Here the Lord is no longer specifically addressing the elders present on February 9, 1831, but rather the entire Church.

“Thou shalt not kill” It is common to refer to this command and to the commandments in the following verses 19 through 29 as a reiteration of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament—a nostalgic review of some commandments that were tenets of the law of Moses. Is this correct? It is not. Verses 18 through 29 are not a reiteration of the law of Moses, the lesser law. Rather, they are a new legislation—a part of the higher law.

19 And again, I say, thou shalt not kill; but he that killeth shall die.

verses 18-19 Three penalties are specified for the murderer: (1) He shall not obtain forgiveness for his sin in this world or in the world to come (verse 18). This means that the redeeming powers of the Savior's atonement will not be available to him. He himself must bear the entire burden of this sin. Ultimately, if he repents, he will not be worthy of either the celestial or terrestrial glories, but may inherit a telestial glory. (2) He shall die (verse 19). This may imply that capital punishment is appropriate for him, or it may simply mean that he will suffer the second death which is a permanent and eternal spiritual death or separation from God. (3) He shall be delivered to and dealt with by the laws of the land (verse 79).

verse 19 President Joseph Fielding Smith said that the Church: "cannot destroy men in the flesh, because we do not control the lives of men and do not have power to pass sentences upon them which involve capital punishment. In the days when there was a theocracy on the earth, then this decree was enforced. What the Lord will do in lieu of this because we cannot destroy in the flesh, I am unable to say, but it will have to be made up in some other way" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:97).

Perhaps it should be mentioned here that abortion, although a gravely serious sin, is not equal to murder. Those guilty of abortion are not denied the gift of repentance and may, if they do repent, receive the full blessings of the Savior's atonement and become once again candidates for the celestial kingdom (see Boyd K. Packer, *CR*, April 1992, 95).

See the discussion of the three most abominable sins in the sight of God in the commentary for Alma 39:5-6. See also *Three Most Abominable Sins in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 18.

20 Thou shalt not steal; and he that stealeth and will not repent shall be cast out.

verse 20 "he that stealeth and will not repent shall be cast out" To be cast out is to be excommunicated.

21 Thou shalt not lie; he that lieth and will not repent shall be cast out.

verses 20-21 Those who steal or lie and will not repent are to be "cast out" or excommunicated.

22 Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.

verse 22 Whereas all the previous commandments concerning personal behavior have been stated as "thou shalt nots," this commandment is a "thou shalt."

"Thou shalt" commandments leave no room for guessing. President Spencer W. Kimball explained: "When the Lord says *all thy heart*, it allows for no sharing nor dividing nor depriving. . . . The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes preeminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither

social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse. We sometimes find women who absorb and hover over the children at the expense of the husband, sometimes even estranging them from him. The Lord says to them: ‘thou shalt cleave unto him and none else.’ Marriage presupposes total allegiance and total fidelity” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 142-43).

Although biological attraction can happen spontaneously and without effort, maintaining a long-term, loving relationship in marriage usually does not. It is a goal that must be chosen and diligently pursued, a conscious decision for which husbands and wives may be held accountable. To ignore one’s spouse or the relationship that exists between husband and wife is a sin.

23 And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out.

verse 23 “**he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her**” There is a difference in degree between carnal-mindedness and looking “upon a woman to lust after her.” Both are sins, but the former involves hypothetical thinking or sexual fantasies, while the latter involves intent to commit adultery if given an opportunity. That is why in the latter case the individual has actually committed adultery already in his or her heart (see Matthew 5:27-28)—because the act is desired, planned, and intended, though not yet carried out. In such a case, the desired act of adultery has become a personal idol.

24 Thou shalt not commit adultery; and he that committeth adultery, and repenteth not, shall be cast out.

25 But he that has committed adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsaketh it, and doeth it no more, thou shalt forgive;

26 But if he doeth it again, he shall not be forgiven, but shall be cast out.

verses 24-26 Verses 22-23 involve mental and emotional unfaithfulness, but these particular verses—verses 24-26—involve actual physical unfaithfulness. The law of the Church directs that unrepentant adulterers be excommunicated from the Church.

27 Thou shalt not speak evil of thy neighbor, nor do him any harm.

verse 27 To “speak evil” or bear false witness is to testify to or to pass along reports, insinuations, speculations, or rumors as if their were true, to the detriment of a fellow human being.

28 Thou knowest my laws concerning these things are given in my scriptures; he that sinneth and repenteth not shall be cast out.

verse 28 **“he that sinneth and repenteth not shall be cast out”** Repeated, blatant sin of any kind where there is no honest attempt to repent is not to be tolerated in or by the Church.

29 If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments.

verse 29 This verse provides a definition of what it means to love God. To truly love him is to obey him (John 14:15; 14:21). Obviously mortals cannot “keep all [of his] commandments” to perfection, so there is room for repentance here.

verse 30-39 These verses, along with verses 53-55, explain the law of consecration. Before studying these verses, please review the discussion of the “law of consecration and stewardship” in the introductory commentary for section 42.

30 And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.

verse 30 Consecration, in the present context, means to give all we possess or may possess to the Church to administer to the poor and needy and to build Zion, the New Jerusalem. Only those who are willing to give everything to the Lord are worthy to receive everything from him. All church members who have been to the temple have covenanted to live the law of consecration, though at present the institutional expectations of the Church require them to live only the law of tithing (see D&C 119-120) and accept those demands on their resources that are made in their home wards and branches. Those individuals who have accepted the law of consecration by covenant yet will not observe the law of tithing or make other sacrifices of time or resources requested of them have broken their temple covenants.

“a deed which cannot be broken” Whatever property or other resources a family took with them into the covenant of consecration was to be legally transferred to the Church by deed. Technically, consecrated properties became the Church’s and would not be given back even if an individual changed his mind and wanted to leave. This part of the law was not implemented.

31 And inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me; and they shall be laid before the bishop of my church and his counselors, two of the elders, or high priests, such as he shall appoint or has appointed and set apart for that purpose.

verse 31 **“inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me”** Resources used to help the poor and the needy are resources given to the Savior (Matthew 25:40; Mosiah 2:17).

“or high priests” According to Orson Pratt (*HC*, 1:150,152), these words were added both here in verse 71 by Joseph Smith several years after section 42 was received. The words referring to a “high council” in verse 34 were also added. In February 1831, when this revelation was first received, there were no high priests or high council in the Church, because the organization of the Church had not yet been fully revealed. Later, after these offices had been revealed, Joseph adjusted verses 31, 34, and 71 to include high priests in their proper places.

32 And it shall come to pass, that after they are laid before the bishop of my church, and after that he has received these testimonies concerning the consecration of the properties of my church, that they cannot be taken from the church, agreeable to my commandments, every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration, as much as is sufficient for himself and family.

verse 32 “every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property” A steward is a manager. In this system an individual consecrates all of his possessions to the Church and receives back, as his own private property, a stewardship, sufficient for his needs and that of his family. He is to manage this stewardship, and manage it well, for the enrichment of himself, his family, and the kingdom.

33 And again, if there shall be properties in the hands of the church, or any individuals of it, more than is necessary for their support after this first consecration, which is a residue to be consecrated unto the bishop, it shall be kept to administer to those who have not, from time to time, that every man who has need may be amply supplied and receive according to his wants.

verse 33 “which is a residue” Stewards are expected to meet their own needs out of the produce of their stewardship. Should a steward or manager produce more than he or she personally needs, the amount left over, or residue, is forwarded to the bishop for the support of others in the system with no residue, or even shortfalls. The residue is also to be used to build the kingdom (see verse 35).

“according to his wants” Stewards and their families are not expected to live in poverty. Although personal extravagance would be a violation of principle, stewards are expected to take their just wants from the produce of their stewardships (compare D&C 82:17). It appears, for example, that if music is a large part of one’s life, or woodworking is a large part of another’s, it would be acceptable for the one to have musical instruments and for the other to have woodworking tools. In disputed cases the bishop judges what is a “just” want or desire and what is selfishness or extravagance.

34 Therefore, the residue shall be kept in my storehouse, to administer to the poor and the needy, as shall be appointed by the high council of the church, and the bishop and his council;

verse 34 “the high council of the church” See the commentary for verse 31.

35 And for the purpose of purchasing lands for the public benefit of the church, and building houses of worship, and building up of the New Jerusalem which is hereafter to be revealed—

36 That my covenant people may be gathered in one in that day when I shall come to my temple. And this I do for the salvation of my people.

verse 36 Just imagine the exciting spirit that would occur in a community able to live the law of consecration. It is obvious that in order for the community to be successful, they would have to leave behind the slackers, the critics, and the me-firsts. Together, they would become of one heart and one mind and would experience remarkable spiritual growth.

This verse refers to the Lord's visit to his temple announced in Malachi 3:1-3. We are not given to know which temple, but we would presume that the time is following the Lord's second coming when there will exist on the earth a true Zion society.

37 And it shall come to pass, that he that sinneth and repenteth not shall be cast out of the church, and shall not receive again that which he has consecrated unto the poor and the needy of my church, or in other words, unto me—

38 For inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto me.

39 For it shall come to pass, that which I spake by the mouths of my prophets shall be fulfilled; for I will consecrate of the riches of those who embrace my gospel among the Gentiles unto the poor of my people who are of the house of Israel.

verse 39 “that which I spake by the mouths of my prophets shall be fulfilled” The prophets mentioned here would include Isaiah (see Isaiah 60:3-7, 16; 61:5-6) who taught that the riches of the Gentiles would be brought to Zion in the last days. This theme is continued in the Epistles of Paul, who insisted that Gentile converts share their wealth with Israel by “contributing” to or “communicating” with the “poor” of Israel (see Acts 24:17; Romans 15:26-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16). The Greek word translated *communicate* in the King James Version of the New Testament is usually some form of *koinoneo*, which means “to have in common.” It can also be translated as “share,” and from this comes our common sense of “communicate,” which is to share ideas by making them common knowledge (apply to Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16).

“I will consecrate of the riches of those who embrace my gospel among the Gentiles unto the poor of my people who are of the house of Israel” How have the

rich among the Gentiles helped the poor of the house of Israel? In the book of Mormon, the United States of America is referred to as the “great gentile nation.” This is not to say that there would be none of the house of Israel in America, but that as a nation it would not be thought of as part of the house of Israel. This great Gentile nation consists of people from many other countries. The Lord has blessed the United States with great wealth and temporal abundance. From the early days of the Church, saints in the United States have enjoyed prosperity and temporal wealth unknown to most of mankind throughout history. Through their faithfulness in paying their tithes, supporting missionaries, and giving other contributions, these saints of the great gentile nation made it possible for the work of the kingdom to go forth to the nations of the earth. Now saints in many nations who enjoy temporal prosperity—other Gentiles—join in and contribute resources to the work, so the kingdom can more quickly fulfill its destiny.

“the poor of my people who are of the house of Israel” This phrase does not imply that those living the law of consecration will be poverty-stricken. It refers to those in Zion who produce less than they need. Even in Zion there may be needy, but their needs will be met through the consecration of new converts and the surpluses, or residues, of the more productive stewards.

verses 40-42 These verses explain the law of miscellaneous conduct.

40 And again, thou shalt not be proud in thy heart; let all thy garments be plain, and their beauty the beauty of the work of thine own hands;

verse 40 “let all thy garments be plain” Those who have accepted the law of consecration and received a stewardship by covenant must not expend the resources of their stewardship on unnecessary extravagance such as expensive clothes. The law of consecration is not intended to subsidize the lifestyles of the rich but to put their surplus resources—beyond what is sufficient for their needs—into the hands of brother and sister saints who do not have sufficient for their needs. The principle here is that the genuine need of others must have priority over selfish wants (see Alma 1:27). This verse also encourages personal creativity and industry. The implication is that garments that one makes are more beautiful and less expensive than those one might purchase.

41 And let all things be done in cleanliness before me.

verse 41 The spirit of those of the Lord’s people who live the law of consecration is one of beauty, cleanliness, simplicity, and nobility.

42 Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer.

verse 42 “Thou shalt not be idle” It is obvious that a good work ethic among the members of a Zion society is essential. A celestial individual can and will work hard without the incentive of direct, personal gain. Consecration is a celestial law because only the celestial can live it unselfishly, without leaving their share of the work to be done by others. The failure to establish Zion in the past has been largely due to too many in the Church who violate this principle.

“he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer”

It is contrary to the justice of God for those who do not keep their covenants to benefit as though they do. Under the law of consecration, this means that those who will not work to support themselves and to help the poor and needy have no claim upon, and must not be given, the fruits of the laborers. Covenant blessings require covenant obedience. In the welfare program of the Church today, this principle is understood to mean that the needy should be faithful to their covenants and first exhaust their own resources, including their own labor, before making a claim on the resources produced by the labor of other saints. The faithful who cannot work, but who would if they could, are entitled to support. Those who are not faithful or who will not work for themselves but expect to be supported by the labor of others must not be allowed to do so.

verses 43-52 These verses explain the law of faith and healing—the Lord’s will concerning the blessing of the sick. The main points are: 1. The saints are obligated to tenderly care for the sick, even the sick who lack the faith to be healed. 2. It is appropriate to treat the sick with such medicines as are available—in this case herbs and foods. 3. The elders of the Church should be called to bless the sick by the laying on of hands. 4. Not all of the faithful saints who are blessed by the elders will recover. 5. Those who lack the faith to be healed are still candidates for the celestial kingdom, and caring for them is still the responsibility of the members.

43 And whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food, and that not by the hand of an enemy.

verse 43 It would seem that some members of the Church believe that all illness should be dealt with only through priesthood administrations. This is not the official doctrine of the Church, as was stated in a *Church News* editorial:

Every man, woman, and child should care for his or her body as the temple of God which it is. Attention should be given to proper rest and exercise, and a well-balanced diet. The Lord has given us the Word of Wisdom to assist us further in better caring for our bodies.

There are times when we should pray for the sick, and through the priesthood lay hands upon the head of the ill and bless them. . . . But our belief in the divine power of healing should in no way preclude seeking competent medical assistance. Dr. James

E. Talmage, a member of the council of the Twelve, in 1921 said in an address: "I say some have charged us with inconsistency, for they say: 'If you believe in the gift of healing, what is the need of doctors, what is the need of surgeons, why build hospitals?' Because we know that 'there is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the world was, and when we attain any blessing it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.' And the law is, in the instance under consideration, that we shall do all we can of ourselves. . . ."

We must do all we can, and then ask the Lord to do the rest, such as we cannot do. Hence we hold the medical and surgical profession in high regard. . . . When we have done all we can then the Divine Power will be directly applicable and operative (*Church News*, February 19, 1977, 16).

44 And the elders of the church, two or more, shall be called, and shall pray for and lay their hands upon them in my name; and if they die they shall die unto me, and if they live they shall live unto me.

verse 44 "they shall die unto me, and if they live they shall live unto me"

When one is enduring faithfully in the new and everlasting covenant at the time of one's death, then one is said to die "unto Christ" or "in Christ." Those who are blessed by the elders and recover from their illness have an obligation to live unto Christ, to be his faithful, covenant sons and daughters in building up his kingdom on earth.

45 Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection.

46 And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them;

verse 46 How is it that the righteous "shall not taste of death"? President Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

To some members of the Church the saying that those who die in the Lord shall not taste of death has been a hard saying. They have seen good faithful men and women suffer days and at times for months before they were taken. But here the Lord does not say they shall not suffer pain of body, but that they shall be free from the anguish and torment of soul which will be partaken of by the wicked, and although they may suffer in body, yet death to them will be sweet in that they will realize that they are worthy before the Lord (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:186).

Some have added to this thought. Though a person's death may be painful, even excruciating, being dead will be a sweet relief and rest to them, for they will rest in paradise with the certain knowledge that the Lord judges them worthy of celestial glory.

47 And they that die not in me, wo unto them, for their death is bitter.

verse 47 Those who die unrepentant will suffer the pains of hell in the world of spirits. See a discussion of suffering under the heading “How Might We Categorized Adversities and Sufferings?” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 1, *Adversity and Suffering*.

The combination of verses 45-47 is often referred to as the “Lord’s law of mourning.”

48 And again, it shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed.

verse 48 It does seem unlikely that the Lord has assigned each of us a specific date for our death. It seems equally unlikely that he orchestrates the circumstances and causes of our death. This would require a degree of micro-managing of the affairs of man that seems uncharacteristic of the way in which God interacts with mortal man. On the other hand, when the disease processes here on earth that characterize this mortal existence combine to produce a potentially fatal illness, a merciful God, may certainly decide that the time is right for us to pass from this mortal phase.

49 He who hath faith to see shall see.

50 He who hath faith to hear shall hear.

51 The lame who hath faith to leap shall leap.

52 And they who have not faith to do these things, but believe in me, have power to become my sons; and inasmuch as they break not my laws thou shalt bear their infirmities.

verse 52 Lacking the faith to be healed is not necessarily a sin of a less than celestial character, and in such cases the Lord expects the saints to support and care for the afflicted under the law of consecration.

verses 53-55 These verses, along with verses 30-39, explain the law of consecration.

53 Thou shalt stand in the place of thy stewardship.

verse 53 This is a command to all the saints living the law of consecration. The Lord seems to be saying that each person should make do with their own stewardship. The other idea which may be conveyed here is that the saints are to live near and work with the land and other parts of the stewardship they have been given. He desires no “absentee” stewards holding a stewardship from the Lord but investing their time or resources elsewhere.

54 Thou shalt not take thy brother’s garment; thou shalt pay for that which thou shalt receive of thy brother.

verse 54 “Thou shalt not take thy brother’s garment” The law of consecration is not a system of common ownership or group ownership as was the system of “common stock.” One’s stewardship under the law of consecration is legally one’s own private property. The system of consecration practiced at this time was neither communal nor communistic in the usual sense of those words, but a system of individually controlled and privately owned stewardships working cooperatively toward the same goal—to establish Zion.

“thou shalt pay for that which thou shalt receive of thy brother” If a steward needs something from another, he must pay a fair price for it. If he cannot pay, he is to go to the bishop for it, and his needs will be met from the storehouse.

55 And if thou obtainest more than that which would be for thy support, thou shalt give it into my storehouse, that all things may be done according to that which I have said.

verses 56-61 These verses explain the law relative to scriptures.

56 Thou shalt ask, and my scriptures shall be given as I have appointed, and they shall be preserved in safety;

verse 56 This verse, and the following five verses, refer to the Joseph Smith Translation which was being worked on at the time this revelation was received (see Dahl, “Joseph Smith Translation and the Doctrine and Covenants,” 110). Verses 56-61 may also refer to the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, particularly since verse 59, “my law to govern my church,” likely refers to section 42 itself (see D&C 38:32, 36; 41:3; 43:8).

57 And it is expedient that thou shouldst hold thy peace concerning them, and not teach them until ye have received them in full.

verse 57 “hold thy peace concerning them” The Lord instructs the Church not to use the JST and the other new scriptures in preaching publicly until they had been given “in full,” or completed. The Lord’s reasons for this command are not entirely clear. Some have suggested that it may have increased the persecution experienced by the saints.

58 And I give unto you a commandment that then ye shall teach them unto all men; for they shall be taught unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people.

verses 56-58 These verses refer to Joseph’s inspired revision of the Bible.

59 Thou shalt take the things which thou hast received, which have been given unto thee in my scriptures for a law, to be my law to govern my church;

verse 59 “my law to govern my church” This phrase seems to be a clear reference to section 42, the law of the Church (see the same phrasing in D&C 38:32, 36; 41:3; 43:8—all referring to section 42). Thus the phrase “my scriptures,” as used here and in verse 56, obviously includes the Doctrine and Covenants as well as the JST.

60 And he that doeth according to these things shall be saved, and he that doeth them not shall be damned if he so continue.

61 If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.

verse 61 “revelation upon revelation” This is exactly how Joseph received the Doctrine and Covenants, the JST, and other scriptures—successive revisions gradually added here a little and there a little.

“the mysteries and peaceable things” For a discussion of the “mysteries” see the commentary for D&C 6:7. For a discussion of the “peaceable things” see the commentary for D&C 36:2.

62 Thou shalt ask, and it shall be revealed unto you in mine own due time where the New Jerusalem shall be built.

verse 62 This promise will be fulfilled in D&C 57:1-3.

verses 63-69 These verses, along with verses 4-9, explain the law of missionary work.

63 And behold, it shall come to pass that my servants shall be sent forth to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south.

64 And even now, let him that goeth to the east teach them that shall be converted to flee to the west, and this in consequence of that which is coming on the earth, and of secret combinations.

verse 64 “that which is coming on the earth” From the perspective of the Kirtland Saints, “that which is coming” would include the Civil War, which would devastate the nation, mark the beginning of “modern war,” and probably be the beginning of the wars of the last days (see D&C 87:1-3).

“and of secret combinations” The only way to escape the evil that men do to one another is to flee to Zion.

65 Behold, thou shalt observe all these things, and great shall be thy reward; for unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but unto the world it is not given to know them.

66 Ye shall observe the laws which ye have received and be faithful.

verse 66 “the laws which ye have received” Again, another reference to section 42.

67 And ye shall hereafter receive church covenants, such as shall be sufficient to establish you, both here and in the New Jerusalem.

verse 67 “ye shall hereafter receive church covenants” More commandments and covenants are yet to be received including the temple ordinances and covenants. At the time of this revelation it was anticipated that the temple ordinances would be an anchor for the saints both in Kirtland and in Missouri.

68 Therefore, he that lacketh wisdom, let him ask of me, and I will give him liberally and upbraid him not.

verse 68 The Lord repeats the well-known scriptural thought found in James 1:5-6.

69 Lift up your hearts and rejoice, for unto you the kingdom, or in other words, the keys of the church have been given. Even so. Amen.

verse 69 “the keys of the church” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God upon the earth. Therefore, to be given the keys of the Church is to be given possession and control of the earthly kingdom of God.

verses 70-73 These verses explain the law of remuneration for services. All whose labor for the Church prevents them from earning their own livelihood are to be remunerated from the consecrations and surpluses of the Church. Their support shall be administered by the bishop of the Church, who was then Edward Partridge.

70 The priests and teachers shall have their stewardships, even as the members.

71 And the elders or high priests who are appointed to assist the bishop as counselors in all things, are to have their families supported out of the property which is consecrated to the bishop, for the good of the poor, and for other purposes, as before mentioned;

72 Or they are to receive a just remuneration for all their services, either a stewardship or otherwise, as may be thought best or decided by the counselors and bishop.

73 And the bishop, also, shall receive his support, or a just remuneration for all his services in the church.

verses 74-93 These verses, along with verses 18-29, explain the law of moral conduct.

verses 74-77 These verses describe the Lord's law to the Church on marital fidelity and divorce. In the following verses, to "receive" means to receive into full fellowship through baptism. To "cast out" means to cast out of the Church by excommunication.

If an individual divorces his or her spouse because the spouse has committed adultery, that individual is to remain in good standing and fellowship in the Church. Those members who leave their spouse in order to have a sexual relationship with someone else, however, are to be excommunicated. Even a legal divorce and remarriage, if pursued with adulterous motives, is still adultery in the sight of God (see Matthew 19:3-9). Those who are married but are living with someone other than their spouse are not to be received into the Church without repentance. Those who are not married but have been sexually active may also be received into the Church if they will genuinely repent and begin to live chaste lives.

The eternal purposes of sex and marriage are so sacred and such a necessary part of our exaltation that disregard for a loving, faithful, and functional marriage cannot escape the Lord's condemnation. Marriage partners are commanded to love one another and no one else (verse 22), are not to pursue or even consider in their hearts any other sexual partners (verse 23), and may not divorce a faithful spouse and remarry just to get a new partner (verse 75). Single people are to be faithful to their future spouse, whether they marry in this life or the next, and they are to repent of any sexual activity or other sins before being fellowshipped into the Church (verse 77).

74 Behold, verily I say unto you, that whatever persons among you, having put away their companions for the cause of fornication, or in other words, if they shall testify before you in all lowliness of heart that this is the case, ye shall not cast them out from among you;

75 But if ye shall find that any persons have left their companions for the sake of adultery, and they themselves are the offenders, and their companions are living, they shall be cast out from among you.

76 And again, I say unto you, that ye shall be watchful and careful, with all inquiry, that ye receive none such among you if they are married;

77 And if they are not married, they shall repent of all their sins or ye shall not receive them.

verses 78-87 These verses discuss the relationship of the law of the Church to the law of the land: local, state, and federal. If members of the Church break the law of the land, they are to be turned over to the civil authorities for judgment. Church membership does not protect us from the law of the land and gives us no shield from civil justice.

When individuals break the law of the Church, they are to be dealt with in church disciplinary councils. Church disciplinary councils cannot impose any penalty or sanction other than loss of membership or fellowship and therefore will not hear cases involving violation of secular law or suits for damages. The Church determines only issues of sin, which is violation of God's law (see verse 87). Civil law decides all issues of crime, which is violation of civil law, and the Church leaves civil justice to the courts. Thus, an individual might be tried in the civil courts and then brought before a church disciplinary council because the act violated both civil law and the law of God.

78 And again, every person who belongeth to this church of Christ, shall observe to keep all the commandments and covenants of the church.

79 And it shall come to pass, that if any persons among you shall kill they shall be delivered up and dealt with according to the laws of the land; for remember that he hath no forgiveness; and it shall be proved according to the laws of the land.

80 And if any man or woman shall commit adultery, he or she shall be tried before two elders of the church, or more, and every word shall be established against him or her by two witnesses of the church, and not of the enemy; but if there are more than two witnesses it is better.

81 But he or she shall be condemned by the mouth of two witnesses; and the elders shall lay the case before the church, and the church shall lift up their hands against him or her, that they may be dealt with according to the law of God.

82 And if it can be, it is necessary that the bishop be present also.

83 And thus ye shall do in all cases which shall come before you.

84 And if a man or woman shall rob, he or she shall be delivered up unto the law of the land.

85 And if he or she shall steal, he or she shall be delivered up unto the law of the land.

verses 84-85 Note that these verses distinguish between robbing and stealing. Robbery carries the meaning of accosting an individual and forcefully taking his or her belongings. Stealing implies taking the possessions of another unbeknown to him or her.

86 And if he or she shall lie, he or she shall be delivered up unto the law of the land.

87 And if he or she do any manner of iniquity, he or she shall be delivered up unto the law, even that of God.

verses 88-93 These verses deal with the proper way of handling personal disputes or injuries in the Church. Personal differences are to be taken by the injured

party first to the offending party. The assumption is that brothers and sisters in Zion will act in good faith to resolve their differences and remain brothers and sisters. Saints are not to begin by working through third parties or by complaining or making accusations until the offender finally hears about it from the third party. This approach violates the law of the Church. Instead, the injured party is to go privately to the offender, state his or her complaint, and resolve it confidentially. If the offender will not confess and repent, the injured party is to take the matter to proper church leaders, but still privately and confidentially, “not to the members” (verse 89). At this point the church leaders can decide whether or not an injury can be proved. If the offense can be proved, then the offender will confess and repent or be subject to church discipline with the possible loss of membership or fellowship.

Private offenses are to be handled by the Church privately, giving the offender the opportunity to make amends to the injured and to God and not to suffer public humiliation for a private fault. “Note the caution that this remedy is to be private—‘not before the world.’ This is not done in order to hide the facts, but rather to increase the chance that the correction will improve the life of a brother or sister” (Dallin H. Oaks, “Speaking Today: Criticism,” 72).

Public offenses, however, are generally wrought by more high-handed, rebellious, and proud individuals. Therefore, church discipline for public offenses is to be made public, in order that the offending individuals may be ashamed and curb their pride (see verse 91), thus giving them greater motivation for repentance. Unfortunately, for those whose pride is very great, a public rebuke will often cause them, in self-justification, to become dissident former members, and enemies of the Church.

88 And if thy brother or sister offend thee, thou shalt take him or her between him or her and thee alone; and if he or she confess thou shalt be reconciled.

89 And if he or she confess not thou shalt deliver him or her up unto the church, not to the members, but to the elders. And it shall be done in a meeting, and that not before the world.

90 And if thy brother or sister offend many, he or she shall be chastened before many.

91 And if any one offend openly, he or she shall be rebuked openly, that he or she may be ashamed. And if he or she confess not, he or she shall be delivered up unto the law of God.

92 If any shall offend in secret, he or she shall be rebuked in secret, that he or she may have opportunity to confess in secret to him or her whom he or she has offended, and to God, that the church may not speak reproachfully of him or her.

93 And thus shall ye conduct in all things.

Brief Historical Setting

1831 February

Concerning the reaction of the Church to the new law, John Whitmer stated: “After the above law or revelation was received, the elders went forth to proclaim repentance according to commandment, and there were members added to the church. Though Bishop Edward Partridge visited the church in its several branches, there were some that would not receive the Law. The time has not yet come that the law can be fully established, for the disciples live scattered abroad and are not organized; our [numbers] are small and the disciples untaught, consequently they understand not the things of the Kingdom. There were some of the disciples who were flattered into the church because they thought that all things were to be common, therefore they thought to glut themselves upon the labors of others” (*Early Latter Day Saint History*, 42).

Concerning the reception of the law by the Church, Joseph noted in a letter to Martin Harris: “We have received the laws of the Kingdom since we came here and the Disciples in these parts have received them gladly” (Woodford, *Historical Development*, 1:527).

Joseph began planning for the growth of the Church in Kirtland, knowing that converts from the eastern United States and Canada would soon be flowing in, for Kirtland was to be the central staging area for establishing Zion further west “on the borders by the Lamanites” (D&C 28:9). The growth of the Church in Kirtland would also bring some tensions between old and new members or between local and eastern members. The problems of getting along in a rapidly growing community that was trying to live the law of consecration intensified as new arrivals came in from New York and elsewhere, and as more of those who had been prepared for the gospel by the preaching of Sidney Rigdon (see D&C 35:4) were converted in the Kirtland area. The reader will note that most of the next fifteen or so revelations deal with better organizing the Church, resolving disputes between members, and combating the influence of false spirits and deceivers among the members.

On arriving in Kirtland, Joseph found a few members of the Church presuming to receive revelations and consequently teaching false doctrines. The Lord warned against these counterfeit claims and false teachings [**D&C 43 - Spurious Revelations**].

Also in February, the Lord announced that an important conference of the elders of the Church should be held. The date for this conference was set for June 1831 [**D&C 44 - Conference of June 1831**]. This turned out to be a great convocation of the elders at which the office of high priest was revealed to the Church.

Section 43 Spurious Revelations

By the spring of 1831, the number of church members in Kirtland and its vicinity had increased to more than a thousand. These saints met in more than twenty branches of the Church.

As the Church grew in size, so did the intensity of persecution felt by the members. The Church existed in a highly charged and critical environment where local journalists were quick to pounce upon and criticize anything they could get their hands on, such as the doctrinal content of Joseph's revelations and/or those individuals whose names appeared in the revelations. For this reason Joseph began to identify certain persons in the revelations by code names such as "Enoch" for Joseph Smith, "Ahashdad" for Newell K. Whitney, and "Pelagoram" for Sidney Rigdon. Journalists were also anxious to write about the failings of individual members of the Church and thus produce evidence that Mormonism was a deluded sect.

In April 1830, ten months prior to Joseph's receiving section 43, the Lord had instructed the saints that it was only through Joseph Smith that revelation would come for the building of Zion. Speaking of Joseph, the Lord said, "Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power" (D&C 21:7). The Lord reiterated this doctrine at the time of the Hiram Page affair in D&C 28:2: "But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses."

This instruction was difficult for some of the saints to follow since many had come from religious backgrounds that permitted any member of the congregation to proclaim doctrine for the entire assembly. These were Protestant churches that were very democratic in their structure, working from the bottom up, and the new converts were mostly unfamiliar with the idea of a priesthood order working from the top down or a hierarchy of spiritual authorities over the Church. Thus, the Lord needed to make clear to the Kirtland saints how he would reveal his will to them in his restored Church. Also, section 28, with its clear statement concerning the unique role of the Prophet in receiving revelation for the Church, had been given in Fayette, and very few of the New York saints had arrived in Kirtland. The revelations did not yet exist in printed form and were accessible to the Kirtland saints only, if at all, by private, handwritten copies. Most of the Kirtland saints may therefore have simply been unfamiliar with the information in section 28.

Spurious revelations and visions claimed by early converts to the Church provided critics further fuel for inflammatory articles which were written to cast doubt on the unusual beliefs of the Mormons. For example, one of the early converts, Heman Basset, claimed to have received a revelation in Kirtland from an angel. After reading

this revelation to others, Basset would show them a picture of what he claimed to be a group of angels. Another person known as Black Pete claimed to have received messages from heaven in the form of letters floating across the sky. While seeking to obtain a closer look at one of these traveling messages, he “ran off a steep wash bank twenty-five feet high, passed through a tree top” growing parallel with the water below and fell into the Chagrin River. Black Pete emerged from the stream with only a few scratches, but “his ardor had somewhat cooled” (*JD*, 11:3-4). John Whitmer recorded in his history of the Church an account of one of the early converts, a woman known only as Mrs. Hubble. He wrote: “About these days there was a woman by the name of Hubble who professed to be a prophetess of the Lord, and professed to have many revelations, and knew the Book of Mormon was true, and that she should become a teacher in the Church of Christ. She appeared to be very sanctimonious and deceived some who were not able to detect her in her hypocrisy: others however had the spirit of discernment, and her follies and abomination were made manifest” (*Early Latter Day Saint History*, 42-43).

Some other church members also began teaching incorrect principles. In a discourse given years later in Ogden, Utah, Elder George A. Smith commented on this problem that existed in the early Church: “There was a prevalent spirit all through the early history of this Church, which prompted the elders to suppose that they knew more than the Prophet. Elders would tell you that the prophet was going wrong” (*JD*, 11:7). Many members became confused and bewildered by the different claims. Under these circumstances the Prophet went to the Lord for guidance and in February 1831, a few days after he had received section 42, Joseph received section 43 which warned against the counterfeit claims and false teachings of these misguided church members. This revelation emphasized that the Lord had appointed only one person, Joseph Smith, to receive revelation for the Church. Other members might receive revelation for their own needs, stewardships, and specific callings, but they did not have authority to receive revelation for the Church.

Section 43 was directed to the elders of the Church—those directing church affairs in the branches and preaching the gospel among nonmembers—that they might have insight regarding these spurious revelations coming forth from some misguided saints.

The elders were told in section 43 that they are sent forth to teach and not be taught, and they were given a warning which they were to deliver to the nations of the earth regarding the Lord’s second coming and millennial reign (verses 20-26).

John Whitmer recorded the effect that section 43 had upon the Kirtland saints: “After this commandment was received, the saints came to understanding on this subject, and unity and harmony prevailed throughout the church of God: and the saints began to learn wisdom, and treasure up knowledge which they learned from the word of

God, and by experience as they advanced in the way of eternal life” (*Early Latter Day Saint History*, 44).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 43:15-16 Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach.

1 O hearken, ye elders of my church, and give ear to the words which I shall speak unto you.

verse 1 Section 43 was apparently delivered to Joseph directly in response to his inquiry about Mrs. Hubble and her “revelations.” It was received in the presence of twelve elders, who represented all of the elders of the Church.

2 For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church, through him whom I have appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations from my hand.

verse 2 “**ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church**” This phrase refers to section 42. The Lord seems to imply, “You have received an important revelation from my authorized servant Joseph, and now you are inclined to believe the rantings of someone like Mrs. Hubble?”

3 And this ye shall know assuredly—that there is none other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations until he be taken, if he abide in me.

verse 3 Here, then, is the Lord’s clear statement on the matter: Only the prophet speaks to the Church for the Lord. As one might expect, there have been many Mrs. Hubbles in the Church since 1831. President Joseph F. Smith wrote, “Whenever you see a man rise up claiming to have received direct revelation from the Lord to the Church, independent of the order and channel of the priesthood, you may set him down as an imposter” (*JD*, 24:188-90).

4 But verily, verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him; for if it be taken from him he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead.

verses 3-4 The Reorganized LDS Church bases its law of succession to the presidency upon these verses. In their church the president appoints his own successor. Later on, the appropriate law of succession to the presidency will be made clear. The Lord will reveal that the “keys of presidency” after the death of the president lie with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (section 107).

Between 1831 and 1835 these verses do define the law of succession to the presidency of the Church. It is interesting to note that if Joseph Smith should have

fallen because of iniquity, he still would have been the only one authorized to appoint his successor.

An interesting historical point is that Joseph, perhaps because of this verse, in July 1834 ordained David Whitmer to be “President of the Church of Christ.” Actually Brother Whitmer was ordained to be president of the Church in Missouri and president of the high council. We would now consider this office analogous to that of the stake president. Whitmer thought he was the president in Missouri just as Joseph was the president in Ohio, and that the two of them were thus equal in rank. When he was excommunicated by the high council in Missouri, he didn’t believe they had the power to excommunicate him because only the “common council of the church” can excommunicate the president (see D&C 107:82). Whitmer’s objections evidence that he misunderstood what office he was being called to accept. This misconception likely helps explain why he was the only one of the three witnesses to never come back to the Church after his excommunication. He must have reasoned, “I hold the keys of the presidency. The Church should come back to me—not me to the Church.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained the order of priesthood succession as follows: “We frequently hear discussions in our classes and between brethren to the effect that any man could be called, if the authorities should choose him, to preside over the Church, and that it is not the fixed order to take the senior apostle to preside, and any member of that quorum could be appointed. The fact is that the senior apostle automatically becomes the presiding officer of the Church at the death of the president. If some other man were to be chosen, then the senior would have to receive the revelation setting himself aside” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:189).

5 And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments;

6 And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me.

7 For verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed.

verse 7 “he that is ordained of me . . . and be ordained” The first use of the word *ordained* here probably means something like “called,” “directed,” or “approved.” The second use of *ordained* carries the usual, more specific, meaning.

Those who are truly acting under God’s direction will come into the Church through the gate of baptism and then be ordained to teach what the Lord has already given through the Prophet.

8 And now, behold, I give unto you a commandment, that when ye are assembled together ye shall instruct and edify each other, that ye may know how to act and

direct my church, how to act upon the points of my law and commandments, which I have given.

verse 8 The Lord instructs the leaders of his Church, in this case the elders, in what they should do when they meet together. We may well expand the applicability of this verse to all assemblies of the saints.

“ye shall instruct and edify each other” To instruct is one thing, but to instruct and *edify* is something more. *Edify* comes from the same root as *edifice* and means “to build up.” Both of these are accomplished if the saints are taught by the influence of the Spirit of God. Today this instructing and edifying may take place in priesthood meetings, Relief Society meetings, and auxiliary class meetings.

9 And thus ye shall become instructed in the law of my church, and be sanctified by that which ye have received, and ye shall bind yourselves to act in all holiness before me—

verse 9 “ye shall bind yourselves” The Lord refers to the principle of covenant making. What is a covenant? Is covenant-making a pertinent topic even today?

From a time even before the creation of the earth, God has made covenants with his children (Abraham 3:24-28). In each dispensation the making of eternal covenants has been God’s method of binding us to gospel principles essential to our spiritual progress and eventual exaltation. In entering into a covenant, a person tends to bind himself by his own integrity. He feels a sense of responsibility to act in a certain way. As the Lord enters into covenants with a people, he acknowledges that people as “his people.” Covenants are equally important to us today in this final dispensation as they have been to the saints of dispensations past. Today we are said to be a “covenant people.” We enter into sacred and binding commitments and obligations with the Lord. What are these covenants? We begin with the baptismal covenant. Men receive the Melchizedek priesthood only after agreeing to accept the “oath and covenant” of that priesthood. We then continue on to enter into those covenants available to us in the temple including the endowment and the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

We must not enter into these covenants lightly as they involve solemn obligations. There are unimaginable blessings reserved for those who keep their covenants. These blessings will be realized both in the eternities and here on earth. There are also damning penalties or “cursings” which await those who break their covenants. As we progress in mortality through the sequence of available covenants, the potential blessings increase for those who keep them, as does the gravity of the punishment for those who do not. Today a special caution or warning is issued by the ecclesiastical leader to the man who is about to receive the Melchizedek priesthood. The man to receive the Melchizedek does so by entering into the “oath and covenant of the priesthood.” In D&C 84 the Lord has warned that if a man should enter into this

covenant and later fail to live up to it, it would have been better for him in the eternities if he had never made the covenant in the first place. The ultimate covenant man may enter into here on earth is likely the blessing of having his calling and election made sure. And what is the potential penalty for those who turn all together from this covenant? They have committed the unpardonable sin and are banished to live with Satan forever.

While making a covenant involves a two-way promise made equally between God and man, it is God, not man, who fixes the terms of the agreement. He is the author of the covenant and the guarantor of its terms. Angels function as witnesses. It is man's role to accept or reject the terms of the covenant.

Since Old Testament times, covenants have been entered into with solemn ceremonies or rituals. In making a covenant, the individual takes an oath that includes a conditional cursing: "May thus and such befall me if I should violate this obligation." Animal sacrifices also often accompanied the swearing of oaths. One scholar explained that anciently the sacrificial animal was cut in two, and the individual making the covenant passed between the two pieces (Genesis 15:10, 17; Jeremiah 34:18). This implied that the violator of the covenant would be treated like the sacrificial animal that is cut in two! (M.H. Pope. "Oaths" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. 1962. 3:576). This ritual imagery implied the Lord's warning that a covenant-breaking Israel might fall victim to the punishing sword. For ancient Israel this warning proved to be more than just metaphorically valid.

In the scriptures there are other words and phrases that are used synonymously with "covenant" and "entering into covenants." Examples include the term "word" and the phrase "obey my word" (Numbers 30:2; 1 Chronicles 16:15; Psalm 105:8). Phrases such as "take upon us the name of Christ" (Alma 46:18), "keeping the commandments" (Alma 48:15), and "maintenance of the sacred word of God" (Alma 44:5) are all the scriptural equivalents of entering into a covenant with the Lord. For further discussion of covenants in the Lord's earthly kingdom, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 3, *Covenants and Covenant Making*.

10 That inasmuch as ye do this, glory shall be added to the kingdom which ye have received. Inasmuch as ye do it not, it shall be taken, even that which ye have received.

**11 Purge ye out the iniquity which is among you; sanctify yourselves before me;
12 And if ye desire the glories of the kingdom, appoint ye my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and uphold him before me by the prayer of faith.**

verse 12 "appoint ye my servant Joseph Smith, Jun." This is a command for the Church to "provide" for Joseph's temporal support (see verse 13). Larry E. Dahl explains: "*Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* and modern dictionaries agree that one of the meanings of the word *appoint* is to 'furnish; equip with

things necessary.’ That seems to be the intent of these verses. Joseph Smith needed, in addition to a house, the faith and prayers of church members, and provisions of ‘food and raiment’ so that he could accomplish what the Lord had commanded him to do” (*Joseph Smith Translation and the Doctrine and Covenants*, 111).

“uphold him before me by the prayer of faith” Daily prayer for church leaders ought to be part of every saint’s spiritual life “if ye desire the glories of the kingdom.” But the expression “prayer of faith” (emphasis added) implies more than simple prayer. It requires the prayerful individual to get up off his or her knees and work to do whatever they can to support the leader.

13 And again, I say unto you, that if ye desire the mysteries of the kingdom, provide for him food and raiment, and whatsoever thing he needeth to accomplish the work wherewith I have commanded him;

verse 13 “if ye desire the mysteries of the kingdom” Providing Joseph with the necessary support would free him to provide the saints with revelations, scriptures (such as working on the JST), commandments, etc.

14 And if ye do it not he shall remain unto them that have received him, that I may reserve unto myself a pure people before me.

verse 14 Sacrifice does bring forth the blessings of heaven, and those who supported Joseph did aid materially in the establishment of Zion, while those who neglect this duty are not worthy of Zion. Though many of the Kirtland Saints sacrificed much for Zion, in the long run and as a group they failed to keep this commandment of the Lord. Consequently, the blessings they and the Church after them might have received through Joseph, had he not been forced to stop work on the JST in order to support his family, were never received (*HC*, 136-37). This verse also implies the threat of excommunication or disfellowship for those members not worthy of Zion.

15 Again I say, hearken ye elders of my church, whom I have appointed: Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit;

verse 15 “hearken ye elders of my church, whom I have appointed: Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach” The world has neither the power nor the knowledge to instruct the Latter-day Saints in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Babylon cannot instruct Zion in the things of God. God has called us to teach them. We are the teachers of the world.

16 And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power, that ye may give even as I have spoken.

verse 16 The term “endowed with power” seems to refer to those ordinances which will later be received in the Kirtland Temple and the keys of the priesthood which will be restored there.

17 Hearken ye, for, behold, the great day of the Lord is nigh at hand.

verse 17 The Savior’s second coming in glory is near.

18 For the day cometh that the Lord shall utter his voice out of heaven; the heavens shall shake and the earth shall tremble, and the trump of God shall sound both long and loud, and shall say to the sleeping nations: Ye saints arise and live; ye sinners stay and sleep until I shall call again.

verse 18 This verse and the next refer to the Lord’s second coming.

“the trump of God shall sound both long and loud” The horn or trumpet that will blow to signal the return of Christ and the resurrection of the just (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Alma 29:1).

“Ye saints arise and live” At the Lord’s second coming, those who have been born again and sanctified by the gospel covenant will be resurrected to receive the Lord in their glorified flesh. If the reader wishes to review the complete sequence of the resurrection, see the introductory commentary for Alma 40:16-20.

19 Wherefore gird up your loins lest ye be found among the wicked.

verse 19 “gird up your loins” See the commentary for D&C 36:8.

20 Lift up your voices and spare not. Call upon the nations to repent, both old and young, both bond and free, saying: Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord;

verse 20 This dispensation is known as the times of the Gentiles when the gospel will be preached to all the nations of the earth, sparing none. Toward the end of this dispensation, the Gentiles will have had their chance, and the times of the Gentiles will end. Then the gospel will be taken primarily to covenant Israel. Thus, in this dispensation, the first (covenant Israel) will be last (to receive the gospel).

21 For if I, who am a man, do lift up my voice and call upon you to repent, and ye hate me, what will ye say when the day cometh when the thunders shall utter their voices from the ends of the earth, speaking to the ears of all that live, saying—Repent, and prepare for the great day of the Lord?

verse 21 This verse is a continuation of the previous verse (note the colon following the word *saying* in verse 20). Thus, the speaker here is not the Lord, but rather the collective missionaries of the latter-day Church.

In effect, the missionaries say, “If you hate and reject me, a mere mortal, for saying these things, what will you do when God himself says them to you with the voice of overwhelming natural disasters until you either repent or die?”

22 Yea, and again, when the lightnings shall streak forth from the east unto the west, and shall utter forth their voices unto all that live, and make the ears of all tingle that hear, saying these words—Repent ye, for the great day of the Lord is come?

23 And again, the Lord shall utter his voice out of heaven, saying: Hearken, O ye nations of the earth, and hear the words of that God who made you.

24 O, ye nations of the earth, how often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!

verse 24 The Lord’s desire to gather the Gentile nations is just as strong as his desire to gather Israel (see Matthew 23:37).

25 How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trump, and by the voice of judgment, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!

verses 17-25 The Lord will use all kinds of natural phenomena to convince the people of the earth to repent and prepare for his second coming. Speaking of this method of warning the people of earth, Brigham Young said:

Do you think there is calamity abroad now among the people? Not much. All we have yet heard and all we have experienced is scarcely a preface to the sermon that is going to be preached. When the testimony of the elders ceases to be given, and the Lord says to them, “Come home; I will now preach my own sermons to the nations of the earth,” all you now know can scarcely be called a preface to the sermon that will be preached with fire and sword, tempests, earthquakes, hail, rain, thunders and lightnings, and fearful destruction. . . . You will hear of magnificent cities, now idolized by the people, sinking in the earth, entombing the inhabitants. The sea will heave itself beyond its bounds, engulfing mighty cities. Famine will spread over the nations (*JD*, 8:123; see also *D&C* 88:88-92).

See *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 26, *Sign’s of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

26 Behold, the day has come, when the cup of the wrath of mine indignation is full.

verse 26 “the cup of the wrath of mine indignation is full” The Lord is fully ready to punish the wicked. The Lord’s wrath and indignation are neither wrong nor unjust. He metes out punishment to satisfy the demands of justice so that the wicked may be forgiven and eventually receive some degree of glory.

For those who have repented and come to the Savior, he has already drunk for us the bitter cup of God’s wrath—he has suffered the agony of the atonement. Those who will not repent must drink it themselves at some future time (D&C 19:16-19). What form does the Lord’s punishment take? It obviously results in suffering by those who receive it. Is this really *punishment* in the purest sense? Please remember that in God’s universe, there is nothing of suffering that is purely punitive. All suffering experienced by any individual as the result of God’s justice is inevitably for the eternal betterment of that individual.

27 Behold, verily I say unto you, that these are the words of the Lord your God.

28 Wherefore, labor ye, labor ye in my vineyard for the last time—for the last time call upon the inhabitants of the earth.

29 For in mine own due time will I come upon the earth in judgment, and my people shall be redeemed and shall reign with me on earth.

verse 29 “in mine own due time” No one knows the time of his coming (Matthew 24:36; D&C 49:7), but when he comes, he will come unexpectedly (“quickly”).

30 For the great Millennium, of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come.

31 For Satan shall be bound, and when he is loosed again he shall only reign for a little season, and then cometh the end of the earth.

verse 31 Apparently Satan’s being bound during the Millennium is the result of two separate phenomena:

1. Satan will actually be restrained by the power of God. God will mandate that Satan’s freedoms be limited. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught concerning the binding of Satan: “There are many among us who teach that the binding of Satan will be merely the binding which those dwelling on the earth will place upon him by their refusal to hear his enticings. This is not so. He will not have the privilege during that period of time to tempt any man” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:192).

Apparently, Satan will be bound, at least in part, by priesthood power that will cast him out and will not allow him the exercise of any influence.

2. The Lord will destroy telestial wickedness from off the earth, and thus there will not be people on the earth who will respond to his promptings. The prophet Nephi wrote, “Because of the righteousness of his [the Lord’s] people, Satan has no power;

wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth” (1 Nephi 22:26).

President George Q. Cannon added further insight to divine limitations to be placed upon Satan:

We talk about Satan’s being bound. Satan will be bound by the power of God; but he will be bound also by the determination of the people of God not to listen to him, not to be governed by him. The Lord will not bind him and take his power from the earth while there are men and women willing to be governed by him. That is contrary to the plan of salvation. To deprive men of their agency is contrary to the purposes of our God. . . .

Satan only gains power over man through man’s exercise of his own agency; and when Satan shall be bound, as the Lord says he will be for a thousand years, one of the great powers that will help bring this to pass will be man’s agency. The Lord has never forced men against their will to obey him. He never will do so. If Satan, therefore, has power with man, it is because man yields to his influence. . . .

The time is not far distant when great judgments will be poured out upon the wicked inhabitants of the earth. Every prophet who has looked forward to our day has seen and predicted that the wicked would be destroyed. Their destruction means the destruction of Satan’s power [including the literal destruction of the wicked]. The righteous will be left, and because of their righteousness the Lord will have mercy upon them; they, exercising their agency in the right direction, will bring down his blessings upon them to such an extent that Satan will be bound (*Gospel Truth*, 1:86-87).

“when he is loosed again he shall only reign for a little season” When the Millennium is over, Satan will be allowed once more to tempt mortals upon the earth and will have influence again for a short time. We may assume that there will appear on the earth mortals who are inclined to respond to his ministrations. There will then be a great last battle, sometimes called the battle of Gog and Magog (see Revelation 20:8) or the battle of the great God (see D&C 88:114), in which Satan and all his servants will be defeated forever. Then the earth will be cleansed once again and will go through a process similar to death and resurrection, at the end of which it will be made a celestial world to be inhabited by all those who lived upon it who are worthy of the celestial kingdom.

“and then cometh the end of the earth” Note, again, that at the onset of the Millennium will come the “end of the *world*.” And at the end of the Millennium will come the “end of the *earth*.”

32 And he that liveth in righteousness shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and the earth shall pass away so as by fire.

verse 32 “changed in the twinkling of an eye” The “twinkling of an eye” is a blink. When righteous mortals die during the Millennium, they will simply pass from mortality to a resurrected state in the twinkling of an eye.

“the earth shall pass away so as by fire” At the end of the Millennium, the earth will also “die” and be melted down, so to speak (see 2 Peter 3:10-11), just as raw materials are melted down and made pure in the refiner’s fire. The earth will then be “resurrected” as a pure, celestial world.

33 And the wicked shall go away into unquenchable fire, and their end no man knoweth on earth, nor ever shall know, until they come before me in judgment.

verse 33 The “wicked” here are those who are “filthy still” at the resurrection of the unjust after the end of the Millennium. These are the ones who still refuse to repent even after suffering hell in the spirit world. They will not receive any degree of glory. They are the sons of perdition (see D&C 76:31-38, 43-48).

34 Hearken ye to these words. Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Treasure these things up in your hearts, and let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds.

verse 34 “let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds” The word “solemnity” means something very serious or sublimely important. The “solemnities of eternity” are the facts of our eternal life. The Lord counsels the saints to let the serious things of eternity, the Lord’s covenants, the great blessings that will be given the faithful, and all matters of a spiritual nature rest on their minds. How marvelous it would be if we would be continually guided by an eternal perspective!

35 Be sober. Keep all my commandments. Even so. Amen.

Section 44 Conference of June 1831

In February 1831 the Lord gave this revelation, and in it he commands that an important conference of the elders of the Church be held. No date for the conference is actually set in the revelation, but Joseph is told to set the date. Since the organization of the Church, three major conferences of the elders had been held. The first was on June 9, 1830, the second on September 26, 1830, and the third on January 2, 1831. In D&C 20:61 the Lord had instructed the elders of the Church to meet in conference every three months.

Some church historians have suggested, on the evidence of John Whitmer's history, that a general conference was held in Kirtland on March 4, 1831. The original Whitmer manuscript, however, reads June 4, 1831, a date that was later changed to read March 4. No other evidence for a March conference exists, and in a letter to Hyrum dated March 3-4, Joseph mentioned the Lord's commandment that the elders gather to Kirtland, but he said nothing about a conference then in progress (Dean Jesebe, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 230-31).

This conference was convened on June 3, 1831, and did turn out to be one of the great conferences during which the office of high priest was revealed, and Joseph became a high priest. The location of Zion also was revealed (section 52), and the Lord called missionaries to go to Zion and help build up the New Jerusalem (also section 52).

By the end of February 1831, there were not enough Ohio saints to consecrate sufficient land to support all the new converts that would soon be coming to Kirtland expecting to receive stewardships. An obvious solution to this problem was to call the full-time missionaries from their various fields of labor and reassign them to the Kirtland area to increase the number of local converts with local resources to consecrate (see verses 1-4). Thus, instead of producing converts who left everything somewhere else to come to Kirtland and strain the meager resources there, the elders in Kirtland would find local converts who could provide additional resources for the gathering saints in Kirtland. The shortage of resources in Kirtland at that time was also one reason why many arriving eastern saints were sent on to Jackson County, Missouri (see Backman and Perkins, "United Under the Laws of the Celestial Kingdom," 173-77).

This intensified proselyting in the Kirtland area did have the desired effect of increasing the amount of land and other resources available to the bishop's storehouse. Thus, the Church was strengthened in Kirtland and more eastern saints were able to gather there.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants, it is expedient in me that the elders of my church should be called together, from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, by letter or some other way.

verse 1 “my servants” This revelation was directed to Joseph and Sidney rather than to the elders or to the Church. The Lord is instructing them on how to meet the problems of the Church.

“it is expedient in me that the elders of my church should be called together, from the east and from the west” The commanded conference of elders was to include the New York saints who were still in New York at this time, the Kirtland saints, and all the elders previously sent out on missions to various parts of the country. Therefore it would be necessary to hold the conference in the spring after the New York saints had a chance to gather to Ohio and the missionaries could be contacted and called to Kirtland.

President David O. McKay explained the purposes of church conferences:

Reference to the Doctrine and Covenants will disclose the fact that there are four principal purposes for holding conferences of the Church: (1) to transact current church business [D&C 20:62], (2) to hear reports and general church statistics [D&C 73:2], (3) to “approve of those names which I the Lord have appointed, or to disapprove of them” [D&C 124:144], and (4) to worship the Lord in sincerity and reverence, and to give and to receive encouragement, exhortation, and instruction” [D&C 58:56; 72:7] (CR, October 1938, 130-31).

2 And it shall come to pass, that inasmuch as they are faithful, and exercise faith in me, I will pour out my Spirit upon them in the day that they assemble themselves together.

verse 2 Here is yet another benefit the saints enjoy when they meet in conference. The Spirit is poured out upon them and they are instructed and edified by that Spirit.

3 And it shall come to pass that they shall go forth into the regions round about, and preach repentance unto the people.

verse 3 To preach “repentance” is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is to teach of Christ’s atonement and resurrection and their implications in the eternal lives of investigators. The Lord commands that the missionaries go forth in the “regions round about”—the Kirtland area.

4 And many shall be converted, insomuch that ye shall obtain power to organize yourselves according to the laws of man;

verse 4 “many shall be converted” The population of the Church in Ohio, and particularly in Kirtland, increased roughly 50 to 100 percent annually between 1830 and 1838 (see Backman, *The Heavens Resound*, 140).

5 That your enemies may not have power over you; that you may be preserved in all things; that you may be enabled to keep my laws; that every bond may be broken wherewith the enemy seeketh to destroy my people.

verses 4-5 “That your enemies may not have power over you” President Joseph F. Smith wrote:

When the Lord restored the gospel, the spirit of gathering came with it. The Lord commanded the people to gather together, and that they should not only be organized as a church, but that they should be organized under the laws of the land, so that they might not be helpless and dependent and without influence or power; but that by means of united effort and faith they should become a power for the accomplishment of righteousness in the earth (*CR*, April 1900, 47).

It was important for the young Church to avoid lawsuits and other forms of legal harassment. The law in Ohio at that time required any religious society, that desired to be incorporated so that they could legally own property as a church and perform all the functions of a church, to register the name of their church and the names of their trustees with the clerk of common pleas. In this law, no recognition was given to a central organization, but each congregation in each community was required to register within their own county. Each congregation had to have at least twenty members in order for them to be able to incorporate. Therefore, it was important for the Church to have at least that many in each congregation. If they did not qualify, they would be denied authority to perform marriages, hold tax-free property, and have their own cemetery, etc.

One might also read into this counsel from the Lord a general admonition to the elders of the Church to obey the laws of the land as they went about preaching, “that your enemies may not have power over you.”

“that you may be enabled to keep my laws” This phrase refers to the law of the Church contained in section 42.

6 Behold, I say unto you, that ye must visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief, that they may be kept until all things may be done according to my law which ye have received. Amen.

verse 6 “that they may be kept until all things may be done according to my law which ye have received” Joseph and Sidney had to make certain that the poor were taken care of until such time as the law of the Church with its law of consecration and stewardship of property could be fully implemented among the saints for that same purpose.

President George Q. Cannon recorded the following insight into the character of the Prophet Joseph:

At no time during the prophet’s career did the care of the poor escape his attention or become a matter of indifference to him. He was a man of large

benevolence, and his sympathies were quickly aroused by any tale of sorrow or appeal for relief. In the most busy and trying periods of his life those who went to him for counsel in their troubles, always found him willing to listen, and they were sure to receive encouragement and assistance. To extend comfort to the bruised spirit, and to help the needy and distressed appeared a constant pleasure to him. His hospitality, also, was a marked feature in his character. His house was always open to entertain the stranger. One of the most cherished recollections of many of the old members of the Church is the kindness with which they were treated by “Brother Joseph,” and the warm welcome he gave them to his house upon their arrival at Kirtland and other places where he lived (*Life of Joseph Smith*, 109-10).

Brief Historical Setting

1831 March

In March 1831, as Joseph was working on the inspired revision of the Bible, he came to Matthew 24, the great discourse given on the Mount of Olives by Jesus after his disciples had asked him about his second coming and the “end of the world.” It seems likely that Joseph’s pondering these verses was the trigger for receiving a revelation in March about events to transpire in the future [**D&C 45 - The Second Coming of the Lord**].

Also in March, the Lord revealed guidance to Joseph and the Church regarding the question of whether nonmembers should be allowed to attend sacrament meetings. The Lord also taught the saints how to discern valid gifts of the Spirit from manifestations of evil spirits [**D&C 46 - Gifts of the Spirit**].

Section 45 The Second Coming of the Lord

The arrival of the Prophet Joseph in Kirtland marked the beginning of a period of rapid growth in the membership of the Church. By early June 1831 the Church had grown to two thousand in number. Civic leaders, priests, newspaper editors, and parishioners joined together in an effort to stop the conversion of their neighbors to the new religion. In his history the prophet recorded, “Many false reports, lies, and foolish stories, were published in the newspapers, and circulated in every direction, to prevent people from investigating the work, or embracing the faith” (*HC*, 1:158). During these trying times of slander and abuse, the Lord blessed the saints with revelations of comfort, peace and assurance. One of these revelations was section 45, of which the prophet wrote, “To the joy of the saints who had to struggle against every thing that prejudice and wickedness could invent, I received the following: [D&C 45]” (*Ibid.*). Joseph received section 45 on March 7, 1831.

At the time section 45 was received, Joseph Smith had been in Kirtland scarcely more than a month, and the large majority of the New York saints were still in New York, not due to arrive in Kirtland for weeks.

In 1831, as now, the exact circumstances and details of the second coming of Christ generated a lot of speculation, much of it unhealthy, among the saints. In Kirtland during this period, counterfeit spiritual phenomena and false spirits accompanied extreme doctrinal speculations about the second coming and were greatly troubling to the Church. Section 45 may have been given in part to answer some of the questions of the members and to quiet down the extreme speculations and doctrinal hysteria in which some were indulging.

Just three days before his crucifixion, Jesus and his disciples left the temple and climbed the Mount of Olives, where they had a dramatic view of the temple and Jerusalem. Here his disciples asked the Lord about his second coming in glory. They asked, “When shall these things be . . . and what is the sign of thy coming?” (*JS-M* 1:4). His lengthy and detailed answer provides one of the most important revelations on the signs of the times and of the second coming. Known as the Olivet discourse because it was given on the Mount of Olives, the full discourse is given in Matthew 24 and 25. Joseph Smith’s inspired corrections of the Olivet discourse are so significant that they have been included in the Pearl of Great Price (*Joseph Smith-Matthew*). Mark and Luke also recorded portions of the discourse, though not as fully as did Matthew (see Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36). In response to his disciples’ questions the Lord spoke of the temple in Jerusalem in the latter days, the last days of the world, and of the signs that would precede his second coming.

Section 45 expands on Matthew’s account, as the Lord revealed to his latter-day Church additional insights concerning the subjects of his Olivet discourse. Section 45 is

one of the most powerful views into the future that is available in all of our recorded scripture.

As one reads section 45, it is sometimes difficult to know to whom the Lord is speaking and to what period of time he is referring. Thus for clarification the verse commentary will serve to orient the reader to the Lord's audience.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 45 The Second Coming of the Lord

D&C 45:3-5 Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.

D&C 45:36-39 Parable of the fig tree.

D&C 45:51-53 These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

verses 1-10 Introduction and salutation from the Lord

1 Hearken, O ye people of my church, to whom the kingdom has been given; hearken ye and give ear to him who laid the foundation of the earth, who made the heavens and all the hosts thereof, and by whom all things were made which live, and move, and have a being.

verse 1 “Hearken, O ye people of my church” “hearken ye and give ear”

The Lord's injunction for his people to listen is repeated ten times in the first fifteen verses of section 45. This strong emphasis on hearing and receiving this information identifies section 45 to be of major doctrinal importance to the Church, both in 1831 and today.

2 And again I say, hearken unto my voice, lest death shall overtake you; in an hour when ye think not the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved.

verse 2 “lest death shall overtake you”

Those who fail to heed the Lord's warning voice run the risk of being found unredeemed from sin when the Lord returns. Also, none of us is getting out of this mortal life alive. The end of the world comes every day for somebody, and not in the too distant future for all of us. When our last day arrives we will not be spared the pains of hell if our souls are not yet saved.

“in an hour when ye think not the summer shall be past” *Summer* is the time to labor and to prepare a harvest with which one may survive the winter. President Joseph Fielding Smith noted:

In all ages of the world it has been the peculiar belief of men that the sayings of the prophets were to be fulfilled in times still future. That is true of the people today. We have had ample warning of the nearness of the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. . . . In this revelation [section 45] we are given the warning that the summer is passing and if we are heedless of the warning we will find the summer past, the harvest ended and our souls not saved. While no man knows the day or the hour, yet if we are taken unawares, we will be without excuse for the signs are ample and we now see them being fulfilled (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:195).

3 Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—

verse 3 Unless our Savior pleads our case, we will not be exalted. He defends us, not by citing our merits, not by arguing our righteous deeds, but by arguing from his position as Savior of the world which he merits by virtue of his awful and selfless sacrifice. He pleads for us for *his sake*. It is as if he were saying to those who enforce the demands of justice, “Show mercy to him not for him, but for me.” He pleads for those who accept and enter into his everlasting covenant and endure in it and for those who would have had they had the opportunity (D&C 137:5-9).

4 Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

verse 4 **“him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified”** In some way we don’t fully understand, when each of us is exalted, we add to the glory—the light and spiritual assets—of the Father (and the Son).

5 Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.

verse 5 **“Father, spare these my brethren”** The Savior pleads for each of his people (members of his earthly kingdom) to be spared from the demands of the law of justice which dictate that no one who has sinned (“no unclean thing”) can enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Nephi 15:34; Alma 11:37).

verses 3-5 These verses may be used as evidence that the Father is the enforcer of the demands of justice. Certainly the Father is the epitome, essence, and personification of justice. He is by his very nature just. It is not in his nature to be otherwise. The Father may exercise his influence in enforcing the law of justice. These verses support this possibility. Here, the Son is pleading our case before the Father.

There is, however, evidence to suggest that it is not the Father who is the enforcer of justice. See a discussion of this interesting topic in “Who or What Enforces the Law of Justice?” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 12, *The Law of Justice*.

6 Hearken, O ye people of my church, and ye elders listen together, and hear my voice while it is called today, and harden not your hearts;

verse 6 “while it is called today” This phrase refers to this dispensation from the restoration of the gospel to the second coming of the Lord (see D&C 65:23). For each of us who live in this dispensation, this phrase also refers to the period between our mortal birth and our resurrection. Thus, it includes the time we spend on earth and in the world of spirits. Other scriptural phrases that refer to this same period of time include “today” and “the day of this life.” Hence, “tomorrow” begins at the resurrection, after which change is no longer possible, and when we enter into a “new day” of our spiritual existence. “Yesterday” can also be understood in reference to the period of our premortal life.

7 For verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world—a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

verse 7 “I am Alpha and Omega” See the commentary for D&C 19:1.

“a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not”

The Savior’s light shines throughout the universe. It even shines on the wicked and unworthy. But they “comprehendeth it not”—they do not perceive or benefit from it. It is as though the light does not shine on them. For a more thorough discussion of the light of Christ, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15, *The Concept of Light*.

8 I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not; but unto as many as received me gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God; and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life.

verse 8 “I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not” This phrase refers to the children of the covenant that Jehovah, or Christ, made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or Israel—particularly those belonging to Jesus’s own tribe of Judah. Jesus refers here to the generation of Jews who rejected him.

Even though the Jews did not receive him, we should not say that they were responsible for his crucifixion. Not all, or even most, of the Jews of Jesus’s day shared responsibility for that crime, nor does any Jew born after that time. To argue that subsequent generations of Jews are guilty of the blood of Christ is to suppose some sort of “original sin” or “inherited guilt” passed from parents to their children, which idea, of course, is ludicrous.

“unto as many as received me gave I power” Those Jews in Jesus’s day who received him and his teachings were given the gospel, the priesthood, the new and everlasting covenant, and the fulness of gospel ordinances.

9 And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me.

verse 9 “I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world” This phrase refers to the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this latter day.

“to be a standard for my people” The word *standard* is a synonym for an *ensign* (compare D&C 98:34; 105:39). Both terms refer to a sign, banner, flag, emblem, or other object that can be raised or held aloft to help troops, followers, disciples, or members gather or rally to the correct side or the correct place, or to help keep them oriented and in their proper place once they have been organized.

Ultimately, Jesus Christ himself, raised up on the cross in his sacrificial role as the Lamb of God, is the ensign to the nations, who will gather the faithful to himself and keep them oriented and in their right place in Zion once they have been gathered.

Today the ensign raised up to the nations in the latter days is his restored gospel, his everlasting covenant, his Zion. To this latter-day ensign the Gentiles will gather, and in so doing they will also gather to the Christ who was crucified and raised up on the cross—the ultimate ensign. It is appropriate that the church’s publication most directly responsible for proclaiming the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to the world is appropriately called the *Ensign*.

“and for the Gentiles to seek to it” We have mentioned previously that our dispensation begins with the times of the Gentiles (see verse 28)—that period when the gospel is taken and taught first to the Gentiles, and then later to the Jews—just as the preceding dispensation began with the gospel’s being taken first to the Jews, and then also to the Gentiles (see 1 Nephi 13:42). The Gentiles are the inhabitants of all the nations of the earth, from Albania to Zimbabwe, every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Preaching the gospel to all the world in this manner is a work primarily reserved for our latter-day dispensation.

“to be a messenger before my face” Just as John the Baptist was an Elias who prepared the way for Christ, so the latter-day Church prepares the way for the millennial kingdom of God that will be established at the second coming of Christ.

10 Wherefore, come ye unto it, and with him that cometh I will reason as with men in days of old, and I will show unto you my strong reasoning.

verse 10 “I will reason as with men in days of old” This phrase carries with it the idea that Christ will “reason with” or try to convince men that his covenant and gospel are on the earth and comprise our only way home—back to his presence.

verses 11-14 These verses contain a teaching example involving Enoch. In connection with the Lord's coming there will be a cleansing of wickedness and a destruction of the wicked. Enoch escaped wickedness by living righteously and being translated. Thus if one lives as righteously, one may escape destruction at the Lord's coming.

11 Wherefore, hearken ye together and let me show unto you even my wisdom—the wisdom of him whom ye say is the God of Enoch, and his brethren,

verse 11 “let my show unto you even my wisdom—the wisdom of him whom ye say is the God of Enoch” At the time this revelation was received, the prophet Joseph had already received the revelation now known as Moses 6-7, the book of Enoch. The Lord seems to be pointing out that Enoch and his people created a Zion society and were taken to heaven by the same Lord who is now speaking and by the same celestial principles that are now being revealed to the people. The Lord is just as able to lead us to Zion, and then to heaven, today as he was able to lead Enoch and his people to Zion, and then to heaven, in their day, and he will do so if members of the Church will keep his commandments.

12 Who were separated from the earth, and were received unto myself—a city reserved until a day of righteousness shall come—a day which was sought for by all holy men, and they found it not because of wickedness and abominations;

verse 12 “Who were separated from the earth, and were received unto myself” According to Moses 7:21, the Zion of Enoch and its people were taken physically off the earth before the Flood, just as the future inhabitants of Zion will be taken physically off the earth before the burning (see D&C 88:96-98; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Nephi 13:37). Joseph Smith explained that the people of Enoch were not taken to the direct presence of God, but were translated to a terrestrial order (*TPJS*, 170). This would be roughly the same level of glory as found in Eden before the fall and which will exist during the Millennium after the earth receives its paradisiacal glory (see Articles of Faith 1:10, where “paradisiacal” refers to a state like Eden). Joseph further stated that God “appointed unto him [Enoch] a ministry unto terrestrial bodies,” and that Enoch's saints are “held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets” (*HC*, 4:209-210).

“a city reserved until a day of righteousness shall come” When this earth has been raised to a terrestrial glory during the Millennium, then the Zion of Enoch shall be physically returned to the earth (see D&C 133:24; Moses 7:63).

“a day which was sought for by all holy men, and they found it not because of wickedness and abominations” After recording that Enoch was translated, Paul says that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed after them (they obviously knew

what had taken place as pertaining to the people of Melchizedek and others) “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:5-10), that is, they “sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken” (JST, Genesis 14:34). But as Paul said, and as the Lord confirms in this verse, even these “holy men . . . found it not [it was not available to the people of the earth] because of wickedness and abominations” (D&C 45:11-12; Hebrews 11:11-16; *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., 804-05).

13 And confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;

verse 13 “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” This phrase is commonly found in scripture (see Hebrews 11:13-16; 1 Peter 2:11; see also Ephesians 2:19). In the Bible, the word *stranger* most often refers to someone who lives in a land though his citizenship is somewhere else. A pilgrim is someone on a journey—just passing through. Those who look for the establishment of righteousness upon the earth and long to be citizens of Christ’s kingdom when he returns must not feel too much at home in this telestial or fallen world. By virtue of Jesus Christ and the covenants we have made with him, we are already citizens of a better country than any now found upon the earth. In this telestial realm we are pilgrims just passing through—citizens of a better world forced to wait and dwell in Babylon until Zion is established.

In this particular verse those holy men, who longed for a better world, readily, and doubtless regretfully, confessed that they themselves were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” That is, they regretted that the earth was not more righteous, so that they would not be “strangers and pilgrims.”

14 But obtained a promise that they should find it and see it in their flesh.

verse 14 This promise that the City of Zion shall return, and that holy men of all ages, in their resurrected state, shall dwell therein, will have millennial fulfillment. Of that glorious day, the Lord said unto Enoch: “Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest” (Moses 7:63-64).

In giving revealed direction to Noah, the Lord said: “Remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch, which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the first-born shall come down out of heaven, and

possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch” (JST, Genesis 9:21-23). All who have received the fulness of the gospel and its ordinances have received this same promise made to the patriarchs. We are the “children of the promise” made to the fathers.

verses 15-16a (to the colon) The Lord is addressing the saints in 1831.

15 Wherefore, hearken and I will reason with you, and I will speak unto you and prophesy, as unto men in days of old.

verse 15 “I will speak unto you and prophesy, as unto men in days of old”

God is willing to give us the same covenant promises and the same gospel that he gave to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and so on. If we are faithful to our covenants, we will, according to the promises of God, be like the ancient saints. That is, we will be patriarchs (and matriarchs) of an innumerable posterity in a glorious promised land, the celestial kingdom. This promise is guaranteed to us by the same gospel covenants that were given our ancient fathers. God is willing, and even anxious, to deal with each of us as he dealt with Adam and Eve or with Abraham and Sarah. All that was ever available to them is available to us through the restoration of the gospel. Thus, God is the same in his dealings with human beings yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

16a And I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh, and spake unto them, saying:

verse 16a “I will show it plainly” Beginning with this verse, the Lord begins to tell the latter-day Church what he told his ancient disciples when they asked him about the details of his second coming. The “it” the Lord will show us is the “day of righteousness” (verse 12) that will begin with his return to the earth at his second coming.

verses 16b-59 He is now speaking to his disciples on the Mount of Olives. This quotation begins following the colon which follows the word *saying* and extends to the end of verse 59, excepting the editorial comment in verse 34 and the first five words of verse 35 (compare JS-M in the Pearl of Great Price).

16b As ye have asked of me concerning the signs of my coming, in the day when I shall come in my glory in the clouds of heaven, to fulfil the promises that I have made unto your fathers,

verse 16b The Lord’s citation of the Olivet discourse, the same as is contained in Matthew 24 and 25 and in Joseph Smith–Matthew, begins in this verse with the

words “As ye have asked of me.” The Savior interrupts the quotation after verse 33 to make an explanatory comment (which includes verse 34 and the first five words of verse 35) but continues it in verse 35 with “Be not troubled.” He seems to end the account at the end of verse 59 and begins speaking directly to Joseph Smith in verse 60.

“in the clouds of heaven” This phrase is a reference to the prophecy in Daniel 7:13, where Daniel saw in a dream the end of the world and the second coming of Christ.

“to fulfil the promises that I have made unto your fathers” All the promises of the gospel will be fulfilled for the righteous at their glorious resurrection, which takes place at the Lord’s second coming.

17 For as ye have looked upon the long absence of your spirits from your bodies to be a bondage, I will show unto you how the day of redemption shall come, and also the restoration of the scattered Israel.

verses 16-17 “ye have looked upon the long absence of your spirits from your bodies to be a bondage” By the time of the Lord’s second coming, the righteous dead, including many of Jesus’s ancient disciples, will look upon their time in the spirit world without their bodies as a severe limitation (see also D&C 138:50). While spirits in paradise are without pain, they cannot accomplish many things that can be done only with a body. A body of flesh and bones is not, as in Greek philosophical thought, a limitation. Rather, it is an enabling factor. It is ability, potency, and power, and we will dearly miss its use in the spirit world where we will be temporarily deprived of that means to effect, to create, and to accomplish.

“the day of redemption” This phrase refers to the day when we actually return to our physical bodies and receive celestial, terrestrial, or telestial glory. This redemption or salvation puts us, as Joseph Smith taught, beyond the reach of all of our enemies which are death, hell, and the devil (see the commentary for 2 Nephi 28:23).

“the restoration of the scattered Israel” The Lord’s apostles were anxious to know the signs of the Lord’s second coming because they understood that a major resurrection of the righteous would occur at that time. They were anxious to know how long they would have to wait after their deaths until their resurrection. We actually know that the resurrection of the righteous, the “morning of the first resurrection,” begins at the time of the Savior’s resurrection. While some of the righteous dead may be resurrected between the Savior’s resurrection and his second coming, many of the righteous dead will have to wait until his coming just prior to the Millennium to be resurrected. His apostles were also aware that the Lord’s second coming would not occur until after the final gathering of Israel, “the restoration of the scattered Israel.”

verses 18-24 The Lord is speaking to his disciples about events that would happen in their own day. These include the tribulations that will fall upon Jerusalem and its people in the first century AD. We now know that all of these prophecies were all fulfilled with the events surrounding the devastating Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

18 And now ye behold this temple which is in Jerusalem, which ye call the house of God, and your enemies say that this house shall never fall.

19 But, verily I say unto you, that desolation shall come upon this generation as a thief in the night, and this people shall be destroyed and scattered among all nations.

verse 19 “desolation shall come upon this generation” A place is made desolate by being turned into a wasteland without inhabitants. A person is made desolate by being left alone without companions or comfort. The people of “this generation,” that is, the Jews of the second half of the first century, will be made desolate as individuals, and their homes and cities will become desolate places. An incredibly large number of Jews will die (Josephus said it was over a million—Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 450), and many of the remainder will be driven out or sold as slaves into all corners of the world. Their temple will be destroyed so thoroughly that not one stone would be left standing upon another (see verse 20).

“this people shall be destroyed” In AD 68, the Roman general Vespasian and his son Titus took a large Roman army into Israel to subdue rebellious Judah. In AD 70 Titus surrounded Jerusalem and placed it under siege. Soon the starvation of the Jews inside the walls of Jerusalem began. Citizens of Jerusalem who ventured outside the walls to search for roots to eat, if seized, were crucified by the Roman soldiers. Sometimes hundreds of Jews hanging on crosses could be seen from the city walls. A trench was dug around the city in order to make its isolation complete. Prisoners of war were cut open, while still alive, to enable soldiers to search their bodies for gold which they might have swallowed. Six hundred thousand persons died within the walls, and the dead bodies, too numerous to be buried, were left in the houses. The Zealots, a fanatical sect whose members maintained that God would save them at the last moment, went about murdering and urging the people to resistance. Within the walls of the Holy City, rival political factions stole the possessions of citizens and the food from the mouths of women and children. Pressed by the famine, mothers ate their babies. In their madness, the political gangs fought and killed each other for control of the city and even burned each other’s food supplies, all while the common enemy, the Romans, waited outside the walls for the inevitable (*Ibid.*, 387-401, 416-17). Even Titus was sick at heart at the daily horrors he witnessed or heard about. At length the temple became a fort. Titus attacked it as such. A Roman soldier, contrary to order, set fire to it. After a while the scene was one of carnage and plunder. Six thousand Jews perished in the

flames. In this awful war more than a million and a half of the Jews perished, and many were sold into slavery.

Like the generation before the Flood, the generation of the Babylonian conquest, and the generations at the end of the Jaredite and Nephite societies, so was the generation of the first Jewish revolt. Because the people had become ripe in iniquity, the Spirit of the Lord had ceased striving with them, and Satan had full power over their hearts. Drunk with their own sins and with anger and rage, they could not be reached, would not repent, and were sealed up to destruction.

“and scattered among all nations” Just as the lost ten tribes had been taken into bondage and scattered eight hundred years previously, the Jews will be dispersed among every nation on earth. Today, the dispersed of Israel in many cases are not even aware of their Israelite heritage, having been absorbed ethnically and culturally by the nations in which they dwell.

20 And this temple which ye now see shall be thrown down that there shall not be left one stone upon another.

21 And it shall come to pass, that this generation of Jews shall not pass away until every desolation which I have told you concerning them shall come to pass.

verses 21 The Savior spoke the words of the Olivet discourse during the last week of his life. Jerusalem fell in AD 70. Thus, his promise “that this generation of Jews shall not pass away until every desolation . . . shall come to pass” was fulfilled. Some of the disciples who heard Jesus speak those words were still alive when the legions of Titus put the temple to the torch.

Actually, a “generation” is a notoriously difficult measure of time to define. Is a generation (1) twelve to sixteen years, the biological minimum; (2) twenty years, an average for birth of a firstborn; (3) thirty years, the average age difference between most parents and children; (4) seventy years, the biblical human life span; or (5) a hundred plus years, the length of the longest individual life within a generation? Whenever the Lord gives a warning that “this generation shall not pass away,” it is better to repent immediately and avoid the vagaries of the definition of a “generation.” There exists even the possibility, however, that “this generation” can even refer to this dispensation. When the term is used, for example, in D&C 84:4, it could mean anytime between the restoration of the gospel and the Lord’s second coming.

22 Ye say that ye know that the end of the world cometh; ye say also that ye know that the heavens and the earth shall pass away;

verse 22 “the end of the world” By now, the reader knows that the phrase “end of the world” coincides with the second coming of the Savior. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

The end of the world is the end of unrighteousness or of worldliness as we know it, and this will be brought about by “the destruction of the wicked.” When our world ends and the millennial era begins, there will be a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17-25; D&C 101:23-24). Lust, carnality, and sensuousness of every sort will cease, for it will be the end of the world (*Mormon Doctrine*, 848).

We thus learn that the scriptural phrase “end of the world” refers to the destruction of the earth at the Lord’s second coming in glory.

“the heavens and the earth shall pass away” The phrase “end of the earth” (in this case “the earth shall pass away”) refers to the destruction and celestialization of the earth at the end of the Millennium.

23 And in this ye say truly, for so it is; but these things which I have told you shall not pass away until all shall be fulfilled.

verse 23 “until all shall be fulfilled” The Lord has prophesied of the latter-day restoration of the gospel and the establishment of Zion, the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, and the destruction and scattering of the Jewish people. All of these will transpire before the second coming of the Lord.

24 And this I have told you concerning Jerusalem; and when that day shall come, shall a remnant be scattered among all nations;

verse 24 “shall a remnant be scattered among all nations” Those Jews who escape the great destructions of AD 70—“a remnant”—shall be scattered among all nations. In AD 70, the blood of the “Jews” would have been carried into the world mainly through those of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi.

verses 25-50 Prior to the Lord’s second coming there are to be given signs to warn the people of this advent and invite all to repent. These are called “signs of the times.” These will occur in such a way that only those who are watching for them in faith and have the Spirit will recognize them for what they are. Those who do not have the Spirit will rationalize them away and will find alternative explanations for the Lord’s signs. “And unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times” (D&C 68:11). Later on, the signs of the Lord’s coming will serve not only to warn, but also to punish and cleanse. For a relatively thorough discussion of the signs of the times, please see three chapters in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine* volume 3: chapter 24, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Introduction*, chapter 25, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Warn*, and chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

25 But they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

verse 25 The Jews shall be eventually gathered again, but they shall remain scattered until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled. It would appear that the gathering of the Jews will occur in two phases. There will be a physical gathering to the land of Palestine. This has already begun and is, in fact, well underway. This verse, however, refers to the priesthood gathering or the gathering of the Jews to the Savior and to his gospel and earthly kingdom. This will not commence until “the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

In order to understand the meaning of the phrase “the times of the Gentiles” or “days of the Gentiles” (2 Nephi 27:1), one must first understand the meaning of the concept of the “great Gentile nation.” Any nation that does not have the Messiah as its king is a Gentile nation. The “great Gentile nation” seen in prophecy is the United States of America. The “times of the Gentiles” is the latter-day period when only Gentile nations exist on the earth before the beginning of the Millennium. The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in that latter day will be in the hands of the missionaries of the great Gentile nation—the missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through the efforts of these “Gentile” missionaries, the gospel will be disseminated to those of the house of Israel wherever they may be found throughout the world. The “times of the Gentiles” will also be a time of universal apostasy and much wickedness. The “fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles” will be when the Lord Jesus Christ takes control of the secular government of the earth and there are no more “Gentile governments.” The actual fulfillment of the “times of the Gentiles” will apparently occur when the Lord, some time before his second coming in glory, sets his foot on the Mount of Olives to rescue the Jews from a great marauding force. The mount will cleave in twain. The Lord will show unto the Jews the wounds in his hands and in his feet. At that moment the Jews will realize that Jesus is the Messiah. The Jews will experience great remorse and will repent and accept Christ and his gospel and his Church. This event will mark the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles, and it will usher in the “day of the Jew.”

A simpler criterion for the end of the “times of the Gentiles” is when the Gentile nations of all the world have had their fair chance to accept or reject the gospel. At that time it will be taken from them and will go once again to the children of Judah

The Lord said, “But many [that are] first shall be last; and the last [shall be] first” (Matthew 19:30). During the days of the mortal Christ and his apostles the gospel was taken first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. In this dispensation the order is reversed. The gospel is taken first to the Gentiles and then to the Jews.

The question is often asked, “Has the gathering of the Jews to their promised land begun?” Just as the scattering of a people occurs because of apostasy, so does gathering occur because of repentance and acceptance of Christ and his gospel. By this criterion, and as discussed above, one might argue that the real prophesied gathering of the Jews has not yet commenced. Yet who can doubt that the spirit of

gathering has begun to move upon the Jews scattered throughout all parts of the world. Elder George Q. Morris said in conference:

This statement by a writer is very interesting: “Strangely enough when the State of Israel was reborn in 1948, it was a nation of 600,000, the same number which the Bible reports that Moses led out of bondage in Egypt. It now numbers some two million, the same number which it is said populated the ancient kingdom of Solomon, when Israel was in all its glory.” That is why we may now say that the Jews have returned to Palestine (CR, April 1960, 100-01).

26 And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.

verse 26 “in that day” This phrase refers to that day, time, or generation in which the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled (compare verse 30).

“wars and rumors of wars” As we approach the end of the times of the Gentiles and come closer to the second coming of Christ, social and political conditions on the earth will deteriorate and the earth will become a very dangerous place.

“men’s hearts shall fail them” People will become disheartened; there will be widespread despair, discouragement, despondency, and depression.

27 And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound.

verses 27 “the love of men shall wax cold” As we approach the end of the world, we can expect natural human affection to decrease outside of Zion. Practical evidences of this loss might include an increase in spouse and child abuse, an increase in divorce rates, an increase in abortion, and a decrease in parental responsibility toward their children. Traditional families will cease to be the norm or even to be valued.

28 And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel;

verse 28 “when the times of the Gentiles is come in” The Lord now goes back and summarizes again, in verses 28-30, the “times of the Gentiles.” They began with the restoration of the gospel. The expression “a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness” has reference to the restoration of the gospel.

29 But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.

verse 29 “they receive it not” This phrase has reference to the majority of the world, those “that sit in darkness.”

30 And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

verse 30 The times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled when the latter-day Church has completed its mission to take the gospel to every nation and when the majority of Gentiles have rejected it in favor of “the precepts of men.”

31 And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

verse 31 “an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land” It is probably fair to say that it is not possible to speculate as yet as to what this “desolating sickness” might be. A careful reading of this verse in association with the prior verse places this “overflowing scourge” in the generation in which the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled which has not happened as yet. Because of our experience, here on earth, with the devastating effects of AIDS, we can well imagine the occurrence of an awful plague.

Elsewhere in the Doctrine and Covenants we are taught that this scourge “shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty” (D&C 5:19), and that “it shall not be stayed until the Lord come” (D&C 97:23; see also D&C 84:97). Whatever the scourge is to be, the prophecy of its arrival cannot be fulfilled until after the gospel has been taught in every nation and to every kindred, tongue, and people, and the Gentiles have rejected it. Nor can this prophecy be deemed fulfilled until the sickness has covered the whole land and left it “desolated,” which our contemporary diseases have not yet done.

It is possible, I suppose, that the “scourge” spoken of could include such non-biological plagues as some form of wickedness, crime, war, or utter despair that will descend upon Babylon at the end (see Zechariah 14:12, 15, 18, in which the plague is said to consume the flesh of the wicked at the last day).

32 But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

verse 32 “But my disciples shall stand in holy places” Where is safety? in the latter-day Kingdom of God.

President Ezra Taft Benson defined “holy places”: “Holy men and holy women stand in holy places, and these holy places include our temples, our chapels, our homes, and the stakes of Zion, which are, as the Lord declares, ‘for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth’ (D&C 115:6)” (“Prepare Yourselves for the Great Day of the Lord,” 68).

33 And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another.

verse 33 “**there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations**” As the end approaches, disasters that leave the land desolate, such as earthquakes, famines, floods, droughts, storms, and wars, will increase. Yet, as in the days of Noah, the people will not listen, but will thirst all the more for wickedness and violence.

After this verse the Lord interrupts his citation of the Olivet discourse for an explanation contained in the next verse. He then resumes the discourse in verse 35 with “Be not troubled.”

34 And now, when I the Lord had spoken these words unto my disciples, they were troubled.

35 And I said unto them: Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled.

verse 35 “**Be not troubled**” Those saints who are obedient and prepared can well afford to be calm and serene in the coming turmoil.

“**ye may know**” The occurrence of all the promised curses and plagues upon the wicked will be a testimony to the faithful that the promised blessings will also come and that the end is very near.

36 And when the light shall begin to break forth, it shall be with them like unto a parable which I will show you—

37 Ye look and behold the fig-trees, and ye see them with your eyes, and ye say when they begin to shoot forth, and their leaves are yet tender, that summer is now nigh at hand;

verse 37 “And as [Jesus] sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3). Jesus responded by speaking of certain signs that would indicated the nearness of his coming. Among these signs was the “parable of the fig-tree.” One characteristic of a fig tree is that it does not put forth its leaves until relatively late in the season, long after most trees are in full leaf. The Savior used this feature in a parable concerning his second coming. “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [the Savior’s second coming] [is] nigh” (Matthew 24:32). Using the parable of the fig-tree, President Spencer W. Kimball made a prophetic pronouncement: “The leaves are commencing to show on the fig tree” (*Ensign*, May 1976, 74).

38 Even so it shall be in that day when they shall see all these things, then shall they know that the hour is nigh.

39 And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man.

verse 39 “**he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come**” Those who reverence the Lord will be looking forward to the second coming—they will want it to come. For them the Lord’s second coming will be deliverance from the wickedness of the fallen world of Babylon. The signs leading up to his coming will only be perceived as such by those who respond to the Spirit of God. Thus, only those who look forward to his coming and are worthy to respond to the promptings of the Spirit will recognize the signs of his coming and understand them for what they are. Again, if the reader wishes to review a rather comprehensive review of this topic, please see the reference above to the three chapters in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3 (see the commentary for verse 24).

40 And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath.

41 And they shall behold blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke.

42 And before the day of the Lord shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fall from heaven.

43 And the remnant shall be gathered unto this place;

verse 43 This verse refers to the remnant of the Jewish people who have been scattered throughout the world. By the time of his second coming, these Jews shall have begun to gather “unto this place,” that is, to the place where Jesus spoke these words to his disciples—in Old Jerusalem.

44 And then they shall look for me, and, behold, I will come; and they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off.

verse 44 “**then they shall look for me**” The antecedent for *they* is the “remnant” described in verse 43 who fear God and are looking for the coming of their Messiah but do not yet know that their longed-for Messiah is Jesus Christ. The Jews have the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the last days and the coming of the Messiah. They will recognize some of the signs and will be looking for his coming. Then they will see him coming in the clouds of heaven, and the prophecy of Jesus to the Jews in Matthew 26:64 will be fulfilled: “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

45 But before the arm of the Lord shall fall, an angel shall sound his trump, and the saints that have slept shall come forth to meet me in the cloud.

verse 45 “before the arm of the Lord shall fall” Before the judgment of the Lord falls upon the wicked. Before this mighty judgment upon the world, the archangel Michael will sound his trumpet (see D&C 29:13, 26) and the righteous, both living and dead, will be lifted up off of the earth to meet Christ in the air (see also D&C 88:96-98; 133:56; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

46 Wherefore, if ye have slept in peace blessed are you; for as you now behold me and know that I am, even so shall ye come unto me and your souls shall live, and your redemption shall be perfected; and the saints shall come forth from the four quarters of the earth.

verse 46 “if ye have slept in peace blessed are you” Those righteous dead who enjoyed the peaceful rest of paradise between death and resurrection, as opposed to suffering for their sins in hell, will come forth from the four quarters of the earth. They will be resurrected (their “redemption shall be perfected”) and raised up to meet Christ in the air at his coming.

47 Then shall the arm of the Lord fall upon the nations.

verse 47 Once the saints, both living and dead, have been raised up to meet the Lord, the judgment of the Lord will fall upon the earth and the wicked who remain upon it.

This passage, like most others dealing with the last days, leaves ambiguous the fate of those mortals who are worthy of terrestrial glory but not of celestial glory when the Savior comes. Since the millennial earth will possess a terrestrial glory, however, and since the terrestrial are referred to elsewhere as “Christ’s at his coming” (D&C 88:99) and as being resurrected in the first resurrection (see verse 54), though not in the “morning of the first resurrection,” it is possible that the living who are worthy of a terrestrial glory will also be protected at the moment of his coming in glory.

Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

Some members of the Church have an erroneous idea that when the millennium comes all of the people are going to be swept off the earth except righteous members of the Church. That is not so. There will be millions of people—Catholics, Protestants, agnostics, Mohammedans, people of all classes and of all beliefs—still permitted to remain upon the face of the earth, but they will be those who have lived clean lives, those who have been free from wickedness and corruption. All who belong, by virtue of their good lives, to the terrestrial order, as well as those who have kept the celestial law, will remain upon the face of the earth during the millennium (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:86).

48 And then shall the Lord set his foot upon this mount, and it shall cleave in twain, and the earth shall tremble, and reel to and fro, and the heavens also shall shake.

verse 48 “this mount” This phrase refers to the Mount of Olives on which the Savior was sitting when he gave this great discourse. Parley P. Pratt, in a pamphlet published while Joseph Smith was still alive, described the great events depicted here:

Zechariah, chapter 14, has told us much concerning the great battle and overthrow of the nations who fight against Jerusalem, and he has said, in plain words, that the Lord shall come at the very time of the overthrow of that army; yet, in fact even while they are in the act of taking Jerusalem, and have already succeeded in taking one-half the city, spoiling their houses and ravishing their women. Then, behold, their long-expected Messiah, suddenly appearing, shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, a little east of Jerusalem, to fight against those nations and deliver the Jews. Zechariah says the Mount of Olives shall cleave in twain, from east to west, and one-half of the mountain shall remove to the north while the other half falls off to the south, suddenly forming a very great valley into which the Jews shall flee for protection from their enemies as they fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah; while the Lord cometh and all the saints with him. Then will the Jews behold that long, long-expected Messiah, coming in power to their deliverance, as they always looked for him. He will destroy their enemies and deliver them from trouble at the very time they are in the utmost consternation, and about to be swallowed up by their enemies. But what will be their astonishment when they are about to fall at the feet of their Deliverer and acknowledge him their Messiah! They discover the wounds which were once made in his hands, feet, and side; and on inquiry, at once recognize Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the man so long rejected. Well did the prophet say that they shall mourn and weep, every family apart, and their wives apart. But, thank heaven, there will be an end to their mourning; for he will forgive their iniquities and cleanse them from uncleanness. Jerusalem shall be a holy city from that time forth, and all the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon. She shall be lifted up and inhabited in her place, and men shall dwell there. There shall be no more utter destruction of Jerusalem, “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9) (*Voice of Warning*, 32-33).

49 And the Lord shall utter his voice, and all the ends of the earth shall hear it; and the nations of the earth shall mourn, and they that have laughed shall see their folly.

verse 49 This verse hints at the anguish, despair, and self reproach of the wicked just prior to their destruction at the return of the Lord.

50 And calamity shall cover the mocker, and the scorner shall be consumed; and they that have watched for iniquity shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.

verse 50 The wicked will then be consumed by burning, and the earth will be purified by fire to render it a fit habitation for Christ and his saints.

“they that have watched for iniquity” Perhaps this refers to those who keep their eyes open for the opportunity to commit (and materially benefit from) sin, who watch for their chance at wickedness and take it when it comes.

51 And then shall the Jews look upon me and say: What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet?

52 Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God.

53 And then shall they weep because of their iniquities; then shall they lament because they persecuted their king.

verses 51-53 These verses describe the long-awaited collective repentance and conversion of the Jews. This is not repentance for the death of Christ, for these Jews are not guilty of that. Rather, it is the same repentance that all who come to Christ must experience. Though a few individual Jews have joined the Church since its founding in 1830, the mass conversion described in scripture will not take place, nor will the gathering of Israel be completed, until after the coming of the Lord. When the Gentile nations have heard and rejected the gospel and the world is ripe in iniquity, then the times of the Gentiles will be over, the Savior will return, and the Jews will be converted and redeemed. But this great mass conversion will await the personal appearance of Christ to the Jews in Jerusalem.

54 And then shall the heathen nations be redeemed, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them.

verse 54 “then shall the heathen nations be redeemed” The saints of God, those who will inherit his celestial kingdom, will be resurrected before Christ descends from the heavens to the earth and before the wicked are punished (see verses 45-48). Then after the resurrection of the celestial saints, and after the Savior descends to the Mount of Olives (see verse 48), and after his arm has fallen upon the wicked to destroy them (see verse 47), and after he has conversed with and converted the Jews at Jerusalem (see verses 51-53), then the resurrection of terrestrial—“heathen”—dead will take place (see also D&C 88:99) in what might be called the “afternoon” of the first resurrection. But it is still the first resurrection during which they will be raised and not the second or last resurrection (for the wicked) at the end of the thousand years (see Revelation 20:5-6).

Generally the scriptures divide the world into just two categories—Jews and Gentiles (or heathens). The Bible translates the same words, *goyim* in Hebrew and *ethnikoi* in Greek, variously as either “the Gentiles,” “the nations,” or “the heathen.” In this last dispensation, however, it is possible to further divide the Gentile nations into “Christian nations”—those Gentile nations who have some knowledge of Jesus Christ—and “heathen nations”—those Gentile nations who have no knowledge of Christ (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 346-47). This is the distinction intended here by the use of “the heathen nations” (compare D&C 90:10). These heathen nations, who know nothing of Christ or of his commandments, are also referred to as they who “have sinned without the law” (D&C 76:72), or “the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited . . . who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it” (D&C 76:73-74).

The common denominator for all these descriptions is the idea that as a general rule and because of their ignorance, these peoples may be judged more leniently for their transgressions than either Israel or the so-called Christian nations. Because they didn’t have the Lord’s commandments, the heathen will be less likely to be judged “wicked” than will members of the Church or other Christians who knew and rejected the commandments. Thus, this particular verse holds out much greater hope for the unbaptized heathen than did the majority of Christian churches in 1831, most of whom taught that the unconverted “heathen” burned in hell forever and ever.

It should carefully noted that being a members of a heathen nation does not dictate an inheritance in any particular kingdom of glory. While there may be a general pattern for the majority of those in the heathen nations to inherit terrestrial glory, those in the heathen nations have just as much chance for celestial glory as the Jews or anyone else, and perhaps even more. Each man will be judged on his own merits. The critical considerations, as we have discussed previously, are threefold: (1) what spiritual progress an individual has made prior to coming to earth; (2) the circumstances encountered during mortality; and (3) the amount of spiritual progress or growth the individual makes here on earth (for a more complete discussion of this important concept, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 1:18). There will always be many exceptions to any general pattern or rule. We know, for example, that those individuals who lived and died without even hearing gospel will be judged as if they had heard the gospel and had an opportunity to live it. Those who would have received it and endured in it, had they had the opportunity, will be raised up to the celestial kingdom of God (D&C 137:5-9). Each man will be perfectly-fairly judged by an all-knowing and loving Savior.

“and it shall be tolerable for them” Once every man has received his final reward, whether it be celestial, terrestrial, or telestial, he will ultimately find it “tolerable.” We can be assured that every man will be comfortable with his final reward. It will be where he belongs—an environment to which he is completely well suited. He will live among those with whom he is comfortable.

55 And Satan shall be bound, that he shall have no place in the hearts of the children of men.

verse 55 “Satan shall be bound” During the thousand years, Satan’s influence will be nullified. See the commentary for D&C 43:31.

56 And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

verse 56 Though many people think the Olivet discourse is limited to Matthew 24, a careful reading of Matthew 25 clearly shows that the three parables given there (the parable of the ten virgins, the parable of the talents, and the parable of the sheep and the goats) were part of the same discourse (note especially Matthew 25:1, 31).

verses 57-59 Prior to studying these next three verses, the reader is urged to review the discussion of the parable of the ten virgins in the introductory commentary for section 33.

57 For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.

verse 57 “abide the day” This phrase means to survive that particular day, the day of destruction at Christ’s second coming.

58 And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation.

verse 58 “the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance” This phrase might refer to one of two things. First, it may suggest that the “wise virgins” represent both the celestial and terrestrial people who will not be hewn down at the Lord’s second coming and will inherit the millennial earth as a place of abode. Secondly, it may refer to the wise virgins as those celestial beings whose ultimate inheritance will be the celestialized earth.

59 For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver.

verse 59 The Lord ends his citation of the Olivet discourse after this verse, and he begins speaking to Joseph Smith in the following verse.

verses 60-75 The Lord gives counsel to our own dispensation through the Prophet Joseph. The description of the latter-day Zion in verses 66 through 71 makes it sound much like the Zion of Enoch.

60 And now, behold, I say unto you, it shall not be given unto you to know any further concerning this chapter, until the New Testament be translated, and in it all these things shall be made known;

verse 60 Until March 7, 1831, the date of Joseph's receiving section 45, Joseph and Sidney had worked on the JST for the book of Genesis only. Here in verses 60-61 the Lord invites them to begin work on the New Testament. The translation of Joseph Smith–Matthew (Matthew 23:39 through Matthew 24) began the next day, March 8, 1831 which indicates the importance the Prophet Joseph placed upon the work. See the supplemental article, *Joseph Smith's Inspired Revision of the Bible*.

“this chapter” This phrase likely refers to Matthew 24 which, of course is now found in the Pearl of Great Price as JS-M.

“in it all these things shall be made known” The antecedent of *it* is the JST of the New Testament, especially Joseph's translation of Matthew 24. This particular chapter, Joseph Smith–Matthew, does indeed reveal details of Christ's prophecies to his disciples about the second coming, details that were lost between the first century and 1831. The information found there was intended specifically for the saints of the latter days in order to prepare them for what was coming.

61 Wherefore I give unto you that ye may now translate it, that ye may be prepared for the things to come.

62 For verily I say unto you, that great things await you;

63 Ye hear of wars in foreign lands; but, behold, I say unto you, they are nigh, even at your doors, and not many years hence ye shall hear of wars in your own lands.

verse 63 **“ye shall hear of wars in your own lands”** This prophecy undoubtedly refers to the Civil War, at this time still thirty years away, and perhaps also to other wars we have not yet experienced (see D&C 38:29-32; 87:1-8).

verses 64-75 The tribulations and judgments that will be poured out upon the world prior to the second coming will be so extensive and devastating that if the Lord did not prepare a means of preservation, his people too would perish. But he has prepared a means for his people to escape those terrible times. That means is Zion, a place of safety, peace, and refuge.

The Prophet Joseph understood this doctrine, for he also taught that Zion was the place of deliverance in the last days:

Without Zion, and a place of deliverance, we must fall, because the time is near when the sun will be darkened, and the moon turn to blood, and the stars fall from heaven, and the earth reel to and fro. Then, if this is the case, and if we are not sanctified and gathered to the places God has appointed, with all our former professions and our great love for the Bible, we must fall. We cannot stand. We cannot be saved, for God will gather out his saints from the Gentiles, and then comes desolation and destruction, and none can escape except the pure in heart who are gathered (*TPJS*, 71).

64 Wherefore I, the Lord, have said, gather ye out from the eastern lands, assemble ye yourselves together ye elders of my church; go ye forth into the western countries, call upon the inhabitants to repent, and inasmuch as they do repent, build up churches unto me.

verse 64 “western countries” The safety of the saints lay in moving from their eastern homes in New York and Pennsylvania and gathering to the West—Ohio, Missouri, and eventually the Great Basin of Utah. The saints did not actually establish a Zion in Missouri though it will soon be designated as the location of Zion (see D&C 57:1-3). Through following the prophet Brigham Young to the mountains of the West, the saints were spared the desolating slaughter of the Civil War.

65 And with one heart and with one mind, gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you.

verse 65 “purchase an inheritance” Here the Lord makes it clear to the saints how they are to acquire lands in “the western countries” to establish Zion. They are to “gather up” their riches and buy the lands.

66 And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God;

verse 66 Zion or the New Jerusalem will be larger than just one city, but the center place will be in Jackson County, Missouri. The *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* explains: “In the scriptures four words seem closely related to the concept of Zion: gathering, preparation, defense, and refuge. The tribulations and judgments that will be poured out upon the world prior to the Lord’s second coming will be so extensive and devastating that if the Lord did not prepare a means of preservation, his people too would perish. But he has prepared a means for his people to escape those terrible times; that means is Zion” (98).

67 And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion.

verse 67 “glory of the Lord . . . terror of the Lord” For the righteous saints, Zion will be glorious, but for its enemies Zion will be terrible. The power of the Lord will terrify all Zion’s enemies so that they will fear to approach her.

verses 68-71 In the period before the coming of the Savior, there will be no peace or security anywhere or with anyone outside of Zion. The rest of the world will become an armed camp, and the whole world will be full of blood and schemes “as it was in the days of Noah” (JS-M 1:41). Those who will neither commit violence nor suffer it must flee to Zion, the only refuge of safety on earth.

68 And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety.

69 And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another.

70 And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand.

71 And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy.

verses 72-75 In church periodicals before 1844, verses 72-75 were not printed with section 45, even though they did appear in the 1833 Book of Commandments and in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. This oddity may have been due to an editorial decision not to reproduce a prohibition that was no longer relevant nor to suggest to the church’s enemies that the saints might be hiding something (see verse 72).

72 And now I say unto you, keep these things from going abroad unto the world until it is expedient in me, that ye may accomplish this work in the eyes of the people, and in the eyes of your enemies, that they may not know your works until ye have accomplished the thing which I have commanded you;

verse 72 “keep these things from going abroad unto the world” It was not yet the right time to publish or preach to the world the things found in this revelation, as they could be misunderstood or distorted and could arouse the anger of the world against the saints more quickly as they tried to establish Zion in Missouri. Those outside of the Church who studied this revelation would realize that they would not be included in Zion, and they may well have regarded the revelation as a threat against them.

73 That when they shall know it, that they may consider these things.

74 For when the Lord shall appear he shall be terrible unto them, that fear may seize upon them, and they shall stand afar off and tremble.

75 And all nations shall be afraid because of the terror of the Lord, and the power of his might. Even so. Amen.

Section 46 Gifts of the Spirit

This section was given March 8, 1831, the day following Joseph's receiving of section 45, in response to two needs or questions that had arisen.

The first question was, exactly who ought to be admitted to sacrament meetings. John Whitmer wrote in his history of the Church: "In the beginning of the Church, while yet in her infancy, the disciples used to exclude unbelievers, which caused some to marvel and converse on this matter because of the things written in the Book of Mormon [3 Nephi 18:22-34]. Therefore the Lord deigned to speak on this subject that his people might come to understanding" (*HC*, 1:163-64, footnote). In verses 3 through 6 of section 46, the Lord commands that no one who desires to attend be excluded from the "public meetings" of the Church, including sacrament meetings.

The second question concerned a problem of major proportions that arose in the Kirtland area in the spring of 1831. There appeared among the saints a variety of peculiar spiritual manifestations and practices. Prior to Joseph's arrival in Kirtland, the several hundred new converts in Ohio were leaderless. These new converts had joined the Church with little formal instruction and preparation except for a personal witness of its truthfulness. They brought with them considerable baggage—a variety of prior religious experiences and notions. When the four missionaries to the Lamanites left the Kirtland area, they did missionary work among the Quakers (see section 49). They had some success and converted several including Jesse Gause, Reynolds Cahoon, Burr Riggs, and Leman Copley. Once these men became latter-day saints they could no longer remain in the Shaker commune. The only congregation they could turn to was that of the new members in the Kirtland area. Under the influence of these Shaker converts, the worship of the leaderless branch took on the flavor of these erstwhile Quakers.

In the absence of a tempering, authoritative influence, the newly received gospel seemed to act as a catalyst and, like an organism gone wild, peculiar behaviors—both traditional and unique—became epidemic. Prior to his coming to the Ohio, Joseph had sent John Whitmer to preside there. After a short time, John wrote an urgent message to the Prophet that consisted, in summary, of but one word: Help! (The above adapted from James R. Christianson's essay, "And Now Come . . . Let Us Reason Together," *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 201).

As reported by John Whitmer:

Some had visions and knew not what they saw. Some would fancy themselves that they had the sword of Laban and would wield it . . . like an Indian in the act of scalping. Some would slide on the floor . . . like a serpent . . . which they termed sailing in the boat to the Lamanites preaching the gospel (*Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Lyndon W. Cook, 134).

Parley P. Pratt wrote:

Some very strange spiritual operations were manifested which were disgusting rather than edifying. Some persons would seem to swoon away and make unseemly gestures, and be drawn or disfigured in their countenances. Others would fall into ecstasies and be drawn into contortions, cramps, fits, etc. In short a false and lying spirit seemed to be creeping into the Church (*Autobiography*, 61).

These weird and unrestrained spiritual excesses were viewed with delight and relish as fodder by an already hostile press, and most of the revelations Joseph received in the spring of 1831 dealt in some way with this problem (sections 46, 49, 50 and 52).

The major theme of section 46 is gifts of the Spirit. Just what is a gift of the Spirit? It would seem that the concept of “gifts of the Spirit” is associated with some confusion in the Church. There are perhaps three different concepts that merit our consideration all of which might fit into the category of “gifts of the Spirit”:

1. Free gifts. It would seem that at times the Lord temporarily grants to individuals upon the earth divine abilities. These are not particularly earned through any special effort or accomplishment by the individual to whom they are given but rather are given to the Church to edify the saints. These same gifts might be given to authorized priesthood holders for the purpose of administering the affairs of the kingdom and in order to move the work along. These gifts are not given as signs to non-believers.

2. Proclivities or “talents” that we brought with us from the premortal world. These were doubtless earned in the premortal world over a long period of time through assiduous effort on the part of each individual who possesses them. We may describe an individual here on earth, for example, as particularly “gifted” in music or art or in a host of other special abilities. These talents were not given as free gifts but were earned gradually “line upon line, precept upon precept.” The individual who earned this type of gift paid the price of assiduous effort and dedication. While the veil between heaven and earth does obscure our memory of these abilities, and to some extent the abilities themselves, the veil is not impenetrable. These abilities, or potential abilities (which is perhaps a better description of their earthly manifestation) do penetrate the veil. We are required to discover them and re-develop them. When we do so, that process is most exciting and fulfilling as these abilities return to us rapidly and with unusual efficacy.

3. The third type of gifts of the Spirit are those attributes of God and Christ that we may receive by personal revelation in return for our obedience to gospel commands. For a more thorough discussion of this type of gift, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 7, *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit* and chapter 8, *The Blessings of Spiritual Gifts*.

These gifts are the very essence of our spiritual progress. Indeed, there is no spiritual growth without the ministrations of the Spirit and his granting of these gifts of the Spirit. Our growth toward godhood is measured in the summation of spiritual gifts we are able to earn and receive. These gifts provide us the knowledge, understanding, and divine characteristics that we acquire as we strive toward godhood. We can certainly itemize several including a testimony of the Savior, a witness of the restored gospel, a conviction of the plan of salvation, a testimony of the Prophet Joseph and of the modern-day prophet, and love and testimony of the scriptures. Trying to itemize them, however, is an exercise in futility since our spiritual growth is an individual affair and the lessons we must be taught as we grow—the spiritual gifts we must acquire—are legion. Each individual brings with him from the premortal world an individual level of growth, unique strengths, individual weaknesses, and widely varying knowledge. Our growth in mortality must be individually tailored to suit our unique and individual needs. You may need to be granted a spiritual truth by the Spirit only once, while I may need several tellings.

As you consider the gifts mentioned in section 46 and in Article of Faith 7, you must decide for yourself into which of these three categories of gifts of the Spirit each belongs, though it seems to your author that the Lord is mostly speaking of the free gifts described in category (1) above.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 46 Gifts of the Spirit

D&C 46:11-12 Free gifts—to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

D&C 46:30 He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh.

verses 1-7 These verses were apparently given by the Lord to correct what had become the practice of the Church at that time in excluding nonmembers from its services. With this correction, church practice would then agree with the policy described in 3 Nephi 18:22-33 and perhaps also in Moroni 6:7-9.

1 Hearken, O ye people of my church; for verily I say unto you that these things were spoken unto you for your profit and learning.

2 But notwithstanding those things which are written, it always has been given to the elders of my church from the beginning, and ever shall be, to conduct all meetings as they are directed and guided by the Holy Spirit.

verse 2 “notwithstanding those things which are written” Though the scriptures state clearly that nonmembers should not be kept out of meetings of the saints (see 3 Nephi 18:22-33), the Lord teaches that the last word in the meetings is that of the presiding elder and the promptings he receives from the Holy Ghost. The

Church is, after all, a “living church” (D&C 1:30), one that receives and responds to the direct revelations of the God granted through the Spirit.

3 Nevertheless ye are commanded never to cast any one out from your public meetings, which are held before the world.

verse 3 The previous verse notwithstanding, here is one principle that must not be violated in sacrament meetings. Certainly, however, any who are disruptive or constitute a danger to those in attendance in the meeting may be asked to leave.

There are, of course, meetings that are not public, such as bishopric and presidency meetings, council meetings, and meetings held in temples. Attendance at these meetings may be controlled.

4 Ye are also commanded not to cast any one who belongeth to the church out of your sacrament meetings; nevertheless, if any have trespassed, let him not partake until he makes reconciliation.

verse 4 “Ye are also commanded not to cast any one who belongeth to the church out of your sacrament meetings” This instruction refers to all members including even those who are disfellowshipped or on probation as well as any who have offended others or who might be deemed unacceptable for any other reason. All members of the Church have a covenant obligation, and therefore a logical right, to attend sacrament meeting—even those who are “out of favor” with their brothers and sisters.

“if any have trespassed, let him not partake” This phrase refers to a member of the Church who attends sacrament meeting who is unrepentantly guilty of serious sin and plans to partake of the sacrament in his sinful and unrepentant state. Elder David O. McKay taught that “to partake of the sacrament unworthily is to take a step toward spiritual death” (*CR*, October 1929, 14-15). Therefore out of love and concern for the individual, as well as out of duty to maintain the high standards of the Church, presiding authorities should not allow one who is known to be involved in serious sin to partake of the sacrament. It is nothing less than mockery for a person to partake of the sacrament as though renewing sacred promises to keep covenants when that person has no intention of keeping the commandments. A leader who prevents this from happening preserves the sanctity of the ordinance and also protects the would-be partaker from a sin of hypocrisy, mockery, and defiling what is sacred. It therefore is imperative that we each examine ourselves before we partake (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

5 And again I say unto you, ye shall not cast any out of your sacrament meetings who are earnestly seeking the kingdom—I speak this concerning those who are not of the church.

verse 5 It is, of course, altogether appropriate for investigators of the Church to attend sacrament meetings.

6 And again I say unto you, concerning your confirmation meetings, that if there be any that are not of the church, that are earnestly seeking after the kingdom, ye shall not cast them out.

verse 6 “your confirmation meetings” In the early days of the Church it was common to baptize people on one day and then later to confirm them in a public meeting held specifically for that purpose. Today, it is more common for an individual to be baptized and then be confirmed at least a week later in a sacrament meeting.

7 But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils.

verse 7 “ye are commanded in all things to ask of God” This verse makes it clear that we are to invite the Lord to be involved in all of the affairs of our lives. It is a commandment to do so.

“that which the Spirit testifies unto you” Perhaps the central and overriding theme of section 46 is the importance of following the promptings of the Spirit in all aspects of our lives.

“considering the end of your salvation” This phrase refers to keeping in mind your ultimate goal of salvation—celestial resurrection and exaltation. As we prayerfully live out our lives, we should give careful consideration to how each of our daily choices will affect our exaltation.

“doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men” It is true that false doctrines may simply be examples of how sincere individuals can follow their own intuitions and get things wrong. Or, they may be actually inspired of Satan.

8 Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given;

verse 8 Perhaps the most effective protection against our being deceived is to develop the gift of discernment. When we are in constant communication with the Spirit of God, we become adept at recognizing his promptings. The individual who is constantly prayerful, diligent in his callings, and obedient in his personal life does benefit, virtually daily, from communication with the Spirit of God. Whether the Spirit prompts him in his every-day life, grants unto him the special gifts or favors he needs to fulfill his callings, or sanctifies him through bestowing the earned gifts of the Spirit, he

learns to know and recognize the Spirit of God. He is seeking earnestly the best gifts—those communicated by the Lord’s Spirit. It is then difficult for a contrary spirit to connect with him, as he recognizes the difference. He has the power of discernment.

Elder Marion G. Romney warned against supernatural manifestations that are not worked by the power of the Holy Ghost:

The world today is full of counterfeits. It has always been so. Away back in the days of Moses, when Aaron’s rod became a serpent, then Pharaoh’s wise men, sorcerers and magicians “cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents” (Exodus 7:11-12). Isaiah warned against seeking “unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter (Isaiah 8:19) (CR, April 1956, 70-71).

9 For verily I say unto you, they are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me, that ask and not for a sign that they may consume it upon their lusts.

verse 9 As we speak of gifts of the Spirit in section 46, it seems apparent that we are speaking of those special spiritual blessings and favors the Lord grants to his righteous followers—those “who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do.” The Lord delights to give these gifts freely to those who seek to build his kingdom and those who are striving to obey and serve him. They are not given as signs to convert the nonbeliever. Rather, they are given to the righteous as a reward for their faith. These are likely fundamentally different from those gifts of the Spirit that constitute our incremental spiritual growth (see the introductory discussion for this revelation).

“and him that seeketh so to do” This profoundly important phrase is the key to our being considered righteous and even “perfect” by the Lord. No one perfectly keeps all the commandment all of the time. In fact we all fall well short of this accomplishment. But the Lord knows us perfectly. He does not expect perfection. What he does expect is earnest and diligent striving.

“not for a sign that they may consume it upon their lusts” The righteous individual who prays for blessings from the Lord and, in fact, succeeds in receiving those blessings, inevitably desires to receive blessings from the Lord for the correct reasons. Most always they desire to bless others in their life or to further the work of the Lord’s earthly kingdom. It is, of course, possible to desire the Lord’s blessings for the wrong reasons. For example, an individual may desire a blessing for the purpose of popularity or influence over others. Or, he may desire a blessing from the Lord to prove to himself that the Lord exists and can give blessings. He may seek after a blessing to prove to all around him that he is worthy of the Lord’s blessings. There are a host of worldly reasons why the proud may desire the blessings of the Lord. We may say that those guilty of pride desire a blessing from the Lord that they may “consume it upon

their lusts.” If any person desires blessings in order to benefit themselves, it is unlikely that the blessings will eventually result in the blessing of others.

10 And again, verily I say unto you, I would that ye should always remember, and always retain in your minds what those gifts are, that are given unto the church.

verse 10 The Lord is about to enumerate some of the gifts of the Spirit which he is willing to provide to members of his Church.

11 For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

verse 11 Beginning here, there is a need for the reader to understand which type of gifts are described here in section 46 (see the discussion of the different types of gifts of the Spirit in the introductory commentary for this section).

Certainly we are not speaking here of talents because talents are not given without prior (in the premortal experience) long-term diligent effort to acquire them. They are not given free of charge to any man, let alone guaranteed “to every man.”

And we are likely not speaking of those gifts of the Spirit that are increments of the attributes of God or Christ and the essence of our spiritual growth. Each of this latter type of gifts of the Spirit must be earned through obedience, and they also do not come with any guarantees.

In section 46, we are speaking of those “free” gifts or blessings that are given to the obedient and righteous as rewards for their faith. These gifts may persist with an individual throughout his mortal life, as long as he remains faithful and righteous, or they may be given ad hoc by the Lord for a specific reason or situation, and the need for the particular blessing may pass. It is most interesting in this verse to learn that the Lord intends to give to every righteous man at least one of these free gifts if he seeks for it in the correct manner.

12 To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby.

verse 12 “that all may be profited thereby” The gifts of the Spirit are distributed one to Brother X, some others to Sister Y, and others still to Brother or Sister Z, so the saints will better understand that we need and depend upon each other. The Lord intends us to join together in one body to complement each other’s strengths and compensate for each other’s weaknesses. Collectively, we possess all necessary gifts. One person may enjoy the gift of healing, and another the gift of knowledge. Sometimes our leaders ask us to do something that seems not to be one of our gifts so we can grow. In this manner, the Church—all of us together as a group of brothers and sisters—possess every necessary gift. And so it follows that we need each other, each

of the members needs the whole body (Romans 12:4-5). By design, no single individual is intended to be spiritually self-sufficient.

verses 13-25 The Lord now enumerates several specific gifts of the Spirit.

13 To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

verse 13 It is most unlikely that those blessed with this wonderful gift can expect to see the Lord in open vision. They will not possess a knowledge of Jesus Christ that is out of the realm of faith. Faith in or a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ is the result of the Savior's actually being revealed to an individual by the Holy Ghost. Those with this blessed gift will possess a personal witness or testimony of the Savior that is unusually strong.

14 To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.

15 And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the differences of administration, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men.

verse 15 "the differences of administration" This phrase is first used in 1 Corinthians 12:5, where the Greek means "the different kinds of ministries" or "differences in ways of serving." The full sense might be rendered something like "the differences in how God has equipped each of us to serve." To know these differences of administration is to recognize how God has endowed different individuals with different gifts and with different "styles" or ways of doing things. By extension, it follows that church leaders who recognize the differences of God-given gifts and ways of using them among the individual saints will also know how best to utilize these different individuals for the benefit of all. They possess the gift of administering in the affairs of the Church.

16 And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to know the diversities of operations, whether they be of God, that the manifestations of the Spirit may be given to every man to profit withal.

verse 16 "to know the diversities of operations" Again, the Greek behind the parallel at 1 Corinthians 12:6 means the "differences in activities" or the "different kinds of things that go on." It is a gift of the Spirit to be able to see what is really going on around us, to recognize the operation or activity of an influence, movement, or trend, to know what is at work and whether it is of God. Blessed is the flock whose shepherd has this gift.

17 And again, verily I say unto you, to some is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of wisdom.

18 To another is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge.

verses 17-18 “the word of wisdom . . . the word of knowledge” The “word of wisdom” refers to the gift of possessing wisdom and not to the commandment known as the Word of Wisdom.

The “word of knowledge,” in its narrowest sense is merely the ability to assimilate facts or information and to convey that information.

What is the essential difference between knowledge and wisdom? Wisdom is the ability to view, understand, and apply knowledge in its proper long-term perspective—even in its eternal perspective. It is to have both knowledge and judgment, insight, and common sense. It is to be able to apply knowledge for the benefit of oneself and others.

19 And again, to some it is given to have faith to be healed;

20 And to others it is given to have faith to heal.

21 And again, to some is given the working of miracles;

22 And to others it is given to prophesy;

23 And to others the discerning of spirits.

verse 23 “the discerning of spirits” The Greek words behind this phrase in 1 Corinthians 12:10 mean “the ability to tell whether a spirit is of God or not.” This is the gift of discernment. Note that a “spirit” does not necessarily refer to a single supernatural being in the usual sense, but may also refer to more general or subtle forces or influences at work in the Church. Thus the phrase “a spirit of rebellion” may not refer to a single evil spirit, but to a general influence upon, or a tendency manifested by, or a feeling detected in many saints at once. This general influence of evil may also be referred to in the singular as a “spirit.” The gift of discernment allows its possessors to analyze also these more general forces and influences at work in a family, ward, or other organization and to know whether they are or are not from God.

24 And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues;

verse 24 There seem to be at least three manifestations of the gift of tongues:

1. when individuals are enabled to learn to speak with ease and fluency a foreign but known language (see Acts 2);

2. when persons are enabled to speak the pure or Adamic language; and

3. when persons speak under the influence of the Holy Ghost, they speak with the tongue of angels. They speak what God or his ministering servants would speak if they were present. The prophet Joseph Smith cautioned the saints about the gift of tongues. He explained that it is one of the least of the gifts but generally the one most

sought after (*TPJS*, 246). He warned that Satan may seek offer his own counterfeits in order to deceive the people (*Ibid.* 25, 229).

25 And to another is given the interpretation of tongues.

26 And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God.

27 And unto the bishop of the church, and unto such as God shall appoint and ordain to watch over the church and to be elders unto the church, are to have it given unto them to discern all those gifts lest there shall be any among you professing and yet be not of God.

verse 27 Bishops in the Church have available to them the gift of an uncommon degree of discernment.

28 And it shall come to pass that he that asketh in Spirit shall receive in Spirit;

verse 28 “He that asketh in Spirit” is one who asks for a gift of the Spirit for appropriate reasons. This verse, then, simply says that he who prays appropriately for a gift of the Spirit will receive that gift (see verse 30).

29 That unto some it may be given to have all those gifts, that there may be a head, in order that every member may be profited thereby.

verse 29 He who presides over the Church possesses all necessary free gifts. He also has an abundant of those spiritual gifts incident to his considerable spiritual growth.

30 He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh.

verse 30 Part of the process of acquiring gifts of the Spirit is to possess the gift and discernment to know which gifts we need “according to the will of God.”

31 And again, I say unto you, all things must be done in the name of Christ, whatsoever you do in the Spirit;

verse 31 As fallen and sinful beings, we cannot expect to command the powers of heaven in our own unworthy names. Christ alone in his perfect and infinite righteousness is worthy of the great blessings and powers of heaven. Therefore, when we act, pray, or speak in the name of Jesus, we acknowledge that we do so as those who have become one with him, and that we are his servants exercising his rights and powers with his permission. Since Christ is the only perfectly sinless, righteous, and worthy being, it is his name only that can command the powers of heaven, but he allows those who are his to “take his name upon them” and to use its power in his service.

32 And ye must give thanks unto God in the Spirit for whatsoever blessing ye are blessed with.

verse 32 Let us never neglect the necessity of expressing gratitude for the blessings we do receive (D&C 59:21).

33 And ye must practise virtue and holiness before me continually. Even so. Amen.

verse 33 The gifts of the Spirit are available to all who will pay the price, which includes obeying the commandments—practicing “virtue and holiness before me continually,” seeking perfection with all one’s heart, and entering into a covenant relationships with the Lord. These covenants are made at the time of partaking of the sacrament as we commit ourselves to repent of specific ways in which we fall short of the Savior’s example. The gifts will be the greatest in those who seek most earnestly. They are available to all within the Church who have been baptized by water and by the Spirit. George Q. Cannon wrote of spiritual gifts that seem to fit into both the “free gift” and spiritual growth categories:

How many of you . . . are seeking for these gifts that God has promised to bestow? How many of you, when you bow before your Heavenly Father in you family circle or in your secret places contend for these gifts to be bestowed upon you? How many of you ask the Father, in the name of Jesus, to manifest himself to you through these powers and these gifts? Or do you go along day by day like a door turning on its hinges, without having any feeling upon the subject, without exercising any faith whatever; content to be baptized and be members of the Church, and to rest there, thinking that your salvation is secure because you have done this?

If any of us are imperfect, it is our duty to pray for the gift that will make us perfect. Have I imperfections? I am full of them. What is my duty? To pray to God to give me the gifts that will correct these imperfections. If I am an angry man, it is my duty to pray for charity, which suffereth long and is kind. Am I an envious man? It is my duty to seek for charity, which envieth not. So with all the gifts of the gospel. They are intended for this purpose. No man ought to say, “Oh, I cannot help this; it is my nature.” He is not justified in it, for the reason that God has promised to give strength to correct these things, and to give gifts that will eradicate them (*Millennial Star*, April 1894, 260-61).

Brief Historical Setting

John Whitmer was named church historian in March 1831 [**D&C 47 - John Whitmer Named Church Historian**].

During the spring of 1831, the New York saints continued to arrive in the Ohio territory. The concern of those already in Ohio was: “Where will we put them? Where

will we find sufficient land for them?" The Lord gave counsel [**D&C 48 - Land for Gathering in Ohio**].

Section 47 John Whitmer Named Church Historian

Since the time of Adam and Eve, the saints of the Lord have been instructed to keep records of both their spiritual and temporal affairs, their divine revelations, and their history. In our own time this commandment is found in D&C 21:1 and elsewhere. Some great prophets have obeyed this commandment, to the benefit of millions who came after them. These prophets include Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Nephi, Mormon, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, among many others.

Prior to March 1831, Oliver Cowdery had acted as historian and recorder though he had never been formally called and set apart to the job. On March 8, 1831, the same day Joseph received section 46, he also received section 47. In section 47, John Whitmer is named official church historian. Actually he was called to the position previously by a council of elders. (It has been suggested, with tongue in cheek, that perhaps he was the only one out of town when the council met.) His acceptance of the call was half-hearted. He told Joseph he would rather not be the church historian, but that if it was the Lord's will, then he would accept. Joseph inquired, and this revelation was the Lord's answer. On April 9, 1831, John Whitmer was sustained in his twin callings as both church historian and church recorder by a special meeting of elders in Kirtland. D&C 69:2-8 also gives John additional instructions on his duties as church historian.

He served as custodian of the records until his excommunication on March 10, 1838, at Far West.

Not only was his acceptance of the call half-hearted, but his execution of the office was mediocre. His historical record turned out to be a "mere sketch of the things that transpired." His total work consisted of 85 pages, 75 per cent of which was simply a copy of the revelations received by Joseph during those years.

After his excommunication, he refused to deliver up to the Church his documents. Because of his refusal, Joseph wrote him a letter asking him again to give up his records, and that if he did not, then Joseph and some of the other brethren would proceed to write a history of their own. At that point in church history, Joseph did proceed to dictate an account of the history of the Church from its beginning. This project continued to the death of the Prophet and beyond. From these records, the Church published in 1951 the *History of the Church* which covers the period of time from the Church's inception to a short period following Joseph's death.

At John Whitmer's death, his history was given to his nephew John C. Whitmer of Richmond, Missouri. The Whitmers eventually willed the history to the Reorganized LDS Church, which has since published it.

1 Behold, it is expedient in me that my servant John should write and keep a regular history, and assist you, my servant Joseph, in transcribing all things which shall be given you, until he is called to further duties.

verse 1 “keep a regular history” The historical records kept up to this time in the Church had been rather irregularly attended to. The Church needed a permanent historian. The prophet Joseph Smith wrote of the value of keeping accurate and complete records:

If you assemble from time to time, and proceed to discuss important questions, and pass decisions upon the same, and fail to note them down, by and by you will be driven to straits from which you will not be able to extricate yourselves, because you may be in a situation not to bring your faith to bear with sufficient perfection or power to obtain the desired information; or, perhaps, for neglecting to write these things when God has revealed them, not esteeming them of sufficient worth, the Spirit may withdraw and God may be angry; and there is, or was a vast knowledge, of infinite importance, which is now lost (*HC, 2:198-99*).

“assist you . . . in transcribing all things which shall be given you” John Whitmer’s duties were not confined to keeping the records or writing a history. He is here called to transcribe anything that may come to Joseph. At the time Joseph and Sidney were working on the JST. While Sidney Rigdon functioned as scribe for most all of that project, it was John Whitmer who transcribed much of the manuscript of the JST. To *transcribe* here means to produce another clearer, cleaner copy of what Sidney had written as he took dictation from the prophet. John Whitmer also functioned as scribe for the project on occasion.

2 Again, verily I say unto you that he can also lift up his voice in meetings, whenever it shall be expedient.

3 And again, I say unto you that it shall be appointed unto him to keep the church record and history continually; for Oliver Cowdery I have appointed to another office.

verse 3 “it shall be appointed unto him to keep the church record and history continually” In addition to being the church historian, John Whitmer was also to serve as the church recorder and keep the records that we would refer to today as membership and statistical records.

“Oliver Cowdery I have appointed to another office” This likely refers to Oliver’s calling as “second elder of this church” (D&C 20:3) and as the leader of the Lamanite mission (see D&C 28:8; 30:5-6), where Oliver was still serving at the time this revelation was received.

4 Wherefore, it shall be given him, inasmuch as he is faithful, by the Comforter, to write these things. Even so. Amen.

Section 48 Land for Gathering in Ohio

After section 37, commanding the saints to gather in the Ohio, the spirit of gathering was poured out upon them, and in the spring of 1831, many saints began the westward move from New York. Some in the Church even wondered if the Ohio might be the place of gathering spoken of in the Book of Mormon, the New Jerusalem.

The law of consecration and stewardship had not yet been implemented in Kirtland mostly because there were not sufficient properties in the Kirtland area to provide for even the local saints, let alone for the many who would shortly be gathering to Ohio from the East. The question was how to provide for the newcomers.

The saints in Kirtland became agitated and concerned wondering where all these New York saints would live, and they inquired of Joseph. Section 48 was given in response to their inquiries.

The Lord commands the Kirtland saints to share any extra lands with the immigrants, and if sufficient lands are not available, then the immigrants should buy additional lands (verses 1-3).

Another question also arose among both the saints already in Kirtland and those migrating into the Kirtland area from the east. The question was, how permanent is our stay here in Kirtland? Should we buy homes and farms, or should we rent? Will the law of consecration be instituted here, or will Zion be located somewhere else? The Lord told both groups that their stay in Kirtland was only temporary, and they should, insofar as possible, save their money for the time in the future when they might begin to build a city in another gathering place, the location of which was not yet revealed (verses 4-6). We, of course, know now that Ohio was a place where the saints gathered while the Lord prepared them to establish Zion in the land of Missouri.

1 It is necessary that ye should remain for the present time in your places of abode, as it shall be suitable to your circumstances.

verse 1 The Lord uses the phrase “present time” three times in the first three verses of this section implying that the Ohio would be only a temporary place of gathering.

And yet in D&C 51:17 the Lord advises the saints to act as though they would be in Ohio for years, and in D&C 64:21 they were told to maintain a strong presence in Kirtland for at least five more years, until the Kirtland Temple could be dedicated.

2 And inasmuch as ye have lands, ye shall impart to the eastern brethren;

verse 2 The Kirtland saints are commanded to consecrate what property they possessed to the needs of the New York saints who would soon be arriving. Many in Ohio obeyed this commandment for the benefit of incoming saints who had already

given up their own homes and lands to gather to Kirtland. Joseph and Emma themselves lived in shared or borrowed lodgings for much of their time in Kirtland.

3 And inasmuch as ye have not lands, let them buy for the present time in those regions round about, as seemeth them good, for it must needs be necessary that they have places to live for the present time.

verse 3 The Lord is still addressing the Kirtland saints. He says that when the consecrated Ohio properties are all given out as stewardships, those New York saints who are still arriving will have to find accommodations in the area as best they can and at their own expense.

4 It must needs be necessary that ye save all the money that ye can, and that ye obtain all that ye can in righteousness, that in time ye may be enabled to purchase land for an inheritance, even the city.

verse 4 Zion is not to be located in Ohio. The saints are instructed by the Lord to not expend all of their financial resources in Ohio. Rather, they are to earn and save as much money as they can in hopes that they may one day invest that money in the land and city of Zion. “The city” in this verse is the New Jerusalem. This city is to be built through the sacrifice and consecration of the saints. The Church had first learned about the city from Ether 13:3-8 and two previous revelations received by Joseph Smith, D&C 28:9 and D&C 42:6-9. The location of this city had not been revealed at this point in the church’s history (see verse 5). Three months later, in June 1831, the Lord will reveal that Missouri is the place for the gathering (see D&C 52:2-3), but he will not reveal the specific location as being Jackson County until July of 1831 (see D&C 57:1-3).

“land for an inheritance” This phrase suggests that each individual’s share of the land or city of Zion is rightfully his through the Abrahamic covenant. Among the other blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant is that the righteous children of Abraham will receive a holy land on which to dwell (for a summary of the Abrahamic covenant, see the commentary for 1 Nephi 14:8). This promise, of course, is extended also to those Gentiles who accept Christ and his gospel and become Christ’s sons and daughters and members of the house of Israel by adoption. Our portion in the earthly Zion is a symbol and token of our portion in the coming celestial world, the ultimate “promised land.”

5 The place is not yet to be revealed; but after your brethren come from the east there are to be certain men appointed, and to them it shall be given to know the place, or to them it shall be revealed.

verse 5 “there are to be certain men appointed” This phrase refers to an advance party of saints that would be sent ahead to scout the area, make the necessary

arrangements, purchase the land, and lay the foundations of the New Jerusalem in order to prepare Zion for the gathering of the saints. This commandment was obeyed, and the prophecy that the place would be revealed to these men was fulfilled three or four months later when sections 52 and 57 were received.

6 And they shall be appointed to purchase the lands, and to make a commencement to lay the foundation of the city; and then shall ye begin to be gathered with your families, every man according to his family, according to his circumstances, and as is appointed to him by the presidency and the bishop of the church, according to the laws and commandments which ye have received, and which ye shall hereafter receive. Even so. Amen.

verse 6 “they shall be appointed to purchase the lands” The Lord has already revealed in D&C 45:65 how the land of Zion was to be acquired: it was to be purchased. The saints would not find the lands they sought unoccupied, nor would Joseph lead the Church to take them by conquest as Joshua had done in obtaining the lands of the Canaanites. The Lord expected the Church generally and the saints individually to purchase the lands that would be pointed out to them.

“then shall ye begin to be gathered with your families” The basic unit of Zion, or the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth, is the family.

“as is appointed to him by the presidency and the bishop of the church” Today the First Presidency of the Church holds the keys of gathering and instructs the saints as to who should gather where, when, and how. President Harold B. Lee taught this point clearly:

*It would be well, before the frightening events concerning the fulfillment of all God's promises and predictions are upon us, that the saints in every land prepare themselves and look forward to the instruction that shall come to them from the First Presidency of this Church as to where they shall be gathered (*Ye Are the Light of the World*, 167).*

In March of 1831, there was no First Presidency. The presiding leadership of the Church on the earth at that time was Joseph Smith who was the “first elder” of the Church and Oliver Cowdery, who was the “second elder” (see D&C 20:3). In January 1832 Joseph will be ordained president of the high priesthood. Though most historians might date the organization of the First Presidency from that time, it was not actually referred to as the First Presidency until 1834. It is interesting also to note that Joseph Smith will not receive the “keys of gathering” Israel until Moses returns them to him on April 3, 1836 in the Kirtland Temple.

A careful reading of this particular phrase, however, suggests that it does not refer to the gathering of Israel, but rather to the gathering of each man and his family to Zion and to the law of consecration and stewardship where he will receive a

stewardship “according to his family” and “according to his circumstances.” And this “as [it] is appointed him by the presidency and the bishop of the church.”

Brief Historical Setting

1831 May

The infamous Shaker affair occurred in May 1831. At the urging of a new convert to the Church, the former Shaker Leman Copley, the best missionaries in the Church, Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt, were dispatched by the Lord to visit the Shaker settlement. These two missionaries, accompanied by Brother Copley, took with them a revelation given by the Lord specifically for the Shakers [**D&C 49 - The Shakers**]. This missionary experience ended negatively when the missionaries, after delivering their message, were summarily rejected by the Shakers. Further, the Shakers were angered when Parley P. Pratt, following the Shakers’ rejection of his message, “shook the dust off his garments” as a testimony against them. Leman Copley was also angered by Parley’s undiplomatic gesture, so much so that he left the Church and evicted the Colesville saints from his land (see Historical Setting for section 51 below).

The peculiar spiritual manifestations in the Kirtland area in the spring of 1831 did not disappear with one rebuke. In May, again it was necessary for the Lord to speak to Joseph on the matter [**D&C 50 - Teaching by the Spirit**].

Section 49 The Shakers

In May 1831 a new convert to the Church, fifty-year-old Leman Copley, came to the Prophet Joseph. He had recently been baptized, but he was afraid to accept ordination to preach and wanted to know the will of the Lord on the matter. According to Shaker historical records, Copley, though he had been a member of the Shakers, could not manage to live the celibate lifestyle which was encouraged among the Shakers. He had moved away from the Shakers but still admired their doctrines. He was anxious to see the truth preached to his former associates, for whom he still had great affection and respect. Also, though honest-hearted in his acceptance of the restored gospel, he still retained the idea that the Shakers were right in some particulars of their doctrine. Accordingly, he asked Joseph to send missionaries to the Shakers that they might also have the opportunity to hear and accept the Gospel. He asked for two of the best missionaries in the Church, Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt. Joseph consented to inquire of the Lord "in order to have a more perfect understanding on the subject." Section 49 was thus received.

In this section the Lord does extend calls to Sidney, Parley, and to Leman Copley. Joseph had initially been reluctant to send Brother Copley, because he was not adequately prepared to serve as a missionary. Both Sidney and Parley, however, had an extensive background of experience with the Shakers. Sidney had lived in the area for years and was acquainted with their leaders and their doctrine. Parley had relatives that were Shakers and thus was also acquainted with them.

Elders Rigdon, Pratt, and Copley fulfilled the mission appointed to them by this revelation. They visited the settlement of Shakers, preached the gospel to them, and even read section 49 to them in its entirety. They were rejected, as the Shakers "utterly refused to hear or obey the gospel" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 65).

One cannot understand section 49 without knowing what the Shakers were teaching, practicing, and believing. The following is a brief review of this interesting people.

They resided in a communal group in North Union, Ohio, fifteen miles from Kirtland. Today this area is known as Shaker Heights and is near Cleveland.

The Shakers began as a break-off from the Quakers. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, had been founded in England in the 1640s, the founders believing that the scriptures were only a portion of God's revelation and that new revelation was to be expected.

Two English Quakers, James and Jane Wardley, stated that God's spirit of revelation was frequently manifest to them in Quaker meetings by means of a violent shaking of their bodies. They broke off from the Quakers, and their group became nicknamed the Shaking Quakers.

The Shaking Quakers or Shakers gave equal place to women and men in church organization and predicted that since Christ had first appeared in the form of a man, his second appearance would be in the form of a woman. When a woman named Ann Lee (married name Ann Stanley) joined their group, the Wardleys became convinced that she fulfilled this prediction. She was a pious woman who had suffered greatly, especially in childbearing, since all four of her children died as infants. She also had suffered as a wife, as her husband eventually deserted her. Because of this suffering, many in this small sect, in addition to the Wardleys, came to believe that Ann Lee was the Messiah whose return they were awaiting.

They actually believed that God was both male and female. The scriptural basis for this belief was Genesis 1:27, “In his own image . . . created he them” (both male and female). God, they believed, first made his appearance in the form of a male, Jesus Christ. In Ann Lee, the female principle of God was made manifest, and in her the promise of the Second Coming was fulfilled. The Shakers also believed that even angels and spirits are both male and female—that is, have dual natures.

They believed that Christ’s kingdom upon the earth began with the establishment of the Shaker Church. From the days of the ancient apostles the Lord had sent no one to preach until the Shakers were raised up to call in the elect in a new dispensation. Thus, they believed that the Millennium had begun with the ministry of Ann Lee.

Mother Ann, as she came to be called, believed that sexual relations were at the root of most all the evils in the world. She therefore advocated celibacy for both men and women, even though she herself had been married and given birth to four children (who had all died at birth).

After severe persecution in England, Mother Ann claimed to have received a revelation directing her to America in 1774 to establish the Church of the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing—the Shakers’ official name. By 1831 their membership had peaked at between five and ten thousand. There were about eighteen Shaker communities in the United States, and all were known for their piety, order, and industry. Their numbers remained this strong, due to a few converts and hundreds of civil war orphans whom they claimed, until 1874, and then it began to decline. Today only a handful of very old Shakers remain. The only active community that exists is located at Sabbathday Lake, Maine.

Some additional practices and beliefs of this unique group were:

1. The ruling authority of the Shakers was vested in a committee—usually four persons, two females and two males.

2. Private ownership of property was eliminated, and several communal groups (called united orders) were established throughout the United States. They believed in separation from the world and group ownership of possessions. Ostentation, luxury, and private ownership of property were regarded as sinful and un-Christian.

3. Confession was all that was necessary for forgiveness of sins. Thus the outward ordinances, baptism and the laying on of hands, were unnecessary and had ceased with the apostolic age. Their confessions were given openly.

4. It was possible for people to live without sin.

5. Although the Shakers did not forbid marriage, they believed that those who lived a celibate life abided a higher law. They referred to celibacy as "the cross," probably having metaphorical reference to the *cross* some chose to bear.

6. Pork was forbidden in their diet, and many ate no meat.

7. The resurrection consisted of the restoration or raising of the spirit but not the physical body.

8. Their dress and manners remained similar to those of the Society of Friends, the Quakers. They were also hard working farmers reminiscent of the Amish. They made beautiful furniture which is highly prized even today. In general they believed in a strong work ethic. They invented many useful industrial tools.

9. They were called *Shakers* because of their ceremonies. They would sing, dance, clap their hands in regular time, hold hands, embrace, form circles, shake, and shout peculiar things. The women would spin around for minutes without stopping. Men would touch only other men, and women would touch only other women.

10. They lived in dormitories and ate in a dining hall. Men were kept strictly separate from the women, however.

11. They were pacifists.

12. They believed that the need for physical ordinances such as baptism had ceased with the ancient apostles.

13. Sickness and disease were regarded as sins against God.

14. There are some interesting parallels between the Shakers' beliefs and Mormonism: They believed in continuous revelation, and they had a Book of Moses. They denied the doctrine of the trinity. Ann Lee had spiritual spectacles that she put on so she could read documents. They had holy anointings, a united order, Melchizedek priesthood, and Aaronic priesthood. Important men in U.S. history allegedly appeared to Ann Lee including John Adams, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson. They believed in a mother in heaven. They believed that the time had come for the New Jerusalem to be built, and they laid out the ground where the temple would stand. They collected and printed their own hymns. They were temperance people and avoided tobacco, alcohol, tea and coffee. They had a roll of parchment of John the Revelator.

At one point a member of the Shakers, a man named Joseph B. Dylk decided that he, not Ann Lee, was the millennial Lord Jesus Christ, and he broke with the main body of the Shakers.

The three missionaries arrived at North Union on a Saturday evening and were allowed to give to the group a long discussion of the gospel. They spent the night, and the next morning they spoke in the regular Sunday meeting. After Sidney Rigdon read

section 49 to the Shakers in their meeting as part of his comments, they were rather abruptly rejected and dismissed. Parley P. Pratt, unwisely it seems, would not let the meeting come to a close without a witness against the Shakers. He arose and shook his coattails: “He shook the dust from his garments as a testimony against us, that we had rejected the word of the Lord Jesus” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 13). This greatly angered the Shakers’ leader, Ashbel Kitchell, and he severely rebuked Parley. Not only did Kitchell vent his anger on Elder Pratt, but also upon Leman Copley.

This experience was so upsetting to Brother Copley that it caused him to re-evaluate his membership in the restored Church. To make matters worse, when he arrived back at his farm in Thompson, Ohio, where the Colesville branch of the Church had settled after arriving from New York, he found them upset with him for getting the missionaries involved in this misadventure (see the Historical Setting for section 51 below). Thus, rejected by the saints, he ejected them from his farm and returned to North Union and begged for membership again with the Shakers. His betrayal forced the saints to abandon the improvements they had made to his farm and move on to Missouri immediately. This mission, intended originally to bring people to Christ, resulted in problems for the saints.

With this background, then, section 49 is more easily understood.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 49 The Shakers

D&C 49:7 The hour and the day no man knoweth, nor shall they know until he come.

D&C 49:20 It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin.

1 Hearken unto my word, my servants Sidney, and Parley, and Leman; for behold, verily I say unto you, that I give unto you a commandment that you shall go and preach my gospel which ye have received, even as ye have received it, unto the Shakers.

2 Behold, I say unto you, that they desire to know the truth in part, but not all, for they are not right before me and must needs repent.

verse 2 “they are not right before me” In spite of their industry, there were obviously several things that were “not right” among the Shakers. Their rejection of the sacred nature of marriage, sexuality, and the family could alone account for the Lord’s statement here.

3 Wherefore, I send you, my servants Sidney and Parley, to preach the gospel unto them.

4 And my servant Leman shall be ordained unto this work, that he may reason with them, not according to that which he has received of them, but according to

that which shall be taught him by you my servants; and by so doing I will bless him, otherwise he shall not prosper.

verse 4 “Leman shall be ordained unto this work” As already mentioned, Copley had been concerned about being ordained to the priesthood, which the Lord here commands be done.

“not according to that which he has received of them” There is a tendency to preach to those of another faith by assuming their point of view and trying to persuade them that the restored gospel must be true. Such an approach avoids any confrontation between the old and the new and is not how the Lord wanted this mission to be undertaken. The Shakers were to be confronted with the simple truth.

“otherwise he shall not prosper” The Lord asked a lot of Leman Copley. He still had a high regard for the Shakers and for their religion, but he had to choose. He could teach the restored gospel with the courage of his testimony to his former friends, or he could lose his conviction of the truth and come under condemnation.

5 Thus saith the Lord; for I am God, and have sent mine Only Begotten Son into the world for the redemption of the world, and have decreed that he that receiveth him shall be saved, and he that receiveth him not shall be damned—

verse 5 “I am God, and have sent mine Only Begotten Son into the world” Keep in mind that it is Jesus Christ who speaks in the Doctrine and Covenants, though here, as elsewhere he speaks the words of the Father, whom Christ represents as though he were the Father. He speaks by “the divine investiture of authority.”

6 And they have done unto the Son of Man even as they listed; and he has taken his power on the right hand of his glory, and now reigneth in the heavens, and will reign till he descends on the earth to put all enemies under his feet, which time is nigh at hand—

verse 6 “they have done unto the Son of Man even as they listed” To *list* is to desire. This phrase means that the Shakers did not look forward to Christ’s second coming. Rather they looked for the return of the “Christ spirit,” a spirit that would infuse their leader and render him or her spiritual and not carnal. They believed four persons had been given this spirit in its fulness: Adam, Abraham, Christ, and Ann Lee.

“the right hand of his glory” This expression refers to the light and power of the Lord and implies that he possesses all power. Indeed, the Lord was given all power in heaven and on earth. He reigns supreme in heaven. On this Earth His supremacy has not yet been fully recognized, but it will be: for all enemies will be put under His feet, and the will of God will be done as it is done in heaven.

“which time is nigh at hand” This contradicts the Shaker teaching that Christ had already come to earth a second time in the form of Ann Lee.

7 I, the Lord God, have spoken it; but the hour and the day no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor shall they know until he comes.

verse 7 The deliberate suspense that is generated by anticipation and uncertainty in the hearts of the saints serves an important function in the Lord's training of his people (see also Matthew 24:36). While we wait, not knowing the day of his coming, we prepare ourselves. If we knew the time of his coming, some would find occasion to procrastinate their repentance. But keeping the uncertainty of the future in focus enables and motivates us to prepare continually—not just individually, but as a Church as well.

8 Wherefore, I will that all men shall repent, for all are under sin, except those which I have reserved unto myself, holy men that ye know not of.

verse 8 “**all are under sin**” All men are guilty of sin (Romans 3:23). While we remain in mortality, our only hope of perfection is the perfection “in Christ” promised by the Lord's servant Moroni (Moroni 10:32-33). As long as we are sincerely striving to obey his commandments, the Lord extends the blessings of his atonement to us, and he consequently considers us perfect.

“**except those which I have reserved unto myself, holy men that ye know not of**” There are men who have been made “perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32-33), who have been taken by God for his own purposes and whose carnal natures have been erased or otherwise overcome. We are taught by Joseph Fielding Smith that these are “translated persons such as John the Revelator and the three Nephites” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:209).

9 Wherefore, I say unto you that I have sent unto you mine everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning.

verse 9 “**mine everlasting covenant**” This phrase refers to the gospel. The central purpose of the gospel is to enable us to be forgiven of our sins through the atonement of Jesus Christ and then to return to celestial glory.

10 And that which I have promised I have so fulfilled, and the nations of the earth shall bow to it; and, if not of themselves, they shall come down, for that which is now exalted of itself shall be laid low of power.

verse 10 “**that which I have promised I have so fulfilled**” The promises made to the fathers—Abraham (Genesis 17:17-21; 22:16-18; Abraham 2:6-11), Isaac (Genesis 26:3-5), and Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15), as well as to Lehi, Nephi, and Moroni—about the fulness of the gospel coming once again to their posterity have been fulfilled in the restoration of the gospel in this latter day. The Gentile nations will either repent and bow before Jesus Christ, and thus become the seed of Abraham by adoption, or they will not repent and will be laid in the dust by the power of God.

“if not of themselves, they shall come down” If the people of the nations do not accept the gospel, they shall be brought down into the dust.

“for that which is now exalted of itself” This phrase refers to those whose natural self dictates that they are fully self sufficient in all things.

11 Wherefore, I give unto you a commandment that ye go among this people, and say unto them, like unto mine apostle of old, whose name was Peter:

verse 11 “this people” The Shakers.

“like unto mine apostle of old, whose name was Peter” Peter is mentioned in this verse because the message in verses 11-14 is essentially Peter’s message to the Jews on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:38. Moreover, Peter’s clear teaching in this New Testament passage corrects a major doctrinal error of the Shakers—baptism is necessary to salvation.

verses 12-28 These verses are addressed directly to the Shakers by the Lord and correct many of their false doctrines.

12 Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus, who was on the earth, and is to come, the beginning and the end;

verse 12 Note the “was” and “is to come.” The Lord again reminds the Shakers that the Lord’s second coming is yet in the future.

13 Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, according to the holy commandment, for the remission of sins;

verse 13 Because the Shakers did not believe in the necessity of baptism—they believed that one could live without sin—this verse was obviously meant to correct that view. They were guilty of sin and needed to repent. The “holy commandment” mentioned here likely refers to Peter’s great charge to the Jews found in Acts 2:38 to “repent, and be baptized.”

14 And whoso doeth this shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of the hands of the elders of the church.

verses 14 The Shakers rejected baptism but believed in the gifts of the Spirit. Hence, the Lord teaches them that the gift of the Holy Ghost is received only after one has entered the gate of repentance and baptism (2 Nephi 31:17). The prophet Joseph Smith maintained that the true gifts of the Spirit are enjoyed only by those who have the gift of the Holy Ghost (*HC*, 5:27; see also Acts 2:37-38).

15 And again, verily I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man.

verse 15 This corrects another major doctrinal error of the Shakers. While they technically did not forbid marriage, the social pressure against it was enough to drive people like Lemman Copley out of their community if they could not be celibate.

Because marriage, sexuality, and family are important parts of God's eternal plan, Satan will always try to destroy them or turn men's minds away from their proper uses. Throughout the history of Christianity, one may detect the workings of the adversary in those branches of the historic Christian church that forbade marriage or, like the Shakers, insisted that a higher reward is available in heaven for the celibate.

It is wrong to encourage celibacy (see Genesis 2:24; 1 Timothy 4:3; Hebrews 13:4). President Spencer W. Kimball bore testimony about the importance of marriage:

In magazines we frequently see articles on this anti-marriage revolution. . . . Let me say again, marriage is honorable. It is a plan of God. It is not a whim, a choice, a preference only; it's a must ("Marriage Is Honorable," in *Speeches of the Year, 1973*, 261).

16 Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation;

verse 16 "it is lawful that he should have one wife" This phrase doesn't seem intended to teach the necessity of one wife, as contrasted with more than one wife. Rather, it teaches the necessity of having a wife and that marriage is endorsed by God and is part of his plan for the human family.

"and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation" The earth was created to be a home and testing ground for billions of mortal beings. Without marriage and procreation upon the earth to create future generations of mortals, the purpose (or end) for which the earth was created, would be thwarted. Celibacy is, hence, an apostate doctrine, one in which Satan obviously delights.

Another of the "end[s] of [the earth's] creation" is the formation of an eternal celestial family—each member of which is sealed into the family by a "welding link" of the gospel covenants. This future family, members of which will only be those who inherit celestial glory, will obviously have a vital function in the lives of celestial beings for all eternity.

17 And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.

verse 17 This is the first scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants to deal with the topic of premortal existence. The "measure of man" is the number of human beings created to live upon the earth, and this number is fixed (see Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 194; Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 94; and Brigham Young, in *JD*, 8:352). The word "his" refers back to "man." The earth was created to be filled with the measure or number of

spirit children who were begotten with the intent that they should live here. And when were these spirits begotten or created? “Before the world was made.”

A certain number of spirits will be born into mortality during the Millennium when the earth is in its terrestrial or paradisiacal state, but these persons will also be part of the “measure of man,” the number of those designated to experience their mortality upon this earth. For an interesting discussion of just who it is that qualifies to be born during the Millennium, See the subtitle, “Generational trials” under the heading “Purpose of the Millennium” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 30, *The Millennium*.

18 And whoso forbiddeth to abstain from meats, that man should not eat the same, is not ordained of God;

verse 18 This corrects yet another doctrinal error among the Shakers. It is wrong to forbid the eating of meat.

Note the obvious error in this verse created by the double negative. The verse says that whoso forbiddeth to abstain from meats . . . is not ordained of God. If a person forbids to abstain from meats, then he encourages the eating of meat. The intent is that whoso commandeth to abstain from meat . . . is not ordained of God.

19 For, behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance.

verse 19 “ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment” Contrary to some current thinking in the world around us, animals are meant (“ordained”) to be used by human beings for food, for leather, for fur, and so forth. These are purposes for which they were created. There is no sin in killing animals for human use. The sin is in wasting what is killed (see verse 21). Humans do have an obligation to justify the death of an animal by using it for the benefit of humanity, which is the purpose of its creation, whether for food, clothing, or income. Abraham, the friend of God and father of the faithful, was, after all, a shepherd, and Peter was a commercial fisherman. They made their living from the wholesome use of animals.

20 But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin.

verse 20 It was never intended by God that one human being should have more of the earth’s bounty than another. The celestial law is equality through consecration and stewardship. Division into rich and poor upon the earth is the result of the natural man and the design and workings of Satan. This unnatural division destroys the rich by the pride of their riches and by giving rise to the feeling that they are superior to the poor and deserve better treatment simply because they are rich. It also destroys the

poor with the trials of poverty, starvation, exposure, disease, and by suggesting the feeling that the poor are inferior simply because they are poor. One reason why the “world lieth in sin” is that we generally prefer and sustain Babylon’s economic systems based on competition motivated by self-interest rather than Zion’s economic system based on cooperation motivated by compassion. This is the spirit of the law of consecration.

But what of the inevitable consequence that those who labor diligently in this life tend to accumulate more material riches than those who lack the same industry? Do those who work hard and accumulate more commit sin? Should they give away all of their “extra” accumulations? It seems likely that among a people not given to live the law of consecration, this inevitable disparity will be tolerated by the Lord.

21 And wo be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need.

verse 21 President Spencer W. Kimball quoted from President Joseph F. Smith in general conference:

I do not believe any man should kill animals or birds unless he needs them for food, and then he should not kill innocent little birds that are not intended for food for man. I think it is wicked for men to thirst in their souls to kill almost everything which possesses animal life. It is wrong, and I have been surprised at prominent men whom I have seen whose very souls seemed to be athirst for the shedding of animal blood (*CR*, October 1978, 64).

22 And again, verily I say unto you, that the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, neither of a man traveling on the earth.

verse 22 “the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman” Neither Ann Lee nor Joseph Dylk is Jesus Christ. The Shakers believed that God was both male and female and was therefore adequately represented by both male and female forms, that Christ had already come as a male in the meridian of time, and that “she” therefore had returned at the second coming in the female form of “Mother Ann” Lee. Once again, this verse corrected the Shaker belief.

“neither of a man traveling on the earth” The Lord adds that the Son of Man will not come disguised as any mortal living on the earth, male or female. He will come as the scriptures explicitly describe him as coming: “in clouds of heaven” with power and great glory (Matthew 26:64). He will be universally acknowledged and hailed as the Messiah.

23 Wherefore, be not deceived, but continue in steadfastness, looking forth for the heavens to be shaken, and the earth to tremble and to reel to and fro as a drunken man, and for the valleys to be exalted, and for the mountains to be made

low, and for the rough places to become smooth—and all this when the angel shall sound his trumpet.

verse 23 “be not deceived” The second coming has not occurred, and the Millennium has not begun. Continue your watchful waiting and be aware of the signs of his coming. If the reader desires to review a comprehensive discussion of these signs, see three chapters in volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*: chapter 24, *Sign’s of the Lord’s Second Coming—Introduction*, chapter 25, *Sign’s of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Warn*, and chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

24 But before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose.

verse 24 Here the Lord lists two of the things that must yet happen before the day of his appearance in glory.

“Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness” This statement is a remarkable prophecy that modern Israel, the restored Church, will be driven into the wilderness where they will prosper and grow. Of this verse Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “The physical gathering here alluded to is the assembling of the Latter-day Saints in the tops of the mountains in western America. It is there that Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains. The wilderness referred to is the then-uninhabited areas that were colonized by Brigham Young less than a score of years later” (*Millennial Messiah*, 210-11).

“the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose” Part of the gathering of Israel in the latter days is the gathering of the Lamanites and their coming to a knowledge of their ancestral heritage and of the gospel. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “And as to the day when the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose, it has scarcely commenced. They are not yet, except in a beginning degree, the pure and delightsome people of whom the scriptures speak” (*Ibid.*, 211). Before the Savior comes again, the descendants of the Book of Mormon peoples will join the Church in increasing numbers and will have claimed their rights as children of Israel. As a people, they will then have “blossom[ed] as the rose.”

25 Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed.

verses 25 Before the second coming of Christ the saints will have established a flourishing Zion upon the earth. Which definition of Zion might we apply here (see the commentary for D&C 42:9)?

verses 26-28 It is difficult to know where the message to the Shakers, which began in verse 12, ends. Are verses 26-28 addressed to the Shakers or to Sidney

Rigdon, Parley Pratt, and Leman Copley? Notice that “shall not be confounded” (verse 27) is a phrase from the writings of Peter (see 1 Peter 2:6), in whose style the message to the Shakers was to be delivered (see verse 11). Nevertheless, the command to “go forth as I have commanded you,” in verse 26 makes it likely that at least these last three verses are directed to the missionaries.

26 Behold, I say unto you, go forth as I have commanded you; repent of all your sins; ask and ye shall receive; knock and it shall be opened unto you.

27 Behold, I will go before you and be your rearward; and I will be in your midst, and you shall not be confounded.

verse 27 “I will go before you and be your rearward” God will be both their scout and their rear guard.

28 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, and I come quickly. Even so. Amen.

Did the appointed missionaries fulfill the Lord’s command to go among the Shakers and preach the gospel? John Whitmer wrote that Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, and Leman Copley “went and proclaimed [the gospel] according to the revelation given them, but the Shakers hearkened not to their words and received not the gospel at that time, for they are bound in tradition and priestcraft; and thus they are led away with foolish and vain imaginations” (*HC*, 1:169n.).

We must not leave this episode without commenting on what became of Leman Copley. For his betrayal of the saints, in evicting them from his lands, he was disfellowshipped, but he was back in full fellowship again by October 1832. In 1834 he took a stand against the Church by testifying in a court case against the prophet Joseph Smith brought by another apostate, Philastus Hurlbut, and for this he was excommunicated. On April 1, 1836, he asked for forgiveness and was re-baptized! We then lose track of him and only know that he did not gather with the saints in Missouri or Illinois, and he did not go west with the saints. He died in Ohio in 1860 and is buried in Thompson, Ohio.

Section 50 Teaching By The Spirit

The missionaries called to proselyte among the Lamanites (see section 32), after successfully preaching the gospel in the Kirtland area and converting many, had left the Kirtland area about November 1, 1830, to continue westward on their mission. The newly converted saints in the Kirtland area were left mostly to themselves until Joseph arrived in Kirtland about February 1, 1831. Their natural leaders, Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge, had traveled to Fayette in December 1830 to see the Prophet Joseph and had remained in New York. We have commented previously on the false influences and beliefs that had crept in among the Kirtland saints. Satan had sought to take advantage of their inexperience and lack of strong local leadership by encouraging these false influences among them. We have previously discussed the peculiar spiritual manifestations that became rampant among these Ohio saints (please review the background materials for sections 28, 43 and 46). Parley P. Pratt, having just returned from his missionary excursion to the Shakers in May of 1831, encountered the manifestations of false spirits, and he quickly found that he did not know how to handle them:

As I went forth among the different branches, some very strange spiritual operations were manifested, which were disgusting, rather than edifying. Some persons would seem to swoon away, and make unseemly gestures, and be drawn or disfigured in their countenances. Others would fall into ecstasies, and be drawn into contortions, cramps, fits, etc. Others would seem to have visions and revelations, which were not edifying and which were not congenial to the doctrine and spirit of the gospel. In short, a false and lying spirit seemed to be creeping into the Church.

All these things were new and strange to me, and had originated in the Church during our absence [from Kirtland], and previous to the arrival of President Joseph Smith from New York.

Feeling our weakness and inexperience, and lest we should err in judgment concerning the spiritual phenomena, myself, John Murdock, and several other elders went to Joseph Smith and asked him to inquire of the Lord concerning these spirits or manifestations. After we had joined in prayer in his translating room [Joseph was working on his inspired revision of the Bible], he dictated in our presence the following revelation. Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each sufficiently long for it to be recorded by an ordinary writer in long hand (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 61-62).

In this way and under these circumstances, section 50 was received for the Church on May 9, 1831.

Parley P. Pratt's description of Joseph's receiving of section 50 might mislead some into thinking that the revelatory process was simply one of Joseph's taking

spiritual dictation from the Lord. Such a simplistic view might lead one to believe that once written down, a revelation could never be altered or edited since it was the directly dictated words of the Lord. Indeed, Parley P. Pratt went on to say: “This is the manner in which all his written revelations were dictated and written . . . as he dictated them, so they stood” (*Ibid*, 62). We know that all Joseph’s revelations have undergone editing and alteration after their initial writing. Joseph himself edited them, and many have been altered since Joseph’s death. Brother Pratt’s observations are thus misleading, in a sense. While he may have described accurately Joseph’s receiving section 50, his description falls short of explaining to us the process whereby we now possess the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants in their current form. Orson Pratt said: “Joseph the Prophet, in writing the Doctrine and Covenants, received the ideas from God, but clothed these ideas with such words as came to his mind” (*Minutes of the School of the Prophets*, Salt Lake Stake, December 9, 1872, 3). Thus we learn that revelation is a process, not an event. Revelations are usually given a little at a time—line upon line.

Section 50 provides for us helpful guidelines in discerning “false spirits” or manifestations that are not from God. It has become also an important missionary section, as it teaches us much about the importance of teaching the gospel using the vital influence of the Spirit of the Lord.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 50 Teaching By the Spirit

D&C 50:13-15 Unto what were ye ordained? To preach my gospel. And then received ye spirits which ye could not understand, and received them to be of God; and in this are ye justified?

D&C 50:17-22 He that preacheth and he that receiveth . . . are edified and rejoice together.

D&C 50:23-24 That which is of God is light, and the light groweth brighter until the perfect day.

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, and give ear to the voice of the living God; and attend to the words of wisdom which shall be given unto you, according as ye have asked and are agreed as touching the church, and the spirits which have gone abroad in the earth.

verse 1 “the voice of the living God” The living God is, of course, Jesus Christ.

“the words of wisdom” Any counsel from the Lord might be appropriately referred to as words of wisdom. This phrase has nothing to do, of course, with section 89.

2 Behold, verily I say unto you, that there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world.

verse 2 “false spirits” It is likely that these false spirits are a combination of the natural man himself with his predictable inclination for ostentatious and overtly sensually gratifying religious expressions, those among the members who are deliberate deceivers, and the influences of Satan and his minions. These false spirits may encourage false ideas, false doctrines, and false practices of worship.

3 And also Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you.

verse 3 Apparently Satan is able to orchestrate counterfeit spiritual experiences for some individuals, even members of the Lord’s Church. Joseph Smith once observed: “Nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the spirit of God” (*HC*, 4:573).

4 Behold, I, the Lord, have looked upon you, and have seen abominations in the church that profess my name.

verse 4 This verse implies a culpability on the part of those involved in false religious practices.

5 But blessed are they who are faithful and endure, whether in life or in death, for they shall inherit eternal life.

verse 5 Just as the previous verse lays blame on those involved in false religious practices, in this verse the Lord affirms those who, by virtue of their righteousness, remain pure in their ideas, doctrines, and worship practices. They are not deceived by those influences that would lead them astray.

6 But wo unto them that are deceivers and hypocrites, for, thus saith the Lord, I will bring them to judgment.

verse 6 Whenever the Church of Jesus Christ has been on the earth, there have always been spiritual pretenders and spiritual deceivers to be found in the Church. The word *hypocrite* means stage actor or one who plays a part. These pretenders would have others believe that they have spiritual gifts which they don’t actually possess. Some of them manage to remain undetected by the rest of the saints or by their leaders. Consequently, it follows that no idea, doctrine, literature, or business proposition should be accepted simply because it is promoted by a member of the Church, for it is not church membership or association that is the test of trustworthiness but habitual and observable compliance with the accepted principles of righteousness. These hypocrites can do great damage to other weaker members of the Church who are often brought to believe they represent the Church.

7 Behold, verily I say unto you, there are hypocrites among you, who have deceived some, which has given the adversary power; but behold such shall be reclaimed;

verse 7 “such shall be reclaimed” The deceived or disillusioned shall be reclaimed, but not the deceivers, for the unrepentant hypocrites and pretenders will be cut off from Christ and his Church either in this life or the next (see the following verse).

8 But the hypocrites shall be detected and shall be cut off, either in life or in death, even as I will; and wo unto them who are cut off from my church, for the same are overcome of the world.

verse 8 “the same are overcome of the world” Once an individual is cut off from the Lord’s Church, the spirit is withdrawn, and influences of the world inevitably overtake and dominate them.

9 Wherefore, let every man beware lest he do that which is not in truth and righteousness before me.

verse 9 The spirit of appropriate worship in the Lord’s Church is to be conservative: avoid exaggeration, embellishment, or overly dramatizing. Our religion must be what we really believe, what we really feel, and what we really are—not a role we adopt for church occasions.

10 And now come, saith the Lord, by the Spirit, unto the elders of his church, and let us reason together, that ye may understand;

verse 10 “let us reason together” We have previously commented on this phrase (see the commentary for D&C 45:10). The Lord has an agenda for each of us. It is, above all else, that he wants to live with us forever after this life. He wants us home. When he reasons with us, his intent is not to face us with cold and unbiased logic. Rather, it is to attempt to convince us of the eternal benefits of becoming and remaining his people. He will do all he can, within the limits placed on him by our needing a fully mortal experience, to ensure that we have every chance to get home.

11 Let us reason even as a man reasoneth one with another face to face.

verse 11 In this verse the Lord indicates the personal, one-on-one relationship he would like to maintain with each of his children.

12 Now, when a man reasoneth he is understood of man, because he reasoneth as a man; even so will I, the Lord, reason with you that you may understand.

verses 12 The Lord wants us to clearly understand his counsel, hence he condescends to reason with us on our level. “Behold, I am God and have spoken it;

these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding” (D&C 1:24).

13 Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained?

verse 13 “unto what were ye ordained” Joseph Smith received section 50 in the presence of “a number of elders” (*HC*, 1:170). It would seem that the Lord is speaking directly to those elders. The Lord answers his question in the next verse.

14 To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth.

15 And then received ye spirits which ye could not understand, and received them to be of God; and in this are ye justified?

verses 13-15 The Lord gently rebukes his servants for having trouble discerning these false manifestations. The implication is that if the elders there present had been worthy of the influence of the Holy Ghost, they would have had no trouble with their spiritual discernment.

16 Behold ye shall answer this question yourselves; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto you; he that is weak among you hereafter shall be made strong.

verse 16 The Lord evidences his kindness and long suffering for these fledgling members of the Church in Kirtland.

verses 17-22 In these six following verses lie the very essence of powerful gospel teaching—teaching by the Spirit of God.

17 Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

18 And if it be by some other way it is not of God.

19 And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

20 If it be some other way it is not of God.

verses 17-20 These verses are concerned with the teaching of spiritual truths and not secular truths. They explain that spiritual truths may be taught and received by the Spirit of God or without the Spirit of God. Both the speaker of spiritual truth and the hearer of spiritual truth may or may not be in tune with, or possess, the influence of the Spirit of God at the moment of teaching. God’s way of teaching and hearing is for both the teacher and hearer to possess the Spirit of God. If either the hearer or the teacher is not in tune with the spirit, then the teaching is “not of God.”

A spiritual truth spoken or received without the Spirit of God may be mentally understood, but it will not affect an individual's thinking and behavior. Though he may give mental assent to the truth, he will not act on it.

The influence of the Spirit of God not only allows an individual to accept spiritual truth and be profoundly influenced by it, but it also allows him or her to discern the difference between truth and error. The basis of the power of spiritual discernment is the Spirit of God.

21 Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

22 Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.

verses 21-22 To be edified is to be spiritually taught, built up, added to.

If either the speaker or the hearer of truth lacks the influence of the Spirit, then there is no spiritual connection made. There is no spiritual edification or uplift. On the other hand, if both the speaker and the hearer of spiritual truth possess the influence of the Spirit of God—that is they both respond to his influence—then both the speaker and hearer are jointly edified. This is the ultimate achievement in gospel teaching.

The young missionary in the Church today simply must learn the principle contained in these verses. If he or she can teach the principles of the gospel in a way that allows the Spirit to bear witness to him or her (to the missionaries themselves) each and every time they teach them, they then provide the investigator with the best possible chance of feeling the Spirit's influence. If the missionary is successful, then "both [the missionary and the investigator] are edified and rejoice together."

23 And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

verse 23 The hearer who is responsive to the influence of the Holy Ghost is automatically a discerner of truth. They can identify what is true and edifying and also what is untrue and not edifying. They can avoid that which is dark and untrue (see verse 25).

24 That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

verses 24 As we grow spiritually we receive through personal revelation increments of the attributes of Christ and our hearts are changed so that we become new creatures. In so doing we actually are allowed to partake of the light of Christ. Increments of his light become our light, and in this way we grow to become like him. For a discussion of this fascinating topic see *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

25 And again, verily I say unto you, and I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you;

26 He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all.

verse 26 “He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest” He who possesses the fulness of the gospel, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the priesthood of God, and the ordination to preach is a teacher and leader over all those who do not have these qualifications no matter how young or unlearned he may be.

“notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all” But keep in mind the profound truth that all who lead in the kingdom of God, in contrast to leaders in worldly organizations are servants to those to whom they minister just as Jesus Christ, who presides over our universe, is the servant of all (Matthew 20:25-28).

27 Wherefore, he is possessor of all things; for all things are subject unto him, both in heaven and on the earth, the life and the light, the Spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son.

verse 27 “he is possessor of all things; for all things are subject unto him” The righteous and diligent Melchizedek Priesthood holder who is on the Lord’s errand is entitled to call upon all of the powers of heaven for help. The Lord’s ministering angels are subject to him. He may call upon all of the resources of heaven including the light of Christ and the power of God.

28 But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin.

29 And if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done.

30 But know this, it shall be given you what you shall ask; and as ye are appointed to the head, the spirits shall be subject unto you.

verse 28-30 Let us not make the mistake of believing that a man must be perfect before he can receive all of the blessings of heaven as he engages himself in the work of the Lord. The key is that he is honestly and diligently trying to overcome himself. He is striving to live the commandments, and seeking sincerely to serve the Lord. Then, by virtue of the Savior’s atonement, he is regularly justified and sanctified as he covenants to keep the Lord’s commands and as he keeps those covenants. This cleansing is accomplished on an ongoing basis by the Spirit of God through the ordinance called the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. The reader is referred to the discussion of the three parts of the ordinance of baptism. See *Baptism—the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18. As

the individual is thus cleansed, he is then considered by the Lord to be “perfect” (Moroni 10:32-33).

This individual may then ask in righteousness for anything necessary to perform his calling, and receive it. The man who is properly in tune with the Spirit will have his prayers answered because he is prays for things which are appropriate (see the commentary for D&C 46:30).

“as ye are appointed to the head” This phrase means “as you are ordained to lead.”

31 Wherefore, it shall come to pass, that if you behold a spirit manifested that you cannot understand, and you receive not that spirit, ye shall ask of the Father in the name of Jesus; and if he give not unto you that spirit, then you may know that it is not of God.

verse 31 “if you behold a spirit manifested that you cannot understand”

Those who are in the service of the Lord will sometimes find themselves in situations that are spiritually uncomfortable. If they are uncertain as to the true nature of the situation, whether it is of God or not, then they can petition the Father who will assist them in discerning the situation. Perhaps it is desirable in this verse to interpret the word “spirit” in a broader sense. Evil situations can arise for various reasons. Certainly they may be the direct result of the ministrations of an evil spirit—one of the followers of Satan himself. They may also be the product of the potential evil that is intrinsic in man—the natural side of each individual. This natural tendency of all men, when unchecked by the Spirit of God can result in an evil “spirit” whether or not Satan or one of his adherents is directly involved.

32 And it shall be given unto you, power over that spirit; and you shall proclaim against that spirit with a loud voice that it is not of God—

verse 32 The diligent servant of God is given power both to discern and to rebuke an evil situation, an evil spirit.

33 Not with railing accusation, that ye be not overcome, neither with boasting nor rejoicing, lest you be seized therewith.

verses 33 “Not with railing accusation . . . neither with boasting nor rejoicing” Keep in mind that the Lord’s servant operates by virtue of the priesthood which is borrowed power from God. The servant does not function by his own power. Thus, he must not allow himself to lose his proper humility. He is merely the servant or instrument of God. A loss of proper perspective or humility in this matter can lead to a loss of priesthood power (D&C 121:43-44).

34 He that receiveth of God, let him account it of God; and let him rejoice that he is accounted of God worthy to receive.

verse 34 “let him account it of God” Let he who receives blessings from God give thanks to God for those blessings (D&C 59:21).

35 And by giving heed and doing these things which ye have received, and which ye shall hereafter receive—and the kingdom is given you of the Father, and power to overcome all things which are not ordained of him—

verse 35 “these things which ye have received, and which ye shall hereafter receive” The Lord refers to the revelations (commandments) in the Doctrine and Covenants—those which the saints had already received and those which they would yet receive.

“and the kingdom is given you of the Father, and power to overcome all things which are not ordained of him” This parenthetical promise of the Lord is contingent upon the individual’s “giving heed and doing these things which ye have received, and which ye shall hereafter receive.”

36 And behold, verily I say unto you, blessed are you who are now hearing these words of mine from the mouth of my servant, for your sins are forgiven you.

verse 36 This promise—that the Lord will forgive the sins of those gathered to hear Joseph receive this revelation—is also contingent upon the Lord’s commandment to be obedient in the previous verse.

37 Let my servant Joseph Wakefield, in whom I am well pleased, and my servant Parley P. Pratt go forth among the churches and strengthen them by the word of exhortation;

verse 37 “my servant Joseph Wakefield” Joseph Wakefield, from Watertown, New York, was apparently a convert in the New York period. In this verse he is called to be a companion to Parley P. Pratt in visiting the branches of the saints in order that they might rebuke the adverse spirits and correct the errant practices that had appeared. Joseph Wakefield was excommunicated in 1834. Among other things, he was offended that Joseph Smith once came out of his translating room in Kirtland and immediately began playing with children, a practice he thought incompatible with the dignity and high office of a prophet (see Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 69, 134).

38 And also my servant John Corrill, or as many of my servants as are ordained unto this office, and let them labor in the vineyard; and let no man hinder them doing that which I have appointed unto them—

verse 38 “my servant John Corrill” Baptized four months earlier in January of 1831, John Corrill is also called on a mission. Like Joseph Wakefield, Corrill was among the first group of men to be ordained to the office of high priest on June 3, 1831, a month following receipt of this revelation. Corrill became disaffected in Missouri and was excommunicated from the Church on March 17, 1839.

39 Wherefore, in this thing my servant Edward Partridge is not justified; nevertheless let him repent and he shall be forgiven.

verse 39 “in this thing my servant Edward Partridge is not justified” Apparently Bishop Partridge had attempted for some reason unknown to us to interfere with the missionary callings confirmed by the Lord in verses 37 and 38. His mistake may have been due to inexperience. He had been in the Church less than six months at the time. Here he is assured that he will be forgiven if he repents of his error.

40 Behold, ye are little children and ye cannot bear all things now; ye must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth.

verse 40 The Lord reminds the church members there assembled that they are as yet immature in their gospel understanding. They needed to grow spiritually.

41 Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me;

verse 41 The Lord also assures the members of his deep affection and intimate relationship with them. Those obedient to their covenants are “given” by the Father to Jesus Christ to become Christ’s children.

“I have overcome the world” We are able to overcome the world by striving diligently to keep the commandments. If we endure, we will be exalted by virtue of the Savior’s atonement. The Father’s expectations of his only begotten Son were far higher. In order for the Savior to overcome the world he had to live a sinless life and then atone for all of the sins of mankind. Because he has “overcome the world” we can take heart and be at peace, for his atonement will cover for our deficiencies. We can “overcome the world” far more easily than he did. He has made it all possible.

42 And none of them that my Father hath given me shall be lost.

verse 42 As far as Jesus is concerned if those members remain faithful, they will not be lost. There is, of course, the issue of their agency, and we have already learned that Joseph Wakefield and John Corrill apparently will lose their inheritance.

43 And the Father and I are one. I am in the Father and the Father in me; and inasmuch as ye have received me, ye are in me and I in you.

verse 43 Let us not speak glibly about this verse and suppose that we thoroughly understand it. It is likely that there is something, and perhaps many things, about the oneness of the Father and the Son that we simply don't understand—indeed, that we are not as yet given to understand (see the commentary for D&C 93:3). We are taught in this verse that we have an opportunity to share in this exciting oneness!

44 Wherefore, I am in your midst, and I am the good shepherd, and the stone of Israel. He that buildeth upon this rock shall never fall.

verse 44 “the stone of Israel” Here the Savior identifies himself as “the stone of Israel.” In scripture he is often referred to as the “rock” or “stone.” This implies that he is our “sure foundation,” firm supporter, refuge, fortress of impregnable strength (see Genesis 49:24; Isaiah 8:14; 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Matthew 7:24; 21:42; John 10:11; Alma 5:38-39; 3 Nephi 11:39-40).

45 And the day cometh that you shall hear my voice and see me, and know that I am.

verse 45 This exciting pronouncement has a few possible interpretations. It may refer to the Lord's second coming wherein those righteous on the earth and the righteous who are caught up to meet him will see his face. Or it could refer to a private audience with him which might occur here on earth, as we enter the world of spirits (2 Nephi 9:41; Alma 40:11-14), or as we are resurrected and meet him at the great and last judgment.

46 Watch, therefore, that ye may be ready. Even so. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

The Colesville saints arrived in the Kirtland area from New York in the spring of 1831, and a recent convert, a former Shaker by the name of Leman Copley, allowed them to move onto his land in Thompson, Ohio, about twenty miles outside Kirtland (see D&C 49 and its commentary). In May of 1831 the Lord commanded the Colesville saints, while in Thompson, Ohio, to begin to live the law of consecration [**D&C 51 - Law of Consecration**].

Section 51 Law of Consecration

In May 1831 the saints from Colesville, New York, began to arrive in Ohio. The saints in Ohio had been instructed to divide their land with their eastern brethren (D&C 48:2), and it was the duty of Edward Partridge who had been appointed bishop (D&C 41) to take care of the newcomers.

The Colesville saints were settled in Thompson, Ohio, about sixteen miles east of Kirtland on a 759-acre plot owned by Lemam Copley, a new convert, who had agreed to allow the saints to use his land. Here they would form a united order separate from the one getting started in Kirtland. This branch consisted largely of the extended family of Joseph Knight Sr., including Joseph's son, Newel, and their friends and acquaintances. Newel Knight was appointed president of the branch at Thompson. The Colesville saints had been particularly persecuted in New York and had given up much to gather to Ohio. Bishop Partridge asked for divine guidance. He and the Prophet were particularly anxious to know how to provide for them. The Prophet inquired of the Lord for him and received this revelation in May 1831.

The experience of Orson Pratt, who was present when Joseph received this revelation at Thompson, Ohio, was reported later by another individual:

No great noise or physical manifestation was made; Joseph was as calm as the morning sun. But he [Orson Pratt] noticed a change in his [Joseph's] countenance that he had never noticed before, when a revelation was given to him. Joseph's face was exceedingly white, and seemed to shine (*Millennial Star*, August 11, 1874, 498-99).

The Thompson saints immediately went to work improving the farm by fencing the property and planting crops. They were commanded to settle on the land as if they were going to be there "for years" (verse 17). However, their stay turned out to last only a very "little season" (verse 16)—only about a month. After the unpleasant missionary experience among the Shakers (see commentary for D&C 49), Lemam Copley left the Church, broke his agreement with the Colesville saints, and evicted them from his land.

In section 54 the Colesville saints will be commanded to move to Independence, Missouri, to begin to establish Zion. They would thus become the first group of saints to be commanded to move to Zion.

Section 51 contains important principles upon which the law of consecration is based. The Lord was beginning to train the saints in the principle of consecration as a preparatory step before they should be permitted to journey to Zion. The city of Zion was, of course, to be established upon this principle. Review the background material for section 42 regarding the law of consecration. It should be mentioned that the law of consecration, to this point, had been unfolded a little at a time—line upon line. It will continue to be revealed slowly to the saints. While some who read section 42 believe that it contains the law of consecration, it was only a beginning. Additions to the law

may be found in sections 48, 51, 56, 57, 70, 78, 82, 83, 85, 90, 92, 96, 101, 104, and 105.

As originally received, section 51 directs the saints to legally deed over all their property and possessions to the bishop as agent for the Church. Stewardships would then be appointed back to them, and they were given legal title to their stewardship. Should a steward over consecrated property leave the Church, he could maintain his stewardship, but could take nothing else of his originally consecrated property with him. This was all in accordance with the law of the Lord given earlier (see D&C 42:30-32). In March 1833, however, a Missouri court held that irrevocably deeding all of one's property to the Church was not a practice that should be allowed, since it conflicted with the court's views of fairness and its understanding of the intent of British common law. The Missouri court ordered that property formerly consecrated to the Church be returned to its original owner in the specific case of an apostate member named Bates. Since the intent of section 51 was that that all aspects of consecration should be strictly legal, Joseph revised the wording of the revelation to accommodate the court's decision by deleting the verse between the present verses 2 and 3 that instructed Edward Partridge to retain legal title to consecrated properties. Joseph also added verse 5, which clarifies that stewardships are the private property of their stewards.

While the specific forms of consecration observed in Ohio and later in Missouri are no longer practiced today, the law of consecration itself has never been rescinded. The obligations of consecration laid upon the Church by the law of the Lord (see D&C 42:30-39) are still binding and are observed today largely by the payment of tithes and offerings, by accepting church callings, by sacrificing the time and other resources sometimes necessary to magnify those callings, and by entering into covenants to make whatever further temporal sacrifices the Lord may ask of us.

1 Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God, and I will speak unto my servant Edward Partridge, and give unto him directions; for it must needs be that he receive directions how to organize this people.

verse 1 “how to organize this people” Edward Partridge was the only bishop in the Church, and the responsibility for the organization and temporal welfare of the incoming saints fell to him.

2 For it must needs be that they be organized according to my laws; if otherwise, they will be cut off.

verse 2 “it must needs be that they be organized according to my laws” Zion can be created only if the Lord's people are organized based upon the principles of heaven (D&C 105:5). On February 9, 1831, barely three months before this revelation was received, the Lord had given the Church his law, including the law of consecration

(see D&C 42:30-39). Section 51 will teach Bishop Partridge and the saints how to apply the law of consecration to their circumstances in Ohio.

It should be noted that the law of consecration has been applied to saints differently in different times and circumstances, and that while the principles of consecration will always remain the same, we should not assume this law will be applied to a future Zion in the exact form described in this section.

3 Wherefore, let my servant Edward Partridge, and those whom he has chosen, in whom I am well pleased, appoint unto this people their portions, every man equal according to his family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs.

verse 3 “those whom he has chosen” In D&C 42:31, Bishop Partridge was commanded to “appoint” and “set apart” two counselors, either elders or high priests to assist him in his work.

“this people” This phrase, of course, refers to the newly arrived Colesville saints in Thompson, Ohio.

“every man equal according to his family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs” The bishop is directed to give to each man his stewardship—those material possessions which he requires to live and work. This stewardship is based on the size of his family and other specific circumstances to be determined by the bishop. Under this system, every man is to be “equal” not in the specific amount of goods given, but rather equal in that each man receives according to the same principles, according to the same process—a fair process administered by the bishop. One man may have a large family; another a small one. One man may farm. Another may teach. Yet another may run a mercantile store. All will receive according to their needs. Note particularly also the generous consideration given to personal preferences, or “wants,” in establishing these stewardships (see also D&C 82:17).

4 And let my servant Edward Partridge, when he shall appoint a man his portion, give unto him a writing that shall secure unto him his portion, that he shall hold it, even this right and this inheritance in the church, until he transgresses and is not accounted worthy by the voice of the church, according to the laws and covenants of the church to belong to the church.

verse 4 “a writing” This is a deed. A man’s “portion” is his stewardship. With this stewardship, he receives a deed of ownership for all of the contents of the stewardship. We will learn in the following verse, that if the man transgresses and leaves the Church, he maintains legal ownership of his stewardship, but he has no claim on the other materials which he originally consecrated to the Church.

5 And if he shall transgress and is not accounted worthy to belong to the church, he shall not have power to claim that portion which he has consecrated unto the

bishop for the poor and needy of my church; therefore, he shall not retain the gift, but shall only have claim on that portion that is deeded unto him.

verse 5 “he shall not retain the gift, but shall only have claim on that portion that is deeded unto him” The individual who leaves the Church has no claim on those materials which he originally consecrated to the Church—“the gift”—but he maintains legal ownership of his stewardship—“that portion that is deeded unto him.”

6 And thus all things shall be made sure, according to the laws of the land.

verses 6 It should be noted that the system was based upon private and not communal or common ownership. Also it was the Lord’s intent that the system comply with the laws of the land.

7 And let that which belongs to this people be appointed unto this people.

verse 7 The assets consecrated to the bishop were to be used only for the welfare of church members who were themselves living the law of consecration.

8 And the money which is left unto this people—let there be an agent appointed unto this people, to take the money to provide food and raiment, according to the wants of this people.

verse 8 “And the money which is left unto this people” Bishop Partridge managed such church temporal matters as paying bills, buying and selling lands and goods, helping with construction projects, printing, and assisting the poor. Thus, he had accessible to him in the bishop’s storehouse some funds, and not just material goods.

“let there be an agent appointed unto this people” An “agent” is to be appointed to assist the bishop. This agent was to handle the actual transfer of properties in and out of the bishop’s storehouse. A. Sidney Gilbert was called the following month as the agent to assist Bishop Partridge (see D&C 53:4).

9 And let every man deal honestly, and be alike among this people, and receive alike, that ye may be one, even as I have commanded you.

verse 9 “let every man . . . be alike among this people” In the united order everyone was “alike” in that they each had what they needed for the support of themselves and their families. There were no rich or poor among them. To truly become one, the saints must be willing to share their temporal blessings freely with other saints. The personal need to be rich, to have more than one’s brothers and sisters, is incompatible with the establishment of Zion.

In absolute terms, however, the saints in the order were not alike in goods possessed or income received. A man with seven children had needs that were different from those of couples just beginning married life. The order was united in love, purpose, and commitment, but unity does not mean absolute sameness.

10 And let that which belongeth to this people not be taken and given unto that of another church.

11 Wherefore, if another church would receive money of this church, let them pay unto this church again according as they shall agree;

verses 10-11 The word “church” in these verses means branch of the Church such as the Church in Missouri as opposed to the Church in Thompson, Ohio. At this time, apparently, the Lord wished the different areas of the Church to remain financially separate from each other, and the consecration of properties within the different units was to be handled separately.

12 And this shall be done through the bishop or the agent, which shall be appointed by the voice of the church.

13 And again, let the bishop appoint a storehouse unto this church; and let all things both in money and in meat, which are more than is needful for the wants of this people, be kept in the hands of the bishop.

verse 13 The bishop is assigned to be responsible for distributing those things in the “bishop’s storehouse” wherein are kept all those things consecrated to the Church that have not yet been distributed as stewardships and those goods produced by the order in excess of their needs (the “residue”).

Though bishops’ storehouses may have changed somewhat conceptually since the early 1830s, they continue to operate in the Church today on the same general principles as stated in sections 42 and 51.

14 And let him also reserve unto himself for his own wants, and for the wants of his family, as he shall be employed in doing this business.

verse 14 “he shall be employed in doing this business” In most cases, those who are asked to serve the Church full time also have a right to temporal support through the resources of the Church. In Kirtland, Bishop Partridge was to be employed full time in managing the consecrations of the saints and administering those resources to the poor and the needy. These duties made it difficult for him to pursue his trade as a hatmaker at his home in Painesville, Ohio. In consideration of his circumstances, the bishop was allowed appropriate compensation from the storehouse.

15 And thus I grant unto this people a privilege of organizing themselves according to my laws.

verse 15 This is the Lord’s go ahead to the Colesville saints to start living the law of consecration and stewardship. The Lord also emphasizes that it is a privilege for them to participate in this celestial plan.

16 And I consecrate unto them this land for a little season, until I, the Lord, shall provide for them otherwise, and command them to go hence;

verse 16 “this land” For the saints generally, “this land” refers to the area around Kirtland, Ohio, but for the Colesville saints, to whom section 51 was specifically given, it refers to the Lemman Copley farm in Thompson, Ohio.

“for a little season” The Lord informs the Colesville saints that for them Kirtland is just a stopover. In fact, the “little season” for these saints will last only about six weeks. Lemman Copley, who had offered to share his farm with the incoming saints, will withdraw his offer when Bishop Partridge begins organizing things according to the law of consecration as directed in this revelation. On July 3, 1831, at the Lord’s direction, the Colesville saints will leave Thompson, Ohio, for Jackson County, Missouri.

17 And the hour and the day is not given unto them, wherefore let them act upon this land as for years, and this shall turn unto them for their good.

verse 17 “as for years” The Lord wanted the saints, even the Colesville saints, to live the gospel—including the law of consecration—and share it in Ohio as though they were to be there for a long time. Though Kirtland was home to the Ohio branch of the Church for years (see D&C 64:21-22), it was only a brief stop for the Colesville saints. Yet no place is so “temporary” that it allows us a time-out from living the principles of the gospel. Wherever we find ourselves, we must be saints. The same labors of love, diligence, industry, and service, and the same spiritual obligations to build Zion as best we can, are required of us in short-term habitations as in permanent ones. Thus, students and others who are just “passing through” some unit of the Church are expected to make the same investments of time, money, service, and emotional support to their “temporary” wards and stakes as to those in which they expect to live permanently.

18 Behold, this shall be an example unto my servant Edward Partridge, in other places, in all churches.

verse 18 “this shall be an example” Bishop Partridge is put on notice by the Lord that the Lord will be implementing the law of consecration in other places besides the Kirtland area. When the Lord eventually does so, the new organizational structure will be as has been outlined in section 51. Bishop Edward Partridge will be called to Missouri in less than one month (see D&C 52:3, 24).

19 And whoso is found a faithful, a just, and a wise steward shall enter into the joy of his Lord, and shall inherit eternal life.

verse 19 “a wise steward shall enter the joy of his Lord” This joy is likely a gift of the Spirit in the form of a subjective feeling and a permanent reward in the celestial kingdom.

20 Verily, I say unto you, I am Jesus Christ, who cometh quickly, in an hour you think not. Even so. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1831 June

By June 1831, most of the eastern saints had arrived in the Kirtland area, and many had, for the moment at least, been settled on land belonging to Lemam Copley in Thompson, Ohio. June 3, 1831, was the day appointed for a special conference of elders (see D&C 44:1). The conference was to last for three days, through June 5. This was the first conference to be held in Ohio, and forty-four elders attended. At this conference several were ordained to the office of high priest. On the day following the conference, which was June 6, the Lord favored the elders there gathered with a revelation [**D&C 52 - Location of Zion**] in which he named Missouri as the specific location where Zion would be built, and he called twenty-eight missionaries to leave their homes in Kirtland and travel to Missouri to proclaim the gospel.

Recall that the Colesville branch of the Church, directed by branch president Newel Knight, were uprooted when Lemam Copley asked them to leave his land. They had experienced further troubles in trying to live the law of consecration, apparently in large part due to selfishness of several of their number, especially one Ezra Thayer (or Thayre). Brother Thayer had been one of the missionaries called to Missouri, but he was having serious misgivings about this missionary call and even about his church membership. Thus, the missionary assignments recorded in section 52 were altered later in June 1831 to exclude Ezra Thayer [**D&C 56 - Change in Missionary Assignments**].

Also in June 1831 the Lord commanded the Colesville saints to travel as a group to Missouri to establish themselves there [**D&C 54 - Colesville Saints Sent to Zion**].

About the middle of June 1831, Joseph was planning his trip to Missouri, having been commanded to go there as a missionary with Sidney Rigdon as his companion. Bishop Edward Partridge was called to go also. Once there, Bishop Partridge would remain in Missouri as bishop over the Church in Zion. A. Sidney Gilbert, the partner of Newell K. Whitney in the Gilbert and Whitney store, was commanded to go along with Joseph in the presidential party [**D&C 53 - Algernon Sidney Gilbert**]. He too would remain in Missouri to function as keeper of the bishop's storehouse and the Church's land agent in Missouri.

A new arrival in Kirtland, a former journalist and newspaper editor, William W. Phelps also received a revelation [**D&C 55 - William Wines Phelps**]. He was commanded to join the Church and then travel to Missouri with Joseph and the others. Phelps would also remain in Missouri to run the Church's printing press and to edit the Church's monthly magazine, the *Evening and Morning Star*.

Joseph and those assigned in the revelations to travel with him departed Kirtland for Missouri on June 19.

Section 52 Location of Zion

From all parts of the land came the saints to attend the fourth conference of the Church which had been announced in a revelation in February 1831 (D&C 44). The prior three conferences had all been held in Fayette on June 9, 1830, September 26, 1830, and January 2, 1831. This conference opened on the morning of the 3rd of June 1831 (a Friday) in Kirtland, Ohio, and closed on the 5th of June. Joseph Smith presided. Fourteen months had elapsed since the organization of the Church with six members. Forty-four elders attended the conferences. The membership of the Church by this time numbered about two thousand.

There was a great outpouring of the Spirit upon the assemblage. Several men were ordained to the office of high priest. Joseph Smith ordained five brethren to that office. Then Lyman Wight, one of the high priests ordained by Joseph, was instructed to ordain Joseph Smith and seventeen other men to the same office. This was the first time anyone in this dispensation had been ordained a high priest. In 1829 Peter, James, and John had bestowed apostolic authority upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, including the authority to ordain high priests. It was by this apostolic authority and by his office as first elder in the Church that Joseph ordained Lyman Wight and the others. It should be noted that Lyman Wight did not bestow upon Joseph Smith any priesthood authority Joseph did not already hold. This same pattern of “I-ordain-you-you-ordain-me” ordination had also been followed on April 6, 1830, when the Church was organized. On that date Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery ordained each other as elders in the Church, even though they already held apostolic authority from Peter, James, and John. As particular priesthood offices were created in the Church, it was necessary even for Joseph Smith to be ordained thereto according to the revealed pattern. Though Joseph had been an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ since May of 1829, he became first an elder and then a high priest in the Church only as those offices came into existence, and he did so in the revealed manner.

During the conference, Joseph prophesied that John the Revelator was then among the ten tribes to help prepare them for their return from their long dispersion. After Lyman Wight was ordained an high priest, the Spirit fell upon Brother Wight, and he prophesied concerning the coming of Christ. He said there were some in the congregation that would live until the Savior comes in glory. He prophesied that some of the saints would suffer martyrdom and seal their testimonies of Jesus Christ with their blood.

Satan even revealed himself during this conference. Parley P. Pratt recorded in his autobiography, “There also were some strange manifestations of false spirits which were immediately rebuked” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 72). Satan bound two brethren, Harvey Whitlock and John Murdock, so that they could not speak. Joseph

commanded the devil in the name of Christ, and he departed, much to the joy and comfort of the saints (*John Whitmer's History of the Church*, chapter 7).

There had been rumors for months among the saints concerning the location of Zion. Until this section was received, no one knew that location. Section 52 was received on either the last day of the conference or on the day following. In verses 2 and 42 the Lord reveals that the next conference of the Church will be held in Missouri, which is Zion—"The land which I will consecrate unto my people, which are a remnant of Jacob, and those who are heirs according to the covenant" and "Missouri, which is the land of your inheritance."

The Lord then called twenty-eight missionaries to leave their homes and travel the one thousand or so miles from Kirtland to Independence to preach the gospel. They were commanded to go forth two by two and proclaim the word, on the way, to every congregation where they could get a hearing. Although the western frontier of Missouri was their destination, they were commanded to take different routes on their way so they might broaden their exposure (verse 33). This was an exciting and dramatic revelation! The saints now knew where the gathering would take place.

The saints will live in Independence from June 1831 through 1833 when they will be forced to leave and move farther north. They will then leave Missouri altogether after the "extermination order" is issued by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs on October 27, 1838.

We have never lost the theology that Zion, the New Jerusalem, will be founded in Missouri and will be a gathering place of the saints before the Lord's second coming. We have dedicated a temple site there, and in the Lord's due time Zion will yet be established in Independence. Some saints will be called to go there but not all saints, certainly. The stake there will be the center stake of the Church. When the Lord returns to his temple, Jackson County will be the headquarters of the political kingdom of God—the center of the earth's government. A passage in Isaiah suggests that during the Millennium the secular leadership will center in the New Jerusalem and the spiritual leadership in Old Jerusalem: "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

Some have suggested that Joseph's use of the word "enemies" in verse 42 of this section may not have been exactly the word the Lord intended. In the verse the Missourians are referred to as the "enemies" of the saints. This kind of pre-conditioning may have resulted in a bias in the minds of the saints against the Missourians with whom they had to deal daily. As the saints moved into Missouri, they had to buy land, building materials, and provisions from the Missourians. As the saints were forced to do business with their "enemies" the relationship between the saints and the Missourians soon became an adversarial one resulting in the eventual persecution and expulsion of the saints. Perhaps in verse 42 the Lord wanted to simply express the idea that the

Missourians did not know the gospel and would likely be unsympathetic toward the interests and intentions of the saints. Perhaps he would have wanted to warn them to deal with the Missourians in a kindly and diplomatic way.

As we have mentioned above, the date recorded for this revelation in the heading of the Doctrine and Covenants, June 7, 1831, is incorrect. Joseph indicated in the *History of the Church (HC, 1:175-77)* that this revelation was given the day after the conference closed. Since it was a three-day conference, beginning on Friday, June 3, and ending on Sunday June 5, the revelation had to have been received on Monday June 6. This date is corroborated by contemporary accounts (see Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 71).

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto the elders whom he hath called and chosen in these last days, by the voice of his Spirit—

2 Saying: I, the Lord, will make known unto you what I will that ye shall do from this time until the next conference, which shall be held in Missouri, upon the land which I will consecrate unto my people, which are a remnant of Jacob, and those who are heirs according to the covenant.

verse 2 “the next conference, which shall be held in Missouri” The Lord had commanded that conferences of the Church be held every three months or as often as the elders, assembled in conference, decided (see D&C 20:61). Usually the leaders of the Church decided, in one conference, the date and place of the next. The next one was obviously to be held in Missouri, “the land which I will consecrate unto my people.” This verse amounts to a revelation as to the general location of Zion. The exact location of Zion, however, has not yet been revealed.

3 Wherefore, verily I say unto you, let my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon take their journey as soon as preparations can be made to leave their homes, and journey to the land of Missouri.

verse 3 “let my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon . . . leave their homes” The sacrifices required by the Lord in these early days were no less difficult for Joseph and Emma than they were for the other saints. Four months prior to Joseph’s receiving this revelation, Joseph and Emma had arrived in Kirtland. At that time Emma had been six months pregnant. The Smiths had first boarded with the Whitneys, and had been in their own quarters on the Morley farm less than three months. Barely a month before this call was received, Emma had given birth to twins who both died within a few hours—her second and third babies to die at birth. Soon afterward the Smiths had adopted the Murdock twins, and now Joseph was called to leave Emma in Kirtland to the care of friends and travel to Missouri for the sake of Zion.

4 And inasmuch as they are faithful unto me, it shall be made known unto them what they shall do;

5 And it shall also, inasmuch as they are faithful, be made known unto them the land of your inheritance.

6 And inasmuch as they are not faithful, they shall be cut off, even as I will, as seemeth me good.

verses 4-6 Those of us who study scripture are always more comfortable when the Lord is expressing his love and tender mercy for each of us, and less comfortable when he is explaining the consequences of his justice. Our natural reaction to these three verses is to fly to the defense of Joseph and Sidney and think, “Is it really necessary that the Lord speak to them so plainly?” These verses do remind us that God is a God of Justice as well as mercy, and that he is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).

verses 7-33 Twenty-eight elders, in addition to Joseph and Sidney, are called to travel as missionaries to Missouri by different routes, preaching the gospel as they go. While this work does contain some biographical information, many of these missionaries will remain unknown to the reader. Excellent biographical summaries for these and all other individuals mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants may be found in Dean Jessee’s *Papers of Joseph Smith* (see also Black, *Who’s Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*).

7 And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant Lyman Wight and my servant John Corrill take their journey speedily;

8 And also my servant John Murdock, and my servant Hyrum Smith, take their journey unto the same place by the way of Detroit.

9 And let them journey from thence preaching the word by the way, saying none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith.

verse 9 The missionaries are to teach only what they find in scripture when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; they are reminded not teach their own ideas.

10 Let them go two by two, and thus let them preach by the way in every congregation, baptizing by water, and the laying on of the hands by the water’s side.

verse 10 “**Let them go two by two**” Here is one modern scriptural basis for the practice in the Church of sending out missionaries in pairs.

11 For thus saith the Lord, I will cut my work short in righteousness, for the days come that I will send forth judgment unto victory.

verse 11 **“I will cut my work short in righteousness”** The Lord will make “short work” of the world when he moves suddenly and in total righteousness to end it and to establish his millennial kingdom. Missionaries, like these called to Missouri, are sent out to warn and prepare the world for the sudden and righteous judgments of God that are soon to come.

12 And let my servant Lyman Wight beware, for Satan desireth to sift him as chaff.

verse 12 The reader will recall that Lyman Wight, before his conversion to the gospel, had been a Campbellite and leader of a small group of families who had established themselves on the Isaac Morley farm near Kirtland. They were living a type of united order on a small scale—the so-called “common stock family.” They had become involved in petty controversies and major conflicts. Some members of the family had decided that what belonged to one belonged to all, hence they would take each other’s clothes and property and use them without permission. Joseph will advise them to abandon their common stock program.

13 And behold, he that is faithful shall be made ruler over many things.

verses 14-19 In these next six verses, the Lord teaches the secret or key (“a pattern in all things”) for discerning those individuals who are of God and those who are not. This teaching is made necessary because “Satan is abroad in the land” and will try to deceive by imitating the godly individual. The Lord is teaching this grand secret so that it might be used to discern those who lead and teach in the Church. In verses 15 and 16, “he that prayeth” and “he that speaketh” refers to those who lead and teach in the Church. These may also include the missionaries of the Church.

The grand secret is threefold: (1) He who is “of God” is obedient to the commandments of God, and he evidences, in his very character, the fruits (gifts of the Spirit—those increments of spiritual growth that are increments of the attributes of Christ) consequent to that obedience. (2) He “trembleth” under God’s power—he evidences a contrite spirit, and he is submissive to God. (3) He brings forth positive fruits. He who obeys the Lord’s commands and grows spiritually brings forth positive fruits in himself. Also, he naturally desires to influence others to do the same—he also brings forth good fruits in all those to whom he ministers and teaches.

He that fails to obey the Lord’s commandments, is not contrite and submissive, and who does not naturally focus on the spiritual betterment of others is not of God. He is the deceiver.

14 And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations—

15 Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances.

verse 15 The unspoken implication of this verse is that there will be some who pray and appear to be contrite, yet their prayers are insincere and they only feign contrition. They are also hypocritical in their appearance of obedience—they do not obey or they obey for the wrong reasons. These may be found in and out of the Church. Again, they are the deceivers.

“obey mine ordinances” The expression *ordinances* here likely refers to all laws, statutes, and covenants—the commandments—associated with the restored gospel.

16 He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances.

verse 16 Again, just as in the previous verse, we find here an implication that the deceiver will feign contrition and meekness in his speaking and teaching, yet he is disobedient to the Lord’s commands and he lacks the spiritual character of an obedient servant.

17 And again, he that trembleth under my power shall be made strong, and shall bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you.

verse 17 “he that trembleth under my power” This expression refers to the genuine contrition and submissiveness of man. He who feels his frailties, inadequacies, and weaknesses compared to God is likely to obey—though it be difficult—and consequently grow spiritually (“bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom”). It requires little effort to disobey. One need only follow the promptings of his natural-man self. He who obeys must exert real effort in overcoming his natural tendencies, even to the point of trembling in the Lord’s presence.

18 And again, he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits, even according to this pattern, is not of me.

verse 18 “he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits” This phrase refers to those individuals who show outward evidence of being overcome by worldly influences and therefore lack evidence of spiritual growth.

19 Wherefore, by this pattern ye shall know the spirits in all cases under the whole heavens.

verse 19 The Lord has given this pattern so that each of us may be able to discern those of God from those of Satan.

20 And the days have come; according to men's faith it shall be done unto them.

verse 20 **“And the days have come”** This expression refers to the last days prophesied of in the scriptures, when the fulness of the gospel would be preached and when it would be “done unto them” according to their faith—those leaders, teachers, and missionaries who are of God will receive their just eternal reward.

21 Behold, this commandment is given unto all the elders whom I have chosen.

verse 21 **“this commandment”** This likely refers to section 52 in its entirety, though the Lord could be referring more specifically to the important pattern that he has described in verses 14 through 19.

22 And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant Thomas B. Marsh and my servant Ezra Thayre take their journey also, preaching the word by the way unto this same land.

verse 22 **“and my servant Ezra Thayre”** This command for Ezra Thayre to travel to Missouri as a companion to Thomas B. Marsh will be revoked less than two weeks following Joseph's receiving this revelation (see D&C 56:5) due to Thayre's lack of preparation. He will, however, be called again about seven months from the date of this revelation (see D&C 75:31).

“unto this same land” That is, to Missouri.

23 And again, let my servant Isaac Morley and my servant Ezra Booth take their journey, also preaching the word by the way unto this same land.

24 And again, let my servants Edward Partridge and Martin Harris take their journey with my servants Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, Jun.

25 Let my servants David Whitmer and Harvey Whitlock also take their journey, and preach by the way unto this same land.

26 And let my servants Parley P. Pratt and Orson Pratt take their journey, and preach by the way, even unto this same land.

27 And let my servants Solomon Hancock and Simeon Carter also take their journey unto this same land, and preach by the way.

28 Let my servants Edson Fuller and Jacob Scott also take their journey.

29 Let my servants Levi W. Hancock and Zebedee Coltrin also take their journey.

30 Let my servants Reynolds Cahoon and Samuel H. Smith also take their journey.

31 Let my servants Wheeler Baldwin and William Carter also take their journey.

32 And let my servants Newel Knight and Selah J. Griffin both be ordained, and also take their journey.

verse 32 The commandment given these two brethren was also changed through no fault of their own (see D&C 56:6-7).

Though twenty-eight missionaries were called in this revelation to go the Missouri, thirty actually went. One of the original twenty-eight did not go (Ezra Thayer), and three additional brethren were called later (see sections 53, 55, and 56).

33 Yea, verily I say, let all these take their journey unto one place, in their several courses, and one man shall not build upon another's foundation, neither journey in another's track.

verse 33 “one man shall not build upon another's foundation, neither journey in another's track” As the missionaries traveled to Missouri, they were commanded to take different routes so that they might preach to as many people as possible.

34 He that is faithful, the same shall be kept and blessed with much fruit.

35 And again, I say unto you, let my servants Joseph Wakefield and Solomon Humphrey take their journey into the eastern lands;

36 Let them labor with their families, declaring none other things than the prophets and apostles, that which they have seen and heard and most assuredly believe, that the prophecies may be fulfilled.

37 In consequence of transgression, let that which was bestowed upon Heman Basset be taken from him, and placed upon the head of Simonds Ryder.

verse 37 “let that which was bestowed upon Heman Basset be taken from him” One of the Kirtland saints involved in “the family” before the arrival of Joseph Smith, Heman Basset was one of those most caught up in the false spiritual manifestations discussed in sections 46, 49-50. He had left the Church by May 1831, a month before this revelation was received. “That which was bestowed upon” him was the office of an elder in the Church and a call to preach the gospel in the Kirtland area.

“and placed upon the head of Simonds Ryder” Symonds Ryder is called on a mission. The story of his conversion and apostasy are interesting. He was a Campbellite preacher who was converted after reading an account in the newspaper of a great earthquake in China which destroyed Peking. Six weeks prior he had heard a young Mormon girl predict the destruction of that city. The superficiality of his conversion was soon evident. In the letter, signed by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, in which Brother Ryder was called on a mission and in the license-to-preach he received from the Church, his name was spelled R-i-d-e-r instead of R-y-d-e-r. He was greatly offended and claimed that his call could not have come from God because the “Spirit” would never err and misspell his name! He left the Church in the fall of 1831,

and he later assisted others in tarring and feathering Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in March 1832 (see the background material for section 81). It is ironic that his name is still not spelled correctly in the Doctrine and Covenants. His tombstone and his signature give the spelling as Symonds Ryder, not Symonds Rider or Simonds Ryder.

38 And again, verily I say unto you, let Jared Carter be ordained a priest, and also George James be ordained a priest.

39 Let the residue of the elders watch over the churches, and declare the word in the regions round about them; and let them labor with their own hands that there be no idolatry nor wickedness practised.

verse 39 “Let the residue of the elders watch over the churches” The Lord commands those elders not assigned to go as missionaries to Missouri to stay home and be the priesthood leaders for the saints in the branches (“churches”) in and around Kirtland.

“let them labor with their own hands that there be no idolatry nor wickedness practised” The Lord reminds the saints that the law of consecration which is to be practiced in Kirtland is not going to mean a free ride for anyone but is an opportunity and an obligation to work as faithful stewards for the benefit of all. Those who are more interested in what they might *obtain* from the labor of others than they are in what they might *contribute* (these value their own material possessions above their covenant obligations) may be accused of “idolatry” as well as “wickedness.”

40 And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple.

verse 40 “remember in all things the poor and the needy” The Lord seldom speaks of the law of consecration and stewardship without commenting on the importance of looking after the poor and the needy. The care of the poor and the needy is obviously a most important and nonnegotiable requirement for the saints if they are to be celestial people.

41 And again, let my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge take with them a recommend from the church. And let there be one obtained for my servant Oliver Cowdery also.

verse 41 “a recommend” The Lord has previously commanded that those moving from branch to branch carry a *recommend* (see D&C 20:64, 84), a written document certifying the holder’s worthiness and good standing in the Church. Even the leaders of the Church were required to observe the policy (see also D&C 72:17-19). In our day this requirement is observed by forwarding individual membership records from one church unit to another. Also, with modern means of communication, a bishop can

contact a new member's previous bishop for confirmation of good standing even before receiving printed membership records.

42 And thus, even as I have said, if ye are faithful ye shall assemble yourselves together to rejoice upon the land of Missouri, which is the land of your inheritance, which is now the land of your enemies.

verse 42 “the land of your inheritance, which is now the land of your enemies” As mentioned in the introduction of this section, this phrase was a clear foreshadowing of, and possibly even a contributing factor to, the difficulties to come. When the saints began to gather in Jackson County, Missouri, the local non-LDS inhabitants quickly became antagonistic.

43 But, behold, I, the Lord, will hasten the city in its time, and will crown the faithful with joy and with rejoicing.

verse 43 “I, the Lord, will hasten the city in its time” This phrase refers to the city of New Jerusalem, the latter-day Zion.

44 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and I will lift them up at the last day. Even so. Amen.

verse 44 “I will lift them up at the last day” The Lord avows that he will exalt them (“the faithful” in the previous verse) at his coming (see also the commentary for D&C 17:8).

Character Vignette

Ezra Booth

He was a Methodist minister in Mantua, Ohio—a small town near Hiram, Ohio—and was a man of “more than ordinary culture and with strong natural abilities.” He was a friend of John and Elsa Johnson of Hiram, Ohio. One day in 1831, Ezra Booth, along with the Johnsons, visited Joseph in his home in Kirtland. Elsa Johnson at the time had been afflicted with a chronically “lame arm” and was not, at the time of their visit to Joseph, able to lift her hand to her head. Ezra Booth and the Johnsons visited Joseph partly out of curiosity and partly to see for themselves what there might be in the “New Doctrine.” During the interview, the conversation turned to the ancient Apostles. Someone said, “Here is Mrs. Johnson with a lame arm. Has God given any power to men on earth to cure her?” A few moments later, when the conversation had turned to another subject, Joseph rose, walked across the room, took Elsa Johnson by the hand, and said in the most solemn and impressive manner: “Woman, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command thee to be whole.” He then immediately left the room. The group was awe-struck at the presumption of the man and the calm assurance with

which he spoke. Mrs. Johnson at once lifted her arm with ease, and on her return home the next day was able to do her washing without difficulty or pain.

Ezra Booth came into the Church shortly after witnessing this miraculous healing. He was ordained an elder and called, in section 52, to go to Missouri as a companion of Isaac Morley. While in Missouri, he was disillusioned to find that he was not granted that which he had requested of the Lord: the power to “smite men and make them believe.” It appears that he required a continuous flow of miraculous manifestations to maintain his spiritual vitality. When he learned that faith, humility, and patience were required, he was disappointed and turned away from the Church.

He announced his apostasy in September 1831, about the time Joseph was moving from Kirtland to Hiram, Ohio (see the commentary for section 64), and he was excommunicated from the Church. He was later to write a series of nine anti-Mormon letters that were initially published in the *Ohio Star* in Ravenna, Ohio. They were eventually also published in Eber D. Howe’s book, *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic). Booth’s letters did not deal with any fundamental truths but rather decried “lightness and levity” in the Prophet and a “proneness to jesting and joking”—also a “temper easily irritated.” He also brought up other points that did not bear on the doctrine, rather on what he perceived as inconsistencies in the restored Church. His letters played a direct role in inflaming mob violence against the saints in Hiram.

Section 53 Algernon Sidney Gilbert

What excitement there was in the Church! The saints now knew the general location of the New Jerusalem, and missionaries had been dispatched to Missouri to begin to build up the City of Zion. As soon as the city is built, the Lord will come! What can I do to help? In this spirit of intense excitement, Sidney Gilbert came to the Prophet to ask what he could do. He had not received a calling from the Lord in the conference of June 1831, and shortly after the conference he approached Joseph Smith. Joseph received section 53 in response to Brother Gilbert's inquiry. According to the *Far West Record*, Sidney Gilbert was ordained an elder by Joseph Smith on June 6, 1831, along with W. W. Phelps (see section 55) and others. It is therefore likely that sections 53 and 55 were given on the same day, on or before June 6, 1831.

Sidney Gilbert, a man of great practical sense and sound judgment, had been a successful businessman merchant in nearby Painsville, Ohio. Subsequently, with Newell K. Whitney he founded the successful mercantile firm of Gilbert and Whitney in Kirtland, Ohio. He was converted and joined the Church in the fall of 1830 when the missionaries dispatched to the Lamanites stopped in the Kirtland area. He was also shy, and he shrank from speaking publicly. He preferred to work behind the scenes. Because of this natural diffidence, he was reluctant to accept a mission call and was once overheard to say that he "would rather die than be a missionary."

Through Joseph, the Lord called Sidney Gilbert to "forsake the world" and give his services to the Church as an "agent" or assistant to Bishop Edward Partridge (see D&C 51:8). He was also called to join the presidential party and travel to Missouri with the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon.

B. H. Roberts said of Sidney Gilbert that the Lord had "few more devoted servants in this dispensation." In Missouri he was appointed keeper of the Lord's storehouse and also had responsibility for purchasing lands for the saints. He assisted Edward Partridge in managing the temporal affairs of the Church in Missouri. He opened another small store (see D&C 57:6-8), which was also named Gilbert and Whitney. This store also served as a bishop's storehouse. In the persecution that came upon the saints in Jackson County, he sacrificed all his worldly goods to the cause. On July 23, 1833 he offered himself as a ransom for the saints. Shortly after the saints were forced out of Independence, he contracted cholera and died April 29, 1834, at the age of 45.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 53:2 I give unto you a commandment that you shall forsake the world.

1 Behold, I say unto you, my servant Sidney Gilbert, that I have heard your prayers; and you have called upon me that it should be made known unto you, of the Lord your God, concerning your calling and election in the church, which I, the Lord, have raised up in these last days.

verse 1 “concerning your calling and election in the church” This is the only use of this phrase in the Doctrine and Covenants. Here this phrase refers only to Brother Gilbert’s calling in the Church.

2 Behold, I, the Lord, who was crucified for the sins of the world, give unto you a commandment that you shall forsake the world.

verse 2 “forsake the world” To forsake the world means to abandon worldly motivations and values. For Brother Gilbert it meant leaving his business in Kirtland to attend to the Lord’s business in Missouri. Elder George Q. Cannon taught:

We need to be born again, and have new hearts put in us. There is too much of the old leaven about us. We are not born again as we should be. Do you not believe that we ought to be born again? Do you not believe that we should become new creatures in Christ Jesus, under the influence of the gospel? All will say, yes, who understand the gospel. You must be born again. You must have new desires, new hearts. But what do we see? We see men following the ways of the world just as much as though they made no pretensions to being Latter-day Saints. Hundreds of people who are called Latter-day Saints you could not distinguish from the world. They have the same desires, the same feelings, the same aspirations, the same passions as the rest of the world. Is this how God wants us to be? No. He wants us to have new hearts, new desires. He wants us to be a changed people when we embrace his gospel (*CR*, October 1899, 50).

3 Take upon you mine ordination, even that of an elder, to preach faith and repentance and remission of sins, according to my word, and the reception of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands;

verse 3 “Take upon you mine ordination” Since we know that Brother Gilbert was ordained an elder on June 6, 1831, this verse provides strong evidence that section 53 was received on or before June 6.

“remission of sins” This phrase seems to be used here as a synonym for baptism.

4 And also to be an agent unto this church in the place which shall be appointed by the bishop, according to commandments which shall be given hereafter.

verse 4 “also to be an agent unto this church” Sidney Gilbert’s responsibilities as an agent include his becoming a real estate buyer in Missouri to acquire land for stewardships and for church buildings.

“appointed by the bishop” Though worded somewhat ambiguously, this verse, and particularly this phrase, seem to indicate that Brother Gilbert would be assisting Bishop Partridge. Since Edward Partridge has just been called to go to Missouri (see D&C 52:24), it is clear that if Sidney Gilbert is to assist the bishop and work under his direction he must go to Missouri with him.

5 And again, verily I say unto you, you shall take your journey with my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon.

6 Behold, these are the first ordinances which you shall receive; and the residue shall be made known in a time to come, according to your labor in my vineyard.

verse 6 “these are the first ordinances which you shall receive” If the word *ordinances* is understood here to mean commandments, as seems likely, then this reference is to further instructions that Sidney Gilbert will receive pertaining to his duties as agent for the Church.

7 And again, I would that ye should learn that he only is saved who endureth unto the end. Even so. Amen.

verse 7 It would seem that few in the early Church were better examples of enduring to the end than was A. Sidney Gilbert. The reader should recall that enduring to the end is not to stop one’s spiritual progress and just hang on by one’s fingernails hoping to die before you begin to begin to slip spiritually; hoping to continue to be judged worthy by the Lord until mortal death. Rather, to endure to the end is to continue proactively to grow spiritually until the end. One cannot retire from gospel commandments.

Section 54 Colesville Saints Sent to Zion

You will recall that in section 51, those saints from Colesville, New York, on their arrival in Ohio, were settled in Thompson, Ohio. They were commanded to live the law of consecration under the leadership of Newel Knight, their branch president. They moved onto the 759 acre farm of Lemman Copley, a new convert and former Shaker. The agreement entered into with Lemman Copley was that he would consecrate half of his farm to the Church and sell the other half to the Church at a fair price.

Serious problems arose soon after their arrival. When Lemman Copley returned from the Shaker mission, which he had enthusiastically proposed, he appeared to have been somewhat “shaken.” He had begun to wonder if perhaps his former church was not right, after all, and the restored Church was wrong. To make matters worse, when Lemman returned to Thompson, many of the members there, people who were living on his land through his generosity, blamed him for deceiving them with the hope of converting the Shakers.

When Bishop Edward Partridge began to divide up Lemman Copley’s farm according to the principle of stewardships, according to the earlier agreement, Lemman, who had not yet legally conveyed his property to the Church, withdrew his offer. In the bitter exchanges that followed, Lemman ordered the Colesville saints off his land. He also charged them rent for the time they had lived there, despite the fact that they had planted his fields, built fences, and made other major improvements to the property.

Problems had also arisen among the Colesville branch members as they tried to live the law of consecration. One of their number, Ezra Thayer, apparently was a major part of the problem.

In section 52 both Newel Knight and Ezra Thayer had been called on missions to Missouri. Newel was to serve with Selah J. Griffin, and Ezra with Thomas B. Marsh. In this section, however, the Lord changes Newel Knight’s assignment. He is asked to “stand fast” in his present assignment as branch president of the Colesville saints. Ezra Thayer was having serious misgivings about his missionary call and his church membership. Thus, in section 56 the Lord will reassign Thomas Marsh and Selah J. Griffin to travel together as missionaries to Zion.

All of these events put the Colesville Branch in a difficult spot. Newel Knight was appointed by the Colesville Branch to petition Joseph Smith to inquire of the Lord concerning the course of action they should pursue, and Joseph did so inquire in June 1831. It seems likely that sections 52, 53, and 55 were all received on, or just before, June 6, 1831, and that section 54 was received somewhat later. Thus, section 54 is out of chronological sequence.

In section 54, the Colesville saints are commanded, as a group, to move to Missouri to begin to build up Zion. They thus became the first body of saints

commanded to move to Missouri. At this early date, it was not intended that any of the other branches in Ohio should go to Missouri.

Newel Knight is remembered from his early days in the Church in Colesville, New York, and by his involvement in the first miracle of the Church. Prior to his baptism, he was once asked by the Prophet to pray in public, but being timid, he refused. The result was that an evil spirit seized him and distorted his face, twisted his limbs, and tossed him about fearfully. Joseph cast out the evil spirit in the name of the Lord. Thus, was the first official miracle in this dispensation accomplished.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, even he who was crucified for the sins of the world—

verse 1 “even Alpha and Omega” See the commentary for D&C 19:1.

2 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, my servant Newel Knight, you shall stand fast in the office whereunto I have appointed you.

verse 2 “you shall stand fast in the office whereunto I have appointed you”
See the introductory commentary for this section.

3 And if your brethren desire to escape their enemies, let them repent of all their sins, and become truly humble before me and contrite.

verse 3 “if your brethren desire to escape their enemies” Newel Knight's brethren were the members of the Colesville Branch. Joseph Smith taught that salvation was victory over one's enemies, which enemies are death, hell, and the devil (see the commentary for 2 Nephi 28:23). Here, however, the Lord may have reference to the Church's enemies in Ohio.

“let them repent of all their sins” The members of the branch at Thompson had been rude and unkind to Lemman Copley in reaction to the failure of the Shaker mission. Some had also shown selfishness rather than humility or gratitude over the prospects of receiving stewardships from the Copley farm in Thompson. Their attitudes and behavior had contributed in some degree to the loss of the Thompson properties and rendered them homeless, and thus more vulnerable to their enemies.

4 And as the covenant which they made unto me has been broken, even so it has become void and of none effect.

verse 4 “the covenant which they made unto me has been broken” These words are addressed not just to Lemman Copley but to the entire Thompson branch, some of whom shared blame with Lemman for the failure of this attempt at consecration.

5 And wo to him by whom this offense cometh, for it had been better for him that he had been drowned in the depth of the sea.

verse 5 We are left to wonder to whom the Lord applied this verse. Perhaps in the final analysis, it was Leman Copley who took back his consecration.

“drowned in the depth of the sea” Robert J. Matthews has pointed out that the Lord, in dealing with mortal man, has always been inclined to use colorful and attention-getting figures of speech. He wrote:

We find these in conversation with his disciples, in teaching the multitudes, and in censuring the Jewish rulers. Some examples are as follows: When he called fishermen into his service he said, “I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). If one knowingly gives offense (which means to lead someone away from the faith), said Jesus, “it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). That is, it would have been better for the person to have died, rather than to have committed that sin. Of Judas who betrayed him, Jesus said, “it had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:24). John the Baptist was praised by Jesus as a “burning and a shining light” and of being “much more than a prophet” (John 5:35; Luke 7:26). James and John he surnamed the “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17), while the Jewish rulers he called “hypocrites,” “blind guides . . . children of hell,” “like unto whited sepulchers, full of dead men’s bones,” “a generation of vipers” (Matthew 23:15-16; 23:27, 33). To a man who had been cured of a physical ailment, Jesus said, “sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (John 5:14), not meaning that every physical ailment is the direct result of sin, but rather that sin would lead to a loss of salvation, which is worse than having a physical affliction. Of those Pharisees and scribes who had such great inconsistency in their beliefs, he said they “strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24). To others he declared, “if thy hand offend thee, cut it off . . . if thy foot offend thee cut it off . . . and if thine eye . . . offend thee, pluck it out” (Matthew 18:8-9) (*Behold the Messiah*, 227).

Can one imagine a more frightening way to die than to have a millstone hung about one’s neck and then be thrown into the sea?!

6 But blessed are they who have kept the covenant and observed the commandment, for they shall obtain mercy.

7 Wherefore, go to now and flee the land, lest your enemies come upon you; and take your journey, and appoint whom you will to be your leader, and to pay moneys for you.

verse 7 As is pointed out in the commentary for verses 7-8 below, the Lord commands the Colesville saints to go to Missouri.

“appoint whom you will to be your leader” Not surprisingly, Newel Knight was chosen to lead the members of the Thompson branch to Missouri.

“and to pay moneys for you” Perhaps this phrase refers to settling the monetary obligations Leman Copley imposed on the saints who had lived on his land after he fell away from the Church.

8 And thus you shall take your journey into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the Lamanites.

verses 7-8 “take your journey” Following their failure to obtain permanent land in Kirtland, the Colesville saints are commanded, with very little notice, to leave Ohio and go to Missouri. About sixty faithful members obeyed this commandment, leaving Ohio on July 3 and arriving in Independence, Missouri, on July 25. The Colesville saints stuck together in Ohio and throughout their lives in the Church, partially through family ties and other natural bonds of affection.

9 And after you have done journeying, behold, I say unto you, seek ye a living like unto men, until I prepare a place for you.

verse 9 “seek ye a living like unto men” Though the Colesville saints had already entered into the covenant of consecration in Ohio, because of their circumstances the Lord instructs them to earn their living in Missouri as best they can by normal secular means until the law of consecration and stewardship can be organized for them there. This will turn out to be an exception to the rule, as normally only those saints who agree to live by the law of consecration in Missouri will be asked to emigrate there from the East.

10 And again, be patient in tribulation until I come; and, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, and they who have sought me early shall find rest to their souls. Even so. Amen.

verse 10 “they who have sought me early shall find rest to their souls”
See the commentary for D&C 15:6.

Section 55 William Wines Phelps

Apparently, some time during the conference of elders in June 3-5, 1831, a man arrived among them from Canandaigua, New York with his family. He told Joseph in essence, "I'd be an easy man to convert. Teach me your gospel and tell me what to do." He had first heard of the Book of Mormon in March 1830 when he read an announcement that the book was about to come off the press. He later met Parley P. Pratt, who sold him a copy. He read the book and was moved by it.

This was William Wines Phelps—one of the most colorful and competent men in our church history. He was born in New Jersey and was almost fourteen years older than the Prophet. He was thirty-nine years of age when he joined the Church. In his professional life in New York, he had edited and published a newspaper and had been active in politics.

According to the *Far West Record*, W. W. Phelps (see verse 2) and A. Sidney Gilbert (see D&C 53:3) were ordained elders by Joseph Smith on June 6, 1831, together with several others. It follows that sections 53 and 55, which accompanied those ordinations, ought to be dated together sometime on or before June 6. Since section 54 deals with events that probably took place after June 6, it is likely that section 55 is out of its correct chronological order, belonging properly with section 53 and prior to section 54.

In this section the Lord commands Brother Phelps to be baptized, to be ordained an elder, and to go to Missouri in the presidential party with Joseph Smith and others. In section 55 he is also commanded to assist Oliver Cowdery in running the church's first printing press and to write textbooks for the education of the children of the saints. In 1831 public schools were scarce on the frontier, and Joseph felt the need to provide schools for their children. The Church would also need scriptures for the members, tracts for their missionaries, and newspapers to communicate the news of the Church and the teachings of its leaders.

After arriving in Missouri, he founded and published the *Evening and Morning Star*, the first monthly magazine devoted to the interests of the Church and published by the Church. The first edition was published at Independence in June 1832. He was in the process of publishing the Book of Commandments when interrupted by a mob that destroyed the press in July of 1833, but the following December another printing office was established in Kirtland, and the publication of the *Star* resumed there.

In his lifetime, Phelps composed several hymns popular among the saints, including "Gently Raise the Sacred Strain," "O God, the Eternal Father," "Now Let us Rejoice," "Redeemer of Israel," and "Earth with Her Ten Thousand Flowers." He also wrote "The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning" and "The Earth Was Once a Garden

Place” for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Following the martyrdom of the Prophet, Brother Phelps wrote “Praise to the Man” as a tribute to Joseph.

W.W. Phelps’s career in the Church was a bit tempestuous. He is the only man to be excommunicated on three different occasions, and each time he came back to the Church. He died faithful in the Church at the age of 80 in Salt Lake City.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant William, yea, even the Lord of the whole earth, thou art called and chosen; and after thou hast been baptized by water, which if you do with an eye single to my glory, you shall have a remission of your sins and a reception of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands;

verse 1 “with an eye single to my glory” Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Through the natural eyes men see the light which guides them in their physical existence, through their spiritual eyes, [they see] the spiritual light which leads to eternal life. As long as the natural eyes are unimpaired, men can see and be guided by the light of day; and as long as the spiritual eyes are single to the glory of God—that is, as long as they are undimmed by sin and are focused solely on righteousness—men can view and understand the things of the Spirit. But if apostasy enters and the spiritual light turns to darkness, “how great is that darkness!” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:240).

For a discussion of the concept of light see *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1 chapter 15.

Here on earth, we are constantly torn between things of the world and things of the Spirit. Though it might seem ideal and desirable, we do not have the luxury of giving ourselves wholly to things of the Spirit, since things of the world are good and necessary for our existence here. The secret is to keep them in proper perspective—to be “in” the world but not “of” the world. Our ultimate and primary loyalty must be to the things of the Spirit—we must keep our eye single to the glory of God. Man cannot worship both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24).

2 And then thou shalt be ordained by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., to be an elder unto this church, to preach repentance and remission of sins by way of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

verse 2 As mentioned above, Brother Phelps ordination to the office of elder took place on June 6, 1831.

3 And on whomsoever you shall lay your hands, if they are contrite before me, you shall have power to give the Holy Spirit.

4 And again, you shall be ordained to assist my servant Oliver Cowdery to do the work of printing, and of selecting and writing books for schools in this church, that little children also may receive instruction before me as is pleasing unto me.

verse 4 “you shall be ordained to assist my servant Oliver Cowdery to do the work of printing” Oliver Cowdery, the second elder of the Church, had remained in Missouri since arriving there six months earlier as head of the Lamanite mission. As the second elder, Oliver was also the effective head of the Church in Missouri, and W.W. Phelps was called to assist Oliver there by doing the work of writing, editing, and publishing. Brother Phelps’s calling was so important to the Church, however, that a short time later the Lord will instruct Oliver to assist W. W. Phelps to make certain that he has the resources necessary to complete his calling (see D&C 57:13).

See also the introductory commentary for this section.

“selecting and writing books for schools” Brother Phelps was largely unsuccessful in completing this part of his calling. A year later, in June 1832, Phelps wrote in the first edition of *The Evening and Morning Star*: “Those appointed to select and prepare books for the use of schools, will attend to that subject, as soon as more weighty matters are finished.”

5 And again, verily I say unto you, for this cause you shall take your journey with my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, that you may be planted in the land of your inheritance to do this work.

verse 5 “take your journey” Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, William W. Phelps, A. S. Gilbert, and others left Kirtland about two weeks later, on June 19, 1831 to travel to Missouri.

6 And again, let my servant Joseph Coe also take his journey with them. The residue shall be made known hereafter, even as I will. Amen.

verse 6 “let my servant Joseph Coe also take his journey with them” Joseph Coe had recently been baptized and ordained. He made the trip to Missouri as commanded and returned to Kirtland. He served in various callings there, worked to build the Kirtland Temple, and participated in the laying of its cornerstone. He helped in the securing of the Egyptian mummies and their papyri in 1835. He became dissatisfied with the Church in 1837, however, and was excommunicated in December 1838. When the Church moved on to Missouri and Illinois, Joseph Coe remained behind in Kirtland.

“the residue shall be made known hereafter” The rest of the Lord’s instructions will be made known later (compare D&C 57:16).

Section 56 Change in Missionary Assignments

In November 1830, seven months before section 56 was received, Frederick G. Williams joined the Church and traveled with the missionaries to Missouri (to preach to the Lamanites). Williams left both his family and his 144-acre farm behind in Kirtland. The following spring, sometime before May 1831, the Williams family, the Prophet's father, Joseph Smith Sr., and Ezra Thayre, one of the incoming New York saints (see D&C 33:1), had reached some kind of agreement concerning the use of the Williams farm. By the time Ezra Thayre received his mission call to Missouri in June (see D&C 52:22), at least three families (Williams, Smith, and Thayre), and maybe more, had been sharing the Williams farm and its facilities for some weeks.

In May 1831 Joseph Smith Jr. received a revelation concerning the Williams farm and the families living there (see Smith, *Kirtland Revelation Book*, 91-92). This revelation was not included in the Doctrine and Covenants, but it does give some background to sections 54 and 56. According to this revelation, Joseph Smith Sr. was to manage the Williams farm and all three families were to live there together until the Church could build another house for the Thayres on the same property. Also, a share of the property was to be deeded in stewardship to Frederick G. Williams—who still legally owned it all but had left it at the disposal of the Church when he went to Missouri.

Ezra Thayre was one of the New York Saints who went to Kirtland with a fair amount of cash, presumably from selling his New York property. It appears that he had agreed to consecrate his holdings to the Lord and had received in return a promised interest in the Williams farm. But when Ezra was called to Missouri, he wanted to secure his financial interest in Kirtland by receiving some kind of consideration: either by getting his money back or by receiving legal title to a portion of the Williams farm (see verses 9-10). Essentially, Thayre wanted to own his stewardship at a time when this was not the practice of the Church. Though called as a missionary to Missouri, Ezra would not go until his personal interests were secured. His stubbornness in the matter made it necessary for another companion to be provided for Thomas B. Marsh, who was ready to go as commanded. Four months later, on October 10, 1831, a conference of elders in Kirtland rebuked Ezra for his pride and stubbornness, but no other action was taken against him at that time (see Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 15-16).

It is possible to assign Ezra Thayre too much blame for the failure of the saints in Ohio to live the law of consecration. He was clearly reluctant to go to Missouri with his financial interests unsecured, but he did not put the saints off his land, as did Lemam Copley, nor did he cease to associate with the Church. There is no evidence that Ezra Thayre, who lived in Kirtland, was in any way involved in the troubles at Thompson, Ohio, between Lemam Copley and the Colesville saints. Further, Ezra Thayre must have repented of his errors, whatever they were, for another call as a missionary to

Missouri was made to him seven month later on January 25, 1832. Ezra accepted that mission call and fulfilled two other missions for the Church after that. Later in Kirtland, he participated in the School of the Prophets and served as a land buyer for the Church. He was a member of Zion's Camp in 1834, and though briefly disfellowshipped in 1835, he moved to Missouri with the saints in 1838 and fled with them to Illinois late that year. He was a prominent church member in Nauvoo and a member of the council of fifty there. After the death of Joseph Smith, however, Ezra Thayer did not support the leadership of Brigham Young, but stayed in the East, eventually joining the Reorganized Church.

Among the missionary calls issued in section 52, Thomas B. Marsh and Ezra Thayer were called to serve together as were Newel Knight and Selah J. Griffin. The Lord had changed Newel Knight's assignment, commanding him to continue in his calling as branch president of the Colesville saints and to go to Missouri with them. For the reasons detailed above, Ezra Thayer was dragging his feet. Hence, Thomas B. Marsh was ready and anxious to get on with his mission. Brother Marsh went to Joseph, and in response to Joseph's inquiry of the Lord on the matter, section 56 was received.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 56 Change in Missionary Assignments

D&C 56:4 I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good.

1 Hearken, O ye people who profess my name, saith the Lord your God; for behold, mine anger is kindled against the rebellious, and they shall know mine arm and mine indignation, in the day of visitation and of wrath upon the nations.

verse 1 "Hearken, O ye people who profess my name" The Lord addresses all those who profess his name, that is, all those who claim to revere and worship him. But among these there are the rebellious who have incurred the Lord's anger.

Talk is cheap. Anyone can claim to worship Jesus Christ. But real commitment and real obedience are more difficult. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21, italics mine). Those who merely profess Jesus's name while rejecting the obligations of a disciple will incur the wrath and adverse judgment of God.

"in the day of visitation and of wrath upon the nations" In the day of the Lord's second coming.

2 And he that will not take up his cross and follow me, and keep my commandments, the same shall not be saved.

verse 2 “he that will not take up his cross and follow me” For an explanation of the concept of “taking up one’s cross,” see the commentary for D&C 23:6.

“shall not be saved” Here, as in many cases in scripture, the word *saved* means saved in the celestial heaven. *Technically* to be saved is to be assigned any degree of Glory.

3 Behold, I, the Lord, command; and he that will not obey shall be cut off in mine own due time, after I have commanded and the commandment is broken.

verse 3 “he that will not obey shall be cut off in mine own due time” Temporally, to be “cut off” is to be excommunicated. Spiritually, it means to be cut off from the Lord’s presence.

4 Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good; and all this to be answered upon the heads of the rebellious, saith the Lord.

verse 4 “I, the Lord command and revoke, as it seemeth me good” The Lord emphasizes that he may command and revoke. Even though he is an unchanging and omniscient being, rebelliousness and unrighteousness among his saints may at times necessitate the rescission of commandments already issued. Commandments, even commandments dealing with the future, are not prophecies. They are not even implied prophecies. Surely the Lord sometimes gives commandments he knows will not be obeyed.

At times, the disobedience of some individuals renders the obedience of others impossible. In these instances the Lord will either offer an alternate plan, or he will accept the offering of those who sincerely attempted to obey (D&C 124:49).

5 Wherefore, I revoke the commandment which was given unto my servants Thomas B. Marsh and Ezra Thayre, and give a new commandment unto my servant Thomas, that he shall take up his journey speedily to the land of Missouri, and my servant Selah J. Griffin shall also go with him.

verse 5 Ezra Thayer is released from his missionary calling.

6 For behold, I revoke the commandment which was given unto my servants Selah J. Griffin and Newel Knight, in consequence of the stiffneckedness of my people which are in Thompson, and their rebellions.

verse 6 The stiffneckedness of both Leman Copley and the Colesville saints made it necessary that Newel Knight remain with the Thompson, Ohio Branch, as they travel to Missouri. He is therefore released from his missionary calling as a companion to Selah J Griffin.

7 Wherefore, let my servant Newel Knight remain with them; and as many as will go may go, that are contrite before me, and be led by him to the land which I have appointed.

8 And again, verily I say unto you, that my servant Ezra Thayre must repent of his pride, and of his selfishness, and obey the former commandment which I have given him concerning the place upon which he lives.

verse 8 “Ezra Thayre must repent of his pride, and of his selfishness”

Brother Thayre’s putting his concern for his own financial future above the success of the Missouri mission, above his obligation under the covenant of consecration, and above obedience to the direct command of God, is accounted by the Lord as selfishness which is, of course, a form of pride.

“obey the former commandment” This could refer to the Lord’s command to live the law of consecration and stewardship (D&C 51:3-15), especially since it concerns “the place upon which he lives.” Another possibility is that it refers to the Lord’s call to serve a mission in Missouri (D&C 52:22).

9 And if he will do this, as there shall be no divisions made upon the land, he shall be appointed still to go to the land of Missouri;

verse 9 Ezra Thayre had proposed that the Frederick G. Williams farm be divided up among the three families now occupying the farm. He further proposed that he be deeded that part of the farm designated to be his. It is clear that Thayre’s proposals violated the spirit of the law of consecration and stewardship. In this verse the Lord says that if Ezra Thayre will repent and obey spirit of the law of consecration and stewardship, then it will not be necessary to divide the farm and deed part of it to Ezra Thayre. Further, the Lord avers that then Ezra Thayre would be worthy to have the privilege of serving a mission in Missouri.

10 Otherwise he shall receive the money which he has paid, and shall leave the place, and shall be cut off out of my church, saith the Lord God of hosts;

verse 10 In this verse, the Lord outlines for Ezra Thayre the alternatives should he not repent. If Thayre continues to insist on dividing the land and having a part of it deeded to him, then the Church would return the money that he had consecrated, he would have to move off of the land, and he would lose his membership in the Church—he would be excommunicated!

Apparently, Ezra Thayre did repent, because the land was not divided, he was not paid back, and he was not excommunicated. He was again called to fill a mission in Missouri seven months later, on January 25, 1832.

11 And though the heaven and the earth pass away, these words shall not pass away, but shall be fulfilled.

verse 11 The Lord solemnly avows that the alternatives he has offered to Ezra Thayre will apply—they will not be rescinded.

12 And if my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., must needs pay the money, behold, I, the Lord, will pay it unto him again in the land of Missouri, that those of whom he shall receive may be rewarded again according to that which they do;

verse 12 The Lord has not finished speaking of the Ezra Thayre problem. The Lord states that if Thayre insists on being paid back his consecrated money, and that money is returned to him from church funds, then the Lord will make it up to Joseph and the Church through the productivity of the church activities in Missouri. Monies will be consecrated by church members in Missouri to make up the short fall, and those who contribute that money will be blessed.

13 For according to that which they do they shall receive, even in lands for their inheritance.

verse 13 The Lord reiterates that the industrious Missouri members will be compensated spiritually and materially according to the law of the harvest (D&C 6:33).

14 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto my people—you have many things to do and to repent of; for behold, your sins have come up unto me, and are not pardoned, because you seek to counsel in your own ways.

verse 14 “thus saith the Lord unto my people” While this revelation is directed to the entire Church, it likely particularly applies to those saints in Ohio who are struggling with pride and with obeying the revealed principles of consecration.

“you seek to counsel in your own ways” The prideful Ohio saints were seeking to explain to God why he must do things the way they think he should. Seeking to counsel the Lord (Jacob 4:10) continues to be a major stumbling block of some people in the Church even today. These tend to disagree with the commandments, and they seek to explain to the Lord why the commandments are wrong.

15 And your hearts are not satisfied. And ye obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.

verse 15 “your hearts are not satisfied” The Lord’s commands are not fulfilling to the prideful members. They need more in the way of tangible material and temporal rewards. They do not obey the commandments (“the truth”), but rather seek after things of the world. Note here that “the truth” is more than something to be believed. It is something to be done.

16 Wo unto you rich men, that will not give your substance to the poor, for your riches will canker your souls; and this shall be your lamentation in the day of

visitation, and of judgment, and of indignation: The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved!

verse 16 “Wo unto you rich men” This phrase refers to those who receive less back temporally from living the law of consecration than they contribute. In other words their consecration is larger than their stewardship. There is no sin in being rich; rather the sin is in being unwilling to live the law of consecration and to give up the pleasure of having more than your fellow saints. It doesn't matter what other redeeming characteristics a rich man may possess. If he is unwilling to stop being rich so that his brothers and sisters can stop being poor, then he can neither establish Zion nor inherit the celestial kingdom. Is there clear and present spiritual danger in being rich? Indeed there is (Luke 18:18-30).

17 Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose bellies are not satisfied, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men's goods, whose eyes are full of greediness, and who will not labor with your own hands!

verse 17 This verse refers to those who receive back more temporally from living the law of consecration than they contribute. Those poor who receive increased assets through the law of consecration must do it with a spirit of humility and gratitude rather than with a “welfare rights” or an “entitlement” mentality, demanding the assets of working people. Greed is a sin that plagues both the rich and the poor. Just as the unredeemed and greedy rich often despise the poor and withhold from them what is necessary to live, so the unredeemed and greedy poor often hate the rich and lust after their wealth. Those poor who seek to live the law of consecration out of greed or out of the desire to avoid working for a living can neither establish Zion nor inherit the celestial kingdom.

18 But blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, whose hearts are broken, and whose spirits are contrite, for they shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs.

verse 18 “blessed are the poor who are pure in heart” It is possible to be poor, enter the law of consecration and stewardship, and thrive both spiritually and temporarily in it. An attitude of humility and gratitude and a good work ethic are vital requirements.

The Lord's counsel in verses 16-18 is directed specifically to those going to Missouri to lay the foundations for Zion. Living the law of consecration and stewardship is a significant challenge for every individual, be he rich or poor.

“for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs” *Fatness* in this context means material abundance, having more than is needed. When the law of consecration is

implemented to its fullest extent by a Zion people, all those who live under it will have enough and to spare—not just of their needs, but of their wants as well.

19 For behold, the Lord shall come, and his recompense shall be with him, and he shall reward every man, and the poor shall rejoice;

verse 19 “the Lord shall come” The Lord will come in power and glory to right every wrong, to remove both iniquities and inequities from the Church and from the earth, and to justly adjudicate the proper rewards and inheritances of all people.

“his recompense shall be with him” This phrase refers to the fact that the Lord will fairly and appropriately reward or pay all of the people on earth at the moment of his second coming.

20 And their generations shall inherit the earth from generation to generation, forever and ever. And now I make an end of speaking unto you. Even so. Amen.

verse 20 “forever and ever” This earth will become the celestial kingdom for all those who have lived upon it and are worthy of that degree of glory. Thus, an inheritance upon the earth “forever and ever” is an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God.

The next four sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, sections 57 through 60, were given in Missouri and are referred to as the Zion revelations.

Brief Historical Setting

In Missouri Joseph received instructions from the Lord concerning Zion, including the location of the temple site, the “center place” of Zion [**D&C 57 - Independence Is Center Place of Zion**] and a warning that Zion would be established only after much tribulation [**D&C 58 - Instructions Concerning Zion**].

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The Lord also gave counsel to Joseph on Sabbath day observance. This was received shortly after Joseph attended the funeral of Sister Polly Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight [**D&C 59 - Law of the Sabbath**].

Section 57 Independence Is Center Place of Zion

The elders who had been called to Missouri began leaving Kirtland in pairs in the middle of June, 1831. At the time the Church was only fourteen months old. Joseph Smith, accompanied by seven others (Martin Harris, W.W. Phelps, Edward Partridge, Sidney Rigdon, Sidney Gilbert, Brother Gilbert's wife Elizabeth, and Joseph Coe), started west on June 19 and went as far as Cincinnati by wagon, canal boat, and stage coach. From Cincinnati they proceeded by river boat to Saint Louis, Missouri, and from there Joseph and four others walked the 240 miles across the state to Jackson County. The rest came up the Missouri River by boat. In Jackson County, they met up with Oliver Cowdery, Ziba Peterson, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Frederick G. Williams who had previously traveled to Missouri on their mission to the Lamanites. Joseph and his traveling company had traveled about one thousand miles in less than a month, and they arrived in Independence July 17, 1831. Together in Missouri, then, were the presidential party, the Lamanite missionaries (minus Parley P. Pratt), and some elders who had already arrived from Kirtland. The saints from the Colesville Branch arrived a few days later.

When Joseph Smith left Kirtland for Missouri according to the commandment received in section 52, he had been living in Kirtland for a little less than five months. He and his wife, Emma, had been living in their own quarters for less than three months. In such a short time, organization of the Church in Kirtland was not anywhere near completed, but already the Lord had made it clear that establishing the Church in Kirtland was not the long-term goal of the Church. Kirtland was merely a staging area or preliminary gathering point for the establishment of Zion in far-off Missouri. Therefore, Joseph Smith and other saints, including the Colesville saints from New York, were commanded to continue on to Missouri to prepare for Zion in that place.

In July 1831 in Jackson County, the Prophet Joseph surveyed the degenerate condition of the place and was discouraged. He wrote:

The meeting of our brethren [Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Ziba Peterson, and Frederick G. Williams], who had long awaited our arrival, was a glorious one, and moistened with many tears. It seemed good and pleasant for brethren to meet together in unity. But our reflections were many, coming as we had from a highly cultivated state of society in the east, and standing now upon the confines or western limits of the United States, and looking into the vast wilderness of those that sat in darkness; how natural it was to observe the degradation, leanness of intellect, ferocity, and jealousy of a people that were nearly a century behind the times, and to feel for those who roamed about without the benefit of civilization, refinement, or religion (*HC*, 1:189).

Joseph wondered, how and when could anything as magnificent as Zion be created out of this? In this mood he had probably been reading the book of Isaiah, and

on July 20 he asked three poignant questions of the Lord—all three taken from Isaiah. These three questions were: When will the wilderness blossom as the rose (Isaiah 35:1)? When will Zion be built up in her glory (Isaiah 60:1-2)? And, where will thy temple stand unto which all nations shall come in these last days (Isaiah 2:2)?

In response to this yearning prayer, Joseph received section 57 on July 20, three days after his arrival in Independence, which answered only one of the questions—the one regarding the location of the temple. Additional answers to the Prophet’s questions were promised in the future, however.

The saints already knew from section 52 that Missouri was the location of Zion, but where specifically in Missouri? Previous revelations had suggested that it would be “on the borders by the Lamanites” (see D&C 28:9), “into the western countries” (see D&C 45:64), and “into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri” (see D&C 54:8). Oliver Cowdery and the missionaries to the Lamanites, still faithful to their call (see D&C 28:8), were laboring in the vicinity of Independence in Jackson County, Missouri, so it was there that the Prophet and his company first headed.

The saints from Colesville, New York, about sixty in number, who had settled temporarily at Thompson, Ohio, arrived in Independence on July 25, under the leadership of Newel Knight—five days after section 57 was received.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 57:1-3 The place which is now called Independence is the center place of Zion.

1 Harken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

2 Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion.

verse 2 “this is the land of promise” A *land of promise* is, of course, a land obtained according to a promise of the Lord. In D&C 42:35-36 the Lord had promised the saints that the location of the New Jerusalem (see Ether 13:1-12) would be revealed to them in the future. In D&C 52:1-5 Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were commanded to go to Missouri to hold a conference and were promised that if they were faithful the Lord would reveal to them the land of their inheritance. Verse 3 will fulfill these two promises.

“city of Zion” This is the New Jerusalem which will one day be founded based on celestial principles (D&C 105:5) including the law of consecration and stewardship. The reader is reminded that Zion may be defined on two levels—see the commentary for D&C 42:9.

3 And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse.

verse 3 This verse gives the location of the “center place” of Zion or the site of the temple. The site is just west of the courthouse in Independence and consists of 63 1/4 acres. It was dedicated as a site for the temple on August 3, 1831 by Joseph Smith. Actually, Joseph eventually laid out plans for a complex of twenty-four temples that would some day be built on the site.

Today this plot of land is owned by three separate churches. Our Church owns about 20 acres. The Hedrickites—the Church of Christ, Temple Lot—owns the small plot where Joseph placed corner stones to mark the site of the center temple. This group was organized by Granville Hedrick as a splinter group from the Utah church. They quietly purchased the center part of the temple lot after the saints departed Independence, and they located their headquarters there. Today this is a small group of friendly people who still live and worship in Independence. The Reorganized LDS Church owns the remainder, which is the largest part of the property.

4 Wherefore, it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the saints, and also every tract lying westward, even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile;

verse 4 “it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the saints” A parcel of land containing the temple site—the 63 1/4 acres—was purchased by the Church on December 19, 1831 from Jones H. Flournoy for \$130.

“also every tract lying westward, even the line running directly between Jew and Gentile” The saints were instructed to buy all the land between Independence and the Indian frontier. This line is the Missouri River. In those days the United States government had given to the Indians the lands west of the Missouri. The “Jew” refers to the Indians. While none of the families of Lehi and Ishmael were actually descended from the tribe of Judah, the book occasionally refers to them as “Jews” since they came out from the land of Judah. The only actual Jews among the Book of Mormon peoples were those descended from Mulek, the son of King Zedekiah and any others in his party who may have been of the tribe of Judah. The “Gentile” refers to the people living east of the river, many of whom were a lawless element.

5 And also every tract bordering by the prairies, inasmuch as my disciples are enabled to buy lands. Behold, this is wisdom, that they may obtain it for an everlasting inheritance.

verse 5 “every tract bordering by the prairies” The Lord repeats his instruction to the saints to buy the land between Independence and the Indian frontier.

“everlasting inheritance” The scattered ten tribes of Israel will be gathered to the “New Jerusalem”—the United States of America with its center in Jackson County. Thus Jackson County is the center place of the promised land of the ten tribes of Israel. And for how long? This verse clearly states that this land is promised as an “everlasting inheritance.” Does this mean that it will cease to be a promised land at the beginning of the Millennium? At the end of the Millennium when the earth is celestialized? No, the verse suggests that it will be a promised land to that part of the house of Israel forever—even after the earth is changed into a celestial globe.

6 And let my servant Sidney Gilbert stand in the office to which I have appointed him, to receive moneys, to be an agent unto the church, to buy land in all the regions round about, inasmuch as can be done in righteousness, and as wisdom shall direct.

verse 6 For an introduction to A. Sidney Gilbert, see the introductory commentary for section 53. Sidney Gilbert is commanded to function as the land agent in buying up lands for the incoming saints under Bishop Partridge (see D&C 53:4). Also he will be instructed to establish a mercantile store in Independence for the purpose of raising money to buy lands for stewardships (see verse 8) and to meet other church financial needs. It is interesting to note that in two years in Independence, the saints bought only the sixty-three acres that comprise the temple lot.

7 And let my servant Edward Partridge stand in the office to which I have appointed him, and divide unto the saints their inheritance, even as I have commanded; and also those whom he has appointed to assist him.

verse 7 Bishop Edward Partridge is to continue in his calling in receiving consecrations and assigning and distributing those goods which make up their “inheritance” or “stewardship.” The term *inheritance* applies to the land or real estate that is part of the saints’ stewardship.

8 And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant Sidney Gilbert plant himself in this place, and establish a store, that he may sell goods without fraud, that he may obtain money to buy lands for the good of the saints, and that he may obtain whatsoever things the disciples may need to plant them in their inheritance.

verse 8 See the commentary for verse 6. Sidney Gilbert’s retail store would also provide goods needed by the saints in the area and eventually also serve as a bishop’s storehouse. Managing this store was Sidney Gilbert’s personal stewardship in Missouri.

9 And also let my servant Sidney Gilbert obtain a license—behold here is wisdom, and whoso readeth let him understand—that he may send goods also unto the people, even by whom he will as clerks employed in his service;

verse 9 “let my servant Sidney Gilbert obtain a license” The saints were settling right on the line between the United States and Indian territory (today approximately the Missouri-Kansas border) and apparently intended to operate on both sides of this border. On the first Sunday in Zion, W.W. Phelps preached to a mixed audience of Native Americans and settlers on the western side of the border, and as an agent for the Church in Independence, Sidney Gilbert would undoubtedly need to send goods across the border, which was only a few miles away (see verse 10). Any trade across the state line into Indian territory, was closely controlled by the federal government. Therefore, it was necessary for Sidney to get a permit or license to send goods across the border to the Lamanites, to the missionaries, and to other saints operating there.

“that he may send goods also unto the people, even by whom he will as clerks employed in his service” Brother Gilbert, once he had a proper license, could then send goods across the border to the Indians. The last part of this phrase, “even by whom he will as clerks employed in his service,” refers to the fact that once Brother Gilbert was properly authorized by the license, he could have these goods sent by anyone he wished as long as they were clerks whom he employed.

10 And thus provide for my saints, that my gospel may be preached unto those who sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death.

verse 10 “those who sit in darkness” This phrase is used here particularly in reference to the Indians who live in Indian territory. The missionaries to the Lamanites had already preached to the Shawnees and Delawares west of the border, and the saints at this time still intended to further evangelize the Indians there. Oliver had already notified the Prophet of the great tribe known as Navajos “three hundred miles west of Santa Fe,” and it was initially envisioned that the Latter-day Saints and the Lamanites would one day mingle together. However, the missionaries were soon denied access to the Indian lands when antagonistic Protestant missionaries persuaded the Indian agent to evict the Mormon missionaries from off the Indian lands.

verses 8-10 The full meaning of these verses, once they were received from the Lord, was then later partly and purposefully disguised by the Prophet to keep the enemies of the Church from knowing specifically what the Church was planning to do to convert the Lamanites. Since the saints were not allowed to go across the border into the Indian nations, the plan was to get the Indians to come to them. It was a common practice at trading posts to cheat the less sophisticated Indians out of their barterable items. Sidney Gilbert’s store was to be a place where the Indians would get a fair exchange for their goods—“without fraud”. This would hopefully accomplish two things:

(1) First, it would bring the Indians to the saints, and, (2) once the Indians saw that the saints dealt honestly with them, they would be converted to the gospel.

The two earliest manuscript copies of section 57 read in the latter part of verse 9 and all of verse 10: “That he may send goods also unto the Lamanites, even by whom he will as clerks employed in his service and then the gospel may be proclaimed unto them” (Smith, *Kirtland Revelation Book*, 90; see also Woodford, *Historical Development*, 1:728-31).

11 And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant William W. Phelps be planted in this place, and be established as a printer unto the church.

12 And lo, if the world receive his writings—behold here is wisdom—let him obtain whatsoever he can obtain in righteousness, for the good of the saints.

verses 11-12 “William W. Phelps” See the introductory commentary for section 55. Consistent with the commandments given to him earlier, Brother Phelps is instructed to carry on his assignment of printing and writing (see D&C 55:4) in Independence, Missouri. His stewardship was to be a printer and writer and to make whatever money he could at these trades “in righteousness” so that any moneys he made in excess of his own needs might be used “for the good of the saints.”

13 And let my servant Oliver Cowdery assist him, even as I have commanded, in whatsoever place I shall appoint unto him, to copy, and to correct, and select, that all things may be right before me, as it shall be proved by the Spirit through him.

verse 13 In this verse Oliver Cowdery is called to assist W. W. Phelps in the work of printing. In D&C 55:4, received in Kirtland, W.W. Phelps had been called to assist Oliver Cowdery in the work of printing and creating school books for children. Is there a discrepancy here? Has Oliver been demoted? Perhaps we learn that in the work of the Lord we are to assist each other, and it matters little who is called to lead or who is called to assist.

As a result of this commandment, W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery began the process of buying and moving a printing press all the way from Cincinnati, opening a printing office, and publishing a monthly newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, as well as printing other tracts for the Church. Eventually, they were instructed to publish the Book of Commandments (see D&C 70:1-3; 72:20-21), which task was underway when a mob destroyed the printing office and the press on July 20, 1833.

“as it shall be proved by the Spirit through him” That is “approved” or “confirmed” by the Spirit through Brother Phelps.

14 And thus let those of whom I have spoken be planted in the land of Zion, as speedily as can be, with their families, to do those things even as I have spoken.

verse 14 “with their families” Originally, the calls issued to the Missouri missionaries were extended to the brethren themselves (see D&C 52:3-8, 22-44), and presumably the calls were for a limited period of time after which they would return to their homes. By now there are several who are instructed to *remain* in Missouri, including the Colesville saints, A. Sidney Gilbert, Oliver Cowdery, Edward Partridge, W. W. Phelps, and others. If their families are not already with them, they are instructed to move their families to Independence as well.

15 And now concerning the gathering—Let the bishop and the agent make preparations for those families which have been commanded to come to this land, as soon as possible, and plant them in their inheritance.

verse 15 Bishop Partridge and Brother Gilbert are admonished to go to work to provide land and homes as stewardships or “inheritances” for all those called to live in Missouri.

16 And unto the residue of both elders and members further directions shall be given hereafter. Even so. Amen.

By the end of 1831, Bishop Partridge had established a storehouse for the reception and distribution of consecrated goods, and one year after the gathering had commenced in Missouri most of the three to four hundred converts living there had consecrated their property to the bishop and were living on inheritances. But the implementation of this law was impeded by problems. Wherever the law of consecration and stewardship was attempted, there was a tendency for poor people to be attracted to the movement and for the wealthy to shun such an undertaking. Some members did not comply or did not learn of the recommendations of the leaders in Kirtland, who instructed the saints not to gather in Missouri unless they took with them money, seeds, cattle, or other contributions to the system. Evidently, there was not sufficient property to give every family an adequate inheritance. A number of families crowded into homes that were meant to support a single family. Some became lazy while they were waiting for an inheritance or the anticipated second coming of the Lord. Others left the Church taking with them their inheritances. As early as the fall of 1832, Bishop Edward Partridge began leasing land (rather than conveying deeds) to the saints. Under the provision of these contracts, stewards were not permitted to transfer their inheritances to their wives, children, or heirs, or to sell their property.

On several occasions, the Prophet wrote to church leaders in Missouri informing them that their adaptation of the law of consecration was not correct. In a letter to W. W. Phelps, dated November 27, 1832, Joseph Smith stated that he was displeased because the saints who had gathered in Zion had not received “their inheritance by consecrations, by order of deed from the Bishop” (Robert J. Woodford, “The Historical

Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, BYU, 1974). The Prophet eventually resolved this problem.

Meanwhile only a smattering of members in Kirtland attempted to live the law of consecration, although their practice was not precisely the same as the basic principles of the order that had been revealed.

It is one thing to receive a revelation and quite another to implement the instructions received therein. Since the Lord has stated that we must be united under the principles of consecration and stewardship or we cannot inherit the celestial kingdom, one day we must live these principles (D&C 88:22; 105:5).

After experiencing frustrations and failures for almost a decade, in 1838 members throughout the Church were given a less comprehensive law, the law of tithing (see D&C 119-120).

Section 58 Instructions Concerning Zion

Please review the introductory background material for section 57. Joseph recorded the events of his first week in Zion as follows:

The first Sabbath after our arrival in Jackson County [ironically, the 24th of July], Brother W. W. Phelps preached to a western audience over the boundary of the United States, wherein were present specimens of all the families of the earth; Shem, Ham, and Japheth; several of the Lamanites or Indians—representative of Shem; quite a respectable number of Negroes—descendants of Ham; and the balance was made up of citizens of the surrounding country, and fully represented themselves as pioneers of the West. At this meeting two were baptized, who had previously believed in the fulness of the Gospel.

During this week the Colesville branch, referred to in the latter part of the last revelation [57:15], and Sidney Rigdon, Sidney Gilbert, and wife [Elizabeth], and Elders Morley and Booth, arrived. I received the following—section 58 (HC, 1:191).

In the background materials for section 57, we learned that Joseph had asked three questions of the Lord: When will the wilderness blossom as the rose (Isaiah 35:1)? When will Zion be built up in her glory (Isaiah 60:1-2)? And, where will thy temple stand unto which all nations shall come in these last days (Isaiah 2:2)? In section 57 the Lord answered the third question: Where will thy temple stand? The Lord concluded section 57 by promising: “Further directions shall be given hereafter” (D&C 57:16).

In section 58, received August 1, 1831, the Lord answers the first two questions. The second question—When will Zion be built up in her glory?—was answered first.

On August 2, 1831, the day following the reception of section 58, Joseph and Sidney helped members of the Colesville Branch “lay the first log, for a house, as a foundation of Zion,” a combination church and school in Kaw Township, twelve miles west of Independence (HC, 1:196). Following the Lord’s instructions (see verse 57), Sidney Rigdon also consecrated and dedicated Jackson County, Missouri, specifically as the land of Zion and for the gathering of the saints. According to Oliver Cowdery: “Brother Sidney Rigdon stood up and asked saying: Do you receive this land for the land of your inheritance with thankful hearts from the Lord? answer from all: ‘We do.’ Do you pledge yourselves to keep the laws of God on this land, which you never have kept in your own lands? ‘We do.’ Do you pledge yourselves to see that others of your brethren who shall come hither do keep the laws of God? ‘We do.’ After prayer he arose and said, I now pronounce this land consecrated and dedicated to the Lord for a possession and inheritance for the saints (in the name of Jesus Christ having authority from him). And for all the faithful servants of the Lord to the remotest ages of time. Amen” (cited in John Whitmer’s *Early Latter Day Saint History*, 79).

On the next day, August 3, 1831, two days after section 58 had been received, Joseph Smith laid the cornerstone of the temple in Independence a mile and a half west of the new brick courthouse. According to the commandment in verse 57, Sidney Rigdon consecrated the ground and pronounced the land dedicated to the Lord. On the following day, the Prophet Joseph dedicated the temple site.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 58 Instructions Concerning Zion

D&C 58:26-29 It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant. Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause.

D&C 58:42-43 If a man repenteth of his sins . . . he will confess them and forsake them.

D&C 58:64-65 The gospel must be preached unto every creature, and behold the Son of Man cometh.

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, and give ear to my word, and learn of me what I will concerning you, and also concerning this land unto which I have sent you.

verse 1 “learn of me what I will concerning you” The Lord commands his saints, and particularly his elders or the leaders of his Church to pay attention to this revelation and learn well what the Lord would have them do.

“also concerning this land unto which I have sent you” The Lord will also make his will known regarding the land of Zion. At this point the saints know the basic principles for establishing Zion (sections 42, 51). They also know where Zion is to be established (section 57), and they know who among the saints will begin to establish it (sections 52-57). What they do not know is the details of how they should proceed, the time table for these events, and exactly what to expect in the future. It is natural that they should want the Lord to provide them with detailed instructions for every step of the process. They will learn, however, that true saints should not be expected to be commanded in everything but should employ their own initiative in accomplishing worthwhile projects (see verses 26-29).

2 For verily I say unto you, blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven.

verse 2 “whether in life or in death” The Lord here begins to prepare the saints for the truth that while the rewards of obedience are sure and certain, for some those rewards will come only after further tribulation and perhaps even following death. Zion will not be established easily or all at once, and the saints might not enjoy its blessings in their lifetime.

3 Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

verse 3 “Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes” In spite of the revelations the saints have received concerning Zion, they do not, nor can they as yet, understand what is to befall them and the city of Zion. The faithful saints will receive their promised inheritance, but only after more trials and sacrifices. They will learn in the next verse that “the hour is not yet.” It is likely that this verse and the next caught the saints by surprise. They were not expecting a delay.

4 For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand.

verse 4 “after much tribulation come the blessings” When this verse is coupled with D&C 101:4-5 and D&C 136:31, we learn that the Lord will try us and test us until the dross is removed from our souls and we are worthy for an inheritance in Zion.

It would seem that there are separate categories of tribulations that may be experienced by us during our mortal sojourn.

First, there are adversities that we may simply term “accidents of mortality.” This telestial world is characterized by diseases, personal challenges, and the potential for accidents. These are simply characteristic of this mortal phase. The Lord does not necessarily dictate that they happen, rather he simply allows us to deal with this mortal phase and its inherent trials (“type 1” sufferings). In this latter category are found the problems we may encounter as a consequence of the poor choices or unrighteousness of other people. This mortal phase is hazardous. We humans are all in it together and must watch out for each other and care for each other while we are here.

Second, tribulations may come as a natural consequence of disregarding the Lord’s counsel. These occur as the result of unwise choices (“type 2” sufferings).

Third, trials may come as tutorials from the Lord given to righteous people whom he wishes to teach patience, character, long-suffering, and courage (“type 3” sufferings). For a more complete discussion of adversities and suffering, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 1, *Adversity and Suffering*.

5 Remember this, which I tell you before, that you may lay it to heart, and receive that which is to follow.

verse 5 The Lord continues his warnings and foreshadowings that trials and tragedies are in the offing. He is warning the saints of trials yet to come, even though no one can, at this time, see a troubling cloud on the horizon. How, for example, are the saints, in August of 1831, to know that Jackson County, like Kirtland, will not be a

permanent place for them, even though it has been dedicated and consecrated for that purpose?

6 Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you—that you might be obedient, and that your hearts might be prepared to bear testimony of the things which are to come;

verse 6 “for this cause I have sent you—that you might be obedient” Here the Lord implies that an important purpose for the commandment to establish Zion is not so much to establish Zion physically but to establish a spiritual Zion—a faithful, obedient, and consecrated people.

The saints are today still establishing spiritual Zion in all the stakes of Zion throughout the world. The physical Zion will yet be built in this dispensation, and on the very ground dedicated for that purpose in 1831. But in the meantime, each of us can and should establish spiritual Zion in our own homes and in our own hearts by obedience and faithfulness to the Lord. When the Lord’s people have at last become a righteous people, the Lord will direct them in the details of establishing the complete physical and spiritual Zion.

“the things which are to come” This phrase refers to the events associated with the end of the world and the second coming of Christ, including the inevitable establishment of a physical Zion in Jackson County, Missouri. The Church’s investments in Zion, the beginnings made by these pioneers, testify that Zion will be built as the prophets have spoken.

7 And also that you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand;

verse 7 It would seem, as we study today the Lord’s answer to Joseph Smith, that the Lord was trying to tell the saints that Zion was not to be established in 1831 but rather in the future, after the saints had experienced much tribulation. It is also apparent, however, that the saints did not take this meaning from the revelation, as they seemed to continue to anticipate that they would build Zion immediately. Joseph Fielding Smith said:

That Zion was to be established and the city built at once was evidently the idea possessed by some of the saints. . . . That the city was not to be built at that time is indicated in this word: [Section 58:3-7, quoted]. From this we see that the glory and greatness of the city of Zion was reserved for the future; although in the scriptural sense the time is “nigh at hand” (*Essentials in Church History*, 1950, 131).

If Zion was not to be built up immediately, why were the saints sent to Missouri? In verses 3-7 above, the Lord outlines the purposes for which he had sent the saints to Zion. The first was a test of obedience for the saints (verse 6). They had already been obedient in coming to Missouri and would yet have the opportunity to be obedient to

instructions still to come from the Lord. Second, they were to prepare their hearts so they could bear a personal conviction of what was to come (also verse 6)—the building of Zion. By living in Zion they would acquire the personal knowledge and experience upon which to base that testimony. Third, they were to lay the foundations for the city of Zion (verse 7). An apparent fourth reason is found in the two following verses.

“that you might be honored” Here we learn that by sending these saints to Zion, the Lord is honoring them. He judges them worthy of being honored by him.

“in laying the foundation . . . of Zion” These saints were sent to Jackson County to establish the location and lay the foundation (largely a figurative foundation) of Zion. They did not yet understand that a later generation would actually build the holy city.

8 And also that a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor; yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail;

verse 8 “a feast of fat things” The “feast of fat things” refers to a fatty, sumptuous, full-flavored meal fit for royalty.

“wine on the lees” This expression refers to wine which remains on its settlings or dregs until it is well matured. It is then poured off and strained to provide the best wine possible. The word *lees* here is a translation of the Hebrew *shmarim*, which literally means “dregs.” The expression “wine on the lees” apparently refers to only a part of the total fermented wine, the part nearest the dregs. That is the strongest, sweetest, and most concentrated portion of the fermented product—the “fat part” (see Isaiah 25:6). These concentrated dregs, which contained the most flavor, were similar to a jelly or preserve and were considered a great delicacy.

It should also be noted, parenthetically, that when drinking is given a negative connotation—for example, if the cup were bitter like gall or vinegar—then the dregs are the bitterest and most difficult portion to drink (as in Psalm 75:8; Alma 40:26). The lees or the dregs represent the most concentrated part of a substance or, metaphorically, of an experience. If a drink is sweet like wine, then the dregs are the sweetest part, but if the drink is bitter like vinegar, then the dregs are the most bitter part.

Only the best will be served at the Lord’s feast. These two expressions figuratively, then, express the idea that the fulness of the gospel brings both spiritual and temporal plenty to all, but particularly to the poor.

9 Yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited.

verse 9 Not only were the saints to begin to prepare a “feast of fat things . . . for the poor” (see Isaiah 25:6—Joseph may well have been studying the book of Isaiah at the time), they were also to prepare “a supper of the house of the Lord.” Both of these

expressions, the “feast of fat things” and the “supper of the house of the Lord,” figuratively represent the law of consecration and stewardship. The object of the law of consecration and stewardship is to bring to the world an entirely new social order, to establish a community in which even the poor will share the “fat things” with the “rich and the learned, the wise and the noble” (Smith and Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 336).

The “feast of fat things . . . prepared for the poor” and “supper of the house of the Lord” seem, on another level, to refer to the latter-day Zion and the restored gospel. This is the same meal referred to in other places as the marriage feast of the Lamb, when Jesus as the bridegroom comes to the earth to receive his bride—the Church—unto himself with joy and rejoicing (see Revelation 19:7-9, 17). The implication is that in Zion the celestial law, the law of consecration and stewardship, will eventually be fully observed.

10 First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble;

11 And after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come.

verses 10-11 “First, the rich . . . and then . . . the poor” Before the celestial order is established in Zion, the world lieth in sin (D&C 49:20), and it is only the rich who have a material abundance. It is inevitable that the wealthy and the educated will also have some advantage in learning the gospel. But when the law of consecration and stewardship is instituted, then all injustices (ignorance and poverty) and all worldly advantages will be done away, and the righteous poor will receive full measure of the blessings of the gospel.

12 Behold, I, the Lord, have spoken it.

13 And that the testimony might go forth from Zion, yea, from the mouth of the city of the heritage of God—

verse 13 “that the testimony might go forth from Zion” This testimony is to that of future events associated with the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, and the establishment of the law of consecration and stewardship.

verses 14-20 In these following verses, the Lord gives counsel to Bishop Edward Partridge some of which applies to bishops in general—especially verse 17 which calls a bishop to be a “judge in Israel.”

14 Yea, for this cause I have sent you hither, and have selected my servant Edward Partridge, and have appointed unto him his mission in the land.

verse 14 “Edward Partridge . . . his mission in the land” Edward Partridge had previously been called as bishop of the Church (see D&C 41:9). As such, his proper functions included assigning stewardships and judging the hearts and behaviors of the saints relative to the law of the Lord. This will continue to be his particular function when called to stay in Missouri (see verse 24). There can be no doubt that Bishop Edward Partridge was the individual called of God and appointed to “divide unto the saints their inheritance” in Zion (D&C 57:7).

15 But if he repent not of his sins, which are unbelief and blindness of heart, let him take heed lest he fall.

verse 15 “if he repent not of his sins” During their weeks in Missouri together, “Bishop Partridge several times strenuously opposed the measures of the Prophet, and was sharply reprovved by the latter for his unbelief and hardness of heart” (Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 113). Despite his high calling as the bishop in Zion, if Partridge had not repented of this attitude he would have fallen. Bishop Partridge was a good man with a firm testimony of the gospel, and he eventually sacrificed all he had for the kingdom. But he also had some very firm opinions about how Zion was to be built—opinions which were at odds with the instructions he received from Joseph Smith. These differences with the Prophet continued for some time and will eventually contribute to the loss of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri. Edward Partridge will not be the last saint to doubt the words or plans of the prophets.

16 Behold his mission is given unto him, and it shall not be given again.

verses 15-16 During the administration of Joseph F. Smith, the First Presidency of the Church issued a statement to clarify the role played by Edward Partridge in Missouri. The following is an excerpt from that statement:

On occasion of the Prophet’s first visit to Independence, Missouri—Edward Partridge accompanied him—in the meetings and conferences held upon the land of Zion, bishop Partridge several times strenuously opposed the measures of the Prophet, and was sharply reprovved by the latter for his unbelief and hardness of heart. Indeed, the apostate, Ezra Booth, who was present, made the scene between the bishop and the Prophet one of the items that justified to him his apostasy. He refers to the circumstance in a letter, addressed to Bishop Partridge, which has been several times published in anti-Mormon literature. The bishop, moreover, was reprovved for his “blindness of heart and unbelief,” and warned of the danger of falling from his high station, in a revelation given in August 1831, while both he and the Prophet were still in Missouri (*Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:113).

Your author has frequently had feelings of empathy for the Prophet Joseph as I have studied the Doctrine and Covenants and the events of the early history of the Church. How often must he have felt discouraged and lonely! He repeatedly

encountered apostasy and recalcitrance in those whose support he so desperately needed. I have become fond of a story related by Daniel Tyler, an associate of the prophet in Kirtland:

At the time William Smith and others rebelled against the Prophet at Kirtland, I attended a meeting . . . where Joseph presided. Entering the school house a little before the meeting opened and gazing upon the man of God, I perceived sadness in his countenance and tears trickling down his cheeks. A few moments later a hymn was sung, and he opened the meeting by prayer. Instead of facing the audience, however, he turned his back and bowed upon his knees, facing the wall. This, I suppose, was done to hide his sorrow and tears.

I had heard men and women pray . . . from the most ignorant, both as to letters and intellect, to the most learned and eloquent. But never until then had I heard a man address his Maker as though he was present listening as a kind father would listen to the sorrows of a dutiful child. Joseph was at that time unlearned, but that prayer, which was to a considerable extent in behalf of those who accused him of having gone astray and fallen into sin, was that the Lord would forgive them and open their eyes that they might see aright. . . . There was no ostentation, no raising of the voice as by enthusiasm, but a plain conversational tone, as a man would address a present friend. It appeared to me as though the veil were taken away. I could see the Lord standing facing his humblest of all servants I had ever seen (in Hyrum and Helen Mae Andrus's, *They Knew the Prophet*, 51-52).

17 And whoso standeth in this mission is appointed to be a judge in Israel, like as it was in ancient days, to divide the lands of the heritage of God unto his children;

verse 17 “a judge in Israel” Bishops are authorized to judge in the area of a man's standing or stewardship in the Church. Their jurisdiction is limited to matters spiritual and pertaining to the Church. They are not, of course, empowered to judge infractions of civil law or to impose punishments for crimes (see D&C 42:79-86).

18 And to judge his people by the testimony of the just, and by the assistance of his counselors, according to the laws of the kingdom which are given by the prophets of God.

verses 16-18 Edward Partridge, at the time, was not a ward bishop, for there were none in the Church. He was rather the bishop of the whole Church (see D&C 41:9). Soon Newell K. Whitney will be called as bishop in Kirtland, and Edward Partridge will remain as bishop in Missouri (see D&C 72). Neither will preside over the other. Neither was the Presiding Bishop in the modern sense, which office will not be created until later (see D&C 124:41). Bishop Partridge was also the acknowledged leader of the Church in Missouri until 1834, when a presidency of local high priests was appointed.

19 For verily I say unto you, my law shall be kept on this land.

verse 19 “my law shall be kept on this land” In context, the Lord seems to be saying that those who intend to enjoy the full fellowship of the Church in Zion will have to obey his commandments. Some have interpreted this phrase as referring to the law of consecration and stewardship. Those in Zion must adhere to this celestial law.

20 Let no man think he is ruler; but let God rule him that judgeth, according to the counsel of his own will, or, in other words, him that counseleth or sitteth upon the judgment seat.

verse 20 The bishop, the judge in Israel, must seek the mind and will of the Lord as he works in his calling. This is, of course, true for all of the Lord’s servants who labor with him in his kingdom.

21 Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.

verse 21 “Let no man break the laws of the land” It is tempting for religious groups to think that since they obey a higher law, they are not obligated to observe the secular laws of the land. The Lord here prohibits such thinking among the saints. Unless specifically commanded otherwise, the saints are to observe the constitutionally valid law of the land. This includes observing legalities in business, obeying speed limits, paying taxes, etc.

22 Wherefore, be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet.

verse 22 “until he reigns” The saints are reminded that as Zion is built up, the laws of the land must be obeyed—at least until “he reigns”—until Christ returns to stand at the head of the political kingdom of God. After his coming there will be no laws but his laws, and the saints will be subject to no other power but his (see D&C 38:22).

23 Behold, the laws which ye have received from my hand are the laws of the church, and in this light ye shall hold them forth. Behold, here is wisdom.

verse 23 “the laws of the church” The Lord wishes the saints to distinguish between the laws of the Church, by which fellowship and the right to an inheritance are decided within the Church, and the laws of the land, by which the saints are to be governed in civil matters. There is an implied caution here against attempting to turn the law of the Church into the law of the land.

24 And now, as I spake concerning my servant Edward Partridge, this land is the land of his residence, and those whom he has appointed for his counselors; and

also the land of the residence of him whom I have appointed to keep my storehouse;

verse 24 “also the land of the residence of him whom I have appointed to keep my storehouse” This refers to A. Sidney Gilbert. See the introductory commentary for section 53.

25 Wherefore, let them bring their families to this land, as they shall counsel between themselves and me.

26 For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

27 Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

28 For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

29 But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.

verse 29 “receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart” The word *commandment* in the Doctrine and Covenants is often used as a synonym for “revelation.” Thus, the condemnation spoken of here cannot be limited to violations of specific “thou shalt” or “thou shalt not” but also applies to resisting the general information and programs revealed to the saints by the Lord.

“the same is damned” The verb *to damn* comes from a Latin root meaning “to condemn,” or “to pronounce guilty.” It is unrelated to the similar verb *to dam*, meaning to stop or to block one’s progress. Despite common confusion of these two verbs, and though the effect of being damned might also be to be dammed (as several writers have pointed out), “to be damned” does not merely mean having one’s progress stopped. It means to be condemned, to be judged guilty or worthy of punishment. In a spiritual sense it means being declared guilty of sin, the exact opposite of being “justified” or declared innocent of sin.

Thus, according to this verse, refusing to do what good we can when we have the opportunity simply because “we don’t have to” is an attitude with serious spiritual consequences. To resist the revelations, or to accept them only grudgingly, or to do good only when specifically commanded, is to find ourselves condemned, “damned,” and consigned, if we don’t repent, into the power of Satan to suffer for our sloth and hard-heartedness.

verses 26-29 Herein is a profound and vital principle. Ezra Taft Benson explained:

Usually the Lord gives us the overall objectives to be accomplished and some guidelines to follow, but he expects us to work out most of the details and methods. The methods and procedures are usually developed through study and prayer and by living so that we can obtain and follow the promptings of the Spirit. Less spiritually advanced people, such as those in the days of Moses, had to be commanded in many things. Today those spiritually alert look at the objectives, check the guidelines laid down by the Lord and his prophets, and then prayerfully act—without having to be commanded “in all things.” This attitude prepares men for godhood. . . .

Sometimes the Lord hopefully waits on his children to act on their own, and when they do not, they lose the greater prize, and the Lord will either drop the entire matter and let them suffer the consequences or else he will have to spell it out in greater detail. Usually, I fear, the more he has to spell it out, the smaller is our reward (*CR*, April 1965, 121-22).

While this principle is as applicable today as it was then, in 1831 there was a particular reason why it was essential. In that day, the fastest means of communication between Kirtland and Independence was a three week ride on horseback each way. The church headquarters was not in Zion but in Kirtland. Therefore it was vital that the saints and leaders in Missouri exercise their agency and not wait to be commanded “in all things.”

These verses were particularly directed to Bishop Edward Partridge. In section 57, Bishop Partridge learned that he was now to live in Zion. Keep in mind that he had a business, home, and family in Ohio, and thus he was being called to sacrifice much. He had many questions, as most of us would have. How will he provide for his family? Who will pay the expenses of moving everything to Missouri? Perhaps even: Is this a temporary or a permanent assignment? These verses were given in response to his question. What is the Lord’s answer? Solve these problems yourself!

It should be the nature of the Lord’s children—to make things better wherever we go—even without being specifically commanded in every detail. God’s true sons and daughters set about to do good in this world, without selfish intent and without necessarily being commanded to do so.

30 Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments?

31 Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled?

verses 30-31 “**Who am I . . .**” These are rhetorical questions equivalent to “Do you think I’ll declare the guilty innocent?” or “Do you think I won’t keep my promises?” It anticipates a negative response.

32 I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing.

33 Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above.

verses 32-33 Many of God's blessings are promised contingent upon living certain principles or keeping certain commandments. When we obey the commandments or live the principles, we receive the promised blessings. But some people expect God to give them these conditional blessings anyway, even without their obedience. When this does not happen, they unjustly condemn God, his prophets, or his programs as false and his promises as unkept.

“their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above” The doubters, skeptics, and disobedient will still receive rewards and accolades, but they will come from “beneath”—they will be the rewards of men and not the rewards of God.

34 And now I give unto you further directions concerning this land.

verse 34 “directions concerning this land” The land referred to is Jackson County, Missouri, or Zion.

verses 35-39 Martin Harris, a relatively wealthy man, is called to consecrate all his money to the bishop's storehouse. Martin had previously been commanded to offer up his possessions to publish the Book of Mormon (see D&C 19:26, 34-35). He then moved with the saints to Ohio and traveled with the Prophet to Missouri. Orson Pratt observed that “Martin Harris was the first man that the Lord called by name to consecrate his money, and lay the same at the feet of the Bishop in Jackson County, Mo., according to the order of consecration. He willingly did it; he knew the work to be true; he knew that the word of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph was just as sacred as any word that ever came from the mouth of any Prophet from the foundation of the world. He consecrated his money and his substance, according to the word of the Lord. What for? As the revelation states, as an example to the rest of the Church” (*JD*, 18:160-61).

35 It is wisdom in me that my servant Martin Harris should be an example unto the church, in laying his moneys before the bishop of the church.

36 And also, this is a law unto every man that cometh unto this land to receive an inheritance; and he shall do with his moneys according as the law directs.

verse 36 “this is a law unto every man” Kirtland was to be a collection point and a staging area to organize the saints in the East and prepare them for Zion. The Lord here commands that only those saints who have agreed to consecrate all their possessions, as Martin Harris had (see verse 35), were to emigrate to Zion (compare verses 44, 46). Unfortunately, many of the Ohio saints disregarded this commandment and moved to Jackson County, Missouri, before being called to do so and without

having entered into the covenant of consecration. Spiritually unprepared, disobedient to counsel, and unwilling to live the law of consecration, they eventually caused economic, social, and spiritual problems in Missouri that contributed to the loss of Zion there.

37 And it is wisdom also that there should be lands purchased in Independence, for the place of the storehouse, and also for the house of the printing.

38 And other directions concerning my servant Martin Harris shall be given him of the Spirit, that he may receive his inheritance as seemeth him good;

39 And let him repent of his sins, for he seeketh the praise of the world.

40 And also let my servant William W. Phelps stand in the office to which I have appointed him, and receive his inheritance in the land;

verse 40 William W. Phelps had been called to serve the Lord as a printer, publisher, and educator (see the introductory commentary for section 55).

41 And also he hath need to repent, for I, the Lord, am not well pleased with him, for he seeketh to excel, and he is not sufficiently meek before me.

verse 41 “he seeketh to excel” W. W. Phelps’s attitude toward other saints was competitive rather than cooperative. He wanted to get ahead of them rather than push them ahead of him. It is not evil to pursue excellence. Indeed, Jesus was the most excellent of all men. But Jesus also sought to share his merits with us to make us as he is, rather than simply wanting to outperform us. The pursuit of personal excellence for the glory of God and the benefit of our fellows is a positive virtue, but the competitive urge that simply compels us to win for our ego’s sake is not. Evidently, it is in this latter sense that Brother Phelps “[sought] to excel” and is here cautioned about it. The compulsive need always to beat our brothers and sisters, to establish our superiority over them by always winning, is as incompatible with establishing Zion as is the need to have more money, a newer car, or a larger house than they do.

42 Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

verse 42 “I, the Lord, remember them no more” Note that this scripture does not promise that repentant sinners will forget their sins. Neither does any other scripture. Alma 36:17-21, for example, says only that Alma remembered his pains no more, and that the memory of his sins didn’t harrow him up (vex, torment, distress, afflict, or torture) him anymore. Rather, we are promised that it is *the Lord* who “will remember them no more.”

43 By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.

verse 43 “he will confess them” Certain serious sins require confession to a bishop. However, all transgressions require honest confession or admission to oneself and often to the injured party, if there is one. Elder Spencer W. Kimball taught:

No one can ever be forgiven of any transgression until there is repentance, and one has not repented until he has bared his soul and admitted his intentions and weaknesses without excuses or rationalizations. He must admit to himself that he has grievously sinned. When he has confessed to himself without the slightest minimizing of offense, or rationalizing its seriousness, or soft-pedaling its gravity, and admits it is as big as it really is, then he is ready to begin his repentance (“Love Versus Lust,” Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 5 January 1965] 10).

Unwillingness to admit our sins to the injured parties by confession indicates that true repentance has not yet taken place, for our desire to be cleansed of sin is weaker than our desire to hide our faults and protect our egos.

“and forsake them” To *forsake* means to abandon.

44 And now, verily, I say concerning the residue of the elders of my church, the time has not yet come, for many years, for them to receive their inheritance in this land, except they desire it through the prayer of faith, only as it shall be appointed unto them of the Lord.

verse 44 “I say concerning the residue of the elders of my church” The Lord addresses here those Missouri missionaries who have not been specifically called to remain in Independence, and he instructs them on his will for them (see verses 44-65).

“the time has not yet come, for many years” The Lord is not willing for most members of the Church to go to Zion yet. It would be many years to come (compare D&C 51:17: “as for years” and D&C 64:21: “a space of five years”). It would actually not be until seven years later, in 1838, that most of the Ohio Saints will be called to Missouri. The Lord desires that several things occur in preparation: (1) that Zion be built up slowly (see verse 56), (2) that the land be purchased by contributions from the Ohio saints (see verse 49), (3) that missionary work be done in Missouri (see verse 48) and in all the world (see verse 64), (4) that the Prophet has time to complete his work in Kirtland (see verse 58), (5) and that other preparations be made over a period of years.

Unfortunately, overeager and disobedient saints refused to follow the Lord’s plan for gradual, economically sensible, and spiritually consecrated settlement in Missouri but went there on their own, unbidden and unprepared, and expecting the bishop in Zion to provide them with an inheritance. The financial and logistical strain on the resources of the saints in Independence eventually proved too great. Too many of these incoming saints were too greedy, too inexperienced, too self-willed, and too disobedient to help in establishing Zion. Since they did not live according to the covenant that was made when the land was dedicated (see the introductory

commentary for this section), in barely more than two years the Lord allowed the saints to be driven off the land (additional reasons are given in D&C 101:7-8; 103:3-4; 105:11, 17).

45 For, behold, they shall push the people together from the ends of the earth.

verse 45 Having sufficiently answered the question concerning the time of the building of Zion, the Lord turned to the first question asked by the Prophet: When will the wilderness blossom as a rose? In this verse the Lord tells the elders of the Church what they must do in the years before the fulfillment of Zion. They must “push the people together from the ends of the earth.” This phrase specifically refers to the gathering of the scattered ten tribes of Israel under gospel tent in America (see Deuteronomy 33:13-17, 3 Nephi 14:12-13).

The Lord obviously knew that that these early saints would not succeed in establishing Zion in their day. This verse and others suggest that there is much to be done, before Zion is established.

46 Wherefore, assemble yourselves together; and they who are not appointed to stay in this land, let them preach the gospel in the regions round about; and after that let them return to their homes.

verse 46 “let them return to their homes” Those saints not commanded to remain in Independence are commanded to return to their homes in Kirtland.

47 Let them preach by the way, and bear testimony of the truth in all places, and call upon the rich, the high and the low, and the poor to repent.

48 And let them build up churches, inasmuch as the inhabitants of the earth will repent.

49 And let there be an agent appointed by the voice of the church, unto the church in Ohio, to receive moneys to purchase lands in Zion.

verse 49 This verse was necessary because the bishop (Edward Partridge) and his agent (A. Sidney Gilbert) were now to make their home in Zion. This left the Kirtland area with no one to preside over the United Order there. In this verse, the Lord commands that a second agent be called to assist in Ohio. In section 63:42-45, Newell K. Whitney will be called to fill this position (see also D&C 72:8).

verses 50-51 Money was going to be required to buy lands in Zion. Sidney Rigdon is commanded in these verses to write a description of Zion—a sort of “brochure”—to be distributed among the branches of the Church for the purpose of encouraging contributions.

Later the Lord will indicate that what Sidney Rigdon had written was unacceptable (see D&C 63:55-56, a probable reference to this assignment). The

glowing description of Jackson County found in the *History of the Church* (1:197-98) is a revised version of Sidney's second, more acceptable attempt to describe Zion (see Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon*, 101-05).

50 And I give unto my servant Sidney Rigdon a commandment, that he shall write a description of the land of Zion, and a statement of the will of God, as it shall be made known by the Spirit unto him;

51 And an epistle and subscription, to be presented unto all the churches to obtain moneys, to be put into the hands of the bishop, of himself or the agent, as seemeth him good or as he shall direct, to purchase lands for an inheritance for the children of God.

verse 51 “an epistle and subscription” The description of Zion—the “brochure”—commanded in verse 50 was to be accompanied by a cover letter to local leaders that included a sign-up sheet for the members to indicate their interest in contributing. Funds would then be received by local authorities, to be forwarded to Bishop Partridge or his agents in Missouri. The subscription, or sign-up sheet, would provide church leaders with a list of those willing to contribute or invest in the land described in the brochure.

52 For, behold, verily I say unto you, the Lord willeth that the disciples and the children of men should open their hearts, even to purchase this whole region of country, as soon as time will permit.

verse 52 If the saints had been perfectly obedient to the Lord's commands concerning Zion, he would have prepared the way for the legal purchase of most all of the land in Independence. He would have done this by opening the hearts, or influencing his “disciples” to raise the money and purchase the lands from “the children of men.”

53 Behold, here is wisdom. Let them do this lest they receive none inheritance, save it be by the shedding of blood.

verse 53 The Lord emphasizes the need for the saints to obtain clear and legal title to the lands they purchase. In this way any disputes over ownership could be settled by law, and violence can be avoided.

Some people have incorrectly concluded that this verse implies that the saints were authorized by the Lord to take land in Missouri by force if necessary. While it is true that property can sometimes be obtained in this manner, theft and murder could never be acceptable means of establishing Zion (see Whitmer, *Early Latter Day Saint History*, 79). Essentially the Lord is saying, “If you don't buy the land, you'll have to kill for it, and that is unacceptable” (compare D&C 57:4-5; 63:29-31). Ironically, when blood

later was shed over this land, it was mostly the blood of the saints who held legal title to it but were driven out anyway.

54 And again, inasmuch as there is land obtained, let there be workmen sent forth of all kinds unto this land, to labor for the saints of God.

verse 54 “let there be workmen sent forth of all kinds” Those saints in the east with necessary skills for building Zion were to be called and sent there as needed.

55 Let all these things be done in order; and let the privileges of the lands be made known from time to time, by the bishop or the agent of the church.

verse 55 “Let all these things be done in order” This is a further commandment by the Lord that Zion should be built up slowly, sensibly, and according to the principles of consecration and the law of the Lord (see verse 56). Only those who were prepared and appointed to go to Missouri were to go, according to the procedures revealed to the Church. As mentioned previously, however, sometimes self-willed saints want to get ahead of the Lord and do things according to their own timetable. The violation of these instructions and procedures by the saints who would not wait to be called to Missouri contributed to the eventual downfall of the saints there.

“privileges of the lands” This phrase refers to a report on the availability of the lands and the opportunities for the saints to obtain lands.

56 And let the work of the gathering be not in haste, nor by flight; but let it be done as it shall be counseled by the elders of the church at the conferences, according to the knowledge which they receive from time to time.

verse 56 The gathering to Zion was to be an orderly process, and only those called to Zion should go there.

57 And let my servant Sidney Rigdon consecrate and dedicate this land, and the spot for the temple, unto the Lord.

verse 57 On August 2, 1831, the day following this revelation, Sidney Rigdon dedicated the land of Zion to the Lord as directed in this verse.

58 And let a conference meeting be called; and after that let my servants Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, Jun., return, and also Oliver Cowdery with them, to accomplish the residue of the work which I have appointed unto them in their own land, and the residue as shall be ruled by the conferences.

verse 58 “let a conference meeting be called” The Lord had also previously indicated that a conference was to be held in Missouri (see D&C 52:2). Thirty-one members attended this conference, which was held on August 4, 1831, in Kaw

Township at the home of Joshua Lewis, a local convert of the missionaries to the Lamanites.

“their own land” Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph, Oliver, and Sidney had much to do back in Kirtland as directed by the Lord and as decided by the conferences of the elders of the Church.

59 And let no man return from this land except he bear record by the way, of that which he knows and most assuredly believes.

verse 59 What contemporary mission president has not emphasized the necessity of his missionaries’ talking to people and bearing testimony to them in all circumstances—as they are traveling on a bus, shopping, or walking on the street.

60 Let that which has been bestowed upon Ziba Peterson be taken from him; and let him stand as a member in the church, and labor with his own hands, with the brethren, until he is sufficiently chastened for all his sins; for he confesseth them not, and he thinketh to hide them.

verse 60 “Let that which has been bestowed upon Ziba Peterson be taken from him” Ziba Peterson was one of the missionaries called to preach to the Lamanites (see D&C 32:3). He had departed Fayette, New York, with Oliver Cowdery ten months earlier, in October 1830. In April 1831 he and Oliver Cowdery traveled to Lafayette County, Missouri, and preached to the people of Lexington, baptizing forty to fifty persons.

Following this pointed rebuke by the Lord given August 1, 1831, Ziba confessed his sins at the conference held August 4, and he received forgiveness. One week later, on August 11, he married Rebecca Hooper, one of the Lafayette County converts. Ziba Peterson later became disaffected, and when the saints fled Jackson County in 1833, he and his family remained behind.

61 Let the residue of the elders of this church, who are coming to this land, some of whom are exceedingly blessed even above measure, also hold a conference upon this land.

verse 61 “Let the residue of the elders of this church . . . also hold a conference upon this land” This conference was held August 24, 1831, in Kaw Township. Several elders who had not reached Jackson County by the previous conference on August 4 attended on August 24, with Bishop Partridge presiding (see verses 62-63). After this second conference in Missouri, the late-arriving elders were also to return to Ohio.

62 And let my servant Edward Partridge direct the conference which shall be held by them.

63 And let them also return, preaching the gospel by the way, bearing record of the things which are revealed unto them.

64 For, verily, the sound must go forth from this place into all the world, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth—the gospel must be preached unto every creature, with signs following them that believe.

verse 64 "the sound must go forth from this place" Even though most of the Church still lived in Ohio, and would for some years to come, the perspective of the Church was changed. Independence was the "center place" from which the gospel was to go forth (D&C 57:1-3).

"the gospel must be preached unto every creature" How literally did the Lord intend this command to be? President Spencer W. Kimball, referring to this verse and others, said:

It seems to me that the Lord chose his words when he said "every nation," "every land," "uttermost bounds of the earth," "every tongue," "every people," "every soul," "all the world," "many lands."

. . . I feel that when we have done all in our power that the Lord will find a way to open doors. That is my faith ("When the World Will Be Converted," *Ensign*, October 1974, 5, 10-11).

Truly the words of the prophet Joseph Smith will be fulfilled:

No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done (*HC*, 4:540).

65 And behold the Son of Man cometh. Amen.

Joseph Smith and the others were involved in many other activities in Missouri. On August 2, 1831, the Prophet assisted the Colesville saints in laying the first log for a house of worship in Kaw township, twelve miles west of Independence. The log was carried by twelve men in honor of the twelve tribes of Israel. That same day Sidney Rigdon was in Independence consecrating and dedicating the area for the gathering of the saints. On August 3, in the company of eight other men, Joseph stood on the plot where the temples were to be erected and dedicated the land for the building of a House of the Lord.

Section 59 Law of the Sabbath

On Sunday August 7, 1831, Joseph attended the funeral of the first church member to die in Zion, sister Polly Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight, Sr. and the mother of Newel Knight. Her health had been failing for some time, and she was very ill during her journey from Thompson, Ohio, to Missouri. “Yet,” said her son Newel, “she would not consent to stop traveling. Her greatest desire was to set her feet upon the land of Zion and to have her body interred in that land.” She was so ill, as the Colesville saints traveled to Missouri, that her son Newel Knight bought lumber, during the journey, to make a coffin in case she would die before they arrived at their destination. The Lord, however, gave her the desire of her heart, and she lived to stand on that land (*HC*, 1:99, footnote). Sister Knight died on Saturday August 6. The Knights, along with the other Colesville saints had arrived in Jackson County about two weeks earlier on July 25, having been evicted from Lemman Copley’s farm in Thompson, Ohio, the preceding month.

After the funeral, Joseph received this revelation. The revelation starts out as a funeral sermon (verses 1-3), but the remainder of the revelation deals with the principles of Sabbath-day keeping. It is the most important scripture we have which deals with the spirit of the Sabbath.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 59 The Law of the Sabbath

D&C 59:8 Thou shalt offer a sacrifice . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

D&C 59:9-12 On this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High.

D&C 59:21 And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things.

D&C 59:23 But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come.

verses 1-3 These verses likely refer to Polly Knight. She is the first of “those that die” (verse 2), “whose feet stand upon the land of Zion” (verse 3), and who had “obeyed my gospel” (verse 3). These blessings and promises also belong to all faithful saints in Zion.

1 Behold, blessed, saith the Lord, are they who have come up unto this land with an eye single to my glory, according to my commandments.

2 For those that live shall inherit the earth, and those that die shall rest from all their labors, and their works shall follow them; and they shall receive a crown in the mansions of my Father, which I have prepared for them.

3 Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in its strength.

verse 3 “they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth”

Both those who live and those who die in righteousness shall inherit the earth, since the earth will become the celestial kingdom and become their eternal abode.

4 And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time—they that are faithful and diligent before me.

verse 4 “they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few” Note that the Lord considers his commandments to be blessings from him and not merely limitations or burdens.

verses 5-14 These verses contain commandments that are either New Testament commandments or parts of the Mosaic law now given a new gospel context.

5 Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.

verse 5 “in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him” Deuteronomy 11:1 reads: “Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.” The phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him” adds to this previously known command.

6 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

verse 6 “nor do anything like unto it” This phrase expands the scope of the Mosaic prohibitions in Exodus and Leviticus to include the spirit of the law.

The following statement by the First Presidency (President Harold B. Lee, N. Eldon Tanner, and Marion G. Romney) on abortion seems appropriate to mention here. The statement teaches us that abortion is a sin “like unto” killing:

In view of a recent decision of the United States Supreme Court, we feel it necessary to restate the position of the Church on abortion in order that there be no misunderstanding of our attitude.

The Church opposes abortion and counsels its members not to submit to or perform an abortion except in the rare case where, in the opinion of competent medical

counsel, the life or good health of the mother is seriously endangered or where the pregnancy was caused by rape and produces serious emotional trauma in the mother. Even then it should be done only after counseling with the local presiding priesthood authority and after receiving divine confirmation through prayer.

Abortion must be considered one of the most revolting and sinful practices in this day, when we are witnessing the frightening evidence of permissiveness leading to sexual immortality.

Members of the Church guilty of being parties to the sin of abortion must be subjected to the disciplinary action of the councils of the Church as circumstances warrant. In dealing with this serious matter, it would be well to keep in mind the word of the Lord stated in the 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 6, "Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it" (*Church News*, January 27, 1973, 7).

President Spencer W. Kimball also applied this passage to abortion (*CR*, April, 1975, 8).

As to the amenability of the sin of abortion to the law of repentance and forgiveness, we quote the following statement made by President David O. McKay and his counselors, Stephen L Richards and J. Reuben Clark, Jr., which continues to represent the attitude and position of the Church:

As the matter stands today, no definite statement has been made by the Lord one way or another regarding the crime of abortion. So far is known, he has not listed it alongside the crime of the unpardonable sin and shedding of innocent human blood. That he has not done so would suggest that it is not in that class of crime and therefore that it will be amenable to the laws of repentance and forgiveness (*Church News*, January 27, 1973, 7).

This quoted statement, however, should not in any sense, be constituted to minimize the seriousness of this revolting sin.

President Ezra Taft Benson also applied this "spirit-of-the-law" principle—"or anything like unto it" to the law of chastity: "This means fornication, homosexual behavior, self-abuse, child molestation, or any other sexual perversion" (*Ensign*, November 1986, 46).

7 Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.

verse 7 A specific commandment intended only for Levites in the Old Testament is contained in 1 Chronicles 23:30: "And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even." This verse applies this commandment to all of the saints in this dispensation.

The absence of gratitude is looked upon by the Lord as an offense unto God. President Joseph F. Smith described the absence of thankfulness as sin: "And I believe

that one of the greatest sins of which the inhabitants of the earth are guilty today is the sin of ingratitude. . . .” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 270-271).

verses 8-23 Section 59 gives principles for keeping the Sabbath rather than a Pharisaical list of specific do’s and don’ts. Note the counsel contained in these verses: Offer a sacrifice unto the Lord—that of a broken heart and contrite spirit. Keep yourself unspotted from the world. Rest. Pay your devotions to the Most High. Don’t worship only on Sunday. Set your interpersonal relationships straight if they have gone awry. Maintain a thankful heart and a cheerful countenance. Is laughter a sin? Certainly not wholesome laughter. We should avoid the scurrilous type of irreverent laughter, however.

8 Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

verse 8 **“Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God”** The Lord requires sacrifice of those of us in this final dispensation just as he required it of those in the Mosaic dispensation. But instead of sacrificing sheep and cattle, we must sacrifice our will to his.

“a broken heart and a contrite spirit” To understand this phrase it is necessary to understand the scriptural concept of pride. Please review “Pride” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5, *The “Natural Self” and “Spiritual Self.”* Those with a broken heart and a contrite spirit are those who are humble and responsive to the promptings of the Spirit and actively seeking ways in which to repent—to become more like the Savior.

A “broken heart and a contrite spirit” is also a gift of the Spirit that must be earned through our obedience. It is the gift of divine motivation. See “The Solution to Pride—A Broken Heart and Contrite Spirit” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5, *The “Natural Self” and “Spiritual Self.”*

9 And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

verse 9 **“go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day”** The Lord specifically commands us, as we strive to keep the Sabbath day holy, that we worship him by praying and by attending our sacrament meeting and partaking of the sacrament. The renewal of our baptismal covenant by partaking of the sacrament is one of the most sacred acts we perform as Latter-day Saints (see also verse 12).

The word *sacraments* is plural here because it refers not only to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper but to all our sacred Sabbath performances—prayers, blessings,

confirmations, testimonies, lessons, or anything else we may do in Jesus's name. A "sacrament" is anything said or done in the sacred name of Jesus Christ.

10 For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

11 Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

verse 11 A reminder that no one should get the idea that just because there is a designated Sabbath, all religious exercises, devotions, keeping the commandments, or being concerned with the things of God should be limited to Sunday only. Every member of the Church has covenant obligations to the Lord that are valid and must be observed seven days a week.

12 But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

verse 12 "on this, the Lord's day" In the world, controversy exists regarding which day of the week should appropriately be set aside as the Sabbath. We care nothing for all these arguments since this section of the Doctrine and Covenants was given on Sunday, and in this verse the Lord identifies Sunday as the appropriate day of worship: "this, the Lord's day."

"thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins" An "oblation" is an offering to God. It might be an offering of money, time, talent, or anything else consecrated to God as an act of obedience or worship. Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined an oblation in its highest sense as "giving full devotion to the Lord, of offering him a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 541-42).

Does the ordinance of the sacrament involve confession? As we seek to grow spiritually, we must, with the willing cooperation of the Spirit of God, discern and identify those of our characteristics that need to be changed. We must then acknowledge or confess, at least to ourselves, those sins, and then we can set about to change them (see D&C 58:42-43). It may be useful to the reader to review the commentary on the three parts of the ordinance of baptism at this point, particularly the third part of the ordinance, the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost (see the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31).

verses 13-14 Note the words "perfect" and "rejoicing" used in referring to the fast. John W. Welch has reported on the doctrine of the fast in the early Christian church. He has examined an early Christian text from one of the so-called "apostolic fathers"—the Shepherd of Hermas. Apostolic fathers are early Christian church leaders

and writers whose lives actually interfaced with the apostles. The writings of these apostolic fathers are considered credible and authentic owing to the early date of their writings and because of their association with the apostles. The Shepherd of Hermas was a Bishop of Rome who is believed to be the one referred to by Paul (Romans 16:14). He wrote about AD 150. Brother Welch reports the writings of the Shepherd of Hermas on the law of the fast:

1. You are first to “guard against every evil word and every evil desire, and cleanse your heart of all the vanities of this world.”

2. Then you must “estimate the cost of the food you would have eaten on that day on which you intend to fast, and give it to a widow or an orphan or someone in need.”

3. Moreover, “You must observe these things with your children and your whole household, and in observing them you will be blessed.”

4. Furthermore, those who receive fast offerings are to pray “on behalf of” those who have extended their generosity in this way.

“This fast,” the Christian is told, “is very good in keeping the Lord’s commandments,” and if you will do these things, “this fast of yours will be perfect” and “your sacrifice will be acceptable in God’s sight, and this fast will be recorded, and service performed in this way is beautiful and joyous.”

Note the words in verses 13 and 14 of section 59 “perfect” and “rejoicing” which are similar to the “perfect” and “joyous” found in this early Christian text.

If these directives may be described as the true order of fasting, it is evident that few Christian churches today follow this essential instruction. Is it possible that this was one of the “plain and precious things” taken away from the original gospel as it went forth from the mouth of the Son of God as foreseen by Nephi of old (1 Nephi 13:28)? But Nephi also beheld that some of those truths would be restored by “other books” that would come forth “from the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:38).

Because little was known about the ancient manuscripts of the Shepherd of Hermas until after the middle of the 19th century, it is interesting that only The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as far as we know, teaches and actually operates a regular program of fasting along these earliest Christian lines.

We may therefore conclude that fasting in the religious sense cannot be equated with just missing a few meals. True fasting is the attitude in which we miss those meals, an attitude of conscious sacrifice for the sake of others and for the sake of drawing away from our carnal natures while drawing closer to God. And as we draw closer to God through proper fasting, should we not rejoice? Even the food we prepare to end our religious fasts can be prepared in the spirit of fasting, the spirit of rejoicing—rejoicing not that our fast is over but that through our fast we have blessed our fellow saints and more effectively communed with God.

In a figurative sense, the Sabbath day itself, when properly observed, may be understood as a fast; not a fast from food and water, but from the worldly concerns of the rest of the week. If we truly fast from our weekday concerns on the Sabbath, we can enter into the full joy of the Lord's day.

13 And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full.

verse 13 “let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart” Food should be prepared in simplicity. A simple meal should suffice rather than an elaborate feast. On one occasion Jesus was a guest in the house of Mary and Martha. Martha was overly busy trying to host the Savior in grand style, while Mary just sat listening to the Savior. To Martha's rebuke of her younger sister, the Lord replied, “But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42). The Lord's implication was that there are more important things than a fancy and perfect meal.

“that thy fasting may be perfect” Just what constitutes a “perfect fast”? President Joseph F. Smith has counseled us:

Now, while the law requires the saints in all the world to fast from “even to even” and to abstain both from food and drink, it can easily be seen from the scriptures, and especially from the words of Jesus, that it is more important to obtain the true spirit of love for God and man, “purity of heart and simplicity of intention,” than it is to carry out the cold letter of the law. The Lord has instituted the fast on a reasonable and intelligent basis, and none of his works are vain or unwise. His law is perfect in this as in other things. Hence, those who can are required to comply thereto; it is a duty from which they cannot escape; but let it be remembered that the observance of the fast day by abstaining twenty-four hours from food and drink is not an absolute rule, it is no iron-clad law to us, but it is left with the people as a matter of conscience, to exercise wisdom and discretion. Many are subject to weakness, others are delicate in health, and others have nursing babies; of such it should not be required to fast. Neither should parents compel their little children to fast. I have known children to cry for something to eat on fast day. In such cases, going without food will do them no good. Instead, they dread the day to come, and in place of hailing it, dislike it; while the compulsion engenders a spirit of rebellion in them, rather than a love for the Lord and their fellows. . .

But those should fast who can, and all classes among us should be taught to save the meals which they would eat, or their equivalent, for the poor. None are exempt from this; it is required of the saints, old and young, in every part of the Church (*Gospel Doctrine*, 243-44).

14 Verily, this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer.

verse 14 While we generally define “fasting” as going without food, it should be noted that here the Lord defines “fasting and prayer” as “rejoicing and prayer.”

15 And inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance—

verse 15 The Lord doesn’t have anything against happiness, gladness, or cheerfulness, as demonstrated by the last half of this verse. The prohibition against “much laughter” here should be understood as meaning prohibition against that state of silliness, giddiness, loss of dignity, and loss of control in which people are more prone to cross the line of propriety, to make light of sacred things, to mock that which is good, or to make fun of others. This prohibition should not be understood as a total ban on all humor or on any degree of laughter, since a large number of General Authorities use an appropriate degree of humor—and the saints respond with appropriate laughter—when they address the Church in conference or on other important occasions.

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord commands the saints three times concerning laughter. We are commanded to cast away “excess of laughter” (D&C 88:69), avoid “much laughter” (this verse), and cease from “all laughter” (D&C 88:121). The context of each passage is crucial and explains the variation in the three commandments. Doctrine and Covenants 88:69 is apparently describing our everyday activity as we attempt to live lives that are more and more Christlike. Thus, laughter is permitted, but not to excess. In this verse, D&C 59:15, the setting is fasting, prayer, and Sabbath observance, in which there should not be “much” laughter; and in D&C 88:121 the setting is the Lord’s house, the temple (compare D&C 88:117, 119-20), where there should be no laughter at all.

verses 16-20 In these verses the Lord promises that as we are obedient in keeping the Sabbath day holy, our temporal needs will be met. Here is evidence that the immediate blessings for obedience are temporal as well as spiritual.

16 Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this, the fulness of the earth is yours, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which climbth upon the trees and walketh upon the earth;

verse 16 “the fulness of the earth is yours” The earth and all it produces, both animal life (see verse 16) and plant life (see verse 17), are allowed for the use of the saints. There are no kosher laws for the modern Church as there were for ancient Israel. Modern Israel, the Church of Jesus Christ, may drink milk with their meat or wear linen with wool. We can eat shellfish, escargot, rabbit, or pork. The Mosaic law’s prohibitions against using certain of nature’s resources do not apply to the saints. Even

the Word of Wisdom, which was not given to the Church until 1833, a year and a half following this revelation, is not so much a prohibition against use as it is a prohibition against misuse (see D&C 89). The Lord expected the saints to use all the bounty the earth produces intelligently and appropriately (see verse 20).

17 Yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards;

18 Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;

19 Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.

verse 19 “enliven the soul” The *soul* is defined in D&C 88:15-16 as the combination of the spirit and the body. The things of this earth are given not just for the nourishment of the body but for the joy of the spirit as well. “To enliven” means to stimulate or to rejuvenate. Thus, the products of nature are meant to rejuvenate or renew our spirits with their aesthetic qualities as well as our bodies with their physical properties.

20 And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.

verse 20 “neither by extortion” There is a difference between use and exploitation. Humans did not “use” the passenger pigeon very wisely. They are now extinct. The resources of nature are given to man to manage, not to pillage. Wholesale destruction of natural resources violates God’s command that they be used “with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.” Perhaps *extortion*, which literally means to “twist out,” here refers to forcing more from a resource than it can bear.

verses 16-20 President Spencer W. Kimball was once asked whether or not a serious drought that was ravaging the western United States might be due to the disobedience of the people. He said:

Today numerous of the people of this land spend the Sabbath working, devoting the day to the beaches, to entertainment, to shows, to their weekly purchases. The Lord makes definite promises. He says: “Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:4). God does what he promises, and many of us continue to defile the Sabbath day (CR, April 1977, 4-5).

21 And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.

verse 21 In using the products of nature for our own wants and needs, we need not fear that we might somehow offend God, for they are all given to us. God will, however, be offended by foolish persons who use what he has provided for them but will not acknowledge his hand in providing it—who “remove” God from their conceptual world and will not thank him (see verse 7) or keep his commandments.

22 Behold, this is according to the law and the prophets; wherefore, trouble me no more concerning this matter.

verse 22 “according to the law and the prophets” The Lord points out that his word on these matters is already found in the scriptures. The Lord does not seem to appreciate being petitioned for answers he has already given. Many of the saints would benefit from searching the scriptures and the revelations to modern prophets before asking God to solve their problems through personal revelation or divine intervention. God may already have answered their questions or solved their problems—if only they would consult the scriptures and other resources the Lord has provided.

23 But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.

verse 23 Are we self-aggrandizing as we strive to keep the commandments? Do we seek after rewards? This verse reveals the reward for living in accord with the gospel principles. We are not promised riches, freedom from problems, or good health. Rather, the rewards are ones we should strive for: peace of mind in this world and the opportunity for eternal progression in the next world—the celestial heaven.

24 I, the Lord, have spoken it, and the Spirit beareth record. Amen.

Perhaps a fitting summary to section 59 is a statement by the First Presidency (President David O. McKay, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., and Henry D. Moyle) as to what constitutes appropriate observance of the Sabbath day:

The Sabbath day is not just another day on which we merely rest from work, free to spend it as our lightmindedness may suggest. It is a holy day, the Lord's day, to be spent as a day of worship and reverence. All matters extraneous thereto should be shunned (*Deseret News*, June 20, 1959).

Joseph Smith had section 59 printed as a handbill and distributed to the saints in Kirtland shortly after his return from Missouri. This fact provides evidence of how important Joseph considered this revelation to be in that day.

Brief Historical Setting

As the time drew near for the missionaries to return to Kirtland, some of them inquired of Joseph, who in turn inquired of the Lord. The Lord gave counsel concerning their journey home **[D&C 60 - Journey Back to Kirtland]**. The Lord specifically warned them of the dangers of traveling by water **[D&C 61 - Danger Upon the Waters]**. On the way home they met up with some missionaries who were on their way to Independence. After joyful salutations the Lord gave instructions and encouragement to the missionaries **[D&C 62 - Testimony]**.

Section 60 Journey Back to Kirtland

Having fulfilled their mission in Missouri, those missionaries not called to remain in Independence turned their attention to the return trip home to Kirtland as instructed in D&C 58:46. The Prophet and his party had accomplished much. During their time in Missouri, they had located and dedicated the land of Zion and the site of its temple. They had established a bishopric, a mercantile store, and a bishops' storehouse. They had made plans for a publishing house. They had begun to buy land and build upon it, and they had familiarized more than two dozen Kirtland saints with the land of Zion and how to get there.

On Monday, August 8, 1831, the day after Polly Knight's funeral and the reception of section 59, the returning elders asked the prophet Joseph Smith just how they should return to Ohio and by what routes; whether they should do missionary work along the way; and if Joseph had any other special instructions for them. In response to their inquiries, Joseph received section 60 on August 8. It consists of the Lord's instructions pertaining to the journey home. Sections 60-62 constitute a unit dealing with the return from Zion, and they should be studied together.

Joseph and ten companions departed the following day, Tuesday August 9, rowing down the Missouri River in a flotilla of sixteen canoes.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 60:2 With some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, because of the fear of man.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto the elders of his church, who are to return speedily to the land from whence they came: Behold, it pleaseth me, that you have come up hither;

2 But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them.

verse 2 “they will not open their mouths” Some of the elders called as missionaries to Missouri refused to preach or bear testimony of the restored gospel while on this mission. A few seemed to have expected the Lord to give them greater powers of public speaking as a reward for their even attempting to preach. This is obviously a stern warning to those elders.

Young missionaries today are often surprised to learn that the Lord commands that they open their mouths in most all circumstances in which they find themselves. Since most new missionaries find this a stressful and anxiety-producing activity, and

they face the real “fear of man” for the first time, they are sobered to learn that the Lord is angry if they do not do so.

“they hide the talent which I have given unto them” The frightened young missionary may attempt to justify himself by claiming that he never had a talent in public speaking or preaching, so he shouldn’t be required to open his mouth. Here the missionaries’ talents lie in their knowledge and testimony of the restored gospel. This great blessing brings with it the obligation that one’s knowledge and testimony be shared with others who lack that witness (see the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30).

The first missionaries to arrive in Zion were those who had done little or no missionary work on their way to Missouri, and that is why they arrived before the others. When Joseph was ready to leave Independence, there were still several pairs of missionaries yet to arrive from Kirtland, having been delayed by preaching the gospel on the way to Zion. It is ironic that some of the less faithful missionaries were the ones rewarded with being on the scene when the land was dedicated and the conference held. Perhaps in these verses there is something of a rebuke to those who had not fulfilled the mandate given them, and the Lord is giving them a chance to redeem themselves on the journey back to Kirtland.

Brigham Young explained one of the benefits of sharing our “testimony talent”: “A man who wishes to receive light and knowledge, to increase in the faith of the holy gospel, and to grow in knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, will find that when he imparts knowledge to others he will also grow and increase” (*JD*, 2: 267).

3 And it shall come to pass, if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away, even that which they have.

verse 3 The principle of “use it or lose it” applies in all our spiritual growth, including our testimonies of the restored gospel. As we grow spiritually, the increments of the attributes of God the Father or Jesus Christ that we acquired through our obedience must be utilized and applied during our mortal lives. If they are not, we will surely lose them (see D&C 1:31-33; 82:7). It is because of this concept that “there are no plateaus in spiritual growth.” If we are not actively growing spiritually, we are surely deteriorating.

4 For I, the Lord, rule in the heavens above, and among the armies of the earth; and in the day when I shall make up my jewels, all men shall know what it is that bespeaketh the power of God.

verse 4 **“in the day when I shall make up my jewels”** When the Lord comes in glory, he will claim his “jewels”—those who have been obedient to his commandments. The metaphorical imagery here suggests God as the emperor of the universe taking the finest treasures from all his vast domains to make up his “crown

jewels.” When this earth has fulfilled its present purpose, God will take the most precious and valuable things upon it, his obedient sons and daughters—his “jewels”—and place them in their proper settings among his treasures (compare Isaiah 62:3; Zechariah 9:16).

“what . . . bespeaketh the power of God” Bespeaketh means to give evidence, to testify, or to signify. On that day when the Lord makes up his “jewels,” everyone will see the shining glory and favored status of those obedient saints who did not fear men. Their glorious exaltation before all the world, even though they may have personally been the meek, lowly, or uneducated during their mortal lives, will be God’s final witness of his own infinite power.

5 But, verily, I will speak unto you concerning your journey unto the land from whence you came. Let there be a craft made, or bought, as seemeth you good, it mattereth not unto me, and take your journey speedily for the place which is called St. Louis.

verse 5 The Lord instructs the returning missionaries to either make or purchase boats and head down the Missouri River to St. Louis. The elders ended up buying large canoes, capable of holding several men.

“it mattereth not unto me” Even though the Lord has given rather specific counsel to the returning elders in this verse, he makes it clear in this brief but profoundly meaningful phrase that it really doesn’t matter to him how they return home, so long as they “fill their mission” (D&C 61:22) on their way. Some details of our life are simply unimportant to the Lord. It is apparent here that it didn’t really matter to him whether the elders “made, or bought” a craft, whether they traveled “by water or by land” (D&C 61:22), or whether they rode on horses, mules, or in wagons (see D&C 62:7-8).

Some saints today agonize over whether God wants them to drive a Ford or a Chevy, to buy a house or rent an apartment, to study sociology in college or dental hygiene in a vocational school. But God might not care one way or the other. However, sometimes God does care about such details, and it is important for us to be prayerful and to follow the promptings of the Spirit. If we get no promptings, in response to our prayers, concerning the details of our lives or the many choices we face, it may be because any of the available options is equally acceptable to the Lord, or because there may be no spiritual advantage or disadvantage of any one option over any other (compare D&C 80:3). If the Lord does not prompt us one way or the other, we should not become paralyzed and unable to proceed. We should just make the best choice we can and get on with our lives. After all, our goal is not for God to make every decision for us. But rather, our objective is to become like God, with the power of independent decision and action within ourselves (see D&C 58:26-29).

“take your journey speedily” What is the Lord commanding here? Is he telling the elders to “hurry and go”—to leave promptly—or to “go in a hurry”—to travel swiftly

once they were underway? D&C 61:3 suggests that the Lord is instructing them to “hurry and go”—to leave Missouri quickly. They left the following morning. Compare this with verse 14, where the elders are to “speedily return” but “not in haste,” that is, they were to start as soon as possible, but they were not to travel in great haste once they left. The Lord wanted them to proselyte along the way.

6 And from thence let my servants, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, take their journey for Cincinnati;

verse 6 Keep in mind that Oliver Cowdery had been away from Joseph and the main body of the Church for some ten months. When he left on his mission to the Lamanites, the center of the Church was located in New York, but he will eventually return to it in Kirtland, a branch he had helped to found.

“take their journey for Cincinnati” It is not entirely clear why the Lord commanded the “presidential party” to travel to Cincinnati. Oliver and the other missionaries to the Lamanites had already preached in Cincinnati without success while on their way west from Fayette to Missouri. They will, however, be commanded to preach the gospel while they are there (see verse 7).

A short time later, the printing press for W. W. Phelps in Zion will be purchased in Cincinnati. Perhaps their business there had partly also to do with this printing press.

7 And in this place let them lift up their voice and declare my word with loud voices, without wrath or doubting, lifting up holy hands upon them. For I am able to make you holy, and your sins are forgiven you.

verse 7 “I am able to make you holy, and your sins are forgiven you” One sense of the word *holy* is whole, entire, complete, sound, unimpaired. In this setting we would expect the word to mean whole in a moral sense. Hence, free from sin and actively receiving the incremental attributes of God as they grow spiritually. Though all human beings are imperfect, Jesus Christ has, through his atonement, the power to justify and sanctify, or to “make holy,” those who enter with him into the covenant of baptism and subsequently work to keep that covenant through constant striving to obey him. Through the instrumentality of the Holy Ghost, those human beings who earnestly strive to keep his commandments are regularly justified and sanctified. See *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*.

8 And let the residue take their journey from St. Louis, two by two, and preach the word, not in haste, among the congregations of the wicked, until they return to the churches from whence they came.

verse 8 “not in haste” As emphasized in the commentary for verse 5, the Lord cautions that the elders were not to go in haste. Rather, they were to take their time and preach the gospel en route.

“congregations of the wicked” Congregations are gatherings. In 1831 this word did not necessarily mean only church congregations but wherever people congregated.

The word “wicked” in that day meant “someone who is of slight or little blame.” The Lord often, according to Joseph Fielding Smith, “refers to the people scattered abroad as ‘congregations of the wicked’” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:223). The Lord is telling these missionaries to preach to the “congregations of the wicked” who are not really wicked (sinful and immoral) but simply those who do not have or understand the truth (see also verses 13, 14).

“until they return to the churches from whence they came” The word *churches* here refers to branches of the restored Church

9 And all this for the good of the churches; for this intent have I sent them.

verse 9 “all this for the good of the churches” The Lord has commanded the returning elders to preach the gospel which will build up the branches of the restored Church.

10 And let my servant Edward Partridge impart of the money which I have given him, a portion unto mine elders who are commanded to return;

verse 10 “impart of the money which I have given him” This phrase refers to the assets Bishop Partridge has received as bishop and agent for the Church. He is to use some of these church funds to help the elders get home to Kirtland. Those elders who are able are then expected to pay the money back when they arrive in Kirtland, but those who are financially unable to pay it back are not required to do so (see verse 11).

11 And he that is able, let him return it by the way of the agent; and he that is not, of him it is not required.

12 And now I speak of the residue who are to come unto this land.

verse 12 “the residue who are to come unto this land” This phrase refers to those missionaries who were called to travel to Zion on a mission who are delayed in arriving in Jackson County until after the receiving of this revelation on August 8. They had missed the conference of elders held on August 4 and will thus attend a second conference to be held for the late arrivers on August 24. Among these are Hyrum Smith and John Murdock, who are coming by way of Detroit (see D&C 52:8), also David Whitmer, Harvey Whitlock, Levi Hancock and Zebedee Coltrin (see verse 14). The Lord is about to give specific instructions to this group.

13 Behold, they have been sent to preach my gospel among the congregations of the wicked; wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, thus: Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known.

verse 13 “they have been sent to preach my gospel among the congregations of the wicked” We have made the point previously that the late arrivers to Zion may well have arrived later because they did a better job in preaching the gospel to the people whom they encountered on the way to Missouri.

“Thou shalt not idle away thy time” They are given counsel that the Lord would give to all his missionaries: Don’t spend time in alternative activities. Spend your time in directly preaching the gospel. Every mission president in the Church knows that missionaries can be creative in finding ways to spend their time in activities that have little to do with missionary work. Teaching potential investigators about the restored gospel is stressful because of the risk of rejection. Nevertheless, that is how the Lord would have his missionaries spend their time.

“neither shalt thou bury thy talent” Here the “talent” of the missionaries is a knowledge of the restored gospel. It should not be kept hid under a bushel.

14 And after thou hast come up unto the land of Zion, and hast proclaimed my word, thou shalt speedily return, proclaiming my word among the congregations of the wicked, not in haste, neither in wrath nor with strife.

verse 14 “thou shalt speedily return . . . not in haste” See the commentary for verse 5. The late arrivers are also counseled to depart Independence soon after their arrival there.

15 And shake off the dust of thy feet against those who receive thee not, not in their presence, lest thou provoke them, but in secret; and wash thy feet, as a testimony against them in the day of judgment.

verse 15 The missionaries are told to perform the ordinance of shaking the dust off their feet as a witness against those who reject them. This was to be done “in secret,” however, so as to avoid the kind of unpleasantness as happened during the mission to the Shakers (see section 49). See also the commentary for D&C 24:15.

16 Behold, this is sufficient for you, and the will of him who hath sent you.

17 And by the mouth of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., it shall be made known concerning Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery. The residue hereafter. Even so. Amen.

verse 17 “it shall be made known concerning Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery” The Lord will give further specific travel instructions to Sidney and Oliver in the following section (see especially verses 23-24, and 30 of section 61).

“The residue hereafter.” This sentence likely refers to additional travel instructions—the rest of his instructions to the returning missionaries—that will yet be given prior to their arriving back in Kirtland.

Section 61 Danger Upon the Waters

On the 9th day of August 1831, Joseph and ten elders left Independence for Kirtland in a flotilla sixteen canoes, carrying themselves and their provisions. The first day they went as far as Fort Osage where they had “excellent wild turkey” for supper. Some disagreements and ill feelings arose among the traveling brethren. A couple of the elders had expected great miracles to occur in Missouri and, despite the clear statement of D&C 58:3-7 that these things would take place only over time and after much trial, they were unhappy that they had not seen a more immediate and dramatic fulfillment of God’s promises. As a result of their false expectations being disappointed, there was some murmuring and arguing among the party (see verse 20).

On August 11, the third day of the journey, the canoe in which Joseph and Sidney were riding actually hit a “sawyer,” or partially submerged tree, and was nearly overturned. The accident could easily have been fatal, for at that time the Missouri was a truly wild river without dams, locks, or levies. According to Joseph Smith, there had been other mishaps earlier that same day (*HC*, 1:203). That afternoon they quit the river earlier than usual and camped at McIlwaine’s bend, presently known as Miami Bend, about forty miles above Chariton, Missouri (see map of “the Missouri-Illinois area” at the back of the Doctrine and Covenants).

The discord among some of the brethren, which began during this journey back to Kirtland, was aggravated by that day’s difficulties on the river. The only account we have of the happenings at McIlwaine’s Bend is from the pen of Ezra Booth in a letter he wrote to Edward Partridge September 20, 1831. Keep in mind that those in charge of this canoe voyage, Joseph and Oliver, were respectively twenty-five and twenty-four years old. They were not experienced river guides but were placed in the position of having to direct men considerably older and more experienced than themselves.

The morning after they left Independence, the conduct of some of the elders displeased Oliver who uttered a malediction something like, “As the Lord God liveth, if you do not behave better, some accident will befall you.” In the afternoon of the third day while negotiating some treacherous waters, Joseph took command and issued some orders that were resented by the brethren in one of the canoes who refused to obey, and in so doing became tangled in some brush and almost capsized. This frightened Joseph who ordered them all ashore, while some of the brethren felt they should continue. Once on shore, at McIlwaine’s bend, tempers flared and words were exchanged. Joseph and Oliver were accused of being “highly imperious and quite dictatorial.” Joseph was also called a coward. After much emotional discussion, apologies were made, and a reconciliation of sorts was reached.

Before nightfall W. W. Phelps saw in open vision the Destroyer in his most horrible power ride upon the face of the waters. Others heard some peculiar noises but

did not see the vision. The rest of that evening was spent in camp sorting out hard feelings and attempting a reconciliation between angry or offended parties. By late that evening, most of those involved had repented, apologized, and been reconciled to one another.

The next morning August 12, after prayer, Joseph received section 61, which explained in part the previous day's events and the related vision given to Elder Phelps.

The first known text of section 61 appeared in *The Evening and the Morning Star* for December 1832, about sixteen months after the revelation had first been received. This was published in Missouri by W. W. Phelps, editor of the *Star*, who had himself received the vision that preceded section 61.

1 Behold, and hearken unto the voice of him who has all power, who is from everlasting to everlasting, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

verse 1 “**even Alpha and Omega**” See the commentary for D&C 19:1.

2 Behold, verily thus saith the Lord unto you, O ye elders of my church, who are assembled upon this spot, whose sins are now forgiven you, for I, the Lord, forgive sins, and am merciful unto those who confess their sins with humble hearts;

verse 2 “**whose sins are now forgiven you**” It is likely that there had been genuine humility, remorse, and confession during the session of reconciliation the previous evening. Whether the Lord is referring to ongoing sins in the lives of these missionaries or the sins of murmuring the previous day, it is the Lord's wont to forgive sins when there is true repentance and a determination to obey. The forgiveness of sins that occurs in our life does not occur once or even a few times. Rather, forgiveness is received hundreds or even thousands of times as we sojourn through life. See the commentary on the three parts of the ordinance of baptism, particularly the commentary on the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost in the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31. See also “Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth,” in volume 1, chapter 18 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

3 But verily I say unto you, that it is not needful for this whole company of mine elders to be moving swiftly upon the waters, whilst the inhabitants on either side are perishing in unbelief.

verse 3 The Lord suggests that opportunities to preach the gospel to people on both sides of the river may be lost as this large group of missionaries travels swiftly toward home. The Lord prefers that they take the time to proselyte as they go (see D&C 58:59; 60:14). This may seem contradictory to D&C 60:1, 5, but in these latter two verses the Lord explained that they were to hurry up and do missionary work rather than to hurry up and go home (see verse 4).

4 Nevertheless, I suffered it that ye might bear record; behold, there are many dangers upon the waters, and more especially hereafter;

verse 4 “I suffered it that ye might bear record” This phrase and this verse are somewhat enigmatic. The Lord seems to be saying, “I allowed you as a group to travel by boat, though that is not a good way to get any proselyting done as you travel, as I wanted you to experience the dangers that lie upon the waters (and Satan’s control of the waters) and warn others of those dangers (“bear record” of them).

“and more especially hereafter” The reference time frame of this phrase is uncertain here. Whatever dangers the company had already encountered would be worse at some future time. This phrase could mean that the dangers would be worse farther downstream, or they might be worse on that river in the future than they were in August 1831. It is likely that the destructive power of the waters described here will be part of the woes and destructions prophesied for the very last days (compare Moses 7:66, wherein Enoch describes the sea in the last days as becoming “troubled”).

5 For I, the Lord, have decreed in mine anger many destructions upon the waters; yea, and especially upon these waters.

verse 5 Perhaps today we tend to be a generation that is a bit more spiritually pragmatic than others have been, and the idea that Satan controls some of the elements, particularly the waters, may seem peculiar to us. There has long been in the Church a tradition that water, especially when used for recreation, may be uniquely dangerous to church missionaries, for example. Joseph Fielding Smith in referring to section 61 has taught us something about the relationship of Satan to the elements:

It may be strange to us, but it is a fact that Satan exercises dominion and has some control over the elements. . . . Paul speaks of Satan as the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). The Lord revealed to these brethren [at McIlwaine’s bend] some of the power of the adversary and how he may ride upon the storm. They were commanded to use judgment as they traveled upon these waters. . . . Moreover, notwithstanding the great power of Satan upon the waters, the Lord still held command, and he could protect his people whether on land or by water as they journeyed (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:224-25).

In addition to Satan’s influence over the elements, Joseph Fielding Smith also suggests that the Lord’s cursing the waters may have a role in their becoming more dangerous:

In the beginning the Lord blessed the waters [Genesis 1:20] and cursed the land [Moses 4:23], but in these last days this was reversed—the land was to be blessed [D&C 57:11] and the waters cursed [Revelation 15:3-5]. A little reflection will bear witness to the truth of this declaration. In the early millennia of this earth’s history, men did not understand the composition of the soils, and how they needed building up when

the crops were taken from them. The facilities at the command of the people were primitive and limited, acreage under cultivation was limited, famines were prevalent . . . Someone may rise up and say that the soil in those days was just as productive as now and this may be the case . . . It matters not what the causes were. In those early days of world history, there was neither the production nor the varieties of fruits coming from the earth, and the Lord can very properly speak of this as a curse or the lack of blessing upon the land. In those early periods we have reason to believe that torrents, floods, and the dangers upon the waters were not as great as they are today, and by no means as great as what the Lord has promised us. The early mariners among the ancients traversed seas as they knew them in that day in comparative safety. . . . Today this manner of travel in such boats would be of the most dangerous and risky nature. . . .

In regard to the Missouri-Mississippi waters, we have seen year by year great destruction upon them and coming from them. Millions upon millions of dollars, almost annually, are lost by this great stream overflowing its banks. . . . Verily the word of the Lord has been fulfilled in relation to those waters (*Ibid.*, 1:206-7).

In section 61 the Lord does not forbid missionaries to use water as transportation, but he simply advises them to be extra careful—especially with the waters of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.

The Lord indicates that the waters of the world, particularly the waters of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers—“these waters”—will be in this final dispensation an instrument of great destruction. Presumably the Lord is referring to floods, storms, and warfare fought on the high seas.

6 Nevertheless, all flesh is in mine hand, and he that is faithful among you shall not perish by the waters.

verse 6 Despite some popular belief to the contrary, section 61 does not prohibit travel by water, or even swimming, for missionaries (see commentary on verses 24-26). Even in those future times when the curse upon the waters will become more evident than it is now, the “upright in heart” will still be able to travel to Zion safely by water (verses 16, 22). It is the unfaithful and the rebellious, like the rebellious elders on the previous day, who need to fear the power of Satan over the waters, for by their unfaithfulness, they render themselves susceptible to that power. Notice that when the elders at McIlwaine’s Bend repented, they were allowed to continue their journey even upon the waters of the Missouri river (see verse 22).

7 Wherefore, it is expedient that my servant Sidney Gilbert and my servant William W. Phelps be in haste upon their errand and mission.

verse 7 “my servant Sidney Gilbert and my servant William W. Phelps” These men had been commanded to return to Kirtland to get their families and then travel to Cincinnati to purchase a printing press. They would then bring their families

and the printing press to Independence. William W. Phelps was to be the printer for the Church, and Sidney Gilbert had been appointed purchasing agent.

8 Nevertheless, I would not suffer that ye should part until you were chastened for all your sins, that you might be one, that you might not perish in wickedness;

verse 8 The Lord wanted the traveling group of returning missionaries to remain together in one group so that they might benefit from the experiences they had on the river and at McIlwaine's Bend. Unpleasant as the experience must have seemed initially, it is notable that the Lord knew that the entire experience, including the humble confessions and reconciliations, would produce needed repentance and growth in the elders in the group.

9 But now, verily I say, it behooveth me that ye should part. Wherefore let my servants Sidney Gilbert and William W. Phelps take their former company, and let them take their journey in haste that they may fill their mission, and through faith they shall overcome;

verse 9 Now that they had benefited from their experience at McIlwaine's Bend, the Lord commanded Sidney Gilbert and William W. Phelps to go on ahead of the rest of the group that they might complete their unique assignment (see verse 7).

10 And inasmuch as they are faithful they shall be preserved, and I, the Lord, will be with them.

11 And let the residue take that which is needful for clothing.

12 Let my servant Sidney Gilbert take that which is not needful with him, as you shall agree.

verses 11-12 The group is commanded to simplify their luggage so that they carry with them only that clothing which is needful and thus travel "lighter." The rest of the group's belongings will be carried back to Kirtland by Sidney Gilbert (and William W. Phelps).

13 And now, behold, for your good I gave unto you a commandment concerning these things; and I, the Lord, will reason with you as with men in days of old.

verse 13 "for your good I gave unto you a commandment" The Lord did command these elders to depart promptly from Independence by boat (see D&C 60:5).

"and I the Lord, will reason with you as with men in days of old" Now, let me explain why I gave you the commandment to travel by water.

14 Behold, I, the Lord, in the beginning blessed the waters; but in the last days, by the mouth of my servant John, I cursed the waters.

verse 14 “I, the Lord, in the beginning blessed the waters” When God first created the world, both the land and the waters were blessed (Genesis 1:10-12, 20-22). Then when Adam and Eve transgressed in the Garden of Eden, the land was cursed for their sakes, but the waters were not: “In the beginning God cursed the earth; but did he curse all things pertaining to it? No, he did not curse the water, but he blessed it” (Brigham Young in *JD*, 7:162).

From the beginning, water was ordained to be a cleansing and a purifying element. When the earth became corrupted in the days of Noah, God purified it by bringing the waters upon it. Likewise, today sinful men and women may also be purified through baptism by immersion in water. One of Christ’s most important symbolic names is the Living Water or the Water of Life.

“in the last days” This phrase is probably meant to tell us when the curse would take effect rather than when John pronounced it. In other words, John, either in the meridian of time or sometime since, pronounced a curse that would come upon the waters sometimes in the last days. The full realization of that curse was still future in Joseph’s day (compare verse 15).

“by the mouth of my servant John, I cursed the waters” The reference here may be to passages in the book of Revelation written by the apostle John. There are a couple of passages in Revelation that might be interpreted as the waters’ being cursed in the latter days (see Revelation 8:8-11; 16:2-6). Perhaps also this phrase refers to an event in the ministry of John not otherwise recorded in scripture.

15 Wherefore, the days will come that no flesh shall be safe upon the waters.

16 And it shall be said in days to come that none is able to go up to the land of Zion upon the waters, but he that is upright in heart.

verses 15-16 “the days will come” “in days to come” The phrase “the last days” can be ambiguous, referring to events anytime between the restoration of the gospel in 1830 and the moment of the second coming of Christ. This language in verses 15-16 makes it clear that “the last days” as used in verse 14 refers to a time still in the future.

17 And, as I, the Lord, in the beginning cursed the land, even so in the last days have I blessed it, in its time, for the use of my saints, that they may partake the fatness thereof.

verse 17 “I, the Lord, in the beginning cursed the land” “in the last days have I blessed it” When Adam fell, the ground or the earth was cursed for his sake (see Genesis 3:17). This curse will be removed from the whole earth only when the Savior comes to establish his millennial reign upon it and renew it to “paradisiacal glory” (Articles of Faith 1:10). According to this verse, however, God has already removed the curse upon the land and blessed it in order that the saints might establish Zion and

enjoy its fruits. The land is no longer cursed and there is no more impediment for those saints who will establish Zion, whether in their own hearts, in their own homes, wards, stakes, or eventually in Jackson County, Missouri.

18 And now I give unto you a commandment that what I say unto one I say unto all, that you shall forewarn your brethren concerning these waters, that they come not in journeying upon them, lest their faith fail and they are caught in snares;

verse 18 “you shall forewarn your brethren concerning these waters . . . lest their faith fail and they are caught in snares” Apparently, the power of Satan over those traveling upon the waters is proportionate to their lack of faith. Since some of the Missouri elders had murmured and been rebellious the day before, the power of Satan over them had increased, and they had experienced increased difficulties on their journey. W. W. Phelps was allowed to see the source of their troubles and the power Satan had been given to destroy the wicked or faithless who travel upon the waters. Future saints traveling to Zion needed to know that should they prove unfaithful, particularly as they traveled upon untamed waters, they would find themselves vulnerable to the power of the destroyer.

19 I, the Lord, have decreed, and the destroyer rideth upon the face thereof, and I revoke not the decree.

verse 19 “I, the Lord, have decreed . . . and I revoke not the decree” The curse pronounced by the mouth of John is still in effect and will be more fully realized at a future time. Satan has been given power over the waters, and that curse will not be revoked until the Savior comes.

20 I, the Lord, was angry with you yesterday, but today mine anger is turned away.

verse 20 During the three days upon the river some disagreements and ill feelings had developed among the brethren and explanations and reconciliations had become necessary. The greater part of the night at McIlwaine’s Bend was devoted to these matters. The brethren had become reconciled to each other. Those whose special callings dictated more urgency (see verse 21) started overland the next morning with all of the group’s non-essential luggage. The rest of the company continued the journey via the river. With the repentance of the elders and their reconciliation to one another, the danger for them in traveling upon the waters was greatly lessened, so that they might, with continued faithfulness, resume their travels, even by water (see verse 6).

21 Wherefore, let those concerning whom I have spoken, that should take their journey in haste—again I say unto you, let them take their journey in haste.

verse 21 “let them take their journey in haste” By the time they arrived at McIlwaine’s bend, the brethren had discovered that progress by canoe was slow. Hence it became necessary for those who had been appointed with a special responsibility to purchase a printing press, Sidney Gilbert and W. W. Phelps, to find a more expeditious means of travel than by canoe. Also the group consisting of Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon were given special travel instructions by revelation. On the morning of August 12, those with special instructions started overland for St. Louis and Kirtland, and the rest of the company (Samuel Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, Ezra Booth, Frederick G. Williams, Peter Whitmer Jr., and Joseph Coe) continued the journey via the river preaching the restored gospel as they went.

22 And it mattereth not unto me, after a little, if it so be that they fill their mission, whether they go by water or by land; let this be as it is made known unto them according to their judgments hereafter.

verse 22 This verse seems to apply to those elders who continued on by canoe toward St. Louis. They were to find their own way, either by water or by land, so long as their means of travel allowed them the opportunity to preach the gospel and fulfill their mission as they went. The Lord did not care whether they traveled by land or by water.

23 And now, concerning my servants, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, let them come not again upon the waters, save it be upon the canal, while journeying unto their homes; or in other words they shall not come upon the waters to journey, save upon the canal.

verse 23 The Lord wishes the group of Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, and Oliver Cowdery to hurry back to Kirtland. They were not to travel again by water except when they reached “the canal” which is the Ohio Canal which ran from Lake Erie to Columbus, Ohio. This apparently was an expeditious way to travel in those days.

24 Behold, I, the Lord, have appointed a way for the journeying of my saints; and behold, this is the way—that after they leave the canal they shall journey by land, inasmuch as they are commanded to journey and go up unto the land of Zion;

25 And they shall do like unto the children of Israel, pitching their tents by the way.

26 And, behold, this commandment you shall give unto all your brethren.

verses 24-26 There is little indication in the historical record that the saints understood section 61 as a blanket prohibition against water travel, though they were clearly advised to travel up to Zion by land (see Phelps, “Way of Journeying for the Saints,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1832, 5). For example, Parley

P. Pratt and his wife traveled to Missouri by water in the summer of 1832 (see Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 64-65). Rather, section 61 was seen as an expression of the Lord's preference that those called to settle permanently in Zion travel by land, perhaps because of the physical dangers of going by boat, but also because of the missionary opportunities that would otherwise be lost.

27 Nevertheless, unto whom is given power to command the waters, unto him it is given by the Spirit to know all his ways;

verse 27 This verse likely refers specifically to Joseph Smith, who holds all the keys and powers of the priesthood (compare Moses 1:25). See also the following verse.

28 Wherefore, let him do as the Spirit of the living God commandeth him, whether upon the land or upon the waters, as it remaineth with me to do hereafter.

29 And unto you is given the course for the saints, or the way for the saints of the camp of the Lord, to journey.

30 And again, verily I say unto you, my servants, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, shall not open their mouths in the congregations of the wicked until they arrive at Cincinnati;

verse 30 There was sufficient urgency in the mind of the Lord for Joseph Smith and his party to hasten back to Kirtland, that the group is reminded not to stop to preach the gospel to nonmembers in their congregations on the way home, at least until they arrived in Cincinnati.

31 And in that place they shall lift up their voices unto God against that people, yea, unto him whose anger is kindled against their wickedness, a people who are well-nigh ripened for destruction.

verse 31 At that time Cincinnati was only a frontier village like Independence and, like other western towns, it was the gathering place of many who had been forced to flee from the larger cities because of violations of the law. In all the border towns in that day wickedness and lawlessness prevailed.

32 And from thence let them journey for the congregations of their brethren, for their labors even now are wanted more abundantly among them than among the congregations of the wicked.

verse 32 “**from thence let them journey for the congregations of their brethren**” After preaching in Cincinnati, Joseph, Oliver, and Sidney were to head directly back to Kirtland—back to the congregations of the saints—where their labors were more urgently required than they were on route. The leadership of Joseph and Sidney had indeed been sorely missed and was urgently needed. John Whitmer

recorded that while Joseph and the other leaders were in Missouri, a number of the saints had apostatized in Kirtland, though of these many were reclaimed when their leaders returned (*Early Latter Day Saint History*, 80).

33 And now, concerning the residue, let them journey and declare the word among the congregations of the wicked, inasmuch as it is given;

verse 33 The Lord again commands those who continued on down the river toward St. Louis after Joseph Smith and others separated from them (Samuel Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, Ezra Booth, Frederick G. Williams, Peter Whitmer Jr., and Joseph Coe). They are commanded to take every opportunity to preach to nonmembers on their way back to Kirtland.

34 And inasmuch as they do this they shall rid their garments, and they shall be spotless before me.

verse 34 “they shall rid their garments” This phrase means to rid them of blame for the sins of people they could have warned and converted, but did not. Notice that whenever someone would have been converted if only some missionary had been obedient, the responsibility for their subsequent sins and ignorance is not charged to themselves alone but is shared with the disobedient missionary!

35 And let them journey together, or two by two, as seemeth them good, only let my servant Reynolds Cahoon, and my servant Samuel H. Smith, with whom I am well pleased, be not separated until they return to their homes, and this for a wise purpose in me.

36 And now, verily I say unto you, and what I say unto one I say unto all, be of good cheer, little children; for I am in your midst, and I have not forsaken you;

37 And inasmuch as you have humbled yourselves before me, the blessings of the kingdom are yours.

38 Gird up your loins and be watchful and be sober, looking forth for the coming of the Son of Man, for he cometh in an hour you think not.

verse 38 “he cometh in an hour you think not” While we are not told the time of the Lord’s second coming, we do know that it will be at a moment when he is not expected. This phrase has the same meaning as the phrase “I come quickly,” found in several places in scripture.

39 Pray always that you enter not into temptation, that you may abide the day of his coming, whether in life or in death. Even so. Amen.

verse 39 “whether in life or in death” Whether we are alive at the Savior’s coming or have died prior to that event, we will still want to be able to “abide the day of his coming.” For the living this means being allowed to stay upon the earth after his

coming and to participate in his millennial kingdom. For the dead it means being resurrected with the other righteous dead on that day, in the morning of the first resurrection, also to participate in his millennial kingdom.

The arrangement whereby Joseph, Oliver, and Sidney were to leave the river and travel home by stage was regarded by some of the brethren as overly expensive, and the suggestion was even made that the revelation may have come about because of Joseph's fear of the river. "Why do we have to beg our passage on foot while they get to travel by stage?" They even took notice when Joseph and the others failed to obey the commandment given in verse 30 to stop and preach in Cincinnati.

Section 62 Testimony

After three days of rowing down the Missouri River, Sidney Gilbert, W. W. Phelps, Joseph, Oliver, and Sidney Rigdon all left the river on August 12 to journey by land speedily to Kirtland while the others continued on in their canoes downriver toward St. Louis (see commentary for section 61 for the reasons they left the river). On the day following this separation, the 13th of August 1831, Joseph and his party crossed the Missouri River at Chariton, Missouri, and encountered there a party of missionaries still traveling toward Independence—Hyrum Smith, John Murdock, Harvey Whitlock, and David Whitmer. After joyful salutations, Joseph received section 62 which was directed to the missionaries on their way to Zion and included encouragement and instructions for them.

Keep in mind that Hyrum Smith and John Murdock had been instructed to travel to Missouri by way of Detroit, so they naturally would be expected to arrive later than Joseph and his party. Brother Murdock later, in his journal, provided an additional reason why this group may have been late:

August 1st, traveled 28 miles and crossed the Illinois River. 2nd, 30 miles to Mississippi River Louise—Ana [Louisiana] Ferry and got my feet wet by which I took a violent cold by which I suffered near unto death. 3rd, crossed the river into Missouri. Traveled 25 miles to New London, found it a very wicked place. As we slept in a tavern, in the night Brother Hyrum lay on the far side of the bed with his hand out on our clothes, which hung on a chair by the bedside, and a person seized his wrist. Brother H. [Hyrum] cried out, "Who is there," and at the same time broke his hold, which awoke me. We heard the bedstead in the other room creak which notified us that he had gone to bed. Thursday 4th, arrived at Salt River where we preached next day, but I was sick and went to bed, and we continued there near one week and then I gave my watch in pay to Wm. [William] Ivy to carry me in a wagon to Charidon [Chariton] 70 miles. We stayed there 2 days. Met Brother J. [Joseph] Smith, Jr., S. [Sidney] Rigdon and others, and received the revelation recorded in the Book of Covenants [Doctrine and Covenants] on page 202 or 308 [section 62]. We also fell in company with Brother Harvey Whitlock and David Whitmore [Whitmer], and we four put our money together and bought a pony. I rode him to Lexington, 60 miles, and on the way we four slept one night in a chamber where one half of the floor was laid, and the other not and a window being open, on the opposite side of the chamber from me, and I had a raging fever and had occasion to go to the window; it being dark, I stepped off the floor and fell across the joints.

John Murdock's illness probably turned out to be malaria (see the commentary for verse 7).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 62 Testimony

D&C 62:3 The testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon.

1 Behold, and hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, your advocate, who knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted.

verse 1 “who knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted” To succor means to give aid or help. Because the Savior has personally experienced mortality and all of man’s weaknesses, sufferings, and temptations, he knows perfectly how to help those of us in mortality who suffer problems and temptations (Hebrews 2:18; 2 Nephi 9:21; Alma 7:11-12). He completed the process of his acquiring perfect empathy for all humankind during the agony of his atonement and death. He also is thus able to judge us with perfect exactness and perfect fairness.

2 And verily mine eyes are upon those who have not as yet gone up unto the land of Zion; wherefore your mission is not yet full.

verse 2 “those who have not as yet gone up unto the land of Zion” Section 62 is directed to those Missouri missionaries who arrived in Zion after the Prophet Joseph had left there, though it was given specifically to Hyrum Smith, John Murdock, Harvey Whitlock, and David Whitmer. We have mentioned previously that generally it is to the missionaries’ credit that they were late arrivers in Missouri, as it likely meant that they tarried in their journey from Kirtland to Missouri preaching the gospel to those whom they encountered along the way. Of the thirty-one men who had been called to go to Missouri (see D&C 52:3-7, 22-32; 55:1, 4, 6), only nine were in the Prophet’s returning party (Frederick G. Williams and Peter Whitmer Jr. were returning Lamanite missionaries), and Edward Partridge, Isaac Morley, and John Corrill had remained in Missouri. This leaves nineteen missionaries who were still on their way to Missouri.

3 Nevertheless, ye are blessed, for the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over you, and your sins are forgiven you.

verse 3 These nineteen missionaries, still on their way to Zion (see verse 2), were, by and large, successful in preaching the gospel along the way to Independence. Levi Hancock, Zebedee Coltrin, Solomon Hancock, and Simeon Carter, for example baptized over 120 persons between them on the way to Zion, and Parley P. Pratt recorded having established branches of the Church in Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana.

“the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon, and they rejoice over you” This phrase verbalizes the theme of section

62. How thrilling these words must have been for the missionaries to hear! Undoubtedly this verse applies to each of us as we bear a sincere testimony to others—the act is recorded in heaven and the angels rejoice.

There is also a more sobering implication of all of this. It seems likely that a heavenly record is kept in heaven of all that we say and do. Even our most private deeds are available to an audience who rejoices at our righteousness but also grieves at our sins.

“your sins are forgiven you” Again, we are made aware of the idea that it is our constant striving to be obedient that is all important. As we do strive to obey, the Lord, by virtue of his atoning sacrifice, regularly—hundreds or even thousands of times—extends to us the blessings of his atonement and justifies us (forgives us of our sins) and sanctifies us (grants to us those increments of the attributes of God which we merit through our obedience and burns from our soul a small modicum of our natural self). See *Justification and Sanctification in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17.

4 And now continue your journey. Assemble yourselves upon the land of Zion; and hold a meeting and rejoice together, and offer a sacrament unto the Most High.

verse 4 In D&C 58:61-63, the brethren in Independence were commanded to convene a conference presided over by Bishop Edward Partridge. Here the Lord tells these missionaries bound for Zion that they will be a part of that meeting which will be held on August 24, 1831, in Kaw Township.

5 And then you may return to bear record, yea, even altogether, or two by two, as seemeth you good, it mattereth not unto me; only be faithful, and declare glad tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth, or among the congregations of the wicked.

verses 4-5 These missionaries are told not to turn around and return to Kirtland, but to continue on to Independence, get a testimony that it is the site of Zion, and then return bearing their testimonies along the way.

6 Behold, I, the Lord, have brought you together that the promise might be fulfilled, that the faithful among you should be preserved and rejoice together in the land of Missouri. I, the Lord, promise the faithful and cannot lie.

verse 6 **“that the promise might be fulfilled, that the faithful among you should be preserved and rejoice together in the land of Missouri”** The “promise” here referred to by the Lord is that if all will be obedient and diligent, then Zion will flourish and prosper (see D&C 35:24; 39:13; 49:25; and 52:42). Unfortunately, not all of the elders present on this occasion did remain faithful. Ezra Booth lost his testimony on

this very journey and later went public with complaints against Joseph Smith (see D&C 64:15-16). Joseph Coe was excommunicated in 1838.

One reason some of the men in Joseph's party had become critical of the Prophet was that they had expected to make many converts, whereas—mostly because of their own unwillingness to preach—they actually had little missionary success.

7 I, the Lord, am willing, if any among you desire to ride upon horses, or upon mules, or in chariots, he shall receive this blessing, if he receive it from the hand of the Lord, with a thankful heart in all things.

verse 7 As described in the introductory commentary for this section, one reason these brethren had been so slow in traveling to Zion was that John Murdock was very ill with an illness that was thought to have been malaria. In his journal he reported that he was so sick that he didn't even have the strength to close his mouth to keep the flies from buzzing around inside. The question was raised with Joseph as to whether or not the missionary group should use their meager funds to provide transportation for Elder Murdock. Once they had Joseph's permission, they bought a horse, and he rode the rest of the way to Zion. Even so, he periodically fell off his horse and was so weak that he had to lie on the ground until the other missionaries caught up with him and placed him back in the saddle.

The Lord makes it clear in this verse that he has no objection to the expenditure of money to buy a horse, so long as it moved the work forward.

The word "chariots" in verse 7 refers to "light four-wheeled carriages with backed seats" in other words, a wagon.

"he shall receive this blessing . . . with a thankful heart in all things" This phrase refers to the blessing of riding a horse or riding in a wagon instead of walking.

8 These things remain with you to do according to judgment and the directions of the Spirit.

verse 8 **"These things remain with you"** It was up to the missionaries to decide how to administer their resources to best magnify their callings. Some people might have objected to the purchase of a horse for John Murdock as an unnecessary extravagance. After all, the elders probably would have made it to Independence eventually even without such a purchase. But it is up to individual stewards to manage their stewardships wisely for the long-term good of the kingdom. As long as our primary goal is to build the kingdom of God, we are justified in our expenditure of the Lord's resources to that end, even though we may also benefit indirectly from such a decision. Should church leaders today spend sacred tithing funds for airplane tickets, renting vehicles, staying in hotels, and eating in restaurants when they travel on the Lord's errand? If these measures make them more effective in building up the kingdom of God, then yes, of course they should.

9 Behold, the kingdom is yours. And behold, and lo, I am with the faithful always. Even so. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

When Joseph arrived back in Kirtland, he found the saints there ripe for a rebuke from the Lord for some folly and wickedness that had crept in among them. The Lord revealed the appropriate rebuke [**D&C 63 - Sign Seeking and Immortality**]. The Lord also counseled the saints on another area of weakness [**D&C 64 - Forgiveness**].

Section 63 Sign Seeking and Immorality

Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon returned to Kirtland from their mission to Missouri on August 27, 1831. The rest of their party of eleven made their way back during the next few days or weeks.

Once Joseph was back in Kirtland, the word spread among the members of the Church there that the center place of Zion had been revealed by the Lord (D&C 57), that a temple site had been designated there, and that the land of Zion had been dedicated for their future inheritance. This news generated considerable excitement and rejoicing. Many expressed a desire to know what they were to do in order to obtain stewardships there. In general the saints were hungry for any word from the Lord regarding the gathering of the saints in Zion.

The Lord had repeatedly instructed that all who go to Zion must obey his law—the celestial law on which Zion was to be built—the law of consecration and stewardship.

Section 63 is the first revelation given to Joseph after his arrival back in Kirtland. It was received on August 30, 1831, three days after his return to Kirtland. It is essentially a rebuke to the saints in Kirtland for the folly and unrighteousness that had crept in among them while Joseph and the others were in Missouri. Joseph's leadership had been sorely missed in Ohio during the two and a half months he and the other leading brethren had been gone from Kirtland. Some of the saints had wandered. Following Joseph's return, an increased number of disciplinary councils were held in Kirtland, and Simeon Carter is recorded to have mourned over what he called the "falling away" that had taken place in Kirtland while they were absent (compare verses 22, 53). For example, Ezra Booth and a few others who shared his disillusionment with the work had begun to criticize church leaders and to question the whole idea of establishing Zion. It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that section 63 warns the saints in Kirtland of their need to repent and to eliminate evil from among themselves. It explains that they could not be God's people and could not establish Zion unless they did so (see verses 13, 19, 63).

While there is a clear negative warning side to section 63, it also provides new information concerning Zion.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 63 Sign Seeking and Immorality

D&C 63:7-12 I . . . am not pleased with those . . . who have sought after signs.

D&C 63:59 I am from above, and my power lieth beneath.

verses 1-19 The rebuke contained in these verses is for the saints collectively. There is a strong reproof here for those saints who were drawing away from the Church because they had expected to witness miracles or experience supernatural blessings, but they did not do so.

verses 1-6 In the first six verses of section 63, the awesome power of the Lord is made explicit. The facts of his role as righteous judge are made clear. He judges without selfishness or whim.

1 Hearken, O ye people, and open your hearts and give ear from afar; and listen, you that call yourselves the people of the Lord, and hear the word of the Lord and his will concerning you.

verse 1 “you that call yourselves the people of the Lord” Just about anyone can join the Church and become nominally a Latter-day Saint, but among the members there are those who merely take on the name or the calling and not the covenant obligations assumed by the elect. Section 63 is for all who are called saints, both the obedient and the rebellious, though verses 1-19 apply more particularly to the latter group.

2 Yea, verily, I say, hear the word of him whose anger is kindled against the wicked and rebellious;

3 Who willeth to take even them whom he will take, and preserveth in life them whom he will preserve;

verse 3 This verse suggests that all those mortals who die are those “whom he will take,” and all those who live are those “whom he will preserve.” Does God really orchestrate every instance of the death of mortal men? Does he decide in each instance if and when someone lives or dies? Does he directly reach out and cause death of all mortals who die?

There are two overriding principles that have a bearing on these questions. First, it is God’s specific and overarching wish for each of us that we eventually return to our celestial home, there to live with him forever (Moses 1:39) Second, we are currently living in a telestial realm, outside of the direct presence of God. In this realm he does not micromanage every detail of our course throughout mortality. If we are faithful, we can certainly expect to benefit from the ministrations of a loving Heavenly Father while we are here on earth. But, in some measure he leaves us to the natural forces and influences here on earth. This is the nature of mortality. This mortal experience is designed to allow us to make independent decisions and then learn and live with the consequences of those decisions. When he does intervene directly in our lives, we can be confident that his influences inevitably maximize eternal prospects.

Then what can we say about the meaning of this verse? It may have its most important application to eternal life and spiritual death (see verses 4-6). Certainly it is given to God (the Son) to judge us all (John 5:22)—to condemn (“take”) those whom he will and exalt (“preserve”) those whom he judges worthy.

4 Who buildeth up at his own will and pleasure; and destroyeth when he pleases, and is able to cast the soul down to hell.

5 Behold, I, the Lord, utter my voice, and it shall be obeyed.

6 Wherefore, verily I say, let the wicked take heed, and let the rebellious fear and tremble; and let the unbelieving hold their lips, for the day of wrath shall come upon them as a whirlwind, and all flesh shall know that I am God.

verses 1-6 The reader is almost taken aback by the spirit of these six verses. The Lord is a God of incomprehensible love and mercy, yet in these verses he almost seems angry. There was disobedience in the Church at the time, and it is vital for us all to remember that he is a God of justice as well as a God of mercy. His justice side is more visible in these verses. He likely *is* indeed angry, and the cause of his anger is apparent in the following verses.

7 And he that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation.

verse 7 Signs are miracles—events that indicate supernatural intervention into the natural world. A sign, as the term is used here, means temporal evidence or proof—something sensory, tangible, or empirical (derived from experience or observation)—for spiritual realities. Those persons whose interest in such proofs, the lust for signs, exceeds their faith in and faithfulness to Christ, will get what they seek. In other words, they will see signs. But what they see will not bring about their salvation, for salvation comes only through faith in Christ. Those signs will become an end in themselves—they will not build a faith in the kingdom of God. It is a great sin to seek more diligently or to value more highly the by-products of faith, such as signs or miracles, than we value the saving faith itself. Joseph F. Smith wrote: “Show me Latter-day Saints who have to feed upon miracles, signs, and visions in order to keep them steadfast in the Church, and I will show you members of the Church who are not in good standing before God, and who are walking in slippery paths” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 7).

Usually those seeking signs are those who have lost their faith, or never had any faith in the first place.

8 Verily, I say unto you, there are those among you who seek signs, and there have been such even from the beginning;

verse 8 “there are those among you who seek signs” Ezra Booth and a few others like him turned away from the Church at this time because they could not

maintain their faith without frequent miracles to sustain it. Ezra Booth, a former Methodist minister, had joined the Church because he had witnessed the miraculous healing of Elsa Johnson's arm by the Prophet Joseph. About a month later, at a conference in June 1831, Ezra himself was overcome by an evil influence, which the Prophet quickly rebuked. Ezra expected to experience even greater miracles than these in Missouri, but when Joseph didn't meet his expectations, the sign seeker lost his faith. Actually, he had no real faith to lose, for what little inclination he did have to submit to the Lord's will was dependent upon physical rather than spiritual evidence. The basis for his temporary and shallow commitment was the miracles or signs he had experienced rather than the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit.

9 But, behold, faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe.

verse 9 "faith cometh not by signs" Signs cannot create the most basic type of faith—deliberate faith. This type of faith is by definition the willingness to act on things that cannot be proven physically or empirically (by direct observation or experimentation). When someone says, "Well, if you can just prove this or give me a little more evidence for it, then I'll believe it," this is the opposite of faith, for it is a demand that spiritual realities be proven empirically before accepting that they are so. Deliberate faith, on the other hand, is the willingness to venture forth and obey the Lord's commands even though one cannot prove they are valid and from God, or even that God actually exists.

For a discussion of faith, including the important types of faith, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapters 9, *Revealed Faith*, 10, *Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith*, and 11, *Other Notes on Faith*.

"signs follow those that believe" While signs cannot create the most basic faith, they can strengthen the revealed faith of a faithful individual who is striving to live the Lord's commands. Ironically, it is only when we have committed ourselves to live by faith without needing or seeking signs, that signs will occur. Only after we have exercised faith are we entitled to the confirmation of signs and miracles.

The gift of faith, revealed faith, does not come to an individual until after a trial of that faith. The prophet Moroni wrote: "Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith" (Ether 12:6). A person receives no "witness" or confirmation of his faith until after a trial of that faith. The trial comes in the "experimenting upon [the] words" of God—the deliberate acting upon his words hoping to obtain the gifts of faith. The trial of the faith is in the "experimenting." When the Spirit judges that sufficient effort has been made—including diligently pondering and praying then working and persisting—then the gifts of faith will be granted.

A person might say, "Before I pay my tithing, I must know for sure that it is a true principle." The Lord's way is just the opposite. His way is to first act in faith and pay your tithing. Then over time your faith in the law of tithing will be granted (revealed to

you) as a spiritual gift. An individual who demands outward evidence of the power of God as a condition for his believing is seeking to circumvent the process by which faith is developed. He wants proof without paying the price. As with an adulterer, he wants the benefits, superficial and transient though they may be, without accepting any responsibility—pleasure without obligation. This is exactly the opposite of the Lord’s way. Thus, it is “a wicked and adulterous generation [that] seeketh after a sign” (Matthew 16:4).

10 Yea, signs come by faith, not by the will of men, nor as they please, but by the will of God.

11 Yea, signs come by faith, unto mighty works, for without faith no man pleaseth God; and with whom God is angry he is not well pleased; wherefore, unto such he showeth no signs, only in wrath unto their condemnation.

verse 11 “only in wrath unto their condemnation” God sometimes does show signs to the wicked, as he did to the prophets of Baal when Elijah called down fire from heaven (see 1 Kings 18). But these signs only serve as testimonies against them. Even when evil sign seekers are shown the will of God by empirical evidence, they still resist it. Those who sin against what has been revealed to them—against spiritual gifts and knowledge—are more guilty than those who, without the gifts (revealed faith), simply cannot muster the strength (deliberate faith) to obey.

12 Wherefore, I, the Lord, am not pleased with those among you who have sought after signs and wonders for faith, and not for the good of men unto my glory.

verse 12 “I . . . am not pleased with those . . . who have sought after signs and wonders for faith” The Lord condemns those who seek after signs and wonders as a substitute for faith or to build or strengthen faith. It is logically contradictory to seek miracles or signs for the purpose of creating or strengthening faith, since faith is believing and then obeying even when there is no physical evidence. Moreover, asking God to prove himself with signs before we will believe him constitutes the sin of “tempting God” (see Deuteronomy 6:16; Jacob 7:14). Tempting God is demanding that he meet our tests, that he submit himself to be judged and evaluated by our human reasoning.

13 Nevertheless, I give commandments, and many have turned away from my commandments and have not kept them.

verses 14-16 Adultery is warned against. Though certainly adultery is intended in a sexual sense here, in scripture, adultery is referred to at times in quite another context. In scripture the Lord often characterized himself as the bridegroom or husband while his people or the Church are symbolized as the bride or wife. When the symbol of

the adulterous wife is used, it may refer to the unfaithful breaker of covenants, one who chases after other gods leaving behind the true Lord and Master. Hence, a “wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Matthew 16:4).

14 There were among you adulterers and adulteresses; some of whom have turned away from you, and others remain with you that hereafter shall be revealed.

verse 14 The Prophet Joseph established a certain link between sign seeking and adultery with the following story:

When I was preaching in Philadelphia, a Quaker called out for a sign. I told him to be still. After the sermon, he again asked for a sign. I told the congregation the man was an adulterer; that a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and that the Lord had said to me in a revelation, than any man who wanted a sign was an adulterous person. “It is true,” cried one, “for I caught him in the very act,” which the man afterwards confessed, when he was baptized (*HC*, 5:268; compare *HC*, 3:385).

It should also be noted that those who seek a spiritual witness of truth, rather than physical proof, are not sign seekers. God does not expect us to believe for no reason at all, but he does expect us to believe for spiritual reasons rather than because of temporal proofs.

15 Let such beware and repent speedily, lest judgment shall come upon them as a snare, and their folly shall be made manifest, and their works shall follow them in the eyes of the people.

verse 15 Those who are guilty of adultery in the Church and who yet remain unrepentant and undiscovered are faced with three possible alternatives: (1) they will confess and repent, (2) they will eventually be discovered and their sin will be revealed, or (3) they will lose the Spirit of God and will apostatize, denying what they once knew to be true.

16 And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear.

verse 16 This verse provides the sequence that is often followed when a person lusts in his or her heart. First, they lose the Spirit. Then they deny the faith. Finally, they fear.

“shall deny the faith” Those who have committed adultery and have not repented cannot have the companionship of the Holy Ghost. It is impossible to grow in a testimony of the gospel without the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). Further, it is also impossible to keep from losing one’s testimony without the Holy Ghost’s ministrations. The unrepentant then usually adopt the values and perspectives of the world to fill the

void left in their minds and hearts by the loss of the Spirit. Such individuals will generally then kick against the Church, with its restrictions and its reminders, until they are entirely free of it.

“and shall fear” Probably the essence of fear in mortal man is his losing of the influence of the Spirit of the Lord (for a more complete discussion of fear, see also the commentary for D&C 67:3). Fear before the Lord is the result of sin. As we each approach our inevitable death, the faithful saints, through the atonement of Christ and the assurance of the Comforter, will not fear what comes. Faith in Christ and a testimony of his gospel turn natural fear into peace, love, joy, and confidence (Romans 8:15; Moroni 8:16). In contrast, the unrepentant sinner will be overcome with paralyzing fear. It would seem that few in this world are able to sin without some degree of ambivalence. One is reminded of “that awful fear of death which fills the breast of the wicked” described by the prophet Mormon in Mormon 6:7. The Spirit of Christ within almost every man will produce a nagging sense of fear and dread if he has not “come clean” before the Lord. This is especially so for those who have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and have, at one time, accepted Christ and his gospel.

Even before the events of the end-time begin to play out, however, those who commit sexual sin and refuse to repent live in fear of discovery. They fear the loss of all things that awaits them if they do not repent, and yet they also fear repentance. They fear light, for light reveals their sins. They fear truth, for the truth about themselves is ugly.

Having explained the fruitlessness of sign-seeking and the dangers of adultery, the Lord then turns to other specific sins.

17 Wherefore, I, the Lord, have said that the fearful, and the unbelieving, and all liars, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, and the whoremonger, and the sorcerer, shall have their part in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

verse 17 “I, the Lord, have said . . .” The Lord condemns several categories of sinners. It is interesting—and perhaps important—that the Lord begins this list of those to be condemned with “the fearful, and unbelieving.” Certainly, it would seem that to have fear and lack belief are not as serious as the sins that follow in the list. Yet it is often the fearful—the cowardly—and unbelieving who yield to the enticings of Satan. They fail to stand firm and true in the face of persecutions and temptations. Perhaps fear and unbelief lead to the other sins the Lord lists (D&C 76:36, 103-06).

“whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” This phrase likely refers to those who do not merely lie to achieve their ends but who actually love the process of invention and deception, and who lie for the love of lying.

“the whoremonger, and the sorcerer” The English word *whoremonger* means “one who deals or trades in sex.” In the King James Version of the New Testament,

however, *whoremonger* always translates to the Greek *pornos*, which has the broader meaning of “a sexually immoral person.” Thus, any sexual relationship outside of heterosexual marriage renders one a “whoremonger.”

The English word *sorcerer* refers to anyone who pretends to have or to control supernatural powers—for example, palm readers, psychics, mediums, astrologers, and channelers. A magician who claims to actually possess magical powers would therefore be a “sorcerer” in the scriptural sense, while a magician who claims only to be an entertainer would not be so labeled. In addition, the Greek word used for sorcerer in Revelation 21:8 and 22:15 (*pharmakos*) also includes those who practice quack medicine, that is, any so-called healer who claims special powers and victimizes the sick by selling phony “cures.”

“shall have their part in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone”

Here is a bit of hyperbole, since we certainly do not believe that any literal “lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” exists in the plan of salvation. While the imagery is figurative, it is also effective. Brimstone is sulphur, a hard, brittle, and flammable substance. It is called brimstone because in antiquity it was found mainly around the rims of volcanoes. It is possible that the lake of fire and brimstone is meant to evoke an image of molten lava bubbling in the crater of an active volcano.

“second death” What exactly is this “second death”? To understand clearly the answer to this question, let us review part of the concept of the fall: Because Adam transgressed in the garden, all mankind will temporarily suffer two penalties:

1. Each person will be cut off from the presence of God temporarily while here in mortality. This separation from God or spiritual death may be referred to as the “first death.”

2. Every man will also suffer physical death, the separation of his spirit from his body. These penalties are temporary because, as we will learn, their effects will automatically be some day reversed. No man will be eternally punished for Adam’s transgression (Article of Faith 2). Remember, that the law of justice includes the concept that it is unjust to punish one man for another’s sins. Thus, all men will be resurrected, and also no man will be excluded from the presence of God because of Adam’s sin. Actually, every man will be returned to the presence of God at least long enough to be judged. It does not matter how wicked and unrepentant, every person will, after the resurrection, be brought back into the presence of God for judgment. This returning to God’s presence of every man is proof that no one suffers a permanent spiritual death because of Adam’s transgression.

Once in God’s presence each person is judged. They will either be exalted in the kingdom of God and thus remain in his presence or they will be sent out of his presence a second time and suffer the so-called “second death.” They will be cut off from the presence of God, and from his happiness and joy, forever. While the first death is due to Adam’s transgression, the second death is due the individual’s own sins. These

sufferers of the second death will be consigned to one of the lower two kingdoms. A few will remain “filthy still” (D&C 88:35, 102; Revelation 22:11; Mormon 9:13-14), and live with Satan forever as sons of perdition.

The use of the term “second death” in scripture can be confusing, as it is sometimes used in scripture to refer to outer darkness (see Jacob 3:11).

18 Verily I say, that they shall not have part in the first resurrection.

verse 18 “the first resurrection” For a discussion of the first and second resurrections and the sequence of resurrection, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 9:15.

19 And now behold, I, the Lord, say unto you that ye are not justified, because these things are among you.

verse 19 “ye are not justified” Remember that the pronoun ye is always plural and refers here to the Church collectively. The Lord says that as long as the sins described in verses 12-17 are among the saints, they are not justified—they are not righteous, not free of sin. This weakness on the part of some people presents a problem for even the most righteous individual saints, because only a collectively “justified” (forgiven) people can establish Zion.

20 Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come;

verse 20 “the same shall overcome” See the previous verse. Even when the Church collectively fails to achieve its goals, the promises of God to the *individual* remain. Individual members who keep their covenants shall overcome and receive all their promised blessings—no matter what else may or may not occur. The saints are obligated by covenant to work together to establish Zion, but no other person’s disobedience can rob a faithful saint of his or her full, individual blessings.

“the day of transfiguration” This earth is a living being—the “inanimate” parts of the earth actually consisting of myriad intelligences clothed with bodies of mortal matter (see “Creation” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 3, *The Creation*). The cosmic history of the earth parallels that of the humans who live upon it. Before the fall of Adam, this earth, or at least the part of the earth designated to be the Garden of Eden, existed as a terrestrial paradise. After the fall, the earth, like Adam and Eve, also lost its paradisiacal glory and began its present telestial existence. The leading intelligence of the earth mourned the wickedness and filthiness that came out of itself and pleaded with God for cleansing (see Moses 7:48). Consequently, the earth was baptized by immersion and cleansed of all wickedness at the time of Noah, and it will be baptized again with fire at the second coming of the Lord. Just as baptism by water, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost

leads to the justification and sanctification of human beings, so the fallen or telestial earth will be sanctified and transfigured when it is baptized with fire at the second coming, and it will receive again the terrestrial or paradisiacal glory that it enjoyed before the fall (see Articles of Faith 1:10). The actual day of the earth's transfiguration to a paradisiacal state will be the last day of its telestial existence, the day of the Savior's second coming to the earth.

21 When the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount; of which account the fulness ye have not yet received.

verse 21 We have determined, then, that the "earth shall be transfigured" when it is changed from a telestial state to a terrestrial state.

"even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount" The reference is probably to the Mount of Transfiguration and the events that occurred there, as described in Matthew 17:1-9 and its parallels in Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36 (see also John 1:14; 2 Peter 1:16-19). Apparently more took place upon the mountain, however, than is recorded in the four Gospels. Like Moses on the mount in Moses 1, the apostles received a view of the heavenly patterns governing earthly events. Perhaps the use of the verb *transfigure* for both Jesus on the mount (see Matthew 17:2) and for the earth in the Millennium hints at the nature of the change Jesus experienced upon the mount. God has not yet revealed to the Church all of what happened upon the Mount of Transfiguration nor even the full significance of those events that are recorded.

22 And now, verily I say unto you, that as I said that I would make known my will unto you, behold I will make it known unto you, not by the way of commandment, for there are many who observe not to keep my commandments.

verse 22 "not by the way of commandment" The Lord often expresses his will to the Church in a form other than as a commandment in order to extend mercy and long-suffering to the spiritually weak, while at the same time offering an opportunity for individual discernment and progress to the state of spiritual strength. Those who know the will of God but disregard it unless specifically commanded to obey fail to grasp the disturbing implications of their attitude.

23 But unto him that keepeth my commandments I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life.

verse 23 "the mysteries of my kingdom" Those who keep the commandments of God will learn things that can only be known through personal revelation (see John 4:10).

24 And now, behold, this is the will of the Lord your God concerning his saints, that they should assemble themselves together unto the land of Zion, not in haste, lest there should be confusion, which bringeth pestilence.

verse 24 “they should assemble themselves together unto the land of Zion, not in haste” It is the will of God that the saints should gather to Zion but that they should gather slowly and in a controlled fashion. The transfer from Kirtland to Independence had to be gradual. Perhaps one reason was that the Lord knew that a rapid influx of saints into Jackson County could not be sustained by the resources then available. If too many people were to go to Zion at once, some would be left unprovided for. A rapid influx of saints to Zion would also cause concern among the earlier non-Mormon settlers and would eventually create opposition and conflict. When the saints collectively ignored the will of God that Zion be settled slowly, they were soon impoverished and persecuted just as the Lord had warned.

25 Behold, the land of Zion—I, the Lord, hold it in mine own hands;

26 Nevertheless, I, the Lord, render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s.

verses 25-26 The earth, including all the property needed for Zion, already belongs to God. Nevertheless, God recognizes the stewardship of civil government, here referred to symbolically as Caesar, and generally works within the systems established by “Caesar.” As long as secular government contents itself with its proper stewardship—the things that are Caesar’s—then God is willing to operate by Caesar’s rules and pay with Caesar’s coin.

27 Wherefore, I the Lord will that you should purchase the lands, that you may have advantage of the world, that you may have claim on the world, that they may not be stirred up unto anger.

verse 27 “I the Lord will that you should purchase the lands, that you may have advantage of the world” In Independence, Missouri, this meant that the land, which was to be a Zion for the saints, had to be legally and lawfully purchased. Purchasing the land would theoretically put government and the law on the side of the saints. The Lord by this time had repeatedly instructed the Church that any lands to be acquired in Zion must be purchased. No other means of acquisition would be acceptable (see D&C 42:35; 45:65; 48:4, 6; 57:4; 58:37, 49, 52).

Still, some of the saints would not listen to the repeated word of the Lord but entertained the view that they might take the land of Zion by force of arms just like the children of Israel had taken their promised land from the Canaanites. According to the Doctrine and Covenants, this was never the plan, but the perception among non-Latter-day Saint settlers that this was the aim of the saints, a perception given credibility by

foolish talk among some Mormons, played into Satan's hands in arousing the fear and anger of the mobs.

28 For Satan putteth it into their hearts to anger against you, and to the shedding of blood.

29 Wherefore, the land of Zion shall not be obtained but by purchase or by blood, otherwise there is none inheritance for you.

verse 29 The wording of this verse caused much controversy. Some of the settlers of Jackson County, Missouri, pretended to see in it a threat to take possession of western Missouri by conquest—by the “shedding of blood.” Actually the Lord will forbid the saints in verses 30 and 31 to obtain land by the shedding of blood, and the verses may even imply a warning that if land is not purchased promptly, then blood may be shed. But it will be the blood of the saints and not that of their enemies.

30 And if by purchase, behold you are blessed;

31 And if by blood, as you are forbidden to shed blood, lo, your enemies are upon you, and ye shall be scourged from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue, and but few shall stand to receive an inheritance.

verse 31 “And if by blood” The only two ways to get the land were to buy it or to take it. Because the saints were forbidden to take the land by the shedding of blood, if they didn't purchase the property, they could not obtain it, and Zion would be lost. Neither this verse nor the similar passage in D&C 58:53 should be understood as allowing the saints to consider force as a means of obtaining property in Zion. Though acquisition by force was a theoretical possibility, that course of action had been clearly and repeatedly forbidden.

“your enemies are upon you” If events came to the shedding of blood, then the saints would lose Zion, for they were forbidden to acquire the land by bloodshed.

“synagogue” The use of the term *synagogue* instead of *church* or *congregation* creates a parallel between the experiences of the early saints in this dispensation and those of the disciples in New Testament times. Both groups were called upon to go to the meetinghouses of those who had much of the truth, but not all of it and who were hostile to the disciples' claims to possess the fulness.

32 I, the Lord, am angry with the wicked; I am holding my Spirit from the inhabitants of the earth.

verse 32 “I am holding my Spirit” At some times in history, the wickedness of humanity has made it necessary for the Spirit of God to cease its striving with the stubbornly wicked and to withdraw from them (see Genesis 6:3; D&C 1:33). Whenever this happens, destruction follows, either individually or collectively (see 2 Nephi 26:11). Though one might be tempted to wonder whether the Lord is angry with the wicked

among the saints, the following verses suggest that instead the Lord is withholding his Spirit from the wicked of the earth *without*, or outside, the Church.

33 I have sworn in my wrath, and decreed wars upon the face of the earth, and the wicked shall slay the wicked, and fear shall come upon every man;

verse 33 “I have . . . decreed wars upon the face of the earth” This revelation will be followed soon by the American Civil War (see D&C 87).

34 And the saints also shall hardly escape; nevertheless, I, the Lord, am with them, and will come down in heaven from the presence of my Father and consume the wicked with unquenchable fire.

verse 34 “the saints also shall hardly escape” It is a firm principle that when the Lord sends travails upon the people of earth because of their wickedness, the righteous will not entirely escape. Though the Lord will generally acknowledge the righteous and protect them, it is the nature of this mortal earth that some of the innocent will suffer. There is always some “collateral damage.” The Prophet Joseph wrote:

It is a false idea that the saints will escape all the judgments, whilst the wicked suffer; for all flesh is subject to suffer, and “the righteous shall hardly escape.” Still, many of the saints will escape, for the just shall live by faith; yet many of the righteous shall fall prey to disease, to pestilence, etc., by reason of the weakness of the flesh, and yet be saved in the kingdom of God. So that it is an unhallowed principle to say that such and such have transgressed because they have been preyed upon by disease or death, for all flesh is subject to death; and the Savior has said “Judge not, lest ye be judged” (*HC*, 4:11).

35 And behold, this is not yet, but by and by.

verse 35 This great destruction which the Lord has decreed upon the wicked and a few of the righteous (collateral damage) has not come yet, but it will come soon—“by and by.”

36 Wherefore, seeing that I, the Lord, have decreed all these things upon the face of the earth, I will that my saints should be assembled upon the land of Zion;

verse 36 “all these things” This phrase refers to the trials and destructions prior to the Lord’s second coming.

“I will that my saints should be assembled upon the land of Zion” The fundamental reason for the Lord’s gathering his people together into one place is so that he can watch over and nurture and protect them—keep them safe while chaos rages around them.

37 And that every man should take righteousness in his hands and faithfulness upon his loins, and lift a warning voice unto the inhabitants of the earth; and declare both by word and by flight that desolation shall come upon the wicked.

verse 37 “every man should take righteousness in his hands and faithfulness upon his loins” To “take righteousness in his hand” means to do righteous deeds, while taking “faithfulness upon his loins” may indicate sexual morality.

“lift a warning voice unto the inhabitants of the earth” Preach the restored gospel and repentance in preparation for the Lord’s second coming—warning that desolation shall surely come upon the wicked.

“by word and by flight” The saints are to preach and set the example of gospel living by preaching aloud and by fleeing to Zion to avoid the coming destructions.

38 Wherefore, let my disciples in Kirtland arrange their temporal concerns, who dwell upon this farm.

verse 38 “this farm” This probably refers to the Isaac Morley farm in Kirtland (compare D&C 64:20). Before 1832, most of the saints gathering to Kirtland settled on the Morley farm, including, at the time of this revelation, Joseph and Emma Smith. Brother Morley had consecrated his farm to the Lord and was then called to Missouri (see D&C 52:23). While he was gone, the farm was managed by Titus Billings, and at the time of this revelation Brother Morley was still in Missouri serving as a counselor to Bishop Partridge.

39 Let my servant Titus Billings, who has the care thereof, dispose of the land, that he may be prepared in the coming spring to take his journey up unto the land of Zion, with those that dwell upon the face thereof, excepting those whom I shall reserve unto myself, that shall not go until I shall command them.

verse 39 “my servant Titus Billings” Titus Billings was, like Isaac Morley, a native of Kirtland, and the Morley farm had been left in his hands when Morley went to Missouri. Titus was instructed to sell the land so that the proceeds could be used to purchase land in Independence (see verse 40) and so that the members who were then living on the Morley farm would have to prepare for their move to Zion. By September 12, less than two weeks after section 63 was received, the Prophet and his family moved out of their little house on the Morley farm and moved in with the John Johnson family in Hiram, Ohio, about thirty miles southeast of Kirtland.

40 And let all the moneys which can be spared, it mattereth not unto me whether it be little or much, be sent up unto the land of Zion, unto them whom I have appointed to receive.

verse 40 “them whom I have appointed to receive” This phrase refers to Bishop Edward Partridge, his counselors, and his agents.

41 Behold, I, the Lord, will give unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., power that he shall be enabled to discern by the Spirit those who shall go up unto the land of Zion, and those of my disciples who shall tarry.

verse 41 “those who shall go up unto the land of Zion” Emigration to Zion was not supposed to be self-appointed. The saints were to stay in Kirtland and use it as a base of operations for gathering converts from the East and for generating revenue for Zion. Many of the Ohio saints, however, disobeyed the Lord’s will and went to Zion uninvited, unprepared, and unconsecrated, thus straining the spiritual and financial resources of the Church there.

42 Let my servant Newel K. Whitney retain his store, or in other words, the store, yet for a little season.

verse 42 Newell K. Whitney owned a mercantile store in Kirtland, and it was one of the largest stores in northeastern Ohio. Because the store produced revenue for the Church, Brother Whitney was instructed to continue operating it upon the principles of consecration for the good of the saints.

43 Nevertheless, let him impart all the money which he can impart, to be sent up unto the land of Zion.

44 Behold, these things are in his own hands, let him do according to wisdom.

verse 44 “these things are in his own hands” The Lord trusted Brother Whitney to manage the store and consecrate the proceeds without more detailed instructions or commandments.

45 Verily I say, let him be ordained as an agent unto the disciples that shall tarry, and let him be ordained unto this power;

verse 45 Newell K. Whitney is called to be Bishop Edward Partridge’s agent to handle the affairs of those living the law of consecration and stewardship in the Kirtland area (see D&C 58:49). He is not to be ordained bishop as yet (see D&C 72:8), but rather to act as an agent under the direction of Bishop Partridge.

46 And now speedily visit the churches, expounding these things unto them, with my servant Oliver Cowdery. Behold, this is my will, obtaining moneys even as I have directed.

verse 46 “And now speedily visit the churches” Joseph had been commanded while still in Missouri to raise money among the Ohio saints for the purchase of more land in Zion. This fund-raising effort was to employ Sidney Rigdon’s written description of the property in Jackson County together with a letter and subscription to be sent out to the branches of the church in the Ohio (see D&C 58:50-

51). In this verse Joseph and Oliver are commanded to visit the branches of the Church personally in order to further aid in the fund-raising effort.

47 He that is faithful and endureth shall overcome the world.

verse 47 “He that is faithful” In the context of the Kirtland Church in 1831, being faithful meant at the very least been willing to consecrate one’s possessions to establish and build up Zion. Faithful acts of consecration not only bring the blessings of God upon us in this life but will “follow” us into the next life (see verse 48). In other words, a record of faithfulness in this life will be accepted in the next life as sufficient indication of our character and worthiness (see Revelation 21:7).

48 He that sendeth up treasures unto the land of Zion shall receive an inheritance in this world, and his works shall follow him, and also a reward in the world to come.

verses 49 Beginning in this verse, the Lord does something that may seem out of place—he begins a discussion of the Millennium and resurrection. Actually, it is not at all out of place here since Zion and the Millennium go together. Zion realizes its fulfillment and glory at the advent of the Lord’s coming to usher in the Millennium.

49 Yea, and blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth, when the Lord shall come, and old things shall pass away, and all things become new, they shall rise from the dead and shall not die after, and shall receive an inheritance before the Lord, in his holy city.

verse 49 “blessed are the dead that die in the Lord” When one is enduring faithfully in the new and everlasting covenant at the time of one’s death, then one is said to die “unto the Lord,” “unto Christ,” or “in Christ.”

“all things become new” See 2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5. When the Savior comes a second time to establish his millennial kingdom, the earth will be raised from a fallen, telestial state to a paradisiacal, terrestrial state. This change will transform the earth and everything on it. All evil and wickedness will be removed. Nothing telestial will remain.

50 And he that liveth when the Lord shall come, and hath kept the faith, blessed is he; nevertheless, it is appointed to him to die at the age of man.

verse 50 “he that liveth when the Lord shall come” When Christ comes the second time, there will be righteous mortals, both children and adults, then living upon the earth who will be lifted up while the earth is changed and who will then continue to live out their mortal lives in the paradisiacal environment of the millennial kingdom. Adult mortals will continue to marry and bear mortal children during the Millennium, so that mortals will continue to be upon the earth during the entire thousand-year period.

When these persons have lived their allotted mortal time, provided they are worthy of celestial glory, they will pass through the changes of death and resurrection in the “twinkling” of an eye. Old and frail mortals will be changed into glorified, resurrected beings quickly (see verse 51).

“the age of man” The prophet Isaiah declared that during the Millennium a child will live to be a hundred years of age (see Isaiah 65:20-24). Psalm 90:10, in speaking of conditions before the Millennium, gives “the days of our years” as “threescore years and ten,” or seventy years. So a natural, mortal life span might be shorter before the Millennium than it will be during the Millennium. The important point here is that there will be no premature deaths during the Millennium, neither through disease, nor accident, nor war, nor any other telestial element. None of the mortal population of the millennial earth will die or be changed in a twinkling before their full human life span has been lived. No graves will be dug for the righteous, as all, when they reach the age of one hundred years, will be changed to immortality in the twinkling of an eye. For those destined to inherit a lower degree of glory, death for them may be much as it is now.

51 Wherefore, children shall grow up until they become old; old men shall die; but they shall not sleep in the dust, but they shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

52 Wherefore, for this cause preached the apostles unto the world the resurrection of the dead.

53 These things are the things that ye must look for; and, speaking after the manner of the Lord, they are now nigh at hand, and in a time to come, even in the day of the coming of the Son of Man.

verse 53 “speaking after the manner of the Lord” It has now been more than a century and a half since the Lord described these events as being “nigh at hand.” Because “nigh at hand” means “nearly here,” why haven’t these things happened as yet? Because, as the Lord points out, he is speaking from his own perspective of time, from a perspective that takes in all eternity. And compared with the entire telestial history of this earth, the time remaining is, indeed, relatively short.

54 And until that hour there will be foolish virgins among the wise; and at that hour cometh an entire separation of the righteous and the wicked; and in that day will I send mine angels to pluck out the wicked and cast them into unquenchable fire.

verse 54 “foolish virgins among the wise” The Lord’s allusion here is to his parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). Here he refers to those virgins who did not have sufficient oil in their lamps.

“an entire separation of the righteous and the wicked” Nothing telestial will continue into the Millennium. Section 86 teaches that the wicked will be separated from

the righteous because God allows his children to demonstrate by their mortal, moral choices what they truly are in their heart of hearts. Then he will segregate them according to their own free choices, so they will spend eternity with people pretty much like themselves. This segregation into wheat and tares, chaff and grain, righteous and wicked cannot take place yet, but at the last day and for all eternity thereafter, the wicked will have no influence or impact upon the righteous and will go away into their own place.

“in that day will I send mine angels to pluck out the wicked and cast them into unquenchable fire” Here the Lord refers to the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; D&C 86).

55 And now behold, verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, am not pleased with my servant Sidney Rigdon; he exalted himself in his heart, and received not counsel, but grieved the Spirit;

56 Wherefore his writing is not acceptable unto the Lord, and he shall make another; and if the Lord receive it not, behold he standeth no longer in the office to which I have appointed him.

verses 55-56 In section 58 (verses 50-51) the Lord commanded Sidney Rigdon to create a description of Zion in a brochure for distribution to the saints to encourage financial contributions to the cause of building up Zion. These verses likely have reference at least in part to that assignment and reflect the Lord’s dissatisfaction as to the manner in which Sidney fulfilled this assignment.

Sidney had been too proud to receive counsel. He would not be advised by Joseph Smith, but insisted on writing the brochure his own way. We may surmise from the text that Sidney was trying to write theology or scripture rather than an inducement for the saints to purchase land. In his first attempt, he clearly did not address the intended purpose of the letter in describing the land of Zion in the most attractive terms possible. Here the Lord gives him a second chance, and his second effort proved a success and was accepted. The glowing description of Jackson County found in the *History of the Church (HC, 1:197-98)* is a revised version of Sidney’s second, more acceptable attempt to write a description of Zion (Smith and Sjodahl, *Commentary*, 384).

“he standeth no longer in the office to which I have appointed him” Sidney is threatened here with a rather severe penalty—not because of his literary failure, but because of his pride and his stubborn refusal to accept counsel or to follow the promptings of the Spirit in completing the Lord’s assignment.

57 And again, verily I say unto you, those who desire in their hearts, in meekness, to warn sinners to repentance, let them be ordained unto this power.

verse 57 Any male saint wishing to preach the gospel to those without the Church are to be ordained to the proper priesthood and set apart to be missionaries.

58 For this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words. For I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in the last days.

59 Behold, I am from above, and my power lieth beneath. I am over all, and in all, and through all, and search all things, and the day cometh that all things shall be subject unto me.

verse 59 “I am from above, and my power lieth beneath” For a discussion of this vitally important concept see *The Power of God in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 14.

“the day cometh that all things shall be subject unto me” When the Savior comes to establish his kingdom upon the earth, nothing that will not obey him will be allowed to remain upon the earth. Beyond this, at the last judgment all those who receive any degree of glory and have any place in the mansions of the Father will be subject to Jesus Christ as their Creator and Redeemer and, like the elements themselves, they will obey him in their respective spheres.

60 Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ.

verse 60 “I am Alpha and Omega” See the commentary for D&C 19:1.

61 Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—

62 For behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority.

verses 61-62 If only we could comprehend the full majesty of Jesus Christ, we would realize what a wonderful and sacred thing it is even to speak his name. It is an even more glorious privilege aspire to be like him.

“many there be . . . who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain” The word *vain* means “empty,” “useless,” “pointless” or “without purpose.” One meaning of taking Christ’s name in vain is, therefore, to use it in a manner that is empty and without purpose, as do those who claim to speak or act in his name when they do not. This is not merely a question of priesthood authority, nor is this sin limited to the unordained, for even priesthood holders may invoke the name of Jesus Christ in attempting to present their own words or desires as his. Whenever we speak or act in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, we had better be sure that he really approves of what we are doing, lest we invoke his name in vain, or for nothing. It might even be possible to take his name in vain when we pray publicly, if the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ, amen” is merely a formula signaling that we are finished praying and the congregation may open their eyes.

Another way of taking Christ's name in vain is to speak it thoughtlessly, carelessly, casually, or merely for rhetorical effect, as does the casual blasphemer—he who is guilty of profanity or “swearing.” In speaking profanity, we introduce the name of the Father or the Son into unholy and base situations; and thus we show a careless disregard and disrespect for the Father or the Son.

Perhaps the worst form of using Christ's name in vain is to invoke it when making promises, oaths, or covenants, and then to break them. Members of the Church may take his name in vain when they take his name upon themselves in baptism and then fail to remember him and keep his commandments as they have promised to do (see D&C 20:77, 79).

James E. Talmage taught:

To take the name of God in vain, is to use the name lightly, to use it empty, to use it without effect, so far as the intent is concerned. By way of summary: (1) We may take the name of God in vain by profane speech. (2) We take it in vain when we swear falsely, not being true to our oaths and promises. (3) We take it in vain in a blasphemous sense when we presume to speak in that name without authority. (4) And, we take his name in vain whenever we willfully do aught that is in defiance of his commandments, since we have taken his name upon ourselves (CR, October 1931, 50-53).

63 Wherefore, let the church repent of their sins, and I, the Lord, will own them; otherwise they shall be cut off.

verse 63 “I, the Lord, will own them” To *own* means both to “possess” and to “acknowledge.” If we repent, Jesus will acknowledge us before the Father as his very own possessions (see D&C 29:27; Matthew 10:32; 1 Corinthians 6:20).

64 Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit; and in this there is no condemnation, and ye receive the Spirit through prayer; wherefore, without this there remaineth condemnation.

verse 64 “that which cometh from above is sacred” What things “cometh from above”? All eternal things pertaining to the Father, the Son, and the Father's universe including all things witnessed of and testified of by the Spirit of God. Christ cometh from above (see verse 59) as does all eternal truths about him, including his atonement, his love and mercy. All eternal truths are sacred and can only be understood and appreciated through the influence of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). When these truths are spoken or taught, it should also only be by the Spirit. By the constraint of the Spirit, we are taught what to teach, how to teach, and when to teach it.

“ye receive the Spirit through prayer” Frequent, and even constant, prayer is vital to keep the influence of the Spirit of God with you. Even though a church member possesses the gift of the Holy Ghost, if he desires inspiration through that gift he must draw close to the Lord, and stay in tune with him, through prayer. For further discussion of prayer, see *Prayer* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 8.

65 Let my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, seek them a home, as they are taught through prayer by the Spirit.

verse 65 “Let . . . Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon seek them a home” Sidney Rigdon had lost his home in Mentor, Ohio, when he joined the Church the year before. At the time of this revelation both the Sidney Rigdon family and the Smith family were living on the Morley farm, which the Lord had just commanded be sold (see verse 39). Thus, both Sidney and Joseph needed to find new lodgings for themselves and their families. Through this revelation the Lord could have told Joseph and Sidney where to look for a home, but, in the spirit of not having to be commanded in all things, he allowed them to work the matter out for themselves. Within two weeks of receiving this commandment, Joseph and his family moved in with the John Johnson family, and Sidney Rigdon and his family moved into a cabin on the Johnson property.

66 These things remain to overcome through patience, that such may receive a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, otherwise, a greater condemnation. Amen.

verse 66 “These things remain to overcome” This phrase refers to the common, human problems of how to live, where to live, how to support one’s family, and so on. These everyday challenges were a continual burden on the shoulders of the prophet Joseph Smith and his family. The Lord did not magically resolve for them these common problems of life and mortality. They struggled to find their way and make ends meet as much as any of us, and more than most. That the Smiths accomplished what they did for the Lord, while at the same time dealing with trying domestic difficulties, bestows upon them the greater glory, as it does also for other faithful saints in similar circumstances.

Character Vignette

John Johnson

“Father Johnson” was the patriarch of the Johnson family of Hiram, Ohio. He was 26 years older than the Prophet, and thus he was 52 years old in the fall of 1831. The men in his family were large, strong, sensible, brave, and honest. He was a prosperous farmer of large tracts of lands, and he was noted for paying his debts and living independently. He was associated with the Methodist Church for about five years prior to accepting the gospel. After the miraculous healing of his wife by Joseph Smith

(see Character Vignette on Ezra Booth near the end of section 52), he became satisfied as to the truth of Mormonism, and he was baptized by Joseph.

Two of John Johnson's sons were Luke and Lyman Johnson. Luke was the older of the two brothers by seven years, and was two years younger than the Prophet. Both were appointed as Apostles in February 1835. Both fell away from the Church in 1838. Luke repented and came back into the Church in 1846. He came west in 1846 and served as a bishop in a ward in Tooele County. He died in Salt Lake City at the age of 54. Lyman remained friendly with the Church leaders but apparently did not come back into the Church. He lost his life by drowning in the Mississippi River in 1856.

Section 64 Forgiveness

September 1831 in Kirtland was almost chaotically busy. Joseph Smith and the Kirtland saints were deeply involved in raising funds for the land purchases in Zion through the subscription of members and through the consecration and sale of some Kirtland properties. Because of the imminent sale of the Isaac Morley farm, the large number of saints living there, including the Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon families, had to find new housing. Many of these members had been directed to emigrate to Zion before winter, and preparations for their long journey on such short notice consumed both time and resources.

Joseph needed a home for his family and also he needed a quieter place in which to work, especially to work on his inspired revision of the Bible. See the supplemental article, *Joseph Smith's Inspired Revision of the Bible*. Thus, on September 12, 1831, the Prophet with his wife Emma and their four-month old adopted twins moved to the home of John and Elsa Johnson in the township of Hiram, Portage County, Ohio, about thirty miles southeast of Kirtland. The Smiths occupied a single room in the two-story Johnson farmhouse. The Johnsons were friends of Sidney Rigdon and had been converted to the Church when the Prophet healed Elsa of a chronic and painful joint disease. Sidney and Phoebe Rigdon with their six children moved with him, and they lived in a log cabin near the Johnson home on the 304 acre farm.

For six and a half months—September 12, 1831 through March 1832—Hiram would serve as temporary headquarters of the Church. While Joseph was in Hiram, many saints traveled there to meet with him and seek his counsel. While there, he did much work on his inspired revision of the King James Bible. Also in Hiram several important conferences were held, and sixteen revelations were received (sections 1, 65, 67, 68, 69, 71, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 99, and 133) including the memorable vision recorded in section 76.

One reason the Prophet moved so far from Kirtland in September 1831 was to avoid the persecution beginning there. The work of producing the JST had begun by commandment in 1830, shortly after the Church was organized, and had been interrupted by the move from New York to Ohio in early 1831 and by the mission to Missouri in the summer of that year. Joseph was determined to continue the work of translation as he had been commanded. But to do so he would have to move far from the atmosphere of growing persecution in Kirtland.

We will learn that there in Hiram a mob, excited by the agitation of Ezra Booth, will try to take the lives of Joseph and Sidney. The Prophet and Sidney will flee from Hiram in March 1832 to return to Kirtland. This six-month period in Hiram was a most significant era in the history of the Church.

The day before Joseph moved to Hiram, September 11, 1831, he received section 64. Among other things, section 64 contains an important commandment upon which many of us may stumble—the commandment to forgive one another.

In section 57 a few brethren had been called to settle their affairs in Kirtland and move to Missouri. These included Edward Partridge, Sidney Gilbert, and W. W. Phelps. Evidently the problems that had arisen on the Missouri River (see background materials for section 61) had involved these brethren. Some unpleasant feelings and ill will still existed among them. There needed to be a full reconciliation if they were to successfully lay the foundations for Zion. Thus, section 64 was given primarily for their benefit. They needed to forgive one another and to forgive Joseph.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 64 Forgiveness

D&C 64:9-11 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

D&C 64:23 He that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.

D&C 64:32-34 Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord your God unto you, O ye elders of my church, hearken ye and hear, and receive my will concerning you.

2 For verily I say unto you, I will that ye should overcome the world; wherefore I will have compassion upon you.

verse 2 “I will that ye should overcome the world” The ultimate challenge for each of us mortals here on earth is to make strides in overcoming our natural or natural man tendencies and, instead of succumbing to those natural inclinations, choosing to obey the Lord’s commands. Our natural self is inclined to respond only to earthly influences. Each of the Lord’s commandments can be obeyed only if we are successful in denying (or “overcoming”) part of our natural self. This deliberate overcoming of our natural self is the essence of the characteristic of deliberate faith. For a discussion of this vital topic see *Our “Natural Self” and “Spiritual Self” in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5 and *The Gospel and the Two Natures of Man* in the same volume, chapter 6. See also chapters 9, 10, and 11 in the same volume, *Revealed Faith, Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith*, and *Other Notes on Faith*.

3 There are those among you who have sinned; but verily I say, for this once, for mine own glory, and for the salvation of souls, I have forgiven you your sins.

verse 3 “for mine own glory” For reasons that are not entirely clear, the spiritual progress—and particularly the exaltation of man—adds to the glory of both the Father and the Son (Moses 1:39; D&C 45:4).

“I have forgiven you your sins” This is a rather remarkable pronouncement by the Lord. When an individual is diligently striving to overcome himself and obey the commandments, it is the Lord’s wont to frequently forgive, or justify, that individual as he also grants him the incremental gifts of the Spirit or increments of the attributes of Christ that he gives partially as a reward for the individual’s obedience. But in this instance, the Lord preemptively forgives those elders who are guilty of the sin of failing to forgive others even before they have begun to repent and before the Lord reiterates the commandment to forgive (see verses 9-11). This is indeed a compassionate and merciful gesture which the Lord makes, apparently in order to “get on with” the building of the nascent kingdom of God on earth and to set an example of unconditional forgiveness which he expects of each of us.

4 I will be merciful unto you, for I have given unto you the kingdom.

verse 4 “I have given unto you the kingdom” Note that this is not the promise of a future gift but the assurance of a present possession. When we come to Christ and enter into the covenant of the gospel through the covenant of baptism, we then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and so become, conditionally, members of the kingdom of God. The one condition is that we endure. To endure does not mean to cling desperately to the progress already made, but rather to continue always to progress. In this life, as long as we actively keep our gospel covenants, repent of our sins, and continuously strive to improve the quality and completeness of our obedience, we continue to possess the kingdom of God.

5 And the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom shall not be taken from my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., through the means I have appointed, while he liveth, inasmuch as he obeyeth mine ordinances.

verse 5 “the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom” See D&C 28:7; 35:18. These keys include the right to receive revelation concerning things of the kingdom previously unknown in this dispensation. The Lord informed the Church that while Joseph lived, he, and he alone—not Oliver, not Sidney—would hold these keys on the single condition that he obey the Lord’s ordinances. In March 1833, the Lord will further declare that Joseph Smith will hold these keys of the kingdom not only during his mortal life, but in eternity as well (D&C 90:3).

“through the means I have appointed, while he liveth” In D&C 28:7 the Lord had told Oliver Cowdery that Joseph would hold the keys of the mysteries “until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead.” In D&C 35:18 the Lord told Sidney Rigdon that if Joseph did not “abide in me . . . another will I plant in his stead.” D&C 43:4 also admits the possibility that Joseph could lose his place to another appointed in his stead. By September 1831, some of the saints in Kirtland had become antagonistic toward the Prophet (see D&C 64:6), and they could have used the above passages to suggest it

was time for another to take Joseph's place. The Lord here makes it very clear, however, that while Joseph was obedient he would continue to hold the keys as long as he lived, and this was made explicit eighteen months later in D&C 90:3. In this latter verse the Lord will inform the Church that Joseph Smith will hold the keys in this world and in the world to come. The same principle holds true today. Barring unfaithfulness, those who hold the keys of the kingdom—the president of the Church individually and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles collectively—hold them for this life and for the life to come.

6 There are those who have sought occasion against him without cause;
7 Nevertheless, he has sinned; but verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who confess their sins before me and ask forgiveness, who have not sinned unto death.

verse 7 “he has sinned” The Lord acknowledges that Joseph was not guiltless in the dispute that had occurred. Nor were the other brethren without blame, and they all needed to humble themselves and be forgiving.

“I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who confess their sins before me and ask forgiveness” This statement may be at first misleading. The Lord delights in forgiving the sins of those mortals who realize they have done wrong and feel appropriate remorse; admit to themselves that they have sinned (D&C 58:42-43); make recompense to those whom they may have injured; commit themselves to change and obey the commandments; and then strive with their might to overcome their natural man tendencies and if fact obey. Perhaps the most essential step, the *sine qua non* (Latin for “without which there is none”), of having one's sins forgiven by the Lord is striving diligently to obey the commandments. This essential step is not mentioned in this phrase but should be understood to be implied.

“who have not sinned unto death” The premeditated shedding of innocent blood is the “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16- 17) meaning a sin for which there is “no forgiveness” (D&C 42:79). Is this true? Is the shedding of innocent blood the same as “the unpardonable sin”? Can a man not repent and be cleansed of this sin?

The ultimate and “unpardonable sin” is to shed the only completely innocent blood, the blood of Jesus Christ. Once an individual has been converted to the divinity of Jesus Christ by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost and has come to know God and have an absolute witness, then that individual has a most serious and binding obligation. If he should ever turn altogether against the Church and come out in open rebellion against it, then he is guilty of the unpardonable sin. It as though he “crucifies [Christ]” afresh or “assent[s] unto [his] death” (D&C 76:35; 132:27). Such an individual will be resurrected but will not inherit a kingdom of glory. Rather he will spend eternity with Satan and his angels.

The unjustified shedding of human life is not the “unpardonable” sin. Rather, it is the “unforgivable sin,” second only to the unpardonable sin in its gravity. A murderer may repent and be cleansed in the post-mortal life, and he may be admitted to a kingdom of glory, the telestial kingdom. He cannot, however be forgiven to the point of being worthy for the celestial kingdom. He may become a “servant of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come” (D&C 76:112). See additional discussion of the most egregious sins in *Three Most Abominable Sins in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 18.

8 My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

verse 8 “My disciples, in days of old” This phrase likely refers to Jesus’s disciples in New Testament times. We will learn that the Lord is not hesitant to let us know that the disciples of that dispensation had trouble getting along with each other, just as the disciples of this dispensation sometimes do (see, for example, Mark 9:33-34; 10:41-42; Acts 15:24, 39; 2 Corinthians 11:12-13; Galatians 2:11; 3 John 1:9-10).

“sought occasion against one another” As used here, an *occasion* means an opportunity for taking action (see Daniel 6:4; 2 Corinthians 11:12). Thus, the ancient disciples, like those in Joseph’s day and in ours, sometimes sinned by looking for opportunities to accuse, confront, oppose, or antagonize one another.

“forgave not one another in their hearts” That is, they still held grudges, even though outwardly they may have appeared to have forgiven one another.

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

The Lord declared that when he was in his ministry his disciples sought occasion against one another and failed at times to forgive in their hearts. It was this condition which prompted Peter to ask the Lord how many times he should forgive his brother, “till seven times?” The Lord answered him, “I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21-22). As the disciples of old brought upon themselves affliction and chastening, so we, when we do not have in our hearts the spirit of forgiveness, bring upon ourselves affliction and chastening from the Lord (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:235).

9 Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

verse 9 “he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord” Excellent background and commentary for this phrase is found in the parable of the unmerciful servant (see Matthew 18:21-35).

“there remaineth in him the greater sin” The Lord extends forgiveness to each and everyone of us our trespasses against him and his commandments when we repent of our sins. He therefore expects each of us to forgive those who have offended us. If we persist in holding a grudge against another individual who offends us, but who has confessed and repented of any wrong doing in the affair, our continuing to hold a grudge will not keep the other from receiving God’s forgiveness, but it will render us unfit for that forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15). Hence, failure to forgive an offense against us is a greater sin than that of the offender who offended us.

10 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

verse 10 We may refuse to forgive, but only at the peril of our own souls, for we are forgiven as we forgive. Matthew 6:12 reads, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Matthew 6:14-15 reads, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” It is reported that Brigham Young once said that he who takes offense when no offense was intended is a fool, and he who takes offense when offense was intended is usually a fool. He then described two courses of action to follow when one is bitten by a rattlesnake. One may, in anger, fear, or vengefulness, pursue the creature and kill it. Or he may make full haste to get the venom out of his system. If we pursue the latter course, we will likely survive, but if we attempt to follow the former, we may not be around long enough to finish it.

Is the forgiveness required of us here totally unconditional? Are we allowed to resist injustice in this world? Does the Lord’s command to forgive, for example, require you drop criminal or civil charges against an employee who has embezzled from you? Does it require you to rehire him or her? Should the priesthood leader of an errant church member, in the spirit of unconditional forgiveness, refuse to hold a disciplinary council? Our requirement to forgive is not totally unconditional. There are three qualifying principles:

1. The obligation for the trespasser to repent. The Lord taught: “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4). The trespassing individual must repent of his wrong doing. Otherwise, you are entitled to protect yourself against his further trespassing. But what about the individual who does not repent? How many times must we forgive him? The answer “seventy times seven” (a hyperbolic quantity, meaning indefinitely) is for those who sin against us but repent. For those who sin against us and refuse to repent, the first three times we are still obligated to forgive, but the fourth time the testimonies against the sinner are to be brought before the Lord. If sincere repentance and restitution ensue, forgiveness is required; but if there is not

repentance, the sinner is given over to the judgments of God (see D&C 98:39-48—the law of forgiveness).

2. The right of self defense. The principle of forgiveness does not deprive us of the right to act in our own defense. We are not allowed to hate the aggressor or to hold a grudge against him, but we are not required to suffer preventable injury at his hands either, even on a first offense. The right of self-defense also justifies severing any contact with someone who constitutes a physical, moral, mental, emotional, financial, or spiritual hazard for us.

3. The right to seek for justice. To forgive an individual who has embezzled or stolen money from you requires that you rid yourself of all bitterness, hatred, or desire for revenge. But forgiveness does not require that all relations and feelings be restored to what they once were between the forgiver and the forgiven. One need not drop criminal or civil charges against someone who has stolen from you. A priesthood leader should not refuse to hold an appropriate disciplinary council (see verses 12-14). It is possible to forgive those who have offended you while at the same time preferring not to deal with the individual again. Forgiveness is about the elimination of negative feelings but not always about the restoration of former relationships and privileges.

11 And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.

verse 11 “let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds” In saying this we decline to judge or to condemn others (see Matthew 7:1). We decline to take things personally but leave it to God to reward or condemn our adversaries. In adopting this attitude in our disagreements with others, we avoid anger, bitterness, hatred, malice, and all the other emotional poisons so dangerous to our own hearts. Suspending judgment about the motives or guilt of those with whom we disagree, however, is not the same as letting them have their way. Once again, this principle does not require us to put ourselves or our stewardship at risk but only to deal with our opposition non-judgmentally.

The reader may be surprised to learn what it really means to forgive another individual. The mechanics of this process are not exactly intuitive. It is not sufficient to say to the supposed offender, “I forgive you.” Please see an important discussion of the process of forgiveness in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 6, *Forgiveness*.

12 And him that repenteth not of his sins, and confesseth them not, ye shall bring before the church, and do with him as the scripture saith unto you, either by commandment or by revelation.

13 And this ye shall do that God may be glorified—not because ye forgive not, having not compassion, but that ye may be justified in the eyes of the law, that ye may not offend him who is your lawgiver—

verses 12-13 “do with him as the scripture saith . . . that God may be glorified” It is easy to confuse the issues of forgiveness and justice and wrongly conclude that one excludes the other. Yet the same God who commanded the saints to forgive one another and all men (verses 9-10) also commanded church leaders to discipline unrepentant sinners (verse 12). Church leaders are to forgive first in their own hearts, and then where appropriate to discipline, and finally, when discipline is complete, to forgive in the name of the Church. There can be no grudge, no desire for revenge, no hatred, no bitterness, and no malice in church disciplinary proceedings, and, as individuals, church leaders are required to forgive those who are disciplined.

Nevertheless, reverence for God, the lawgiver, demands that his law be obeyed. Church leaders are expected, as individuals, to forgive sinners. But no local church leader can, as an individual, extend to an unrepentant sinner the forgiveness of the Church or of God. By commandment, the forgiveness of the Church is obtained through the procedures of the Church—through repentance, through confession, and, for serious sins, through its disciplinary councils.

14 Verily I say, for this cause ye shall do these things.

verse 14 “for this cause ye shall do these things” The Lord commands that his counsel in verse 13 be followed, and for what cause? That “God may be glorified” (see verse 13).

15 Behold, I, the Lord, was angry with him who was my servant Ezra Booth, and also my servant Isaac Morley, for they kept not the law, neither the commandment;

verse 15 “Ezra Booth, and also my servant Isaac Morley” Ezra Booth and Isaac Morley had been missionary companions on the trip to Missouri (see D&C 52:23). Ezra in particular did not do well on that trip, and after returning to Kirtland on September 1, he began criticizing the Missouri mission and the leadership of the Church, especially Joseph Smith. He was disfellowshipped on September 6, which is probably why the Lord refers to him in this verse in the past tense as “him who was my servant.” Ezra formally rejected the Church on September 12, the day after this revelation was received.

Isaac Morley had at first refused to consecrate his Kirtland farm to the Lord when commanded to do so, but he soon repented and turned his property over to the Church before going to Missouri as Ezra Booth’s companion. Isaac may have been affected somewhat by his companion’s attitudes or temporarily shared some of his views (see verse 16), but he stayed in Missouri to assist Bishop Partridge, and the Lord notes here

that whatever his sins may once have been, he has at this time already been forgiven (see verse 16).

16 They sought evil in their hearts, and I, the Lord, withheld my Spirit. They condemned for evil that thing in which there was no evil; nevertheless I have forgiven my servant Isaac Morley.

17 And also my servant Edward Partridge, behold, he hath sinned, and Satan seeketh to destroy his soul; but when these things are made known unto them, and they repent of the evil, they shall be forgiven.

verse 17 Edward Partridge and Isaac Morley were still in Missouri when section 64 was received (see D&C 58:24), and they probably did not learn of its contents for weeks. Thus the Lord said of them, “When these things are made known unto them, and they repent of the evil, they shall be forgiven.” The specific sins referred to here are not known, but the Lord had warned Edward scarcely a month before to repent of his “unbelief and blindness of heart” or he would fall (D&C 58:15).

18 And now, verily I say that it is expedient in me that my servant Sidney Gilbert, after a few weeks, shall return upon his business, and to his agency in the land of Zion;

verse 18 Sidney Gilbert is commanded to return to Missouri and resume his calling as a church agent. He had established a mercantile store there which served also as the bishop’s storehouse. He will take sections 63 and 64 with him to Zion, along with other news, information, and instructions (see verse 19).

19 And that which he hath seen and heard may be made known unto my disciples, that they perish not. And for this cause have I spoken these things.

20 And again, I say unto you, that my servant Isaac Morley may not be tempted above that which he is able to bear, and counsel wrongfully to your hurt, I gave commandment that his farm should be sold.

verse 20 “I gave commandment that his farm should be sold” This commandment was given in D&C 63:38-39. The Morley farm was already in the hands of the Church when Isaac left for Missouri, and it was being managed by Titus Billings, who received the commandment to sell it. This was partially for the good of Brother Morley, who had some difficulty parting with it, as well as to finance the purchase of more land in Zion (see D&C 63:40). The Morley farm will formally be sold a month later on October 12.

This was the same farm on which “the Morley family” had been living with its system of “common stock” before the missionaries to the Lamanites arrived in Kirtland. Most of the “family” joined the Church and continued living on the farm after their conversion.

21 I will not that my servant Frederick G. Williams should sell his farm, for I, the Lord, will to retain a strong hold in the land of Kirtland, for the space of five years, in the which I will not overthrow the wicked, that thereby I may save some.

verse 21 “I will not that my servant Frederick G. Williams should sell his farm” Brother Williams earlier had informally consecrated his farm to the Church, and several members were then living on it, but he still held legal title to it. In May 1834 he deeded this farm to the Church without remuneration. Apparently the Lord wanted the Church to retain a foothold in Kirtland for five more years in part because of his desire to see the saints have the blessings of the temple. This revelation was received September 11, 1831. Five years later, the Kirtland Temple had been dedicated, and the Church was beginning to experience a devastating apostasy.

“in the which I will not overthrow the wicked” The Lord reassures the saints that the prophesied destructions of the end of the world and the destruction of all the wicked elements of the earth will not occur during the next five years. He thus calmed the fears of some of the Kirtland saints who wanted to flee to Zion for safety but were told to remain in Ohio.

22 And after that day, I, the Lord, will not hold any guilty that shall go with an open heart up to the land of Zion; for I, the Lord, require the hearts of the children of men.

verse 22 “after that day, I, the Lord, will not hold any guilty that shall go” The Ohio saints had been commanded to remain in Ohio until called by the Prophet to emigrate to Zion (see D&C 58:56; 63:24, 41). Many disobeyed this commandment and thereby contributed to the failure to establish Zion at that time. Here the Lord declares that after the five years are up, all the Ohio saints can then move to Zion without violating his will, provided they are worthy of Zion.

“with an open heart . . . for I, the Lord, require the hearts of the children of men” This probably refers to the willingness of the saints to share one another’s burdens by living the law of consecration.

23 Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.

verse 23 “now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man” See the commentary for D&C 45:6. The “day of the Lord” is the moment of his second coming.

“for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming” We are commanded to pay tithing. This is the first mention of tithing in the Doctrine and Covenants. Note why some have, with tongue in cheek, referred to tithing as “the best fire insurance

around.” The burning of the last day, at the time of the Savior’s second coming, will consume only the wicked—those who abide a telestial law (see D&C 76:98, 104-5). Those who are faithful tithe payers are living at least a terrestrial law, and if term “tithing” is understood to mean freely giving of one’s financial resources to the Lord, as it was understood in 1831, then full tithe payers are living the celestial law as well. And those living a terrestrial or celestial law will not be burned at the last day.

24 For after today cometh the burning—this is speaking after the manner of the Lord—for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon.

verse 24 “I will not spare any that remain in Babylon” Babylon is everywhere that is not Zion. This verse implies that at the Lord’s second coming all who are not in Zion will be destroyed by fire. We have commented previously on the incompleteness of this concept since the terrestrial folks will also be spared, and they will not be gathered to Zion.

25 Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today.

verse 25 “while it is called today” Again, see the commentary for D&C 45:6. This phrase refers to this dispensation from the restoration of the gospel to the second coming of the Lord (see D&C 65:23). For each of us who live in this dispensation, this phrase also refers to the period between our mortal birth and our resurrection; thus it includes the time we spend in the world of spirits.

26 And it is not meet that my servants, Newel K. Whitney and Sidney Gilbert, should sell their store and their possessions here; for this is not wisdom until the residue of the church, which remaineth in this place, shall go up unto the land of Zion.

verse 26 “it is not meet that my servants, Newel K. Whitney and Sidney Gilbert, should sell their store” The Whitney store in Kirtland was generating revenue for the Church and will be needed as a bishop’s storehouse for five or six more years. It is wise, therefore, to keep it.

27 Behold, it is said in my laws, or forbidden, to get in debt to thine enemies;

verse 27 “it is . . . forbidden, to get in debt” One of the issues being raised at this time by Ezra Booth and other critics of Joseph Smith was that the Lord had forbidden the saints to incur debts as individuals, while at the same time the Church was collectively going into debt to acquire property in Kirtland and Zion. Here the Lord explains that while individual members are forbidden to contract debts to their enemies, the Lord will do as he pleases (see verses 28-29). If the Lord uses credit as a means of

building his Church, or if he instructs his leaders to do so, this is not in conflict with his instructions for individuals in their own personal financial conduct. The Lord issues and revokes commandments according to our needs, but he is not himself bound by his commandments to us, nor can his agents go wrong when they obey his instructions.

28 But behold, it is not said at any time that the Lord should not take when he please, and pay as seemeth him good.

29 Wherefore, as ye are agents, ye are on the Lord's errand; and whatever ye do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business.

30 And he hath set you to provide for his saints in these last days, that they may obtain an inheritance in the land of Zion.

31 And behold, I, the Lord, declare unto you, and my words are sure and shall not fail, that they shall obtain it.

verse 31 “my words are sure and shall not fail, that they shall obtain it” Abraham 3:17 assures us, “there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it.” In Joseph’s day, the Church did acquire a foothold in Zion, and it still belongs to the Church today. Faithful saints will both possess it and enjoy its fruits throughout eternity.

32 But all things must come to pass in their time.

verse 32 “all things must come to pass in their time” Once again, the Lord reminds the saints in 1831 (and us in our day) that they (and we) should not expect to see the fulfillment of all things any time soon.

33 Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

verse 33 “ye are laying the foundation of a great work” The Lord recognized, as some of the saints did not, that they were merely planting seeds that would not produce for a long time to come. Ezra Booth was offended at the small things that were accomplished in Missouri. Imagine his thoughts were he able to see the present day Church! Some saints may feel that their services in the Church are “small things,” but as the Lord states here, it is out of such small things that great things proceed—out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”

34 Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.

35 And the rebellious shall be cut off out of the land of Zion, and shall be sent away, and shall not inherit the land.

verses 34-35 The reader should keep in mind that the land of Zion, with its center in Independence, Missouri, is the inheritance a part of the Lord’s people (the tribe

of Joseph—Ephraim—and the others of the ten tribes of Israel) for all eternity—even after the earth has been celestialized to serve as an eternal celestial abode.

36 For, verily I say that the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim, wherefore they shall be plucked out.

verses 34-36 “the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim” Ephraim was the second son of Joseph, the son of Jacob, or Israel. After Reuben, the oldest son of Jacob, lost his birthright through transgression (see 1 Chronicles 5:1-2), Ephraim was declared to be the birthright son through the lineage of his father Joseph (see Jeremiah 31:9) and the “head” of all Israel (Psalm 60:7; 108:8), with the right to preside over his elder brother Manasseh, and also over his uncles. The ancient blessings given the tribe of Ephraim by Jacob and by Moses were, respectively, that Ephraim would “become a multitude of nations” (Genesis 48:19) and that Ephraim, as the son who has responsibility for the family, would “push the people together” in their tens of thousands (Deuteronomy 33:17).

The tribe of Ephraim, however, was also cursed at a later time to become “wanderers among the nations” for their apostasy in making alliances with the gentile nations and for worshiping the gentile gods (Hosea 9:17). Between 732 and 722 BC, the Lord scattered Ephraim among the nations, where they eventually intermarried and lost their identity, thus in time becoming Gentiles themselves.

In the latter-day restoration of the family of Israel, Ephraim still holds the right to preside. Thus, the descendants of Ephraim, recognized as Gentiles in the scriptures or “a multitude of nations,” were the first to be converted in order that they might then “push the people together” from all nations. This fulfills the blessing of both Jacob and Moses upon the head of Ephraim. This is also why the scriptures sometimes refer to the latter-day church members as Gentiles (see D&C 109:60; 1 Nephi 15:13, 22; 2 Nephi 30:3) and sometimes as “Ephraim” (as here and in D&C 113:4). Most converts are Gentiles in terms of ethnicity and national origin, but they are also descended from the house of Israel in at least one ancestral line, or else they are adopted into the house of Israel through the gospel covenant.

“they shall be plucked out” By transgression a man, though he be descended from Joseph through Ephraim, is excluded or expelled from the house of Israel. Paul taught this principle to the early saints. The Jews took great pride in the fact that they were “of the circumcision,” that is that they were the covenant people, circumcision being the token of that covenant. But Paul pointed out that if one “of the circumcision” violated the law, his “circumcision is made uncircumcision” (Romans 2:25.) Nephi also understood this principle and taught: “For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his son, who is the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 30:2).

In this generation, Ephraim holds the birthright in the house of Israel. Hence, Ephraim must be gathered first to prepare the way and establish the Church and the priesthood. The large majority of those coming into the Church today are of the tribe of Ephraim. Today Ephraim holds the keys of the priesthood. It is with Ephraim that the Lord has made covenant, and through Ephraim has he restored his gospel in its fulness. Ephraim is building temples and performing the ordinances in them for the living and the dead. An understanding of the role of Ephraim in this dispensation helps one to understand why the Lord would say that “the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim.”

37 Behold, I, the Lord, have made my church in these last days like unto a judge sitting on a hill, or in a high place, to judge the nations.

38 For it shall come to pass that the inhabitants of Zion shall judge all things pertaining to Zion.

verses 37-38 In these important verses, the Lord points out that his Church, the kingdom of God on the earth, functions figuratively as a judge. Those who gather to Zion become the Lord’s people, regardless of their actual ancestral lineage. In the latter-day Zion, resides the priesthood authority to seal up or condemn mortals for all eternity.

39 And liars and hypocrites shall be proved by them, and they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known.

verse 39 “they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known” The power of revelation and righteousness is such in Zion that false prophets and apostles will be detected.

40 And even the bishop, who is a judge, and his counselors, if they are not faithful in their stewardships shall be condemned, and others shall be planted in their stead.

verse 40 “the bishop . . . and his counselors” This phrase refers to Bishop Edward Partridge. His counselors in Independence at this time are Isaac Morley and John Corril.

“who is a judge” This is the first mention in the Doctrine and Covenants of the bishop’s role as a judge in Israel. There is an intentional irony evident here. The Lord has just pointed out that his latter-day Church and its authorized ministers function as a judge of all nations (see verses 37 and 38). He then warns that even though Bishop Partridge is a judge of all nations, if he is not faithful, he will be judged by the Lord and “condemned, and others shall be planted in [his] stead.”

41 For, behold, I say unto you that Zion shall flourish, and the glory of the Lord shall be upon her;

verse 41 “Zion shall flourish, and the glory of the Lord shall be upon her”

In spite of the sinfulness of the individual members of Zion, the Lord will grant that his light or glory shall shine forth to the world from Zion. Zion will be visible to the world (see verse 42).

42 And she shall be an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto her out of every nation under heaven.

verse 42 “[Zion] shall be an ensign” An *ensign* is a standard, banner, or flag by which the identity or location of a people may be known. In the last days, Zion will be seen as the standard that identifies and points out the location of the people of God.

“unto the people” To the scattered descendants of Israel (see Deuteronomy 33:17).

43 And the day shall come when the nations of the earth shall tremble because of her, and shall fear because of her terrible ones. The Lord hath spoken it. Amen.

verse 43 “and shall fear because of her terrible ones” There will come a day when those on earth who exist outside of Zion will look at Zion with fear and trembling. The leaders of Zion, “her terrible ones,” will also be regarded with awe and respect. The word *terrible* here refers to someone who instills dread, terror, solemn awe, and reverence. Examples of the similar use of this meaning in the scriptures include: “The Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible” (Deuteronomy 7:21); “Let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy” (Psalm 99:3); and “He hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen” (Deuteronomy 10:21).

Brief Historical Setting

1831 October

In October Joseph received an important revelation in the form of a prayer which gave important information about the concept of the kingdom of God [**D&C 65 - Joseph Smith’s Prayer**].

Section 65 Joseph Smith's Prayer

Little is known of the particular circumstances surrounding the reception of section 65 some time in October 1831. Joseph and Emma Smith had been living with John and Elsa Johnson in Hiram, Ohio, for about a month when this revelation was received. Joseph recorded in the forepart of October, "I received the following prayer through revelation" (*HC*, 1:218). Although Joseph recalled this revelation's being received in early October, the Kirtland Revelation Book (see Smith, *Kirtland Revelation Book*, 87), *The Evening and the Morning Star* (Phelps, "Revelation on Prayer," Sept. 1832, 2), and William McLellin's journals (see Shipp and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 243) all list the date as October 30, 1831. McLellin's journals also adds that this revelation was received in connection with Joseph's study of Matthew 6:10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (*Ibid.*).

In essence, Section 65 is a modern version of the Lord's Prayer as revealed to Joseph in October 1831 in Hiram, Ohio. It is one of two sections in the Doctrine and Covenants which are prayers—the other being section 109, the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple.

For a better understanding of the important concept of the kingdom of God, we must go back to the ancient Prophet Daniel's interpretation of the remarkable dream of King Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century BC (Daniel 2). From the days of the prophet Joseph Smith to the present this dream has been understood to be a prophecy that foretells the establishment, growth, and destiny of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Let us consider the dream itself: Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, saw in a dream a large statue in the shape of a man constructed of various substances. The head was of fine gold, the breast and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and his feet were part iron and part clay (Daniel 2:32-33). As the dream developed, a stone that was "cut out without hands" smote the image on its feet and broke the image into tiny pieces, and the wind carried them away. Meanwhile, the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35).

Daniel's interpretation of the dream was that the "statue" represented a succession of world monarchies. The "stone" was seen as representing the kingdom of God. In our dispensation some have speculated as to the more specific interpretation of the various parts of the statue. These speculations are as follows: The statue represents a historical time line and explains a succession of kingdoms beginning in Daniel's time. The head of gold represents Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, the Babylonian Empire (610 BC to 539 BC). The breast and arms of silver represent the Persian Empire under Cyrus (539 BC to 330 BC). The belly and thighs of brass represent the

Mesopotamian Empire established by Alexander the Great of Greece (330 BC to 63 BC). At the death of Alexander the Great at age 32, his kingdom was divided among his generals. It was ruled by their descendants and others until they in turn were overthrown by the Roman Empire which is represented by the legs of iron (63 BC to AD 636). After the fall of the Roman Empire came a world of many nations. This is represented in the dream as a kingdom “part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken” (Daniel 2:42).

In this world setting then would a new kingdom be established, different from all the others. Whereas the other kingdoms described would each grow out of the ruins of previous kingdoms, this new kingdom would be “cut out without hands,” meaning that it would be of divine construction rather than human or manmade. This kingdom would begin on a small scale (a small stone) but would eventually fill the entire earth. Daniel concluded that this new kingdom “shall never be destroyed” and shall “break into pieces and consume” all other kingdoms, “and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

Next, a couple of definitions: the term “kingdom of God” means specifically the Church of Christ upon the earth. The term “kingdom of heaven” refers to that system of government and administration which is operative in heaven and which we pray may some day prevail upon the earth during the Millennium (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *CR*, April 1917, 65-66).

The terms “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are sometimes used erroneously as synonyms, even in our imperfect modern translations of the Bible—especially in the Book of Matthew. Actually the kingdom of God is the same Church as the millennial kingdom of God. Both are the Church of Jesus Christ. The terms refer to the same Church in each of two time periods or settings.

When the kingdom of heaven is established on the earth at Christ’s second coming, the Savior will reign personally as political leader as well as ecclesiastical head. This kingdom is sometimes referred to as the “political kingdom of God.”

A minor controversy seems to exist within the Church today as to whether the “stone that was cut out without hands” refers to the kingdom of God (the Church) or the political kingdom of God (the millennial kingdom of heaven). Certainly Daniel’s prophecy foresees a movement which begins as the kingdom of God is established on the earth and grows and prepares the way for the culminating establishment of the long-awaited kingdom of heaven, or political kingdom of God.

1 Hearken, and lo, a voice as of one sent down from on high, who is mighty and powerful, whose going forth is unto the ends of the earth, yea, whose voice is unto men—Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

verse 1 “a voice” Perhaps this was an audible voice to Joseph, or perhaps the voice of the Lord came into his mind.

“as of one sent down from on high, who is mighty and powerful” This can only be Jesus Christ. Joseph heard the voice of Jesus Christ.

“make his paths straight” In their *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, Smith and Sjodahl explained this phrase:

Eastern potentates, when traveling from one part of the kingdom to another, would proclaim their coming and order their subjects to prepare the way for them, by building roads where there were none; if necessary by leveling hills and filling up depressions, and straightening out the winding paths. . . . To prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight is to acknowledge his sovereignty and to make all necessary preparations for his reception. He will not come to reign until all necessary preparations for his coming have been made. Joseph Smith said, “Hear this, O earth! The Lord will not come to reign over the righteous in this world . . . until everything for the Bridegroom is ready” (*HC*, 5:291) (174).

2 The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth.

verse 2 “The keys of the kingdom of God” Keys imply authority, the right to preside. The use of the word *keys* for this right or authority is a figurative but apt usage. Keys imply the ability to unlock and open doors or to lock and shut them. In other words, they are the ability to seal, or close, and to loose, or open. In ancient courts the chamberlain, who held the keys of the palace and controlled access to the ruler and to his family and possessions, was frequently the most trusted and powerful official in the kingdom. For this reason, Saint Peter, who held the keys of the kingdom of God (see Matthew 16:19), is often depicted in Christian tradition as a chamberlain—one who stands at the door or gate of heaven controlling access to the king and kingdom inside. This great authority to seal or to separate, to open or shut the doors of God’s kingdom, to permit or forbid entry into the presence of the King, has been given to apostles and prophets of God upon this fallen, telestial earth.

There is a difference between holding the priesthood and holding the keys of the priesthood. Any priest or elder has the authority to baptize, for example, but only those who hold the keys of baptism in any church unit—a bishop or mission president—may give permission for the ordinance to take place. Priesthood holders have the authority to act for God, but may only do so when directed by those who hold the keys, or the administrative responsibility, for that particular work. Priesthood is authority. Keys are the right to direct, preside, control, authorize, or forbid the use of that authority.

The President of the Church holds all of the keys of the kingdom of God (see the commentary for D&C 81:2). There is a close relationship between these keys (the right to administer) and the sealing power (the right to make binding in heaven that which is

done on earth). The mortal Christ said to his chief apostle Peter: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

“the kingdom of God” The prophet Joseph taught us further about the kingdom of God:

Some say that the kingdom of God was not set up upon the earth until the day of Pentecost, and that John did not preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, but I say to you in the name of the Lord that the kingdom of God was set up upon the earth in the days of Adam to the present time. Whenever there has been a righteous man on the earth, unto whom God revealed his word and gave power and authority to administer in his name, and where there is a priest of God . . . to administer in the ordinances of the gospel, and officiate in the priesthood of God, there is the kingdom of God. . . . where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God give his oracles [revelations], there is the kingdom of God; and where the oracles of God are not, there the kingdom of God is not (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 271-72*).

Joseph also explained his own role, as he saw it, in the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth:

The ancient prophets declared that in the last days the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, nor left to other people . . .

I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world. . . . It will not be by sword or gun that this kingdom will roll on: the power of truth is such that all nations will be under the necessity of obeying the gospel (*HC, 6:364-65*).

3 Yea, a voice crying—Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the supper of the Lamb, make ready for the Bridegroom.

verse 3 “supper of the Lamb” This phrase is another term for the Messianic feast when the righteous sit down to eat and drink with Christ in his kingdom (see D&C 58:11; Revelation 19:7-9).

“the Bridegroom” As a symbol of complete intimacy and oneness, marriage is frequently used in scripture to figuratively represent becoming one with Christ. The faithful Church (the saints) is the bride, and Christ is the Bridegroom (see D&C 88:92; 133:10, 19). They are joined together in the covenant of the gospel, for which the covenant of marriage is symbolic.

4 Pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name, make known his wonderful works among the people.

verse 4 “wonderful works” It is natural to think of the many miracles and healings of the Savior during his mortal ministry as “his wonderful works,” but by far the most wonderful works of the mortal Messiah were his infinite atonement, his sacrificial death, and his victory over the grave in the resurrection.

5 Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.

verse 5 “clothed in the brightness of his glory” What dramatic power and energy will ignite the world on that last day and burn away anything that cannot abide at least a terrestrial glory! It will be the glory of the Son of Man himself as he descends openly and in full view upon the world.

6 Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thine enemies may be subdued; for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. Amen.

verse 6 “kingdom of God” “kingdom of heaven” The reader should carefully distinguish between these two phrases. See the introductory commentary for this section.

“that the kingdom of heaven may come” When the Savior comes again to the earth, he will bring with him an entire heavenly kingdom together with its inhabitants—a heavenly New Jerusalem to be joined together with the earthly New Jerusalem built by the saints. This heavenly kingdom will include, but may not be limited to, the city of Enoch that was taken up anciently (see Moses 7:62-63; Ether 3:3, 10).

Section 65 is the scriptural confirmation of the role of the Church as the kingdom of God, established in the last days of world history, to prepare the way for the coming of the rightful king of the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ and his heavenly kingdom of heaven. The church President holds “the keys of the kingdom” today on the earth (D&C 65:2).

Brief Historical Setting

1831 November

During the first twelve days of November 1831, four short conferences of the elders of the Church were held at the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Ohio. It was resolved during these conferences that a collection of Joseph’s revelations should be printed and distributed to the membership of the Church. Joseph selected those revelations to be included. On the first day of the conference the Lord gave his endorsement to the planned publication and named the collection the Book of

Commandments [**D&C 1 - The Lord's Preface—The Voice of Warning**]. When asked to sign a written testimony that would be attached to this book, a few of the brethren attending the conference evidenced their imperfect testimonies of the divine origin of the revelations. They wondered if perhaps Joseph hadn't written them, as they saw too much of his vocabulary and language in the revelations. After a prayer, in which he pleaded for wisdom, Joseph received a revelation wherein the Lord challenged anyone present to write a revelation equal to "even the least" of the revelations Joseph had received [**D&C 67 - The Challenge**]. If anyone succeeded, they would be entitled to their reluctance to bear testimony of the divine authenticity of the revelations. If they failed, however, they would then be under heavenly condemnation if they refused to bear witness of them. Only one elder accepted the challenge. He was William E. McLellin, a well-educated former school teacher who had just recently received his own revelation and blessing from the Lord [**D&C 66 - William E. McLellin**]. He accepted the challenge and retired to another room to make the attempt. He failed utterly, and all present, including McLellin, were blessed, as the Spirit bore witness to each of them that the revelations, even though written in Joseph's imperfect language, were indeed from God.

Four more revelations would yet be received during the first twelve days of November 1831. One contained information on the following subjects: the office of bishop, teaching our children the gospel, and a new definition of scripture [**D&C 68 - Bishops. Teach. Scripture**]. Another gave instructions on transporting the manuscripts of the revelations to Independence, Missouri, where they would be printed on William W. Phelps's printing press. Yet another created the so-called "Literary Firm" which was a mini-United Order composed of a group of brethren assigned to take care of the scriptures of the Church as their stewardship [**D&C 69 and 70 - Book of Commandments**]. The final section given during this conference was to serve as the appendix to the Book of Commandments [**D&C 133 - The Appendix**].

Section 66 William E. McLellin

On October 11, 1831, a conference of the Church was held in Hiram, Ohio. Following the session on October 11, the conference was adjourned, and it resumed on October 25 in Orange, Ohio. On the latter date, William E. McLellin (in church history his name has been variously spelled McLellan and M'Lellin) sought for a blessing by revelation from the Lord through Joseph. Section 66 is that revelation.

The exact date of McLellin's birth cannot be ascertained, but he was born in Tennessee about 1806—thus he was about a year younger than the Prophet. According to Joseph Smith, he had a “superficial education” and “more learning than sense” but a “good flow of language,” and he had worked as a teacher in several different schools. He first heard the gospel preached by Elders Samuel H. Smith and Reynolds Cahoon (see section 53:30) in Paris, Illinois, while they were en route from Kirtland to Independence in the summer of 1831. He closed up his affairs as soon as possible and followed these missionaries to Jackson County, hoping to meet the prophet Joseph, but he arrived there too late. In Independence he was baptized and ordained an elder. In the fall of 1831 he made his way to Kirtland where we find him in attendance at the special conference of October 25 in Orange, Ohio. It was there where he finally met the Prophet. During this conference, he was ordained a high priest, and when the conference was adjourned he accompanied the Prophet to Hiram, Ohio, staying with him there for three weeks. There he sought to learn the will of the Lord regarding himself. On October 29 Joseph Smith received section 66 in Hiram, Ohio, dictating it to William McLellin, who acted as scribe. McLellin's journal specified that section 66 was received on Saturday, October 29, after McLellin and the Prophet had returned to Hiram from Orange.

Writing of this experience on another occasion seventeen years later, William McLellin said: “From this conference I went home with the Prophet, and on Saturday, the 29th, I received through him, and wrote from his mouth a revelation concerning myself. I had expected and believed that when I saw Brother Joseph, I should receive one: and I went before the Lord in secret, and on my knees asked him to reveal the answer to five questions through his Prophet, and that too without his having any knowledge of my having made such request. I now testify in the fear of God, that every question which I had thus lodged in the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth, were answered to my full and entire satisfaction. I desired it for a testimony of Joseph's inspiration. And I to this day consider it to be an evidence which I cannot refute” (*Ensign of Liberty, of the Church of Christ*, 61). The fact the McLellin wrote this account ten years after his excommunication from the Church lends credibility to its truth.

Somewhat later, he began to evidence a basic flaw in his spiritual fabric while attending another conference held in early November in Hiram, Ohio. At that

conference, he voiced his doubts about the divine authenticity of section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants (see the supplemental article *A Brief History of the Evolution of Our Present-day Doctrine and Covenants*).

He would later be chosen to be one of the twelve Apostles at the organization of that quorum, and he was ordained to that office on February 15, 1835. With the Quorum of the Twelve in the spring and summer of 1835, he went east on a mission and baptized five converts. While on this mission, he wrote a letter back to Kirtland censuring the church Presidency, and for this he was disfellowshipped. However, on returning to Kirtland in September, he confessed to the council of the First Presidency, was forgiven, and he was returned to full fellowship.

In May 1838, he came before a bishop's court in Far West where he stated that he had no confidence in the Presidency of the Church. Consequently, he had stopped praying and keeping the commandments, and he had indulged himself in his sinful lusts. He was excommunicated for unbelief and apostasy. After his excommunication, he tried to establish a church on his own that he might be its head, but he had no success. He took an active part with the mob in Missouri in robbing and driving the saints. While Joseph and others were being held prisoner in Richmond, Missouri, during their trial, McLellin, who was a "large and active man," went to the sheriff and asked for permission to flog the Prophet. Permission was granted on condition that Joseph would fight. The sheriff made this request known to Joseph, who consented to fight if his irons were removed. McLellin then refused to fight unless he could have a club—to which Joseph readily agreed. But the sheriff would not allow them to fight on such unequal terms. While Joseph was in Liberty Jail, McLellin and others robbed Joseph's house and stable of considerable property.

Heber C. Kimball's condemnation of McLellin, after the latter's excommunication, was chilling. McLellin asked Brother Kimball what he thought of Joseph Smith after all the turmoil that occurred in Missouri. Here is Brother Kimball's reply:

I am more satisfied with him a hundred fold than ever I was before, for I see you in the very position that he foretold you would be in: a Judas to betray your brethren, if you did not forsake your adultery, fornication, lying, and abominations. Where are you? What are you about? You and Hinkle, and scores of others? Have you not betrayed Joseph and his brethren into the hands of the mob, as Judas did Jesus? Yes, verily, you have. I tell you Mormonism is true, and Joseph is a true prophet of the living God, and you with all others that turn therefrom will be damned and go to hell, and Judas will rule over you (*Heber C. Kimball Journal*, Book 94C, 88).

McLellin later adopted the profession of medicine. He finally died in obscurity in Independence, Missouri, at about the age of 77.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto my servant William E. McLellin—Blessed are you, inasmuch as you have turned away from your iniquities, and have received

my truths, saith the Lord your Redeemer, the Savior of the world, even of as many as believe on my name.

verse 1 “you have turned away from your iniquities” At this time the twenty-five-year-old McLellan is a childless widower. There is no reason to suspect that he is guilty of sins which are in any way out of the ordinary.

2 Verily I say unto you, blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel, sent forth unto the children of men, that they might have life and be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days, as it was written by the prophets and apostles in days of old.

verse 2 “mine everlasting covenant” This phrase refers to all of the individual gospel doctrines (including all those in the Book of Mormon) and ordinances (covenants) then available to the saints—mainly repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

“even the fulness of my gospel” Though additional ordinances (covenants) will yet be revealed, William E. McLellan, had received sufficient for exaltation in the celestial heaven were he to remain faithful—the fulness of the gospel.

3 Verily I say unto you, my servant William, that you are clean, but not all; repent, therefore, of those things which are not pleasing in my sight, saith the Lord, for the Lord will show them unto you.

verse 3 “you are clean, but not all” William McLellan had been recently baptized. Was he not therefore entirely clean—entirely cleansed of his sins? There are a couple of important concepts to note here.

First, the Lord forgives our sins at baptism when we truly exercise our faith and when we are sincerely repentant prior to our baptism (Mosiah 18:8-10; D&C 20:37). Hence we might argue that Brother McLellan might not have been completely repentant. While many new converts may have a sincere attitude of repentance, is there any individual who is actually fully and perfectly repentant in absolute terms? The obvious answer is no. Any individual who is perfectly repentant would remain sinless after baptism, and that is, of course, essentially impossible. The most important requirement for the repentance that precedes baptism, and the best we can hope for in any individual, is that the baptismal candidate is determined to begin, at baptism, to continually diligently strive to be obedient. As long as the individual continues to truly strive to be obedient, even though he cannot be absolutely obedient, the Lord is willing to extend the blessings of the atonement to us and repeatedly cleanse us of our sins. We may then be classified, according to scripture, as being “perfect” (Moroni 10:32-33).

Second, it is true that the Lord wipes the slate clean at the moment of baptism, but how long does complete cleansing last? Likely only a few minutes pass before the individual has sinful thoughts and is guilty of sinful words or actions. But this should not

be discouraging to anyone. As mortals we all share the universal tendency to have to keep constant watch on our thoughts, words, and actions. Again, the vital requirement is that we are constantly and diligently striving to change and obey. Then, in spite of our imperfections and frequent falterings, the Lord repeatedly forgives us of our sins.

In the specific case of William E. McLellin, it seems likely however that the Lord knew that he had spiritual flaws which will soon prove to be seriously problematic.

4 And now, verily, I, the Lord, will show unto you what I will concerning you, or what is my will concerning you.

5 Behold, verily I say unto you, that it is my will that you should proclaim my gospel from land to land, and from city to city, yea, in those regions round about where it has not been proclaimed.

verse 5 “you should proclaim my gospel” William McLellin was called on a mission to those areas around Kirtland that had not been covered by previous missionaries.

6 Tarry not many days in this place; go not up unto the land of Zion as yet; but inasmuch as you can send, send; otherwise, think not of thy property.

verse 6 “go not up unto the land of Zion” Like most of the Ohio members, McLellin was concerned about emigrating to Zion. Many of the saints in Kirtland were anxious to go there, and some needed to be restrained. McLellin was to send what money he could to Zion and was not to worry about his possessions—apparently he owned no land.

7 Go unto the eastern lands, bear testimony in every place, unto every people and in their synagogues, reasoning with the people.

verse 7 “Go unto the eastern lands” William McLellin and Samuel Smith traveled and preached in eastern Ohio for six weeks before William got sick and returned to Hiram and Kirtland without his companion. The commandment for McLellin to go into the eastern lands was revoked by the Lord on January 25, 1832, a month after his return to Hiram (see D&C 75:6).

“unto every people and in their synagogues” See the commentary for D&C 63:31.

8 Let my servant Samuel H. Smith go with you, and forsake him not, and give him thine instructions; and he that is faithful shall be made strong in every place; and I, the Lord, will go with you.

verse 8 “Let my servant Samuel H. Smith go with you” Samuel was the prophet’s younger brother, the third person baptized in this dispensation, one of the

original six members of the Church, one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, and the first formal missionary of the modern Church.

“give him thine instructions” This verse teaches the responsibility of missionary companions to help each other and to stay together.

“he that is faithful” This phrase refers to the missionaries, not the investigators.

9 Lay your hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. Return not till I, the Lord, shall send you. Be patient in affliction. Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

verse 9 “Lay your hands upon the sick, and they shall recover.” William McLellin’s journal entries for this mission record some remarkable healings.

“Return not till I, the Lord, shall send you.” William McLellin was not given a specific term for his missionary service but was to remain in the field, being patient in his afflictions and not leaving his companion, until the Lord recalled him. McLellin seems to have disregarded all these instructions (see D&C 75:6-8).

10 Seek not to be cumbered. Forsake all unrighteousness. Commit not adultery—a temptation with which thou hast been troubled.

verse 10 “Seek not to be cumbered.” *Cumbered* means hindered or burdened. The command seems to refer to McLellin’s lingering unrighteousness and his temptation to sexual sin.

“Commit not adultery—a temptation with which thou hast been troubled.” The Lord gives a remarkably blunt piece of advice, but William McLellin seems to have accepted it with no attempt to refute the allegations, even in his private journals. Indeed, he seems even to have appreciated the warning, since he wrote that this revelation fully answered the specific questions he had asked the Lord and that he was entirely satisfied with the answers. At his excommunication trial on May 11, 1838, William McLellin stated that after he lost confidence in church leaders, he “quit praying and keeping the commandments of God, and indulged himself in his lustful desires” (*HC*, 3:31).

11 Keep these sayings, for they are true and faithful; and thou shalt magnify thine office, and push many people to Zion with songs of everlasting joy upon their heads.

verse 11 “push many people to Zion” Pushing the people to Zion was the calling of Ephraim (see Deuteronomy 33:17). In an addendum to section 66, as recorded in William McLellin’s journal and in the *Kirtland Revelation Book*, William was identified as a “true descendant” of Ephraim. His Ephraimite descent is reflected in the language used here to call him to the latter-day work. Moreover, his call is not merely to

convert the people to the gospel but to help in Gathering them to Zion. According to his journal, he was particularly concerned with pushing the saints to Zion (see Shipp and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 271-72).

“with songs of everlasting joy upon their heads” Singing always has been and always will be an important form of worship for the saints of God. Perhaps refusing to sing is a sin similar to refusing to pray.

12 Continue in these things even unto the end, and you shall have a crown of eternal life at the right hand of my Father, who is full of grace and truth.

verse 12 “you shall have a crown of eternal life” The crown is variously described as a crown of righteousness (see D&C 25:15), glory (see D&C 58:4), joy (see D&C 52:43), and eternal life (see D&C 20:14). It is the reward of one who overcomes through Christ and who rules in the kingdom of God (see Revelation 3:11, 21). Even with his weaknesses and temptations, if William McLellin would prove faithful to his covenants “unto the end,” he was promised the victor’s crown of eternal life.

13 Verily, thus saith the Lord your God, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

Section 67 The Challenge

During the first twelve days in November 1831, four short conferences of the elders of the Church were held at the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Ohio, where Joseph was living. Please review the pertinent materials in the supplemental article entitled *A Brief History of the Evolution of Our Present-day Doctrine and Covenants*. Keep in mind that at this point in church history, the only General Authorities of the Church were the elders. There was no President, no First Presidency, and no Quorum of the Twelve. Thus, these conferences of the elders were conferences of the General Authorities or the governing body of the Church. The elders present were: Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, William E. McLellin, Orson Hyde, Luke Johnson, and Lyman Johnson.

For some months before the Prophet moved to Hiram, he was inspired by the Lord to prepare his important revelations for publication. As church membership grew, the need to instruct the members increased. During the morning of the first day of conference, the brethren were united in their desire to publish the revelations, and they set the number of copies to be printed at ten thousand. This expression of faith by these brethren brought a revelation now identified as section 1, the Lord's preface to the Book of Commandments.

It is an erroneous thought to believe that the Prophet selected all of the revelations he had received and placed them in the collection which was to become the Book of Commandments. Each of the revelations selected for that volume was placed there because the Prophet considered that it had some value to the Church in regard to its teachings. There are some revelations still in possession of the Church that were not included. Some of these we can readily believe were not included because the inspiration of the Prophet was that it was not necessary, or because some of them had an application that was not intended for publication to an unbelieving world.

The preparation for the printing was soon completed, but this took a great deal of the Prophet's time from the first of November to the twelfth, and in that time there had been held four special conferences. However, the revelations were ready for delivery to Oliver Cowdery and his companion [John Whitmer] by the fifteenth of that month (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:248-49).

During the second session of the conference in the afternoon of November 1st, the Prophet asked the elders what testimony they were willing to attach to these commandments which would shortly be sent to the world "inasmuch as the Lord had bestowed a great blessing upon us in giving commandments and revelations." A number of brethren arose and said they were willing to testify to the world that they knew that they (the commandments) "were of the Lord." However, there were a few of the brethren present who felt perhaps because of their "superior" education, that there

should be some improvement in the language of the revelations. While it was true that there were grammatical errors in the revelations, it would seem that the spirit of the questions raised concerning the language represented a lack of faith in the divine origin of the revelations. Considerable time was spent in discussions concerning the language as it had been given, whereupon the Prophet, after prayer, received section 67 in the presence of the elders assembled.

In this section the Lord issued a challenge to the learned brethren. He invited them to attempt on their own to write a “revelation” equal to “even the least” of the revelations that Joseph had received. If they succeeded, then they were justified in being hesitant to bear testimony of them. If they failed, however, then they would fall under heavenly condemnation if they failed to bear witness of them.

Note that in verse 5 the Lord acknowledges that some of the elders had been critical of Joseph’s language. The Lord actually issues the challenge in verses 6 through 8.

It appears that this revelation silenced the critics, all except one, William E. McLellin, who was given to some boasting in his own strength and evidently lacked the spiritual preparation to know by the Spirit that the revelations were true. He thus accepted the challenge.

Brother McLellin retired to an adjacent room. There are no historical accounts to tell us how long he was gone, but it seems likely that no one slept in anticipation of his return. When he did return, he stood in the doorway and wept with nothing written on his note papers. A pentecostal-type outpouring of the Spirit followed, as all bore testimony of the truthfulness of the revelations.

This still did not solve the problem of some grammatical errors within the revelations. During the next session of the conference the elders voted that Joseph should review them again and make any corrections he felt were needed.

Joseph received by revelation the wording of a special testimony which was to be signed by the elders present and published in the Book of Commandments. It may have been signed by the elders, but it was later published with the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants and signed—not by the elders present at the conferences of November 1831—but rather by those brethren that comprised the original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation. This testimony has been included in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants since 1835.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 67 The Challenge

D&C 67:11-12 No man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God.

1 Behold and hearken, O ye elders of my church, who have assembled yourselves together, whose prayers I have heard, and whose hearts I know, and whose desires have come up before me.

verse 1 “Behold and hearken” The Lord almost seems a bit impatient. He says, “Look and listen.” In effect, he says, “Pay attention.”

2 Behold and lo, mine eyes are upon you, and the heavens and the earth are in mine hands, and the riches of eternity are mine to give.

3 Ye endeavored to believe that ye should receive the blessing which was offered unto you; but behold, verily I say unto you there were fears in your hearts, and verily this is the reason that ye did not receive.

verse 3 Apparently the Lord had promised a special experience to these elders in connection with the Book of Commandments that would be similar to the experiences granted the Three Witnesses and Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon (compare verse 10). Verse 14 suggests that they might have been promised this manifestation by the laying on of hands by the Prophet Joseph. It is also apparent that the elders were expecting it to be a very special manifestation, perhaps even a miraculous one.

From this verse, it is obvious that this special blessing of testimony was not received. The Lord states the reason they did not receive this blessing and informs them that it was because of the “fears in your hearts.” Wouldn’t these elders have been eager and enthusiastic about the possibility of witnessing a miraculous manifestation from the Lord? What would cause them to fear? Why would fear render them unable and perhaps unworthy to have this anticipated experience?

“fears in your hearts . . . the reason that ye did not receive” See the commentary for D&C 63:16. It would seem likely that the presence of fear in the hearts of these elders is the secondary consequence of a more primary cause.

As we sojourn through mortality, it is not possible to avoid all fear. After all, we are, by divine design, living in a telestial world outside the direct presence of our Father in Heaven. The Apostle Paul warned the Philippians that they must: “Work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). All of us who live here on earth and engage its inevitable challenges will be required to overcome our fears and learn to exercise courage and fortitude. Yet, the Lord has provided blessed relief from fear, and he yearns for us to take advantage of his support and succor. His solution to fear is the influence of the Spirit of God.

When a mortal is deprived of the influence of the Lord’s Spirit, this world is a frightening place, and indeed he or she will find much to fear. There is the fear of death (Mormon 6:7; D&C 101:36), the fear of the final judgment and the eternal future (Hebrews 10:27; Mosiah 2:38; Moroni 10:22; Moses 7:1), and even the fear of man (D&C 60:2). The cause of this loss of responsiveness to the Spirit’s influence is sin. It is

the unrighteous and rebellious who will surely “fear and tremble” (D&C 63:6). The individual without the Spirit is inevitably fearful and does not feel God’s presence.

To a righteous, worthy individual, the Spirit communicates to the soul peace, hope, confidence, and the love of God. The individual who is in tune with the Spirit is confident in the presence of God (D&C 121:45). Feeling the reassurance of God’s love, communicated to a righteous man only by the Spirit of God, casts out from the man’s heart all fear (1 John 4:18-19; Moroni 8:16).

In summary, these elders did not have the promised spiritual experience because in their hearts there was uncertainty, doubt, and fear rather than the conviction and testimony that would bring the reassuring witness of the Spirit.

4 And now I, the Lord, give unto you a testimony of the truth of these commandments which are lying before you.

verse 4 Since the elders failed to qualify spiritually for the promised spiritual experience which would have left them with a powerful spiritual witness, the Lord is preparing to offer an alternative solution to their doubts.

“these commandments which are lying before you” The “commandments” are, of course, the revelations received by the Prophet Joseph. Apparently, the collected revelations were there at the conference in manuscript form for these elders to examine.

5 Your eyes have been upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and his language you have known, and his imperfections you have known; and you have sought in your hearts knowledge that you might express beyond his language; this you also know.

verse 5 **“Your eyes have been upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun.”** The elders were aware and have been commenting on Joseph and his limitations. Joseph had less education than several of the elders present, and these others apparently were privately embarrassed at the unpolished, frontier quality of Joseph’s spelling, punctuation, diction, and such. Note that the Lord basically agrees with their estimate of Joseph’s writing skills, but that was not the issue. Some of the elders doubted, on the grounds of Joseph’s unsophisticated language, that all the revelations could truly be from God.

“you have sought in your hearts knowledge that you might express beyond his language” Some of the more educated elders wanted to rewrite or “improve” the revelations to make them sound more impressive to an educated audience. Forgetting that the Lord speaks to humans “in their weakness, after the manner of their language” (D&C 1:24), these elders thought the unlearned language of the Prophet argued against the divine origins of his revelations. They also wanted to say more than Joseph had said—to “express beyond his language.”

Latter-day Saints believe that God speaks through prophets. Prophets are not, however, merely scribes taking down divine dictation in a single, pure, perfect, and timeless form. Rather, the precise wording of a revelation can be influenced by the mind, education, and verbal or literary skills (or lack thereof) of the prophet himself (see D&C 1:24; 1 Corinthians 1:27). Therefore, there is actually no reason why a revelation could not, with a prophet's approval, be edited for spelling and punctuation, so long as such changes do not alter the meaning or intent of the original—that is, “express beyond his [Joseph's] language.” Such editorial changes have been frequently authorized in printed editions of the LDS scriptures.

6 Now, seek ye out of the Book of Commandments, even the least that is among them, and appoint him that is the most wise among you;

verse 6 “the least that is among them” This phrase refers to the least well-written of the revelations in the estimation of the elders present.

“appoint him that is the most wise among you” The Lord obviously inspired the prophet Joseph to write this phrase with a touch of irony, since the elder that was so designated would be obviously not “wise” at all, but rather would be presumptuously challenging and tempting the Lord. By allowing himself to be designated as the “wisest” among the group, William McLellin displayed his foolish lack of sensitivity and common sense.

7 Or, if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true;

verse 7 “if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it” Here is the essence of the Lord's challenge. Joseph was an uneducated man, and many of the elders were educated. So if Joseph's revelations were not from God, then it should be a simple matter for the elders to write one that sounded as good—to create a “revelation” with the same inspirational quality which they all acknowledged in Joseph's revelations. If they could indeed create such a revelation, then they were entitled to doubt. It should be noted that the challenge proposed here by the Lord was not an open ended one. That is, it was not a challenge offered to the world in all time and in all places. It was for those elders gathered at that place and at that particular time. The result of the challenge is already known to the reader.

8 But if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true.

verse 8 On the other hand, a failure to produce a satisfactory “revelation” would obligate the elders to bear testimony to the divinity of Joseph's revelations.

Immediately following the vain attempt of William McLellin, Joseph received by revelation the following document, which was then signed by the elders present:

The testimony of the witnesses to the book of the Lord's commandments, which He gave to His Church through Joseph Smith, Jun., who was appointed by the voice of the Church for this purpose; we therefore feel willing to bear testimony to all the world of mankind, to every creature upon the face of all the earth and upon the islands of the sea, that the Lord has borne record to our soul, through the Holy Ghost, shed forth upon us, that these commandments were given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for all men, and are verily true. We give this testimony unto the world, the Lord being our helper; and it is through the grace of God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, that we are permitted to have this privilege of bearing this testimony unto the world, that the children of men may be profited thereby.

A slightly revised version of this testimony, signed by the original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, is included at the beginning of the present edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

9 For ye know that there is no unrighteousness in them, and that which is righteous cometh down from above, from the Father of lights.

verse 9 “Father of lights” This expression is also found in James 1:17. The Father and the Son are the source of divine “light” in the universe (see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15, *The Concept Light*).

10 And again, verily I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am—not with the carnal neither natural mind, but with the spiritual.

verse 10 “you shall see me” This is the wonderful promise of the Second Comforter repeated again to disciples in this last dispensation (see John 14:12-17; D&C 93:1), though not every appearance of Christ necessarily bestows the Second Comforter. We thus learn that the astounding privilege of seeing the Savior in open vision is not reserved for prophets only, but is available to any man willing to pay the price required in personal righteousness (see D&C 50:45-46; 88:68-69; 93:1; 130:3). The Prophet Joseph wrote:

The other Comforter spoken of is a subject of great interest, and perhaps understood by few of this generation. After a person hath faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands,) which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted, etc. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his

privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is recorded in the testimony of St. John, in the 14th chapter, from the 12th to the 27th verses . . . [verses 16, 17, 18, 21, 23]

Now, what is this other Comforter? It is no more or less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even he will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him; and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the First Born (*TPJS*, 150-51).

Such a privilege, of course, does not come easily. A high level of personal righteousness and spiritual commitment is required.

Joseph Fielding Smith commented upon the above quotation by the Prophet Joseph:

Joseph Smith speaks of two Comforters: the first is the Holy Ghost, the second is the Son of God himself. He uses the 14th chapter of John as the basis of his discourse. Verses 16, 17, and 26 definitely refer to the Holy Ghost. They speak of the Spirit of truth which “dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Verses 18, 21, and 23 clearly refer to the Lord himself and his coming to man.

The Holy Spirit of Promise is not the Second Comforter; the Holy Spirit of Promise is the Holy Ghost who places the stamp of approval upon every ordinance that is done righteously, and when covenants are broken, he removes the seal (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1954, 1:55).

“and know that I am” When through faithfulness the veil has been parted and individuals receive the Second Comforter, then they no longer testify of Christ through faith, for their faith has become sure and certain knowledge. According to Joseph Smith, the Second Comforter is the resurrected Savior himself, and an individual who receives this blessing “will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even he will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God” (*TPJS*, 151). After a person receives the Second Comforter, faith in Christ becomes knowledge of Christ. Those who receive the Second Comforter no longer rely primarily upon the witness of others, or upon the witness of the scriptures, or even upon the witness of the Spirit, for they have come to know of themselves through their own experience (compare Ether 3:19).

“not with the carnal, neither natural mind but with the spiritual” At present, we are fallen beings and therefore naturally of the telestial order. It is not possible for what is telestial in nature to interact directly with things of a higher order. In order to interact with celestial beings, we must first be transfigured by the Holy Spirit. In other words, our present, fallen natures must be temporarily raised to a higher state of being by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and partake momentarily of the nature that will be ours in the resurrection.

Ordinarily we associate the phenomenon of transfiguration, and the need for transfiguration, with a mortal being who is blessed to be in the physical presence of a divine celestial being. His or her telestial body must be transfigured or temporarily changed so that it has celestial properties which protect the body from damage resulting from celestial glory (see the commentary for Mosiah 13:5). But the same general principle applies for the communication of celestial or spiritual concepts. The telestial, or “natural” mortal mind, cannot grasp celestial concepts lest that mortal mind be “transfigured” temporarily by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost or lifted to a higher celestial state (1 Corinthians 2:14). Only then can the mind grasp (understand and learn) the celestial or eternal concept. We say that the celestial or eternal concepts are “revealed” to the individual. It is notable that over time, the mind that seeks and receives heavenly revelation becomes less and less telestial and more and more celestial. This is spiritual progress. This is the process of becoming more like God. For further discussion of the phenomenon of transfiguration, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 14, *Transfiguration*.

The distinction made here between “natural” and “spiritual” is not between our bodies and our spirits but rather between our present fallen minds and bodies and our future glorified minds and bodies. This can cause some confusion as we read the scriptures. See, for example, 1 Corinthians 15:44 in which the term *natural body* refers to the fallen telestial mortal body, and the term *spiritual body* refers to glorified physical bodies. It is a common error of the orthodox Christian world that “spiritual” must mean “nonphysical.”

11 For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God.

verse 11 The phrase “in the flesh” means in an unprotected mortal or telestial condition. God possesses a celestial glory, and all humans from the fall of Adam and Eve to the present have been of the telestial order. In order for the two to interact, either God must veil his glory or humans must be temporarily raised to a more-than-human glory. This latter phenomenon may be referred to as being quickened or transfigured. This was the experience of all the prophets who have seen God (Moses 1:2, 11, 14).

12 Neither can any natural man abide the presence of God, neither after the carnal mind.

verses 11-12 What missionary hasn't encountered an investigator who has brought up John 1:18 or 1 John 4:12: "no man hath seen God at any time." These verses provide us with the modern-day scriptural explanation of these troublesome passages.

13 Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected.

verse 13 "Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels" Though the elders present on this occasion were good men devoted to the kingdom, they were not sufficiently stripped of jealousy, fear, and pride to be transfigured and receive the second Comforter. Indeed, some were not ready at that time for the appearance of an angel, though at least two of them had already enjoyed this blessing—Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer.

"continue in patience until ye are perfected" The term *perfected* here does not refer to philosophical perfection or absolute unimprovability. This would be an impossible interpretation, given the LDS belief in eternal progression or enlargement. Rather, the individual who has proved his spiritual mettle through continuous unflinching striving to overcome his natural self and obey the commandments, over time, is eventually considered by the Lord to be perfect (Moroni 10:32-33).

14 Let not your minds turn back; and when ye are worthy, in mine own due time, ye shall see and know that which was conferred upon you by the hands of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. Amen.

verse 14 "Let not your minds turn back" That is, don't dwell on the opportunity that was lost here. Rather, look forward to the eventual reception of the promised blessing.

"ye shall see and know that which was conferred upon you by the hands of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun." The reference to the conferral of a blessing by the laying on of Joseph's hands may be figurative, or it may indicate that the elders had received a blessing or some other ministrations from the Prophet in preparation for the offered experience. It should not be assumed that all the elders present on this day had doubts. After all, as witnesses of the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer had conversed with angels, and John Whitmer and Peter Whitmer Jr. had seen and handled the gold plates.

Character Vignette

Orson Hyde

He was nearly a year older than the Prophet, having been born on January 8, 1805, in Connecticut. His father served in the United States Army in the War of 1812. He had eight brothers and sisters. His mother died when Orson was only seven years old, and the family was scattered. Orson came to live with a man named Nathan Wheeler. When Orson was fourteen years old, Wheeler moved with his family to the area of Kirtland, Ohio. After trying several different occupations, Orson finally went to work as a clerk in the Gilbert and Whitney store.

In 1827 Orson converted to the Methodist faith. About this same time he heard that a "golden Bible" had been dug out of a rock in New York, and he expressed a curiosity if not an interest in it. A short time later, he heard the Campbellite minister Sidney Rigdon preach, and he was baptized into the Campbellite faith. He became a student of theology with a view toward becoming a minister for the Campbellites. In 1830 he was made a pastor over two congregations of Campbellites in Ohio. In the fall of 1830 he heard the missionaries preach as they traveled toward Missouri to preach to the Lamanites. He initially opposed the message of the restored gospel, but eventually, being reproved by the Spirit in his private thoughts, he suspended his opposition and prayerfully inquired further. He was finally baptized the first Sunday in October 1831 by his friend Sidney Rigdon.

On February 15, 1835, at Kirtland he was ordained an Apostle. Subsequently he filled many missions in the states, and in 1837 he went to England with other church leaders. Being partly of Jewish extraction, Elder Hyde was sent to Palestine to dedicate that land for the return of the Jews. He actually departed for this mission in 1840. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean, traveled through England and Germany, visited Constantinople, Cairo, and Alexandria, and finally reached Jerusalem. On Sunday morning, October 24, 1841, he ascended the Mount of Olives, built an altar, and so dedicated the land.

He died at age 73 in Spring City, Utah, in Sanpete County, November 28, 1878.

Section 68 Bishops. Teach. Scripture.

On November 1, 1831, Joseph Smith had convened a special group of four short conferences in Hiram, Ohio, of ten leading elders to discuss publication of his collected revelations in a book to be called the Book of Commandments. At the end of the first two days of this conference, four brethren—Orson Hyde, Luke Johnson, Lyman Johnson, and William E. McLellin—came to Joseph and were desirous “to know the mind of the Lord concerning themselves.” Joseph inquired of the Lord and received what is now section 68. Though this revelation was given at the specific request of these brethren, it was not intended for them alone, but for the guidance of all officers and members of the Church.

There are three important themes in section 68, thus the explanation for the peculiar “title” assigned to it. These three major themes are:

1. Law of the office of the bishop (verses 14-24). If a man could be found who fulfilled all of the following requirements, then he would have the right to be a bishop. The requirements are: (1) He is a literal descendant of Aaron as attested to by revelation or patriarchal blessing. (2) He is a firstborn son. (3) He desires the office. (4) He is worthy of the office. (5) He is called to the office and ordained by the First Presidency. President Joseph Fielding Smith pointed out that these provisions applied only to the office of presiding bishop of the Church. “It [this set of provisions] has no reference whatever to bishops of wards” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:92).

Not only would this man have the right to be bishop, but he could serve without counselors, and would not need to hold the Melchizedek priesthood. Aaron in his lifetime was given the keys of presiding over the Aaronic priesthood (Exodus 29:4-9). Since no one in the Church has yet been found who meets these qualifications, today a man must be a high priest in the Melchizedek priesthood to serve as bishop or presiding bishop (verse 15).

2. Teach the gospel to your children (verse 25-32). In section 68, the Lord placed directly upon the parents the responsibility of teaching their children faith in Christ, the doctrines of repentance and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, prayer, and Sabbath day observance all before they reach the age of eight years. Parents are also to teach them to walk uprightly before the Lord (verse 28) and how to work (verse 30). It is a sin not to do so (verse 25).

At the time this revelation was given in November 1831, there was no First Presidency in the Church, and the concept of the “stakes of Zion” was not fully developed. Yet these concepts appear in section 68. Section 68 was not published until the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. As more was revealed between 1831 and 1835, this revelation was edited and augmented to harmonize with the increased understanding gained during those years. Actually the same is true of those

verses which apply to the office of bishop (verses 16-21). These verses were not in the original revelation but were added some time before 1835.

3. Scripture (verse 4). Section 68 provides a unique definition of the concept of “scripture.” When a person who is called by the Lord and is in the service of the Lord speaks, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, what that person says is scripture. It is the will, mind, word, and voice of the Lord and the power of God unto salvation (verse 4). This type of scripture might be referred to as “oral scripture.” In the Church we have evolved three uses of the term “scripture”:

(1) canonized scripture—That material accepted by a group as a spiritual guide or standard of behavior or teaching.

(2) written scripture—When a prophet writes anything under the direction of the Holy Ghost, it may be considered scripture.

(3) oral scripture—Material spoken, preached, or taught by a servant of the Lord under the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 68:3-4 And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

D&C 68:25 Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion and teach them not . . . the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

1 My servant, Orson Hyde, was called by his ordination to proclaim the everlasting gospel, by the Spirit of the living God, from people to people, and from land to land, in the congregations of the wicked, in their synagogues, reasoning with and expounding all scriptures unto them.

verse 1 “Orson Hyde” See the character vignette for Orson Hyde at the end of section 67. At the time Joseph received section 68, Orson Hyde had been a member of the Church only one month; he had been a high priest for only one week. As a new member bearing the responsibilities of the high priesthood, Orson wanted to know the Lord’s will concerning him.

“called by his ordination to proclaim the everlasting gospel” The prophecy pronounced in Orson’s priesthood ordination was literally fulfilled. In 1832 Orson and Samuel H. Smith traveled in the states of New York, Massachusetts, Maine, and Rhode, island, a total distance of some 2,000 miles, on foot. In 1837 he was sent to England. His mission in Jerusalem in 1840-41 is mentioned above.

“congregations of the wicked” See the commentary for D&C 60:8.

2 And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth—

verse 2 “this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood” The word *ensample* is an old spelling for example. This phrase indicates that the pattern or model of missionary work outlined in verse 1, is applicable to all who are called to serve a mission.

“unto this priesthood” This phrase refers to the office of high priest, to which Orson and several other elders had been ordained a week earlier. At this time the office of high priest was the highest office in the Church, because the offices of general authorities as we understand them were established later. Thus, verses 4-6 are not directed to all Melchizedek Priesthood holders but to the presiding high priesthood of the Church. Today the promises of verses 4-6 apply primarily to the general authorities of the Church, but they may also be extended to high priests who preside over wards, stakes, missions, and such when they are acting within the boundaries of their stewardships.

Thus, this verse explains that the call of Orson Hyde is the example for all of those who, like Brother Hyde, have been ordained as high priests. Just as he “was called by his ordination to proclaim the everlasting gospel, by the Spirit of the living God” (verse 1), so are other high priests called by their ordination to “speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (verse 3).

3 And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

verse 3 See the commentary for verse 2.

verses 4-6 The promises in these verses are give exclusively to the leaders of the Church at that time, the high priests.

4 And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

verse 4 See the introductory commentary for this section, specifically the section on “scripture.”

“whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture” Elder J. Reuben Clark, Jr. asked and answered an important question concerning this phrase:

The question is, how shall we know then the things they [the brethren] have spoken were said as they were “moved upon by the Holy Ghost”? I have given some thought to this question, and the answer thereto so far as I can determine, is: We can

tell when the speakers are “moved upon by the Holy Ghost” only when we, ourselves, are “moved upon by the Holy Ghost.” In a way this completely shifts the responsibility from them to us to determine when they so speak (“When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?” 7).

5 Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants.

6 Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come.

verse 6 “Wherefore, be of good cheer” Faithful and obedient members of the Church are entitled to, as an earned gift of the Spirit, feelings of peace, comfort, and joy. This may be referred to as the gift of hope and is the reassurance that all will be well in the eternities. When faithful members are not cheerful and confident of their standing before God, something is wrong. Something important has been misunderstood, neglected, ignored, disobeyed, or, perhaps, was just never learned. A correct understanding of the gospel by faithful members brings joy, peace, confidence, and hope.

verses 7-8 Unlike the promises of verses 4-6, which were given to high priests exclusively, the injunction of verses 7-8 is given to every faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

7 This is the word of the Lord unto you, my servant Orson Hyde, and also unto my servant Luke Johnson, and unto my servant Lyman Johnson, and unto my servant William E. McLellin, and unto all the faithful elders of my church—

verse 7 “Orson Hyde” See the Character Vignette on Orson Hyde at the end of section 67.

“Luke Johnson, and . . . Lyman Johnson” See the Character Vignette on John Johnson at the end of section 63.

“William E. McLellin” See the introductory commentary for section 66.

8 Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, acting in the authority which I have given you, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

verse 8 “Go ye into all the world” Every faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holder must preach the gospel somewhere, in some manner, to someone. President Spencer W. Kimball has stated: “The question is asked: Should every young man fill a mission? And the answer of the Church is yes, and the answer of the Lord is yes. Enlarging this answer we say: Certainly every male member of the Church should fill a mission, like he should pay his tithing, like he should attend his meetings, like he should

keep his life clean and free from the ugliness of the world and plan a celestial marriage in the temple of the Lord. . . . Every LDS male who is worthy and able should fill a mission” (*Ensign*, May 1974, 87).

9 And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.

10 And he that believeth shall be blest with signs following, even as it is written.

verse 1 “even as it is written” Verses 8-10 refer back to the charge of the resurrected Christ to his apostles recorded in Mark 16:15-18 (see also Matthew 28:19-20).

11 And unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man;

verse 11 The Lord seldom gives time references. On the other hand, the Lord has promised to keep his saints informed. Here he promises them, “Unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man” (D&C 68:11), noting that, though the coming of the Lord will overtake the world as a thief in the night, “that day shall not over take you as a thief” (D&C 106:4-5). The caveat, however, is that the saints must pay attention. For a discussion of the “signs of the times” and the “signs of the coming of the Son of Man,” see three chapters in volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*: chapter 24, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Introduction*, chapter 25, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Warn*, and chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

12 And of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life. Amen.

verse 12 “of as many as the Father shall bear record” There are several other scriptural phrases similar to this one. Let us consider a few: John 6:37—“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” John 6:44—“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” John 10:29—“My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” John 17:11—“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” When taken literally, these phrases all suggest that in some way the Father has given to the Son all of those of his children who will eventually become the Son’s “people” or “children” and will be eventually exalted. These statements, rather than being intended to be literal, apparently are simply figurative statements, by the Son, of profound deference to his Father. He has taught on more than one occasion that he came to earth not to do his own will, but his Father’s

(see, for example, John 6:38; compare John 5:19). He also taught that that the doctrine he preaches is not his, but his Father's (John 7:16; 3 Nephi 11:32-34).

“to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life” To the priesthood holders of the Lord's earthly Church, the Lord will eventually give the power to seal up other mortals to eternal life, to render their calling and elections sure. Please review the discussion of the sealing power in the commentary for Helaman 10:7. The fulness of this power and its keys will not be given to Joseph by the ancient prophet Elijah, however, until April 3, 1836 in the temple at Kirtland (see section 110).

“Amen” With this closure, the Lord indicates that his specific responses to Orson Hyde and the three high priests inquiring of him was at an end. What follows in verses 13-35 are items of additional instruction for the entire Church.

13 And now, concerning the items in addition to the covenants and commandments, they are these—

14 There remain hereafter, in the due time of the Lord, other bishops to be set apart unto the church, to minister even according to the first;

verse 14 “There remain hereafter . . . other bishops to be set apart unto the church” At the time of this revelation, Edward Partridge, who was living in Missouri, was the only bishop in the Church. The growth of the Church made ordination of other bishops for specific areas a logistical necessity. One month after this revelation, Newell K. Whitney will be ordained the bishop for Kirtland (see D&C 72:2, 8). Neither of these brethren was the Presiding Bishop in the modern sense, since neither presided over the other. Rather, they were both general bishops each presiding over a specific geographical area of the Church—Bishop Partridge in the West and Bishop Whitney in the East.

15 Wherefore they shall be high priests who are worthy, and they shall be appointed by the First Presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood, except they be literal descendants of Aaron.

verse 15 “Wherefore they shall be high priests” The office of bishop is an office in the Aaronic Priesthood, together with those of deacon, teacher, and priest. When the Aaronic Priesthood was established anciently, however, the right to preside over that priesthood, as a bishop now does, was designated as a privilege of lineage (see Exodus 28:1; 29:9, 29). Because worthy Levites of the family of Aaron, whose right it was to preside over the Aaronic Priesthood, were not available to the early Church in this dispensation, the Lord directed that high priests should function in that office in their place. Today, a bishop actually presides over the Aaronic Priesthood in his ward and is also the presiding high priest in his ward.

“they shall be appointed by the First Presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood” In 1831, when this revelation was first given, there was no First

Presidency, and the original text of the revelation read “appointed by a conference of high priests,” in other words, by the leadership of the Church as it was then loosely organized. After the First Presidency was organized in 1833, the reading of verse 15 was changed to use the correct terminology. This is also true of verses 22-23. D&C 107:59-100 gives additional information about the offices of bishop and Presiding Bishop.

verses 16-21 Under the direction of Joseph Smith, these verses were first added to the text of section 68 in *The Evening and the Morning Star* reprinted at Kirtland in June 1835, and also in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

16 And if they be literal descendants of Aaron they have a legal right to the bishopric, if they are the firstborn among the sons of Aaron;

verse 16 President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

The office of Presiding Bishop of the Church is the same as the office which was held by Aaron. It is the highest office, holding the presidency in the Aaronic Priesthood. It was this office which came to John the Baptist, and it was by virtue of the fact that he held the keys of this power and ministry that he was sent to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to restore that priesthood, May 15, 1829. . . . Should it be shown by revelation that there is one who is the “firstborn among the sons of Aaron,” and thus entitled by the birthright to this presidency, he could “claim” his “anointing” and the right to that office in the Church (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:259).

17 For the firstborn holds the right of the presidency over this priesthood, and the keys or authority of the same.

18 No man has a legal right to this office, to hold the keys of this priesthood, except he be a literal descendant and the firstborn of Aaron.

19 But, as a high priest of the Melchizedek Priesthood has authority to officiate in all the lesser offices he may officiate in the office of bishop when no literal descendant of Aaron can be found, provided he is called and set apart and ordained unto this power, under the hands of the First Presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

20 And a literal descendant of Aaron, also, must be designated by this Presidency, and found worthy, and anointed, and ordained under the hands of this Presidency, otherwise they are not legally authorized to officiate in their priesthood.

verse 20 “must be designated by this Presidency” Joseph Fielding Smith also wrote:

The person spoken of in the revelations as having the right by lineage to the bishopric is the one who is the firstborn. By virtue of his birth he is entitled to hold “the

keys or authority of the same.” This has reference only to the one who presides over the Aaronic Priesthood. It has no reference whatever to bishops of wards. Further, such a one must be designated by the First Presidency of the Church and receive his anointing and ordination under their hands. The revelation comes from the Presidency, not from the patriarch, to establish a claim to the right to preside in this office. In the absence of knowledge concerning such a descendant, any high priest, chosen by the Presidency, may hold the office of Presiding Bishop and serve with counselors (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:92).

21 But, by virtue of the decree concerning their right of the priesthood descending from father to son, they may claim their anointing if at any time they can prove their lineage, or do ascertain it by revelation from the Lord under the hands of the above named Presidency.

22 And again, no bishop or high priest who shall be set apart for this ministry shall be tried or condemned for any crime, save it be before the First Presidency of the church;

23 And inasmuch as he is found guilty before this Presidency, by testimony that cannot be impeached, he shall be condemned;

24 And if he repent he shall be forgiven, according to the covenants and commandments of the church.

verses 22-24 The church discipline guidelines set forth in these two verses apply only to the general bishops Partridge and Whitney, and later to Presiding Bishops, because their stewardships did and do not fall under the control of local church authorities.

If the Presiding Bishop of the Church is guilty of transgression, in which “court” or disciplinary council is he tried? In case of the transgression of the presiding bishop of the Church, he could not be tried by a high council in the stake in which he lives, but he would have to be tried by [the court of] the First Presidency of the Church. The reason for this is that he . . . is not under the jurisdiction of any ward or stake in this capacity. This order given for the trial of the presiding bishop does not apply to a local bishop in a ward. Local ward bishops may be disciplined by the local authorities under whose jurisdiction they operate—usually a stake president. Additional information on this subject is found in D&C 107:15-17, 68-69, which clearly illustrates that the office referred to is that of a general or Presiding Bishop and not that of a local ward bishop.

25 And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

verse 25 Parents—not teachers, bishops, home teachers, or anyone else but parents—bear the primary obligation of teaching their children the basics of the gospel and seeing that they are baptized at the proper time, teaching them to pray, and teaching them to behave properly and to walk uprightly. The Church, through its auxiliaries and programs, will assist in many of these obligations, but the primary responsibility still rests with parents.

“the sin be upon the heads of the parents” The key word in this phrase is *sin*. It is not plural but singular, and it refers not to the sins children may subsequently commit but to the sin of the parents’ not teaching them better. Some parents, due to their misunderstanding of this verse, try to take responsibility upon themselves for the sins of their children, and shield their children from blame by doing so. But this is not possible. In order to sin at all one must have knowledge and understanding, and even poorly raised children know for the most part what they should and should not do. Parents will be held accountable for not teaching their children the gospel, but parents cannot take the blame for the sins of their children, nor can they protect them from suffering the consequences of those sins.

26 For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized.

verse 26 “this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion” In verse 25, the Lord is not expressing a mere hope or suggestion; rather, he is giving a law or a commandment.

27 And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands.

verse 27 “when eight years old” The significant doctrinal statement concerning the age of accountability of children (D&C 68:25, 27) was given by revelation in November of 1831. This, however, was not the first time in our dispensation where such information was made known. While translating Genesis 17 (sometime between February and April 1831), Joseph Smith recorded the following regarding the Abrahamic covenant and the token of circumcision:

And I will establish a covenant of circumcision with thee, and it shall be my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations; that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old (JST, Genesis 17:11).

Thus we see that the concept of an age of accountability of children was known by the Prophet Joseph through his work of Bible translation some six to nine months before section 68 was received.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote of the concept of accountability:

Accountability does not burst full-bloom upon a child at any given moment in his life. Children become accountable gradually, over a number of years. Becoming accountable is a process, not a goal to be attained when a specified number of years, days, and hours have elapsed. . . . There comes a time, however, when accountability is real and actual and sin is attributed in the lives of those who develop normally. It is eight years of age, the age of baptism (“Salvation of Little Children,” 6).

28 And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

verse 28 “they shall also teach their children . . . to walk uprightly before the Lord” The obligation is not just to teach children to understand intellectually what proper behavior is. The full obligation is to teach them to behave properly. In other words, parents in Zion must discipline their children. They must teach them what proper behavior is, and then they must do all they appropriately can to see that their children do, indeed, behave.

29 And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

verse 29 “observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy” See D&C 59:9-12 and its commentary.

30 And the inhabitants of Zion also shall remember their labors, inasmuch as they are appointed to labor, in all faithfulness; for the idler shall be had in remembrance before the Lord.

verse 30 “the inhabitants of Zion also shall remember their labors” One great obstacle to establishing Zion is the human tendency to do less than our best in the belief that others will make up for our laziness. In D&C 42:42 the Lord stated the principle of Zion that the idler would “not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer.”

This may be termed the “entitlement mentality.” It would seem that once the possibility of obtaining something for nothing has been experienced, there is a tendency to become addicted to and dependent on the system that so provides. Elder David B. Haight warned about the ability of the government welfare system to produce idleness:

What has this monstrous thing called government welfare done to the people? Today we have second- and third-generation welfare recipients. Millions have learned how to live off the government. Children are growing up without knowing the value and the dignity of work. The government has succeeded in doing what the church welfare program seeks to prevent. . . .

But church members are not immune to the perils of the government dole. There is evidence that some of our people are receiving something for nothing from the government. The fact that this condition exists in the Church highlights the need for our

members to be knowledgeable about church welfare principles. President Kimball has stated: “No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able, will voluntarily shift the burden of his own or his family’s well-being to someone else” (*Ensign*, May 1978, 86) (*CR*, October 1978, 86).

We thus learn that entitlement mentality is a sin.

31 Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness.

32 These things ought not to be, and must be done away from among them; wherefore, let my servant Oliver Cowdery carry these sayings unto the land of Zion.

verse 32 “These things ought not to be” Such sins are below the celestial standard, and “And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself” (D&C 105:5).

33 And a commandment I give unto them—that he that observeth not his prayers before the Lord in the season thereof, let him be had in remembrance before the judge of my people.

verse 33 “in the season thereof” The Lord commands that we should pray at the appropriate times (“in the season thereof”) and if we neglect our prayers, the common judge, the ward bishop, should know. These appropriate times are not spelled out exactly for us, but they probably ought to include daily personal prayers, daily family prayers, and regular prayers of thanks for specific blessings. To neglect our prayers at their proper times, perhaps especially our prayers of thanks, is an offense to God (D&C 59:21).

34 These sayings are true and faithful; wherefore, transgress them not, neither take therefrom.

verse 34 “These sayings are true and faithful” One meaning of the adjective *faithful* is that which can be trusted or relied upon.

35 Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, and I come quickly. Amen.

verse 35 “I am Alpha and Omega” See the commentary on D&C 19:1.

Sections 69 and 70 Book of Commandments

The history written by the Prophet Joseph states that four special conferences were held from the first through the twelfth of November, 1831, in Hiram, Ohio. It was decided on November 1, the first day of the first conference, that Oliver Cowdery would carry a copy of the revelations to Jackson County, Missouri, to be printed. Between sessions on that day, Joseph Smith received section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants, “The Lord’s Preface, a Voice of Warning.” Still later in the day, Joseph received section 67, and some time on that same day or early the next day, November 2, the testimony of the elders to be published with the Book of Commandments was also received by revelation. On November 2, Joseph received section 68 after inquiring of the Lord in behalf of Orson Hyde and three others. On November 3, Joseph received an important revelation that was to complement the “preface,” or section 1. This was section 133, the “appendix” to the Book of Commandments. The reader may wish to study section 133 at this point, or both sections 1 and 133 to appreciate them in proper chronological order.

Some time between November 3 and 12, during the series of special conferences held at the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Joseph also received section 69, which directed John Whitmer to be a traveling companion for Oliver Cowdery. Joseph Smith stated, “The Book of Commandments and Revelations was to be dedicated by prayer to the service of Almighty God by me; and after I had done this, I inquired of the Lord concerning these things, and received the following” (*HC*, 1:234)—section 69.

On the last day of the series of conferences held between November 1 and 12 in Hiram, the Prophet received the revelation now numbered as section 70. He recorded these events as follows: “My time was occupied closely in reviewing the commandments and setting in conference, for nearly two weeks; for from the first to the twelfth of November we held four special conferences. In the last, which was held at Brother Johnson’s, in Hiram, after deliberate consideration, in consequence of the book of revelations, now to be printed, being the foundation of the Church in these last days, and a benefit to the world, showing that the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom of our Savior are again entrusted to man; and the riches of eternity within the compass of those who are willing to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God—therefore the conference voted that they prize the revelations to be worth to the Church the riches of the whole earth, speaking temporally. The great benefits to the world which result from the Book of Mormon and the revelations which the Lord has seen fit in his infinite wisdom to grant unto us for our salvation, and for the salvation of all that will believe, were duly appreciated; and in answer to an inquiry, I received the following [section 70]” (*HC*, 1:235-36).

The business of the conference on November 12 had included a proposal to provide compensation to the Prophet Joseph and to his scribes Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, John Whitmer, and Sidney Rigdon for their labors and sacrifices in receiving, writing, copying, and preparing the revelations of God for the Church. This compensation would come out of any proceeds from the sale of the revelations. The conference voted to sustain this proposal, and Joseph's subsequent inquiry of the Lord appears to have been designed to secure divine approval for what the conference had done. That approval was received as section 70.

This revelation established what was essentially the first scripture committee of the Church. It created a joint stewardship over the modern scriptures, which included the Prophet, his scribes, and the church printer, W. W. Phelps. This joint stewardship or oversight committee was responsible for any plans or decisions involving the revelations. They were responsible for publishing them to the world, and they were to be compensated for their labors from whatever profits the sale of copies generated. This joint stewardship and financial partnership, organized upon the principles of the law of consecration, soon came to be known as the Literary Firm, a term reflecting its stewardship over the media concerns of the Church (see Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 112-17).

Section 69

1 Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God, for my servant Oliver Cowdery's sake. It is not wisdom in me that he should be entrusted with the commandments and the moneys which he shall carry unto the land of Zion, except one go with him who will be true and faithful.

verse 1 "the commandments and the moneys" Oliver was carrying the manuscript of the Book of Commandments that was to be published in Missouri and also the funds collected from the saints in Ohio and elsewhere for purchasing lands in Jackson County. The manuscript was to be delivered to W. W. Phelps, the church printer, and the money was to be delivered to Bishop Edward Partridge.

2 Wherefore, I, the Lord, will that my servant, John Whitmer, should go with my servant Oliver Cowdery;

verses 1-2 It should not be taken from verse 1 that Oliver was untrustworthy. The fact was that much of the one-thousand mile journey between Hiram and Independence was through frontier country where lawless people and lawlessness prevailed. It was at considerable risk that a person traveled through such country, especially when alone and carrying money. It was wisdom, then, for the safety of Oliver, the money, and the sacred manuscripts, that someone go with him that could function as a "true and faithful" companion. Hence in verse 2 John Whitmer is

appointed to accompany him (B.H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:268n.)

“John Whitmer” John was one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. He had seen and handled the gold plates and had moved from New York to Ohio in obedience to the command of the Lord. In March 1831, John had been appointed church historian (see section 47). Now he is appointed to travel to Missouri as a companion to Oliver Cowdery. John was not released as church historian at this time, however, and he was to keep a record of the events and continue his history as best he could (see verse 3).

3 And also that he shall continue in writing and making a history of all the important things which he shall observe and know concerning my church;

4 And also that he receive counsel and assistance from my servant Oliver Cowdery and others.

5 And also, my servants who are abroad in the earth should send forth the accounts of their stewardships to the land of Zion;

6 For the land of Zion shall be a seat and a place to receive and do all these things.

verses 5-6 Even though the Prophet lived in Ohio, matters dealing with consecration and stewardship were to be administered from Zion in Jackson County, where Bishop Partridge was still the only bishop in the Church and the only one authorized to receive and disburse under the law of consecration.

7 Nevertheless, let my servant John Whitmer travel many times from place to place, and from church to church, that he may the more easily obtain knowledge—

verse 7 As church historian in an age before electronic communication, John Whitmer was to travel from place to place in the Church learning and recording what he could for future generations.

8 Preaching and expounding, writing, copying, selecting, and obtaining all things which shall be for the good of the church, and for the rising generations that shall grow up on the land of Zion, to possess it from generation to generation, forever and ever. Amen.

verse 8 “Preaching and expounding, writing, copying, selecting, and obtaining” The church historian was not merely to be a clerk or a secretary. John Whitmer’s calling was to bless those whom he visited in his travels by preaching and expounding the gospel, and he was entrusted with selecting and preserving those materials that would bless the whole Church for generations to come.

In the spirit of keeping histories, each of us has the obligation to keep our own journal and personal history. Regarding the need for each church member to keep a journal, President Spencer Kimball counseled:

Your own private journal should record the way you face up to challenges that beset you. Do not suppose life changes so much that your experiences will not be interesting to your posterity. . . . Your own journal, like most others, will tell of problems as old as the world and how you dealt with them. Your journal should contain your true self rather than a picture of you when you are “made up” for a public performance. . . . The truth should be told, but we should not accentuate the negative. . . . Your journal is your autobiography, so it should be kept carefully. You are unique, and there may be incidents in your experience that are more noble and praiseworthy in their way than those recorded in any other life. . . . Your story should be written now while it is fresh and while the true details are available. . . . What could you do better for your children and your children’s children than to record the story of your life, your triumphs over adversity, your recovery after a fall, your progress when all seemed black, your rejoicing when you had finally achieved? Some of what you write may be humdrum dates and places, but there will also be rich passages that will be quoted by your posterity. Get a notebook, my young folks, a journal that will last through all time, and maybe the angels may quote from it for eternity. . . . Remember, the Savior chastised those who failed to record important events (“The Angels May Quote from It,” *New Era*, October 1975, 4-5).

In section 70 the Lord will announce that he has made Joseph, Oliver, Martin Harris, John Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon, and William W. Phelps stewards of the Book of Commandments and other printed revelations, and that an accounting of the stewardship of these brethren will be required of them in the day of judgment. Not only are these brethren held responsible for the care of the revelations but also for the printing, distribution, and sale of the book after it is printed. These brethren are also to receive compensation from the sale of the book to the extent of “their necessities and their wants.” The surplus will be given to the bishop’s storehouse. In effect the Lord organized these six brethren into a mini-United Order or the so-called Literary Firm. Their stewardship is the Book of Commandments, the Book of Mormon, and other revelations yet to be received, including Joseph’s inspired version of the Bible, if it should ever be published.

In the future this same group of elders will be appointed to be the board of directors of the United Order of the entire Church and they, and three other elders, will come to be called the “United Firm” or the “Order of Enoch”—that group of nine elders that directly supervised all activities related to the law of consecration.

Section 70

1 Behold, and hearken, O ye inhabitants of Zion, and all ye people of my church who are afar off, and hear the word of the Lord which I give unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and also unto my servant Martin Harris, and also unto my servant Oliver Cowdery, and also unto my servant John Whitmer, and also unto my servant Sidney Rigdon, and also unto my servant William W. Phelps, by the way of commandment unto them.

verse 1 “also unto my servant William W. Phelps” The Hiram conference had originally proposed that only the Prophet and his scribes be included in the joint stewardship over the scriptures. The Lord here adds the name of the church printer, W. W. Phelps, to this list.

2 For I give unto them a commandment; wherefore hearken and hear, for thus saith the Lord unto them—

verse 2 “I give unto them a commandment” “Them” refers to the newly formed Literary Firm.

3 I, the Lord, have appointed them, and ordained them to be stewards over the revelations and commandments which I have given unto them, and which I shall hereafter give unto them;

verse 3 “stewards over the revelations and commandments” Where other stewards might be given farms or retail stores, the Literary Firm had been given management of the modern revelations and church publishing. If the stewards fulfilled this responsibility, they might at the same time generate revenues out of which they could support themselves and their families.

What is a “steward”? Stewardship is not ownership. Rather it is management with a responsibility to account to the owner or master. The basic principle was taught by the Lord when he said: “I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. . . . Behold, all these properties are mine . . . and if the properties are mine, then ye are stewards; otherwise ye are no stewards” (D&C 104:14, 55-56).

4 And an account of this stewardship will I require of them in the day of judgment.

verse 4 Every person who receives a calling or has responsibility in the kingdom of God operates under this same condition. God will require an accounting at our hands of all that he has given us, whatever our stewardship may be.

5 Wherefore, I have appointed unto them, and this is their business in the church of God, to manage them and the concerns thereof, yea, the benefits thereof.

6 Wherefore, a commandment I give unto them, that they shall not give these things unto the church, neither unto the world;

verse 6 “they shall not give these things unto the church, neither unto the world” “These things” refer to “the benefits thereof” in the previous verse. These are the monetary proceeds from the sale of the scriptures. These moneys were to be kept by these brethren and used for their own needs.

7 Nevertheless, inasmuch as they receive more than is needful for their necessities and their wants, it shall be given into my storehouse;

verse 7 A fundamental principle of the law of consecration and stewardship is that any excess income generated by a steward, whether in the form of money or goods is referred to as a “residual” and is given to the bishop to be placed in the storehouse.

8 And the benefits shall be consecrated unto the inhabitants of Zion, and unto their generations, inasmuch as they become heirs according to the laws of the kingdom.

verse 8 “the benefits shall be consecrated unto the inhabitants of Zion, and unto their generations” The law of consecration and stewardship was not intended to be a one-generation-only project. All succeeding generations would be included, and each new family unit would be provided a stewardship. Hence any family in the present generation who generates a residue will benefit not only others of his own generation but those of succeeding generations.

“inasmuch as they become heirs according to the law of the kingdom” “They” refers to subsequent generations who participate in the law of consecration and stewardship begun by their ancestors. If the law of consecration and stewardship is successful, then these participants of the second and third generations are indeed heirs or beneficiaries of the prior generations.

9 Behold, this is what the Lord requires of every man in his stewardship, even as I, the Lord, have appointed or shall hereafter appoint unto any man.

10 And behold, none are exempt from this law who belong to the church of the living God;

verse 10 “none are exempt from this law” This expression refers to the law of consecration, which is but a part of the larger law of the Church. There is no member who is exempt from the principles of the law of consecration, including the leaders of the Church and those who administer the affairs of the law (see verse 11).

11 Yea, neither the bishop, neither the agent who keepeth the Lord’s storehouse, neither he who is appointed in a stewardship over temporal things.

verse 11 All must participate as equals in the law of consecration and stewardship, including even the bishop and his agent.

12 He who is appointed to administer spiritual things, the same is worthy of his hire, even as those who are appointed to a stewardship to administer in temporal things;

verse 12 It does not matter whether one's stewardship is to manage a farm or to manage publication of the revelations of God for the Church, the principles of consecration remain the same. All must participate on the same footing.

13 Yea, even more abundantly, which abundance is multiplied unto them through the manifestations of the Spirit.

verse 13 Those called upon to manage a stewardship over spiritual things do have some advantage over those whose stewardship is purely temporal. They may enjoy spiritual blessings directly as a result of their stewardship over spiritual things over and above those whose stewardship is purely temporal.

14 Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld.

verse 14 Even though a spiritual stewardship might produce more immediate spiritual benefits, this verse reminds those managing a spiritual stewardship that they are just like every other participant in the law of consecration relative to temporal things. They must participate as equals with all other participants. To be "equals" is for each to have according to his needs.

15 Now, this commandment I give unto my servants for their benefit while they remain, for a manifestation of my blessings upon their heads, and for a reward of their diligence and for their security;

verses 12-15 These verses were probably intended by the Lord largely to remind *all* participants in the law of consecration and stewardship that those members of the Literary Firm required temporal support even though they are commanded to confine their efforts to spiritual matters. Those with spiritual stewardships may contribute little in the way of temporal goods to the storehouse.

verse 15 "this commandment" This expression refers to section 70. It is given specifically for the temporal benefit of those members of the Literary Firm. One can only imagine how the words of approval and blessing contained herein would have been received by the Prophet and his associates who had left all, given all, and suffered much to serve the Lord up to this point. These verses constitute a richly deserved divine commendation and approbation for the members of the Literary Firm, and they

provide a fitting closure to the labors of the brethren in preparing the revelations for publication.

16 For food and for raiment; for an inheritance; for houses and for lands, in whatsoever circumstances I, the Lord, shall place them, and whithersoever I, the Lord, shall send them.

17 For they have been faithful over many things, and have done well inasmuch as they have not sinned.

18 Behold, I, the Lord, am merciful and will bless them, and they shall enter into the joy of these things. Even so. Amen.

Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer left Ohio on November 20, 1831, with a copy of the revelations. They also took with them monies that had been contributed for the building up of the Church in Missouri. They traveled by way of Winchester, Indiana, where Levi Hancock and Zebedee Coltrin had established a branch of the Church the previous summer. Oliver and John held conference meetings in Winchester and stayed for about a week while they resolved some difficulties in the branch. They arrived in Independence on January 5, 1832.

Brief Historical Setting

1831 December

By December 1831, anti-Mormon feelings in Ohio were warming to a boil, and the Lord recommended a surprising solution. He counseled Joseph and Sidney to leave on a brief mission to the surrounding townships, and while there challenge the Church's detractors to open debate **[D&C 71 and 73 - Debate the Enemy]**. This seemed to temporarily sooth the feelings building against the Church.

Since Bishop Edward Partridge was now in Missouri, it became necessary to call a second bishop to preside over the United Order in Kirtland. This was done by revelation in December 1831 **[D&C 72 - Newell K. Whitney Called as Second Bishop]**.

Sections 71 and 73 Debate the Enemy

The antagonism that had blossomed against the Church by December 1831 was partly the result of the inflammatory anti-Mormon letters written by the apostate Ezra Booth which were printed in a local newspaper, the *Ohio Star* in Ravenna, Ohio (see the character vignette on Ezra Booth at the end of section 52). Ezra Booth was the former Methodist minister and friend of John Johnson, on whose farm Joseph and Sidney were staying in Hiram. Booth joined the Church after seeing Joseph heal the lame arm of John Johnson's wife Elsa. A short time later, Joseph successfully rebuked an evil spirit that had overcome Ezra. Booth was ordained a high priest in June and was one of the missionaries sent to Missouri that month with Isaac Morley (see D&C 52:23). He became disillusioned after finding that his priesthood did not give him the power to "smite" men and make them believe. On his mission in Missouri he also expected to see more miracles, and he was disappointed that Zion was not founded immediately. The Prophet later wrote of these anti-Mormon letters authored by Booth. He said that they "by their coloring, falsity, and vain calculations to overthrow the work of the Lord, exposed his [Booth's] weakness, wickedness, and folly, and left him a monument of his own shame for the world to wonder at" (*HC*, 1:217).

Also, Simonds Ryder was an associate of Ezra Booth, and the two of them had begun to stir up anti-Mormon feelings in northeastern Ohio by speaking in public meetings. These two were not the first to leave the Church, but they were the most vicious to date, and they were the first to publicly campaign against their former friends.

Since moving to Hiram, Ohio, in September 1831, Joseph and Sidney had spent considerable time working on Joseph's inspired revision of the King James Bible. On December 1, 1831, however, the Lord gave a revelation to Joseph and Sidney (section 71) commanding them to pause in their "translation," and he sent them on a brief mission "for a season" into the surrounding communities to preach and expound the gospel according to the spirit of the Holy Ghost he promised them. The apparent purpose of this limited mission was to confront and confound their "enemies" and thereby calm and sooth the feelings building up against the Church. It would seem that it is sometimes wise to *avoid* criticisms leveled at the Church, and at other times it is wise to *meet* them head on. This was one of those latter times.

Section 71

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, that the time has verily come that it is necessary and expedient in me that you should open your mouths in proclaiming my gospel, the things of the kingdom, expounding the mysteries thereof out of the scriptures, according to that portion of Spirit and power which shall be given unto you, even as I will.

verse 1 “the time has verily come” These were unusual circumstances, as Joseph and Sidney are called by the Lord to do something uncharacteristic of missionaries of the restored gospel in this final dispensation. They are called to confront and neutralize the influence of apostate anti-Mormons who were making it difficult to preach the gospel.

“expounding the mysteries thereof out of the scriptures” A “mystery” is an eternal truth that cannot be known except through personal revelation received through the Spirit of God. All of the eternal truths of the gospel are mysteries until an individual has developed a desire to learn them and has prayed to receive them.

2 Verily I say unto you, proclaim unto the world in the regions round about, and in the church also, for the space of a season, even until it shall be made known unto you.

verse 2 “in the regions round about” This applies to northeast Ohio.

“and in the church also” Unfortunately, some of the saints appear also to have been affected by the accusations of the apostates and needed to hear the truth from Joseph and Sidney.

3 Verily this is a mission for a season, which I give unto you.

verse 3 “a mission for a season” This was not a normal proselyting mission. It was a special call to improve public relations and build up the image of the Church in Ohio, which will last until the immediate problem is solved.

4 Wherefore, labor ye in my vineyard. Call upon the inhabitants of the earth, and bear record, and prepare the way for the commandments and revelations which are to come.

verse 4 “the commandments and revelations which are to come” One might assume, with the publication of the Book of Commandments, that all the revelations the Lord intends for our dispensation have been received. But this is not so. Articles of Faith 1:9 teaches, “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.”

5 Now, behold this is wisdom; whoso readeth, let him understand and receive also;

6 For unto him that receiveth it shall be given more abundantly, even power.

verses 7-10 In these verses the Lord specifically commands that Joseph and Sidney call upon their detractors and invite them to debate, either in public or in private. The Lord then promises them that if they are faithful, the “enemy” will be confounded.

This revelation was received December 1, 1831. Joseph recorded: “From this time until the 8th or 10th of January, 1832, myself and Elder Rigdon continued to preach in Shalersville, Ravenna, and other places, setting forth the truth, vindicating the cause of our Redeemer; showing that the day of vengeance was coming upon this generation like a thief in the night; that prejudice, blindness and darkness filled the minds of many, and caused them to persecute the true Church, and reject the true light; by which means we did much towards allaying the excited feelings which were growing out of the scandalous letters then being published in the *Ohio Star*, at Ravenna, by the before-mentioned apostate, Ezra Booth” (*HC*, 1:241).

The December 20, 1831, *Painesville Telegraph* stated that “Sidney Rigdon, the vice-regent [deputy] and champion of Jo. Smith, has thrown out a challenge, in the *Ohio Star*, to Mr. Booth and Deacon Ryder, who have renounced the Mormon faith, to meet him in mortal combat (of words) on the subject of the Gold Bible.” Ryder refused the invitation. Sidney Rigdon wrote a letter, published in the *Ohio Star* on January 12, 1832, in which he charged: “Symonds, like the worker of iniquity, has sought a hiding place. Let the public remember, when he goes forth again to proclaim his assertions against the Book of Mormon, that he has been invited upon honorable principles to investigate its merits, and dares not do it.”

7 Wherefore, confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in public and in private; and inasmuch as ye are faithful their shame shall be made manifest.

verse 7 “confound your enemies” To confound means to contradict or refute; to put to shame; or to defeat. It should be pointed out that this is not the usual policy of the Church, and this course of action was undertaken at this time only under the explicit command of the Lord and for a specific reason. Normally, there is no good reason to include or to invite the enemies of God to participate with us in the work of God. We are commanded to preach the gospel to the pure in heart—not to contend, argue, or debate with the impure in heart (see 3 Nephi 11:29-30).

8 Wherefore, let them bring forth their strong reasons against the Lord.

9 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you—there is no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper;

verses 8-9 Elder Heber J. Grant, in general conference, said:

Our enemies have never done anything that has injured this work of God, and they never will. I look around, I read, I reflect, and I ask the question, Where are the men of influence, of power and prestige, who have worked against the Latter-day Saints? Where is the reputation, for honor and courage, of the governors of Missouri and Illinois . . . ? Where are there people to do them honor? They cannot be found. . . . Where are the men who have assailed this work? Where is their influence? They have

faded away like dew before the sun. . . . We need have no fears, we Latter-day Saints. God will continue to sustain this work; He will sustain the right. If we are loyal, if we are true, if we are worthy of this Gospel, of which God has given us a testimony, there is no danger that the world can ever injure us. We can never be injured, my brethren and sisters, by any mortals, except ourselves (*CR*, April 1909, 110).

President Harold B. Lee also taught: “No weapon formed against the work of the Lord will ever prosper, but all glory and majesty of this work, that the Lord gave, will long be remembered after those who have tried to befoul the name of the Church and those of its leaders will be forgotten, and their works will follow after them. We feel sorry for them when we see these things happen” (*CR*, October 1973, 167).

10 And if any man lift his voice against you he shall be confounded in mine own due time.

11 Wherefore, keep my commandments; they are true and faithful. Even so. Amen.

In obedience to this call, Joseph and Sidney left Hiram on December 3rd and went forth to Kirtland, Shalersville, Ravenna, and other places preaching boldly the truth and calling on their detractors to come out to meet them face to face. By this means it was intended that the scandalous accusations of the “enemy” might be exposed as false. With the help of the Spirit, they were able to confound their detractors, as the latter were unable to substantiate their falsehoods and were surprised by this sudden challenge so boldly given. Some of the anti-Mormon prejudice was allayed, at least for a time, and some friends and converts were made through this approach.

Section 71 probably helped set a pattern of missionary work that evolved in the early days of the Church—that of going into a town and challenging a prominent local minister to a public debate in a local hall. In those days a missionary wasn’t worth his salt if he couldn’t hold his own in public debate. Some of our early great church leaders were skillful debaters, and the skill of the likes of John Taylor and B. H. Roberts is legendary. Many converts were made as nonmembers watched these debates. Our current missionary approach is not to confront or debate or argue, as it is now considered generally a waste of time to do so.

By the time section 73 was received on January 10th, 1832, Joseph and Sidney had been on their mission for almost six weeks. They had publicly met their critics and had done much to improve the popular image and perceptions of the Church. In section 73, the Lord commanded Joseph and Sidney to terminate their mini-mission and return to Hiram and to their revision of the Bible. Concerning this moment in the history of the Church, the Prophet wrote: “On the 10th of January, I received the following revelation [section 73] making known the will of the Lord concerning the Elders of the Church until

the convening of the next conference” (*HC*, 1:241). The earliest known manuscript of section 73 contains the following notation in the handwriting of Sidney Rigdon: “A Revelation to Joseph and Sidney. The word of the Lord unto them concerning the Elders of the church of the Living God established in the last days, making known the will of the Lord unto the Elders—what they shall do until conference” (cited in Woodford, *Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 1:903). The conference referred to here will be held on January 25, 1832, in Amherst, Ohio, about fifty miles west of Kirtland.

Section 73

1 For verily, thus saith the Lord, it is expedient in me that they should continue preaching the gospel, and in exhortation to the churches in the regions round about, until conference;

verse 1 “it is expedient in me that they should continue preaching the gospel” The second verse of this section refers to the conference of elders that was planned for January 25, 1832. Several of the elders anticipated new mission calls at that conference. These elders wondered what to do while waiting for the conference. In verse 1, the Lord tells them to make good use of their time and continue preaching in the “regions round about” until they are reassigned.

2 And then, behold, it shall be made known unto them, by the voice of the conference, their several missions.

verse 2 “by the voice of the conference” In the years before the organization of the priesthood quorums, church business was often conducted and church assignments made by a process of proposal and sustaining vote in special priesthood conferences like the one to take place at Amherst.

3 Now, verily I say unto you my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, saith the Lord, it is expedient to translate again;

verse 3 “it is expedient to translate again” The Lord here, of course, refers to Joseph and Sidney’s work on the Joseph Smith translation (see the supplemental article, *Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision of the Bible—The JST*). Although the word “translate” implies the use of ancient texts and ancient languages, Joseph’s work was to provide additional revelatory information—additional scripture—by the power of the Spirit and not by scholarly re-interpretation. Later the Prophet would study Hebrew and German, but any knowledge of languages that he would obtain was not involved in his inspired revision of the Bible.

4 And, inasmuch as it is practicable, to preach in the regions round about until conference; and after that it is expedient to continue the work of translation until it be finished.

verse 4 “to preach in the regions round about until conference” Joseph and Sidney are commanded both to translate and to continue their missionary preaching until conference. After the Amherst conference, however, they were to devote their full time specifically to their work on the JST.

“until it be finished” The Prophet continued to work vigorously on the JST from this time until July 2, 1833, when the first draft of his work was finished, and he ceased formal labor on the JST. He continued making revisions in the text, however, from time to time until his death in 1844. It would be difficult to overestimate the benefits and influence of the JST on the doctrinal education of the Prophet and of the Church. In particular, the eighteen months between January 1832—the Amherst conference—and June of 1833 were richly productive. Twenty-three sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were received during that time (sections 73 through 96).

5 And let this be a pattern unto the elders until further knowledge, even as it is written.

verse 5 “let this be a pattern” From this point on when the elders collectively wonder about the Lord’s will for them, let them continue doing their duty and wait to learn his will through the Prophet and other leaders at their scheduled conferences. This remains a pattern for the priesthood holders of the Church today.

6 Now I give no more unto you at this time. Gird up your loins and be sober. Even so. Amen.

Section 72 Newell K. Whitney Called as Second Bishop

On the fourth day of December 1831, while the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon were engaged in their assigned mission refuting their enemies, they took time out for a meeting of the elders which was called in Kirtland, Ohio. At this meeting, the Lord gave an important revelation—section 72. Remember that in December of 1831, Edward Partridge was fulfilling his office as bishop of the Church in Missouri.

In D&C 68:14, which had been received a month before this revelation, the Lord had indicated that “other bishops” besides Edward Partridge would be set apart in the future. In Section 72 the Lord declares that it is now expedient that a bishop be called to serve in the Kirtland area. Newell K. Whitney is called by the Lord as the second bishop of the Church. See his character vignette following the discussion of section 40. See also the commentary for section 41.

Another purpose of section 72 was to reveal the nature of the relationship of the two bishops of the Church. Will they be co-equal? Will one preside over the other? Note in verses 5 and 6 that the bishop in Kirtland is to report to the bishop in Zion. Thus, Bishop Whitney is to function under the direction of Bishop Partridge. This relationship perhaps forms the earliest beginnings of the concept of the presiding bishop.

The duties of the bishop are outlined in verses 9 through 14. It should be kept in mind that in December 1831 the only bishops in the Church were the two bishops in the United Order. There were no ward bishops or presiding bishops. Thus the Lord’s instructions here apply primarily to bishops in the United Order, though we commonly extrapolate and apply this counsel to all bishops in the Church today. Perhaps this is a justifiable application, but we need to be cautious as we make it.

Note also in verses 17 through 19 and in verse 25, a new concept. The Church is growing so rapidly that Edward Partridge cannot possibly know everyone in the Church. Thus, from now on when anyone goes from Ohio to Zion, they must carry a “certificate” from Bishop Whitney to Bishop Partridge introducing the member to Bishop Partridge as a member in good standing. Today in the Church our computerized membership record serves the same function. We also occasionally use, for this purpose, our temple recommend or the more specific “recommend to perform an ordinance.”

It is interesting that section 72 is really a compilation of two revelations received on the same day. The original manuscripts for them are separate, even though they are both in the handwriting of Sidney Rigdon. The first revelation comprised what is now verses 1 through 8 (note that verse 8 ends with “amen”). This revelation called Newell K. Whitney to be the bishop. Recall that at the time of this revelation he was already functioning as the bishop’s agent in Kirtland. The second revelation instructed Bishop

Whitney in his duties. In verse 8 the Lord told Joseph to call Brother Whitney. In verse 9 the Lord said that He would now explain the duties of the man who had already been chosen. The actual sequence, then, was as follows: The first eight verses were given, Newell K. Whitney was called, and then the remainder of the section was given.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 72:3-4 It is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity. For he who is faithful and wise in time is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for him of my Father.

1 Hearken, and listen to the voice of the Lord, O ye who have assembled yourselves together, who are the high priests of my church, to whom the kingdom and power have been given.

verse 1 “O ye . . . who are the high priests of my church” Although many elders and church members were present when this revelation was received, these instructions were directed specifically to the leadership of the Church, who alone could call and ordain a bishop in Kirtland.

2 For verily thus saith the Lord, it is expedient in me for a bishop to be appointed unto you, or of you, unto the church in this part of the Lord’s vineyard.

verse 2 The first bishop of the Church, Edward Partridge (see D&C 41:9), had moved to Jackson County, Missouri, the previous summer, but the majority of the saints still lived in Ohio and the East. Someone else needed to be called to serve the Church as bishop in the Kirtland area.

3 And verily in this thing ye have done wisely, for it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity.

4 For he who is faithful and wise in time is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for him of my Father.

verses 3-4 In 1831 the concept of stewardship had a specific meaning. A stewardship consisted of those materials taken from the bishop’s storehouse and given to a man and his family by the bishop. With this stewardship the man would work and provide for his family and contribute the excess of his production back to the storehouse. He had the obligation to regularly account for his stewardship and his use of it to the bishop.

Do you the reader, in this twenty-first century, have a stewardship for which you are accountable? Each individual brings into this world an array of abilities earned by diligent effort in the premortal world. As we cross into mortality, the veil blunts our memory of these abilities. Until we discern them and begin to re-define and re-develop

them, they lie dormant as untapped “talents” or “gifts.” Each person is responsible to seek after and discover these latent proclivities. The Spirit of the Lord is willing and anxious and able to reveal them to you if you will but make it a matter of earnest seeking and prayer. You will be drawn to them. The areas in which your “talents” lie will become uniquely attractive and appealing to you. These dormant gifts will be of no use to you or to others lest you bring them out into the light and work assiduously to develop and improve and polish them. A secular philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, knew of this important truth and provided us with insight concerning it:

Each man has his own vocation. The talent is the call. There is one direction in which all space is open to him. He has faculties silently inviting him thither to endless exertion. He is like a ship in a river; he runs against obstructions on every side but one; on that side all obstruction is taken away, and he sweeps serenely over a deepening channel into an infinite sea. . . . He inclines to do something which is easy to him and good when it is done, but which no other man can do. He has no rival. For the more truly he consults his own powers, the more difference will his work exhibit from the work of another (Essay on “spiritual laws.”)

Our obligation, then, is to discover and enlarge upon our “stewardships” and then put them to use in serving our fellow men and to contributing uniquely to the kingdom of God on earth.

5 Verily I say unto you, the elders of the church in this part of my vineyard shall render an account of their stewardship unto the bishop, who shall be appointed of me in this part of my vineyard.

6 These things shall be had on record, to be handed over unto the bishop in Zion.

verses 5-6 Note that the bishop in Ohio (“in this part of my vineyard”) was to report to the bishop in Missouri (“Zion”). Thus Edward Partridge in Missouri was, in a sense, the presiding bishop (see also verse 13). When Bishop Partridge died in Nauvoo in May 1840, Newell K. Whitney became the presiding bishop.

7 And the duty of the bishop shall be made known by the commandments which have been given, and the voice of the conference.

verse 7 Some portions of a bishop’s duties had already been revealed (see, for example, D&C 41:9-10; 42:31-36, 71-73, 80-83; 46:27-29; 51:3-20; 57:15-16; 58:55; 64:40; 68:15-24). Additional instructions will yet be received in this revelation (see verses 9-26).

8 And now, verily I say unto you, my servant Newel K. Whitney is the man who shall be appointed and ordained unto this power. This is the will of the Lord your God, your Redeemer. Even so. Amen.

verse 8 It is of interest that Orson F. Whitney described Newell Whitney's reaction to verse 8:

Newell K. Whitney, staggering under the weight of the responsibility that was about to be placed upon him, said to the Prophet: "Brother Joseph, I can't see a bishop in myself." No, but God could see it in him. He was a natural bishop—a first class man of affairs. Probably no other incumbent of that important office . . . has been better qualified for it than Newell K. Whitney. But he could not see it, and he shrank from the responsibility. The Prophet answered: "Go and ask the Lord about it." And Newell did ask the Lord, and he heard a voice from heaven say: "Thy strength is in me." That was enough. He accepted the office, and served in it faithfully to the end of his days—a period of eighteen years (CR, June 1919, 47-48).

9 The word of the Lord, in addition to the law which has been given, making known the duty of the bishop who has been ordained unto the church in this part of the vineyard, which is verily this—

verses 10-17 Four major responsibilities of a bishop are discussed in these verses. Though these instructions are intended specifically for Bishop Newell K. Whitney functioning as a bishop in a united order, we can easily extrapolate them and apply them to bishops in the Church today. First, the bishop administers the Lord's storehouse, receiving and disbursing church funds and other resources for his area (verses 10-11). Second, he evaluates and keeps track of the financial performance of individual stewards in his area (verses 11, 13, 16). Third, the bishop is responsible for the temporal welfare of the members in his area, particularly the poor and the needy (verse 12). Fourth, the bishop serves as a judge in Israel. He has the responsibility of judging and certifying the worthiness of members in his jurisdiction (see also D&C 107:68-74).

10 To keep the Lord's storehouse; to receive the funds of the church in this part of the vineyard;

11 To take an account of the elders as before has been commanded; and to administer to their wants, who shall pay for that which they receive, inasmuch as they have wherewith to pay;

verse 11 "To take an account of the elders" The bishop interviews individual stewards and functions as an accountant or administrator in keeping track of their surpluses or their shortfalls. While the primary focus in this verse is financial, bishops properly monitor and note the progress, successes, and failures of their ward members in matters both temporal and spiritual.

"and to administer to their wants" See D&C 42:33 and its commentary.

“who shall pay for that which they receive” The bishop's storehouse in Kirtland was Newel K. Whitney's store. Financially self-sufficient stewards were expected to purchase their goods at the Whitney store, and the profits from these sales were used for the good of the poor and needy (see verse 12).

12 That this also may be consecrated to the good of the church, to the poor and needy.

verse 12 “That this also may be consecrated to the good of the church” This phrase refers to the profits referred to in the commentary for the previous verse.

13 And he who hath not wherewith to pay, an account shall be taken and handed over to the bishop of Zion, who shall pay the debt out of that which the Lord shall put into his hands.

verse 13 “an account shall be taken” When local stewards require financial help from the bishop's storehouse, they receive that help from their local bishop and the resources at his disposal. A bill for the debt, however, is then to be forwarded to the bishop in Zion who reimburses the local bishop. Thus, the system of consecration and stewardship was to be a church wide system with no local bishop bearing alone the burden of support for the needy members.

The present system of fast offerings, which are a type of consecration, still operates on a pattern similar to that revealed in these verses. First, local needs are met through local offerings. Then net surpluses or net shortfalls are forwarded to the Presiding Bishop of the Church for redistribution or for reimbursement, respectively.

“bishop of Zion, who shall pay the debt” How was the bishop in Zion to get the resources to reimburse the debts of local bishops? From what “the Lord shall put into his hands.” This would include surpluses forwarded to him from profitable stewards, money sent for purchase of lands in Zion, and profits from other church enterprises, of which he was the overseer.

14 And the labors of the faithful who labor in spiritual things, in administering the gospel and the things of the kingdom unto the church, and unto the world, shall answer the debt unto the bishop in Zion;

verse 14 “the faithful who labor in spiritual things” Who can the bishop in Zion turn to for the resources to pay church debts? To the leadership of the Church—to Joseph Smith and his associates—whose stewardship is not to farm or to manage stores, but to administer the affairs of the kingdom. Those who hold the kingdom's keys are ultimately responsible for the kingdom's finances.

15 Thus it cometh out of the church, for according to the law every man that cometh up to Zion must lay all things before the bishop in Zion.

verse 15 “it cometh out of the church” And where do Church leaders get the resources to pay church debts? From the cumulative faithfulness of all the Church’s members in paying their tithes and offerings and in otherwise observing the principles of consecration that they covenanted to observe,

“every man that cometh up to Zion must lay all things before the bishop in Zion” It is intended that only those who consecrated all their possessions to the Lord will be called to Zion (compare Acts 4:34-35; 5:1-4). All the saints in Zion are expected to consecrate all they have to the kingdom, thus providing the resources needed to answer the debts of the Church and to provide the resources needed for the continued growth of Zion.

16 And now, verily I say unto you, that as every elder in this part of the vineyard must give an account of his stewardship unto the bishop in this part of the vineyard—

verse 16 “every elder in this part of the vineyard” Please recall that this revelation was given by the Lord to Joseph Smith when Joseph was in Kirtland. Thus, the expression “this part of the vineyard” refers to eastern part of the 1831 Kingdom of God that centered in Kirtland.

17 A certificate from the judge or bishop in this part of the vineyard, unto the bishop in Zion, rendereth every man acceptable, and answereth all things, for an inheritance, and to be received as a wise steward and as a faithful laborer;

verse 17 “A certificate from the judge or bishop in this part of the vineyard, unto the bishop in Zion” Here is the first mention in this dispensation of the “membership record.” Only those members in good standing with their own local bishop would be commended to the bishop in Zion. In today’s Church, membership records are kept to show a member’s standing in the Church. A bishop should not call a new member to a position of trust before receiving his or her church records or by otherwise confirming that member’s good standing.

In the early days of the Church, certificates or recommends (see verse 19) were issued by one bishop for the purpose of confirming good standing to another bishop. In this case the certificates or recommends were not used for entering the temples—there were no temples yet—but primarily for being accepted in full fellowship into the community of consecrated saints in Zion. When followed, this procedure made it difficult for dishonest individuals to receive land and other goods from the Church without first entering the covenant of consecration and otherwise proving worthy.

“for an inheritance” With a recommend from his local bishop, an individual could emigrate to Zion and receive a stewardship there.

18 Otherwise he shall not be accepted of the bishop of Zion.

verse 18 Going up to Zion was a sacred privilege (see verse 24), and only worthy, profitable stewards with recommends from their local bishop were allowed to go. Without a recommend the Ohio saints were not supposed to go, and were not to be received into fellowship or receive an inheritance there if they went on their own. The disobedience of many saints to these and other commandments, however, contributed to the failure to establish Zion in Jackson County.

19 And now, verily I say unto you, let every elder who shall give an account unto the bishop of the church in this part of the vineyard be recommended by the church or churches, in which he labors, that he may render himself and his accounts approved in all things.

20 And again, let my servants who are appointed as stewards over the literary concerns of my church have claim for assistance upon the bishop or bishops in all things—

verse 20 “stewards over the literary concerns of my church” See D&C 70:3. The obligation of the Literary Firm to consecrate their surplus to the bishop’s storehouse is spelled out in D&C 70:7-8. This verse in section 72 establishes the Literary Firm’s right to apply to the same storehouse for their support, if necessary—the same as with any other steward.

21 That the revelations may be published, and go forth unto the ends of the earth; that they also may obtain funds which shall benefit the church in all things;

22 That they also may render themselves approved in all things, and be accounted as wise stewards.

23 And now, behold, this shall be an ensample for all the extensive branches of my church, in whatsoever land they shall be established. And now I make an end of my sayings. Amen.

verse 23 “this shall be an ensample” The word *ensample* seems to mean “example.” This phrase refers to the working relationship between the presiding bishops Edward Partridge and Newel K. Whitney described in verses 9-23.

24 A few words in addition to the laws of the kingdom, respecting the members of the church—they that are appointed by the Holy Spirit to go up unto Zion, and they who are privileged to go up unto Zion—

25 Let them carry up unto the bishop a certificate from three elders of the church, or a certificate from the bishop;

verse 25 “a certificate from three elders of the church” Perhaps because of the logistical problems arising from having only one bishop outside Zion (Newel K. Whitney), the Lord amends the instructions given in verses 17-19 to allow certificates to be signed either by the bishop or by three worthy elders.

26 Otherwise he who shall go up unto the land of Zion shall not be accounted as a wise steward. This is also an ensample. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1832 January

While living in the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Ohio, Joseph and Sidney spent much of their time working on the inspired revision of the King James Bible in a corner room of the Johnson home. As they translated they came to a passage in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The Lord assisted them with the interpretation of the verse **[D&C 74 - 1 Corinthians 7:14]**.

In January 1832, an important conference was held at Amherst, Ohio, during which Joseph was sustained as "President of the High Priesthood" of the Church, and several missionary pairs were called to serve missions in the eastern states **[D&C 75 - Missionaries Called to the Eastern States]**. Two months later Sidney Rigdon and Jesse Gause were called and ordained as Joseph's counselors. Brother Gause received a revelation calling him to the First Presidency **[D&C 81 - Counselor in the First Presidency]**. Brother Gause's name was removed from the revelation some time later (after he had left the Church in December 1832), and it was replaced by that of Frederick G. Williams who replaced him in the First Presidency in March of 1833 **[D&C 90 - Reorganization of the First Presidency]**. More missionaries were dispatched in the spring and summer of 1832 **[D&C 79 and 80 - The Call to Preach]**.

Section 74 1 Corinthians 7:14

After nearly six weeks of preaching the gospel, confounding their critics, and repairing the Church's image in eastern Ohio, the prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were commanded, on January 10, 1832, to return to Hiram and resume their work on the translation of the Bible (see D&C 73:3-4). When Joseph and Sidney began translating again in an upstairs corner room of the Johnson farmhouse, one of the first texts they worked on was Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. When they came to 1 Corinthians 7:14, Joseph paused and inquired of the Lord. The saints in Corinth had asked Paul a question that probably went something like this: "Paul, I'm a new member of the Church. I love the gospel, and I have a testimony, but my husband (or wife) won't have anything to do with the Church. What am I supposed to do? Should I leave him (or her) and find another mate that will join the Church?"

Paul answers the question in 1 Corinthians 7:14. His answer, paraphrasing, is: No, do not separate. If you are a believer, your participation in the gospel will bring a sanctifying influence into your marriage. This sanctifying influence will also affect all of your children.

Another aspect of this problem at the time of Paul concerned the tension between the husband and the wife over the rearing of children. Often the husband was a Jew who believed in the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17:1-14), while the wife was a Christian. For the Jew, any male child eight days of age was required to be circumcised as a sign that he was a son of Abraham and a member of God's covenant community. There was a feeling among the Jews that children were unholy without circumcision. What could be more serious for a believing Jew than to have his son grow up uncircumcised? On the other hand, the Christian wife believed that the necessity for circumcision was done away in Christ. Section 74 confirms the principle that through Christ, little children are whole and sinless and do not require circumcision at age eight days to remain so.

Section 74 is unique in that there are only three other sections in the Doctrine and Covenants that are exclusively dedicated to scripture interpretation—Sections 77 (the book of Revelation), 86 (the parable of the wheat and tares—Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43), and 113 (the book of Isaiah). Section 74 was received before the conference that was to convene on January 25th. Thus it was received between January 11th and January 25th.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 74 The Lord's explanation of 1 Corinthians 7:14

1 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.

verse 1 This verse is an exact quotation of 1 Corinthians 7:14 in the King James Bible. Again, this verse was written by Paul in the setting of a discussion of part member families (one spouse Christian and the other non-Christian—perhaps a Jew). Paul’s advice, which remains church policy today, was that such marriages should be continued if:

1. the nonmember will tolerate his or her spouse’s activity in the Church (see 1 Corinthians 7:12-13), and
2. the children of such unions are allowed by the unbelieving spouse to be reared in the Church as Christians and not in the synagogue as Jews.

Today, by extension of these same principles, part member marriages should continue if the nonmember spouse permits the member spouse’s activity in the Church and the nonmember spouse also permits the children to be reared in the Church.

Such a union constitutes holy or acceptable matrimony before God—even though it is an arrangement for time only. There is no unholiness attached to faithful, committed marriages performed outside the temple. They may in truth be a “lesser good,” but they are definitely not an evil. The only thing wrong with such marriages for time is their impermanence and the acceptance of their impermanence, with the consequent loss of blessings, by the partners.

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife . . .” “Unbelieving” in this verse means non-Christian. Today the term refers to the nonmember spouse.

The terms “sanctified” and “holy” are exactly synonymous, as the Latin word *sanctus*, which is the root of the English word sanctify, means “holy.” The Jews of Paul’s day tended to divide the world into things holy or unholy (sanctified or unsanctified). This label indicated whether they were clean or unclean, sacred or profane.

The implication of this phrase is that the believing spouse will have a potentially sanctifying effect on the unbelieving spouse—the believing spouse may cause the other to become believing.

“else were your children unclean, but now are they holy” From the Jewish perspective addressed by Paul, if the above conditions do not exist in a mixed marriage, then the children would be “unclean” which implies “not in the proper relationship to the Lord” or “brought up outside the Church (see verse 4).

2 Now, in the days of the apostles the law of circumcision was had among all the Jews who believed not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

verse 2 “the law of circumcision” See Genesis 17:9-14; JST Genesis 17:11-12. Circumcision involved ritually cutting off the foreskin from the male child’s penis

when they were eight days old, or whenever they converted if they were not born a Jew. Circumcision on the eighth day was the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and was originally instituted to symbolize, among other things, that children were not accountable before the Lord until they were eight years old. The law of circumcision of the flesh was done away in Christ (see Moroni 8:8).

“among all the Jews” Even though Corinth (the saints of which were Paul’s addressees in 1 Corinthians) was a Greek city, there were during Paul’s time a large number of Jews living there. Many of these were in exile from Rome due to an edict of Claudius issued in AD 41, which banned them from Rome for causing civil disturbances (see Acts 18:2).

3 And it came to pass that there arose a great contention among the people concerning the law of circumcision, for the unbelieving husband was desirous that his children should be circumcised and become subject to the law of Moses, which law was fulfilled.

verse 3 “there arose a great contention among the people concerning the law of circumcision” Here “the people” were the Jews, both Christian and non-Christian. Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews were irreconcilably divided over the issue of the law of Moses, especially the law of circumcision. The Christian Jews believed the law was fulfilled, and the non-Christian Jews believed it was still in force. One side or the other must be wrong. No compromise was possible. Naturally, this led to “a great contention” in any relationship between Christian and non-Christian Jews, and it would have been particularly difficult where Christian and non-Christian Jews were already married to each other.

Some Jews who became Christians would have had contracts of betrothal in force between themselves and non-Christian Jews (today we would say such couples were “engaged” to be married). Should these betrothal contracts still be honored now that one partner had become Christians? Paul said yes—if the non-Christian partner would agree that the spouse could continue their associations as Christians and any children from the marriage would be reared as Christians and would not be subjected to the law of Moses, including circumcision. Some Jews were already married when they joined the Church. If their spouse was not also converted, should their marriage be preserved? Again, Paul said yes—on the same terms.

4 And it came to pass that the children, being brought up in subjection to the law of Moses, gave heed to the traditions of their fathers and believed not the gospel of Christ, wherein they became unholy.

verse 4 “they became unholy” If the children of religiously mixed marriages were brought up under the law of Moses, they could not at the same time believe the gospel of Jesus Christ—for the two were often contradictory. Reared under the law of

Moses, the children would naturally not want to abandon it for the gospel when they reached the age of accountability. Thus, they would become *unholy*—sinful and in need of redemption—when they became accountable and did not become members of the Church.

5 Wherefore, for this cause the apostle wrote unto the church, giving unto them a commandment, not of the Lord, but of himself, that a believer should not be united to an unbeliever; except the law of Moses should be done away among them,

verse 5 “for this cause the apostle wrote unto the church” Apparently the apostle Paul wrote unto the church in Corinth suggesting to them that a believer in Christianity should not be married to a non-believer unless the Law of Moses can be done away in their household. This counsel is not contained in 1 Corinthians, though the spirit of this counsel is seen in 2 Corinthians 6:14. If, in fact, this counsel was originally in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian saints, this may suggest that the present New Testament text has become corrupted. It is possible that Paul wrote about these things in his earlier, lost letter to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 5:9 for evidence of an earlier letter), and this phrase merely refers to those prior instructions. Thus, it is possible that by revelation to Joseph Smith, the knowledge of this specific counsel by Paul was restored.

“not of the Lord, but of himself” There is a difference between *doctrine* and *policy*. Doctrine is revealed by the Lord through his prophet and never changes. Policy is created and implemented by the Lord’s servants and may be adapted or changed from time to time as circumstances warrant. Doctrines are fundamental principles. Policies interpret and apply doctrinal principles to broader church contexts as directed by church leaders. Policy may not always come directly from the Lord but rather from his servants. In this particular case, where those servants are properly appointed and sustained (Joseph Smith and the apostle Paul), the saints are obligated also to sustain their policies (see D&C 107:30-32).

“except the law of Moses should be done away among them” Paul’s condition for marriage between Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews was that the home must be a Christian home and that the law of Moses would not be observed there.

6 That their children might remain without circumcision; and that the tradition might be done away, which saith that little children are unholy; for it was had among the Jews;

verse 6 “the tradition . . . that little children are unholy” In Paul’s day, Jews had come to believe that infants were born unholy, or outside the covenant, and were in need of circumcision in order to enter the covenant and become holy or clean. This is a

version of the apostate doctrine of original sin. Some Nephites had taught also that infants need baptism, a doctrine Mormon declared a “gross error” and “solemn mockery before God” (Moroni 8:6, 9). This lie that little children are unredeemed unless some ordinance is performed for them is one of Satan’s favorites, for it denies “the mercies of Christ” and would have us trust instead “in dead works” or rituals (Moroni 8:23). Ironically, one reason that circumcision was instituted with Abraham was to show him and his posterity that little children are not accountable before the Lord until their eighth year (see JST Genesis 17:11) and require no ordinance before that time in order to be sanctified by grace through the atonement of Christ.

7 But little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ; and this is what the scriptures mean.

verse 7 “little children are holy” Joseph Smith taught that “the doctrine of baptizing children, or sprinkling them, or they must welter [become entangled in] in hell, is a doctrine not true, not supported in Holy Writ, and is not consistent with the character of God. All children are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the moment that children leave this world, they are taken to the bosom of Abraham” (*HC*, 4:554).

Section 75 Conference of January 25, 1832

An important conference of the Church was held on January 25, 1832, in Amherst, Ohio, located about sixty miles west of Kirtland. Amherst was the home of Gideon Carter, Sylvester Smith, and others. One reason for holding conferences away from Kirtland or Hiram was to promulgate the gospel in those areas.

At this conference Joseph Smith was sustained and ordained “President of the High Priesthood” of the Church by Sidney Rigdon. Also at this conference, by the request of the priesthood, the Prophet inquired of the Lord and a revelation (section 75) was given and written in the presence of the whole assembly, appointing many of the elders to missions.

Even though section 75 itself says nothing about this historic ordination of Joseph, it is important that we remember the importance of this event. Actually, the stage had been set for Joseph’s ordination to this office at the conference of November 1831. Some revealed instructions regarding the organization of the priesthood of the Church had been received at that gathering that were not inserted into the scriptural canon until they were later placed in section 107 (examples include verses 59-60, 74, 75, 78-87, 89, 91, 92, 99, and 100). More pertinent examples include verses 65 and 66 of section 107 which call for the selection and ordination of a president to preside over the high priesthood of the Church. Hence, at the next conference, in January 1832, Joseph is ordained.

In our study of the history of the Church, it is fascinating to watch the gradual unfolding of the concepts of priesthood and church government as we now understand them. You will recall that at the June conference of 1831 (see the commentary for sections 44 and 52), twenty-three priesthood bearers were ordained “to the high priesthood” which now corresponds to the office of high priest. Now we witness the selection and ordination of the “president of the high priesthood,” meaning president of the priesthood. Although the term “First Presidency” will not be used until 1835, this supreme council in the Church was organized at this January 1832 conference. The following March, Joseph will learn in an unpublished revelation that the office of president of the high priesthood is vested with the authority to preside, with the assistance of counselors, over all the concerns of the Church. On March 8, 1832, the Prophet selected and ordained Jesse Gause and Sidney Rigdon as his counselors. After the former, a convert from the Shakers, denied the faith and was excommunicated in December 1832, Frederick G. Williams was called to serve as counselor in the presidency.

Also in section 75, the newly called missionaries are given instructions as to how they ought to deport themselves while on their missions. Whenever they are received into a house, they are to leave their blessing (verse 19). From such houses where they

are not received, they are to depart speedily, shaking off the dust of their feet as a testimony against those who reject them (verse 20). The elders who deliver their messages and are rejected are also assigned to be judges in the day of judgment against those who rejected their testimonies (verse 21).

Apparently, many of the elders went on these short missions and left their families to take care of themselves. They probably assumed that the Lord and the Church would somehow provide for them. In verses 24-28 the Lord tells them they are not to do their missionary work until they have made adequate provisions for their families.

The earliest manuscripts of section 75, including one in the handwriting of Sidney Rigdon which may be the original manuscript, indicate that, like section 72, this revelation may have been received in two parts that were subsequently joined together—the first part consisting of verses 1-22 and the second part consisting of verses 23-36.

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I who speak even by the voice of my Spirit, even Alpha and Omega, your Lord and your God—

verse 1 “Alpha and Omega” See the commentary for D&C 19:1.

2 Hearken, O ye who have given your names to go forth to proclaim my gospel, and to prune my vineyard.

verse 2 “ye who have given your names to go forth” Most of the elders present at this conference had already indicated their willingness to serve missions and had been instructed to wait until this conference to receive their specific calls (see D&C 73:2). In contemporary church terms, they had already “put in their papers.”

3 Behold, I say unto you that it is my will that you should go forth and not tarry, neither be idle but labor with your might—

4 Lifting up your voices as with the sound of a trump, proclaiming the truth according to the revelations and commandments which I have given you.

5 And thus, if ye are faithful ye shall be laden with many sheaves, and crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life.

verse 5 “laden with many sheaves” Anciently, grain was cut by hand and tied into large bundles or sheaves that were then carried to the place of threshing. To see a person or an animal “laden with many sheaves” was proof that this person had reaped an abundant harvest and would now enjoy the fruits of his labors.

“crowned with honor” Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented on the symbolism of being crowned: “Those who gain exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world shall wear crowns. Perhaps literal crowns may be worn on occasion—emblematic of their victory over the world and signifying that they rule and reign as

kings and queens in the eternal house of Israel. But at all times they will be ‘crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life’” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 173).

6 Therefore, verily I say unto my servant William E. McLellin, I revoke the commission which I gave unto him to go unto the eastern countries;

verse 6 If the reader wishes to review a capsule biographical summary of William E. McLellin, see the introductory commentary for section 66. William E. McLellin had previously been called to a mission to “the eastern lands” with Samuel Smith (see D&C 66:7-9). Though called on October 25, 1831, he did not actually leave until November 16, and he returned home before the end of December showing little inclination to go out again. Samuel Smith parted company with William McLellin before Christmas when “because of disobediences our way was hedged up before us [and] Brother William was taken sick” (Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 75).

7 And I give unto him a new commission and a new commandment, in the which I, the Lord, chasten him for the murmurings of his heart;

verse 7 “I give unto him a new commission and a new commandment” William McLellin was given another mission call, this time to work south of Kirtland, but this mission was as unsuccessful as his first.

“for the murmurings of his heart” There are indications other than this verse that William McLellin’s heart was not entirely right. For example, after only three weeks on this second mission, he stopped preaching, claiming ill health and inclement weather. When he took a job working in a store, his companion, Luke Johnson, returned home and got another companion. William McLellin himself wrote, “I determined to cease proclaiming until I was satisfied in my own mind” (*Ibid.*, 70-83).

8 And he sinned; nevertheless, I forgive him and say unto him again, Go ye into the south countries.

9 And let my servant Luke Johnson go with him, and proclaim the things which I have commanded them—

10 Calling on the name of the Lord for the Comforter, which shall teach them all things that are expedient for them—

11 Praying always that they faint not; and inasmuch as they do this, I will be with them even unto the end.

12 Behold, this is the will of the Lord your God concerning you. Even so. Amen.

13 And again, verily thus saith the Lord, let my servant Orson Hyde and my servant Samuel H. Smith take their journey into the eastern countries, and proclaim the things which I have commanded them; and inasmuch as they are faithful, lo, I will be with them even unto the end.

verse 13 A statement of Orson Hyde is interesting relative to this verse:

Soon after our return to Kirtland, I was sent on another mission in company with Brother Samuel H. Smith, a younger brother of the Prophet, who was a man slow of speech and unlearned, yet a man of good faith and extreme integrity. We journeyed early in the spring of 1832, eastward together without “purse or scrip,” going from house to house, teaching and preaching in families, and also in the public conversations of the people. Wherever we were received and entertained, we left our blessing; and wherever we were rejected, we washed our feet in private against those who rejected us, and bore testimony of it unto our Father in Heaven, and went on our way rejoicing, according to the commandment (*Millennial Star*, volume 26:774-75).

14 And again, verily I say unto my servant Lyman Johnson, and unto my servant Orson Pratt, they shall also take their journey into the eastern countries; and behold, and lo, I am with them also, even unto the end.

15 And again, I say unto my servant Asa Dodds, and unto my servant Calves Wilson, that they also shall take their journey unto the western countries, and proclaim my gospel, even as I have commanded them.

16 And he who is faithful shall overcome all things, and shall be lifted up at the last day.

verse 16 “overcome all things” See the commentary for D&C 64:2.

“lifted up” See the commentary for D&C 5:35.

17 And again, I say unto my servant Major N. Ashley, and my servant Burr Riggs, let them take their journey also into the south country.

18 Yea, let all those take their journey, as I have commanded them, going from house to house, and from village to village, and from city to city.

19 And in whatsoever house ye enter, and they receive you, leave your blessing upon that house.

20 And in whatsoever house ye enter, and they receive you not, ye shall depart speedily from that house, and shake off the dust of your feet as a testimony against them.

verse 20 “shake off the dust of your feet” See D&C 24:15 and its commentary.

21 And you shall be filled with joy and gladness; and know this, that in the day of judgment you shall be judges of that house, and condemn them;

verse 21 “you shall be filled with joy and gladness” Not because those who reject the gospel are going to be punished, but because the missionaries themselves will have borne witness of the truth and acquitted themselves of any blame for not warning their neighbors.

22 And it shall be more tolerable for the heathen in the day of judgment, than for that house; therefore, gird up your loins and be faithful, and ye shall overcome all things, and be lifted up at the last day. Even so. Amen.

verse 22 “it shall be more tolerable for the heathen in the day of judgment”

Heathens are those without a knowledge of Christ, the traditionally non-Christian nations of the world. In the final judgment, those who had no opportunity to live by the light of the gospel will be judged with leniency because of their ignorance. We are even taught that they will be judged by an all-knowing Savior as if they had heard the gospel (D&C 137:5-9). But the non-heathens—those who heard the gospel and rejected it, or who knew a portion of it and rejected the fulness, will be judged more harshly. Ignorance in itself is not a sin, unless it is willful. We are assured, by the scriptural passage just mentioned, that this mortal experience will provide each individual with sufficient experience and knowledge to allow the Lord to judge him or her. Deliberate rejection of available light, however, is a sin and cannot be forgiven without repentance.

23 And again, thus saith the Lord unto you, O ye elders of my church, who have given your names that you might know his will concerning you—

24 Behold, I say unto you, that it is the duty of the church to assist in supporting the families of those, and also to support the families of those who are called and must needs be sent unto the world to proclaim the gospel unto the world.

verse 24 “it is the duty of the church to assist in supporting the families”

Most of those called on full-time missions in 1832 were married men with families to support. Since the responsibility of supporting one’s family in most cases has priority over serving a mission (see verses 26, 28), most of these men needed some assurance of support for their families before they could accept mission calls. Once individual resources had been exhausted, it was the responsibility of church members either to assist in supporting or to support entirely, if necessary, the dependents of those called on full-time missions.

25 Wherefore, I, the Lord, give unto you this commandment, that ye obtain places for your families, inasmuch as your brethren are willing to open their hearts.

26 And let all such as can obtain places for their families, and support of the church for them, not fail to go into the world, whether to the east or to the west, or to the north, or to the south.

verses 25-26 “places for your families” Those who are called on missions are commanded—not merely advised—to find church members willing to take in and support their families. Once these missionaries had found lodging and support for their families, then, and only then, were they to embark on their missions.

27 Let them ask and they shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto them, and be made known from on high, even by the Comforter, whither they shall go.

verse 27 In some cases the Lord leaves the direction in which a missionary companionship travels entirely up to them (see verse 30).

28 And again, verily I say unto you, that every man who is obliged to provide for his own family, let him provide, and he shall in nowise lose his crown; and let him labor in the church.

verse 28 “let him provide” When a choice must unavoidably be made between supporting one’s family or accepting a mission call, one must meet the higher obligation and support one’s family. When such a choice is necessary, the faithful member need not fear losing his place in the kingdom. When resources are not sufficient to do all that is asked of us, we must prioritize. According to President Harold B. Lee, “The first priority should be to maintain their own spiritual and physical strength; then comes their family; then the Church; and then their professions” (*Bishop’s Training Course and Self-Help Guide*, sections 2, 7, cited in James E. Faust, *CR*, October 1973, 18-19).

“let him labor in the church” Where individuals are not able to accept a mission call because lodging and support for their families cannot be obtained, they are to labor in their local church units.

29 Let every man be diligent in all things. And the idler shall not have place in the church, except he repent and mend his ways.

verse 29 “the idler” An idler is anyone with available time who is unwilling to consecrate it to the kingdom. In this context, the idler is one who will neither serve a full-time mission nor accept a local calling or assignment. Idlers may be members of record, and they may even attend their church meetings, but those who will not work to build the kingdom are not members in good standing and, unless they repent, they have forfeited their place in the celestial kingdom.

30 Wherefore, let my servant Simeon Carter and my servant Emer Harris be united in the ministry;

verse 30 “united in the ministry” That is, serve as missionary companions.

“Simeon Carter and . . . Emer Harris” Excellent biographical summaries for these and all other individuals mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants may be found in Lyndon W. Cook’s *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (see also Black, *Who’s Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*). It is worthy of note that the first five pairs of missionaries called in this revelation received specific assignments (see verses 6-17), while the next seven pairs were instructed to ask and to knock and the Comforter would tell them where they should go (see D&C 80:3).

31 And also my servant Ezra Thayre and my servant Thomas B. Marsh;

verse 31 “Ezra Thayre” Note that Elder Thayre was issued another mission call (see D&C 52:22; 56:5, 8). He accepted this call, and all indications are that he served faithfully.

32 Also my servant Hyrum Smith and my servant Reynolds Cahoon;

33 And also my servant Daniel Stanton and my servant Seymour Brunson;

34 And also my servant Sylvester Smith and my servant Gideon Carter;

35 And also my servant Ruggles Eames and my servant Stephen Burnett;

36 And also my servant Micah B. Welton and also my servant Eden Smith. Even so. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1832 February

Shortly after returning to Hiram, following the conference of January 1832, Joseph and Sidney, upon resuming their revision of the Bible, came to John 5:28-29, and a discussion arose between the two of them regarding the nature of the resurrection. Are there only two rewards for those who are resurrected? Or are there more than two degrees of goodness and badness?

With a few elders looking on (who came to the Johnson home to simply watch the interesting process of Joseph and Sidney’s working on the inspired revision), Joseph and Sidney received a glorious vision and revelation concerning the three degrees of glory **[D&C 76 - The Vision]**.

About a month later, the Lord also gave some helps in understanding the final book in the New Testament **[D&C 77 - Book of Revelation]**.

Section 76 The Vision

Section 76 is indeed for us a priceless heritage! It has been called one of the greatest, if not the greatest, revelation ever received by man in this or any dispensation. It was received February 16, 1832, in a corner room of the John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio. The following statement of Joseph's provides us with helpful background information:

Upon my return [to the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Ohio] from [the] Amherst conference [held January 25, 1832], I resumed the translation of the scriptures [the revision of the King James Bible]. From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled. It appeared self evident from what truths were left, that if God rewarded everyone according to the deeds done in the body, the term "heaven" as intended for the saints' eternal home must include more kingdoms than one. Accordingly, while translating Saint John's gospel [after coming to John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."], myself and Elder Rigdon saw the following vision (*HC*, 1:245).

We should note that in this corner room of the John Johnson home it was not at all unusual for elders of the Church to come to listen as Joseph and Sidney worked on the Bible revision. It must have been fascinating to watch and listen, and there were often several elders present at any one time. As Joseph and Sidney came to John 5:28-29 and were discussing it, the Spirit moved them to question the verse. They knelt in prayer seeking further light. The Spirit came upon them and they were favored with this glorious vision.

In addition to the Prophet's brief introduction cited above, the only description of this event that has surfaced is a remembrance of Philo Dibble, a close friend and boyhood pal of the Prophet, published in the *Juvenile Instructor*, May 15, 1892. The following tidbits are contained in Dibble's description of the event:

During the time that Joseph and Sidney were in the Spirit and saw the heavens open, there were other men in the room, perhaps twelve. Among whom I was one [the names of the others are not recorded]. During a part of the time—probably two-thirds of the time—I saw the glory and felt the power but did not see the vision. The events and conversation, while they were seeing what is written (and many things were seen and related that are not written), I will relate as minutely as necessary. Joseph would at intervals say "What do I see?" as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what he had seen or what he was looking at. Then Sidney replied, "I see the same." Presently Sidney

would say, "What do I see?" and would repeat what he had seen or was seeing, and Joseph would reply, "I see the same." This manner of conversation was repeated at short intervals to the end of the vision, and during the whole time not a word was spoken by any other person, not a sound or motion made by anyone but Joseph and Sidney, and it seemed to me that they never moved a joint or limb during the time I was there, which I think was over an hour, and to the end of the vision. Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which Joseph remarked, smilingly, "Sidney is not used to it as I am."

After probably almost two hours the vision ended. Section 76 was later dictated to a scribe. It was not recorded while they were having the experience. The revelation was first published in the *Evening and Morning Star* in July 1832, and it was included in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

It should be remembered that Philo Dibble was a very old man when he wrote this account of events that had occurred sixty years before. In an earlier reference to section 76, Brother Dibble had indicated that he was actually present only at the end of the vision (see "Philo Dibble's Narrative," 81). Nevertheless, as a young man he was himself an eyewitness to at least part of the vision and was there at the time to learn from other eyewitnesses exactly what had happened before his own arrival.

Has any other prophet ever seen the same or similar vision? Some are quick to mention John the Revelator or the prophet Nephi or the Brother of Jared. We must keep in mind that several men have seen a vision of the beginning of the world to the end thereof. Joseph Smith's vision, however, went beyond the scope of this world and into the eternal worlds of varying degrees of glory. There are actually only two other men recorded in our present-day scriptures to whom this great revelation was revealed: Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel (see Genesis 28:10-12), and Paul, the apostle (see 2 Corinthians 12:1-7). And our knowledge of these two men having seen such a vision is dependent upon a statement by the prophet Joseph Smith. Joseph taught: "Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob's ladder—the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, where Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for him to utter" (TPJS, 304-05).

Although Jacob saw a vision of the degrees of glory, the present text of Genesis provides only this meager account: "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). Paul's account is not much fuller, and although it sounds as if he is speaking of someone else, a careful reading of verses 5 through 7 reveals this man to be himself. "And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:3-

4). Although Paul mentions a third heaven, the prophet Joseph's explanation does much to clarify what he intended. Paul's treatise of the three different types of resurrection, recorded in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, was undoubtedly based on his vision. Note also that Paul was forbidden to reveal his revelation. It should again be acknowledged that since Joseph and Sidney were working on "the translation of the Scriptures" when this vision was given, this knowledge could have once been in the Bible and was being restored through Joseph (see the preface to section 76). Whether Joseph was the only one who recorded it or if he was restoring knowledge that had previously been recorded, the fact remains that he is the one who has given this generation the knowledge of the varying degrees of glory.

Apparently Joseph Smith was the one privileged to record this vision for the inhabitants of this telestial world just as John the Revelator was the one ordained to record the vision to the end of the world. Although the brother of Jared also recorded his vision of the beginning of the world to the end thereof (see 2 Nephi 27:6-11), his record is apparently reserved for the Millennium, when only those of a terrestrial or celestial nature will be living on the earth.

It should be also noted that in the vision itself Joseph and Sidney were told what they were to write down while still "in the Spirit" those portions of it that could be shared with the Church and with the world. They were also told what they were not to write (verses 28, 49, 80, 113, 114-15). Their written account was then forwarded to Independence, Missouri, for church publication and appeared in *The Evening and Morning Star* in July 1832. Eleven years after the vision (May 1843), Joseph said "I could explain a hundred-fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them" (*HC*, 5:402).

While section 76 will not answer all the questions we may have about our eternal destinies, it is abundantly clear that there is an eternal reward commensurate with every level of obedience—rewards that range from godhood to perdition.

Joseph Smith's own summation of the importance of this revelation is instructive:

Nothing could be more pleasing to the saints upon the order of the kingdom of the Lord, than the light which burst upon the world through the foregoing vision. Every law, every commandment, every promise, every truth, and every point touching the destiny of man, from Genesis to Revelation, where the purity of the scriptures remains unsullied by the folly of men, go to show the perfection of the theory [of different degrees of glory in the future life] and witnesses the fact that that document is a transcript from the records of the eternal world. The sublimity of the ideas; the purity of the language; the scope for action; the continued duration for completion, in order that the heirs of salvation may confess the Lord and bow the knee; the rewards for faithfulness, and the punishments for sins, are so much beyond the narrow-mindedness

of men, that every honest man is constrained to exclaim: “It came from God” (*HC*, 1:251-53).

Yet the reaction of the saints to the doctrines revealed in section 76 was not universally positive. The old orthodox belief that most of humanity would be tortured in hell forever was so ingrained in contemporary religious thinking that Joseph’s glorious message of God’s inexhaustible love and mercy was unwelcome to some. Brigham Young recalled: “When God revealed to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon that there was a place prepared for all, according to the light they had received and their rejection of evil and practice of good, it was a great trial to many, and some apostatized because God was not going to send to everlasting punishment heathens and infants, but had a place of salvation, in due time, for all, and would bless the honest and virtuous and truthful, whether they ever belonged to any church or not. It was a new doctrine to this generation, and many stumbled at it” (*JD*, 16:42).

Keep in mind that section 76 was received February 16, 1832. Joseph would yet live twelve years and would yet receive much more information regarding the concepts in section 76. If we are going to study section 76, it is important to study other revelations received following section 76 that give further light on the subjects treated in section 76. The following additional revelations are helpful: D&C 88:18-32, 95-100, D&C 130:6-11, D&C 131:1-4, D&C 132:15-26, and D&C 137.

In 1843 Joseph wrote and published a version of the section 76 in poetry. This rewriting of section 76 apparently came about when someone wrote a somewhat antagonistic letter to the editor of the *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo which said in effect, “In ancient times the prophets of God wrote their great prophecies in poetry. You claim that Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God, but we’ve never known him to write any poetry.” The editor, W. W. Phelps wrote a bit of poetry himself, then turned the letter over to the Prophet. Joseph, undoubtedly with a twinkle in his eye, took the entire section 76 and rewrote it in poetry. See a copy of that poem following the commentary for this section. In the nearly twelve years that had intervened since February of 1832, Joseph had learned more regarding the three degrees of glory. In this poetic rewriting we find new doctrine never before published such as the concept of “Kolob.” This poem was published in the *Times and Seasons*—our church periodical in Nauvoo on February 1, 1843, and in England in the *Millennial Star* in August 1843.

Section 76, though we refer to it as “the vision,” is actually a series of visions. These may be outlined according to the bolded divisions within the verse commentary. In these separate visions, little is said about what they saw; the emphasis is upon what they heard.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 76 The Vision

D&C 76:22-24 After the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

D&C 76:41-46 The fate of the sons of perdition—the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows.

D&C 76:50-70 Vision of the souls in the celestial kingdom.

D&C 76:71-80 Vision of the souls in the terrestrial kingdom.

D&C 76:81-90 Vision of the souls in the telestial kingdom.

D&C 76:107 I have trodden the wine-press alone, even the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

The Prologue (verses 1-18)

1 Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior.

verse 1 “Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth” Compare Isaiah 1:2; Deuteronomy 32:1. Section 76 impacts our knowledge of both heaven and earth, of both the living and the dead, of both this life and the next. Elder Wilford Woodruff stated that this vision “gives more light, more truth, and more principle than any revelation contained in any other book we ever read. It makes plain to our understanding our present condition, where we came from why we are here, and where we are going to” (*JD*, 22:146-47).

The Lord addresses the inhabitants of the heavens as well as the earth. As to why the inhabitants of the heavens are included one can only speculate. However, inasmuch as they are invited to rejoice, it seems the Lord may be making them aware that he is revealing information to the earth’s inhabitants that has long been withheld from those mortals on earth. Certainly those in the heavens are desirous that the earth’s inhabitants know “the term ‘Heaven’ . . . must include more kingdoms than one” (preface to section 76). Another purpose for including the heavens is implied in verses 5 through 7, which state that the Lord honors those who serve him and will reward those who do so by revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to them. If *the heavens*, as used here, refers to beings who once lived on this earth and now serve the Lord as his messengers but have not yet received their eternal status or blessings, it may be that they are also being shown and enlightened by the power of the Lord’s Spirit (see verse 10).

“beside him there is no Savior” This is an excellent moment for the reader to contemplate the series of scriptures Acts 4:12; Mosiah 3:17; and D&C 18:23.

2 Great is his wisdom, marvelous are his ways, and the extent of his doings none can find out.

3 His purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand.

verse 3 “his purposes fail not” Everything Christ undertakes will be successful (Abraham 3:17).

4 From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail.

verse 4 “From eternity to eternity he is the same” The words usually translated as *eternity* in the Old and New Testaments do not refer to endless time but rather to distinct “ages” of time (see the commentary on D&C 19:3, 6; 76:112). President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “From eternity to eternity means from the spirit existence through the probation which we are in, and then back again to the eternal existence which will follow” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:12).

“his years never fail” He never ages, and he goes on forever.

verses 1-4 It is interesting to note that the Lord refers to himself in the third person in these verses. He switches to the first person after the opening phrase of the next verse.

5 For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

verse 5 “I, the Lord, am . . . gracious” Christ is the source of grace. The simple definition of grace is the love which God has for man—particularly that aspect of his love that inclines him to bestow upon man blessings that man does not actually merit or deserve.

“unto those who fear me” See the commentary for D&C 10:56.

verses 6-10 These verse contain marvelous promises for the Lord to each person who diligently serves the Lord.

6 Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

verse 6 “great shall be their reward and . . . their glory” A person’s *glory* is synonymous with that individual’s light. Spiritual light correlates directly with an individual’s revealed spiritual gifts. See *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

verse 7 “to them will I reveal all mysteries” The Lord is speaking of “those who fear me . . . and serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end” (see verse 5).

“all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom” Whenever the scriptures speak of *mysteries*, they refer to information that can be learned only through divine revelation. The knowledge that will be revealed to Joseph and Sidney in section 76 contains

knowledge that had been, prior to February of 1832, “hidden mysteries” (see verses 8-10). This knowledge includes things that, as far as we know, had never as yet been revealed to man—“which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man” (verse 10).

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

verse 10 “For by my Spirit will I enlighten them” Joseph Smith wrote, “Salvation cannot come without revelation; it is vain for anyone to minister without it. No man is a minister of Jesus Christ without being a prophet. No man can be a minister of Jesus Christ except he has a testimony of Jesus; and this is the spirit of prophecy. Whenever salvation has been administered. It has been by testimony. Men of the present time testify of heaven and hell, and have never seen either; and I say that no man knows these things without this” (*HC*, 3:389-90).

verses 5-10 When coupled with verses 114 through 118, these verses teach us that the Lord is willing to reveal the “hidden mysteries” of the kingdom to those who are faithful. In essence the Lord seems to say that if we want to learn what is in the larger part of this revelation, which Joseph was prevented from writing down, it will come to us through personal revelation if, and when, we prove ourselves worthy.

11 We, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the Spirit on the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two—

verse 11 “being in the Spirit” Being filled with the influence of the Holy Ghost.

12 By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God—

verse 12 “our eyes were opened” When the power of the Holy Ghost descends directly upon an individual, the veil that normally covers sight and understanding can be temporarily drawn aside, allowing him to see and participate in things beyond this natural world (see verses 116-118, D&C 67:11-12).

13 Even those things which were from the beginning before the world was, which were ordained of the Father, through his Only Begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning;

verse 13 “Even those things which were from the beginning” This phrase refers to things from the premortal state even before the creation of this earth. It is technically incorrect to label section 76 as a vision of the afterlife or of the three degrees of glory, for Joseph and Sidney saw much more than this. The scope of this vision spanned from the beginning of creation (verse 13) to the completion of Christ’s work (verses 106-107) to worlds without number and without end (verses 109-112). As mentioned above, this vision is similar to the grand panoramic vision of this world from its beginning to its end allowed to other prophets who stood at the heads of previous dispensations (see Moses 1:1-9, 24-41; 7:21-67; Abraham 3:5), but section 76 includes a vision of both the earth, from beginning to end, and a vision of the eternities. The poetic version of section 76 (see below) describes the content of the vision as including “what was, and what now is, and yet is to be.”

“his Only Begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning” Note that “the beginning” in this case does not refer to the creation of the earth or to the creation of the universe, but to the appearance of Christ on the scene. Christ is the beginning of all things (see D&C 19:1).

14 Of whom we bear record; and the record which we bear is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Son, whom we saw and with whom we conversed in the heavenly vision.

verse 14 The Savior himself may be referred to as the “fulness of the gospel” in that his personal example is the epitome of gospel living, and by virtue of his atoning death he made possible the ultimate fruits of the gospel—a return to our Father’s celestial presence.

15 For while we were doing the work of translation, which the Lord had appointed unto us, we came to the twenty-ninth verse of the fifth chapter of John, which was given unto us as follows—

16 Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, concerning those who shall hear the voice of the Son of Man:

17 And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust.

verse 17 The reader should review the sequence of the resurrections (See the commentary for verse 50. See also “When Are We Resurrected” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 13, *The Spirit World*). When Joseph and Sidney came to John 5:29 during their “translation” of the New Testament, they stopped to ponder the nature of the two resurrections.

“the resurrection of the just” This is referred to as the “resurrection of life” in John 5:29. This is the resurrection of the celestial and terrestrial individuals.

“the resurrection of the unjust” This is the “resurrection of damnation” spoken of in John 5:29. This is the resurrection of those who will inherit a celestial glory (see verse 85) and those who live a mortal life but then, tragically, become sons of perdition.

18 Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit.

verse 18 “for it was given to us of the Spirit” The full significance and meaning of John 5:29 was given to Joseph and Sidney

The Vision of the Son of God (verses 19-24)

After being assured that God’s purposes do not fail and that he delights to honor the faithful with wisdom and understanding through his Spirit, Joseph and Sidney were privileged to see and converse with the Son of God in heavenly vision. The details of that conversation, or even by what means it was carried out, are not stated. The effect of it, however, is clearly stated in verses 22-24.

19 And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about.

verse 19 “And while we meditated upon these things” At least two other great visions in the scriptures came as a direct result of pondering. Nephi says that he was “pondering in mine heart” the things of his father’s dream when he was “caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea into an exceeding high mountain” (1 Nephi 11:1). And President Joseph F. Smith said that he received his remarkable vision of the spirit world as he sat in his room “pondering over the scriptures; and reflecting” (D&C 138:1-2). As Joseph and Sidney pondered John 5:29, they were enabled, by the Spirit of God, to understand and then to see.

President David O. McKay taught the importance of pondering the scriptures:

I think we pay too little attention to the value of meditation, a principle of devotion. In our worship there are two elements. One is spiritual communion arising from our own meditation; the other, instruction from others, particularly from those who have authority to guide and instruct us. Of the two, the more profitable introspectively is meditation.

Meditation is the language of the soul. It is defined as “a form of private devotion or spiritual exercise, consisting in deep, continued reflection on some religious theme.”

Meditation is one of the most secret, most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord (CR, April 1967, 85).

Your author has had this blessed experience. May I share with you the particulars of such an experience? In my study of the scriptures, I frequently arrive at a point where I do not understand—what I am reading does not fit perfectly onto what I

already understand. I can't quite grasp the concept. At the same time I sometimes feel a sense of real excitement, almost a quickening, that includes a feeling of hope and promise that an understanding of the thing is within my grasp if I will but spend some additional time pondering it. I am often moved to offer a silent or vocal prayer. I also sense a warning that if I do not press on now to a more thorough understanding, then I will lose the whole line of reasoning and will be required, at some time in the future, to begin the whole process again. Usually only a few minutes of pondering are sufficient, though sometimes the answer doesn't come until days or weeks later. Then, almost as if I were granted a gift, the missing information occurs to me. My often-unarticulated questions are answered. I now see clearly the concept. When this occurs, I always feel like shouting "Yes!" and I sometimes shed a tear of joy and gratitude. I feel I must share my new understanding with someone, and I often try. Usually, however, the someone can't appreciate the same significance I feel.

New understanding does not often come to the casual student of the scriptures. To him most of the scriptural record is difficult, confusing, and does not offer a ready promise of new understanding. He tends to see the scriptures merely as a means for reviewing familiar scriptural stories and an occasional source of inspiration. The scriptures are much more than this. They are the most fundamental and vital resource for new doctrinal understandings. The serious scripture student, on the other hand, has a firm understanding of those spiritual concepts he has studied in the past. He ponders them frequently and has defined and sharpened the edges of his understanding. He readily perceives what he does and does not thoroughly understand. His base or platform of understanding if firm and permanent imbues him with real confidence and an enthusiasm for adding significantly to his understanding. He is hungry for, and yearns for, new insights. He reads scripture with the real hope and expectation of acquiring new flashes of knowledge.

20 And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness;

verse 20 We mentioned previously that in section 76 we read very little of what Joseph and Sidney saw. The emphasis is upon what they heard. What they did see, however, is important. Here we learn that Joseph and Sidney saw the Father and the Son.

"and received of his fulness" When Joseph and Sidney were in the presence of the Son, they were blessed to experience, in ways that we are not given to understand, the fulness of his glory or light (again, see *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15). We have previously learned that we fully benefit from his light only through our diligent obedience to his commands. When we do obey, then, incrementally, we are blessed to receive his glory (his light, his attributes). It then becomes our glory (our light, our attributes). In some way short of

this usually lifelong process, Joseph and Sidney were blessed to benefit by his glory or light during their great vision experience.

21 And saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshiping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever.

verse 21 “the holy angels, and them who are sanctified” From the poetic version we learn that the “holy angels, and them who are sanctified” saw the Son “in a fulness of glory and holy applause.” Also, in that poetic version we learn that those giving the holy applause consisted of holy angels and those who were sanctified. These are two separate groups: holy angels (implying those who were assigned to this world) and “sanctified beings from worlds that have been.” Make certain that you understand the specific meaning of the term *sanctified* (see *Justification and Sanctification* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17). Thus, is it clear that these are men and women from other worlds created by Jesus Christ who have already been exalted through his atonement and dwell with the Father in his kingdom (see verse 24). The poetic version teaches:

By him, of him, and through him the worlds were all made,
Even all that career in the heavens so broad.
Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,
Are sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours;
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons.
By the very same truths and the very same pow'rs.

The fact that other worlds were created by Jesus Christ, under the Father's direction, is a prevalent New Testament teaching, although it is often not recognized (see Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2). This doctrine is also confirmed in the Pearl of Great Price (see Moses 1:33-35), which source also reminds us, “Only an account of this earth and the inhabitants thereof, give I [the Lord] unto you.” Perhaps this is why nothing is said in the New Testament about the atonement covering the inhabitants of other worlds. The Doctrine and Covenants confirms that Jesus Christ atoned for other worlds as well. In speaking of the many kingdoms and the inhabitants thereof existing in the universe, the Lord likened them unto a man having a field, sending his servants into the fields, and promising to visit each man in his own hour and in his own order (see D&C 88:37, 51-61).

22 And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all which we give of him: That he lives!

verse 22 “last of all” Meaning “the most recent” testimony rather than “the final” testimony.

23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

verses 22-23 These are the sweetest words ever spoken to mankind! He who died now lives! There is life after death!

24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.

verse 24 We learn that the magnitude of Jesus's creative and atoning powers extend beyond the scope of mortal understanding. His creative works include more than this world, and the power of his atonement extends also to the inhabitants of other worlds. The blood of Jesus Christ was not shed for this world alone. The sons and daughters of God on other earths also partake of its saving powers.

“That by him, and through him, and of him” See D&C 88:41; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17. The Creator of the universe and all it contains is Jesus Christ, acting in behalf of the Father.

Astronomers tell us that our solar system is located in a spiral arm of the Milky Way Galaxy, a flat disc-shaped cluster of stars approximately 100,000 light years across at its widest point. A light year is the distance light travels in one year. Moving at the speed of 186,000 miles per second, a beam of light traverses 5.7 trillion miles in 365 days. The size of our galaxy in miles, then, is a staggering 5.7 trillion times 100,000. Our galaxy is estimated to contain at least 200 billion stars, half of which likely possess solar systems similar to our own. The next closest galaxy is Andromeda, a star system much like our own Milky Way, approximately 2.2 million light years away from us. Furthermore, our best telescopes can probe outward into space to a distance of over 10 billion light years and view over 50 billion galaxies, each of which possesses billions of stars. And these galaxies are only the ones we can detect with the present state of our technology.

At this point in our existence, we are not given to understand the extent of Jesus's creations. What comprises our “universe”? What is the extent of this round of our Father's creations? What of all modern science can detect did Jesus Christ create? Our Milky Way galaxy? Many galaxies? All that we can see? We simply do not know!

And what is involved in the process of creation? Today a builder may build or create a home, for example, using pre-manufactured materials. Jesus Christ apparently used only two things—intelligences and unorganized matter—as his basic materials (“things to act and things to be acted upon”—2 Nephi 2:14). These were not created but have always existed (D&C 93:29). From these he made his own raw materials, the atoms, molecules, and elements. Using these raw materials he then formed the structures which we recognize to be part of our physical world. The full creative force of Christ is reflected not only in the forming of the physical world but also in its continued existence. In some way we do not yet understand, his influence—his light—gives

energy and life to all things (D&C 88:13). Apparently the light of Christ imposes order and activates all things—even at the atomic or subatomic levels. We may presume that were he to withdraw, all matter as we know it would collapse into unorganized and deactivated chaos.

“the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof” Note that *worlds* is plural and that there are inhabitants who have lived and who now live upon those many worlds. Is there intelligent life in the universe? Of course there is! And all of these may be saved by the same Jesus Christ who was born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. The poetic version of section 76 makes this even more explicit:

By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made,
Even all that career in the heavens so broad,
Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,
Are sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours;
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons,
By the very same truths, and the very same pow'rs.

“begotten sons and daughters unto God” Which “begetting” is spoken of here? All of the Father’s spirit children—those who inhabit all of the worlds created by the Son—were born as spirits to the Father and his female companion in the premortal world. Thus, all are begotten of the Father. Also we all may become sons and daughters of the Son. We do this through a spiritual rebirth. We are “born again” as children of Jesus Christ by accepting him, his commandments, his atonement, and entering into his covenants (see D&C 25:1; Mosiah 5:7; Ether 3:14; Moses 6:6, 62–7:1).

Since this verse makes it clear that it is *by*, *through*, and *of* Jesus Christ specifically that all these inhabitants of all these many worlds are begotten sons and daughters of God, this “begetting” is perhaps more likely to refer to our spiritual rebirth rather than our premortal spirit birth.

The Vision of Premortal Life, the Fall of Satan, and the Sufferings of Perdition (verses 25-49)

It is interesting that the Lord chose to show Joseph and Sidney perdition, the absence, of glory, immediately after showing them the glory of God. This was doubtless a great teaching moment—a dramatic foil or contrast—wherein Joseph learned the difference between the glory of God and the desperate lack of glory in outer darkness.

Just as those who completely follow Christ become sons of God (verse 58), those who suffer “themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome” (verse 31) become sons of perdition. Those who become sons of perdition must know God’s power, possess God’s power (verse 31), deny the Holy Spirit after receiving it, deny the only Begotten Son (“crucify him unto themselves”) (verse 35), and deny the Son after the Father has revealed him (verse 43). To become a son of perdition is to suffer a permanent second “second death” (verse 37). They are the “only ones who shall not be

redeemed in the due time of the Lord” (verse 38). Through the power of the atonement, Christ saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition (verses 43-44).

After reading these verses which explain how a man might become a son of perdition, you might still be uncertain of the exact process. Let me again recommend that you review the commentary for D&C 132:26-27 which should be helpful.

The Lord explained to Joseph and Sidney that though some are permitted to catch a brief glimpse of perdition, no one except the sons of perdition themselves truly understand the nature, extent, and duration of the suffering there (verses 44-48).

There is an excellent teaching by Joseph about the sons of perdition in the *History of the Church*, volume 6, pages 461-62. Joseph related a dream, the major lesson of which is that the son of perdition places himself in such a position that no one can help him, not even the prophet. Perhaps even God is powerless to do anything.

The fall of Lucifer from the presence of God is documented in the Bible (see Isaiah 14:12; Revelation 12:7-9), and in the Pearl of Great Price (see Moses 4:14; Abraham 3:27-28). But there are many additional things about Satan and his fall revealed in section 76. That he was in a position of authority in the beginning is amplified in the poetic version by the descriptive “authority great.” The titles given him in section 76 are revealing. That he was called “Perdition” explains why the heavens wept over him. According to the dictionary, the word *perdition* means utter destruction, loss, eternal damnation, hell.” As Isaiah also said, he was Lucifer, a “son of the morning” (Isaiah 14:12). According to President Joseph Fielding Smith, Lucifer means “a torchbearer” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:281), the word *lucifer*, itself means bearer of light. “Son of the morning” is usually interpreted to mean he was one of the early-born spirit children of Elohim. Thus, as one of the older of the children of God and someone in a position of authority, the title of Lucifer implies he was not only rebelling against God but was also leading others to do likewise. Therefore, he is designated a torchbearer or crusader against God. In fact, as both Isaiah (Isaiah 14:13-14) and this section teach, he “sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (verse 28). To do this “he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about” (verse 29). In other words, his primary function of the earth is to oppose the work of the Church and its members. Therefore, we may be assured that whenever members of the Church are individually or collectively assembled to further their own spiritual progress or that of the Church, the devil will be there in opposition. In the words of Joseph Smith, “In relation to the kingdom of God, the devil always sets up his kingdom at the very same time in opposition to God” (*TPJS*, 365).

25 And this we saw also, and bear record, that an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved and who was in the bosom of the Father, was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son,

verse 25 “who was in authority in the presence of God” In the premortal world Satan exercised priesthood power. The poetic version calls him “an angel of light in authority great” (see Abraham 3:27-28).

26 And was called Perdition, for the heavens wept over him—he was Lucifer, a son of the morning.

verse 26 “The heavens wept over him,” and with good reason! He was an “angel of God who was in authority [held the priesthood] in the presence of God.” He was Lucifer, which means torch bearer, or bearer of light. He was a “son of the morning,” which could mean either “son of light” or an early-born spirit child of our Father in the pre-earthly life. Obviously he had great capacity, promise, and influence (compare Moses 7:28). However, he was overcome by pride. After the Father put forth his plan for the salvation of man, Lucifer was presumptuous enough to disagree with the Father’s plan and put forth his own. There was never any question, of course, as to whose plan would be employed. I could well be that presumption and pride were not accurate descriptions of his motivation. There is good reason to believe that the Father’s plan was frightening to him. He was going to have to leave a setting of great status, be born into mortality, and earn the honor of returning to his place of notable position. Your author’s suspicion is that he knew himself well enough to know that he would never make it. In essence, he was a pitiful coward who dared not take the chance of entering the test of mortality.

Who exactly is doing the weeping in this verse? Is it the hosts of heaven—the myriad premortal spirits who knew and associated with Lucifer in that sphere? Or might it be God the Father and God the Son themselves? For a defense of this latter possibility, see Moses 7:28-29 and the commentary for those verses.

Perdition means “the lost one.” It is notable that the title *Lucifer* occurs in only two other places in the scripture—Isaiah 14:12 and in Nephi’s quoting of this same Isaiah passage in 2 Nephi 24:12.

If you will study the commentary for D&C 132:26-27, you will learn that Satan became Perdition in the same way that a man on the earth might become a son of Perdition—he committed the unpardonable “sin against the Holy Ghost.” He openly rebelled from a position of great light and knowledge. By his power and influence he convinced “a third part of the hosts of heaven” to rebel with him “because of their agency” (D&C 29:36). We must presume that each of his followers also was guilty of the unpardonable sin. That is each fell from a position of great knowledge and fought against the Lord and his plan. Satan and his followers were “thrust down” “into the earth” (Revelation 12:9), “to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto [the Lord’s] voice” (Moses 4:4).

For further discussion of Satan, his motives, and his methods, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 16, *The Role of Satan*.

27 And we beheld, and lo, he is fallen! is fallen, even a son of the morning!

28 And while we were yet in the Spirit, the Lord commanded us that we should write the vision; for we beheld Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ—

verse 28 “Satan, that old serpent, even the devil” The term *Satan* comes from the Hebrew and means “adversary,” “enemy,” or “accuser” (compare Revelation 12:10).

Devil, on the other hand, comes from the Greek word “diablos,” and means literally “one who separates or divides.” This title is especially apt as the devil separated himself and his followers from God in the premortal world. Also, he now separates those he deceives from God. While God seeks to make us all one (see D&C 38:27; John 17:20-22), the devil seeks to divide us against one another into factions and parties. The divine impulse unites, the devilish divides.

Satan is frequently identified with a serpent or dragon and particularly with the serpent in Genesis 3 (see also Revelation 20:2). In the ancient world the serpent was often a symbol for the forces of chaos and dissolution. Like a poisonous serpent, Satan injects his venom and kills with his mouth—for example, by lying, accusing, teaching false doctrine, etc.

“sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ” Satan apparently attempted something like a coup d’ état—to seize the throne of God by force (see Isaiah 14:12-15).

29 Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about.

verse 29 “he maketh war with the saints of God” Satan has singled out the saints as his enemy against whom he will make war. Joseph Smith said, “The devil will use his greatest efforts to trap the saints” (*TPJS*, 161). He also told Heber C. Kimball that “The nearer a person approaches the Lord, the greater the power that will be manifest by the adversary to prevent the accomplishment of his purposes” (*Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 1967, 132). Only the saints have the potential of being thrust down to the depths of misery where he dwells. Only the saints have sufficient light available to them to be “sealed up” to their exaltation by the Holy Ghost, and only those who have been “sealed up” can fall to the status of “son of Perdition.” They can rise higher or fall farther than any other of the Father’s children.

“encompasseth them round about” It is interesting to note that a similar expression to this one, “encompassed about,” is found three times in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 4:18; Ether 3:2; 6:7). “Encompassed” means encircled or surrounded, but in this verse and in the three verses in the Book of Mormon it implies

something further. It suggests being surrounded by something that is threatening or dangerous and nearly overwhelming.

30 And we saw a vision of the sufferings of those with whom he made war and overcame, for thus came the voice of the Lord unto us:

verse 30 “those with whom he made war and overcame” The sons of perdition (see verses 31-32).

31 Thus saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—

verse 31 Read this verse again carefully, knowing that the Lord is speaking of the sons of perdition, “those who know my [the Lord’s] power, and have been made partakers thereof” This phrase refers to the high level of spiritual progress necessary before one can fall all the way to outer darkness (see D&C 67:10).

“suffered themselves” They knowingly allowed themselves to be overcome. Like Cain, with full knowledge of both Lords, they loved Satan more than God and deliberately choose to follow Satan (Moses 5:18).

32 They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born;

verse 32 “sons of perdition” Recall that perdition means “lost.” These are they who have made the devil—perdition—their spiritual father rather than Christ, and their fate is to be cast off and lost—perdition—forever. Let us review the characteristics of the son of perdition (see also verse 32). First, he knows the Lord’s power, which is the priesthood. Second, he has partaken of the Lord’s power by entering into his covenants (ordinances), particularly those entered into in the temple. Third, having received the power of God and knowing him and the truth of his gospel, he deliberately denies and defies him. He has got to say that “the sun does not shine while he sees it” (*TPJS*, 358).

“better for them never to have been born” Though only a hypothetical possibility, oh that they could have never even entered the premortal presence of God the Father or could never have been born into mortality. In either circumstance they lost or will lose any semblance of eternal glory.

33 For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity;

verse 33 “vessels of wrath” This metaphor compares the sons of perdition to cups or other containers into which the wrath of God is to be poured.

34 Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come—

verse 34 The expression that the sons of perdition have “crucified [Christ] unto themselves” (verse 35) means that Christ and his atonement are dead to them—absolutely and irrevocably inoperative in their lives. Forgiveness, of course, comes only through the Savior’s atonement.

The Prophet Joseph had some chilling things to say about the unpardonable sin and those apostates in the early days of the Church and how the spirit of murder can enter their hearts:

What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy. This is the case with many apostates of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . When a man begins to be an enemy to this work, he hunts me, he seeks to kill me, and never ceases to thirst for my blood. He gets the spirit of the devil—the same spirit that they had who crucified the Lord of Life—the same spirit that sins against the Holy Ghost (*TPJS*, 358).

35 Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame.

verse 35 “Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it” President Spencer W. Kimball explained: “The sin against the Holy Ghost requires such knowledge that it is manifestly impossible for the rank and file to commit such a sin” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 23).

“and put him to an open shame” Sons of perdition would gladly see the Savior ridiculed, spat upon, exposed to all manner of indignity, and even destroyed.

36 These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels—

verse 36 “the lake of fire and brimstone” A hyperbolic metaphor for the fate of the sons of perdition.

37 And the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power;

verse 37 “second death” See the commentary for D&C 63:17. The term “second death,” as it is used in scripture, sometimes refers to that place of eternal damnation where Satan and his sons live, so-called outer darkness (see Jacob 3:11).

There are they who have “sinned unto death” (D&C 64:7). More commonly, however, the term “second death” is used to refer to the spiritual death or that separation from God which may be suffered by mortals due to their sins (see the commentary for Alma 12:16).

38 Yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath.

verse 38 All of God’s children will be saved in a “heaven,” that is, they shall inherit heavenly glory in one of its three degrees—telestial, terrestrial, or celestial—except for the sons of perdition. All humanity, except the sons of perdition are granted “salvation”—freedom from death, hell, and the devil (see the commentary for 2 Nephi 28:23).

39 For all the rest shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb, who was slain, who was in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were made.

verse 39 This verse has caused some confusion. It implies that the sons of perdition will not be resurrected. While those sons of perdition who were won over by Satan in the premortal world will never be resurrected, we know that the blessings of resurrection are extended to all those born into mortality (see D&C 88:14-16, 95-102; Alma 12:16-18) including those who live out a mortal life, suffer mortal death, and while in spirit prison steadfastly refuse to repent. They remain “filthy still,” and are banished to outer darkness where they become sons of perdition.

40 And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us—

verse 40 “And this is the gospel” What is the “gospel”? The term gospel comes from the Old English *godspell* which is derived from *god* (meaning “good”) and *spel* (meaning “story”). Gospel, then, literally means “good story,” “good news,” or “glad tidings.” The LDS Bible Dictionary defines the *gospel*: “The good news is that Jesus Christ has made a perfect atonement for mankind that will redeem all mankind from the grave and reward each individual according to his/her works” (682). Without his atonement, we are lost. Elder Bruce R. McConkie expanded this definition and defined the gospel as, “the atonement. But the gospel is also all of the laws, principles, doctrines, rites, ordinances, acts, powers authorities, and keys needed to save and exalt fallen man in the highest heaven hereafter” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 134).

All other things in the gospel are merely appendages to his atonement. While the doctrines—the commandments, the ordinances, the “plan of salvation”—may be considered to be appendages to the Lord’s atonement, they are, of course, vital as they

comprise the plan whereby a man may be exalted. The gospel of Christ, also called the “doctrine of Christ” (Jacob 7:2, 6; 2 Nephi 31:2, 21; 32:6), then, consists of those teachings which, when adhered to, make it possible to return to live eternally in the presence of our heavenly parents and our Savior. The gospel is the “only way . . . under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 31:21). It is the only doctrine with the power to save. It is the complete formula for getting back to our celestial home.

The gospel of Christ may be reduced to a six-step formula, though certainly not a formula in the sense of a check list meant to be mechanically followed one time through in sequence. It is a formula whose steps must be all kept simultaneously in mind and worked on continuously:

1. The baptism of water. We deliberately commit ourselves to him and evidence that commitment by our willingness to be baptized. In our consenting to be baptized, we humbly manifest our willingness to forsake our worldly ways. We affirm our intention and willingness to identify ourselves with his people and enter into a covenant to take upon ourselves his holy name (2 Nephi 31:13) and obey him. We evidence our sincere desire to return to God’s presence, desiring it above all else, “with full purpose of heart . . . with real intent” (2 Nephi 31:13). We also communicate our desire to actively and enthusiastically seek out the mind of God in order that we might conform to that will.

The actual ordinance of baptism of water is the physical token of this sacred commitment or covenant. An individual baptized by with the proper authority becomes a candidate for the process which will eventuate in his spiritual rebirth and entrance into the kingdom of God.

2. The baptism of the Spirit. This is the receiving of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by someone with proper authority (2 Nephi 31:12). This essential gift bestows the power of personal revelation without which there can be no spiritual progress. It also enables and authorizes an individual to participate in the third part of the ordinance of baptism, the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.

3. The baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. This third component of the ordinance of baptism embodies the principle of repentance and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. The baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost is the very process or “ordinance” by which man progresses spiritually here on earth. Through this process he is purged of his sins and imperfections. It is an ongoing process that continues over a lifetime.

As we manifest our basic faith—our deliberate faith—by our actions through submitting ourselves to these three parts of the ordinance of baptism, we qualify ourselves to begin to receive the myriad gifts of the Spirit that gradually begin to mold us in his image. We qualify ourselves to participate in the process of spiritual growth.

How does this process actually work? How do we qualify for this sanctifying and purging by the Holy Ghost and this incremental receiving of gifts of the Spirit? The

process centers on the ordinance of the sacrament. When we partake of the sacrament, we must commit ourselves to a specific goal of obedience for the coming week. We should prayerfully search our soul and ferret out a specific and small areas where we need to improve. Then we should commit—even covenant—to do better in that specific area. If we strive diligently to obey and live up to our commitment, the Spirit will acknowledge our efforts and the purity of our motivations, and he will bless us. He will extend to us the blessings of the Lord's atonement. He will first forgive us of our sins in the particular area in which we are striving to obey (justification—he will justify us). Then he will sanctify us which is a two-part process. He will first purge out of our soul—as if by fire—the part of the natural self that led to those particular sins. He will then grant us an increment of an attribute of the Savior, a gift of the Spirit. We thus take a small step toward becoming like Christ. Once we have taken a small step, then we are ready for another, and another. Becoming and remaining involved in the process of justification and sanctification is vital.

This process does not just result in a new coat of paint or a “detailing” of our exterior. Rather it produces basic and fundamental changes in us beginning from deep within. It results in a thorough and genuine change in perspective and lifestyle. Through repeated applications of this process we are “born again” (John 3:1-5; Mosiah 27:24-26; Alma 7:14)—we become literally “new creatures,” “totally converted,” “justified,” “reconciled to God,” “born again,” “born of the Spirit,” “born of God,” and “quickenened in the inner man.” We might also be said to have “experienced a mighty change” or to have “received his image in [our] countenances” or to have “entered into the rest of God.” We may even be called “perfect” or “perfect in Christ.”

This brief description of the principles of faith, the three parts of the ordinance of baptism, justification, sanctification, and spiritual growth is hardly satisfactory in instilling in the reader a thorough understanding of these vital and most fundamental principles. For a more thorough grounding please see the following chapters in volume 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the doctrine*: chapter 9, *Revealed Faith*, chapter 10, *Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith*, chapter 11, *Other Notes on Faith*, chapter 7, *Spiritual Growth Gifts of the Spirit*, chapter 8, *The Blessings of Spiritual Gifts*, chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*, and chapter 18, *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth*.

4. The gifts of hope and charity. These culminating gifts are available to those who are well along the path of righteousness and spiritual progress. For a discussion of these two gifts, see “The Fruits of Faith” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 11, *Other Notes on Faith*.

5. Enduring to the end (2 Nephi 31:20). It seems clear that spiritual progress must be an ongoing process. It must be engaged in pro-actively and not passively. There seems to be no such thing as a plateau in an individual's spiritual maturity. When progress slows to a stop, then backsliding will inevitably begin to occur. The key to continued progression, and thus to “enduring to the end” is to maintain one's

relationship with and receptivity to the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost. Without such a relationship it seems impossible to maintain that vital eternal perspective and attitude. When the spiritual or eternal perspective is lost, then only the world and worldliness remains, and all spiritual progress ceases. We must never cease to deliberately strive to progress and improve ourselves. Only in that way does our responsiveness to the promptings of the Spirit remain fresh and alive. The principle of “no pain, no gain” certainly applies in the area of spiritual progress as much as any other. An element of personal grit, will power, and determination are essential.

Some may think of enduring to the end in terms of “hanging on” or “putting up with” or “sticking it out.” Such terms miss the spirit of real enduring. Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “Patient endurance is to be distinguished from merely being ‘acted upon.’ Endurance is more than pacing up and down within the cell of our circumstance; it is not only acceptance of the things allotted to us (Alma 29:3, 6). . . . True enduring represents not merely the passage of time, but the passage of the soul” (CR, April 1990, 43). Scripturally, an individual who is ever-striving is said to stand “steadfastly” and “always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of [his] sins; and [he] shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created [him], or in the knowledge of that which is just and true” (Mosiah 4:11-12).

6. Receiving the promise of eternal life (2 Nephi 31:20). As one’s progress continues, then his continued obedience is almost assured, and, in fact, may eventually be guaranteed by the Lord. First, the righteous and obedient individual is a candidate for an ever-increasing gift of the Spirit, the gift of hope. This is the assurance that one is right with God and that one’s behaviors are acceptable to him. Eventually A man may be “sealed up” to eternal life or have his “calling and election made sure.” Apparently, this may occur during this mortal life or at mortal death.

Please see additional material on the gift of hope and the phenomenon of having one’s calling and election made sure in volume 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. See particularly “Two Little-Appreciated Gifts of the Spirit” in chapter 10, *Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith* and “The Fruits of Faith” in chapter 11, *Other Notes on Faith*. Still further discussion of this topic is found in “The Rest of the Lord—the Gift of Hope” in chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*. See also volume 2 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, chapter 16, *Calling and Election Made Sure*.

We must add to this six-step formula, the principle of the Lord’s atonement which underlies and forms the basis of each principle discussed. We may also add resurrection and eternal judgment. These latter two doctrines were regarded by the prophet Joseph Smith as being among the first principles of the gospel (TPJS, 149, 365).

41 That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

verse 41 “to be crucified for the world” It should be noted that Jesus came into the world to die for the world, the whole world, so that all the world, not just the righteous part of it, might eventually be cleansed, sanctified, and saved in some kingdom of glory (compare John 3:16). The poetic version of section 76 expresses this idea by saying that Jesus, “lay down his life for his friends and his foes.”

42 That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him;

verse 42 “whom the Father had put into his power” To which of God’s children does this phrase refer? It likely refers to those who favored Christ and his plan in the premortal world and whom Christ was then given power to save through his atonement. Christ was not given power to save those in the one-third of the hosts of heaven who were cast down to earth or those who came into mortality who will refuse to repent and who with therefore remain “filthy still.” These sons of perdition are eliminated forever from salvation, as repentance is a condition of receiving the blessings of the atonement.

“and made by him” All of the physical laws and materials and processes of our universe depend completely upon the light of Christ. Without him the organized universe could not and would not exist or function (D&C 88:13). Thus, while Christ does not father our physical bodies, the materials of which they are composed and their biological processes come from him and his creative powers. All organized physical existence depends utterly upon him.

43 Who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him.

verse 43 “Who glorifies the Father” We have commented previously that, in ways we don’t completely understand, each individual who is saved in a kingdom of glory somehow adds to the glory or light to the Father.

“saves all the works of his hands” Christ does not really lose the sons of perdition. Rather, they lose themselves. Ultimately all humankind, except for the sons of perdition are saved from death, hell, and the devil in a kingdom of glory. It was this glorious doctrine that caused some in the Church in 1832 to stumble because it so contradicted the traditions they had been taught and had accepted in their former churches.

“who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him” Whenever the Father’s voice has been heard by man on earth, it has been to identify and testify of his Only Begotten Son (see verse 23; Matthew 3:17; 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17; 2 Nephi 31:11, 15;

3 Nephi 11:7; JS-H 1:17). It is not possible for most of us to become sons of perdition. A special testimony and a special witness are required before a man can become a son of perdition.

44 Wherefore, he saves all except them—they shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment—

verse 44 “everlasting punishment . . . endless punishment . . . eternal punishment” The Lord’s use of these terms in association with the concept of the sons of perdition has caused some confusion among the saints. Recall that these terms in section 19 do not mean punishment that lasts forever. Rather, they mean God’s punishment (see D&C 19:10-12 and the commentary for these verses). Do the sons of perdition suffer a punishment that goes on forever or do they suffer a punishment designed by God which may even have a finite end? Does this verse open the door to a doctrine of eventual redemption for the sons of perdition? In a letter to W. W. Phelps, Joseph Smith wrote in 1833: “Say to the brothers Hulet and to all others, that the Lord never authorized them to say that the devil, his angels, or the sons of perdition, should ever be restored; for their state or destiny was not revealed to man, is not revealed, nor ever shall be revealed, save to those who are made partakers thereof: consequently those who teach this doctrine have not received it of the Spirit of the Lord. Truly Brother Oliver declared it to be the doctrine of devils. We, therefore, command that this doctrine be taught no more in Zion” (*TPJS*, 24).

It is clear we are not given to know the nature of punishment afforded the sons of perdition. My own particular bias is that the Lord seems more likely to banish them to eternal ennui and lassitude than agony that lasts forever.

“to reign with the devil and his angels” It has been common in the Church to think that those who pass through mortality and resurrection to become sons of perdition may reign or rule over Satan and his unembodied angels in eternity (see Moses 5:23; *TPJS*, 181). Some have supposed that the resurrected bodies of the former will produce an everlasting advantage over the latter.

There is another suggestion in scripture, however, that the resurrected bodies of those condemned to outer darkness will eventually undergo dissolution. They may even return to the form of naked intelligence. The prophet Lehi, for example, teaches in 2 Nephi 1:22: “That ye may not be cursed with a sore cursing; and also, that ye may not incur the displeasure of a just God upon you, unto the destruction, yea, the eternal destruction of both soul and body.” As is often the case in the Book of Mormon, the word “soul” is best interpreted here as spirit. As mentioned, some have seen this verse as evidence that certain of the children of God, namely those who become sons of

perdition, may, after their resurrection, not live forever with their resurrected bodies or even their spirit bodies.

Brigham Young, referring to the sons of perdition, made a chilling comment:

They will be decomposed, both soul and body, and return to their native element. I do not say that they will be annihilated; but they will be disorganized, and will be as though they never had been, while we will live and retain our identity, and contend against those principles which tend to death or dissolution. I am after life; I want to preserve my identity, so that you can see Brigham in the eternal worlds just as you see him now (JD, 7:57-58).

Presumably, this dissolution of the bodies of the sons of perdition is to include the dissolution of the *resurrected* bodies for those who had a mortal experience. And it may even include dissolution of the *spirit* bodies of Satan and his “third part” of the hosts of heaven. This would leave all sons of perdition without any embodiment whatever. Each would have nothing remaining except for their individual naked intelligence, in which they would be cast into outer darkness, perhaps never again to be picked up in another round of creation. This final dissolution of the bodies may be termed the “third death” (the “first death” is the spiritual death of each man due to the fall of Adam. The “second death” is the second spiritual death of each man due to his own sins).

“where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” The phrasing follows Mark 9:44-48. The ancients believed that a toothache was caused by a worm eating the inside of a tooth just as a worm eats the inside of an apple. A cavity, they believed, marked the place where the worm had entered, and the phrase “the worm turns” described a sudden sharp pain in a bad tooth. When a bad tooth finally stopped aching, it was believed that the worm eating it had died. “Where their worm dieth not,” then, described an endless excruciating toothache with no hope of relief. Of course the language is figurative, as is the reference to fire, but the imagery is meant to convey some idea of the unending, inextinguishable, and self-inflicted torments of perdition.

45 And the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows;

46 Neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof;

47 Nevertheless, I, the Lord, show it by vision unto many, but straightway shut it up again;

48 Wherefore, the end, the width, the height, the depth, and the misery thereof, they understand not, neither any man except those who are ordained unto this condemnation.

verse 48 “those who are ordained unto this condemnation” Smith and Sjodahl in their *Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants* wrote of this phrase: “Not

foreordained, in the sense of pre-elected by God, to condemnation. . . . He has not foreordained anyone to that fate” (455).

49 And we heard the voice, saying: Write the vision, for lo, this is the end of the vision of the sufferings of the ungodly.

The Vision of the Celestial Kingdom (verses 50-70, 92-96)

Those who inherit this degree of glory are “exalted.” They are those “into whose hands the Father has given all things” (verse 56) and those who have “received of his fulness” (verse 58). They “are Gods.” Later (see D&C 131:1-4), the Prophet explained that there were “three heavens or degrees” within the celestial kingdom (see section 131). It seems clear that the focus of this part of section 76 is upon the highest “heaven” within the celestial kingdom.

Those accepted into the celestial kingdom must have a testimony of Jesus (verse 51); be baptized (verse 51); have received the Holy Ghost (verse 52); keep the commandments (verse 52); overcome sin and the world by faith—also overcome any trial or obstacle “the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him” (Mosiah 3:19); prove to himself and to God that he is determined to serve God at all hazards (verse 63); and be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise (verse 53)—that is; be ratified or approved as worthy of the celestial kingdom by the Holy Ghost (see also the commentary for D&C 132:7).

Though nothing specific is said in this revelation about the necessity of eternal marriage in order to achieve exaltation in the celestial kingdom, that requirement is made clear in D&C 131:1-4 and D&C 132:15-25. Also we learn from D&C 84:33-44 that faithfulness to the oath and covenant of the priesthood is a requirement.

Those who attain this glory are members of the “Church of Enoch” or the “Church of the Firstborn” and “are come unto Mount Zion” (verse 66). These are simply other ways of saying that they are exalted. As we contemplate dwelling “in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever” (verse 62), with all the blessings attendant thereto, we can understand Alma’s declaration: “and my soul did long to be there” (Alma 36:22).

The word “Firstborn” in the phrase “Church of the Firstborn” was never capitalized in the Doctrine and Covenants until the 1921 edition. “Church of the firstborn” is also found in Hebrews, and “firstborn” is not capitalized there. In fact, in the early Greek text the term “firstborn” is plural, meaning the “firstborn ones.” Although “firstborn” certainly may refer to the Savior, it also may have reference to those who are firstborn into the kingdom of God—those who will come with him at his second coming and those who will rise up from the earth and be resurrected from their graves at his coming. These are the ones who come forth in the morning of the first resurrection.

President Harold B. Lee Spoke of those who would inherit celestial glory and explained that they must be converted: “Conversion must mean more than just being a ‘card-carrying’ member of the Church with a tithing receipt, a membership card, a

temple recommend, etc. It means to overcome the tendencies to criticize and to strive continually to improve inward weaknesses and not merely the outward appearances” (CR, April 1971, 92).

50 And again we bear record—for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

verse 50 “resurrection of the just” Please recall that questions about the resurrection of the just had been part of Joseph and Sidney’s original inquiry prior to their receiving section 76 (see verses 15-19). The “resurrection of the just” is the morning of the first resurrection. All men are not resurrected at the same moment. There exists a pre-defined order and sequence in which man is resurrected. Let us summarize this sequence. The apostle Paul said, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man *in his own order*” (1 Corinthians 15:22-23; italics added).

Actually there are two separate resurrections, the first resurrection (also called the “resurrection of the just”), and the second resurrection (also referred to as “the resurrection of damnation” or “the resurrection of the unjust”).

The first resurrection is divided into two parts: the “morning of the first resurrection” and the “afternoon of the first resurrection.” Those who merit a celestial body come forth in the “morning” of the first resurrection. These are they who once resided in paradise, those who bore the title “just men made perfect,” those referred to as “the just” (D&C 76:17), meaning that they are justified, ratified, sealed, and approved of God. These are they who have had their calling and election made sure—they who have received the promise by revelation that they shall be equal with him in “power, might, and dominion” (see D&C 76:95). Those who come forth in this resurrection will live with God and enjoy eternal life which is God’s life.

The morning of the first resurrection began at the time of the resurrection of Jesus, and it is likely continuing at the present time. The final phase of the “morning” is the major resurrection that will occur at the time of Christ’s Second Coming just prior to the Millennium. Of course, those who live during the Millennium and merit celestial glory will receive their celestial bodies during the millennial period (see D&C 132:19).

Those who will inherit a terrestrial body arise in the “afternoon” of the first resurrection. The afternoon of the first resurrection begins some time after the onset of the Millennium and ends before the end of the one thousand years. As mentioned, it is during this phase that those bound for the terrestrial glory will receive their bodies. These are called “Christ’s at his coming” (D&C 88:99). These are they “who have received their part in that prison which is prepared for them, that they might receive the gospel, and be judged according to men in the flesh” (*Ibid.*). These have accepted Christ but not to the degree that would result in their exaltation.

The second resurrection begins at the end of the Millennium. The first to come forth in the second resurrection are those who have been cleansed of their sins and have thus earned the telestial glory. Then, finally, those who have earned no glory and who are destined to spend the rest of eternity with Satan in outer darkness come forth with their bodies. Even “hell” or the spirit prison cannot purge these of their filth. They were given a sure witness and knowledge of heaven’s secrets, but they denied it all and came out in open rebellion striving to destroy the church. Thus they “crucify Christ afresh.” Their fate is unknown, but, as we have already discussed, some have speculated that they may eventually experience dissolution of their resurrected bodies and exist forever as naked or disembodied intelligences in outer darkness.

51 They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

52 That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

verses 51-52 Those who inherit celestial glory must have a testimony of Jesus, and they must accept the fulness of his gospel including the ordinances of his Church. Joseph Smith taught: “A man may be saved, after the judgment, in the terrestrial kingdom, or in the telestial kingdom, but he can never see the celestial kingdom of God without being born of the water and the Spirit” (*HC*, 1:283).

53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

verse 53 “who overcome by faith” It is clear that those who inherit celestial glory must “overcome all things” (compare verse 60). But what do they overcome, and how do they do it? How does faith enter in?

The celestial-bound individual must subdue or overcome all aspects of his natural self or natural-man self. Inevitably, as we endeavor to obey the Lord’s commands, we encounter resistance from our natural self. Initially we must exert our deliberate will in order to obey. We must summon the strength and decide to obey and then obey. This willful and purposeful doing is a manifestation of “deliberate faith” (see the three chapters on faith in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapters 9, 10, and 11). With each act of deliberate obeying there follows the blessing of being granted gifts of the Spirit—increments of the attributes of Christ. These are granted by personal revelation and are received partly because the Spirit judges the obedient individual’s efforts worthy of such a blessing and partly because the Lord is able to mercifully grant such blessings by virtue of his atoning sacrifice. As we receive gifts of the Spirit, we may be said to be acquiring “revealed faith.” This acquisition results in a lessening or

softening of the pulls and tugs of the natural self. An individual who has acquired, through his obedience, much revealed faith—many gifts of the Spirit—thus has less trouble obeying. We thus see the interplay of deliberate effort (deliberate faith), spiritual growth (revealed faith), and the Lord’s grace and mercy in our “overcoming” our natural self.

“sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” In this particular verse the expression “sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” likely means sealed up to eternal life.

The Holy Spirit of promise is none other than the Holy Ghost. This is a title used for the Holy Ghost when he performs a particular type of function. A covenant is a contract or a mutual promise between two parties, and it becomes valid or binding when it is “sealed.” Anciently contracts were sealed in wax or clay with the impression of a signet ring or an official seal. Today we seal most contracts by signing them, though official seals are sometimes still used. Covenants or contracts made with God may be sealed by the power of the Holy Ghost. This occurs when a man has successfully kept his part of the covenant. The Spirit then ratifies, approves, and seals the promised blessings upon the individual. The Holy Ghost ratifies and approves the righteous acts of men so that the covenants—according to which those acts were performed—will be binding on earth and in heaven (D&C 132:7). When a covenant with God is sealed, then God will surely keep his end of the bargain. Covenants with God may be entered into but not sealed. Then the contract or covenant is not binding upon the Lord—we “have no promise” (D&C 82:10). We ensure that the Holy Ghost seals or ratifies the contract by our keeping our part of the bargain. Then the Lord is bound.

Ultimately the end result of a lifetime of covenant ratifying (or unratifying) or sealing (or unsealing) is to be “sealed up” to a certain fate or destination, such as the celestial kingdom or exaltation in that kingdom, although people can also be sealed up to wrath (see D&C 1:8-9; 133:71-73) or even be sealed by the devil (see Alma 34:35).

54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

verse 54 “the church of the Firstborn” The Firstborn of God (in the premortal world) is Jesus Christ. Thus, the “church of the Firstborn” is the Church of Jesus Christ. However, the term “The Church of Jesus Christ” is used to refer to his earthly Church, and the term “church of the Firstborn” is used to refer to his eternal heavenly Church—the celestial kingdom. Those on earth referred to by the title “church of the Firstborn” are those in his earthly Church who will still be members in the eternities. They are the faithful—the Church within the Church—those who keep their covenants, who are loyal and serve God with all their hearts. Even though a person’s name may have been found upon the rolls of the Church in mortality, he who takes his covenants lightly will no longer be a member of Jesus’s Church in eternity (see verses 79, 94-95).

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

verse 55 See verses 59-60. The poetic version adds, “For they hold the keys of the kingdom of Heav’n.”

56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

verse 56 “priests and kings” They will have all authority as priests and kings unto God. Though kings themselves, they will still serve him who is the King of kings.

“who have received of his fulness” The antecedent of “his” is “the Father,” and the fulness spoken of here is the fulness of the Father (see verse 71). Those who become heirs of the celestial kingdom are joint heirs with Christ and eventually receive the same glory (light) which the Father has given the Son, becoming like the Father and the Son in glory. The poetic version specifies, “Receiving a fulness of glory and light.”

57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

verse 57 “priests of the Most High” Usually “the Most High” refers in scriptures to Jehovah who is Jesus Christ (for example, Psalm 83:18). However, Jesus at times introduces us to the Father who is even greater than himself (see John 14:28). Thus the title “Most High” may correctly be applied to either the Father or the Son, or even to the Godhead collectively.

“after the order of” The order or type of priesthood necessary to achieve the kingdom of God—the earthly Zion or the celestial kingdom—is the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Anciently this was called “the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God” (D&C 107:3). Because Melchizedek, and before him Enoch, had held this same priesthood and had utilized it to establish Zion, the order of the Son also became known as the order of Enoch and the order of Melchizedek. Both anciently and today, out of respect for the sacredness of its full title, this priesthood is called the Melchizedek Priesthood (see D&C 104:4).

58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

verse 58 “as it is written, they are gods” This is likely a reference to Psalm 82:6, which is also cited by Jesus in John 10:34. In John it is clear that Jesus understood the psalm to say that those who receive the “word of God” can be called gods (John 10:35), and in the fullest sense Christ is the Word of God (see John 1:1, Revelation 19:13) which must be received to bring this about.

“they are gods, even the sons of God” Note that the two terms “gods” and “sons of God,” are synonymous here, for to be one is also to be the other. Children grow up to be what their parents are. If, through the gospel, we have truly become the sons and daughters of God as the scriptures insist (see verse 24; D&C 11:30; 25:1; 50:41; 4 Nephi 1:17; Mosiah 5:7; 27:25; Ether 3:14; Moroni 7:19; Moses 6:68; 7:1;

Matthew 5:9, 45; John 1:12; Romans 8:16-17, 21; 9:8, 26; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 3:9-10), then it follows that as we grow “from grace to grace”—following the example of Jesus himself—we also become more like God (see 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 3:21).

59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

verse 59 “all things are theirs” See 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 (see also D&C 84:37-38; Revelation 21:7). What isn’t included in “all things”? For the celestial saints, every righteous desire will be granted; every goal achieved; every need satisfied; every hope fulfilled. It is impossible to adequately describe the gifts and bounties of God toward those who love him. They are truly beyond our present comprehension. Those who receive the celestial kingdom belong to Christ and are in his special care, just as Christ belongs to the Father and is in his special care. And as the Father gives all that he has to the Son, so the Son shares all that he has with us, his children of the covenant (see Romans 8:17; Revelation 3:21). Like a kind and good man who wins a fortune and shares his bounty with needy friends, so Christ receives all things, and then he invites us to partake with him in his victory.

60 And they shall overcome all things.

verse 60 See the commentary for verse 53.

61 Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

verse 61 “let no man glory in man” As hard as we may be striving to keep the commandments, we must never assume that it is by our own merits that we grow spiritually and by our own merits that we are saved. We must rely “wholly upon the merits” of Christ (2 Nephi 31:19; compare 2 Nephi 2:8; see also 1 Corinthians 1:31).

62 These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

63 These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

verse 63 “These are they whom he shall bring with him” At his second coming, Christ will bring with him the spirits of “the dead in Christ,” who have rested in paradise, or Abraham’s bosom, since their death (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Before any of those living upon the earth are caught up, these dead in Christ will be resurrected and will join their Savior in the clouds for his descent to the earth. Only then will the righteous mortals upon the earth be caught up—transfigured but not yet resurrected—to meet the Lord in the clouds and will also join him in his glorious descent (see D&C 88:96-98; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

64 These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection.

65 These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

verses 64-65 “first resurrection . . . resurrection of the just” See the commentary for verse 50.

66 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

verse 66 “Mount Zion” The language of verses 66-69 is paralleled in Hebrews 12:22-24. According to D&C 84:2-3; 133:56; Moses 7:62, and Articles of Faith 1:10, Mount Zion is the millennial New Jerusalem that is to be built upon the American continent beginning in Independence, Missouri. It was this very city that the saints in February of 1832 were attempting to build and whose location had been revealed to them barely seven months earlier (see D&C 45:64-71; 57:1-3).

“the city of the living God, the heavenly place” While Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem, is the millennial city of God, that city itself is symbolic of another, heavenly Jerusalem, a cosmic holy of holies, where the Father dwells in celestial glory. Descriptions of this Mount Zion sometimes blend with descriptions of the earthly New Jerusalem.

67 These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

verse 67 “an innumerable company of angels” Those who inherit the celestial kingdom will find themselves in communion and fellowship with many, perhaps billions, of celestial beings like themselves—the hosts of heaven—from billions of other worlds all created and glorified by the same Jesus Christ who created our world and who will glorify us.

“the general assembly and church of Enoch” The English word *church* actually translates from Greek and Hebrew words in the Bible meaning “assembly” or “congregation.” Thus, general assembly and church are parallel terms here meaning roughly the same thing. Because Enoch and his people established Zion and were taken up into heaven, they are a type or symbol for all those later saints who are worthy of Zion and, therefore, comprise part of the church of the Firstborn (see verse 54).

68 These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

verse 68 “whose names are written in heaven” See Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 20:12. There are actually two sets of church records. One is kept on earth for use by the earthly Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—and one is kept in heaven, where no mistakes are made, for the heavenly

Church—the church of the Firstborn, or the faithful saints who keep their covenants and magnify their callings (see D&C 88:2). Being recorded in the earthly records does not guarantee being recorded in the heavenly record.

69 These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

verse 69 “just men made perfect” One may well argue that man, in absolute terms, can never be perfect since he will always be growing and progressing. Even when we reach the celestial kingdom we will have great distances to go before we are like God. But the scriptures say that “no unclean thing can enter the presence of God” (1 Nephi 15:34; Alma 11:37). How can a man be imperfect—still committing sin—and enter into the celestial kingdom? The answer is that here on earth and in heaven God does not hold us to an absolute standard. He does not require absolute perfection. What he does require is that we are earnestly and diligently and constantly striving toward absolute perfection. When we are, then he regularly and mercifully extends to us the blessings of his atonement and justifies or cleanses us of our sins—to the point where he classifies us as being *perfect*. Therefore, for us, absolute perfection is not possible, but “through the merits, and mercy, and grace of Christ the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8) we may become “perfect in Christ.” The poetic version of this verse reads, “These are they that are perfect through Jesus’s own blood.”

“Jesus the mediator of the new covenant” When two parties are at odds or can’t deal with each other face to face, a mediator—a negotiator or go-between—is often called. Because sinful, fallen humans are estranged from their perfect, celestial Father (see Romans 8:7; Mosiah 3:19), we also need a mediator to act as a go-between and to work out an agreement.

The “old” covenant arranged between God and Israel was the law of Moses with its preparatory gospel, its carnal commandments, and its lesser priesthood (see D&C 84:23-27; JST Exodus 34:1-2). Because of Israel’s iniquity at Sinai, knowledge of the Father and access to him were severely limited under this old or lesser covenant, because these are exclusive privileges of the fulness of the gospel and of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which had both been taken away (see D&C 84:25). Under the old covenant of Moses, Jehovah or Jesus Christ represented the Godhead, and his Father remained largely unknown to Israel. The prophet Moses became the mediator or go-between between the Godhead—represented by Jehovah, the Son—and Israel, and this lesser covenant was named after its mediator “the law of Moses.”

In the “new” and everlasting covenant, which is the fulness of the gospel, Jesus Christ once again reveals his Father to Israel and once again seeks to bring us into his Father’s presence, as he once did with Adam, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. In so doing, the Son himself now replaces Moses as mediator between the Godhead—now

represented by Elohim, the Father—and Israel or the Church. This new and better covenant, which once again brings us a knowledge of and access to God the Father, is also named after its mediator, “the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

70 These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical.

verse 70 “whose bodies are celestial” Bodies resurrected to celestial glory are qualitatively different from those resurrected to a lesser kingdom in that they can abide greater glory—greater divine energy. Thus, a celestial body can tolerate or “abide” the very presence of God and the fulness of his glory while a terrestrial or telestial body cannot.

“whose glory is that of the sun” The relative glories or light of the sun, moon, and stars are only symbolic of the differences between the heavenly kingdoms. It is in this sense that the expression “is written of as being typical” is used—the sun is a “type” or symbol of the celestial glory. Bear in mind that even the telestial glory is beyond our present powers of perception and appreciation (see verse 89), and that the actual glory of the celestial kingdom is infinitely greater than the brightness of the sun which symbolizes it.

The Vision of the Terrestrial Kingdom (verses 71-80, 85-89, 91, 97)

Those who receive the terrestrial glory are:

1. those who died without law (verse 72). This category needs modification and amplification. These are those who died without the law who would not have accepted the fulness of the gospel if it had been available to them. Those who would have accepted the gospel had they heard it are heirs of the celestial kingdom (D&C 137:7-9).

2. the spirits of men kept in prison who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh (they had heard and denied it in the flesh) but afterwards received it (verses 73-74).

3. honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men (verse 75). These also would not have accepted the fulness of the gospel if given the opportunity.

4. those who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus (verse 79). This category likely consists of church members who did not live the gospel fully.

Taken together, these qualities give us the profile of the terrestrial personality. That personality is capsulized in verses 75 and 79—“honorable men” who have a testimony of Jesus, but who are not valiant in that testimony. Neither celestial law nor telestial wickedness appeals to them.

The question often arises as to whether or not rejecting the gospel at one point in time disqualifies an individual from receiving it later. Perhaps the terrestrial individual

earns his stripes not so much by missing one opportunity to accept the gospel but by manifesting repeatedly an unwillingness or inability to repent fully and respond to high levels of light and truth. Many church members also fit into this description of the terrestrial personality. They espouse the gospel ostensibly and may even talk as if they intend to fulfill all the spiritual obligations the gospel imposes on them, but never measure up to their stated intentions.

71 And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament.

verse 71 “terrestrial” Outside sections 76 and 78, the word *terrestrial* occurs in scripture only in 1 Corinthians 15:40, where it is used to mean “of the earth” in contrast to celestial, which means “of the heavens.” The root of *terrestrial* is the Latin *terra*, which means “earth.” This derivation has troubled some students who associate the earth with Babylon, or the fallen, telectual world. But Paul made it clear he was speaking of the earth from which Adam was originally made (see 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47), that is, the earth as Eden, or paradise. And the Edenic state, or paradisiacal glory, is what this earth will receive again during the Millennium, when it will be returned to the terrestrial glory in which it was first created (see Articles of Faith 1:10).

72 Behold, these are they who died without law;

verse 72 We must be careful to not affix, in our minds, glib and simplistic criteria for assignment to this or that kingdom of glory. We must keep in mind, first of all, that the Savior himself will make the decision for each and every individual. He is the perfect judge and will render his decisions based upon an infinitely perfect knowledge of the characteristics, desires, intentions, and mitigating circumstances of each individual. He sees and understands men’s hearts intimately, and his judgments will all be incontestably fair. Secondly, a terrestrial person is one who cannot and will not abide the celestial law, but is also not of telectual quality. He would be unhappy eternally in either the celestial or telectual kingdoms. He is, at heart, thoroughly a terrestrial person, and he will eventually come to fully realize and acknowledge that fact. Similar principles apply to those found worthy of celestial or telectual glories.

“these are they who died without law” While it is true that a large portion of those who inherit terrestrial glory will be righteous individuals of the heathen nations who never heard the gospel, we must remember that there will be many exceptions. A couple of important principles apply to those who did not hear the gospel. First, “unto whom much is given much is required” (D&C 82:3). The Lord will hold those who had ample opportunity to hear and accept the gospel to a higher standard than he will those who did not. Also, the Lord is clearly able to judge those who did not hear the gospel as

if they had heard it (see D&C 137:5-9). Thus, there will also be many among the heathen nations who will inherit either the celestial or telestial glory.

73 And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh;

verse 73 “the spirits of men” This expression, of course, refers to individuals of both sexes.

“kept in prison” A prison is any place you can’t leave when you want to, and in the spirit world even the righteous are held captive by the chains of death (see D&C 138:16-18). The spirits of the righteous cannot leave paradise. Rather, they wait for deliverance from death, and they look upon absence from their bodies as bondage (see D&C 138:15, 49-50). Thus, the phrase “spirit prison” applies to the entire spirit world, including “paradise,” and not merely to that part of the spirit world where the wicked suffer in hell. “Spirit world” and “spirit prison” are synonymous terms. The spirit prison includes both paradise, where the spirits of the righteous rest and wait in pleasant surroundings for their glorious resurrection, and hell (see D&C 76:84), where the spirits of the wicked suffer for their sins until their resurrection.

“whom the Son visited” See the account of President Joseph F. Smith of this great event—section 138. We actually learn from section 138 that the Savior taught the spirits in paradise but not those in the spirit prison. This verse may be explained, however, by the fact that even those spirits in paradise looked upon their condition in paradise as a bondage from which they yearned from release through their resurrection.

“that they might be judged according to men in the flesh” Both the mortal phase of man’s existence and the spirit world are parts of man’s second estate. The spirit world allows people a continuation of man’s probationary state. The Lord’s hope for the spirit world is that many might receive a greater eternal reward than their performance in mortality would otherwise merit. Joseph Smith praised this “continued duration for completion, in order that the heirs of salvation may confess the Lord and bow the knee” (*HC*, 1:252). Any additional progress made in the spirit world, including acceptance of vicarious ordinances, may then be credited to an individual just as though it had been achieved while still in the flesh. The poetic version reads, “And then were the living baptiz’d for their dead, That they might be judg’d as if men in the flesh.”

Let us be clear. Each and every individual will end up being assigned for all eternity that place where they will be everlastingly happy and fulfilled. The Lord sees the “heart” of each individual—he knows perfectly the “desires” every individual (*Alma* 29:4). But the word “desires” here does not refer merely to preferences. It refers to what the person actually is. If a man is of celestial quality, he will be granted celestial glory. The same principle holds true with the terrestrial being or the telestial being. The simple fact is that the terrestrial individual would simply not be happy in the celestial

heaven. Celestial life will not be simply a life of bliss. There will be obvious and great challenges. There will be successes and failures. We only need to attempt to identify with the Father as he watches the results of this mortal trial on his sons and daughters. The celestial being is one who will accept and be fulfilled with all that they face in the celestial heaven. The terrestrial individual is one who will prefer the terrestrial life to the celestial life.

74 Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it.

verse 74 The poetic version does much to explain this verse: “They received not the truth of the Savior at first [though they had the opportunity]; but did, when they heard it in prison again.” Thus, it would seem that those honorable people who reject the basic testimony of Jesus when they hear it in the flesh but later accept it in the spirit world, will inherit eternal glory, generally terrestrial glory wherein they may enjoy the presence of Jesus forever as he administers that kingdom (see verse 77; D&C 88:32;33; 138:32-33, 58-59). But again, it is not the timing of their accepting the Savior that is the important factor in the judgment. It is the extent to which they are willing and inclined to modify their lives by their acceptance of Christ and his gospel. It is really just exactly who and what they are in their hearts. Are they celestial? Or, are they terrestrial?

75 These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men.

verse 75 Here is the very essence of the terrestrial individual: He is a good, honest, and honorable person—a good neighbor—but he chooses to be misled on some aspects of the gospel by human arguments and reasoning and by his own natural inclinations.

76 These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fulness.

verse 76 Terrestrial beings will bask in the glory of Jesus Christ, but they will never be able to make his glory their own. They will enjoy the presence of Christ, but they will never become like him.

77 These are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father.

verse 77 “**These are they who receive of the presence of the Son**” The usual non-LDS concept of heaven pretty closely matches the LDS understanding of the terrestrial kingdom—a place where good people dwell in joy with Jesus forever but without family ties and without the possibility of actually becoming what Jesus is. Ironically, the righteous among the so-called orthodox Christians in this world, largely

the evangelical or conservative Protestants, will get pretty much what they expect. If they accept Christ—“receive of the presence of the Son”—and reject the principles and ordinances of the fulness of his gospel, they will likely inherit the terrestrial glory. In order to receive more than the terrestrial, to return to the presence of the Father and to receive, as joint heirs with Christ, all that the Father has, it is necessary to receive a testimony of Jesus Christ and then strive diligently to accept and obey the fulness of the gospel—the principles and ordinances of Christ’s gospel. The poetic version reads, “They are they, that come into the presence of Christ, But not to the fulness of God, on his throne.”

78 Wherefore, they are bodies terrestrial, and not bodies celestial, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun.

verse 78 “they are bodies terrestrial” Terrestrial bodies cannot abide or tolerate celestial glory—it would burn them up.

79 These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God.

verse 79 What does it mean to be “valiant in the testimony of Jesus”? Certainly it means to act on that testimony—to join with his people by covenant (baptism); actively seek to be obedient and to comply with all the laws and ordinances of his gospel; serve him with all our heart, mind, and strength; and endure pro-actively to the end.

Hence, those who receive a terrestrial reward will do so, not so much because of what they do, but because of what they don’t do. In the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Members of the Church who have testimonies and who live clean and upright lives, but who are not courageous and valiant, do not gain the celestial kingdom. Theirs is a terrestrial inheritance” (*CR*, October 1974, 44). The essential ingredient of the celestial being is the character, courage, and determination live and be fulfilled by the requirements of the life in the celestial heaven.

80 And now this is the end of the vision which we saw of the terrestrial, that the Lord commanded us to write while we were yet in the Spirit.

The Vision of the Telestial Kingdom (verses 81-90, 98-112)

The word “telestial” is a uniquely Latter-day Saint term. It does not appear in the Bible, and even in latter-day scripture it only appears in D&C 76 and in D&C 88. *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* defines “telestial glory” as the “lowest of the three Mormon degrees or kingdoms of glory attainable in heaven.” Thus, Joseph Smith added a new word to the English language. Although Paul speaks of three glories of the sun, moon, and stars, and names the first two as celestial and terrestrial, he does not name the third.

Heirs of this glory are they who receive not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus (verse 82); they who deny not the Holy Spirit (verse 83) [this expression seems to refer to those saints who had been sealed up to their exaltation by the Holy Ghost but fell through sin; they did not, however, come out in open rebellion against the Church]; they who are liars and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and murderers (verse 103, Rev. 22:15).

However, “these all shall bend the knee and every tongue shall confess . . . that Jesus Christ is Lord” (verse 110; Philippians 2:9-11). This obeisance and confession will come sometime during the process of preparing to be “heirs of salvation” (verse 88). This cleansing process involves these spirits’ being called up and judged unworthy of resurrection during the Millennium (D&C 88:100-101), then spending one thousand years “in hell” or the spirit prison learning to obey at least a telestial law (verses 84-85, 105-07). Once they are cleansed and prepared, they shall be resurrected and placed in the telestial kingdom, the glory of which “surpasses all understanding” (verse 89). No longer liars, sorcerers, adulterers, whoremongers, and murderers, “they shall be servants of the Most High” but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come” (verse 112).

Joseph and Sidney saw that the inhabitants of the telestial world were “as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore” (verse 109). Though denied access to where God and Christ dwell, they will enjoy the presence and ministrations of the Holy Spirit (verses 86, 112).

81 And again, we saw the glory of the telestial, which glory is that of the lesser, even as the glory of the stars differs from that of the glory of the moon in the firmament.

verse 81 “the glory of the telestial” See the introductory commentary for this section above. It is possible that the term *telestial* is derived from the Greek prefix *tele* which means “at a distance” or “far away.” That would make the telestial kingdom mean something like “the farthest or most distant” kingdom of glory.

82 These are they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus.

verse 82 Again, “received not” here probably means “rejected” or “would not receive,” that is, when they had the chance. The poetic version reads, “These are they that receiv’d not the gospel of Christ, Or evidenced, either, that he ever was.”

83 These are they who deny not the Holy Spirit.

verse 83 Though the telestial beings have been wicked, they are not guilty of the unpardonable sin—that of denying the Holy Ghost.

84 These are they who are thrust down to hell.

verse 84 “Hell” here is the spirit prison. What is hell? In Mormonism is hell a place or a state of mind? It is both. Hell may refer to either “outer darkness” or the spirit prison—specific places. Infrequently, the term may be used to refer to the telestial kingdom. Also hell is the state of mind or the pain caused by sin—the sorrow, anguish, torment, and anxieties when one is not right with God. One may wonder: Does this latter type of hell exist in the terrestrial or telestial kingdoms? Probably not. Those in the telestial kingdom, for example, are happy to be there—it is where they belong, and they know it. The telestial heaven is where they will be comfortable, and they will live among people with whom they are comfortable. They would be unhappy and uncomfortable anywhere else. Recall that, as taught in section 19, there is no such thing as punishment that goes on forever and that the terms “eternal or endless punishment” refer to God’s punishment—not punishment that never ends (see also James E. Talmage, *Vitality of Mormonism*, 264-65).

Perhaps the most common meaning of the word hell is the spirit world. And this label would not refer to those paradisiacal spirits who are already sealed up to eternal life. We might say that hell refers to the “spirit prison.” But why is life in the spirit prison hell? Consider the state of those who are there. It is likely that it is made known to them that they must be brought to a state where they will sincerely confess Christ and covenant to live by his teachings. The alternative to accepting Christ is to remain “filthy still” and end up becoming subject to Satan in outer darkness. And, furthermore, it’s likely that they will come to know that this change, which for some will be very difficult, will have to be accomplished before the resurrection and final judgment. All things considered, there will obviously be some in the spirit prison for whom this change will be exceedingly painful. It will be hell!

Hell will eventually give up its captive spirits at the resurrection (see D&C 19:6; 2 Nephi 9:12; Revelation 20:13).

Thus, a loving God does not—as the religions of men insisted in Joseph’s day—torture the wicked and the unbaptized forever and ever. Eventually, Christ redeems all human beings, including the wicked, rebellious, and unbelieving, from death and from hell, upon the condition of repentance. Elder James E. Talmage taught: “Hell . . . is a place prepared for the teaching, the disciplining of those who failed to learn here upon the earth what they should have learned. . . . No man will be kept in hell longer than is necessary to bring him to a fitness for something better. When he reaches that stage, the prison doors will open and there will be rejoicing among the hosts who welcome him into a better state” (*CR*, April 1980, 97). See also D&C 29:38.

85 These are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work.

verse 85 “the last resurrection” The telestial-bound souls will be resurrected at the “second resurrection” following the millennial thousand years—see the commentary for verse 50 above.

“until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work” The “until” is further evidence that hell does not go on forever (see also verse 106). The last redeeming or “buying back” from the devil that Christ will do is to extend the blessings of his atoning blood to the telestial souls.

86 These are they who receive not of his fulness in the eternal world, but of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial;

verse 86 “who receive not of his fulness . . . but of the Holy Spirit” Telestial beings will never really know the Son. Though they will finally acknowledge Jesus’s lordship, they will not enjoy his direct presence in eternity, as will terrestrial beings. The Godhead will administer the affairs of the telestial world through the person of the Holy Spirit and through ministering angels sent to them from the terrestrial world. The logic of this is impeccable. The telestial beings rejected both the fulness of the Father, which is accessible through the gospel, and the fulness of the Son, which comes through the testimony of Jesus (see verse 82). They did not, however, deny the Holy Spirit (see verse 83). Thus, they may receive “of the Holy Spirit,” but not the presence or power of the Father or the Son.

This does not mean that the Son or the Holy Spirit will permanently inhabit the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms. Both these members of the Godhead will be exalted, celestial beings in eternity, and will enjoy all the blessings of exaltation, including the company and fellowship of other exalted beings. It is likely, however, that the Son and the Holy Ghost will administer the affairs of the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms, respectively, just as they administer affairs upon the earth right now, through chosen intermediaries and perhaps, at times, through personal contact.

“through the ministration of the terrestrial” The many kingdoms of our Father’s house will be governed and will enjoy communication with their presiding authorities in ways very much like the present priesthood government of the Church upon the earth. As the Lord reveals his will to the prophets, and they to the General Authorities, and they to area authorities, and they to stake and mission authorities, and so on, so heaven’s lower kingdoms will be governed by communication and instruction from higher kingdoms in an orderly manner from the top to the bottom. And the will of God will be done in all things and in all kingdoms.

Elder Melvin J. Ballard has written, “We must not overlook the fact that those who attain to the higher glories may minister unto and visit and associate with those of the lesser kingdoms. While the lesser may not come up, they may still enjoy the companionship of their loved ones who are in higher stations” (Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard*, 257).

87 And the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial.

verse 87 “the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial” See the commentary for verse 86.

88 And also the telestial receive it of the administering of angels who are appointed to minister for them, or who are appointed to be ministering spirits for them; for they shall be heirs of salvation.

verse 88 “the telestial receive it of the administering of angels” See the commentary for verse 86. Ministering angels will function under the direction of the Holy Ghost to govern the telestial kingdom.

“they shall be heirs of salvation” A reminder that the telestials are saved in a kingdom of glory, the telestial heaven.

89 And thus we saw, in the heavenly vision, the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding;

verse 89 “the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding”
Elder John A. Widtsoe explained:

The book [Doctrine and Covenants] explains clearly that the lowest glory to which man is assigned is so glorious as to be beyond the understanding of man. It is a doctrine fundamental in Mormonism that the meanest sinner, in the final judgment, will receive a glory which is beyond human understanding, which is so great that we are unable to describe it adequately. Those who do well will receive an even more glorious place. . . . The gospel is a gospel of tremendous love. Love is at the bottom of it. The meanest child is loved so dearly that his reward will be beyond the understanding of mortal man (*Message of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 167).

90 And no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it.

verse 90 “no man knows it” Among mortals, no one can know the glory of even the telestial kingdom except through direct revelation.

91 And thus we saw the glory of the terrestrial which excels in all things the glory of the telestial, even in glory, and in power, and in might, and in dominion.

verse 91 “in might, and in dominion” The terrestrials have more intelligence (more spiritual gifts), more authority, more strength, and a larger expanse in which to operate than the telestials.

92 And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things—where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

93 Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever.

verse 93 “and give him glory forever and ever” We have commented before that as we progress spiritually and add to our own light (glory), we somehow add to the light (glory) of the Father (*TPJS*, 347-48).

94 They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace;

verse 94 “church of the Firstborn” See the commentary for verse 54.

“they see as they are seen” Because God through his grace has given these individuals his fulness and has brought them into his very presence, they interact with him there directly—not as equals, for he still reigns over them, but on equal terms, face to face. It would also seem that celestial beings interact with one another on the same terms, knowing as they are known, without guile or hidden agenda.

95 And he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion.

verse 95 “he makes them equal” All the sons and daughters of God who are exalted in the celestial kingdom are equal with each other and with Christ in receiving all the power and might and dominion of that kingdom (see D&C 88:107). This is the celestial principle upon which the law of consecration rests. In order to establish Zion upon the earth, “every man [must be] equal according to his family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs” (D&C 51:3; see also D&C 70:14; 78:5-6; 82:17-19). This celestial principle is the same in eternity.

This does not necessarily mean that celestial beings will all be the same or that their situations in eternity will be identical, for there, as here, one individual’s family, wants, needs, and other circumstances may differ from another’s. Consequently, their individual, celestial stewardships or kingdoms may likewise be different. All will have, however, equal access to all the corporate resources of the exalted family.

The Lord Jesus Christ also observes the eternal principles of the law of consecration. His eternal consecration is essentially himself—his own perfection, his own merits, his own righteousness. In sharing these, his “earnings,” with us, he raises us to his level, thus making us equal to himself as well as to each other, and making us joint-heirs with him of all that the Father has (see D&C 88:107; Romans 8:17). In consecrating ourselves and our resources for the establishment of Zion here in mortality, we are following the example of Jesus Christ who has consecrated himself and the “earnings” of his infinite atonement for the good of all in eternity.

96 And the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one.

97 And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one.

98 And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world;

verses 96-98 “the glory of the celestial / terrestrial / telestial is one” That is, celestial glory is one distinct level or class of glory. Terrestrial glory is another distinct type of glory, and telestial glory is yet a third distinct type. Each glory is separate and unique. Even though individuals within the telestial kingdom may differ from one another in glory as much as one star differs from another in size or brightness, they are all still of the same order, class, or type of glory (see 1 Corinthians 15:39-41). No one mistakes a star for the moon or the moon for the noonday sun.

99 For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas.

100 These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch;

verses 99-100 The divine impulse is unity. The satanic impulse is division (compare D&C 38:27). Zion is established when the saints are of one heart and one mind (see Moses 7:18), and Zion is lost when the saints divide up into individual special interests.

In the New Testament church this wicked impulse for division was manifested by those in Corinth who accepted some church leaders while rejecting others or who accepted some doctrines while resisting others as they pursued their own individual agenda (see 1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 3:3-9). Thus, they divided the unity of the church and of the gospel into rival factions and parties—of Paul, of Apollos, of Cephas, and such. The Old Testament names in D&C 76:100 witness to the same wicked impulse toward factionalism among the members in earlier dispensations. Similarly, there are some in the Church today who will sustain some leaders but not others and who treat the restored gospel as though it were a buffet lunch—accepting the leaders, doctrines, and policies they like and rejecting the ones they do not. But if the saints cannot learn to become one in Jesus’s Church upon the earth, we need not suppose we will do so in eternity.

101 But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.

verse 101 Given the setting created by verses 99-100, this verse might well refer to some within the Church today. There are some telestial persons in the LDS Church and in other Christian churches who do not really have testimonies of the fulness of the gospel or even of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, though they would appear to. In reality, these persons are followers of men and believe in the teachings of men. They strive to turn the Church to the prevailing views of Babylon. Such persons

merely use the church membership as a mask while they pursue their own individual ends in the service of a different master. The poetic version of the vision says of them, “They went their own way, and they have their reward,” and “In darkness they worshipp’d; to darkness they go.”

102 Last of all, these all are they who will not be gathered with the saints, to be caught up unto the church of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud.

verse 102 See verses 63-67; D&C 45:45; 78:21.

103 These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.

verses 103 A parallel list of characteristics of telestial souls in the book of Revelation adds: the fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, and idolaters (see Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

104 These are they who suffer the wrath of God on earth.

105 These are they who suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

verses 104-105 The reference here is to the wicked who will be living on the earth and who will be burned to death at the second coming of Christ (see also verse 106). Their physical suffering from this very real and very literal fire will last, however, only until they are dead. It is called “eternal” fire because it is the just punishment of an eternal God (see D&C 19:6-12). Additionally, once the wicked are dead, their spirits will be consigned to hell, and “eternal fire” is also used as a figurative expression for the spiritual suffering they will experience in hell between their death and their resurrection. This hell is also located “on earth,” though separated by a veil from the mortal and temporal world of our experience.

106 These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God, until the fulness of times, when Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work;

verse 106 “until the fulness of times” Once again, this verse teaches us that there is an eventual exit from hell. When Christ has completed all his work, the captives in hell will be set free and will be resurrected to the telestial kingdom. This will take place only after the great Millennium and after Satan has been put in chains and cast out forever.

“Christ . . . shall have perfected his work” *Perfected* is used in its biblical sense to mean “completed.” The Greek and Hebrew words sometimes translated as *perfect* in the Bible usually mean “complete,” “whole,” or “mature.”

107 When he shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

verse 107 “he shall deliver up the kingdom” When Jesus Christ has completed his stewardship assignment and has redeemed all that was fallen and has redeemed and reconciled it all to God, he will then turn all things over to his Father and render the glory of his accomplishments to the Father (see D&C 19:19; Moses 4:2; Revelation 1:6). The Father will thus be further glorified and enlarged by the immortality and eternal life brought to pass for so many of his children (see Moses 1:39). Christ will be installed upon the throne of his Father, where the righteous will reign with him as joint-heirs, and the glorified Father will assume an even more glorious state (*TPJS*, 347-48).

“I have . . . trodden the wine press alone” The winepress is a double symbol representing the dual roles of Christ as both judge and Savior. As a symbol of divine justice, the winepress represents Christ’s work in crushing all his enemies beneath his feet as if they were grapes in a vat and directing them to drink the wine or the results of his victory over them. The poetic version says, “Till Christ shall have trodden all enemies down.” In this role as conqueror and judge, the redness of Jesus’s garments (see Isaiah 63:1-4; D&C 133:48, 50) comes from the blood of the wicked whom he justly tramples down at his second coming “like him that treadeth in the winefat” (Isaiah 63:2) and who are forced to drink the bitter wine of his victory and his justice by suffering for their sins in hell.

As a symbol of Christ’s saving atonement and his role as Savior, however, the winepress represents the Savior himself being pressed therein until his blood is shed in the Garden of Gethsemane. *Gath* in Hebrew means “winepress,” and *semene* means “oil” or “richness.” Thus, Gethsemane means “winepress of richness.” Jesus as the “true vine” (John 15:1, 5; 1 Nephi 15:15; Alma 16:17) enters the garden of the winepress, Gethsemane, and there is pressed like grapes in a vat with the hideous weight of the sufferings and pains of the world. Under that tremendous load, his blood, like the juice pressed from grapes, is squeezed through his very skin, and he bleeds at every pore (see D&C 19:18; Mosiah 3:7; Luke 22:44). In his role as Savior, the redness of Jesus’s garments comes from his own blood, shed in the garden and on the cross in our behalf so that we might not suffer (see D&C 133:48). In partaking of the sacrament, the early saints drank wine squeezed in a press in remembrance of the symbolic wine of his blood that was squeezed from his body and shed for us in the press of Gethsemane.

Further, Jesus is described as having “trodden the wine-press alone” because on the one hand he alone conquers all things as victor, and because on the other hand he alone suffered all things as victim. Beyond this, we must remember that the Savior endured his infinite agony in the garden alone. When the worst came, there was no one

to help him or comfort him—the Spirit left him, and even his Father withdrew from him, to leave him utterly and horribly alone in his infinite agony (Matthew 27:46).

“the fierceness of the wrath of almighty God” Finally, we are reminded that the suffering of the Savior in Gethsemane and on the cross was orchestrated by the Father. Though it was made necessary by the sins of men, it was not caused by them. Nor was his suffering of Satan’s design. And there was nothing of arbitrariness in his suffering; the Father had him suffer—just enough—no more and no less than was necessary. Yet his suffering was unimaginable, as he had to come to know the pains, the temptations, the sufferings of every man, that he might know how to judge with perfect fairness (Alma 7:11-12; Hebrews 2:18). See the important discussion in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 19, *The Essence of the Lord’s Atonement*.

108 Then shall he be crowned with the crown of his glory, to sit on the throne of his power to reign forever and ever.

109 But behold, and lo, we saw the glory and the inhabitants of the telestial world, that they were as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore;

verse 109 “they were as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven” Which kingdom—celestial, terrestrial, or telestial—will, in the eternities, be the most populous? If we were to take D&C 137:10 at face value, that is that all who die before the age of accountability automatically return to God’s presence, then perhaps the celestial kingdom would be. It seems more likely that those in the telestial kingdom will outnumber all others.

110 And heard the voice of the Lord saying: These all shall bow the knee, and every tongue shall confess to him who sits upon the throne forever and ever;

verse 110 “These all shall bow the knee, and every tongue shall confess” These seems here to refer specifically to the heirs of the telestial kingdom, a view supported by the poetic version. All those in the celestial and terrestrial kingdoms would by this time have been raised in the first resurrection and would have already acknowledged Jesus as their Lord. Of those who will be saved, all that are left at this point, at the second resurrection, the resurrection of the unjust, are these telestial rebels—who must accept Christ as their ruler and acknowledge his power in order to be redeemed at last from the power of the devil.

Among all the innumerable hosts of the saved in all the kingdoms of glory, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ and that his is the only name in eternity through which they may be saved. One may well argue that such bowing and confessing is not the same as having a testimony of Jesus and being valiant in that testimony. Rather it merely recognizes the practical necessity of

submission to his power. The celestial and terrestrial heirs will have made their confession and obeisance before or at the first resurrection. The telestial beings will do it before or at the second resurrection. Note how radical this doctrine would have seemed in 1832. When the Christian world insisted that the wicked would burn in hell forever, Joseph Smith revealed that they will all finally bend the knee and confess the Savior and then be redeemed in heavenly glory.

111 For they shall be judged according to their works, and every man shall receive according to his own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared;

112 And they shall be servants of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end.

verse 112 “And they shall be servants of the Most High” All those saved in any degree of glory, including the telestial, will be servants of God in eternity.

“where God and Christ dwell they cannot come” This limitation or restriction on the telestials is not the result of statute. There is no written law somewhere which is enforced by angels standing guard. Rather this restriction is the natural result of what they have become. “For where I am they cannot come, for they have no power” (D&C 29:29). The telestial body simply cannot tolerate a celestial environment, and it is likely that the telestial soul would never have the ability to travel to the celestial realm.

There is no indication in scripture that progress is possible from one state to another—from one kingdom to another—once resurrection has occurred. President George Albert Smith observed: “There are some people who have supposed that if we are quickened telestial bodies, that eventually, throughout the ages of eternity, we will continue to progress until we will find our place in the celestial kingdom, but the scriptures and revelations of God have said that those who are quickened telestial bodies cannot come where God and Christ dwell, worlds without end” (CR, October 1975, 172). Elder Spencer W. Kimball agreed with this when he declared: “After a person has been assigned to his place in the kingdom, either in the telestial, the terrestrial, or the celestial, or to his exaltation, he will never advance from his assigned glory to another glory. That is eternal!” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 243-44).

“worlds without end” Forever and ever. In Hebrew and Greek the same words are used for eternity, age, and world. In the idiom of the ancient scriptures, a “world” is as much, if not more, a period of time than a place.

Epilogue and Conclusion (verses 113-119)

A fitting conclusion to section 76 was written by Otten and Campbell:

The fundamental question with which we are confronted is as follows: How do we stand in our relationship to a testimony of Jesus Christ? Sons of Perdition deny him. Telestial people receive not the testimony of Jesus. Terrestrial people reject the

testimony of Jesus in mortality, but afterward receive it and/or fail to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus. Celestial saints receive the testimony of Jesus and are true and faithful to it. Our eternal destiny is dependent upon our faithfulness to a testimony of Jesus Christ (*Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants*, volume 2, 35).

Again, however, please be reminded that our eternal reward depends on just who we are, and not on the timing of our conversion.

113 This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit.

114 But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion;

verse 114 “the mysteries of his kingdom” See the commentary for verse 7.

115 Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter;

verse 115 “not lawful for man to utter” Joseph and Sidney saw much more in this great vision than is recorded in section 76, and much of what they saw was not to be published to the world or even to the membership of the Church. A later comment of Joseph’s to this effect is recorded in his *History of the Church*: “Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder—the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, where Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for him to utter. I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them. The Lord deals with this people as a tender parent with a child, communicating light and intelligence and the knowledge of his ways as they can bear it” (5:402).

“**Not lawful . . . to utter**” indicates knowledge received by one individual that he or she is then prevented by covenant or by commandment from revealing to others, even if they are also faithful members of the Church. In 1832 this would have included, but would not be limited to, most of the information Latter-day Saints now receive lawfully in the temples of God.

The Prophet Joseph also taught:

Could we read and comprehend all that has been written from the days of Adam, on the relation of man to God and angels in a future state, we should know very little about it. Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to them, can never give us a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject (*HC*, 6:50).

116 Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him;

117 To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves;

118 That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.

verses 117-118 “this privilege of seeing and knowing . . . while in the flesh”

This is referring to the privilege granted here to Joseph and Sidney. This passage refers to receiving first-person experience of God rather than only having faith in the words or experiences of others. It is knowing the Father and the Son directly, personally, and empirically through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. This is the great privilege of those for whom the veil is parted because of their faith, that they may see God and come into his presence while yet in the flesh. For this experience it is necessary to be filled with the Holy Spirit, whose indwelling presence changes our nature and preserves our mortal bodies in their contact with divine glory (compare D&C 130:22).

119 And to God and the Lamb be glory, and honor, and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Joseph Smith's Poetic Version of Section 76

In early 1843, the prophet Joseph, aided by his clerks W. W. Phelps and Wilford Woodruff, was preparing his personal history for publication. Portions of that history were already appearing serially in the *Times and Seasons*. In particular he was reviewing the period of February and March 1832. It was during this period that section 76 ("The Vision") had been received in Hiram Ohio.

January and February 1843 was also a time of celebration and conviviality for the saints. An Illinois court in Springfield, Illinois, had just advised Illinois Governor Thomas Ford that a writ issued for Joseph Smith's extradition to Missouri was illegal, and a federal district judge discharged the Prophet on January 7, 1843. Joseph had been in Springfield during the hearings. He returned to Nauvoo, as might be expected, as a hero. The saints would continue to enjoy the blessings of Joseph's society. Two days after his return from Springfield, W. W. Phelps presented Joseph a poem entitled *Vade Mecum*, or *Go with Me*, as part of the jubilee celebration. It was in this setting in February 1843 that a poetic version of section 76 entitled *The Answer* was first published, under Joseph's name, in the *Times and Seasons*. It was a rejoinder to Phelps's jubilee poem, *Vade Mecum*.

During those intervening eleven years between Joseph's receiving section 76 and the writing of his poetic version, Joseph had learned much. His added insights are included in the poetic version. Hence, Joseph's poetic version serves as an important commentary on section 76.

Some examples of the additional information afforded by his poetic version include:

1. The premortal experience and nature of spirits. The concept of premortal spirits was not well understood during the first years after the Church's founding in 1830. The first hint of such knowledge came in 1833, when Joseph received Doctrine and Covenants section 93. Privately, as early as 1839, Joseph began teaching that there was a mother in heaven—the mother of our premortal spirits. By 1841, Joseph publicly declared, "Spirits are eternal" (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* [Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980], 60.). When the Book of Abraham was published in March 1842, the doctrine was further clarified (see Abraham 3:18).

2. The universality of the Savior's atoning sacrifice. In the poem, Joseph emphasizes that the redemption of Christ was not limited to this world nor to a specific period of time. It reached backward in time and forward into the future. It blessed all who ever have and who ever will live upon this earth and its effects spread across the

vastness of space. It was a final act that did not necessitate another sacrifice in the future.

3. Lucifer's remarkable position of prominence in the premortal world. Only in his poem does Joseph identify Lucifer's "godified state" before he fell to the earth to become the devil.

4. The kingdoms of glory. Joseph clarified the identity of those who would inherit the individual kingdoms of glory.

He also emphasizes the happy state of those who will inherit the telestial kingdom. An often repeated story associated with the telestial kingdom deals with something Joseph Smith was purported to have said: "The telestial kingdom is so great, if we knew what it was like we would kill ourselves to get there." Wilford Woodruff recounted a comment by the Prophet that may be the basis of that apocryphal story. According to Charles Lowell Walker, Wilford Woodruff "referred to a saying of Joseph Smith, which he heard him utter: That if the People knew what was behind the veil [sic], they would try by every means to commit suicide that they might get there, but the Lord in his wisdom had implanted the fear of death in every person that they might cling to life and thus accomplish the designs of their creator" (*Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, ed. A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson [Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980], 465). What he may have meant by this statement may never be known, but we do know that the happy state of those who inherit the telestial kingdom is emphasized in the poem.

The poem also clarifies the fate of those who inherit the highest degree of the celestial kingdom—that they will become gods.

5. Joseph Smith's life and mission. Just a few days before Joseph published the poem, he stated, "I know what I say; I understand my mission and business. God Almighty is my shield, and what can man do if God is my friend. I shall not be sacrificed until my time comes—then I shall be offered freely" (*Wilford Woodruff Journal*, 22 January, 1843). Contemporary sources confirm the Prophet's sense of mission and his knowledge regarding his death (see, for example, Ronald K. Esplin, "Joseph Smith's Mission and Timetable: 'God Will Protect Me until My Work Is Done,'" in Larry C. Porter and Susan Easton Black, eds., *The Prophet Joseph: Essays on the Life and Mission of Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988], 280-319.). In this regard, note particularly the first stanza of Joseph's poem.

Vade Mecum (Go with Me) From W. W. Phelps to Joseph Smith the Prophet

Go with me, will you go to the saints that have died,—
 To the next, better world, where the righteous reside;
 Where the angels and spirits in harmony be
 In the joys of a vast paradise? Go with me.
 Go with me where the truth and the virtues prevail;

Where the union is one, and the years never fail;
Not a heart can conceive, nor a nat'ral eye see
What the Lord has prepar'd for the just. Go with me.
Go with me where there is no destruction or war;
Neither tyrants, or sland'ers, or nations ajar;
Where the system is perfect, and happiness free,
And the life is eternal with God. Go with me.
Go with me, will you go to the mansions above,
Where the bliss, and the knowledge, the light, and the love,
And the glory of God do eternally be?—
Death, the wages of sin, is not there. Go with me.
Nauvoo, January, 1843.

The Answer. To W. W. Phelps, ESQ.

I will go, I will go, to the home of the Saints,
Where the virtue's the value, and life the reward;
But before I return to my former estate
I must fulfill the mission I had from the Lord.
Wherefore, hear, O ye heavens, and give ear O ye earth;
And rejoice ye inhabitants truly again;
For the Lord he is God, and his life never ends,
And besides him there ne'er was a Saviour of men.

(verse 1)

His ways are a wonder; his wisdom is great;
The extent of his doings, there's none can unveil;
His purposes fail not; from age unto age
He still is the same, and his years never fail.

(verses 2-3)

His throne is the heavens, his life time is all
Of eternity now, and eternity then;
His union is power, and none stays his hand,—
The Alpha, Omega, forever: Amen.

(verse 4)

For thus saith the Lord, in the spirit of truth,
I am merciful, gracious, and good unto those
That fear me, and live for the life that's to come;
My delight is to honor the saints with repose;
That serve me in righteousness true to the end;
Eternal's their glory, and great their reward;
I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them,—

The great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd—
(verse 6)

From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth.

And for ages to come unto them I will show
My pleasure & will, what my kingdom will do:

Eternity's wonders they truly shall know.

(verse 7)

Great things of the future I'll show unto them,

Yea, things of the vast generations to rise;

For their wisdom and glory shall be very great,

And their pure understanding extend to the skies:

(verse 8)

And before them the wisdom of wise men shall cease,

And the nice understanding of prudent ones fail!

For the light of my spirit shall light mine elect,

And the truth is so mighty 'twill ever prevail.

(verses 9-10)

And the secrets and plans of my will I'll reveal;

The sanctified pleasures when earth is renew'd,

What the eye hath not seen, nor the ear hath yet heard;

Nor the heart of the natural man ever hath view'd.

(verse 10)

I, Joseph, the prophet, in spirit beheld,

And the eyes of the inner man truly did see

Eternity sketch'd in a vision from God,

Of what was, and now is, and yet is to be.

(verses 11-12)

Those things which the Father ordained of old,

Before the world was, or a system had run,—

Through Jesus the Maker and Savior of all;

The only begotten, (Messiah) his son.

(verses 13)

Of whom I bear record, as all prophets have,

And the record I bear is the fulness,—yea even

The truth of the gospel of Jesus—the Christ,

With whom I convers'd, in the vision of heav'n.

(verses 14)

For while in the act of translating his word,

Which the Lord in his grace had appointed to me,

I came to the gospel recorded by John,

Chapter fifth and the twenty-ninth verse, which you'll see. (verse 15)

Which was given as follows:

“Speaking of the resurrection of the dead,—

“Concerning those who shall hear the voice of

“the son of man—

“And shall come forth:—

“They who have done good in the resurrection

“of the just.

“And they who have done evil in the resurrection

“of the unjust.” (verses 16-17)

I marvel'd at these resurrections, indeed!

For it came unto me by the spirit direct:—

And while I did meditate what it all meant,

The Lord touch'd the eyes of my own intellect:—

(verses 18-19)

Hosanna forever! they open'd anon,

And the glory of God shone around where I was;

And there was the Son, at the Father's right hand,

In a fulness of glory, and holy applause.

(verses 20)

I beheld round the throne, holy angels and hosts,

And sanctified beings from worlds that have been,

In holiness worshiping God and the Lamb,

Forever and ever, amen and amen!

(verse 21)

And now after all of the proofs made of him,

By witnesses truly, by whom he was known,

This is mine, last of all, that he lives; yea he lives!

And sits at the right hand of God, on his throne.

(verse 22)

And I heard a great voice, bearing record from heav'n,

He's the Saviour, and only begotten of God—

By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made,

Even all that career in the heavens so broad,

(verses 23-24)

Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,

Are sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours;

And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons,

By the very same truths, and the very same pow'rs.

(verse 24)

And I saw and bear record of warfare in heav'n;
 For an angel of light, in authority great,
 Rebell'd against Jesus, and sought for his pow'r,
 But was thrust down to woe from his Godified state.

(verse 25)

And the heavens all wept, and the tears drop'd like dew,
 That Lucifer, son of the morning had fell!
 Yea, is fallen! is fall'n, and become, Oh, alas!
 The son of Perdition; the devil of hell!

(verses 26-27)

And while I was yet in the spirit of truth,
 The commandment was: write ye the vision all out;
 For Satan, old serpent, the devil's for war,—
 And yet will encompass the saints round about.

(verses 28-29)

And I saw, too, the suff'ring and mis'ry of those,
 (Overcome by the devil, in warfare and fight,)
 In hell-fire, and vengeance, the doom of the damn'd;
 For the Lord said, the vision is further: so write.

(verse 30)

For thus saith the Lord, now concerning all those
 Who know of my power and partake of the same;
 And suffer themselves, that they be overcome
 By the power of Satan; despising my name;—

(verse 31)

Defying my power, and denying the truth;—
 They are they—of the world, or of men, most forlorn,
 The Sons of Perdition, of whom, ah! I say,
 'T were better for them had they never been born!

(verses 31-32)

They're vessels of wrath, and dishonor to God,
 Doom'd to suffer his wrath, in the regions of woe,
 Through the terrific night of eternity's round,
 With the devil and all of his angels below:

(verse 33)

Of whom it is said, no forgiveness is giv'n,
 In this world, alas! nor the world that's to come;
 For they have denied the spirit of God,
 After having receiv'd it: and mis'ry's their doom.

(verses 34-35)

And denying the only begotten of God,—
And crucify him to themselves, as they do,
And openly put him to shame in their flesh,
By gospel they cannot repentance renew.

(verse 35)

They are they, who must go to the great lake of fire,
Which burneth with brimstone, yet never consumes,
And dwell with the devil, and angels of his,
While eternity goes and eternity comes.

(verse 36)

They are they, who must groan through the great second death,
And are not redeemed in the time of the Lord;
While all the rest are, through the triumph of Christ,
Made partakers of grace, by the power of his word.

(verses 37-39)

The myst'ry of Godliness truly is great;—
The past, and the present, and what is to be;
And this is the gospel—glad tidings to all,
Which the voice from the heavens bore record to me:

(verse 40)

That he came to the world in the middle of time,
To lay down his life for his friends and his foes,
And bear away sin as a mission of love;
And sanctify earth for a blessed repose.

(verse 41)

'Tis decreed, that he'll save all the work of his hands,
And sanctify them by his own precious blood;
And purify earth for the Sabbath of rest,
By the agent of fire, as it was by the Flood.

(verse 42)

The Savior will save all his Father did give,
Even all that he gave in the regions abroad,
Save the Sons of Perdition: They're lost; ever lost,
And can never return to the presence of God.

(verse 43)

They are they, who must reign with the devil in hell,
In eternity now, and eternity then,
Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench'd;—
And the punishment still, is eternal. Amen.

(verse 44)

And which is the torment apostates receive,
 But the end, or the place where the torment began,
 Save to them who are made to partake of the same,
 Was never, nor will be, revealed unto man.

(verse 45-46)

Yet God shows by vision a glimpse of their fate,
 And straightway he closes the scene that was shown:
 So the width, or the depth, or the misery thereof,
 Save to those that partake, is forever unknown.

(verse 47-48)

And while I was pondering, the vision was closed;
 And the voice said to me, write the vision: for lo!
 'Tis the end of the scene of the sufferings of those,
 Who remain filthy still in their anguish and woe.

(verse 49)

And again I bear record of heavenly things,
 Where virtue's the value, above all that's pric'd—
 Of the truth of the gospel concerning the just,
 That rise in the first resurrection of Christ.

(verse 50)

Who receiv'd and believ'd, and repented likewise,
 And then were baptiz'd, as a man always was,
 Who ask'd and receiv'd a remission of sin,
 And honored the kingdom by keeping its laws.

(verse 51)

Being buried in water, as Jesus had been,
 And keeping the whole of his holy commands,
 They received the gift of the spirit of truth,
 By the ordinance truly of laying on hands.

(verse 52)

For these overcome, by their faith and their works,
 Being tried in their life-time, as purified gold,
 And seal'd by the spirit of promise, to life,
 By men called of God, as was Aaron of old.

(verse 53)

They are they, of the church of the firstborn of God,—
 And unto whose hands he committeth all things;
 For they hold the keys of the kingdom of heav'n,
 And reign with the Savior, as priests, and as kings.

(verses 54-56)

They're priests of the order of Melchizedek,
Like Jesus, (from whom is this highest reward,)
Receiving a fulness of glory and light;
As written: They're Gods; even sons of the Lord.
(verses 57-58)

So all things are theirs; yea, of life, or of death;
Yea, whether things now, or to come, all are theirs,
And they are the Savior's, and he is the Lord's,
Having overcome all, as eternity's heirs.
(verses 59-60)

'Tis wisdom that man never glory in man,
But give God the glory for all that he hath;
For the righteous will walk in the presence of God,
While the wicked are trod under foot in his wrath.
(verse 61)

Yea, the righteous shall dwell in the presence of God,
And of Jesus, forever, from earth's second birth—
For when he comes down in the splendor of heav'n,
All these he'll bring with him, to reign on the earth.
(verses 62-63)

These are they that arise in their bodies of flesh,
When the trump of the first resurrection shall sound;
These are they that come up to Mount Zion, in life,
Where the blessings and gifts of the spirit abound.
(verses 64-66)

These are they that have come to the heavenly place;
To the numberless courses of angels above:
To the city of God; e'en the holiest of all,
And the home of the blessed, the fountain of love:
(verses 67)

To the church of old Enoch, and of the first born:
And gen'ral assembly of ancient renown'd.
Whose names are all kept in the archives of heav'n,
As chosen and faithful, and fit to be crown'd.
(verse 68)

These are they that are perfect through Jesus' own blood,
Whose bodies celestial are mention'd by Paul,
Where the sun is the typical glory thereof,
And God, and his Christ, are the true judge of all.
(verses 69-70)

Again, I beheld the terrestrial world,
 In order and glory of Jesus, go on;
 'Twas not as the church of the first born of God,
 But shone in its place, as the moon to the sun.

(verse 71)

Behold, these are they that have died without law;
 The heathen of ages that never had hope.
 And those of the region and shadow of death,
 The spirits in prison, that light has brought up.

(verses 72-73)

To spirits in prison the Savior once preach'd,
 And taught them the gospel, with powers afresh;
 And then were the living baptiz'd for their dead,
 That they might be judg'd as if men in the flesh.

(verse 74)

These are they that are hon'able men of the earth;
 Who were blinded and dup'd by the cunning of men:
 They receiv'd not the truth of the Savior at first;
 But did, when they heard it in prison, again.

(verses 74-75)

Not valiant for truth, they obtain'd not the crown,
 But are of that glory that's typ'd by the moon:
 They are they, that come into the presence of Christ,
 But not to the fulness of God, on his throne.

(verses 76-79)

Again I beheld the telestial, as third,
 The lesser, or starry world, next in its place.
 For the leaven must leaven three measures of meal,
 And every knee bow that is subject to grace.

(verse 81)

These are they that receiv'd not the gospel of Christ,
 Or evidence, either, that he ever was;
 As the stars are all diff'rent in glory and light,
 So differs the glory of these by the laws.

(verse 82)

These are they that deny not the spirit of God,
 But are thrust down to hell, with the devil, for sins,
 As hypocrites, liars, whoremongers, and thieves,
 And stay 'till the last resurrection begins.

(verses 83-85)

‘Till the Lamb shall have finish’d the work he begun;
 Shall have trodden the wine press, in fury alone,
And overcome all by the pow’r of his might:
 He conquers to conquer, and save all his own.
(verses 85 and 107)

These are they that receive not a fulness of light,
 From Christ, in eternity’s world, where they are,
The terrestrial sends them the Comforter, though;
 And minist’ring angels, to happify there.
(verse 86)

And so the telestial is minister’d to,
 By ministers from the terrestrial one,
As terrestrial is, from the celestial throne;
 And the great, greater, greatest, seem’s stars,
moon, and sun. (verses 86-88)
And thus I beheld, in the vision of heav’n,
 The telestial glory, dominion and bliss,
Surpassing the great understanding of men,—
 Unknown, save reveal’d, in a world vain as this.
(verses 89-90)

And lo, I beheld the terrestrial, too,
 Which excels the telestial in glory and light,
In splendor, and knowledge, and wisdom, and joy,
 In blessings, and graces, dominion and might.
(verse 91)

I beheld the celestial, in glory sublime;
 Which is the most excellent kingdom that is,—
Where God, e’en the Father, in harmony reigns;
 Almighty, supreme, and eternal, in bliss.
(verse 92-93)

Where the church of the firstborn in union reside,
 And they are as they’re seen, and they know as they’re known;
Being equal in power, dominion and might,
 With a fulness of glory and grace, round his throne.
(verses 94-95)

The glory celestial is one like the sun;
 The glory terrestr’al is one like the moon;
The glory telestial is one like the stars,
 And all harmonize like the parts of a tune.
(verses 96-98)

As the stars are all different in lustre and size,
 So the telestial region, is mingled in bliss;
 From least unto greatest, and greatest to least,
 The reward is exactly as promis'd in this.

(verse 98)

These are they that came out for Apollos and Paul;
 For Cephas and Jesus, in all kinds of hope;
 For Enoch and Moses, and Peter, and John;
 For Luther and Calvin, and even the Pope.

(verses 99-100)

For they never received the gospel of Christ,
 Nor the prophetic spirit that came from the Lord;
 Nor the covenant neither, which Jacob once had;
 They went their own way, and they have their reward.

(verses 100-01)

By the order of God, last of all, these are they,
 That will not be gather'd with saints here below,
 To be caught up to Jesus, and meet in the clouds:—
 In darkness they worshipp'd; to darkness they go.

(verse 102)

These are they that are sinful, the wicked at large,
 That glutted their passion by meanness or worth;
 All liars, adulterers, sorc'ers, and proud;
 And suffer, as promis'd, God's wrath on the earth.

(verses 103-4)

These are they that must suffer the vengeance of hell,
 'Till Christ shall have trodden all enemies down,
 And perfected his work, in the fulness of times:
 And is crown'd on his throne with his glorious crown.

(verses 105-8)

The vast multitude of the telestial world—
 As the stars of the skies, or the sands of the sea;—
 The voice of Jehovah echo'd far and wide,
 Ev'ry tongue shall confess, and they all bow the knee.

(verses 109-10)

Ev'ry man shall be judg'd by the works of his life,
 And receive a reward in the mansions prepar'd;
 For his judgments are just, and his works never end,
 As his prophets and servants have always declar'd.

(verse 111)

But the great things of God, which he show'd unto me,
Unlawful to utter, I dare not declare;
They surpass all the wisdom and greatness of men,
And only are seen as has Paul, where they are.

(verses 114-18)

I will go, I will go, while the secret of life,
Is blooming in heaven, and blasting in hell;
Is leaving on earth, and a budding in space:—
I will go, I will go, with you, brother, farewell.

Joseph Smith.

Nauvoo, Feb. 1843.

Section 77 Book of Revelation

Please recall that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon began working on the revision of the King James Bible in June 1830 in Fayette, New York. This revision will continue until July 1833. By March 1832 they had lived in Hiram, Ohio, on the property of John Johnson for about five months, since September 12, 1831. During this period, the Lord had revealed to Joseph and Sidney much additional information concerning the New Testament. For example, the Prophet had received section 74 while they studied 1 Corinthians 7:14 and section 76 while they pondered John 5:28-29. On or about the first of March 1832, they received section 77 as they pondered some questions regarding the meaning of some of the figurative and symbolic writings of the apostle John in the book of Revelation. There were many things in the book they did not understand, hence the Prophet inquired of the Lord and received answers to his questions.

The exact date section 77 was received is somewhat problematic, but the *History of the Church* and the *Kirtland Revelation Book* each provide some information that help clarify matters. The Kirtland Revelation Book contains a notation from Joseph Smith in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams dated March 8, 1832, stating that “from the 26th of February [when section 76 was received] up to this date have been at home except a journey to Kirtland on the 29th of February and returned home [to Hiram] on the 4th of March. We received a revelation in Kirtland and one since I returned home.” Since the *Kirtland Revelation Book* also records the dates of section 78 as March 1, and section 80 as March 7, it is likely that these are the two revelations referred to here (*Kirtland Revelation Book*, 11, 15, 18). Moreover, in the *History of the Church* the brief introduction to Doctrine and Covenants 78-81 chronologically follows the references to section 77. Here Joseph also noted that “previous to the 20th of March, I received the four following revelations.” The four revelations mentioned are section 78 received on March 1, section 79 on March 12, section 80 on March 7, and section 81 on March 15. All of this indicates that section 77 was likely received on or before March 1, when Doctrine and Covenants 78 was received (most likely February 27th, 28th, 29th or March 1st).

Since Joseph was not scheduled to be translating from the book of Revelation in his work on the Joseph Smith Translation at that time, it is possible that the questions found in section 77 were put to him by the brethren in Kirtland upon his arrival there late on February 29 or early the next day before section 78 was received. The informality of an impromptu question and answer session might explain why Joseph’s inspired responses were not included among his published revelations until later. Joseph’s brief note simply states, “About the first of March, in connection with the translation of the

scriptures, I received the following explanation of the Revelation of St. John” (*HC*, 1:253).

Few details have been preserved concerning the reception of section 77. It did not appear in the 1833 Book of Commandments nor in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Although it was included in the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price in 1851, section 77 did not appear in the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876, where it was included under the direction of President Brigham Young. The oldest manuscript of section 77, indeed, the earliest evidence of its existence, is a copy in the handwriting of Willard Richards that dates to 1840. Section 77 was, however, included as one of the Prophet’s revelations in the *History of the Church*, written sometime between August 27, 1841 and August 24, 1843, and it was printed in the *Times and Seasons* on August 1, 1844 (see Woodford, *Historical Development*, 2:975-76).

Section 77 is not a complete interpretation of the book, but rather gives only a few helps on the interpretation of some passages between chapters 4 and 11. There are twenty-two chapters, however, in the book. Wouldn’t it be marvelous if Joseph had given us even more revealed information regarding this difficult book?

The world’s biblical scholars have seemed to be frustrated and confused by the book of Revelation. This fact notwithstanding, the Prophet Joseph once said: “The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written” (*TPJS*, 290). Obviously, Joseph, through the Spirit, had caught the secret of the book, and he loved it!

While even today the book remains difficult to interpret, we in the Church do have a considerable advantage over the rest of the world. Modern revelation has given us considerable insight into the meaning of the book. This revealed material includes sections 77, 88, 130, and 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants, 1 Nephi 14:10-27, Ether 4:16 in the Book of Mormon, Joseph’s inspired revision of the King James Bible, and some sermons of the Prophet’s which are recorded in his *History of the Church*, volume 5, pages 298, 336-37, 339-45 and volume 6, pages 363-67.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 77 The Book of Revelation

1 Q. What is the sea of glass spoken of by John, 4th chapter, and 6th verse of the Revelation? A. It is the earth, in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state.

verse 1 “the sea of glass” When John the Revelator was taken up to the throne of God in heaven, he saw in front of the throne a sea or lake of glass like rock-crystal. The word *sea* (Hebrew *ya’m*) refers to both the fresh-water ocean, the source of all life and fertility according to tradition, and to a basin of holy water in the temple. Thus, the “sea of glass” becomes a perfect symbol for the future celestialized earth—the earth “in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state” (D&C 77:1). In that state it will

be one of the celestial orbs, a source of the power of life for worlds and a retainer of holiness. The earth is elsewhere described as God's "footstool" (Matthew 5:35) and therefore logically sits "before the throne."

The adjective *glass-like* (Greek *hualinos*) suggests the idea of clear, calm, shimmering. Crystal has a long association with glory and fire (see Exodus 24:9-10, 17; Ezekiel 1:22, 27). The earth thus becomes in effect a gigantic Urim and Thummim, "whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it" (D&C 130:8-9). D&C 130:6-9 adds further insight: "The angels do not reside on a planet like this earth; but they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord. The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim. This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it." Regarding this great Urim and Thummim, Brigham Young explained, "When you wish to know anything, you can look in this earth, and see all the eternities of God" (*JD*, 8:200).

In a note concerning his activities on February 18, 1843, Joseph Smith further recorded: "While at dinner, I remarked to my family and friends present, that when the earth was sanctified and became like a sea of glass, it would be one great Urim and Thummim, and the saints could look in it and see as they are seen" (*HC*, 5:279).

The sea of glass is later described as "a sea of glass mingled with fire" (Revelation 15:2), where exalted beings stand with their harps and sing unto God the following words: "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Revelation 15:3-4).

2 Q. What are we to understand by the four beasts, spoken of in the same verse?

A. They are figurative expressions, used by the Revelator, John, in describing heaven, the paradise of God, the happiness of man, and of beasts, and of creeping things, and of the fowls of the air; that is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, and every other creature which God has created.

verse 2 "the four beasts" It seems apparent that the four beasts are actual beasts who are now exalted but lived on other worlds. These actual beasts are also symbolic of—figurative expressions of—other things. In the book of Revelation, John generally speaks of two types of beasts:

1. He envisions actual living creatures (Greek *zoon*) that exist in heaven (Revelation 4:6-9; 5:6-14; 6:1-7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4). In this passage, John saw actual beasts. The four beasts in this passage are actual beasts that exist in heaven. Some biblical commentators place one of the four beasts at each of the four sides of the throne, where they serve as guardians of the throne. This role is similar to that played by the biblical *cherubim* (see, for example, Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:18-22). Expanding this idea, the Prophet Joseph stated “that John’s vision [of actual beasts existing in heaven] was very different from Daniel’s prophecy—one [John’s vision] referring to things actually existing in heaven; the other [Daniel’s vision] being a figure of things which are on earth” (Ehat, *Words*, 189). The beasts are real but also stand as symbols: “They are figurative [i.e., symbolic] expressions, used by the Revelator, John, in describing [1] heaven, [2] the paradise of God, [3] the happiness of man, [3] the happiness of beasts, and [4 the happiness] of creeping things” (D&C 77:2).

2. Elsewhere in the book of Revelation John speaks of other beasts (Greek *therion*), referring both to wild earthly beasts as well as to symbolic or fantastic beasts (Revelation 6:8; 11:7; 13:1-18; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2, 10, 13; 17:1-18; 19:19-20; 20:4,10). John will later use this term to describe the associates of Satan.

The word *beast* used in this verse could more accurately be translated “living creature.” In fact, the choice of the King James Version translators to use the word *beast* is particularly unfortunate, since these creatures are living, dynamic beings filled with intelligence and glory.

Joseph Smith suggested that the four beasts “lived on another planet than ours.” (Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 171.) The “four beasts” are actually four animals each representing a particular class or order (see the commentary for verses 7-8). They represent all of God’s animate creations.

This revelation also taught John that animals are among those who enjoy exaltation—the fulness of God’s blessings intended for them in the world to come. The grand secret was to show John what there was in heaven. John learned that God glorified Himself by saving all that His hands had made, whether beasts, fowls, fishes or men; and He will glorify Himself with them.

John saw the actual beast in heaven, showing to John that beasts did actually exist there. . . .

John saw curious looking beasts in heaven; he saw every creature that was in heaven—all the beasts, fowls and fish in heaven—actually there, giving glory to God. . .

Says one, “I cannot believe in the salvation of beasts.” Any man who would tell you that this could not be, would tell you that the revelations are not true. John heard the words of the beasts giving glory to God, and understood them. God who made the beasts could understand every language spoken by them. The four beasts were four of the most noble animals that had filled the measure of their creation, and had been saved from other worlds, because they were perfect: they were like angels in their

sphere. We are not told where they came from, and I do not know; but they were seen and heard by John praising and glorifying God (HC, 5:343-44).

John informs us that the four beasts are capable of worshipping God (Revelation 4:8; 5:8-10).

“the spirit of man in the likeness of his person” There is a similarity of form between the spirit of a living thing and the mortal body it inhabits. This similarity may not be exact, however, as in the case of birth defects and other mortal deformities, and the precise degree to which individual spirits correspond to the appearance of their mortal bodies has not been revealed. Certainly, spirits can look exactly like their deceased bodies when necessary, but whether they always do so is open to question. It is not necessary to insist that genetic and environmental influences on mortal, physical bodies are coincidentally shared by their inhabiting spirits.

3 Q. Are the four beasts limited to individual beasts, or do they represent classes or orders? A. They are limited to four individual beasts, which were shown to John, to represent the glory of the classes of beings in their destined order or sphere of creation, in the enjoyment of their eternal felicity.

verse 3 “in their destined order or sphere of creation” There is no revealed doctrine that explains this intriguing phrase. It raises the question: Are there well-defined orders of animals and other living “beings”? Just as man is of a higher order than the animals, and animals are a higher order than plants, are some orders of animals higher than others? And is there an order that applies to all of God’s intelligences in combination to their mortal bodies, even perhaps including plants, lower forms of life, and even inanimate objects? We simply do not know the answer to these intriguing question.

“the enjoyment of their eternal felicity” All forms of living things, and not just human beings, will, through the work of Christ, receive eternal joy—except those who inherit perdition. Does this apply to every living microscopic creature, plants, and even inanimate objects? Perhaps so, but we are not blessed with revelation on this issue presently.

4 Q. What are we to understand by the eyes and wings, which the beasts had? A. Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.

5 Q. What are we to understand by the four and twenty elders, spoken of by John? A. We are to understand that these elders whom John saw, were elders who had been faithful in the work of the ministry and were dead; who belonged to the seven churches, and were then in the paradise of God.

verse 5 “four and twenty elders” John saw in his vision twenty-four elders who, along with the four beasts, had harps and little bottles of perfume—symbolizing

their singing and praying to God as acts of worship. We learn in this particular verse that John may have known some of these men personally, for they had lived in the seven churches of western Turkey addressed in the book of Revelation among which John had labored (see Revelation 1:11). Though John saw in his vision twenty-four specific individuals, these twenty-four symbolically represented all the faithful elders who will be exalted through Christ out of every nation of the earth.

“the paradise of God” This is the pleasant state of some of the spirits in the world of spirits who, between their mortal deaths and their resurrections, are sealed up to immortal life.

6 Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals? A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

verse 6 “the book which John saw” Revelation chapter 5 contains a description of a book sealed with seven seals. The book represents the history and destiny of the earth. Each seal represents a thousand years of its temporal existence. The book is sealed because no man is worthy to open and read it. The book is taken out of the Father’s hand by the Lion and the Lamb—who is Jesus Christ, who is worthy to open the book and who does know the destiny of this world, and in fact is God of this world.

In Revelation 5:1-5, John sees on the right hand of God a scroll of unparalleled significance, “written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.” John notes that the scroll is full, both on the front and the back, which parallels Ezekiel 2:10. Nothing had been left out, and no more could be added. It was the scroll of destiny. John’s imagery bears a mind-set frequently found in apocalyptic literature that from the beginning God has determined the end of history.

We need to clarify here the difference between the view point of Revelation—that God has ordained future events—and the false idea that individual salvation is predetermined and that therefore there is no individual agency. One of the powers ascribed to God is expressed by the Greek words *prognosis*, and *proginsk*. These words are respectively translated “foreknowledge” and “predestination” and catch the idea not only of knowing something beforehand, but of choosing someone beforehand. Paul understood that God, because of his foreknowledge, had marked or set the course of history through the use of individuals who would bring about his will (see Romans 8-9). That is, God ordered things through the means of sending down spirits when and where he chose. These spirits, without any other manipulation on the part of God, act in ways he knows. Thus, by selection of these souls, God can order the course of history while still maintaining agency.

A major thesis of Revelation is that God set the path of all things and nothing will stray from his design. This idea is symbolized in the scroll where the sovereign will of God has been recorded, where all history has been foretold. Though the idea that God has determined the course of world events may grate on some, it was a source of comfort and hope for those to whom John wrote.

“the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God” The book symbolizes the comprehensive plan of God for this earth and its inhabitants from the beginning to the end.

“the seven thousand years of its continuance” These are the seven thousand years of this earth’s existence between the fall of Adam and the end of the Millennium. These seven periods of one thousand years are equated with the “seven seals.”

7 Q. What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed? A. We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh.

verse 7 “the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years” Even though a seal is a bit of wax or clay, imprinted with an identifying mark, which keeps a scroll tightly rolled up, here Joseph equates the scroll with its seal and explains that “the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years . . .”

For ancient Jews the number seven symbolized perfection or completeness. Since the seven scrolls or seven seals represent the comprehensive plan of God (see verse 6), the sequential opening of the seven seals likely represents the full unfolding or implementation of the divine plan for this earth from beginning to end. With the opening of the seventh seal, God’s plan for the temporal earth will reach its final stage in a glorious Millennium.

8 Q. What are we to understand by the four angels, spoken of in the 7th chapter and 1st verse of Revelation? A. We are to understand that they are four angels sent forth from God, to whom is given power over the four parts of the earth, to save life and to destroy; these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; having power to shut up the heavens, to seal up unto life, or to cast down to the regions of darkness.

verse 8 “four angels” John sees four angels standing on the figurative four corners of the earth. These angels hold in check the wind so that it “should not blow on the earth.” The Greek word *anemos*, translated “wind,” indicates a storm wind, sometimes almost hurricane-like. Such winds brought drought, heat, insect plagues, and desolation. Biblical people viewed such winds as displays of divine wrath (cf.

Hosea 3:5; Revelation 16:9, “great heat” being from a scorching wind). In this light, the angels play the role of divine executioners with power to destroy the whole earth.

We learn from this verse that God commissioned these four angels and gave them power to both destroy life and to save it. They have power over the process of condemning judgment and the spreading of the gospel. They have, as it were, two faces. They are not only destroying angels, but saving angels as well. What makes the difference is how men respond to the message they dispense. These four angels may be the same angels referred to in the parable of the wheat and the tares (see D&C 86:5-7; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). In both cases, the angels with the power to save or to destroy were instructed by their leader to wait until the wheat has been gathered (see Matthew 13) or until the saints have been sealed (see Revelation 7). In the meantime their work is to prepare the nations of the world to receive the restored gospel and to bring the world to repentance, even by the use of natural disasters if need be.

The angels have long since left their home in heaven and are now on the earth. These angels are those who in 1831 were “waiting the great command to reap down the earth, to gather the tares that they may be burned” (D&C 38:12). President Wilford Woodruff stated that these angels have been loosed and are at work here (“Temple Worker’s Excursion,” 512). However, their job is not just to destroy but to commit the gospel as well (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:300-01). Their main period of operation is the sixth seal, or the period just preceding the Millennium. Thus, in this dispensation, angelic administration is combining with mortal efforts to assure the world-wide preaching of the gospel during that time (see D&C 77:10). Only after they fulfill that commission will they unleash the winds of destruction.

The signs associated with the sixth seal—the earthquake, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, falling stars, the heavens opening as a scroll, the movement of mountains and islands, and fear coming upon humanity—play a major role in the objectives of the sixth seal. Their function is not primarily destruction—rather it is to warn. They represent additional effort on the part of God to bring all men to him. The four angels symbolize the spiritual forces that oversee and assist in fulfilling this objective. During the sixth seal, the fulness of his gospel will be restored to the earth and both natural and supernatural forces will combine to see that it spreads to all lands and cultures. Those who respond with fulness of heart will enter into the rest of the Lord and find peace and safety. Those who reject it will find vexation and misery.

The world has already rejected the gospel many times, but during the sixth seal conditions are such that one more rejection will assure its doom. This is because the gospel, preached with tremendous power, will not be easily ignored. Those who reject it will not do so out of ignorance. Therefore, events during the sixth seal will heighten the ideological conflict between the forces of good and evil. The conflict will not be resolved during the sixth seal, but the battle lines will be clearly drawn.

The battle lines will fall between the church of the devil and the Church of Jesus Christ. The mortal perspective may not perceive and report it that way, but from a spiritual standpoint the issue is clear.

The armor of the saints—righteousness and tremendous power from God—will protect them from the world-embracing colossus of wickedness, pride, and spiritual apathy while the destroying angels prepare to move against it. As noted above, the primary preparation will be the preaching of the gospel. Pure testimony will flow through the nations during the sixth seal. Many will respond. Those who do not, who willfully rebel against the light and who seek to destroy God's work, will face the wrath of the seventh seal.

9 Q. What are we to understand by the angel ascending from the east, Revelation 7th chapter and 2nd verse? A. We are to understand that the angel ascending from the east is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, he crieth unto the four angels having the everlasting gospel, saying: Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And, if you will receive it, this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things.

verse 9 “the angel ascending from the east” In concert with the four angels, John sees another angel ascending from the east. The imagery used here reminds one of the rising sun, which recalls the glory of God, spreading light and life. The idea is reminiscent of Ezekiel 43:4, where the glory of Jehovah comes out of the east. This angel “is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; . . . and, if you will receive it, this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things” (D&C 77:9). “Elias” here is used as a title (meaning *messenger*), rather than referring to a specific individual.

Speaking of this Elias, Elder Bruce R. McConkie has said:

Correcting the Bible by the spirit of revelation, the Prophet restored a statement of John the Baptist which says that Christ is the Elias who was to restore all things (JST, John 1:21-28). By revelation we are also informed that the Elias who was to restore all things is the angel Gabriel who was known in mortality as Noah (D&C 27:6-7; Luke 1:5-25; *TPJS*, 157). From the same authentic source we also learn that the promised Elias is John the Revelator (D&C 77:9, 14). Thus there are three different revelations which name Elias as being three different persons. What are we to conclude?

By finding answer to the question, by whom has the restoration been effected, we shall find who Elias is and find there is no problem in harmonizing these apparently contradictory revelations. Who has restored all things? Was it one man? Certainly not. Many angelic ministrants have been sent from the courts of glory to confer keys and powers, to commit their dispensations and glories again to men on earth. At least the

following have come: Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James and John, Moses, Elijah, Elias, Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael (D&C 13; 110; 128:19-21). Since it is apparent that no one messenger has carried the whole burden of the restoration, but rather that each has come with a specific endowment from on high, it becomes clear that Elias is a composite personage. The expression must be understood to be a name and a title for those whose mission it was to commit keys and powers to men in this final dispensation (McConkie, *Commentary*, 3:491-92. See also Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:170-174).

“sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” This seal pertains to the Abrahamic covenant and making one’s calling and election sure, as Joseph Smith explained: “Four destroying angels holding power over the four quarters of the earth until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, which signifies sealing the blessing upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure. When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother” (*TPJS*, 321).

In another setting, Ezekiel envisioned the sealing, or marking, on the foreheads of the righteous as a protection for those righteous. This protective sealing and the subsequent destruction of the wicked perhaps prefigures the events recorded Ezekiel 9:4-6: “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the man that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.” This seal of the righteous recalls the mark of blood at Passover (Exodus 12:13). At that time those who possessed the mark of lamb’s blood—that is, those who desired to make Christ’s atonement effective in their lives—were spared the plague of God (Isaiah 44:5; Galatians 6:17).

In short, God marks and seals the righteous with his seal, making them his and placing them under his protection. In the last days, those who possess God’s seal on their foreheads will not be destroyed by the “four winds of the earth” (Revelation 7:1-3). Joseph Smith explained: “Then, having this promise [of one’s calling and election made sure] sealed unto them, it was an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Though the thunders might roll and lightnings flash, and earthquakes bellow, and war gather thick around, yet this hope and knowledge would support the soul in every hour of trial, trouble and tribulation” (*TPJS*, 298).

As a counterfeit to the true and sacred things of God, Satan places a mark on the forehead or the right hand of his followers (Revelation 13:16; 14:9). These followers, however, will not be protected from God’s “four winds,” and they eventually will be destroyed by God.

“this is Elias” See the commentary for verse 9 above. There have been many Eliases or those called to do restorative work in this final dispensation, but in this particular verse Elias seems to be none other than Jesus Christ himself. In the context of the earth’s existence in the first six thousand years, restoring all things perhaps means restoring the fulness of the gospel and the keys of the priesthood to a celestial world, and the several Eliases listed in the commentary for Revelation 7:2 have done this. However, in the context of the seventh thousand years, restoring all things includes restoring the earth itself to a terrestrial state and bringing to pass the redemption and resurrection of the dead. This is the might work of only one Elias, Jesus Christ himself. He will, at his second coming, be the great and final Elias or restorer. It is Jesus Christ himself who ultimately will restore all things and who will finally gather all of Israel together “as a hen gatherereth her chickens” (3 Nephi 10:4-6).

10 Q. What time are the things spoken of in this chapter to be accomplished? A. They are to be accomplished in the sixth thousand years, or the opening of the sixth seal.

verse 10 “in the sixth thousand years” The work of spreading the gospel throughout the world to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people is the work of the latter-day Church. We now live in the sixth time period, or day, or thousand years—the period of time immediately before the glorious Millennium, which is the seven time period or the sabbath day of the earth’s temporal existence.

11 Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel—twelve thousand out of every tribe? A. We are to understand that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.

verse 11 “twelve thousand out of every tribe” John states that the number of those sealed is 144,000. The number need not be taken literally. This verse explains “that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn” (77:11). Note that the Lord’s answer to Joseph’s question does not specify a number. Instead it notes that the group is composed of high priests who have a special calling “to administer the everlasting gospel” and “to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.”

Joseph Smith associated these high priests with the temple (*HC*, 6:365). The symbolic meaning of the number supports this association. Twelve represents the priesthood. Biblical people squared a number to amplify its symbolic meaning. Thus, 144 suggests a fulness of priesthood authority. But John is not satisfied with that. He gives the image a superlative quality by multiplying 1,000, representing completeness. In this way he shows the strength and breadth of the priesthood in the latter days, in this dispensation that is, indeed, the dispensation of the fulness of times. During this period that complete priesthood authority will operate.

The attachment to the temple fits perfectly since only there can one receive the fulness of the priesthood (D&C 124:25-30). Elder McConkie states that the 144,000 are kings and priests “converted, baptized, endowed, married for eternity, and finally sealed up unto eternal life” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:491). Their mission is not merely to bring people into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It goes beyond that. They will have “general authority” status. Their special assignment centers in getting people sealed into the church of the Firstborn through the administration of the fulness of the endowment (on the “church of the Firstborn,” see D&C 76:50-70; 93:21-23).

John, in the book of Revelation, indicates that the 144,000 will be those sealed from all the tribes of Israel. Curiously, he leaves out Dan and adds Manasses (Manasseh, the son of Joseph) to get twelve tribes. John gives no hint why he left out Dan. Some early Christians believed that John dropped the tribal name because of a tradition that the Antichrist would arise from there. The disfavor into which Dan fell goes all the way back to 1 Chronicles 7, which also omits Dan from the list of tribes. It may be that Dan’s association with idolatry marked the tribe for omission since Jeroboam set up his idols in that tribal territory (see Judges 18:30; 1 Kings 12:29). Since John was writing in part against the influences of idolatry invading the church, he may have omitted Dan as a warning.

“the church of the Firstborn” Again, see the commentary for D&C 76:54.

12 Q. What are we to understand by the sounding of the trumpets, mentioned in the 8th chapter of Revelation? A. We are to understand that as God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth, even so, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years will the Lord God sanctify the earth, and complete the salvation of man, and judge all things, and shall redeem all things, except that which he hath not put into his power, when he shall have sealed all things, unto the end of all things; and the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of his work, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years—the preparing of the way before the time of his coming.

verse 12 “sounding of the trumpets” After the opening of the seventh seal in his Revelation, John saw a series of seven angels, who sounded their seven trumpets one after the other in a symbolic series. This verse informs us that the events symbolized by the seven trumpets are mighty works that Jesus Christ will perform after the beginning of the Millennium (after the opening of the seventh seal) but before his second coming—works of judgment, redemption, and resurrection. These works, on the seventh day of the earth’s temporal existence, will be part of sanctifying the earth and raising it to a paradisiacal glory, just as Christ sanctified the earth and gave it the glory of paradise, or Eden, once before—on the seventh day of its creation. This is the same series of trumpet blasts described in D&C 88:96-106. The seventh trumpet announces the completion of all preparations and the coming of the glorious Christ himself to the earth (see Exodus 19:16-20), where the descent of Jehovah, or Christ, to the earth was also marked by the sounding of a trumpet).

“on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth” This phrase can be confusing and should not be interpreted as meaning that the Lord created man on the seventh day. Man was created (the physical creation) on the sixth day of creation. The creation of Adam on the seventh day would require rejecting the specific testimony of Genesis 1:31; Moses 2:31; and Abraham 4:31 that Adam was created on the sixth day or time, and the latter two sources were translated by the prophet Joseph Smith.

13 Q. When are the things to be accomplished, which are written in the 9th chapter of Revelation? A. They are to be accomplished after the opening of the seventh seal, before the coming of Christ.

verse 13 “after the opening of the seven seal, before the coming of Christ” Note that the seventh period of the earth’s existence will start before the second coming of Christ and that there will be a space of time “after the opening of the seventh seal, before the coming of Christ.” The two events are not simultaneous, nor does the opening of the seventh seal initiate the Millennium. According to John’s Revelation, there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour after the opening of the seventh seal before the events symbolized by the seven trumpets—the final preparations for the coming of Christ—began to take place. If we interpret literally the formula of one day with God being a thousand years with man, which is by no means certain that we must so interpret, a half hour would amount to a little less than twenty-one years separating the opening of the seventh seal and the beginning of the seven trumpets. No indication is given of how much additional time the events associated with the seven trumpets will take, although it seems that all will be completed in less than one generation (see JST Matthew 1:34).

14 Q. What are we to understand by the little book which was eaten by John, as mentioned in the 10th chapter of Revelation? A. We are to understand that it was a mission, and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things.

verse 14 “the little book” In his vision John saw an angel holding a little book or scroll. John was instructed to take the book and eat it. When he did so, according to the book of Revelation, he found that it was delicious but that it upset his stomach. The experience of John in this regard is an almost exact repetition of the experience of Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 2:9 through 3:4).

“it was a mission” The interpretation offered here is supported by the similar experience of Ezekiel, who with the same visionary imagery was also called on a mission to preach and minister to the house of Israel. John the Beloved Apostle is here identified as one who will assist in the restoration and gathering of Israel in the latter days. Note that John did not die, but was translated (D&C 7)—making him available to minister to the earth directly in this final dispensation.

15 Q. What is to be understood by the two witnesses, in the eleventh chapter of Revelation? A. They are two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days, at the time of the restoration, and to prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers.

verse 15 “the two witnesses” In Greek the words for *witness* and *martyr* are the same. This is appropriate, since being one often leads to becoming the other. John saw in his vision two servants of the Lord who testify of the truth and who suffer martyrdom for it. These two witnesses have the power to shut the heavens and to smite the earth with plagues. These witnesses will not be casual elders who just happen to be in Jerusalem when was breaks out. They will likely be General Authorities of the Church—prophets specifically called on this mission to the Jewish nation (compare Zechariah 4:12-14; Revelation 11:1-4).

“to the Jewish nation in the last days” It is intriguing that at the time Joseph Smith wrote this revelation, there was no Jewish nation upon the face of the earth. The existence of the nation of Israel in the Holy Land since 1948 constitutes just one more prophecy of Joseph Smith that has come to pass since the Restoration.

Brief Historical Setting

1832 March

By March of 1832, separate united orders were organized under the leadership of Bishops Edward Partridge in Missouri and Newell K. Whitney in Kirtland. The leading brethren of the Church were, by revelation, organized together into yet a third united order—indeed a mini-united order—called the United Firm **[D&C 78, 82 and 92 - The**

United Firm], which was charged with the responsibility of caring for the poor. Initially the Firm owned property jointly, but later the properties were divided among its members [**D&C 104 - Reorganization of the United Order and United Firm**].

Sections 78 and 82 The United Firm

Section 78 was received on March 1, 1832, in Kirtland, Ohio, while Joseph was visiting there from Hiram, Ohio.

Like many other principles of the gospel, the law of consecration or the law of consecration and stewardship was made known to the Prophet gradually, and he in turn gradually disclosed these principles to the saints “line upon line, precept upon precept.”

While many have used the terms “law of consecration” and “united order” interchangeably, they are more appropriately used as follows: the law of consecration and stewardship is the set of principles by which a group of people enter into an agreement for their common temporal welfare. When a group is engaged in living the law of consecration, we may call the group a united order.

Review the material concerning the law of consecration in the commentary for section 42, especially the five essential characteristics of the law of consecration. I will emphasize a couple of additional points. A man first consecrated all of his possessions to the Church, and then he received his stewardship in return. The things his family subsequently grew or produced that were in excess of the family’s needs were placed in the storehouse to be distributed by the bishop to those in need. Also, the system of ownership provided for by the law of consecration was not communal—that is, private and not shared ownership of the land and materials that constituted the stewardship characterized the order. The Lord perhaps revealed to Joseph the necessity of private ownership by showing him the example of the common stock family. In February of 1831, after arriving in Kirtland from New York, Joseph observed a communal order among the Campbellite followers of Sidney Rigdon called “the family” or “the common stock family.” They had established themselves on the Isaac Morley farm near Kirtland and were led by a man named Lyman Wight. They had become involved in petty controversies and major conflicts. Some members of the family had decided that what belonged to one belonged to all, hence they would take each other’s clothes and property and use them without permission. Joseph advised them to abandon their common stock program.

By March of 1832 there was a united order in Missouri under Bishop Edward Partridge and a separate order in Kirtland under Bishop Newell K. Whitney. A third order also had its beginnings. This is the so-called United Firm, or the Order of Enoch as it was also called. This was a separate united order consisting of the leading brethren of the Church, which was created to manage the temporal affairs of the Church. It was a type of business partnership in which the partners controlled the business interests and properties of the Church and used the financial means at their disposal to finance the various programs of the Church. Initially they shared the responsibilities of holding church properties in trust, and they lived off the earnings of

these properties. Later they were each assigned specific properties of their own. After taking from the earnings of these properties sufficient monies for their needs, they gave the surplus to the bishops' storehouses for use by the poor. In fact, this body was assigned primary responsibility for the care of the poor.

The United Firm or simply the Firm also purchased lands for those who gathered in Kirtland and Missouri, and later they would be made responsible for financing the construction of the Kirtland Temple.

Because they acted as purchasing agents for the Church, and because those from whom they attempted to buy lands often had a religious bias against the Mormons, it was important that the identities of the brethren comprising the United Firm remain anonymous, lest they encounter exorbitant prices or even outright refusal to sell. For this reason, whenever these brethren were referred to in revelations in those years (sections 78, 82, 92, 96, 103, 104, 105), they were referred to by code names or pseudonyms. These pseudonyms are now of historical interest only since they are no longer found in the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph was Enoch or Gazelam or Baurak Ale or Seth. Newell K. Whitney was Ahashdah. Sidney was Pelagoram. Oliver Cowdery was Olihah. Martin Harris was Mahemson. Edward Partridge was Alam. A. Sidney Gilbert was Mahalaleel. John Whitmer was Horah. William W. Phelps was Shalemanasseh. John Johnson was Zombre. Frederick G. Williams was Shederlaomach. Pseudonyms were also given to cities and other items in the environment of the early church. For example, the city of Kirtland was referred to as Shinehah (sections 82, 96, 104). "Mine elders" in section 105 was rendered Baneemy. The remaining were all found in section 104. Dollars were talents. New York was Cainhannoch. The tannery was tahhanes. The printing office was Laneshine House. The bishop's storehouse at Kirtland was Ozondah. The ashery at Kirtland was shule. "Print" and "printing" were shinelah and shinelane. It is possible that these names were simply invented, but it appears more likely that most of them came from the Hebrew studies of the early Mormon leaders. These code names were not in the original revelations but were added later as they were needed. Until the 1876 edition the pseudonyms alone were printed, but with the 1876 edition, the real names were published in parentheses following the code names. In the first printing of the current 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the four code names remaining were in D&C 82:11. In a later printing of the same edition, all of the code names were replaced by the appropriate individual's name.

The United Firm had its beginning in section 70. Please see the background materials for that section. In section 70, six of the brethren were organized into the so-called Literary Firm, and they were given the joint stewardship to publish and sell books, periodicals, and the newspapers of the Church. In the spring of 1832, the Literary Firm became the United Firm and was expanded to include nine church leaders—Oliver Cowdery, Edward Partridge, Sidney Gilbert, John Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, Joseph

Smith, Newell K. Whitney, Sidney Rigdon, and Jesse Gause. After Jesse Gause apostatized, he was replaced by Frederick G. Williams. Also John Johnson and Martin Harris were added. These last three brethren had significant financial means and were thus a useful addition to the order. The United Firm not only managed church farmland properties in the Kirtland area but also the Gilbert and Whitney stores in Kirtland and Independence, a tannery, a printing shop, an ashery, and a steam saw mill.

In a period before the leading quorums of the Church were fully organized, the united firm was intended for a limited time to provide financial leadership and accountability for the Church, and its members dealt with matters of church financial policy that would later be the responsibility of General Authorities. Modern analogues to the united and literary firms can be seen in the corporation of the First Presidency, the corporation of the Presiding Bishopric, and the various financial, publishing, welfare, and other committees of the Church.

A major problem encountered in trying to make the United Orders work in Kirtland and Missouri was a tendency for poor people to be attracted to such movements and for the wealthy to shun such enterprises. Few members of the Church owned any land that could be used for redistribution. Since most converts were unable to contribute significant amounts of property to the order, land was not available to be distributed in the form of inheritances or stewardships. Initially the only large acreage owned by members was the Isaac Morley farm on which the family had lived. Although Brother Morley sold fifty acres of land to a nonmember in 1831, he retained about eighty acres. After he moved to Missouri, many members of the Church settled on this farm. In fact, this land was the principal gathering place for the saints prior to 1832. In April 1832, shortly before the United Firm was organized, Frederick G. Williams purchased 144 acres in Kirtland. It was subsequently referred to, quite logically, as the Frederick G. Williams farm. Later in 1833, the Church purchased 103 acres from Peter French for five thousand dollars.

In spite of these land acquisitions, the United Orders were never successful for a variety of reasons. They experienced frustrations and failures for almost a decade, and finally in 1838 the Church was given a less comprehensive law, the law of tithing (D&C 119). Actually, the law of tithing is not a substitute for the law of consecration but rather a part of that law—the part that finances the Church's operations. The United Orders were abandoned, but the law of consecration continues to be a viable principle of the gospel that the saints are expected to live.

Section 78 directs that the “order” (United Firm) be formed, and it commands Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, and Newell K. Whitney to “sit in council with the saints . . . in Zion,” to regulate the affairs of the poor. Obeying the command, Joseph, Sidney, Jesse Gause, and Newell K. Whitney left Ohio on April 1, 1832, and traveled to Independence, arriving April 24. During this visit, at a meeting of the brethren who comprised the

United Firm, it was decided to incorporate the Missouri branch of the Gilbert and Whitney store into the holdings of the Firm.

Section 78

Scripture Mastery

D&C 78:17-18 Ye are little children . . . and ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer.

1 The Lord spake unto Joseph Smith, Jun., saying: Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God, who are ordained unto the high priesthood of my church, who have assembled yourselves together;

verse 1 “**The Lord spake unto Joseph Smith, Jun.**” When the 78th section was initially published in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph’s name was written in code (see the introductory commentary for section 78 above).

“the high priesthood of my church, who have assembled yourselves together” Although no historical information is available for the setting of section 78, the wording here indicates that it was received around the time of a meeting with the church leadership in Kirtland.

2 And listen to the counsel of him who has ordained you from on high, who shall speak in your ears the words of wisdom, that salvation may be unto you in that thing which you have presented before me, saith the Lord God.

verse 2 “**in that thing which you have presented before me**” It is clear that section 78 was received in answer to a request of the Lord from the assembled leaders in Kirtland. Although we do not know the exact wording of their petition, it would seem likely that it dealt with the financial problems of the Church and the difficulty in establishing the bishops’ storehouses. By March 1832 the saints had not yet organized a storehouse either in Kirtland or in Missouri, even though an important part of the Lord’s plan for the consecration of his saints was the establishment of a bishop’s storehouse, and some instruction concerning the storehouse had already been received by the Church (see D&C 51:13). This pattern of actively seeking guidance from the Lord concerning the difficulties of our lives and then listening to and following his advice continues to be a prudent pattern for modern saints.

3 For verily I say unto you, the time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion—

verse 3 “the time has come” More than a year had passed since the Lord had first commanded that the poor and needy be provided for under the law of consecration (see D&C 42:30-44). Further instruction had been given to Bishop Edward Partridge and the Church ten months earlier in section 51. But by March 1832 very little had actually been done to organize and administer the commanded program.

“it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse” It seems most likely the Lord is referring specifically to the United Firm, though he could as well be referring to the law of consecration and stewardship in general, as little had been accomplished up to this time in actually putting that law into effect. Evidence for this latter possibility is the Lord’s reference to a “permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church” in the next verse. The Lord planned that the system of consecration and stewardship be permanent, but the United Firm was considered more of a temporary solution to the Church’s financial woes.

4 For a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which ye have espoused, to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven;

verse 4 “a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church” Today the bishops’ storehouses operate under the direction of the Presiding Bishopric and not a United Firm. It is the establishment and regulation of a storehouse for the poor that was intended to be “permanent and everlasting.”

“to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father” Whatever contributes to the salvation of human beings also contributes to the glory of God, for the work and the glory of God is the immortality and eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39).

5 That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things.

verse 5 “That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things” The purpose of the law of consecration is to make the saints equal in earthly blessings now so that they might become equal in the enjoyment of heavenly or celestial blessings later. Where the saints are not equal temporally, it is because someone will not live the law of consecration. Since consecration is a celestial law, those who will not live it cannot be equal in their heavenly blessings with those who do live it. Therefore those who would enjoy the celestial kingdom in the resurrection must be willing to abide by its laws here upon the earth—including the law of consecration.

6 For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things;

verse 6 Living the law of consecration and participating in a United Order was considered an educational experience for all participants—preparing them to live eternally in the kingdom of heaven. We thus see an example of the idea that the Lord’s purposes are often intimately related to his means. George Q. Cannon taught: “The organization of society that exists in the heavens must exist on the earth; the same condition of society, so far as it is applicable to mortal beings, must exist here” (*JD*, 13:99). The United Order is referred to in the scriptures as an “everlasting order” (D&C 82:20; 104:1).

The system of power and authority within the United Order was nonhierarchical and nonauthoritarian, so that no man ruled over another even in a benevolent way (A. Don Sorenson, “Being Equal in Earthly and Heavenly Power: The Idea of Stewardship in the United Order,” *BYU Studies* [1977], 18:1). We have learned that those who dwell in the presence of the Father will be “equal in power, and in might, and in dominion” (D&C 76:95). “Then shall they be gods, because they have all power” (D&C 132:20).

7 For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.

8 And now, verily thus saith the Lord, it is expedient that all things be done unto my glory, by you who are joined together in this order;

9 Or, in other words, let my servant Newel K. Whitney and my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and my servant Sidney Rigdon sit in council with the saints which are in Zion;

verse 9 The Lord here calls three members of the United Firm to travel to Independence, Missouri. Obedient to this commandment, these three brethren, accompanied by Jesse Gause, traveled to Independence, met with the members and the leaders, and inducted Oliver Cowdery, Edward Partridge, Sidney Gilbert, John Whitmer, and W. W. Phelps into the United Firm. Martin Harris, Jesse Gause, and eventually Frederick G. Williams and John Johnson were also members of the Firm. The retail store that had been established in Independence by Sidney Gilbert, Newel K. Whitney’s former associate in Kirtland, became the bishop’s storehouse in Zion (see D&C 57:8).

10 Otherwise Satan seeketh to turn their hearts away from the truth, that they become blinded and understand not the things which are prepared for them.

verse 10 “**Otherwise Satan seeketh to turn their hearts**” Apparently the saints in Zion were having as much difficulty implementing the principles of consecration and establishing a viable storehouse as the saints in Kirtland. If Satan could divert the saints from living this law, then he could destroy their opportunity of gaining the blessings of eternity. It was obvious that drastic measures were going to be required in

both Kirtland and Zion to get the saints over the hurdle of actually implementing consecration and stewardship.

11 Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, to prepare and organize yourselves by a bond or everlasting covenant that cannot be broken.

verse 11 Here the Lord seems to be speaking to those whom he had called to the United Firm.

“organize yourselves by a bond or everlasting covenant” Entrance into the United Firm was by sacred covenant, just as those who accept the burden of consecration today do so by sacred covenant in the temples of God. President Ezra Taft Benson drew a direct connection between those who made a covenant to enter the United Firm and those today who covenant to live the law of consecration:

We covenant to live the law of consecration. This law is that we consecrate our time, talents, strength, property, and money for the building up of the kingdom of God on this earth and the establishment of Zion.

Until one abides by the laws of obedience, sacrifice, the gospel, and chastity, he cannot abide the law of consecration, which is the law pertaining to the celestial kingdom. “For if you will that I give you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you” (D&C 78:7) (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 121).

“that cannot be broken” This covenant and every other covenant we make, of course, *can* be broken because each person has his or her agency. The meaning of this phrase seems to be that since the covenant of consecration is an eternal and a celestial covenant, it cannot be broken without the loss of celestial glory.

12 And he who breaketh it shall lose his office and standing in the church, and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.

verses 12 “he who breaketh it shall lose his office and standing in the church” Because Zion can only be established upon the principle of consecration (D&C 105:5), those who reject that principle cannot lead others to Zion. Therefore, they must not hold church leadership positions. Worse than this, however, since they have rejected the avowed destination of the Church, they cannot even be counted as members “in good standing.” An extreme example is provided in the New Testament in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (see Acts 5:1-11).

“and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan” The covenant these men of the United Firm made with the Lord was a most solemn one, and it carried with it a very severe penalty. Anyone who broke the covenant would be “delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption” (see also D&C 82:21). According to the 1828 edition of *Webster’s Dictionary*, “to buffet” means “to strike with the hand or fist; to box; to beat.” An example of the enactment of this penalty occurred when Sidney

Rigdon left the Church. Admittedly, this occurred long after the Firm had been disbanded, but Sidney was turned over to the buffetings of Satan by conference action.

“until the day of redemption” Even hell has an end. Eventually, all of those who will repent and accept the atonement and lordship of Christ will be redeemed from the power of Satan (see D&C 76:42-43).

13 Behold, this is the preparation wherewith I prepare you, and the foundation, and the ensample which I give unto you, whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given you;

verse 13 “this is the preparation . . . and the ensample” The creation of the United Firm was not the ultimate fulfillment of the law of consecration, but it was a beginning and an example of how the principle could be implemented and the commandment obeyed. It was an excellent model for all of the Church to watch. The commandment will only be fulfilled or accomplished when the saints have collectively established Zion in preparation for the second coming of the Lord by living the law of consecration and becoming equal in temporal things.

14 That through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world;

verse 14 “notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you” Again, we see a foreshadowing of the persecutions and trial that are awaiting them in the future (see also the commentary on D&C 58:3-4).

Modern church members also should not regard trials and tribulations as a thing of the past. Elder M. Russell Ballard taught: “We can certainly anticipate some exciting and wonderful opportunities in the years ahead. But it will be more and more difficult to remain a committed follower of Jesus Christ. I believe future followers of Christ will face adversity and persecution that is much more intense than anything we see today” (*Ensign*, July 1995, 15).

“that the church may stand independent” Implementation of the law of consecration will, with the blessings of God, give the Church the ability to survive on its own resources without being forced to compromise its principles or to ally itself with or rely upon the institutions of the world. From time to time the Church may choose to cooperate with other entities in matters of mutual concern, but never in a manner that would infringe upon its sovereignty and self-determination.

“above all other creatures beneath the celestial world” The word *creatures* means institutions or entities.

15 That you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion, who hath established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman;

verse 15 “come up unto the crown prepared for you” The eternal destiny of faithful saints, those who make and keep the covenant of consecration, is not to serve, but to rule—and not over one kingdom alone, but over many.

“who hath established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman” Adam-ondi-Ahman is the name of the place where Adam and Eve settled after they were expelled from the Garden of Eden (see D&C 117:8) (See Orson Pratt, *JD*, 18:343). It was there that the Lord appeared to Adam and his righteous posterity three years before Adam’s death, and it is there that another great meeting with the Savior will take place before his second coming.

This phrase in verse 15 and all of verse 16 were not in the original revelation of section 78, but were added to the text by the Prophet Joseph in the first printed edition in 1835. By that time the name and the significance of Adam-ondi-Ahman had apparently been revealed to the Prophet, and three years later in May 1838, Joseph indicated that Adam-ondi-Ahman had been located at a place the saints called Spring Hill in Daviess County, about sixty miles north of Independence (*HC*, 3:35).

16 Who hath appointed Michael your prince, and established his feet, and set him upon high, and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days or end of life.

verse 16 “Michael your prince” Michael, or Adam, is not the king, for Christ is King (see Revelation 19:16). But Michael is the next in authority and is the prince of the kingdom of God. In this role he represents all of us as heirs to the kingdom. Adam still stands at the head of his posterity, the human family, but in subjection to Christ his King. Next to Christ, Adam holds the keys of salvation and works for the benefit of his posterity. According to Joseph Smith, “The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency and held the keys of it from generation to generation. . . . The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam’s authority” (*HC*, 3:385-86).

17 Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;

verse 17 “little children” Our present understanding, compared with what we will understand when we reach our eternal “adulthood,” is like that of little children. Though we may be mortal adults, we have been “born again” and are in the infancy of our eternal lives. By eternal standards we are still naive and without understanding. At present we lack the maturity even to comprehend the full blessings of God, let alone to

receive them. Despite the tribulations we must experience in this life, our destiny is happiness and joy beyond our present comprehension.

18 And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours.

verse 18 “ye cannot bear all things now” The present limitations of mortality make it impossible for us to understand or even tolerate an understanding of all that we will receive from God in the future. The blessings of eternity are so great that only resurrected beings can bear them. For now we must follow the leadership of the Lord and trust in his assurances that we are going to be all right—that the kingdom and its blessings and the riches of eternity are truly going to be ours—assuming, of course, that we remain faithful.

19 And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more.

verse 19 “he who receiveth all things with thankfulness” Compare D&C 59:21 and its commentary.

20 Wherefore, do the things which I have commanded you, saith your Redeemer, even the Son Ahman, who prepareth all things before he taketh you;

verse 20 “Son Ahman” Orson Pratt taught:

There is one revelation that this people are not generally acquainted with. I think it has never been published, but probably it will be in the Church History. It is given in questions and answers. The first question is, “What is the name of God in the pure language?” The answer is “Ahman.” “What is the name of the Son of God?” Answer, “Son Ahman” (*JD*, 2:342).

In Moses 6:57 we find that the interpretation of “Ahman” is “Man of Holiness,” and thus “Son Ahman” is the “Son of Man of Holiness” or, in a shortened form, “Son of Man.”

Additional consideration has been given to the name *Ahman*. Smith and Sjodahl observed that “the word is possibly akin to ‘Amen.’ In Isaiah (65:16) the Almighty is called ‘God of Amen,’ but the translators have made it, ‘God of truth.’ In Revelation 3:14, our Lord calls himself by that name: ‘These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness.’ There is also the word Amon, the name which Egyptians gave a Deity, in whose honor the magnificent temple at Karnak was reared” (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 484).

21 For ye are the church of the Firstborn, and he will take you up in a cloud, and appoint every man his portion.

verse 21 “the church of the Firstborn” See D&C 76:54 and its commentary.

“he will take you up in a cloud” On the last day, the righteous will be lifted off the earth and caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds while the earth is cleansed by fire (see D&C 45:44-45; 88:96-97; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

22 And he that is a faithful and wise steward shall inherit all things. Amen.

Section 82

Scripture Mastery

D&C 82:3 Of him unto whom much is given much is required.

D&C 82:7 Unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return.

D&C 82:8-9 I give unto you a new commandment that you may understand my will concerning you.

D&C 82:10 I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.

The only other revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants that largely contains the Lord’s directions for the United Firm is section 82. We will thus consider it here following section 78, though it is out of sequence.

On March 1, 1832, in section 78 Joseph and Sidney had been commanded to travel to Independence to counsel with the saints in Zion (see D&C 78:9). During the first three weeks in March Joseph received other revelations, began establishing the United Firm in Kirtland, and organized the Presidency of the High Priesthood. As Joseph then prepared for the commanded journey to Missouri, several unpleasant events took place.

The Prophet mentioned a confrontation sometime in March with a son of John Johnson, in whose home he and Emma were then living with their adopted twins. Olmsted Johnson, the young man, rejected the gospel and left home in a bad spirit, and Joseph prophesied that “he would never return or see his father again” (*HC*, 1:260). Another of the Johnson sons, John Jr., had already apostatized, so it seems that the Johnsons were experiencing domestic troubles at this time.

By the fourth week of March, the Smiths’ adopted ten-month-old twins and the Rigdon children, who lived nearby, were suffering from measles. On March 24, Joseph stayed up with the little boy, who was the sicker of the two twins, to let Emma get some much-needed sleep. During the night, a mob led by the apostate Symonds Ryder dragged Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon from their homes and beat, tarred, feathered, and otherwise abused them (*HC*, 1:261-65). For a more detailed description of this mobbing, see the introduction to section 81. After the attack, Joseph was awake all

night while friends and relatives scraped the tar from his body. Nonetheless, in the morning he preached his usual Sunday sermon to a congregation that included some of his attackers.

The following Thursday, March 29, Emma and Joseph's baby son died. Three days later, on Sunday, April 1, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney began their journey to Missouri in obedience to the commandment of the Lord. They took with them Jesse Gause, the newly appointed counselor in the Presidency of the High Priesthood.

Joseph and his party arrived in Independence on April 24, 1832, and according to his own account, "on the 26th, I called a general council of the Church, and was acknowledged as the President of the High Priesthood, according to a previous ordination at a conference of High Priests, Elders, and members, held at Amherst, Ohio, on the 25th of January, 1832. The right hand of fellowship was given to me by the Bishop, Edward Partridge, in behalf of the Church. The scene was solemn, impressive and delightful. During the intermission, a difficulty or hardness which had existed between Bishop Partridge and Elder Rigdon, was amicably settled, and when we came together in the afternoon, all hearts seemed to rejoice and I received the following [section 82]" (*HC*, 1:267).

The minutes of this Missouri conference, during which section 82 was received, indicate that "Br. Sidney Rigdon then stated the items embraced in a Revelation received in Ohio [section 78] & the reason why we were commanded to come to this land & sit in council with the High priests here." In the afternoon session, it was recorded, "all differences [had been] settled & the hearts of all run together in love. A Revelation [was] received through him whom the Church has appointed respecting organization" (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 40-42, 45). This revelation was section 82, which was first published in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, my servants, that inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you.

verse 1 "you have forgiven one another your trespasses" This statement refers to the hard feelings between Bishop Edward Partridge and Sidney Rigdon, mentioned in Joseph Smith's account and the minutes of the meeting. Others had been drawn to take sides in the affair. Apparently, Sidney had previously made a lengthy complaint against Bishop Partridge for a number of infractions, among them improper distribution of funds, failure to follow church policy, and speaking against Joseph Smith. On March 10, a conference of elders in Missouri considered the complaint (neither Joseph nor Sidney were present) and replied to Elder Rigdon that most of the infractions had already been corrected and that Bishop Partridge was repentant for any wrongdoing. This conference of Missouri brethren also chided Sidney about "whether he was not actuated by his own hasty feelings rather than the Spirit of Christ" in

pursuing the matter (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 40-42, 45). In addition, there seem to have been hard feelings by some brethren in Missouri against the Prophet himself, a matter that the Lord would mention again in the future (see D&C 74:76) (see Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 270-74).

These personal tensions between the brethren of Zion and the brethren of Kirtland were resolved amicably between the morning and afternoon sessions of the Missouri conference on April 26, at least for the time being. Once hard feelings had been dispelled and the spirit of love and harmony restored, the Lord blessed the conference in the afternoon session with the revelation known as Doctrine and Covenants 82. It is worthy of note that first the saints forgave one another. Then, the Lord forgave and blessed them (Matthew 6:14-15). Moreover, the spirit of revelation operates best when the saints are united (D&C 38:27).

2 Nevertheless, there are those among you who have sinned exceedingly; yea, even all of you have sinned; but verily I say unto you, beware from henceforth, and refrain from sin, lest sore judgments fall upon your heads.

verse 2 Here the Lord rebukes all of those involved in the unpleasantries that centered on Sidney Rigdon and Bishop Edward Partridge.

3 For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation.

verse 3 When human beings commit sin, the degree of their guilt, or culpability, depends upon the extent of their knowledge and blessings. Two different persons may commit exactly the same sin and yet be held accountable in vastly different degrees, depending on their individual knowledge and background. Elder George Albert Smith cautioned the saints: “We will not be judged as our brothers and sisters of the world are judged, but according to the greater opportunities placed in our keeping. We will be among those who have received the word of the Lord, who have heard his sayings, and if we do them it will be to us eternal life, but if we fail condemnation will result” (*CR*, October 1906, 47).

Moreover, for those who have accepted the fulness of the gospel by covenant, it is not that the Lord expects more of us but that he requires it. Having been given the means of obtaining exaltation, we are required to use those means toward that end. Once blessed by God’s gracious gifts and obligated by our own covenant promises, should we then choose wickedness or sloth, we do so to our own greater condemnation.

Those in Missouri were covenant members of the Church and “Zion builders,” and consequently of them much was required.

4 Ye call upon my name for revelations, and I give them unto you; and inasmuch as ye keep not my sayings, which I give unto you, ye become transgressors; and justice and judgment are the penalty which is affixed unto my law.

5 Therefore, what I say unto one I say unto all: Watch, for the adversary spreadeth his dominions, and darkness reigneth;

verse 5 “darkness reigneth” Does Satan really reign or rule here on earth? It is clear that Satan rules the *world*—not the earth. He rules over Babylon, the world. The ruler of the next world, the millennial world, and of its heirs who must for now live in Babylon, is Christ. As we approach the end of this world, Satan’s power is growing and spreading. Even as the saints watch and wait for the end of this world and the coming of the next, they will see darkness grow, and they themselves will become more isolated, marginalized, and persecuted until the coming of their Savior.

6 And the anger of God kindleth against the inhabitants of the earth; and none doeth good, for all have gone out of the way.

verse 6 “none doeth good” The Lord speaks of the world at the time of Joseph Smith. The whole world lies in the ignorance resulting from apostasy, and all have gone astray from the full truth of the gospel, hence the need for Joseph Smith and the restoration of the gospel.

7 And now, verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, will not lay any sin to your charge; go your ways and sin no more; but unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God.

verse 7 “I, the Lord, will not lay any sin to your charge” Romans 4:8 reads: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Both the Lord, in this verse, and Paul in Romans 4:8 refer to those who are earnestly striving to the best of their knowledge and ability to obey the Lord’s commands and also are ever striving to learn more of the Lord’s commands. We know, of course, that being found innocent at the final judgment cannot lie in our perfect performance (that is, salvation by law or works) but rather in our sins not being charged against us on that day through the mercy and grace of the Savior and the virtue of his atoning sacrifice. This great blessing of forgiveness and salvation comes only to those striving to keep the Lord’s commandments—those struggling to obey (2 Nephi 25:23, Alma 24:11, Matthew 7:21-23; 16:27; Luke 6:46; Romans 2:13; James 2:17-20; Revelation 20:12-13).

“go your ways and sin no more” In specific and realistic terms, the Lord is counseling us, “Strive consistently with all your might to follow my example and be obedient to my commands.” Absolute moral perfection at our stage of existence is impossible, and the Lord knows that.

“unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return” A man may receive gifts of the Spirit—increments of the attributes of Christ—through his obedience

to gospel commands (*Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 7). These divine attributes are received by personal revelation and produce a significant change in our hearts. The processes of Justification and Sanctification are active here (see *Justification and Sanctification* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17). We are then less likely in certain areas to give in to our natural selves and commit sin (break a commandment). We become new creatures in Christ, more likely to continue to obey. As we receive these divine attributes—gifts of the Spirit—the Lord justifies us, that is, forgives us of those sins we committed prior to acquiring these certain gifts of the Spirit.

These attributes, however, are not permanently ours, unless we continue to strive to be obedient. Remember: “There are no plateaus in spiritual growth.” He who stops growing, begins to deteriorate spiritually—he begins to lose those gifts of the spirit he once possessed. He is then likely to sin again in the very same areas in which he had previously overcome his natural tendency to sin (see also D&C 1:31-33).

There is an additional way in which “the former sins return.” When we repent, or begin to obey, the Lord may remove the penalty for our sins assessed by the law of justice. We say that he “forgives us of our sins.” Once forgiven, the penalty may be reassessed if we begin again to sin.

8 And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a new commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you;

verse 8 “I give unto you a new commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you” Here it is likely the Lord is referring specifically to his commandment to organize the United Firm. We may, however, generalize from this statement and conclude that when the Lord gives us a commandment, he is simply explaining to us how we must act, think, and talk in order to be saved in his eternal presence.

9 Or, in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation.

verses 8-9 We often tend to view God’s commandments as restrictive and demanding. Yet, in these verses he reminds us that his commandments are actually informative and enabling. His commandments are ultimately aimed at bringing us greater freedom, joy, and glory. They are something like the directions on a treasure map.

10 I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.

verse 10 When we obey the Lord’s commands, he is bound by his honor, by his part of the covenant, to grant us the promised blessings contained in the covenant.

Here is an interesting question: Can we bind God in absolute terms? Can we remove his agency and force him to keep his end of the covenant if he did not choose to do so? The answer is clearly, no. No intelligent being in our universe can have his agency removed. But he is God because of his absolute integrity. When he promises, it will happen absolutely (Abraham 3:17). If he should relinquish his integrity to an erroneous whim, he would cease to be God.

11 Therefore, verily I say unto you, that it is expedient for my servants Edward Partridge and Newel K. Whitney, A. Sidney Gilbert and Sidney Rigdon, and my servant Joseph Smith, and John Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, and W. W. Phelps and Martin Harris to be bound together by a bond and covenant that cannot be broken by transgression, except judgment shall immediately follow, in your several stewardships—

verse 11 “bound together by a bond and covenant” The members of the United Firm in both Missouri and Kirtland are bound to each other in this partnership by sacred covenant. As with every covenant we may enter into with the Lord, there is a penalty assessed should we not live up to that covenant. See the section entitled “Captain Moroni and Covenant Making” in the introductory commentary for Alma 43.

12 To manage the affairs of the poor, and all things pertaining to the bishopric both in the land of Zion and in the land of Kirtland;

verse 12 “To manage the affairs of the poor, and all things pertaining to the bishopric” We have already learned that one of the fundamental and underlying purposes for the United Firm is to look after the poor and see to their needs. Here we also learn that this body will oversee the affairs of the two bishops, Bishop Partridge in Missouri and Bishop Whitney in Kirtland.

13 For I have consecrated the land of Kirtland in mine own due time for the benefit of the saints of the Most High, and for a stake to Zion.

verse 13 “For I have consecrated the land of Kirtland” Here the verb *consecrated* means dedicated for a specific purpose. The earth is the Lord’s (Psalm 24:1; compare D&C 104:12-14). He owns all the earth and all things thereon. We don’t usually think in terms of the Lord’s consecrating his possessions. While it is true that he cannot surrender his ownership of the earth, figuratively he speaks of himself in this verse as participating, with the saints, in the law of consecration and stewardship.

“for a stake to Zion” This is the first use of the word “stake” in the text of the Doctrine and Covenants. The reader is likely familiar with the metaphor attributed to Isaiah (Isaiah 54:2) in which Isaiah compares the Lord’s earthly kingdom to a tent which has a center pole in Zion and this tent is supported by many ropes or cords attached to many stakes driven into the ground. These tent-stakes, which support the tent, are

located throughout the world. Here the Lord puts the kingdom of God in Joseph Smith's day, into proper perspective. The center pole is in Missouri, in Zion, and Kirtland is a support stake.

14 For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.

verse 14 “For Zion must increase” This phrase has a dual meaning. Obviously the area of Independence, Missouri needs to be built up and strengthened. It is the center place of Zion. But also spiritual Zion, which consists of the pure in heart wherever they may dwell, must also increase. When there is an increase in the numbers of church members who are pure in heart, the borders of spiritual Zion are enlarged, regardless of where the new members may live. The few metaphors in this verse depict Zion as a bride being adorned for her marriage to the coming Bridegroom (see Isaiah 62:4-5; Matthew 25:6; John 3:29; Revelation 19:7-9; Moroni 10:31).

15 Therefore, I give unto you this commandment, that ye bind yourselves by this covenant, and it shall be done according to the laws of the Lord.

verse 15 “I give unto you this commandment, that ye bind yourselves by this covenant” Again, a commandment to those called to be part of the United Firm. As with all those early saints who become part of the law of consecration and stewardship, these brethren entered the Firm through making a covenant with the Lord. Those in the United Firm were called to consecrate their property to establish a bishop's storehouse and to meet other financial needs.

16 Behold, here is wisdom also in me for your good.

17 And you are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claims on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just—

verse 17 “you are to be equal” Equal here does not mean equal in absolute terms. Rather, these brethren were to receive a stewardship that allowed each to have according to his needs.

18 And all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church—

verse 18 “all this for the benefit of the church” One may argue that the law of consecration and stewardship drains the participants of their motivation, and hence of their productivity. The popular wisdom of the world is that competitive self-interest is the

only consistently successful motivation for personal or professional achievement. This is clearly false in a Zion society. Truly celestial individuals are consistently self-motivated to achieve and to excel by the needs of others and by love for God and his Church. They are willing to sacrifice all worldly things for the “benefit of the church” and for the benefit of others.

“that every man may improve upon his talent” This phrase is an allusion to the parable of the talents, in which the righteous servants productively utilized their talents.

19 Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

verse 19 “Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor” In a Zion society the principle of charity is fundamental. Each person must be as concerned about the temporal and spiritual welfare of his neighbor as he is about his own.

“with an eye single to the glory of God” This phrase has reference to the concept that a man cannot worship both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24; Moroni 7:11-14).

20 This order I have appointed to be an everlasting order unto you, and unto your successors, inasmuch as you sin not.

verse 20 “This order I have appointed to be an everlasting order” Ironically, the United Firm was short lived. On April 10, 1834, members of the Firm met and decided that the order should be dissolved due to transgression of some of its members (see D&C 104:52-53).

21 And the soul that sins against this covenant, and hardeneth his heart against it, shall be dealt with according to the laws of my church, and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.

verse 21 “the soul that sins against this covenant” He who violates his covenant promise as a member of the United Firm.

“according to the law of my church” The laws of the Church are stated in section 42 and deal with denying fellowship, excommunication, and in some cases turning offenders over to civil authorities.

“shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan” See the commentary for D&C 78:12.

22 And now, verily I say unto you, and this is wisdom, make unto yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, and they will not destroy you.

verse 22 “make unto yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness” The word *mammon* refers to riches or material wealth, particularly

when those riches result in evil or immorality. Here the Lord refers to the influential nonbelievers in the environment of the saints as the “mammon of unrighteousness.”

According to Elder Joseph Fielding Smith: “It is not intended that in making friends with the ‘mammon of unrighteousness’ [Luke 16:9] that the brethren were to partake with them in their sins; to receive them to their bosoms, intermarry with them and otherwise come down to their level. They were to so live that peace with their enemies might be assured. They were to treat them kindly, be friendly with them as far as correct and virtuous principles would permit, but never to swear with them or drink and carouse with them. If they could allay prejudice and show a willingness to trade with and show a kindly spirit, it might help to turn them away from their bitterness. Judgment was to be left with the Lord” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:323).

Moreover, a righteous individual can learn how wealth and the world operate and then work with the system for righteous purposes. When that is sincerely the motive, such action is not collaboration with Babylon but a way of building Zion.

An additional thought: If you anticipate receiving the true riches of eternity, it is wise to learn obedience and faithfulness with regard to things of this world. If you will become prudent in dealing with a small quantity, you may find yourself in eventual possession of great treasure. If you learn to handle a minor stewardship entrusted to you from someone else, you then can be trusted with something of great value that will be your own (Luke 16:10-12).

23 Leave judgment alone with me, for it is mine and I will repay. Peace be with you; my blessings continue with you.

verse 23 The saints are told to be tolerant and not judge the nonmembers (the “mammon of unrighteousness”) in Missouri.

24 For even yet the kingdom is yours, and shall be forever, if you fall not from your steadfastness. Even so. Amen.

verse 24 The faithful have a right to the kingdom of Heaven. It is theirs to keep, or theirs to throw away.

Sections 79 and 80 The Call to Preach

In March 1832 some elders were called on missions. Jared Carter was called to go to the Eastern states. He was one of the Colesville saints and had joined the Church in New York sometime in February 1831. The following spring he left his farm in Chenango, New York, near Colesville and moved with the saints to Ohio. Settling first in Thompson, Ohio, he later moved to Amherst, about fifty miles west of Kirtland, to be near his brother Simeon. In June 1831 the Lord directed that Carter be ordained a priest (see D&C 52:38), and he was ordained an elder sometime before September of that year. He served six months and two days, keeping a meticulous journal all during his mission. He served mostly in New York and New Jersey and baptized ninety-eight converts.

Section 79 was received by the Prophet on March 12, 1832 in Hiram, Ohio. Jared Carter did record the following details in his journal: "I at length went to Hiram to the Seer to inquire the will of the Lord concerning my ministry the ensuing season and the word of the Lord came forth that showed that it was his will that I should go forth to the Eastern countries in the power of the ordinance wherewith I had been ordained which was to the high privilege of administering in the name of Jesus Christ even to seal on earth and to build up the Church of Christ and to work miracles in the name of Christ" (cited in Woodford, *Historical Development*, 2:1005; spelling and capitalization standardized).

Section 79

1 Verily I say unto you, that it is my will that my servant Jared Carter should go again into the eastern countries, from place to place, and from city to city, in the power of the ordination wherewith he has been ordained, proclaiming glad tidings of great joy, even the everlasting gospel.

verse 1 "Jared Carter should go again into the eastern countries" After moving to the west the previous year, Jared is called to return to the east as a missionary to his former neighbors and others as directed by the Spirit.

"in the power of the ordination" Those who hold the priesthood are God's agents and have been authorized to borrow his power. They are expected to use that power as God would: to bless, preach, perform ordinances, etc. When a priesthood holder is asked to give a blessing, he should not merely pray that God will bestow a blessing. The appointed agent having the necessary power should bestow the blessing in the name of Jesus Christ. That which God has delegated to his servants, they should perform in confidence and power, and not delegate back to him by merely praying that God will do something. There is a critical difference between blessing "in the power of the ordination" and merely praying for a blessing.

2 And I will send upon him the Comforter, which shall teach him the truth and the way whither he shall go;

verse 2 “the way whither he shall go” Jared Carter was to keep moving and to travel as directed by the Spirit. His journal shows great determination on his part to travel to the major cities in New York, as directed in verse 1, “from city to city.”

3 And inasmuch as he is faithful, I will crown him again with sheaves.

verse 3 “I will crown him again with sheaves” See the commentary for D&C 75:5.

4 Wherefore, let your heart be glad, my servant Jared Carter, and fear not, saith your Lord, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

Stephen Burnett and Eden Smith were also called to preach. Their call was a missionary-at-large type call: “Go ye and preach my gospel, whether to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west, it mattereth not.” Not only were they allowed to go where they wanted, but they were also promised success regardless: “ye cannot go amiss.”

Stephen Burnett was converted to the Church by late November 1830 in Orange, Ohio, by John Murdock, who had himself been a member of the Church, at that time, less than one month. The important church conference held on October 25-26, 1831, at which the first high priests were ordained, met at the Burnett home in Orange, Ohio. Among the high priests ordained there was seventeen-year-old Stephen Burnett.

On January 25, 1832, Burnett was called to serve a mission with Ruggles Eames, although that mission either did not take place or was of very short duration, since Burnett is called here two months later to serve a mission with Eden Smith. Burnett also preached for awhile in New Hampshire with Horace Cowan during the summer of 1833. By 1837, however, Burnett had come out in opposition to the Prophet Joseph and was excommunicated on December 3, 1838.

Eden Smith was also an Ohio resident who joined the Church in 1831 at the age of twenty-four. He served several short missions in 1831 and 1832, but his style was to preach for a short period of time and then return home to work and be with his family.

Section 80 was received March 7, 1832. Chronologically this would actually place section 80 five days earlier than section 79, which was received on March 12. Section 80 was first published in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

Section 80

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Stephen Burnett: Go ye, go ye into the world and preach the gospel to every creature that cometh under the sound of your voice.

verse 1 “preach the gospel to every creature” Missionaries are called to preach to any individual who will listen. Neither social status, nor education, nor nationality, nor financial status, nor any other factor should cause the missionary to ignore his or her Heavenly Father’s children when called to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without restriction, all who will hear are invited, all who will repent are called, and all who will obey are chosen.

2 And inasmuch as you desire a companion, I will give unto you my servant Eden Smith.

3 Wherefore, go ye and preach my gospel, whether to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west, it mattereth not, for ye cannot go amiss.

verse 3 “it mattereth not” See the introductory commentary for this section. Once again, we are reminded that there are some decisions that just do not matter in the great scheme of things. There are some decisions in life for which there is no right or wrong answer. It might additionally be noted that the opportunities to preach the gospel are so abundant that one cannot go amiss wherever one chooses to labor. Both the righteous and the wicked in all the earth must be warned (see also the commentary for D&C 60:5).

4 Therefore, declare the things which ye have heard, and verily believe, and know to be true.

verse 4 “declare the things which ye . . . know to be true” The power of the Spirit can best work through us when we actually have spiritual testimonies ourselves. Then, as we teach the investigator, the Spirit may bear witness to both us and the investigator simultaneously. One heart then may bear witness to another heart and the two may “rejoice together” (D&C 50:22). When the Spirit bears witness to the missionary as he or she teaches a gospel principle, then the chance that the investigator will also feel the Spirit’s influence is maximized. In this way, teaching the gospel differs drastically from teaching secular concepts.

5 Behold, this is the will of him who hath called you, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

Section 81 Counselor in the First Presidency

Section 81 is the last of four revelations Joseph Smith mentioned receiving before March 20, 1832. It was received on March 15, 1832. Frederick G. Williams (see the Brief Historical Setting for 1830 October near the end of section 32. See also the introductory commentary for section 56) had been previously called to be an high priest and counselor in the First Presidency, and this revelation instructed him in his calling (see also the background material for section 75).

Actually, in March 1832 there was not really a First Presidency as we call it today. In January 1832 at the conference at Amherst, Ohio, Joseph had been ordained and sustained "President of the High Priesthood." In this section, Brother Williams is instructed in his calling as a counselor to Joseph in the Presidency of the High Priesthood. By 1834 this body was called the First Presidency of the Church. In these commentary materials I have taken the license to refer to the Presidency of the High Priesthood as the First Presidency because the historical evolution from the one to the other is so direct.

Actually, when this revelation was received in March 1832, it instructed Jesse Gause and not Frederick G. Williams in his calling as counselor to Joseph in the presidency. Gause had been ordained a counselor in the Presidency of the High Priesthood on March 8, 1832. When Jesse Gause apostatized and was excommunicated in December of 1832, the call was transferred to Frederick G. Williams, and Jesse Gause's name was removed from the revelation and replaced with that of Brother Williams. Brother Williams was not actually ordained to the office until March 18, 1833! It was on this date that the First Presidency of the Church (as distinct from the Presidency of the High Priesthood) was organized, a year after section 81 was received.

The original recipient of this revelation, Jesse Gause, had been a member of the Shaker community in North Union, Ohio. He had arrived in North Union with his family in October 1831, about seven months after Latter-day Saint missionaries visited that community (see D&C 49). He must have come into contact with the Church soon afterward, for he was called as a counselor to Joseph Smith on March 8, 1832, less than five months later, during which time he had been converted and baptized. Gause was about twenty years older than Joseph Smith and ten years older than Sidney Rigdon. He accompanied the Prophet to Missouri in April and appears to have served faithfully until August 1832, when, on a mission with Zebedee Coltrin, he visited his estranged wife in a proselyting effort among the Shakers at North Union. For health reasons, Coltrin returned to Kirtland on August 19. Gause, unable to reconcile with his wife, "continued east and walked right out of the history of the Church, never again to return" (Woodward, "Jesse Gause," 364). He was excommunicated on December 3,

1832, for reasons unknown, although the *Far West Record* notes that he “denied the faith,” and it is possible that his wife had something to do with the matter (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 47-48).

For the convenience of the reader, let us also briefly summarize the background of Frederick G. Williams. He had joined the Church after being taught by the Lamanite missionaries as they passed through Kirtland on their way to Missouri in the fall of 1830. He volunteered to leave his family and travel with the missionaries to Missouri, and his 144-acre farm in Kirtland was given over to the use of the Church. Members of his family, Ezra Thayre, the Prophet’s parents, and other church members occupied it during his absence. In the fall of 1832, Williams returned to Kirtland and was ordained a high priest. On July 20, 1832, he began serving as Joseph Smith’s scribe. He became a member of the First Presidency in March of 1833. He served as a member of the First Presidency until 1837.

This section was the last to be received while Joseph was living in Hiram, Ohio. It seems appropriate to summarize this Hiram period and make a transition to the next period:

For six and a half months, between September 12, 1831, and the end of March 1832, Hiram, Portage County, Ohio, served as temporary headquarters of the Church. During this period, Joseph and his family lived in the large frame home of John Johnson. Many saints traveled there to meet with him and to seek his counsel, and to attend meetings in the Johnson home. There, the Prophet worked on his inspired revision of the Bible and received some of his most profound visions and revelations. Although the Prophet’s stay in Hiram was brief, this six-month period was one of the truly significant eras in the early history of the Church.

In Hiram, Joseph also encountered serious opposition. Despite a temporary tranquility that prevailed while Joseph was studying, praying, and recording revelations, intense opposition erupted in Ohio in the spring of 1832. Critics denounced the zeal of converts, exposed the failure of members, and complained that the Church created divisions in families. Not understanding the law of consecration, some believed that Joseph was attempting to establish a communistic society in Portage County.

The apostasy of Ezra Booth and Symonds Ryder helped arouse organized opposition against the saints in Hiram (see Character Vignette for Ezra Booth at the end of section 52). When emotions had reached a high pitch, some Missouri settlers planned a violent attack on Joseph. By removing the heart of the Church, they thought they could crush the expansion of Mormonism.

We have already briefly mentioned the mobbing of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on March 24, 1832, by an angry crowd of about fifty men (see the introductory commentary for section 82). Further describing the turbulence of that black night, the Prophet recalled that the mob broke first into the residence of Elder Rigdon, carried him from his home, and dragged him by his heels so that his head was pulled along the

rough frozen ground. Then they covered his body with tar. One man seized a feather pillow from the Rigdon home, and the crowd tore the pillow, removed the feathers, and sprinkled them over Sidney's tarred body.

The Prophet also described his own ordeal: "As I was forced out . . . I made a desperate struggle . . . to extricate myself, but only cleared one leg." Joseph then kicked one of the men. After this man fell on the door step, the angry crowd swore that "they would kill me if I did not" remain still (*Times and Seasons*, 5:611-12). Joseph was then carried into the stark darkness of a lonely meadow where he was beaten by the aroused men. As he was being carried around the corner of the Johnson home, he recounted, the man whom he had kicked caught up with the group and thrust his blood-covered hand into Joseph's face and swore "I'll fix ye." While being carried into the field, the Prophet was choked until he became unconscious. When he awoke, he saw the tarred and bloody body of Sidney Rigdon stretched out on the ground and assumed that Sidney was dead. The Prophet pleaded for mercy, after which one man cursed and said, "Call on yer God for help, we'll show you no mercy" (*HC*, 1:261-62). Luke Johnson later identified the man Joseph kicked as Warren Waste. Waste, Johnson added, was one of the strongest individuals living in the Western Reserve and boasted that he alone could take the Prophet from the house. But after struggling with Joseph and being knocked off the steps he cried, "Do not let him touch the ground, or he will run over the whole of us" (*Millennial Star*, 26:835). Joseph was then carried another thirty rods or so from the Johnson home, where someone cried, "Symonds, Symonds," calling, as Joseph assumed, Symonds Ryder.

Meanwhile some members of the mob held a council. Joseph Smith thought they were trying to decide whether or not to kill him. The group decided against such action, but determined to beat him instead. They tore off all of his clothes, leaving only a shirt collar around his neck. One man fell on him like a "mad cat" and, while scratching his body with sharp nails, muttered, "That's the way the Holy Ghost falls on folks!" Luke Johnson later reported that after Joseph was taken from the Johnson home, the mob stretched him on a board and "tantalized him in a most insulting and brutal manner." He further stated that the mob planned to emasculate him, and a Dr. Dennison was to perform the operation; but when the doctor saw the Prophet stretched on the plank, he changed his mind and refused to perform the operation (*Luke Johnson's History*, 835).

The mob also attempted to force into his mouth a vial of what the Prophet thought was poison, but he broke the vial with his teeth and it fell to the ground, leaving him with a chipped tooth. After being scratched and beaten, Joseph was covered with a coat of tar and feathers. Some of the men tried to close his lips with tar, and others sought to force the tar paddle into his mouth (*HC*, 1:263).

Eventually the mob disappeared, leaving Joseph in the meadow. When he attempted to rise, he fell, but after removing some of the tar from his lips, he breathed

more easily. After a while he saw two lights in the distance. He arose and made his way toward one of the lights, which was coming from the Johnson home. At the door, his wife saw his body darkened with tar, which she thought was blood, and, thinking that he had been severely crushed, she fainted. A blanket was thrown around the Prophet, and a number of friends who had gathered in the Johnson home spent the night removing the tar and washing his body.

The next day was Sunday, and the saints gathered to worship at the usual hour. During the night Joseph had been cleaned up and he prepared himself to preach. “With my flesh all scarified and defaced,” he wrote, he preached to the congregation as usual and noted that some of the men who had participated in the mobbing of the previous night were in attendance. During the afternoon he baptized three converts.

Although Joseph recovered quickly from this ordeal, Sidney was not so fortunate. For several days he was delirious, but he eventually recovered.

Because of continued threats on their lives, Joseph and Sidney and their families left Hiram in the spring of 1832. On April 1, Joseph and Sidney and others left for a mission to Missouri. Since another mob had been organized in Kirtland and the “spirit of mobocracy was very prevalent through that whole region of the country,” the Prophet avoided returning to Kirtland prior to his going to Missouri. He instructed his wife, for her safety, to leave Hiram, return to the Whitney home in Kirtland, and await his return. Following his departure from Hiram, Joseph was not reunited with his family until he returned to Kirtland in June 1832.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 81:5-6 Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. And if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality, and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father.

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you my servant Frederick G. Williams: Listen to the voice of him who speaketh, to the word of the Lord your God, and hearken to the calling wherewith you are called, even to be a high priest in my church, and a counselor unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun.;

verse 1 “a counselor unto my servant Joseph Smith” The specific calling of Jesse Gause in 1832 was as a counselor to Joseph Smith in the Presidency of the High Priesthood (see verse 2). As mentioned in the introduction to this section, this calling is not exactly equivalent to being a counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, because the First Presidency as such was not organized until a year later, on March 18, 1833 (see D&C 90). The differences between the two callings are, however, negligible. Like the later First Presidency, the Presidency of the High Priesthood presided over the

whole Church and not just over the high priests (see D&C 107:78-82, received November 11, 1831).

2 Unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom, which belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood:

verse 2 “Unto whom” Unto Joseph Smith alone. The President of the Church himself is the only individual who exercises by right all the keys of the kingdom at one time. These keys are always extended through the President to his counselors in the presidency by virtue of their association with him in that quorum. When he dies, however, his counselors’ authority to exercise those keys ends, and the presidency is dissolved. At the death of the President, the counselors in the First Presidency resume their places in the other quorums of the Church, and the President of the Quorum of the Twelve automatically becomes the presiding officer of the Church. Because the Twelve as a quorum hold all the keys collectively (see D&C 107:24), they also have the authority, collectively, to reorganize the First Presidency and designate the new President. He then becomes the only individual who exercises by right all the keys of the kingdom at one time, as stated in D&C 132:7: “There is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred.”

“the keys of the kingdom” See the commentary for D&C 65:2.

“Presidency of the high priesthood” The Presidency of the High Priesthood is a priesthood office in the Church even today. The First Presidency as we know it today was not organized for another year (March 18, 1832). Today the prophet and his counselors in the First Presidency are simultaneously the Presidency of the Church (with all its members and auxiliaries) and also the Presidency of the High Priesthood.

3 Therefore, verily I acknowledge him and will bless him, and also thee, inasmuch as thou art faithful in counsel, in the office which I have appointed unto you, in prayer always, vocally and in thy heart, in public and in private, also in thy ministry in proclaiming the gospel in the land of the living, and among thy brethren.

verse 3 “verily I acknowledge him and will bless him” That is, the prophet Joseph Smith.

“and also thee, inasmuch as thou art faithful” Jesse Gause (or his successor in the Presidency, Frederick G. Williams) will be blessed to the extent that he is faithful in his subordinate position to the Prophet Joseph. His duties as a counselor to the Prophet and member of the presidency are enumerated.

First, he is to be “faithful in counsel.” The Lord, in his wisdom, provides leaders with counselors, not just to share the workload but also to share insights, knowledge, and wisdom. In other words, even the prophet can benefit from the advice of others. Counselors are not to be “yes men,” but neither are they to be inflexible when their

president decides against their views. The Lord governs his kingdom by councils. One individual (in this case, the President of the High Priesthood) has the keys and authority to have the final word, but even the prophet is to consider the wisdom and inspiration of his counselors.

Second, he is to pray always. It is important for every leader to seek counsel from him whose kingdom this is. Therefore, faithful and wise leaders will always pray for inspiration and revelation in their policies and deliberations.

Third, he is to proclaim the gospel. Every calling in the Church has with it the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel in one way or another, and preaching and praying are the two activities that will do the most good upon this earth (see verse 4).

4 And in doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord.

verse 4 “in doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings” See verse 3 and its commentary.

5 Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.

verse 5 Fourth, he is to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.” This duty has a dual application. First, the counselors in the First Presidency are to care for the poor, the weak, and the afflicted members of the Church by implementing the law of the gospel. Second, they are to assist the President in the event of his weakness or incapacity. President Harold B. Lee, when serving as counselor to the aging President Joseph Fielding Smith, gave this insight into his responsibility:

As I thought of the role of President Tanner and myself as his counselors, I thought of a circumstance in the life of Moses. . . . As Moses sat upon a hill and raised the rod of his authority, or the keys of his priesthood, Israel prevailed over their enemies; but as the day wore on, his hands became heavy and began to droop at his side. And so [his counselors] held up his hands so they would not be weakened and the rod would not be lowered. He would be sustained so that the enemies of the Church would not prevail over the saints of the Most High God (see Exodus 17:8-12).

I think that is the role that President Tanner and I have to fulfill. The hands of President Smith may grow weary. They may tend to droop at times because of his heavy responsibilities; but as we uphold his hands, and as we lead under his directions, by his side, the gates of hell will not prevail against you and against Israel (CR, October 1970, 153).

6 And if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality, and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father.

7 Behold, and lo, these are the words of Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

verse 7 “Alpha and Omega” See the commentary for D&C 19:1.

Brief Historical Setting

1832 April

While in Missouri, Joseph was also sustained as “President of the High Priesthood” by a conference of the elders in that area. He then visited the Colesville saints who lived in Kaw Township. In Missouri, the Lord gave Joseph a revelation regarding the care of widows and orphans by the Church [**D&C 83 - Widows and Orphans**].

Section 83 Widows and Orphans

See the introductory commentary for section 82. Joseph Smith and his companions traveled from Ohio to Independence, Missouri, in April 1832, to conduct church business and “sit in council with the saints,” according to the commandment they had received in D&C 78:9. Joseph and Sidney left Hiram, Ohio, on April 1, 1832, for Missouri in company with Newell K. Whitney and Jesse Gause. They arrived in Independence on April 24. On April 26 a general council was held during which the Prophet was sustained by the saints in Missouri as President of the High Priesthood. He had previously been sustained and ordained to that position at a conference of the elders of the Church in Amherst, Ohio, on January 25, 1832 (see D&C 75). Since the two centers of the Church were Kirtland and Independence, it was necessary that this action be repeated in Independence. Also, after reconciling some hard feelings between the Missouri and Ohio brethren, Joseph received section 82. The conference continued on April 27, and Joseph noted that the saints in Missouri “were settling among a ferocious set of mobbers, like lambs among wolves” (*HC*, 1:269). On April 28 and 29 he visited the saints who lived above the Big Blue River in Kaw Township, a few miles west of Independence. These were primarily the saints from Colesville, New York. They welcomed him with rejoicing. Joseph returned to Independence the following day for meetings of the Literary Firm and the United Firm. It was agreed at this meeting to print only three thousand copies of the Book of Commandments rather than the ten thousand originally planned. A subsequent meeting of the United Firm appointed Sidney Gilbert and Newel K. Whitney as agents for the two branches of the Firm in Missouri and Ohio, respectively. It was also agreed that the United Firm should take out a loan for fifteen thousand dollars, probably for startup costs for the bishops’ storehouses.

Sometime on April 30, 1832, Joseph received section 83. He recorded the event as follows: “On the 30th, I returned to Independence, and again sat in council with the brethren, and received the following: [D&C 83]” (*Ibid.*). Joseph Smith and his companions remained in Missouri for two weeks,

What happens if a husband in Zion, who is living the law of consecration, is killed? Is the Church beholden to care for his widow and her children? Does the man’s stewardship pass on to his wife and children? What happens if both parents are killed? Do the children have the right to expect that the Church will care for them?

In section 83 the Lord revealed through Joseph that under the law of consecration, the Church does have the obligation to care for widows and orphans, assuming of course there is a need.

What about today? Is the situation different? It would seem that today the primary responsibility lies with the extended family. If family are unable or unavailable to assist, then the Church will step in.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord, in addition to the laws of the church concerning women and children, those who belong to the church, who have lost their husbands or fathers:

verse 1 “in addition to the laws of the church” This revelation is an addendum to the law of the Church on matters found in D&C 42:30-34, which discussed the rights and obligations of stewards but did not address the rights of dependents, particularly if the steward died.

2 Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken; and if they are not found transgressors they shall have fellowship in the church.

verse 2 “Women have claim on their husbands” The primary responsibility for the support of married women in the Church lies not with the Church but with their husbands. In the context of the law of consecration, faithful wives have the right to claim support from their husbands as part of their covenant relationship. This was a very liberal idea in frontier America in the nineteenth century. President Ezra Taft Benson declared: “This is the divine right of a wife and mother. She cares for and nourishes her children at home. Her husband earns the living for the family, which makes this nourishing possible. With that claim on their husbands for their financial support, the counsel of the Church has always been for mothers to spend their full time in the home in rearing and caring for their children” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 547).

Certainly there are exceptions to this policy in practice. Not every female church member has a husband. Not every married sister has a worthy husband. Some sisters have husbands who are disabled or otherwise unable to work. Financial realities may be different from the ideal, and in such cases adjustments can be made. Nonetheless, the general policy remains, and it applies to the vast majority of cases: the husband bears primary responsibility for the support of his wife and family as long as he lives (see 1 Timothy 5:8).

3 And if they are not faithful they shall not have fellowship in the church; yet they may remain upon their inheritances according to the laws of the land.

verse 3 “And if they are not faithful” Some might claim that an unfaithful or unrighteous widow has no right to the Lord’s resources entrusted to her faithful husband, but the Church is not to turn an unfaithful widow out of her home. Such a widow might be refused fellowship according to the same law of the Church that applies

to all members, but faithful or unfaithful, a widow is to retain possession of her husband's legally deeded stewardship.

“according to the laws of the land” Most states and countries have laws governing inheritance and the rights of surviving dependents. In all cases, the policy and practice of the Church is in harmony with civil statutes.

4 All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age.

verse 4 “All children have claim upon their parents” The primary responsibility for the support of dependent children lies with the parents. In the rearing and support of children, the wife shares responsibility with her husband. Just as the wife has claim upon her husband for her maintenance (see verse 2), so also children have claim upon their parents until they are of age.

5 And after that, they have claim upon the church, or in other words upon the Lord's storehouse, if their parents have not wherewith to give them inheritances.

verse 5 “after that” After children come of age.

“they have claim upon the church” The context of this revelation is families living under the law of consecration. When children of such families are of an age to support themselves and start families of their own, they may receive a portion of their parents' stewardship to start out but only if the parents' resources are great enough to be divided. If the stewardship of the parents cannot sustain such division the Church is to provide stewardships, or inheritances, for the new family out of the resources of the bishop's storehouse.

6 And the storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor. Amen.

verse 6 “the storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church” The resources from which the bishop's storehouse will operate will come from the United Firm and from the surpluses of all the other stewards in the Church who are also living under the law of consecration.

“widows and orphans shall be provided for” All faithful widows, orphans, and poor persons in the Church without other means of support have a claim upon the bishop's storehouse, and even unfaithful widows retain possession of their deceased husband's stewardships (verse 3). The poor who are unfaithful to their covenants have no claim upon the resources of the Church, beyond the simple necessity of saving their lives, if it comes to that (see Mosiah 4:16). The Church has no obligation for continuing, daily support of those who do not keep the faith.

According to President Joseph F. Smith: “It is intended that the widows shall be looked after when they are in need, and that the fatherless and the orphans shall be

provided for from the funds of the Church; that they shall be clothed and fed, and shall have opportunity for education, the same as other children who have parents to look after them. When a child is fatherless and motherless, the Church becomes the parent of that child, and it is obligatory upon the Church to take care of it, and to see that it has opportunities equal with the other children in the Church.

This is a great responsibility. Have we ever seen the day since the Church was organized when we could carry out this purpose of the Lord fully, and to our heart's content? We have not, because we never have had the means to do it with. But if men will obey the law of God so that there shall be abundance in the storehouse of the Lord, we will have wherewith to feed and clothe the poor and the orphan and to look after those who are in need in the Church" (*CR*, October 1899, 39-40).

The Church today maintains active social service programs for the purpose of assisting members who are in need. This includes such things as adoption services and counseling services. One cannot help but wonder whether such programs are but vestiges of the law of consecration and stewardship.

Section 84 A Revelation on Priesthood

After spending two weeks in Missouri “sitting in council with the saints” and providing for the establishment of bishops’ storehouses in Independence and Kirtland as commanded by the Lord, Joseph Smith and his companions, except for Jesse Gause (who remained in Missouri at least until June), returned to Ohio. On the return journey, Bishop Newel K. Whitney’s leg and foot were broken in a coach accident, and Joseph stayed with him in Greenville, Indiana, until the bishop could travel. After staying at an inn for nearly a month, Joseph was poisoned one night at dinner but recovered through a priesthood blessing. He and Bishop Whitney left the inn promptly the following day, arriving in Kirtland in late June. They had been away from their families for almost three months.

During 1832 certain difficulties involving Sidney Rigdon began. Sidney had suffered from depression from time to time but for the most part had been able to keep it under control. During the mobbing of March 24, 1832, in Hiram, Sidney had been dragged by his heels along the ground, so that his head suffered severe blows. Following this physical abuse, in addition to the physical sequelae, his depression apparently worsened. After returning to Kirtland from Missouri, Sidney claimed on July 5, 1832, to have had a revelation and “was telling the people that “the kingdom was rent from them, and they might as well all go home for they were rejected” (*Times and Seasons* 5 [October 1, 1844]: 660; see also Whitney, *Times and Seasons* 5 [October 15, 1844]: 686). Reportedly, he also bemoaned that “it was useless to pray or do anything” (Charles C. Rich Papers, as cited in Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 174).

In response to Sidney’s claims, Joseph went immediately from Hiram to Kirtland and relieved Sidney of his priesthood calling (counselor in the Presidency of the High Priesthood) and of his license to preach, but three weeks later a repentant Sidney Rigdon was reinstated in the presidency of the High Priesthood. Joseph Smith, ever kindhearted, explained these events in a letter to W. W. Phelps: “When Brother Sidney learned the feelings of the Brethren [in Missouri] in whom he had placed so much confidence, for whom he had endured so much fatigue and suffering, and whom he loved with so much love, his heart was grieved, his spirits failed, and for a moment he became frantic, and the adversary taking the advantage, he spake unadvisedly with his lips. . . . But he has since repented like Peter of old, and after a little suffering by the buffeting of Satan, has been restored to his high standing in the church of God” (Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 272-73). It should probably be noted that Sidney was not likely fully responsible for the things he had said in view of his significant depression. Nevertheless, President Rigdon was never quite the same man after the mobbing and beating in March 1832 and the difficult journey to Missouri immediately thereafter (see

Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon*, 116-18). Sidney had already moved from Hiram, so when Joseph returned with Bishop Whitney in late June, he spent the rest of that summer in Hiram working on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible with Frederick G. Williams as scribe rather than Sidney. In August 1832, Joseph received section 99 at Hiram (see the introductory commentary for section 99).

In September 1832, the Prophet moved from the Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, into quarters above Bishop Whitney's store in Kirtland, with a kitchen downstairs. During the months since Joseph had left for Missouri, Emma, pregnant again and still grieving for the death of her adopted son, Joseph, had been required to live with three different families in Hiram and Kirtland under cramped and difficult circumstances.

Several months before, during the conference of the Church held in Amherst, Ohio, on January 25, 1832 (see section 75), at least twelve pairs of elders had been called to missionary service in the eastern United States. They labored for about nine months, which was the average duration of a mission in those days. By September they were beginning to return to Kirtland with accounts of their many successes. Joseph Smith, by then relocated in Kirtland, was overjoyed by their experiences. After their return, some of the missionaries came to Joseph and said in effect, "Joseph, give us a blessing. We would love to know more about our priesthood. Give us some morsels from the Lord." Thus on September 22 and 23, 1832, Joseph and six elders united themselves in prayer and were given this revelation (section 84). Other notes taken on that occasion suggest that on the second day, September 23, ten brethren (high priests or elders) were present with Joseph when the revelation was given. Joseph recorded his recollections as follows: "The elders during the month of September began to return from their missions to the Eastern States, and present the histories of their several stewardships in the Lord's vineyard; and while together in these seasons of joy, I inquired of the Lord, and received on the 22nd and 23rd of September, the following revelation on Priesthood [D&C 84]" (*HC*, 1:286-87).

An interesting aside is that when these missionaries returned to Kirtland, there was one thing that detracted from their general feelings of satisfaction regarding their missions. Many of them had found themselves preaching the gospel in such places as Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, New York, etc. These were places of culture, refinement, government, and education. They found there was a barrier that often appeared as a result of the vast differences between themselves and the people in these cities. These missionaries were men from the frontier, not very sophisticated, and of meager education. They just didn't relate. The report of these missionaries was the seedbed for one of the greatest innovations in the Church, and in fact the whole United States—the School of the Prophets—the first really successful adult education program in the United States. After attending that school, the elders could return to the mission field better prepared to meet all people in any walk of life on their terms.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 84 The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

D&C 84:33-42 Oath and covenant of the priesthood. Whoso breaketh this covenant . . . and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.

D&C 84:54-57 And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written.

D&C 84:85 Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour.

D&C 84:88 I will go before your face . . . and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.

D&C 84:109-110 Let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling, and let not the head say to the feet it hath no need of the feet.

1 A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and six elders, as they united their hearts and lifted their voices on high.

verse 1 “and six elders” Joseph Smith indicated that section 84 was received over a two-day period. There is good evidence that verses 1-41 were received on September 22 and verses 42-120 on September 23. The two earliest manuscripts of D&C 84, both in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams, who was serving as the Prophet’s scribe at that time, agree that six elders were present to receive verses 1-41, presumably on September 22. Both manuscripts note that verses 42-120 were received by ten elders (or high priests) on September 23.

2 Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem.

verse 2 “his church, established in the last days” This verse explains a dual purpose for establishing the Church in the last days. First, the Church is established to restore the house of Israel, the chosen people of the Lord. This will be done by searching out both the literal descendants of Israel and those who will be adopted into the house of Israel from among the Gentiles, teaching and baptizing them, thereby restoring or adopting them into the covenant. Second, the Church has been organized to gather the saints of God to establish Zion in preparation for the second coming of

Christ. The establishment of Zion refers to both the spiritual Zion, which exists wherever the pure in heart dwell (see D&C 97:21), and also the physical Zion, which is the New Jerusalem, whose center will be at Independence, Missouri.

“Mount Zion” “Mount Zion” is synonymous with Jerusalem or, more specifically, with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. In scripture the term sometimes refers to Old Jerusalem (see Psalm 78:68-69; Isaiah 10:12), but more usually to the New Jerusalem, the Zion to be built upon the American continent (see for example, Isaiah 24:23; Obadiah 1:21; Micah 4:7; Articles of Faith 1:10). Mount Zion is the dwelling place of God (see Isaiah 4:5), and thus the term refers specifically to the temple and by extension to the land and society centered around the temple, which have become sanctified like the temple itself.

The Mount Zion referred to here is the New Jerusalem (see verse 3) which, by the time this revelation was received, the saints had been commanded to build in Independence, Missouri (see D&C 57:1-3). Joseph Smith once observed: “I shall say with brevity, that there is a New Jerusalem to be established on this continent, and also Jerusalem shall be rebuilt on the eastern continent” (*HC*, 2:262; Ether 13:1-12).

3 Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased.

verse 3 “Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot” The temple lot is described in D&C 57:3, and it had been dedicated a year earlier, on August 3, 1831. When the enemies of the Church prevented the establishment of Zion and the construction of its temple in Jackson County, this commandment was revoked (see D&C 124:49-51). Nonetheless, Zion will eventually be built, and it will be built beginning with the construction of a temple in Independence, Missouri. It seems likely, but may not be necessary (given D&C 124:49-51), that this temple will be constructed on the lot dedicated for that purpose by the prophet Joseph Smith. This property is now owned by the Church of Christ, Temple lot. This group is commonly known as the Hedrickites, after an early leader, Granville Hedrick.

“dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun.” The Hebrew phrase “by the hand of” or “under the hand of” (*beyad* or *tachat yad*) means “under authority, control, or direction or,” as well as literally “by the hand of.” In this particular phrase in verse 3, it appears to mean that the temple lot was literally dedicated by Joseph Smith (see also verse 12).

“others with whom the Lord was well pleased” Note the past tense. Although the individuals who dedicated the location of Zion and its temple were approved of the Lord when they performed that labor, Ezra Booth had since left the

Church and some others had weakened in their commitment by the time section 84 was received.

4 Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation.

verse 4 “**the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints**” The purpose for gathering to Independence, Missouri, both in the past and in the future, is to build the city and temple of God and establish the center place of Zion. In the future gathering for this purpose, however, it will not be necessary to call all the saints to Missouri, for “My cities . . . shall yet be spread abroad” (Zechariah 1:17; see also D&C 97:18). Those who are called to build up the center place of Zion will be called by the priesthood leaders of the Church at that time and will labor under their direction, but there will not be a worldwide gathering of all the saints to Missouri, for Missouri could not hold them all. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “The place of gathering for the Mexican saints is in Mexico . . . and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth. Japan is for the Japanese; Korea is for the Koreans; Australia is for the Australians; every nation is the gathering place for its own people” (*Ensign*, April 1975, 65).

5 For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house.

verses 3-5 “**this generation**” Just what is the duration of a “generation”? A prophecy is made in verses 3 through 5 concerning the city of Zion of the city of New Jerusalem that will be established and the temple which will be erected in that city located in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, the place already dedicated by the Prophet.

Brother Rox W. Doxey discusses the possible meanings of the word *generation* and suggests that the expression “this generation” in these verses refers to our entire dispensation of the gospel: “Inasmuch as that temple has not been built within [more than 180] years of 1832, some members of the Church have wondered about the length of a generation. Although a generation, under certain conditions, is mentioned in the Book of Mormon as an hundred years (Helaman 13:8-11), the term, under some conditions, refers to an indefinite period. For example, Jesus said that it was an evil and adulterous generation that sought after a sign (Matthew 12:39), and in our dispensation the Lord said that “this generation shall have my word through you [Joseph Smith]” (D&C 5:10). From these examples, it is clear that the dispensation of the fulness of times is considered a generation, for the people of our time are still receiving the word of the Lord in the revelation received through Joseph Smith. There is no way

of determining the number of years meant in Section 84, verses 4 and 5. There are two things to be known, however. First, that the Lord has said through his Prophet that the temple will be built in this generation, and second, that from the time this announcement was made the leaders of the Church have never departed from the Lord's intention" (Roy W. Doxey, *The Doctrine and Covenants Speaks* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964], 2: 56 - 57).

The Lord may yet foresee the building of this temple (or these temples) in Independence, Missouri, some time prior his second coming.

verse 5 "and a cloud shall rest upon it" This passage is reminiscent of Old Testament references to the Lord's house (see, for example, 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14), particularly to the tabernacle in the wilderness when the glory of the Lord descended in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night and filled the tabernacle. In their commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants, Smith and Sjodahl wrote: "The Lord manifested himself in ancient Israel in a cloud, shaped as a pillar, which became luminous at night. It guided the people on the journey to Canaan. It stood at the entrance to the Sanctuary, and in it God spoke to Moses. It rested on the Sanctuary and filled it, when that sacred tent was set up. It was the visible sign of God's guiding and protecting care over his people. This glory of the Lord is known as the Shekinah. When the first temple was dedicated, it filled the house (2 Chronicles 7:1-3), and the people bowed down and worshiped. The Shekinah departed when the temple was profaned (Ezekiel 43:2-3). The presence of the Lord will be manifested in this temple of the Latter-day Zion" (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 497).

verses 6-16 Verses 6 through 16 contain a genealogy of Moses' priesthood or Moses' line of priesthood authority. The specific descent from Adam to Noah is given elsewhere in D&C 107:40-52 and in Moses 6:1-25; 8:1-9.

President John Taylor taught that Melchizedek was Shem, the son of Noah. The late Elder Bruce R. McConkie disagreed with that idea. Elder McConkie seemed to base his belief on the plural of the word "fathers" in verse 14. What is the doctrine of the Church regarding this question? There isn't any.

verses 6-31 Place a parenthesis, to open a parenthetical phrase, in verse 6 just after the phrase "sons of Moses." Then go to verse 31 and close the parentheses just after the phrase "for the sons of Moses." The material without the parentheses flows smoothly when read after omitting everything within the parentheses. The material within the parentheses contains significant historical and doctrinal material which is an important explanation of how the two priesthoods, the Melchizedek and the Aaronic, came to be held by Moses and Aaron.

6 And the sons of Moses, according to the Holy Priesthood which he received under the hand of his father-in-law, Jethro;

verse 6 “sons of Moses” The biblical idiom “son of” or “children of” can mean either biological offspring or someone who is in a certain category or belongs to a certain group (see, for example, Luke 5:34; Ephesians 2:3). In this passage, the phrase “according to the Holy Priesthood” makes it clear that these are Moses’s sons in the latter sense. As in section 84, the “sons of Moses” here are all those who, like Moses, receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.

“his father-in-law, Jethro” When Moses fled alone from Egypt, he traveled to the land of Midian, where he married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro the Midianite (see Exodus 2:15–4:20). The Midianites, who lived in the western part of what is now Saudi Arabia, were descendants of Abraham by his wife Keturah and were therefore distant cousins of the Israelites. From his Midianite in-laws, Moses learned the gospel and received the Melchizedek Priesthood, which had been passed down among the Midianites from the time of Abraham to Jethro through the lineage indicated in verses 6 through 14. The priesthood lineage of Jethro (and Moses) back to Adam is traced in verses 14-17.

7 And Jethro received it under the hand of Caleb;

8 And Caleb received it under the hand of Elihu;

9 And Elihu under the hand of Jeremy;

10 And Jeremy under the hand of Gad;

11 And Gad under the hand of Esaias;

12 And Esaias received it under the hand of God.

verse 12 “Esaias” The prophet Esaias is someone other than the prophet Isaiah, although Isaiah’s name is uniformly rendered Esaias in the King James Version of the New Testament. The prophet referred to here and in Doctrine and Covenants 76:100 lived in the days of Abraham and is otherwise unknown to us.

“received it under the hand of God” See the commentary for verse 3. Unlike in verse 3, it is unlikely here that verse 12 intends to convey the idea of ordination directly under God’s hands, because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Jesus Christ) did not yet have a physical body and because heavenly beings are not sent when there are righteous priests available in the flesh to perform ordinances “under God’s direction (or hand).” It may have been in this sense that Joseph Smith said, “All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself” (*TPJS*, 181). In addition, if Esaias had somehow received his priesthood literally at the hands of God, then the priesthood lineage given in verses 6-16 would be disrupted, any priests before Esaias would be links in a different chain of authority back to God, and their inclusion in Moses’s priesthood lineage would be pointless.

13 Esaias also lived in the days of Abraham, and was blessed of him—

verse 13 “**Esaias . . . was blessed of [Abraham]**” It is probable that Esaias received the priesthood from Abraham at the Lord’s direction and that this ordination was the larger part of Abraham’s “blessing” of Esaias. In just the same way, the Bible states that Melchizedek blessed Abraham (see Genesis 14:19). We know from section 84 and other sources that this blessing included ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is odd that though the Midianites were descended from Abraham through Midian, Midian himself is not mentioned in the priesthood lineage between Abraham and Jethro. Perhaps Midian, which is actually a place name, was a title or some other alternative designation for Esaias, just as the scriptures refer to Jethro as Reuel (see Exodus 2:18), Raguel (see Numbers 10:29), or Hobab (see Judges 4:11).

14 Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah;

verse 14 “**Melchizedek**” Melchizedek, a contemporary of Abraham, was a non-Israelite who held the keys of the high priesthood and who ordained the patriarch Abraham. Melchizedek was an ancient king of Shiloam or Salem (ancient Jerusalem, according to the Bible Dictionary) who succeeded in calling his wicked people to repentance and establishing peace by preaching the gospel to them (see Alma 13:14-19; JST Genesis 14:25-40).

“**through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah**” The language in this passage clearly suggests more than one generation between Melchizedek and Noah. Moreover, Alma 13:19-20 states the Melchizedek reigned in Salem “under his father” and that there were “many before him,” which gives the similar impression that there were generations between Melchizedek and Noah, or at least that Noah was not the father of Melchizedek. Hence, Melchizedek was not Shem. Though it is a belief of some in the Church that Melchizedek is Shem, the son of Noah, this identification cannot be confirmed from the scriptures or from modern revelation. The reference in D&C 138:41 to “Shem, the great high priest” is not sufficient to establish this connection, especially in light of D&C 84:14 and Alma 13:19-20. Some early church leaders did express the opinion that Shem was Melchizedek, but this information likely came from their reading in Jewish rabbinic literature. In the fourth century after Christ, Saint Jerome had also heard the same stories. Ironically, the rabbis’ purpose in identifying Melchizedek with Shem, beginning about the fourth or fifth century, was to combat Christian arguments for the existence of a “Melchizedek” priesthood outside the lineage of Aaron (see Hebrews 7:1-21).

15 And from Noah till Enoch, through the lineage of their fathers;

16 And from Enoch to Abel, who was slain by the conspiracy of his brother, who received the priesthood by the commandments of God, by the hand of his father Adam, who was the first man—

verse 16 “Adam, who was the first man” The First Presidency wrote in 1909: “It is held by some that Adam was not the first man upon this earth, and that the original human being was a development from lower orders of the animal creation. These, however, are the theories of men. The word of the Lord declared that Adam was ‘The first man of all men’ [Moses 1:34], and we are therefore duty bound to regard him as the primal parent of our race. It was shown to the brother of Jared that all men were created in the beginning after the image of God [Ether 3:15]; and whether we take this to mean the spirit or the body, or both, it commits us to the same conclusion: Man began life as a human being, in the likeness of our heavenly Father” (*Improvement Era*, November 1909, 80). Whatever man-like creatures may have existed on earth prior to the advent of Adam—and it seems highly possible that there were some—Adam and Eve were the first of those spirit children of God that were born with a mortal body in the image of their heavenly parents—in other words, Adam and Eve were the of the spirit children of the Father who were on the “fast track” to godhood (not on the “animal” track) to be born into mortality.

17 Which priesthood continueth in the church of God in all generations, and is without beginning of days or end of years.

verse 17 “Which priesthood continueth” This phrase refers to the higher or Melchizedek priesthood. There has been a Church of God (Jesus Christ) on the earth in all “generations” (dispensations). And whenever the true church has been upon the earth, it has been governed by the same authority and keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. No credible claim to being the true church can be made in any time or place without possession of the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

“without beginning of days or end of years” This allusion and the JST clear up a misunderstanding about Melchizedek from the text of Hebrews 7:3, in which Melchizedek is said to be “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life.” The JST and section 84 clarify that it is the priesthood of Melchizedek, not the man himself, that was so described. According to Joseph Smith, “The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without being of days or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent” (*HC*, 3:386).

18 And the Lord confirmed a priesthood also upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations, which priesthood also continueth and abideth forever with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God.

verse 18 “the Lord confirmed a priesthood also upon Aaron and his seed”

There is another order of priesthood—the Aaronic. We must conclude that all of the rights and authority of the Aaronic Priesthood lie within those of the higher order of priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood. In other words, the Aaronic is merely a part of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Perhaps this explains the statement of the Prophet Joseph: “All Priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it” (*TPJS*, 180).

The “priesthood which is after the holiest order of God” is the Melchizedek priesthood.

19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

verse 19 “this greater priesthood administereth the gospel” The Melchizedek Priesthood is necessary if the fulness of the gospel is to be on the earth. For example, John the Baptist, who held the Aaronic Priesthood and who knew the gospel, could baptize, but only Jesus and his disciples who held the Melchizedek Priesthood could bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost, administer the Church of Christ, and exercise the keys of the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 3:11; 16:18-19).

“this greater priesthood . . . holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom” We have spoken previously about the “mysteries of the kingdom” (see the commentary for D&C 6:7; 8:11). They are spiritual facts and concepts that cannot be understood by the carnal mind. They can only be truly understood and appreciated by the man whose mind is connected with and responsive to the influence of the Holy Ghost.

There is a certain subgroup of human beings here on earth who have an advantage in learning the mysteries of the kingdom—they have a “leg up” in obtaining and keeping the influence of the Holy Ghost. These are the men who hold the higher priesthood and are righteously administering the affairs of the Lord’s earthly kingdom. These men have better access to the two-way communication between heaven and earth—the figurative gaps or openings in the veil which separates heaven from earth are larger and filled, in one direction, with the petitions of the Lord’s righteous servants on behalf of those members of the kingdom whom these servants are serving. The larger gaps are filled in the other direction with the blessings of heaven to those same servants (see *The Priesthood in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 12).

On one level, therefore, we may say that righteous holders of the Melchizedek have an advantage in learning, by the Spirit of God, the mysteries of the kingdom. The Lord promised those who exercise their priesthood in righteousness that “the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45). Joseph Smith taught that the priesthood is the “channel through which all knowledge,

doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven” (HC, 4:207; TPJS, 166-67).

On another level, when the higher priesthood is on the earth, so are the keys of that priesthood, which keys include the authority to minister to the people of earth spiritual “mysteries.”

“even the key of the knowledge of God” One of the great blessings of the Lord to mortals who are consistently striving to obey his commands, is that he will reveal himself to the man through the influence of the Holy Spirit by the process of personal revelation (see D&C 93:1). We also learn here from this verse that the holders of the Melchizedek have an advantage in coming to truly know God (John 17:3). Again, the two-way communication between heaven and earth is more open for those who hold and honor their higher priesthood.

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

verse 20 “in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest”

There are perhaps two different ways in which one might interpret this phrase:

1. First of all, when a righteous holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood is exercising the rights of his office—performing ordinances including blessing the sick, bestowing the priesthood upon the heads of others, giving blessings of comfort, giving patriarchal blessings, etc.—he does not utilize his own personal power; rather he uses the power of God which he is authorized and entitled to borrow by virtue of his holding the priesthood.

2. The second interpretation is perhaps more likely and centers around the definition of *godliness*. The *power of God* is not the same as the *power of godliness*. Definition one, above, assumes that the two are the same. Godliness actually means “God-like-ness.” Hence the power of godliness does not refer to God’s power, but rather to that power which empowers men to become like God. In the covenants (ordinances) we are commanded to enter into is found the essence of our becoming like God. As we keep our covenants and then enter into more lofty and more and more sacred covenants, we receive increments of the attributes of God—gifts of the Spirit—and we do become slowly more like God. Hence, the gospel ordinances, when done by proper authority, and when entered into with righteous intent, have the power to enable us to become like God.

The orthodox Christian world does not believe in the concept of deification—the idea that man’s destiny is to progress and become like God. Kindliness is the state of being kind. Loneliness is the state of being alone. Holiness is the state of being holy. Saintliness is the state of being saintly. Yet, the world refuses to understand that the scriptural word “godliness” means being like God. The word “godliness” is referred to several times in the Bible and includes the idea of man’s potential to become like God (see 1 Timothy 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3; 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 Peter 1:3).

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

verse 21 The power of our becoming like God is in the ordinances of the holy priesthood—in the covenants into which we are commanded to enter. The priesthood is a grand channel for revelation and power.

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

verse 22 **“without this no man can see the face of God”** “This” does not mean without holding the priesthood. Here, “this” refers to the power of godliness. We have to become more like God in order to see him. This becoming more like him can occur temporarily (transfiguration) or it can happen more permanently as we progress—through receiving incremental gifts of the Spirit in response to our obedience—toward godhood.

While those who hold the Aaronic priesthood can stand in the presence of angels and receive their counsel, the Melchizedek Priesthood is necessary in order to be able to abide the presence of God. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that without the priesthood powers, man “would not see the face of God. For if they did, his glory would destroy them. Sinful men cannot see the face of God and live” (*The Promised Messiah*, 589).

23 Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God;

verse 23 **“this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel”** When Moses taught the Israelites, he held the Melchizedek Priesthood. He taught them the gospel of Jesus Christ and that they needed the ordinances of the holy priesthood to see God and become as he is. It was Moses’s intention, in taking the children of Israel to Mount Sinai, to give them these ordinances, including the ordinances of the temple (hence, the tabernacle) and to introduce them into the presence of God—“that they might behold the face of God.”

“sought diligently to sanctify his people” Moses sought to see his people grow spiritually through obedience to the commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While Moses was in Midian, he learned the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Moses 1:17), received the Melchizedek Priesthood from his father-in-law (see verse 6), and experienced the vision of the burning bush, which called him to minister to the children of Israel still captive in Egypt (see Exodus 3:1–4:17). It was the intention of Moses and the will of God that the children of Israel should also be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ, be sanctified through obedience to the laws of the gospel, ordained, endowed, and brought into the presence of God at Mount Sinai. For this reason, they were brought to the mount (see Exodus 19:3-13). Initially, the children of Israel collectively

accepted the Lord's proposals (see Exodus 19:7-8; 24:3-8), and many of them received the ordinances, made the covenants, and were consequently brought into the very presence of God (see Exodus 24:9-11).

24 But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory.

verse 24 **“But they hardened their hearts”** Despite Moses's intentions, however, the children of Israel weakened in their resolve and collectively refused to receive the covenants of the gospel. They did not fully repent, and they did not really want to know God or enter into his presence. Those who had already received the ordinances and made the covenants violated them. “God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law [the gospel] from Moses. . . . The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them [Exodus 20:19; Deuteronomy 5:23-27]; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law [the law of Moses]” (Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings*, 506-07).

In addition to rejecting the opportunity to receive the fulness of the gospel, the children of Israel then brazenly sinned against even the lesser law (and those who had seen God broke their holy covenants by making and worshiping the golden calf; see Exodus 32:7-9). While Moses was on the mountain receiving a dispensation of the higher laws of the gospel, Aaron and the people below “corrupted themselves” with idolatry (Exodus 32:7). In consequence, they became unworthy of the higher law, and God in his anger revoked the promises made in the gospel covenant.

“that they should not enter into his rest” The conditional promises God had made to Israel were revoked because the conditions for them had not been met.

What is “his rest”? See the commentary for 2 Nephi 21:10. See further discussion of this important spiritual gift in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1. See particularly, “Two Little-Appreciated Gifts of the Spirit” in chapter 10, *Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith* and in “The Fruits of Faith” in chapter 11, *Other Notes on Faith*. Still further discussion of this topic is found in “The Rest of the Lord—the Gift of Hope” in chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*.

25 Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also;

verse 25 This doctrine is crucial to an understanding of the Old Testament scriptures. Why is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ not clearly found in the writings of Moses and the other Old Testament prophets? Is it because these originally “Christian” texts have become corrupted and the “plain and precious” references to Jesus Christ and his gospel have been removed? No, not usually (but see Moses 1:41). The fulness of the gospel cannot be found in the Old Testament writings

because most of it was never put there in the first place. According to this verse, God took the fulness of the gospel away from Israel as a nation at Sinai. Individual prophets and some others associated with them, such as the kings David and Solomon, did receive the fulness of the gospel and its covenants in Old Testament times (see D&C 132:39), but the gospel and its covenants were withheld from Israel collectively by divine decree because of Israel's rejection of these blessings at Sinai. Joseph Smith wrote: "Was the Priesthood of Melchizedek taken away when Moses died? . . . That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face to face [the Melchizedek] was taken away; but that which brought the ministry of angels [the Aaronic] remained" (*TPJS*, 180-81).

The public writings of Moses preserved in the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) are documents specifically adapted to a people living a lesser law under the lesser priesthood. Because the knowledge of the fulness of the gospel, along with the higher priesthood and its ordinances, was removed from ancient Israel by command of the Lord (see Moses 1:23), a restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood in the latter days also called for a revision of the Old Testament scriptures, restoring them from their post-Sinai to their pre-Sinai point of view. The Joseph Smith Translation and the books of Moses and Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price fulfill this need by putting the events of Genesis and other Old Testament passages in their proper setting of the fulness of the gospel. As presently constituted, the biblical books of Moses are preparatory documents, perhaps corresponding to the Aaronic Priesthood (see Galatians 3:19, 24), whereas the creation accounts and the patriarchal narratives recorded by Joseph Smith in the Pearl of Great Price and the JST represent the restoration of the fulness, corresponding to the Melchizedek Priesthood.

26 And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;

verse 26 "And the lesser priesthood continued" When Israel sinned by its idolatry, Moses broke the stone tablets that God had made for Israel (see Exodus 32:19). This set of tablets contained upon them the new and everlasting covenant of the gospel. After Israel had been punished and the wicked and unrepentant killed, Moses returned to the mount and received another law based on the same principles as the original but formulated as a law of carnal commandments (a list of do's and don'ts) with the fulness of the gospel and the higher priesthood removed from it (see verses 25-27). This lesser law was not the gospel of Jesus Christ, but the law of Moses, named not after the divine Christ but after the man Moses, its lesser mediator (see JST Exodus 34:1-2; Galatians 3:19; JST Galatians 3:19; D&C 42:18; 76:69). When the knowledge and powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood were taken away from Israel, the Aaronic Priesthood was allowed to continue, but from that time on the people were forbidden entrance into the temple itself. "High priests" in Israel were Aaronic priests who

administered only ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood, and the only “temple” ordinances available to the people were animal sacrifices performed outside the building itself in the courtyard.

“the key of the ministering of angels” To minister means “to serve,” just as ministry means “service.” The Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys that entitle one to be visited and aided when necessary by angels sent from the presence of God (see Oaks, *CR*, October 1998, 48-52). Nevertheless, the Melchizedek Priesthood and the power of godliness manifested in its ordinances are necessary for one to enter into the presence of God himself (see verses 19-22).

27 Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb.

verses 26-27 “the preparatory gospel . . . and the law of carnal commandments” The lesser law of Moses is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. It does not contain full knowledge of Jesus as Savior, of the gift of the Holy Ghost (the conferring of which is a Melchizedek Priesthood ordinance), or of justification through grace (see D&C 20:30), for these all pertain to the fulness of the gospel. The law of Moses is a preparatory gospel of obedience, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins. The law of Moses with its carnal commandments prepares human beings for the fulness of the gospel by raising them from a level of disobedience and wickedness associated with the telestial kingdom to a level of obedience and relative righteousness associated with the terrestrial kingdom. In this condition, having learned obedience by following rules, they are prepared to receive the celestial principles of the gospel and to become perfected and sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Carnal commandments are rules, sometimes even seemingly arbitrary rules. Rules require less understanding than do principles, and rules are therefore better suited to the spiritually immature than are principles. Rules are usually black and white—do this; don’t do that. A law of carnal commandments is essentially a collection of rules that require little thought, wisdom, or spiritual experience and sensitivity from those who live them. Rules require obedience, not understanding. If one is obedient, one can live the law of carnal commandments, even if one has no idea why some behaviors are demanded and others are forbidden. Once one has learned to obey (through the observance of rules or carnal commandments), then, and only then, is one equipped and prepared to be instructed in the higher principles upon which the rules are based. Thus, observing rules develops the commitment of obedience, which then prepares us to receive principles. The succession of kingdoms (telestial, terrestrial, and celestial) is loosely paralleled by a succession of obedience (wickedness through disobedience, righteousness through rules, and perfection through gospel principles).

verse 27 “the Lord in his wrath” The law of Moses with its carnal commandments was not a blessing to ancient Israel at Sinai. It was rather a curse (see Galatians 3:10, 13). Those to whom God had offered the fulness of the celestial gospel at Sinai were cursed by having the fulness of the gospel withdrawn from them and by being given only a preparatory gospel in its place. Moreover, the lesser law itself pronounces a curse upon all who disobey even one of its tiniest rules (see Deuteronomy 27:26), and because all humans sin, all Israel falls under the curse of the law. On the other hand, to later generations of Israel the law of Moses was both a curse and a blessing—a curse for these same reasons but also a blessing because it provided a divine law that reminded them of their duties and responsibilities to the God of their fathers.

“until John” The preparatory nature of the law of Moses is illustrated by the ministry of John the Baptist, who held the Aaronic Priesthood, and who affirmed that the kingdom of God was approaching, and preached repentance and baptism for the remission of sins (see Matthew 3:1-6). He did these things to prepare Israel for the One who was coming to “baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11; see also verse 28). John did not himself publicly preach the fulness of the gospel of Christ, however; that was a ministry for Jesus’s apostles. John was the administrator of the preparatory gospel. Its principles and ordinances were faith, repentance, baptism in water, and the remission of sins—the first, second, and third principles of the gospel. Nevertheless, it was only a preparatory gospel because it did not contain the fourth principle of the gospel: baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost. The reader is invited to review the discussion of the three parts of the ordinance of baptism in *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18. Also missing was the Melchizedek Priesthood with its other ordinances.

“filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb” Though the Holy Ghost had come upon John even before his birth (see Luke 1:15, 41), during his ministry John also had the gift of the Holy Ghost which he surely must have received by the laying on of hands by someone with the proper authority. We do not know who, where, when, or how. The Holy Ghost may, of course, at God’s discretion, come upon anyone, to any degree, and for any length of time, even if the individual is not yet a confirmed member of the Church. This was the case, for example, with Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, Cornelius, and the young Joseph Smith (see Luke 1:41, 67; 2:25; Acts 10:47; JS-H 1:73). In all such cases, however, these persons must subsequently receive the laying on of hands to receive the *gift* of the Holy Ghost by the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood. See “What is the Gift of the Holy Ghost” in *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

28 For he was baptized while he was yet in his childhood, and was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow

the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power.

verse 28 “baptized while he was yet in his childhood” John was baptized as a child, but not before the age of accountability, which is eight years of age. In the Judaism of John’s day, one was considered a child until the age of twelve, so John would probably have been baptized sometime between his eighth and twelfth birthdays and perhaps sooner rather than later. We have no record of who may have performed this baptism.

“ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power” The word *ordain* has a broader range of meanings than we may sometimes recognize. According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie, the ministration described here was not an ordination to the priesthood but was what might now be more technically called a “setting apart” for a specific mission and receiving all the rights and powers pertaining to that mission: “The naming of children and circumcision of male members of the house of Israel took place on [the eighth] day. In the case of John, he ‘was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old’—not to the Aaronic Priesthood, for such would come later, after his baptism and other preparation but—‘unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power’ (D&C 84:28). That is, at this solemn eighth day ceremony, an angel, presumably Gabriel, gave the Lord’s Elias the divine commission to serve as the greatest forerunner of all the ages” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:89).

“to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews” The kingdom of the Jews was neither the kingdom of Israel nor the kingdom of heaven. At the time of John it was merely one of the fallen kingdoms of mortal men, governed by an Edomite usurper, King Herod, and led spiritually by apostate priests who did not hold the keys necessary to their office. The rightful successor to the priesthood of the house of Aaron and he who held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood by right of succession at the time of John’s birth was Zacharias, John’s own father. According to Joseph Smith, “John was a priest after his father, and held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, and was called of God to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God. The Jews, as a nation, having departed from the law of God and the Gospel of the Lord, prepared the way for transferring it to the Gentiles” (cited in Dahl and Cannon’s *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 352). In other words, the preaching of John overthrew the corrupt kingdom of the Jews. Because of the Jews’ rejection of the gospel and their rejection of John’s testimony of Christ, the right to have the gospel was taken from them and given to the Gentiles. Joseph Smith went on to say that “John, at that time, was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth, and holding the keys of power. The Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law. . . . The son of Zacharias

wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven” (*Ibid.*, 354).

29 And again, the offices of elder and bishop are necessary appendages belonging unto the high priesthood.

verse 29 “the offices of elder and bishop” These offices are subcategories, or “necessary appendages,” within the Melchizedek Priesthood. Elders hold the authority of Melchizedek but not necessarily the keys of that priesthood or the right to preside, as do high priests set apart to their offices. Bishops are here assumed to be bishops by right of ordination as high priests in the Melchizedek Priesthood rather than by right of Aaronic lineage. Technically, literal descendants who are the firstborn of the sons of Aaron have the legal right to the office of presiding bishop, but even such a descendant must be found worthy and appointed by those in authority holding the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood (see D&C 68:15-20). In the Church today, presiding bishops who are not literal descendants of Aaron preside over the Aaronic Priesthood by virtue of their Melchizedek Priesthood, which allows them to “officiate in all the lesser offices” (D&C 68:19), so long as they are appointed by those in authority who also hold the Melchizedek Priesthood.

30 And again, the offices of teacher and deacon are necessary appendages belonging to the lesser priesthood, which priesthood was confirmed upon Aaron and his sons.

verse 30 “the offices of teacher and deacon” These offices are subcategories, or “necessary appendages” (verse 29), within the Aaronic Priesthood.

31 Therefore, as I said concerning the sons of Moses—for the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation, upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed—

verse 31 In this verse the Lord returns to his original topic, after a parenthetical diversion of twenty-five verses (see the commentary for verses 6-31 above).

“Therefore, as I said concerning the sons of Moses” The phrase “sons of Moses” does not refer to the literal offspring of Moses and Aaron but rather to those who, like Moses and Aaron, have entered into the covenants of the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods, respectively.

“shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice” See the commentary for D&C 13:1.

“which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation” See the commentary for verses 3-4.

32 And the sons of Moses and of Aaron shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, upon Mount Zion in the Lord's house, whose sons are ye; and also many whom I have called and sent forth to build up my church.

verse 32 “upon Mount Zion in the Lord's house” See the commentary for verse 2.

“whose sons are ye” Joseph Smith and the elders with him who had accepted calls and served missions and had otherwise been faithful to their priesthood covenants, by virtue of righteously holding the Melchizedek Priesthood (and the Aaronic, which it embraces), are “sons” of Moses and of Aaron. Again, “sons of” here does not refer to those whose lineage is reckoned uniquely, but rather to all those heir to the same priesthood blessings once received by Moses and Aaron.

verses 33-42 In these verses is spelled out the Oath and Covenant of the priesthood, probably the most important doctrinal topic in section 84. We have previously discussed the important general principles of covenant making. If the reader wishes to review these, please study *Covenants and Covenant Making* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 3. The characteristics of the covenants we are commanded to make with God are there discussed.

We may quickly summarize the salient features of the vertical covenants which we make with God as follows: (1) God's primary motive in all his dealings with mortals is that he wants to live with us forever after this life. He yearns to have us return to live with him again. (2) He understands us humans intimately—both collectively and individually, and he has apparently instituted the system of covenants to assist and encourage us in trying to live the gospel well enough to be judged worthy of returning to his celestial presence following this life. Covenants are God's method or “technique” for helping us to return home. (3) As we enter into two-way promises with God, he inevitably promises us vastly more than we promise him. (4) God is the author of the covenant agreements, and here on earth he presents them to us in a sequence, beginning with the covenant of baptism and ending with the covenant of being sealed up to eternal life. As we “ascend” the sequence of covenants, we enter into increasingly sacred, increasingly important, and increasingly binding covenants. It would appear that it is God's hope that if we are successful in keeping the initial covenants, we will better be able to keep the later ones. Again, covenants are a way in which God hopes to bring us home to him. (5) The promises he makes to us are increasingly choice and sacred as we ascend the sequence of covenants, but they are also increasingly binding. Penalties await those who enter into covenants and subsequently fail to live up to their end of the bargain. The gravity of the penalties progressively increases as we ascend the sequence of covenants.

It would seem that the concept of the “oath and covenant” of the priesthood consists of three essential elements:

1. First, the oath. The terms of this priesthood covenant are guaranteed by an unbreakable oath, but it is not the male receiving this priesthood who swears. Rather, it is God himself who swears the oath and who thereby binds himself eternally to keep his covenant promises when the terms of the priesthood holders' covenants are met.

2. Second, the covenant. God himself fixes the terms of this binding two-way promise, and the prospective holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood agrees before hands are laid upon his head that he will keep his end of the bargain by magnifying his callings in the priesthood.

3. Finally, the penalty. Damning penalties or cursings await those who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and fail to magnify that priesthood. Today, stake presidents are asked to warn those candidates for ordination to the higher priesthood of the significant penalties that await them should they fail to honor their priesthood.

In essence, the Oath and Covenant of the priesthood is this: When a man receives the Melchizedek priesthood, he enters into a solemn covenant with the Lord that he will magnify his callings in the priesthood and keep the commandments. In turn the Lord promises him his exaltation in the celestial kingdom, and he will receive "all that my Father hath."

One of the most powerful statements ever made on the Oath and Covenant of the priesthood was made by President Spencer W. Kimball at the Stockholm area conference in August 1974. In speaking to the priesthood session, he set his notes aside and was moved by the Spirit to speak as follows. This statement has never been published to my knowledge. He first read D&C 84:33-42:

I hope you know these ten verses in the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. I hope you have memorized them, for they are basic. . . . Every man here is eligible to become the elect of God, and all that depends, after one has received the blessings, on you and me. Also, "all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord; For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me; And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him." Did you think of that! All that my Father hath! To be a God! To be a great leader! To be perfect! To have all the blessings which you can ascribe to your Father in heaven. All that is available to you and me as we hold the priesthoods, particularly the Melchizedek priesthood which, of course, comes only after the Aaronic priesthood. All is thine! That is what the father said to his son who was not the prodigal son but the brother of the prodigal son. The father brought blessings and gifts to the younger son who had been evil and who had returned to his home. The father put a ring on his finger and a cloak over his shoulders and killed the fatted calf. But he didn't ever give him "all that the father hath." But, he said to the other son, "You have always been faithful. You have always been true to your faith and trust, and all that I have is thine! That was the estate with all of its parts, and this is according to the Oath and Covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

Now you made an oath when you received the priesthood. You made an oath! And you cannot with impunity ignore that oath! You promised! And every stake president and mission president who interviews asks for promises: Will you? Have you? Have you done? Will you continue to do? And with that oath you move forward in your service in the Melchizedek priesthood. Therefore all those who receive the priesthood receive this oath, and you move forward in your service in the Melchizedek priesthood. Therefore all those who receive the priesthood receive this Oath and Covenant of my Father which he cannot break. Which he the Father cannot break! Because he is true to all of his commitments. One hundred percent true. He cannot break it . . . but you can and I can. We can break our covenants. We can ignore our oath, and we can go into discord. Therefore all those who receive the priesthood receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he the Father cannot break so long as we keep his requirements. “But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.”

This is serious business, brethren. We are not playing with mere words. “And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood” for if we consider the seriousness of receiving the priesthood, then we might be tempted to say, “I don’t want it. I don’t want to be an elder if it’s that serious.” But the Lord anticipated that, and he said, “And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day.” Brethren, this isn’t a play thing. The priesthood of God is the most serious thing in the world. It was by the priesthood that the world was created. And it is by the same priesthood that your words will be created. And if you are to become a god with your wife and have worlds of your own, it will be through the magnifying of this priesthood which you hold.

Now, you see, you are not ordinary people. You are not just ordinary men with some suggested responsibilities. You are the sons of God. You are the elect of God. And you have within your hands the possibility of becoming a god. To pass by the angels and the gods, who are set there, to your exaltation. Oh, this should make us tremble! Brethren, we should tremble as we think of the responsibility. You have twenty-two million people in these four countries, I think. Twenty-two million, and you represent them all. You stand in a high place with your heavenly Father. And kings and lords and earls and dukes and emperors—they are men of the world; but you are men of heaven. You are men with all that potential.

I hope you will find the ten verses in the 84th section and memorize them until they become a part of you. Make it clear to yourself that they who receive this priesthood receive him. And that means more than just sitting in a chair and having somebody place hands upon your head. I think that when you receive it, you must accept it. You do not merely sit. “And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.” Can you

imagine anything greater? Shouldn't we be frightened, and almost awed as we contemplate the honor we have? And the responsibility we have? This comes with the Oath and Covenant. We did swear, and it is evident that we cannot escape that responsibility.

We had a letter from a man the other day who said, "I have decided to go inactive for a while." He just didn't understand! It is impossible for one to go inactive. We have this responsibility upon our heads regardless of how we feel! How can we be casual? How can we be careless? How can we ever become inactive?!"

33 For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

verse 33 "whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods" This phrase means more than just being ordained to the two priesthoods. It means actually obtaining, coming to have in one's own possession, the powers of heaven. That can be done only "upon the principles of righteousness" (D&C 121:36). Many who are ordained to the priesthood fail to obtain or keep its powers because they do not exercise those powers in righteousness.

"magnifying their calling" For a discussion of the concept of magnifying one's calling, see the commentary for Jacob 1:19.

"sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies" The Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, of course, has a key role in the process of sanctification (see *Justification and Sanctification in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17).

But what does sanctification have to do with "the renewing of [our] bodies"? Apparently, as we are sanctified by the Spirit of God, we may at times expect an improvement in the health of a mortal body in addition to the improvement and growth of our spiritual self. It would seem that this blessing is given to faithful individuals to assist them in further magnifying their callings. President Spencer W. Kimball taught: "I present to you the thought that President McKay was up in his nineties. President Smith was in his nineties. All the presidents of the Church since almost the beginning became men of age. Their bodies were renewed, and their spirits were sanctified" (Stockholm Area Conference, 1974). President Hugh B. Brown once testified that President David O. McKay had "been sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of his body" and added that "some of the rest of us are better off today than we were many years ago so far as physical health is concerned—and we attribute that fact to [the Lord's] blessing" (*CR*, April 1963, 90). Elder Carlos E. Asay reported: "Many of us have felt the influence of this 'renewal promise.' Without it, scores of our assignments might have gone unfinished" (*CR*, October 1985, 58). Perhaps the ultimate manifestation of this phenomenon is "translation" of a mortal or lifting his body to a higher state (see *Doctrine of Translation in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 17).

There may be another important aspect to the meaning of this phrase. In Alma 13:12 the high priests who had been sanctified by the Holy Ghost could no longer look upon sin except it be with abhorrence. Perhaps the “renewing of their bodies” also includes the Holy Ghost’s blessing us so that we no longer desire to sin. As we grow spiritually, that is, as we are “sanctified by the Spirit,” our carnal or natural self tends to be purged and refined and replaced by an enhanced spiritual self. The pulls of the flesh have less and less power over us.

34 They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

verse 34 “They become” To whatever degree the sanctification of the Spirit is experienced, those who obtain the two priesthoods and magnify their callings are really, personally, changed in some degree by doing so.

“the seed of Abraham” When this term is used in a singular sense, it refers to Jesus Christ (see Galatians 3:16). In a collective sense, however, it refers to all who, like Abraham, have faith in Christ (see Galatians 3:7). Just as those who follow Moses and Aaron in obtaining the priesthood become the children (sons) of Moses and Aaron, so all those who follow Abraham by having faith in Christ become the children, or seed, of Abraham. They are adopted into the house of Israel, and they are heirs of all the blessings promised to Abraham (see Galatians 3:27-29; Abraham 2:10).

“the church and kingdom” This phrase refers to the “church of the firstborn”—those who are to inherit the celestial degree of glory (see also the commentary for D&C 76:54).

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

verse 35 “all they who receive this priesthood” The word *priesthood* is commonly used in at least six different ways:

1. God’s own personal power and authority. The power and authority possessed by God himself has been referred to as his (God’s) *priesthood* (*JD*, 26:245). This priesthood is the power by which the cosmos was ordered, universes and worlds were organized, and the elements in all their varieties were put into place. Through his priesthood, God governs all things.

2. That specific portion of God’s power he makes available for borrowing. When requested in righteousness, and on the Lord’s errand, the Lord will hear the pleas of his authorized servants and allow them to borrow parts of his power for righteous purposes. This behest is often referred to as the man’s *priesthood* or “the power of the priesthood.”

The Holy Ghost plays a vital role in judging those who exercise their priesthood in righteousness. He also grants them the needed portions of God’s power. Joseph Smith taught: “The Holy Ghost is God’s messenger to administer in all those priesthoods” (*HC*, 5:555).

3. The Lord's designation or *authorization*. The Lord's authority, permission, or authorization given to his servants to speak and act in his name is referred to as his *priesthood*. It is the divine authority for a man to invoke God's power as the man administers in the Lord's earthly kingdom.

4. The covenant order of men. Those who possess this authority and these powers are also referred to collectively as the *priesthood*.

5. The special revelation in the form of knowledge that passes through the figurative enlarged channels in the veil that separates heaven and earth. This priesthood, this revelation, includes timely knowledge and inspiration (in addition to authorization and power already discussed). This use of the word *priesthood* applies, for example, in statements such as: "This greater priesthood . . . holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God" (D&C 84:19-20; cf. *TPJS*, 166-67). This priesthood conveys the mind and will of God; and, when employed by his servants on his errand, it functions as if by the Lord's own mouth and hand (D&C 1:38).

6. The special channel through which all this special revelation, authorization, and power pass. This special channel itself may also be called the *priesthood*. Joseph Smith taught that the Melchizedek priesthood "is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven" (*TPJS*, 166-67).

The reader is left to decide which use of the word priesthood is pertinent here. Subsequent verses suggest that perhaps definition 4. above is most pertinent.

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

verses 36-38 The promises of God to the faithful are linked together here in a marvelous progression: Whosoever receives the servants of God (the priesthood) receives also their Master, the Son. Whosoever receives the Son receives also the Father who sent him. And whosoever receives the Father receives all that the Father has. These promises, of course, apply to both male and female members of the Church. Marion G. Romney taught: "This statement is worth emphasizing: 'He that receiveth my servants receiveth me.' Who are his servants? They are his representatives in the offices of the priesthood—the general, stake, priesthood quorum, and ward officers. It behooves us to keep this in mind when we are tempted to disregard our presiding authorities, bishops, quorum, and stake presidents, etc., when, within the jurisdiction of their callings, they give us counsel and advice" (*CR*, October 1960, 73).

verse 38 “all that my Father hath shall be given unto him” This is the promise of exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God. It is the promise of becoming like God, of becoming gods. Once again, the doctrine of deification was beginning to be taught to the saints (see John 17:21-23; Romans 8:14-17; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:7; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 3:21; 21:7). Those who receive the priesthood and magnify their offices or callings will, as joint-heirs with Christ, receive all that the Father now possesses, just as Christ has received it. They will receive all the power, comprehension, and knowledge of God the Father. They will share his celestial glory and will live his type of celestial life.

39 And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

40 Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

verses 39-40 A man enters into this covenant when he is ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood. For the definition of the “oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood,” see the commentary for verses 33-42 above.

The concept of the “oath and covenant” applies to more than just the oath and covenant of the priesthood. Whenever God commands obedience (a covenant) of his people, he guarantees (swears an oath) promised blessings which are far grander than that which the covenant requires. One example is the promise-curse of the Book of Mormon: “Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments [covenants], [I swear an oath that] ye shall prosper in the land. . . . And . . . inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 9:13). Generally we may say that if we will make and faithfully keep the covenants presented to us, God guarantees by his own oath that we shall receive all things and be exalted in his celestial kingdom.

41 But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.

verse 41 “altogether turneth therefrom” This phrase implies “without subsequent repentance.”

“shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come” Here is the penalty for violating this priesthood covenant. For the average priesthood holder who has not been sealed up to eternal life this verse does not imply perdition. Rather it means that “he will not again have the priesthood conferred upon him, because he has trampled it under his feet; but as far as other things are concerned, he may be forgiven” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:141-42). He who breaks the covenant shall not have the right to the priesthood hereafter, and he forfeits

the right to exaltation and eternal associations. Nevertheless, as always, should such a person repent or, he may still be forgiven and receive celestial blessings in eternity.

42 And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you.

verse 42 “wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood” Which definition of “priesthood,” of those listed under verse 35 above, do we use here? Again, I will leave it to the reader to decide. Certainly, those who will not heed the servants of God cannot receive the blessings of the gospel (see D&C 1:14). Also those who do not receive the ordination cannot be exalted in the celestial kingdom.

“which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice” The elders present on September 23, 1832, when section 84 was given, receive here a divine confirmation of their oath and covenant of the priesthood.

The voice of God in this case came through the mouth of his servant Joseph Smith (see D&C 1:38).

“I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you” The word *charge* here means instructions. It would seem from this and other passages that at times God does instruct his angels to watch over his servants (see verse 88; D&C 109:22; Matthew 18:10).

verses 43-61 Every man born into this world has within him a modicum of the power of eternal discernment which has come to be known as the “Light of Christ” or the “Spirit of Jesus Christ.” This gift is the natural endowment of every mortal. If its promptings are obeyed, the possessor will be led to a belief in Jesus Christ and to further light and truth through the Holy Ghost.

43 And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

44 For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

verses 43-44 “words of eternal life . . . every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” These phrases refer not only to those words voiced by God himself in personal revelation but also his words as voiced by his authorized servants (see D&C 1:38; 21:4-5).

45 For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

verse 45 “word of the Lord . . . truth . . . light . . . Spirit . . . the Spirit of Jesus Christ” These several expressions refer to the light of Christ. See the important

chapter, *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15. The light of Christ is the source of all spiritual and physical energy on all levels of existence in this creation, from the subatomic to the intergalactic. Heat, light energy, truth, glory, and spirit characterize the works and the forces of God in the universe. All of these originate from the light of Christ.

46 And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.

47 And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father.

48 And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world.

verses 46-48 Every human being born into the world has a certain measure of light, life, energy, and spiritual intelligence. All of these derive from the light of Christ, which permeates the physical creation. If humans will heed this inborn light-energy, they will be led upward to more intense forms of the divine power until they eventually are led back to the Father, the ultimate source of all spiritual light.

verse 48 “**not for our sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world**” God reveals himself to some and gives them the blessings of eternity, not just for their sakes but so they can, in turn, take those same blessings to all the inhabitants of the world (D&C 88:81-82). We cannot receive the blessings of eternity without fulfilling in some way our obligation of taking those blessings to others.

49 And the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin.

50 And by this you may know they are under the bondage of sin, because they come not unto me.

51 For whoso cometh not unto me is under the bondage of sin.

52 And whoso receiveth not my voice is not acquainted with my voice, and is not of me.

53 And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that the whole world groaneth under sin and darkness even now.

verses 49-53 “**the whole world lieth in sin**” Every human being has committed sin (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). The only way sin may be removed is through the atonement of Christ. Hence, “whoso cometh not unto me is under the bondage of sin” (verse 51). Everyone in the whole world who has not received the gospel is in bondage to sin. This sin brings misery to their lives, and they groan under its influence. Those who seek deliverance from the bondage follow the influence of the light of Christ

in their lives and seek ever greater light until they hear the gospel and recognize in it the voice they have heard faintly and followed before. The distinction between “righteous” and “wicked” in these verses is not based on whether they sin or not. They all lie under the bondage of sin (see verse 49). But the righteous are those who hate their sins and who seek deliverance from their bondage. They recognize the voice that proclaims deliverance and enter into the covenant that bestows it.

verses 54-58 President Ezra Taft Benson has told us that the Lord revealed to him during the dedication of the temple in Mexico that the condemnation spoken of in verses 54 through 57 is resting upon the Latter-day Saints (*Ensign*, November 1984, 6). We will long remember President Benson for his emphasis on the Book of Mormon and his calling the Church to repentance regarding that vital scripture.

54 And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—

verse 54 “you have treated lightly the things you have received” Here the Lord turns his attentions to the saints. It is likely that the Lord condemns here the saints’ reception of his counsel regarding, among other things, the law of consecration and stewardship and the establishment of Zion. President Benson has taught us that this scripture also is applicable to the saints of our day and includes part of the revealed word of the Lord, particularly the Book of Mormon.

55 Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation.

verse 55 “vanity and unbelief” *Vanity* means “emptiness.” Vanity also describes behavior that is empty and ultimately accomplishes nothing, just as the related phrase “in vain” means “all for nothing.” Vanity and vain are often applied to preoccupation with appearance rather than reality, because all such concern is ultimately pointless. Everybody ages, and God doesn’t care how pretty we are. In the religious sense, in this passage “vanity” means to prize appearance over reality, or to prize that which is of little or no value more highly than the riches of eternity.

Unbelief, in the Church, often occurs in the form of those saints who treat the doctrines of the kingdom as if they were a buffet lunch, selecting what they like and rejecting what they don’t. This is often a matter of selecting those principles which they can manage to live and rejecting those which are too difficult for them (see the phrase “not only to say but to do” in verse 57).

Those who are guilty of vanity and unbelief are “walking in darkness at noon-day” (D&C 95:5-6), having knowledge given to them but preferring ignorance, having light shined upon them but preferring the dark.

56 And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all.

verse 56 “the children of Zion, even all” The immediate historical setting of these verses is the vanity and unbelief of the members of the Church in Zion (Missouri) who were then resisting the instructions of the Prophet Joseph about the establishment of Zion and the law of consecration (see verse 76; D&C 58:15, and its commentary). But in a secondary sense, “the children of Zion” includes the whole Church then and now. We are still guilty of the sins of vanity and unbelief and suffer the condemnation of God for it.

57 And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—

verse 57 As stated above, President Benson applied these verses to the Church today:

The Lord declares that the whole Church and all the children of Zion are under condemnation because of the way we have treated the Book of Mormon. This condemnation has not been lifted, nor will it be until we repent (see D&C 84:51-81). The Lord states that we must not only say but we must do! We have neither said enough nor have we done enough with this divine instrument—the key to conversion. As a result, as individuals, as families, and as the Church, we sometimes have felt the scourge and judgment God said would be “poured out upon the children of Zion” [verse 58] because of our neglect of this book (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 64).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks further declared: “The subject I believe we have neglected is the Book of Mormon’s witness of the divinity and mission of Jesus Christ and our covenant relationship to him. . . . In too many of our classes, in too many of our worship services, we are not teaching of Christ and testifying of Christ in the way we should. This is one way we are failing to ‘remember the new covenant’” (*Ensign*, March 1994, 60-67).

58 That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion.

verse 58 “Meet,” of course, means appropriate.

“otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment” The members of the Church in 1832 were warned that if they did not repent of their vanity and unbelief, they would be judged and scourged. By 1838 almost all of the members were living in Missouri, but they had still been unable to establish Zion. On October 27, 1838, the infamous extermination order was issued by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs. Subsequently the Prophet Joseph was held in Liberty Jail, the saints were attacked and abused, and Brigham Young led the saints out of Missouri under trying circumstances. Some see

the events of the fall of 1838 as the scourge visited upon the saints partly for their vanity and unbelief and partly for failing collectively to accept and implement the doctrines of Zion (see Smith and Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 509). Since President Ezra Taft Benson has pointed out the continuing condemnation of the contemporary Church, it follows that if the Church does not repent collectively in our day, we also await a scourge and judgment preceding the second coming of the Savior (see 1 Peter 4:17).

59 For shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, I say unto you, Nay.

verse 59 “shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land?” In both the Old and the New Worlds, the land of promise was given to a chosen people with both a promise and a warning. If the inhabitants will dwell upon the land in righteousness, they will be blessed as promised, but if they turn to wickedness, they will be scoured off the land (see Leviticus 18:24-28; Deuteronomy 29:24-29; 2 Nephi 1:7; Ether 2:9). Ultimately, the Lord will not tolerate wickedness in the land of promise.

60 Verily, verily, I say unto you who now hear my words, which are my voice, blessed are ye inasmuch as you receive these things;

61 For I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the spirit of prayer, in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you.

verses 60-61 The Lord’s mercy is again manifest as he offers to the elders present on September 22 and 23, 1832, forgiveness of their sins if they will but repent of their vanity and unbelief.

“with this commandment” With this revelation—section 84.

verses 62-102 The Savior provides the assembled priesthood leaders with detailed instructions concerning the preaching of the gospel.

62 Therefore, go ye into all the world; and unto whatsoever place ye cannot go ye shall send, that the testimony may go from you into all the world unto every creature.

63 And as I said unto mine apostles, even so I say unto you, for you are mine apostles, even God’s high priests; ye are they whom my Father hath given me; ye are my friends;

verse 63 “as I said unto mine apostles” In the Old World, Christ said to his apostles, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of

the world” (Matthew 28:19-20). In the New World the Savior similarly charged his twelve disciples, and the prophet Mormon said of them, “They did go forth among all the people of Nephi, and did preach the gospel of Christ unto all people upon the face of the land; and they were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ and thus the people of that generation were blessed, according to the word of Jesus” (3 Nephi 28:23).

“you are mine apostles” The Savior’s charge to the early Church in verses 62-102 was given to the leaders of the Church and not necessarily to the general membership. The Quorum of the Twelve had not yet been established when section 84 was received, so the high priesthood of the Church largely functioned as its general authorities. These verses contain instructions for the leaders of the Church in modern times as well as in ancient times.

“ye are my friends” Those who serve the Lord over time, as he commands, become, as did the prophets Moses and Abraham, not just God’s servants, or even his children, but his friends (see verse 77; John 15:15; James 2:23; Exodus 33:11).

64 Therefore, as I said unto mine apostles I say unto you again, that every soul who believeth on your words, and is baptized by water for the remission of sins, shall receive the Holy Ghost.

65 And these signs shall follow them that believe—

verse 65 The signs or blessings listed here are apostolic privileges. Perhaps “them that believe” refers to those who have been converted, called, commissioned, and in turn sent out as the Lord’s special witnesses. In any case, the apostolic blessings listed here may be passed to or enjoyed by others, but we should not assume that they are always available to every missionary or to every member.

66 In my name they shall do many wonderful works;

verse 66 “In my name” Human beings do not perform these works. They are only possible because his servants invoke the authority of Jesus Christ. The priesthood is God’s power which his servants are authorized to borrow.

67 In my name they shall cast out devils;

68 In my name they shall heal the sick;

69 In my name they shall open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf;

70 And the tongue of the dumb shall speak;

71 And if any man shall administer poison unto them it shall not hurt them;

verse 71 This promise must have been particularly meaningful to the Prophet Joseph, who had been poisoned at an inn three months earlier and had been healed by the power of the priesthood (see the introductory commentary for this section).

72 And the poison of a serpent shall not have power to harm them.

73 But a commandment I give unto them, that they shall not boast themselves of these things, neither speak them before the world; for these things are given unto you for your profit and for salvation.

verse 73 “they shall not boast themselves of these things, neither speak them before the world” God’s miracles are sacred. They are not performed by men. Rather, a servant priesthood holder is the agent through whom God uses his power to work the miracle. God works the miracle. They should never be done for the glory of a man. Rather, all credit should be reverently and quietly given to God. The miracles should be kept out of the public eye. They are private and personal. The working of signs and miracles have little or no power to convert (D&C 63:7-12).

74 Verily, verily, I say unto you, they who believe not on your words, and are not baptized in water in my name, for the remission of their sins, that they may receive the Holy Ghost, shall be damned, and shall not come into my Father’s kingdom where my Father and I am.

verse 74 “they who believe not on your words . . . shall be damned” Those who do not accept the fulness of the gospel of Christ will be condemned to a kingdom of glory lower than the celestial.

75 And this revelation unto you, and commandment, is in force from this very hour upon all the world, and the gospel is unto all who have not received it.

76 But, verily I say unto all those to whom the kingdom has been given—from you it must be preached unto them, that they shall repent of their former evil works; for they are to be upbraided for their evil hearts of unbelief, and your brethren in Zion for their rebellion against you at the time I sent you.

verse 76 The Lord turns his attention to the saints and commands the returning missionaries, who were present when this revelation was received, to preach repentance unto the saints themselves. The saints are in need of a reprimand, and they need to repent. Reference is made here to the tension that had developed between Sidney Rigdon, Edward Partridge, and others in Missouri. These tensions had for the most part been resolved by the parties involved during the conference in Independence the preceding April 24, but the historical record shows that even though all parties were conciliatory at that time, it seems that the saints in Zion soon rekindled some hard feelings.

To *upbraid* is to reproach or censure. The commandment contained here to upbraid or reprimand the saints in Missouri for their unbelief was followed by two letters to them, both dated January 14, 1833. One of these was from Joseph Smith, and it contained the text of section 88. The other was from Orson Hyde and Hyrum Smith,

writing for the Church in Kirtland. The text of these letters calling the Missouri saints to repentance can be found in the *History of the Church*, 1:316-21 (see the introductory commentary for section 85).

77 And again I say unto you, my friends, for from henceforth I shall call you friends, it is expedient that I give unto you this commandment, that ye become even as my friends in days when I was with them, traveling to preach the gospel in my power;

verse 77 “that ye become even as my friends in days when I was with them” The Savior refers to his ancient Old World apostles whom he referred to in their day as his friends (John 15:15). The Lord extends this same blessing to those returning missionaries in 1832—that is they are referred to by the Lord as his friends.

78 For I suffered them not to have purse or scrip, neither two coats.

verse 78 “I suffered them not to have purse or scrip” Again, the Lord refers to his Old World apostles. A purse is a coin-pouch. Many have taken the word “scrip” to mean the scriptures. This is not correct. Scrip was a small bag that shepherds carried at their side with a strap over their shoulder. It was filled with extra clothing and some food. The Lord is saying not to take any money or luggage, but rather to depend upon the Lord, the Church, and the good people they contacted and taught for their temporal support.

79 Behold, I send you out to prove the world, and the laborer is worthy of his hire.

verse 79 “to prove the world” An older meaning of prove is “to test or try.” The sense here is to preach the gospel to the world and by doing so to divide the listeners into sheep and goats: those who belong to the Savior’s flock and those who do not. The test applied by the preacher “proves” the spiritual character of the listener sufficiently to establish the facts (or provide “proof”) at the judgment day.

“the laborer is worthy of his hire” The missionary was to be supported by those who received his message. The full-time labor of the missionaries in taking the gospel to the world was worth the support of those who heard their message. That hardly amounts to a “paid ministry” because the brethren received only their bare sustenance and accumulated nothing—having no purse to put it in (see verse 78).

80 And any man that shall go and preach this gospel of the kingdom, and fail not to continue faithful in all things, shall not be weary in mind, neither darkened, neither in body, limb, nor joint; and a hair of his head shall not fall to the ground unnoticed. And they shall not go hungry, neither athirst.

verse 80 The Lord promises careful personal heavenly attention to the physical status of the apostle missionary (see verse 88).

81 Therefore, take ye no thought for the morrow, for what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed.

82 For, consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin; and the kingdoms of the world, in all their glory, are not arrayed like one of these.

83 For your Father, who is in heaven, knoweth that you have need of all these things.

84 Therefore, let the morrow take thought for the things of itself.

verses 81-84 The reader should keep in mind that these instructions and promises are for the leaders of the Church and other missionaries sent out by them, as they travel without purse or scrip. These instructions and promises are not intended as commandments or advice for the saints generally in living their everyday lives. Otherwise, we would not worry about such things as a year's supply. We would set no goals, make no plans, prepare for no future possibilities. If such advice were to be generally applicable to the Church, there would be no bishops' storehouses, no scheduled meetings or conferences, or even plans for the eventual establishment of Zion. On the contrary, the Lord expects his saints to be wise stewards and to take appropriate "thought for the morrow" and beyond.

85 Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man.

verse 85 We often interpret this verse out of its scriptural context and apply its principle to members of the Church in general. While there may be some merit in doing that, we should keep in mind that these instructions apply to missionaries who cannot anticipate in advance what topics or questions may arise in the course of their work. This instruction should not normally be applied to speaking, preaching, or teaching assignments within the Church, where a great deal of thought and preparation is expected of those who magnify their callings.

86 Therefore, let no man among you, for this commandment is unto all the faithful who are called of God in the church unto the ministry, from this hour take purse or scrip, that goeth forth to proclaim this gospel of the kingdom.

verse 86 It is helpful, in reading this verse, to remove the expression: "for this commandment is unto all the faithful who are called of God in the church unto the ministry." Then the verse reads: "let no man among you, from this hour, take purse or scrip." This commandment to take no purse or scrip applied in the early Church to all subsequent missionaries. However, on September 16, 1860, President Brigham Young said that missionaries should no longer follow the practice of asking members in the

mission field for support. Instead, that support should come from members at home. The laws of the United States and other nations (for example, vagrancy laws and visa requirements) also made traveling without purse or scrip socially infeasible and a hindrance to the work.

87 Behold, I send you out to reprove the world of all their unrighteous deeds, and to teach them of a judgment which is to come.

verse 87 “I send you out to reprove the world” In their *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, Smith and Sjodahl wrote: “To reprove . . . is to convict. God’s messengers, as it were, are lawyers before the bar of God. It is their duty to convict the world of sin, and to warn all men of the judgment which is to come. They are not sent out to entertain the world with philosophical lectures, or ethical discourses, or flowery oratory, or amusing anecdotes. Their one duty is to secure conviction and, if possible, repentance and salvation” (518, see also verse 79).

88 And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.

verse 88 “mine angels round about you, to bear you up” There are ministering angels. That is authentic church doctrine.

89 Whoso receiveth you receiveth me; and the same will feed you, and clothe you, and give you money.

90 And he who feeds you, or clothes you, or gives you money, shall in nowise lose his reward.

91 And he that doeth not these things is not my disciple; by this you may know my disciples.

verses 89-91 Some have noted a similarity between these verses and the Savior’s parable of the sheep and the goats: “Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:31-46). This latter parable is not usually perceived in terms of missionary work. Yet it is clear by the parallels here that missionary work is an important setting and application for the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew.

92 He that receiveth you not, go away from him alone by yourselves, and cleanse your feet even with water, pure water, whether in heat or in cold, and bear testimony of it unto your Father which is in heaven, and return not again unto that man.

verse 92 “**cleanse your feet even with water**” This is an apostolic responsibility not extended to other missionaries. The action described here is a variation on shaking the dust off the feet (Matthew 10:14-15).

93 And in whatsoever village or city ye enter, do likewise.

94 Nevertheless, search diligently and spare not; and wo unto that house, or that village or city that rejecteth you, or your words, or your testimony concerning me.

95 Wo, I say again, unto that house, or that village or city that rejecteth you, or your words, or your testimony of me;

96 For I, the Almighty, have laid my hands upon the nations, to scourge them for their wickedness.

97 And plagues shall go forth, and they shall not be taken from the earth until I have completed my work, which shall be cut short in righteousness—

verses 94-97 These verses sound once again an important theme of the Doctrine and Covenants—that of the voice of warning (see D&C 1; 45:31 and its commentary).

98 Until all shall know me, who remain, even from the least unto the greatest, and shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this new song, saying:

verse 98 “**all shall know me, who remain**” When the Lord returns and cleanses the earth by fire, all who remain to inhabit his millennial kingdom will be his. Although not all will be church members, for many good people of other faiths will be worthy of his millennial kingdom, it will not take long for the truth to spread among the good people of all the earth.

“**with the voice together sing this new song**” When the kingdom is established upon the earth, it will be possible for the first time to sing of the Lord’s mighty works as already accomplished instead of yet in the future. The new song that will be sung will celebrate the works of the victorious Christ. The words of this song are found in verses 99-102. Elder Ruder Clawson of the Quorum of the Twelve said: “I declare to you, my brethren and sisters, that this new song . . . is one of the greatest songs that was ever written, and I have no doubt that it is a greater song than anything that ever can be written, because it sets forth the works of Almighty God and the consummation of all things” (*CR*, April 1932, 89).

verses 99-102 These verses constitute a new millennial psalm celebrating The Lord’s victory over evil and corruption, the final gathering of Israel, and the establishment of Zion. It will be sung by the saints after the Lord’s coming in glory. The prophet Isaiah foresaw this event and even this song and gave it the title “When the

Lord Shall Bring Again Zion.” See Isaiah 52:8-10 or the corresponding verses in 3 Nephi which are 3 Nephi 16:18-20 and their commentary.

**99 The Lord hath brought again Zion;
The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel,
According to the election of grace,
Which was brought to pass by the faith
And covenant of their fathers.**

verse 99 “The Lord hath brought again Zion” The establishment of the millennial kingdom is the establishment of Zion permanently and perfectly upon the earth. Zion will be established in more than one way, however. It will be “brought down . . . from above,” referring to the return of the City of Enoch, the heavenly Jerusalem, which the Lord shall bring with him at the time of his return. Zion will also be “brought up . . . from beneath,” referring to the Zion established upon the earth by faithful saints, living and dead, who will be lifted up from the earth at the last day (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). These are the saints who have kept their covenant with the Lord to build Zion, even if it is only in their own homes or neighborhoods. Undoubtedly, it will include the righteous of other faiths who would have accepted the gospel on earth and worked to build Zion if only they had had the opportunity (see D&C 137:5-9).

“The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel” To redeem is to buy back. Thus, Israel will sing the song of Jesus’s redeeming them from death, sin, and hell. They are redeemed from death by the resurrection, which will begin when the physical kingdom is established. They are redeemed from sin through his atoning sacrifice. They are or will be redeemed from hell by their being lifted up to a kingdom of glory. Those who are wicked when Christ comes, will remain in Satan’s power, in hell (the world of spirits), for the thousand years of the Millennium (see D&C 76:84-85, 106; 88:101; Revelation 20:5).

“brought to pass by the faith and covenant of their fathers” God’s grace is not random but is associated with the mercy and justice of God (see verse 102). It is true that we cannot save ourselves, but we can choose to have faith in Christ and to enter and keep his covenant. If we are faithful to our covenants, which are the same covenants God made with our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Christ will redeem us by his grace. And by doing so he graciously keeps his promises both to us and to the fathers.

**100 The Lord hath redeemed his people;
And Satan is bound and time is no longer.
The Lord hath gathered all things in one.
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above.
The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath.**

verse 100 “and time is no longer” It is common for Latter-day Saints to divide the future into “time” and “all eternity.” From this point of view, time is the present, fallen, and mortal world, whereas eternity is the world to come. To say “time is no longer” does not mean that time is no longer reckoned after the beginning of the Millennium, for the Millennium itself is to last for a thousand years, and so someone has to be counting. Rather “time is no longer” means that the world and the time of our probation have come to an end, because Satan is bound, and there is no more delay to the establishment of Zion on earth (see D&C 19:2-3).

“The Lord hath gathered all things in one” From the beginning, the establishment of Zion has been an attempt to gather together in one community those who have come to God and Christ and thus share one heart and one mind (see Moses 7:18). This unity of all into one is an eternal goal and will be largely accomplished in the great millennial kingdom (see D&C 27:13; 38:27; 41:6).

**101 The earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength;
And truth is established in her bowels;
And the heavens have smiled upon her;
And she is clothed with the glory of her God;
For he stands in the midst of his people.**

verse 101 “The earth hath travailed” The earth is itself a living entity, which is said to suffer under the curse of the fall and the sins committed upon its face by its inhabitants (see Moses 7:48). From the time of the fall until the second coming of Jesus Christ, the earth has been unable to exercise its real strength, which would make this world a paradise, as it was once in Eden and will be again in the Millennium. As we draw closer to the coming of the Savior and as the world ripens in sin, the earth’s pains are compared to the increasing pangs of childbirth. Natural disasters will reflect the travail of the earth, becoming increasingly more severe as the end approaches. Then with the coming of the Savior, it will be over, and the earth, like the mother she is, will be delivered and bring forth “her strength” for the new millennial age.

“clothed with the glory of her God” When the risen Christ returns, he will bestow the glory of a terrestrial world on the earth, making earth once again a paradise, as it was in Eden before the fall.

**102 Glory, and honor, and power, and might,
Be ascribed to our God; for he is full of mercy,
Justice, grace and truth, and peace,
Forever and ever, Amen.**

verse 102 “to our God” To Jesus Christ.

103 And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, it is expedient that every man who goes forth to proclaim mine everlasting gospel, that inasmuch as they have

families, and receive money by gift, that they should send it unto them or make use of it for their benefit, as the Lord shall direct them, for thus it seemeth me good.

104 And let all those who have not families, who receive money, send it up unto the bishop in Zion, or unto the bishop in Ohio, that it may be consecrated for the bringing forth of the revelations and the printing thereof, and for establishing Zion.

105 And if any man shall give unto any of you a coat, or a suit, take the old and cast it unto the poor, and go on your way rejoicing.

verses 103-105 Those who served missions were not to benefit personally therefrom. If sums of money were given to them beyond their immediate needs, they were to be sent home for the support of their families or be sent to the bishop's storehouse for the building of Zion. If someone donated other goods, such as a coat, the missionary could keep the better of two, but he could not accumulate possessions. What he did not need, he was to give away.

Specifically, at the time this revelation was received, W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery were in Independence, Missouri, preparing to print the Book of Commandments, which would contain the revelations received through the prophet Joseph. They were also publishing the newspaper *The Evening and the Morning Star*, in which some of the revelations appeared. This verse commands missionaries in 1832 to send any donated funds to these two brethren to assist them in paying the cost of printing the scriptures.

106 And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also.

verse 106 "take with him him that is weak" We all grow spiritually in part through the example and teaching of others who are strong.

107 Therefore, take with you those who are ordained unto the lesser priesthood, and send them before you to make appointments, and to prepare the way, and to fill appointments that you yourselves are not able to fill.

108 Behold, this is the way that mine apostles, in ancient days, built up my church unto me.

verse 108 Examples would include Paul and Barnabas taking young John Mark with them (see Acts 13:5) or Paul later training Timothy and Titus (see Acts 16:1; Titus 1:4).

109 Therefore, let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling; and let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?

110 Also the body hath need of every member, that all may be edified together, that the system may be kept perfect.

verses 109-110 “let every man stand in his own office” These verses allude to and summarize Paul’s well-known metaphor of the Church as the body of Christ and the saints as its “members” (a word originally meaning “body part”). Every person in the Church has an office, a calling, or a function. Each part is needed, and if each “member” stands in his or her own calling and magnifies it, then all the parts work together and the body of Christ (the Church) functions effectively. But if anyone neglects his or her own duty or covets the calling of another, then the body of Christ (the Church) is handicapped. Let the head of the Church (who was Joseph Smith in 1832) be the head, and don’t let the neck and shoulders or any other “member” try to be the head, or we deform and handicap the body of Christ, which is the Church. Let each “member” learn his or her own duty and perform it without jealousy or covetousness and without trying to perform or influence the duty of another.

111 And behold, the high priests should travel, and also the elders, and also the lesser priests; but the deacons and teachers should be appointed to watch over the church, to be standing ministers unto the church.

verses 112-116 These verses are directed specifically to Bishop Newel K. Whitney in Kirtland.

112 And the bishop, Newel K. Whitney, also should travel round about and among all the churches, searching after the poor to administer to their wants by humbling the rich and the proud.

verse 112 Bishop Whitney’s primary duty will be to care for temporal needs within the Church.

113 He should also employ an agent to take charge and to do his secular business as he shall direct.

verse 113 Bishop Whitney is given permission of the Lord to hire someone to take care of the retail store, Newel K. Whitney & Co., while he does the business of the Church.

114 Nevertheless, let the bishop go unto the city of New York, also to the city of Albany, and also to the city of Boston, and warn the people of those cities with

the sound of the gospel, with a loud voice, of the desolation and utter abolishment which await them if they do reject these things.

verse 114 Bishop Whitney is also called on a preaching mission to New York City, Albany, and Boston to warn the people of the great hardships which await them if they reject the gospel. President Wilford Woodruff went one step further. He prophesied that New York would be destroyed by an earthquake, Boston would be swept into the sea, and Albany consumed by fire. Brigham Young was in attendance when these things were said, and he told the congregation that these remarks were revelation and would be fulfilled (*Deseret News*, 33:678). These calamities are likely to be associated with the natural disasters immediately preceding the end of this world (see verse 101).

The mission commanded in this verse was undertaken by Bishop Whitney almost immediately and lasted less than two weeks. He was accompanied on this mission by Joseph Smith, who recalled “a hurried journey to Albany, New York and Boston, in company with Bishop Whitney, from which I returned on the 6th of November, immediately after the birth of my son Joseph Smith, the third” (*HC*, 1:295).

115 For if they do reject these things the hour of their judgment is nigh, and their house shall be left unto them desolate.

116 Let him trust in me and he shall not be confounded; and a hair of his head shall not fall to the ground unnoticed.

verse 116 “Let him trust in me” This phrase refers to Bishop Whitney (see Luke 12:6-7).

117 And verily I say unto you, the rest of my servants, go ye forth as your circumstances shall permit, in your several callings, unto the great and notable cities and villages, reproving the world in righteousness of all their unrighteous and ungodly deeds, setting forth clearly and understandingly the desolation of abomination in the last days.

verse 117 “setting forth clearly and understandingly the desolation of abomination” The term “desolation of abomination” is also found as “the abomination that maketh desolate” (Daniel 11:31; 12:11) and “the abomination of desolation” (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; JS-M 1:12, 32). Idolatry, murder, sexual sin, and perversion of rituals are among those sins described in the Old Testament as abominations. An abomination of desolation is sin so repugnant to God that his Spirit is completely withdrawn, destruction follows, and the land is left desolate, or empty, of its inhabitants.

The prophet Daniel described an event that would precede the coming of the Messiah as “the abomination that maketh desolate” (Daniel 11:31; 12:11). This specific event would consist of desecration of the temple and the perversion of its worship,

which would leave the temple desolated of God's Spirit. This, in turn, would lead to the eventual political destruction of the people of the Holy Land. Jews anciently understood the abomination of desolation as idolatry, bloodshed, and other heinous sins committed in the temple, particularly the attempts by pagan rulers to institute idolatry in the Jerusalem Temple, as in the cases of the Seleucid Greek king Antiochus IV (ca. 167 BC) and the Roman emperor Caligula (ca. AD 42).

When Jesus referred to the abomination of desolation, however, he added a warning: "Whoso readeth, let him understand" (Matthew 24:15), thus indicating the possibility of another meaning for the term beyond the physical desecration of the Jerusalem Temple (which took place in AD 70). The apostle Paul alludes to this additional dimension of the abomination of desolation in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-11. In Paul's reference, the temple that will be desolated is equated with the Church of Jesus Christ (see 2 Thessalonians 2:4; see also Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5). The abomination is the "falling away," or apostasy, of the members (2 Thessalonians 2:3), which sets up a false idol in the temple (the Church). This false idol is the "man of sin," or "son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), who usurps the rightful place of God, the "Man of Holiness" (Moses 6:57). This idol, of course, is Satan (see 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9), who deceived the members of the Church into believing a false gospel. According to Paul, this "mystery of iniquity" was already at work in the Church as he wrote to the Thessalonian saints (2 Thessalonians 2:7) and was in fact almost complete.

Thus, while the "abomination of desolation" refers on one level to the desecration of the physical temple of God (which took place as prophesied in AD 70). on another level it refers to the desecration of the spiritual temple, the Church of Jesus Christ, and to the perversion of its doctrines and ordinances in a Great Apostasy (which also took place as prophesied; see D&C 1:15-16). The servants of God, newly called in this dispensation, are to reveal to the world that there has been an apostasy, call the world to repentance, and show them how to avoid the additional desolations that will inevitably precede the coming of the Messiah (see JS-M 1:32).

On a more general level, the principle could be stated that whenever people commit abominations, they bring upon themselves desolation. The Spirit of God withdraws, their priesthood is no more, and they are left to themselves and to the consequences they have freely chosen.

118 For, with you saith the Lord Almighty, I will rend their kingdoms; I will not only shake the earth, but the starry heavens shall tremble.

119 For I, the Lord, have put forth my hand to exert the powers of heaven; ye cannot see it now, yet a little while and ye shall see it, and know that I am, and that I will come and reign with my people.

120 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Amen.

verse 120 **“I am Alpha and Omega”** See the commentary on D&C 19:1.

Section 85 One Mighty and Strong

Since September 1832, Joseph and Emma had been living in Kirtland, Ohio, in quarters above Newel K. Whitney's store. On November 6, 1832, Joseph Smith returned to Kirtland from a brief mission to New York, Albany, and Boston to which the Lord had called Bishop Whitney and on which the Prophet accompanied him. Sometime during the next three weeks, Joseph received letters from church leaders in Missouri, that caused him real concern about the situation of the saints there.

On the 27th of November 1832, the Prophet wrote to William W. Phelps, who was in Independence in charge of the printing office, about several things that were "lying with great weight upon [his] mind" (Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 285-87; see also *HC*, 1:297-99; *The Evening and the Morning Star*, January 1833). Brother Phelps had also been delegated with the authority to assist Bishop Edward Partridge in matters concerning the establishment of the saints and distributing to them their inheritances according to the law of consecration. Joseph was seriously concerned. He had received word that Bishop Partridge was not being fair in distributing inheritances or stewardships. Instead of legally deeding to the saints their inheritances, he was leasing the land to them. Under the provisions of Bishop Partridge's contracts, stewards were not permitted to transfer their inheritances to their wives, children, or heirs, and they were prohibited from selling their property. These contracts further stipulated that if an individual left the Church, he had no legal claim to his inheritance.

Although the original of Joseph's letter to Brother Phelps has not been preserved, the file copy made by Joseph's scribe, Frederick G. Williams, is in the possession of the Church, and the full text has been published several times. Brother Phelps received Joseph's letter in December 1832 and promptly published portions of it in the January 1833 issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star*. The full text of the letter, except a postscript, was also published at Nauvoo in the *Times and Seasons* for October 15, 1844. In 1876 Orson Pratt was directed by President Brigham Young to include portions of the Phelps letter, roughly equivalent to what had appeared in *The Evening and the Morning Star* in 1833, as section 85 in the Doctrine and Covenants. Section 85 did not appear in editions of the Doctrine and Covenants before 1876, but its inclusion as a divine revelation is clearly justified by the Prophet's language in verses 5-6 ("saith the Lord of Hosts," and "thus saith the still small voice") and by his declaration in verse 10 that "these things I say not of myself."

Scripture Mastery

D&C 85:7 I the Lord God will send you one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand . . . to set in order the house of God.

D&C 85:8 That man . . . that putteth forth his hand to steady the ark of God, shall fall by the shaft of death, like as a tree that is smitten by the vivid shaft of lightning.

verses 1-5, 9-12 Bishop Partridge's mismanagement wasn't the Lord's only concern. Some of the Missouri saints were failing to keep their covenants and commitments. In these verses the Lord reminded them that records were being kept that would reflect their obedience to his laws. This record is referred to by two names in the scripture: the "Book of the Law of the Lord" and the "Book of Remembrance." It is interesting to note that an actual book was kept in those days and is now in the possession of the Church. It contained the names and recordings of specific sacrifices, contributions, etc. made for the benefit of the Church.

Today, analogous records might be tithing records and any other church records indicating those who are living the law of sacrifice and the law of consecration as we interpret them today. The scripture is clear. If our name is not in the "book" we should not expect to be exalted.

Apparently Jesse Gause was excommunicated the week after this letter was written. Some wonder why his name is not found more often in our history, or why his name is not as well known as the others who served as Joseph's counselors. Perhaps the answer lies in these verses. He apostatized at the same time the Lord declared that such people should not have their names found in the church records.

Another note of interest is that just before section 85 was received, Brigham Young, Joseph Young, and Heber C. Kimball traveled from Mendon, New York, to Kirtland to meet the prophet Joseph Smith. They found the Prophet in a field behind the Whitney store where he was chopping wood with his brothers. Though all three had previously joined the Church (in April 1832), this was the beginning of their close association with the Prophet in Kirtland.

1 It is the duty of the Lord's clerk, whom he has appointed, to keep a history, and a general church record of all things that transpire in Zion, and of all those who consecrate properties, and receive inheritances legally from the bishop;

verse 1 "the Lord's clerk" Although the Prophet's letter was addressed to W. W. Phelps, the portions of it that make up section 85 consist of instructions originally directed to John Whitmer, the church historian (see D&C 47), or "the Lord's clerk" who was then living in Missouri. These instructions emphasize the importance of obeying the law of the Lord governing inheritances in Zion and of documenting compliance with that law through scrupulous record keeping.

"to keep a history" On the very same day the Church was organized, the Lord directed that a record should be kept of its affairs (see D&C 21:1). As church historian, John Whitmer already knew that he was to keep a general history of the Church in Missouri, for this had been specified when he was called (see D&C 47:1). In this

revelation, however, Whitmer is instructed to keep other kind of records as well, including financial and membership records for the saints in Missouri (see verses 1-5).

“those who consecrate properties, and receive inheritances” The conveyance of resources between the Church and its members in the context of the law of consecration and stewardship are to be matters of permanent church records. This practice continued to include tithing and fast offering contributions in the contemporary Church.

2 And also their manner of life, their faith, and works; and also of the apostates who apostatize after receiving their inheritances.

verse 2 “their manner of life” The Church was also to keep what would today be called membership records, which would include an indication of an individual’s standing in the Church. Church records were also to indicate those who left the Church after making sacred covenants.

3 It is contrary to the will and commandment of God that those who receive not their inheritance by consecration, agreeable to his law, which he has given, that he may tithe his people, to prepare them against the day of vengeance and burning, should have their names enrolled with the people of God.

verse 3 “contrary to the will and commandment of God” In order to understand clearly the meaning of this verse, read the phrase prior to the first comma followed directly by the phrase following the final comma—thus eliminating the explanatory material between these two commas. Then, a careful reading of this verse reveals the following interpretation: It is against the Lord’s will that those people going up to Zion who do not have any personal possessions to consecrate be included with those in Zion who are part of the law of consecration and stewardship. Or, stated in the positive sense, it is the Lord’s will that those going up to Zion should have personal possessions to consecrate and then receive back a stewardship. Then they can rightly be included with those in Zion who are living the celestial law. Too many of the saints were traveling to Missouri without permission and seeking to obtain a stewardship without having any personal possessions to consecrate—“those who receive not their inheritance by consecration.”

It is obvious that in encouraging the saints to live the celestial law, the Lord wishes to “tithe his people.” In this verse the word tithe does not specifically refer to specific offering of a tenth of the saints income, but rather the word tithe is used in a general sense to mean “require sacrifice of.” Those who consecrate all of their personal possessions have sacrificed for the Lord’s cause and kingdom, and thus have been “tithed.”

As stated previously, it was intended originally that “go[ing] up unto Zion” (D&C 72:24) from the East would be a privilege for those saints who had prepared themselves both materially and spiritually and who would consecrate all their possessions to the

bishop in Zion upon arriving there (D&C 72:15). The Lord had told his people very clearly how they were to establish Zion (see D&C 42; 48; 51; 56-59; 63; 70; 72). The law of consecration and stewardship were sufficiently explained in these revelations and in instructions from the Prophet Joseph. Those who went up to Zion were supposed to be debt-free and also were to have the means to purchase land in Missouri upon their arrival. Ideally, they were to bring with them enough food and clothing to last for a year. Most importantly, they were supposed to be called to go up and were to arrive in Missouri with recommends from the Church in Kirtland attesting to their worthiness and good standing (D&C 72:3-6, 16-18, 24-26).

Unfortunately, enthusiastic but disobedient members were emigrating to Missouri on their own without observing the Lord's law, without being called, and without sufficient financial resources or preparation. Their disobedience and the consequent financial drain they placed on the Missouri Church threatened the very establishment of Zion. Whatever their motives may have been, the Lord commands here that such individuals were not to be accepted as members in good standing when they arrived in Missouri. No one should have claim upon the blessings of Zion who will not observe the principles of Zion or make and keep the covenants of Zion. Had this commandment been observed by the saints in Jackson County, the financial pressures which frustrated the establishment of Zion there would have been greatly reduced.

4 Neither is their genealogy to be kept, or to be had where it may be found on any of the records or history of the church.

verse 4 “Neither is their genealogy to be kept” This reference is not to genealogical records in the modern sense but rather to family membership records. Those uncalled or unauthorized saints who arrived in Zion unannounced were not to be included on the membership records of the Church there.

5 Their names shall not be found, neither the names of the fathers, nor the names of the children written in the book of the law of God, saith the Lord of Hosts.

verse 5 “Their names shall not be found . . . in the book of the law of God” Those unprepared and ill-advised saints who traveled to Zion of their own volition were not only to be excluded from the membership records of the Church in Missouri, but their names also were not to be “written in the book of the law of God.” In Joshua 24:26, we are told that Joshua wrote in “the book of the law of God” an account of the covenant by which Israel entered the promised land. This same term is used here in a similar fashion to indicate a physical record of those who received inheritances in Missouri by covenant according to the law of God, that is, Doctrine and Covenants section 42 (see Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 178). Apparently, the terms “book of the law of God” (verses 5, 7), “book of remembrance” (verse 9), and

“book of the law” (verse 11) all refer to the same record of those who have entered the covenant of consecration and are to receive inheritances in Zion.

6 Yea, thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things, and often times it maketh my bones to quake while it maketh manifest, saying:

7 And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God;

verse 7 “I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong” The Lord states his intention of sending “one mighty and strong” to Zion to set in order the house of God.

Over the years many apostate groups have been formed when one individual or another decided that he is the “one mighty and strong.” Some of these individuals have been obviously mentally ill. One of the most notorious was Ervil LeBaron who felt inspired to begin to systematically eliminate rival leaders so that he might eventually take over the world and present it as properly prepared at the return of the Savior.

In the Church, there has been much discussion as to the identity of the “one mighty and strong.” We have a statement by the First Presidency of the Church that attempts to clarify the identity of the “one mighty and strong.” This article implies that section 85 was originally intended for Bishop Partridge that that verse 7 specifically refers to Bishop Partridge or one of his bishop successors in Zion (“One Mighty and Strong,” Official statement by the First Presidency, *The Improvement Era*, October, 1907, 929).

Others have strongly insisted that the “one mighty and strong” is Jesus Christ. Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, in their book, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, insist: “A comparison of verses 7-9 and their parallels elsewhere shows that the coming of ‘one mighty and strong’ is described in section 85 in precisely the same language used elsewhere to describe the coming of Christ (see also JS-M 1:53-54). The idea proposed by some that the ‘one mighty and strong’ is some intermediary character who will arrive prior to the second coming of the Savior in order to straighten out the Church is incorrect. This is a distortion that persists only because it allows dissidents to envision the Church as presently in need of correction—and to declare themselves or someone else as the ‘one mighty and strong’ called to steady the ark. But verse 8 makes it clear that the ark needs no one to steady it, just as it reveals the fate of any who may try. No one may steady this ark until the coming of

Jesus Christ, the One Mighty and Strong, who will settle all accounts, right every wrong, and rewards all his faithful saints at his glorious coming” (73-74).

If the “one mighty and strong” carries out all his responsibilities as he should, then verse 7 applies to him. If he falters, then verse 8 outlines his fate in colorful detail. In the event that he should fail, then the Lord would send another “mighty and strong.” After hearing of Joseph’s displeasure over the way in which he was distributing stewardships, Bishop Partridge quickly repented (who wouldn’t after reading verse 8!?).

“to arrange by lot the inheritance of the saints” See Numbers 26:55-56; 33:54. “By lot” means by chance, as in drawing straws or drawing the names from a hat. Arranging things by lot eliminates the possibility of any human influence or favoritism on the outcome. At the same time, since there is no random chance with God and he controls all things, the outcome will reflect his divine judgment. Since the inheritances of all consecrated saints are to be equal (adjusting for individual “circumstances, wants, and needs”; see D&C 51:3), there is no need to worry that a selection “by lot” will unfairly favor some or disadvantage others. In a sense, selecting equal inheritances “by lot” allows God to arrange his people however he wishes without the influence of preexisting bias on the part of the saints.

8 While that man, who was called of God and appointed, that putteth forth his hand to steady the ark of God, shall fall by the shaft of death, like as a tree that is smitten by the vivid shaft of lightning.

verse 8 “that man” Latter-day Saint tradition has tended to identify “that man” in this verse as specifically and exclusively Edward Partridge. However, a contemporary document indicates that this is too narrow an understanding. Over a year after Joseph wrote his letter containing section 85 to W. W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery wrote to John Whitmer to clarify the duties of the clerk as they had been given in that revelation. Concerning verse 8 specifically, Oliver wrote: “Brother Joseph says, that the item in his letter that says, that the man that is called . . . and puts forth his hand to steady the ark of God, does not mean that any one had at the time, but it was given for a caution to those in high standing to beware, lest they should fall by the shaft of death” (cited in Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 179). Although the warning contained in verse 8 undoubtedly was intended for Bishop Partridge and his associates in Missouri, it was a warning only, and the phrase “that man” was not intended to single out an individual or to indicate that such a sin had already been committed.

There is no doubt that Edward Partridge experienced some difficulty in following all the instructions of the prophet Joseph Smith, and it is likely that the warning in verse 8 was intended primarily for him. But Bishop Partridge was faithful, repented, of his unbelief, and died in good standing the Church (*HC*, 2:302-03).

“to steady the ark of God” The reference is to an incident recorded in 2 Samuel 6:6-7. When David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, Uzzah, one

of the teamsters driving the wagon (see 2 Samuel 6:3), took it upon himself to steady the load by touching the ark himself rather than waiting for an authorized priest to do it. For this presumption, Uzzah was struck dead “like as a tree that is smitten by the vivid shaft of lightning” (see 2 Samuel 6:8). It doesn’t matter how sincere our belief may be that those who hold the keys are wrong; when we presume to invade their stewardship and correct what we think to be “errors,” we, like Uzzah, are steadying the ark. Even where there may be genuine problems, these must be resolved in the Lord’s appointed way, through priesthood channels, and not by self-appointed judges or spiritual vigilantes.

Ark steadying is a subtle form of apostasy that falls short of open rebellion. Today some well-intentioned people, not willing to fully entrust the administration of the Lord’s earthly kingdom to his chosen servants (and by corollary to him), seek to “steady the ark.” They feel some need to counsel the prophets and seek to shape the Church and its practices (and even doctrines) after their own pattern. They call in question the actions of the Lord’s anointed and offer unsolicited and uninspired suggestions. Often their murmuring is really an attempt to introduce government by popular demand—changing the Church from a theocracy to a democracy.

“Perhaps when we murmur we are unconsciously complaining over not being able to cut a special deal with the Lord,” observed Elder Neal A. Maxwell. “We want full blessings but without full obedience to the laws upon which those blessings are predicated. For instance, some murmurers seem to hope to reshape the Church to their liking by virtue of their murmuring. But why would one want to belong to a church that he could remake in his own image, when it is the Lord’s image that we should come to have in our countenances? (see Alma 5:19). The doctrines are His, brothers and sisters, not ours. The power is His to delegate, not ours to manipulate!” (*Ensign*, November 1989, 83).

President Brigham Young taught that the Lord will “steady the ark” if necessary. He can better direct the work of the Church in his appointed ways than can mere mortals who lack the eternal revelatory perspective:

Let the kingdom alone, the Lord steadies the ark; and if it does jostle, and appear to need steadying, if the way is a little sideling [to go sideways] sometimes, and to all appearance threatens its overthrow, be careful how you stretch forth your hands to steady it; let us not be too officious in meddling with that which does not concern us; let it alone, it is the Lord’s work. I know enough to let the kingdom alone, and do my duty. It carries me, I do not carry the kingdom. I sail in the old ship Zion, and it bears me safely above the raging elements. I have my sphere of action and duties to perform on board that ship; to faithfully perform them should be my constant and unceasing endeavor. If every bishop, every president, every person holding any portion of the holy priesthood, every person who holds a membership in this church and kingdom would take this course the kingdom would roll without our help (*JD*, 11:252).

The Lord directs the affairs of his church through proper channels of authority by the keys of the kingdom. The inspiration given to administer the Church also stays within those parameters. When we doubt that inspiration, questioning and seeking to undermine the authorized administration, we presume to steady the ark—a right that is not ours to take. When those inspired leaders pay little attention to our suggestions and do not make the changes that we may desire, we may become more vocal and critical of them. This pattern of apostasy leads from well-intentioned criticism to ever-increasing dissension and disaffection. There are many modern methods of steadying the ark by seeking to “straighten out” the Lord’s appointed leaders. Elder Spencer W. Kimball declared that apostasy often begins with criticism of current leaders. He spoke of various forms of rebellion that contribute to the “devolutionary process” of apostasy (President Kimball’s use of the term *devolutionary* suggests it is intended to mean the opposite of *evolutionary*. To evolve is to develop. To devolve is to deteriorate—eventually into oblivion.):

Apostasy usually begins with question and doubt and criticism. It is a retrograding and devolutionary process. The seeds of doubt are planted by unscrupulous or misguided people, and seldom directed against the doctrine at first, but more often against the leaders. They who garnish the sepulchers of the dead prophets begin now by stoning the living ones. They return to the pronouncements of the dead leaders and interpret them to be incompatible with present programs. They convince themselves that there are discrepancies between the practices of the deceased and the leaders of the present. . . . They allege love for the gospel and the Church but charge that leaders are a little “off the beam”! Soon they claim that the leaders are making changes and not following the original programs. Next they say that while the gospel and the Church are divine, the leaders are fallen. Up to this time it may be a passive thing, but now it becomes an active resistance, and frequently the blooming apostate begins to air his views and to crusade. He is likely now to join groups who are slipping away. He may become a student of the *Journal of Discourses* and is flattered by the evil one that he knows more about the scriptures and doctrines than the Church leaders who, he says, are now persecuting him. He generally wants all the blessings of the Church: membership, its priesthood, its temple privileges, and expects them from the leaders of the Church, though at the same time claiming that those same leaders have departed from the path. He now begins to expect persecution and adopts a martyr complex, and when finally excommunication comes he associates himself with other apostates to develop and strengthen cults. At this stage he is likely to claim revelation for himself, revelations from the Lord directing him in his interpretations and his actions. These manifestations are superior to anything from living leaders, he claims. He is now becoming quite independent (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 462).

9 And all they who are not found written in the book of remembrance shall find none inheritance in that day, but they shall be cut asunder, and their portion shall be appointed them among unbelievers, where are wailing and gnashing of teeth.

verse 9 “shall find none inheritance in that day” If a person’s church records show faithful obedience to the financial laws of God, then that individual will have a claim upon the Lord for an inheritance in his kingdom. Those saints who have not kept their financial covenants will have no valid claim and will receive no inheritance in Zion or in the celestial kingdom. President Joseph F. Smith indicated that for contemporary saints this referred particularly to the law of tithing (*CR*, October 1899, 42).

10 These things I say not of myself; therefore, as the Lord speaketh, he will also fulfil.

11 And they who are of the High Priesthood, whose names are not found written in the book of the law, or that are found to have apostatized, or to have been cut off from the church, as well as the lesser priesthood, or the members, in that day shall not find an inheritance among the saints of the Most High;

12 Therefore, it shall be done unto them as unto the children of the priest, as will be found recorded in the second chapter and sixty-first and second verses of Ezra.

verse 12 “the children of the priest” When the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem, beginning around 539 BC, it was necessary to reconstitute the priesthood for service in the temple, according to the genealogies and other records which had been kept during the captivity. At that time it was discovered that many who claimed the priesthood by right of descent could not prove their claim by the official records (see verse 11; D&C 128:6-7; Revelation 20:12; Daniel 7:10; 2 Nephi 29:11; 3 Nephi 27:25-26). These individuals were therefore dismissed from the priesthood as “polluted” or of irregular (non-Levitical) descent (Ezra 2:62; Nehemiah 7:64). These included several of those referred to as “children of the priests” in Ezra 2:61.

Section 86 Parable of the Wheat and Tares

This revelation was received December 6, 1832, at Kirtland while the Prophet was working on his inspired revision of the Bible with Frederick G. Williams as scribe. During that same month, Joseph received two additional revelations focused primarily upon events associated with the end of the world. These include section 87 which describes the wars and destruction that were soon to rage over the earth and section 88 which discusses the redemption of Christ and other events relating to his second coming. Section 86 is usually studied for its value in shedding light on Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). A contribution of equal worth is the insight it gives into one of the most significant revelations of the ancient Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah chapter 49).

Section 86 clarifies the timing and the sequence of the elements symbolized in the parable of the wheat and the tares. In particular, verse 7 explains that it is the wheat, the children of the kingdom who are to be gathered first, whereas the tares left over will then be bundled for burning. This reverses both the order and the focus of the parable as it is given in the King James Version but also brings the parable into agreement with other scriptures (see Matthews, *Plainer Translation*, 82). Concerning this revelation, Joseph wrote simply, "On the 6th of December, 1832, I received the following revelation explaining the parable of the wheat and tares" (*HC*, 1:300).

First let's consider the Lord's parable. Fundamental to an understanding of the parable is a knowledge of the nature of tares. Tares is a noxious weed, known today as darnel. It could be sown in a wheat field by an enemy of the farmer and prove to be most troublesome because it cannot be distinguished from the wheat among which it is growing until the darnel ripens and its seeds turn yellow. Hence, the farmer must allow both to grow until harvest. Farmers assigned their wives and children the tedious task of pulling out the tare kernels one by one from the good grain after harvesting. If tares are ground into meal they spoil the flour and may cause dizziness or nausea when eaten. The bundled tares are burned or fed to the chickens.

I will attempt to summarize the parable and provide, as interjected material, insights gleaned from both the book of Matthew (KJV) and section 86.

A man sowed good wheat seed in his field. In Matthew the Lord declared to his disciples that the sower was Jesus himself. Section 86 identifies the sowers as the apostles. Joseph Fielding Smith taught that there is really no contradiction here, since the Savior is the one who instructed and commissioned the apostles to go forth. Sowing good wheat seed means preaching the gospel. The field is the world.

While the man (the sower) slept, his enemy sowed tares among the wheat and went on his way. The enemy is Satan. The tares represent rebellious, iniquitous persons or the followers of Satan, while the wheat represents children of the kingdom or

righteous persons. The wicked choke the righteous and cause apostasy—drive the Church “into the wilderness.” Actually, the good wheat seed is sown—and the tares sown among the good seed—on two occasions. The first was during the Savior’s mortal ministry (see D&C 86:2), and the second is in the last days, the dispensation of the fulness of times (see D&C 86:4).

As the grains ripened, it became apparent that both wheat and tares were growing in the man’s field. When the man’s servants pointed out the presence of the noxious grain, the man knew that his enemy had done this thing. The man’s servants or reapers asked if they might be permitted to harvest the tares, and the man denied them lest they destroy the good wheat at the same time. The reapers are the angels who are crying unto the Lord both day and night and who are ready and waiting to be sent forth to reap down the fields—to destroy the wicked. In these last days, when the restored gospel is just beginning to go forth, the blades of wheat—the converted saints—are yet tender and would be destroyed if any attempt were made to harvest the tares—the rebellious and wicked.

The man instructed his reapers to allow both wheat and tares to grow together until the harvest (the final cleansing at the beginning of the Millennium). Then the reapers could harvest the grain separate the two types into bundles. The tares would be burned and the wheat gathered into the man’s barn.

Hence we learn that this parable, as taught by Jesus, refers to our time—the last days.

Wilford Woodruff, in an address to Salt Lake Temple workers in 1894 (*Young Women’s Journal*, August 1894, 5:412-13) taught that the angels of destruction “have left the portals of heaven, and they stand over the earth waiting to pour out judgments. And from this very day shall they be poured out . . . the next twenty years will see mighty changes among the nations of the earth.” It was in August 1914, twenty years later, that World War I broke upon the world.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 86 (compare Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) Parable of the Wheat and Tares

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants, concerning the parable of the wheat and of the tares:

verse 1 The speaker or first person is the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Behold, verily I say, the field was the world, and the apostles were the sowers of the seed;

verse 2 **“the field was the world”** The corresponding passage in Matthew 13:38 reads, “the field *is* the world” (italics mine). This change indicates that the parable has a dual application, one for the meridian of time which has passed, and one for “the

last days” (verse 4) in which we now live. When the good seed was sown in the former dispensation, the tares succeeded in choking the wheat and in driving the Church into the wilderness. In the second instance, “in the last days,” quite a different outcome is predicted.

“the apostles were the sowers of the seed” As mentioned above, in Matthew 13:37 the Lord identified himself as the sower of the good seed. However, after he had personally taught his apostles, he sent them out after his resurrection to “teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19), so the reference here is probably to the spread of the Church in the apostolic period. Moreover, according to D&C 1:38, the one who is commissioned and sent is the same as the one who sends him (“whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same”), so the point is moot.

3 And after they have fallen asleep the great persecutor of the church, the apostate, the whore, even Babylon, that maketh all nations to drink of her cup, in whose hearts the enemy, even Satan, sitteth to reign—behold he soweth the tares; wherefore, the tares choke the wheat and drive the church into the wilderness.

verse 3 “after they have fallen asleep” As long as the apostles lived, the good seed or the children of the kingdom (see Matthew 13:38) remained. Only after those who held the keys of the Lord’s work had been removed and the ordinances could no longer be performed with authority could Satan complete his work of choking out the good seed and driving the Church into the wilderness. The elimination of the apostles and prophets was a final step in the completion of the Great Apostasy.

“the apostate, the whore, even Babylon” Another scriptural designation for this entity is the “great and abominable church (1 Nephi 14:3; 22:14), or the “church of the devil” (1 Nephi 14:10). For a discussion of the identity of the great and abominable church, see the introductory commentary for 1 Nephi 13 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

A generation in the early history of Christianity knew the truth of the gospel and then willfully perverted it, thus bringing about the Great Apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12).

“maketh all nations to drink of her cup” See the commentary for D&C 29:17; 35:11.

“in whose hearts, the enemy, Satan, sitteth to reign” This is likely an allusion to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 which reads: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” In this passage, the “temple” in which Satan “sitteth” is the Church which is made up of the members collectively. In other words, as he “sitteth

in the temple of God,” he and his influence dwell prominently among the members of the Church (see 2 Corinthians 6:16, for example, where Paul says to the members of the Church, “For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Keep in mind that ye here, as always, is plural). When Satan instead of Jesus sits and reigns in the hearts of the members collectively, the Church of the Lamb has become “the church of the devil” (1 Nephi 14:10).

“he soweth the tares” According to the metaphor, Satan sows or plants the darnel seeds among the wheat in an attempt to choke out the wheat and cause it to be overtaken by the tares. But if we look beyond the figurative to the literal, then Satan actually places or plants wicked people among the righteous saints in an attempt influence the saints to do and think and say evil.

“the tares choke the wheat and drive the Church into the wilderness” See the commentary for D&C 33:5.

4 But behold, in the last days, even now while the Lord is beginning to bring forth the word, and the blade is springing up and is yet tender—

verse 4 “in the last days, even now” In this final dispensation, the good seed has been planted a second time upon the earth through the restoration of the gospel. The first blades of wheat are beginning to show forth but are yet tender and subject to injury.

5 Behold, verily I say unto you, the angels are crying unto the Lord day and night, who are ready and waiting to be sent forth to reap down the fields;

verse 5 “the angels are crying unto the Lord day and night” The period of restoration of the gospel seems to be presided over by the four angels that John the Revelator saw in Revelation 7:1. These angels stand at the “four corners of the earth” and have the power to save and to destroy—“hurt the earth and the sea.” They preside over the period of restoration of the gospel, and whether they save or destroy depends upon the reaction of the people to the gospel message. Modern revelation confirms this view and adds depth:

Q. What are we to understand by the four angels, spoken of in the 7th chapter and 1st verse of Revelation? A. We are to understand that they are four angels sent forth from God, to whom is given power over the four parts of the earth, to save life and to destroy; these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; having power to shut up the heavens, to seal up unto life, or to cast down to the regions of darkness (D&C 77:8).

We learn here that God commissioned these four angels and gave them power both to save life and to destroy it. They have power over the processes of spreading the gospel and condemning judgment. They have, as it were, two faces. They are not

only saving angels, but destroying angels as well. What makes the difference is how men respond to the message they dispense.

The angels have long since left their home in heaven and are now on the earth. These angels are those who in 1831 were “waiting the great command to reap down the earth, to gather the tares that they may be burned” (D&C 38:12). Joseph Fielding Smith wrote that these four angels “seem to fit the description of the angels spoken of in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; D&C 86:1-7) who plead with the Lord that they might go forth to reap down the field. They were told to let the wheat and the tares grow together to the time of the end of the harvest, which is the end of the world (Matthew 13:38-39). These are now at work in the earth on their sacred mission” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2:70). President Wilford Woodruff stated that these angels have been loosed and are currently at work here on earth (“Temple Worker’s Excursion,” 512). President Joseph Fielding Smith emphasized that their job is not just to destroy but to commit the gospel as well (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:300-01).

6 But the Lord saith unto them, pluck not up the tares while the blade is yet tender (for verily your faith is weak), lest you destroy the wheat also.

verse 6 “pluck not up the tares while the blade is yet tender” Any method which the angels may use to destroy the tares from off the earth will also destroy the wheat, particularly because the wheat is yet tender (the strength and the faith of the saints is yet lacking).

7 Therefore, let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe; then ye shall first gather out the wheat from among the tares, and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo, the tares are bound in bundles, and the field remaineth to be burned.

verse 7 “then ye shall first gather out the wheat from among the tares” Matthew 13:30 reads, “Let both grow [the wheat and the tares] together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” Here in Matthew the focus is on the burning of the wicked. However, in this verse of section 86, the order of events in the parable is reversed. That is, the wheat is gathered first. Then the tares are bound and burned. Hence, the parable is brought into conformity with other scriptures, and the focus is changed from the burning of the wicked to the gathering of the righteous of Israel (see Matthews, *Plainer Translation*, 82).

“the field remaineth to be burned” Explaining a bit more about the metaphor: After the grain had been harvested, the fields of stubble and trash were burned, together with any weeds (tares) that remained. This practice eliminated the trash,

destroyed the seeds of unwanted plants, sterilized the fields of some kinds of diseases and insect pests, and added valuable nutrients to the soil for the following year's crop.

verses 8-11 Let us now turn our attention to the final four verses of section 86, verses 8-11. To understand their contribution to our knowledge, we must have a firm understanding of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 49:1-6. Let's take this prophecy of Isaiah's apart, verse by verse, and see if we can come to understand it. Acknowledgment for the following material is given to Kent P. Jackson and his essay, "Revelation Concerning Isaiah" contained in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 326-30.

It is exciting to open the Book of Isaiah to chapter 49 and follow along in verses 1 through 6. I will format these six Isaiah verses and their commentary as we do the Doctrine and Covenants verses:

1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

verse 1 The speaker in this passage is named Israel as is evident in verse 3. From the days of the ancient patriarchs, Joseph, the son of Jacob (or Israel), and his descendants have been singled out to stand at the head of the house of Israel and provide spiritual leadership (see Genesis 37:5-11; 48:13-20; 49:26; Deuteronomy 33:16-17). This was their foreordained calling. An important part of that calling included the challenge to Joseph's descendants to be saviors of their brethren of Israel, just as their forefather Joseph had been a temporal savior in ancient times.

Of Joseph's sons, Ephraim had the birthright. Jeremiah prophesied concerning Ephraim's role in the latter-day gathering of Israel. As the presiding tribe, it would be he who would announce to all that the time of the gathering and return had come (Jeremiah 31:6).

The terms "called me from the womb" or "from the bowels of my mother hath he mentioned my name" imply that Ephraim's role has been prophesied from very early times—from the beginning.

It seems reasonable to conclude that "Israel" or the speaker in this prophecy is the tribe that is to preside in these latter days—the tribe of Ephraim. At the head of that tribe, and presiding under the Lord's direction over latter-day Israel, stands the prophet Joseph Smith. Thus, Joseph Smith himself might be considered to be the first person in this prophecy of Isaiah.

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

verse 2 “In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me” At the same time that Joseph’s father, Jacob, pronounced the blessing of presidency on Joseph and his posterity, he prophesied that the government would be in the hands of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8-10). This was fulfilled in the kingship of David and his descendants, and it will be fulfilled to its fullest measure in the millennial kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The descendants of Joseph never ruled over the house of Israel, in spite of the fact that they inherited from their ancestor the keys of presidency.

Ephraim’s presidency over Israel was to be realized in the last days, thus Ephraim was hidden “in the shadow of his hand” until the last days. With the calling of Joseph Smith, a descendant of Ephraim, the tribe to which he belonged took its rightful position at the head of the family of Israel. Foreordained to a great latter-day service, ancient Joseph’s children—both of Ephraim and Manasseh—have accepted their calling to bring the blessings of the gospel to their brethren.

“a polished shaft . . . in his quiver” Joseph Smith himself provided an interpretation that may explain the fulfillment of this scripture. He said of himself, “I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else . . . all hell knocking off a corner here and a corner there. Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty” (*TPJS*, 304). Thus Joseph viewed himself as a polished shaft in the Lord’s quiver, in direct fulfillment of Isaiah’s words.

3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

verse 3 Through Israel the Lord will be glorified. That this act of glorification would take place later than Isaiah’s day is clear from his use of future tenses throughout the passage. The ways in which Israel would glorify the Lord are specified in verses 5 and 6 and include: (1) the re-establishing of Israel and gathering it again to the Lord, and (2) serving as a “light to the Gentiles,” to make the gospel available to them.

4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

verse 4 “Israel” points out that his labors in the past have been in vain. To this, the Lord responded with a powerful prophecy of more significant labors that lay ahead in verses 5 and 6. The Prophet Joseph eloquently expressed his discouragement while imprisoned in Liberty Jail (D&C 121:1-6; D&C 122:1-4).

5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

verse 5 As has been discussed already, it was the commission of the birthright of ancient Joseph to bring about the gathering of Israel in the last days. Ephraim’s

leader, Joseph Smith, was the one to whom the keys of gathering were restored (D&C 110:11). It will be under the authority of those keys that the gathering will continue.

Jeremiah explained that it would be “the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim” that would cry, “Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God” (Jeremiah 31:6). In modern revelation, the Lord has affirmed that “they who are in the north countries” will return and receive their blessings under the hand of “the children of Ephraim” (D&C 133:26-34).

Today it is, with few exceptions, the children of Ephraim and Manasseh, who constitute the Lord’s Church; and who are taking the gospel message to the scattered remnants of Israel. They are gathering their brethren.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

verse 6 “It is a light thing” This phrase means it is a comparatively small task, that Israelites should work to gather and restore only other blood Israelites. Israelites must also serve as a “light to the Gentiles”—an *ensign* (an example or missionary) to all the world, even those outside the blood of Israel.

“a light to the Gentiles” Nephi and others taught how the great blessings of the last days would be made available not only to the house of Israel, but to the Gentiles as well (see 1 Nephi 22:8-11). The gospel is to be taken by Ephraim, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, to all people (see JS-M 31; D&C 42:58). Once again, the tribe of Ephraim and Joseph Smith stand out as the main participants in this work.

verses 8-11 With this background, then, we are prepared to understand D&C 86:8-11. These verses identify Joseph Smith and his co-workers of the tribe of Joseph—the members of the Church of Jesus Christ in these latter days—as the fulfillment of these words from Isaiah. These are they “with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of [their] fathers, for [they] are lawful heirs according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God.” Having been foreordained long ago to this calling, and having inherited it through lineal descent, Ephraim’s children are now no longer “hid from the world” but are at the forefront of the Lord’s work in the last days to restore scattered Israel to the covenant blessings, and to bring the message of the gospel to the Gentiles.

In a conference address in April 1975, Elder Theodore M. Burton was assigned to speak on verses 8 through 11 of section 86. I would commend this talk to you, the reader (*Ensign*, May 1976, 69-71).

8 Therefore, thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers—

verse 8 “with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers” It was not the priesthood itself that had continued down through the lineage of Joseph and his associates (in which case there would have been no need for a restoration). Rather, it was the right by lineage to receive and hold the priesthood—when it was restored—that these individuals had inherited from their ancestors. Section 86 is directed to the Lord’s servants (see verse 1) in the latter days. Just as Joseph Smith is a direct descendant of the biblical Joseph and Ephraim (see 2 Nephi 3:6-7), and through Joseph a descendant also of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so also are many other priesthood leaders and members in these latter days descendants of the ancient patriarchs. For these literal descendants of the patriarchs or fathers, the right to receive the priesthood comes with their lineage because of the promises made to the fathers concerning their posterity. When the literal descendants of the fathers turn to God in righteousness and seek their rights as heirs, God is obligated to reveal the gospel and the priesthood to them (see Abraham 1:2-4).

God promised Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph that the gospel and the priesthood would be restored in the latter days to their direct, biological descendants and that through their family the gospel and the priesthood would then be taken to the rest of the world (see Abraham 2:9-11). In this dispensation, God’s promise to the patriarchs has been fulfilled by the restoration of the priesthood to direct descendants of Abraham and Joseph.

However, the fulfillment of this promise to the patriarchs that the gospel and the priesthood would be restored to their descendants first, in no way excludes other lineages from learning the gospel, coming to Christ, and receiving the priesthood and its blessings. In fact, it is the intent of God, and the mission of Israel that this very thing happen, through the leadership of these rightful heirs in the latter days (see Abraham 2:10; Isaiah 49:12, 21-22).

9 For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God—

verse 9 “For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh” Joseph Smith and his associates are literal descendants and therefore rightful heirs of the promises made by God to the fathers.

“and have been hid from the world with Christ in God” See the commentary for Isaiah 49:2 above. Among the hidden things are the true nature, lineage, identity, and importance of the prophet Joseph Smith and of his associates in the leadership of the Lord’s Church and kingdom upon the earth. Some hidden things might require knowledge of the premortal life, of foreordination, or of the postmortal spirit world in order to be understood at all, and these are things that the world does not know. The world perceives only the temporal, and therefore a true understanding of the Lord’s

servants and the importance of their work is hidden from the world's view (compare Colossians 3:1-3).

10 Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began.

verse 10 “your life and the priesthood have remained” The word *your* here is plural, as is also indicated by the use of “ye” (which is plural) in verses 9 and 11. Because the Lord’s servants (see verse 1) are rightful heirs of the promises made to the fathers, their lineage, speaking collectively, will continue to hold the keys and administer the kingdom until the Savior comes. The phrase “life and the priesthood” refers to their right to the priesthood by virtue of their genealogy.

“until the restoration of all things” This glorious time began with the restoration of the gospel and of the priesthood in the latter days but will not be complete until all things have been restored. This would include the restoration of spirits to their bodies at the resurrection (see Alma 40:23-24), the restoration of the kingdom of David to its rightful ruler (see Acts 2:6-7), and the restoration of the earth to its paradisiacal glory (see Articles of Faith 1:10). In its fullest sense, therefore the restoration of all things can only take place after the second coming of Christ and the establishment of his millennial kingdom upon the earth.

11 Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel. The Lord hath said it. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1832 December

By the fall and winter of 1832, an explosive political situation was smoldering in the United States. Tensions were rife between the northern and southern states. On Christmas day the Lord warned, in a revelation, that a devastating civil war between the states would occur **[D&C 87 - A Prophecy on War]**. As we know, that war did begin in April 1861, some twenty-eight years later.

1833 January

In contrast to the dire prophecy of Christmas day, a few days later, the Lord revealed a great message of peace to the earth which is replete with important doctrines **[D&C 88 - The Olive Leaf]**. This revelation, section 88, included a commandment to start building a temple in Kirtland, but this particular commandment went largely unheeded by the saints.

In January a seminary for missionaries and church leaders was organized in Kirtland. This school, the School of the Prophets, was also called the School of the Elders. Although religious topics received the main emphasis in this school, a variety of other subjects was also studied. The school was initially held in Bishop Whitney's store in a small room which measured fifteen by fifteen feet.

Section 87 A Prophecy on War

This revelation was received on Christmas day 1832. It is interesting to consider the probable circumstances that stimulated Joseph's prayer for this revelation. In a manner of speaking, Joseph was "reading the newspapers and watching the six o'clock news." At least he was reviewing the world situation, and he was aware of a potentially explosive political situation in the United States. The fall and winter of 1832 were dominated by a political controversy known as the Nullification Crisis. This crisis grew out of the tensions existing between various geographic sections of the pre-Civil War United States. Specifically, the South felt itself threatened by the North. The state of South Carolina was the center of the unrest generated by this controversy. Southerners, and particularly South Carolinians, felt oppressed and disadvantaged by the high protective tariff of 1828, the so-called Tariff of Abomination. This tariff imposed heavy duties on foreign manufactured goods, which favored the industrial North (they could manufacture their own equipment), while at the same time it worked against the interests of those in the agrarian South who needed the foreign goods. In addition to the economic problems, the South was becoming increasingly wary of the growing anti-slavery movement in the North.

In order to protect itself from these threats, South Carolina passed an Ordinance of Nullification. This ordinance was based on a states rights philosophy which claimed the following: (1) Sovereignty resided in the states. (2) The states had created the federal government. (3) The states could decide if a law was constitutional. (4) If a federal law was determined not to be so, that law could be declared null and void in that state.

On November 24, 1832, a special convention in South Carolina declared the Tariff of 1828 null and void. This explosive situation nearly caused a war in 1832.

It was in this historical setting that Joseph Smith received his Prophecy on War. One might ask: how much did the Prophet know about this political controversy? One finds a clue in the *History of the Church* taken in part from the personal records of the Prophet. From a note on December 25, 1832, we find:

Appearances of troubles among the nations became more visible this season than they had previously been since the Church began her journey out of the wilderness. The ravages of the cholera were frightful in almost all the large cities on the globe. The plague broke out in India, while the United States, amid all her pomp and greatness, was threatened with immediate dissolution. The people of South Carolina, in convention assembled (in November), passed ordinances, declaring their state a free and independent nation; and appointed Thursday, the 31st day of January, 1833, as a day of humiliation and prayer, to implore Almighty God to vouchsafe his blessings, and restore liberty and happiness within their borders. President Jackson issued his

proclamation against this rebellion, called out a force sufficient to quell it, and implored the blessings of God to assist the nation to extricate itself from the horrors of the approaching and solemn crisis.

It is ironic that on the day of peace, December 25th, Joseph received the Prophecy on War.

It would seem, on balance, that the slavery issue was prominent in the Prophet's mind. In 1860 Brigham Young informed the saints that at the time section 87 was received, the Prophet and his brethren had been pondering the question of slavery: "Brother Joseph had that revelation concerning this nation [section 87] at a time when the brethren were reflecting and reasoning with regard to African slavery on this continent, and the slavery of the children of men throughout the world" (*JD*, 8:58). On April 2, 1843, eighteen years prior to the Civil War, Joseph will further clarify that on Christmas Day 1832, as he had been praying to know about the wars that were to come upon the nations, a voice had revealed section 87 to him (see D&C 130:12-13)" (*HC*, 5:324; 6:116; Grant, *JD*, 2:147). He further clarified at that time also that the rebellion of South Carolina would probably begin over the issue of slavery. Thus, in Joseph's own mind, the coming war was going to be fought, not over the tariff issues raised by the Nullification Crisis, but over slavery.

Section 87 was not published in 1835, nor in subsequent editions of the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876, although it was published in 1851 by Franklin D. Richards in England. In an address in 1860, Brigham Young referred to the still-unauthorized revelation: "Brother [Orson] Hyde spoke of a revelation which he tried to find in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. That revelation was reserved at the time the compilation for that book was made by Oliver Cowdery and others in Kirtland. It was not wisdom to publish it to the world, and it remained in the private escritoire [writing desk]" (*JD*, 8:58). Perhaps it was feared in the early days that a revelation about the wars that were to fall upon the Gentiles would be interpreted as threats against non-members and have an incendiary effect upon the enemies of the Church. Other verses had also been held back from Joseph's revelations for similar reasons.

Even though section 87 was not included in the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876, it is well attested before that time and is, in fact, one of the most reprinted sections in that volume of scripture. The earliest extant copy of the revelation, in the handwriting of Sidney Gilbert, was made some time before June 12, 1833. Orson Pratt recalled: "When I was a boy, I traveled extensively in the United States and the Canadas, preaching this restored gospel. I had a manuscript copy of the revelation [section 87] which I carried in my pocket, and I was in the habit of reading it to the people among whom I traveled and preached" (*JD*, 13:135).

When the Civil War did begin, the exact and detailed correctness of Joseph's prophecy caused it to be considered an "oddity" by the national media, and the Doctrine

and Covenants 87 was printed and reprinted in non-LDS newspapers along with the question, “Have we not had a prophet among us?” (*HC*, 1:312-16).

In Joseph’s own day, however, in consequence of the information received in section 87, he was commanded by the Lord to write a warning letter to the nation. This he did ten days after receiving section 87. His letter, to a Mr. N. E. Seaton (or, possibly, Sexton) was sent to Rochester, New York, and published in Seaton’s newspaper there. Moreover, Joseph exhorted other persons in his own lifetime to warn their friends and relatives in South Carolina to repent and to flee the carnage that was coming to that area. For example, Wilford Woodruff’s journal for December 30, 1860, records the following: “Brother Emmett Murphy preached in the morning and gave an account of his receiving the gospel, his gathering to Missouri, his visit to Joseph in Prison, [and] the advice of Joseph the Prophet to him to go to South Carolina and Georgia and warn his friends of the wrath and desolation that the people in that land [would suffer] and to gather out his friends to Zion, for the wars and rebellion would begin in South Carolina” (cited in Woodruff’s *Historical Development*, 2:1108).

Joseph Smith later prophesied that the coming war would devastate Jackson County, Missouri, for its persecution of the saints so that “the fields and farms and houses will be destroyed, and only the chimneys will be left to mark the desolation” (Grey, “Joseph Smith and the Civil War,” 20; compare Webb, *Battles and Biographies of Missourians*, 5; Howard, Illinois, 298). This prophecy was fulfilled in every horrible detail.

Section 87 was first published in the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price, printed in England in 1851. It became part of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876 when it was included by Orson Pratt at the direction of President Brigham Young.

Let us examine some of Joseph’s predictions concerning the Civil War and then test the truth of these predictions by examining the subsequent historical events. Bear in mind that he made this prophecy twenty-eight years, three months, and seventeen days before the Civil War began.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 87 A Prophecy on War

D&C 87:1-3 Joseph’s prophesying of the Civil War.

D&C 87:8 Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls;

verse 1 “the wars that will shortly come to pass” His first prediction was that war would occur. Take note of the fact that the word “wars” in verse 1 is plural. Section

87 is not just a revelation on the Civil War, but on war generally as it will apply to the saints in the latter days.

The spirit of prophecy, however, specifically directed him to declare that there definitely would be a war between the states. Of course, this war did take place and is known to us as the Civil War—between 1861 and 1865. The Civil War will mark the beginning of a series of conflicts that will in time bring about “a full end of all nations” (verse 6).

“beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina” Joseph prophesied that South Carolina would take the initiative. On November 17, 1860, South Carolina passed an ordinance of secession and in the following month became the first state to secede from the Union. On April 12, 1861, the Confederate forces laid siege to Fort Sumter. This fort, garrisoned by United States troops, was located in the harbor off Charleston, South Carolina. Thus began the great war between the states, and indeed, South Carolina did take the initiative.

“death and misery of many souls” He further prophesied that this war would bring death to many. As it turned out, the Civil War was one of the bloodiest wars in history. Of the approximately 2.4 million men who fought in the Civil War, almost half were killed or injured. At the time, this number represented a large percentage of the adult male population of the United States. The number killed or wounded varies considerably depending upon the source you chose to believe. Most Civil War studies give casualty figures in excess of 600,000. One indication of just how high the losses were is shown by a comparison with casualties in other U.S. wars. The aggregate figure for the Civil War is usually held to be about 618,000 (360,000 North, 258,000 South). The next highest casualty figure is for World War II, during which 318,000 died. World War II is followed by World War I with 115,000. Other casualty figures include: The American Revolution—4,044; War of 1812—2,200; Mexican War—13,270; Korean War—33,000; and Vietnam War—46,616.

2 And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place.

verse 2 “beginning at this place” That is, beginning with the start of the Civil War in South Carolina. As stated, the prophecy on war was not limited to the Civil War. It also included wars in other nations. In fact, the prophecy declared that “war will be poured out upon all nations.” Since the Civil War, wars have occurred with greater frequency and warfare has become more severe. It has been reported that there have been over 245 wars between World War II and the year 1983. The Civil War marks the beginning of the wars of the last days, for the Civil War is generally accepted as the first “modern” war. For the first time, technology, tactics, politics, and other factors combined to make it possible to destroy hundreds of thousands and, later, even millions of persons in a relatively short time. The world wars, holocausts, and “killing fields”

endured since the Civil War would not have been possible on such a scale at an earlier time in the earth's history before the advent of "modern" technology, politics, and warfare.

3 For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations.

verse 3 "the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain" The Prophet foretold the nature of the antagonists in this conflict. He specifically stated that the North would fight the South, which is in fact what occurred. Joseph also prophesied of two other specific events in this verse.

First, the southern states would call upon Great Britain and other nations for aid. Once war broke out, the South did send commissioners to various European nations to seek diplomatic recognition and military aid, including Great Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium. These nations offered passive support to the South but would not enter into official political and military alliances unless the Confederacy could demonstrate some likelihood of ultimate victory.

"they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves" Second, a specific historical period is described, when "they shall also call upon other nations" to defend themselves from still "other nations." When the events described in this verse take place, war will become worldwide. Brother Sidney B. Sperry noted that the pronoun "they" in this passage refers not to the South but to the nations to which the South had previously appealed, that is, to Great Britain and France, Holland, and Belgium. This seems likely, since the South never sought military aid against "other nations" (foreign powers) but only against the Northern States. Thus, the prophecy in verse 3 indicates that during the Civil War the South would call upon Britain as well as on other nations. Then, at a later time, those other nations, Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium would in turn also call upon other nations for help against their enemies, and war would at that time be poured out upon the whole world. In fact, Great Britain and these other nations did seek the aid of other nations at least twice in the twentieth century, and on each occasion the result was a world war.

4 And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.

verse 4 "slaves shall rise up against their masters" Daniel H. Wells (*Millennial Star*, 27:186-87) stated: "Many of the slaves formerly belonging to the southern states have been marshaled and disciplined for war by the North and arrayed in deadly combat against their former masters. On July 10, 1863, a federal officer

wrote: Forty thousand strong are already in the service. They are destined to wield the sword of just retribution, to teach their former masters which of them is the superior race.”

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett have proposed another meaning for this verse. They feel that it does not apply to the Civil War which is to occur “shortly” (verse 1). In contrast the conflict or conflicts describe in this verse will occur after “many days.” They reason:

“Many days” after the Civil War and “many days” after the world wars in which Britain and her allies call upon other nations for help, then will slaves rise up against their masters. In chronological context, it will be seen that the reference cannot be to the black slaves of the nineteenth century South, who for the most part did not rise up against their masters, but to all inhabitants of the earth who are in political or economic bondage in a period after the world wars. Brigham Young stated that Joseph Smith and the brethren had been pondering the slavery both of black Africans in the Americas and of all the peoples of the world when this revelation came to him (*JD*, 8:58). In other terms, a worldwide outbreak of demands for independence and self-determination on the part of every conceivable ethnic, political, racial, economic, linguistic, or religious group will tear the nations of the world apart and engulf the earth in blood and war. We have seen this process at work specifically in such former Communist Bloc countries as Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, and so forth. No doubt we will see more in the future (*Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 89).

“who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war” Satan loves war, and wherever Satan has gained influence on the earth there will be elaborate and expensive preparations for war. As the nations of the earth prepare to wage war with each other, it appears that their own minorities, splinter groups, and “break-away republics” will cause internal dissension and collapse.

5 And it shall come to pass also that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation.

verse 5 “the remnants who are left of the land” In addition to the factors discussed above which have resulted in wars in the United States of America and in other countries of the world, there is yet another factor. It is that the “remnants who are left of the land” will rise up in anger to produce yet further conflicts. Who are these remnants? Generally, they are held to be the indigenous peoples of the United States and other countries of the world. These would include the native Indian peoples of North, Central, and South America, including whatever element of them originated from the Book of Mormon peoples. Certainly some of these remnants may be remnants of the house of Israel. These shall “vex the Gentiles.” The Gentiles in this context may be

the population of the United States of America or the populations of many other countries.

This passage may have been misunderstood, as some readers may suppose it refers only to the Indian wars in the United States in the last half of the nineteenth century. The native American peoples do indeed seem to be some of the “remnants” referred to here, and the Indian wars may have been a partial fulfillment of the prophecy, but there may be a greater fulfillment yet to come. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “The history of this American continent . . . gives evidence that the Lamanites have risen up in their anger and vexed the Gentiles. This warfare may not be over. It has been the fault of people in the United States to think that this prophetic saying has reference to the Indians in the United States, but we must remember that there are millions of the ‘remnant’ in Mexico, Central and South America. . . . The independence of Mexico and other nations to the south has been accomplished by the uprising of the ‘remnant’ upon the land. However, let us not think that this prophecy has completely been fulfilled” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2:127).

6 And thus, with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations;

verse 6 “the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn” It would seem that the sequence of wars, violence, disasters, and other hardships which began with the Civil War, will only increase during this final dispensation to the point where virtually no one will be spared. This sequence will terminate with the second coming of the Lord and the great destruction of the wicked elements of the earth that will occur then.

The Prophet Joseph said:

I saw men hunting the lives of their own sons, and brother murdering brother, women killing their own daughters, and daughters seeking the lives of their mothers. I saw armies arrayed against armies. I saw blood, desolation, fires. The Son of Man has said that the mother shall be against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. These things are at our doors. They will follow the saints of God from city to city. Satan will rage, and the spirit of the devil is now enraged. I know not how soon these things will take place; but with a view of them, shall I cry peace? No; I will lift up my voice and testify of them. How long you will have good crops, and the famine be kept off, I do not know; when the fig tree leaves, know then that the summer is nigh at hand (*HC*, 3:391).

A first taste of these conditions would be experienced with the Civil War and the world wars, but the full realization of the “consumption decreed” (verse 6) will only be experienced as we approach the world’s last day. Thus, it will be necessary for the saints to recognize the signs of the times through their study of the scriptures and by

listening to the words of the prophets and gather to the stakes of Zion for safety. A reasonably thorough discussion of the latter-day signs of the times is available to the reader. See three chapters in volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. They are chapter 24, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Introduction*, chapter 25, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Those that Warn*, and chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

“chastening hand of an Almighty God” The eventual destruction of the nations will not be an arbitrary act. It will be the just punishment meted out to them by God for rejecting the gospel, killing the prophets, and persecuting the saints (see verse 7). According to D&C 63:33, in these wars “the wicked shall slay the wicked.” In the beginning of this dispensation, the American Civil War marked a judgment upon the United States for their treatment of the saints, just as worldwide consumption of the nations will mark God’s judgment upon all nations for the same sins as we draw closer to the end.

“a full end of all nations” The only political entity that will pass from this fallen, telestial world into the glorious, terrestrial Millennium intact will be the kingdom of God. All nations, including the United States, will be consumed in the chaos and destructions that precede the coming of Jesus Christ. In the Millennium, there will be only one kingdom and one King.

It is possible that events preceding the Savior’s glorious appearance to the Nephites will prove to parallel events preceding his glorious coming in our own dispensation. These parallels might include the rise of gangs and conspiracies (see 3 Nephi 1:27-30; 6:27-28), the increasing wickedness of the people (see 3 Nephi 2:1-3), wars, famines, and sieges (see 3 Nephi 4:2-5), the worst battles in Nephite history (see 3 Nephi 4:11), corruption of the legal system (see 3 Nephi 6:11-12, 21-30), the collapse of government and division into smaller groups (see 3 Nephi 7:2-6), the growth of the Church (see 3 Nephi 7:24-26), and, finally, unexpected natural disasters and the destruction of the wicked (see 3 Nephi 8).

7 That the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies.

verse 7 “the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints” God is a God of justice, and those who reject his mercy offered in the gospel covenant must suffer his justice when they have ripened in iniquity. Elder George Q. Cannon wrote: “There is no sin that a nation can commit, which the Lord avenges so speedily and fearfully as he does the shedding of innocent blood, or, in other words, the killing of his anointed and authorized servants. No nation which has been guilty of this dreadful crime has ever escaped his vengeance” (*Millennial Star*, 4 June 1864, 361).

“the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord” The Lord will take vengeance upon the wicked nations, and the righteous shall be protected. Thus, the cry and blood of the saints will not longer come up into the ears of the Lord.

“Lord of Sabaoth” For a discussion of the unique title “Lord of Sabaoth,” see the commentary for D&C 88:2.

8 Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen.

verse 8 “stand ye in holy places, and be not moved” So what do we do? “stand ye in holy places, and be not moved.” In other words, be found in the correct places, associating with the right people, and remain calm. President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “Holy men and holy women stand in holy places, and these holy places include our temples, our chapels, our homes, and the stakes of Zion” (“Prepare Yourselves for the Great Day of the Lord,” 68).

“it cometh quickly” See the commentary for D&C 33:18.

Section 88 The Olive Leaf

During December 1832, Joseph continued his work on the Joseph Smith Translation at Kirtland and continued to receive, in connection with that work, some remarkable visions concerning the future of the world. According to Jedediah M. Grant, “The prophet stood in his own house when he told several of us of the night the visions of heaven were opened to him, in which he saw the American continent drenched in blood, and he saw nation rising up against nation. . . . The prophet gazed upon the scene his vision presented, until his heart sickened, and he besought the Lord to close it up again” (*JD*, 2:147).

Naturally, after Joseph had seen such terrible things lurking in the future of the world, both he and those with whom he shared these visions were concerned for the future of the Church and the saints. Consequently, beginning on December 27, two days after section 87 had been received, a council of ten leading high priests met to plead with the Lord for additional understanding, and God blessed them—and all his saints—with a great revelation. However, this was not a revelation of future doom and woes, but a revelation of peace and comfort for the Lord’s people, both at that time and in times to come.

This revelation (actually, a collection of revelations) was received beginning only two days after the vivid communication now identified as the Prophecy on War (D&C 87), which deals with the wars and destructions about to come upon the earth and which will eventually lead to a “full end of all nations.” After the stern warnings and declarations found in the Prophecy on War, it is interesting that the Prophet identified this revelation as “the olive leaf . . . plucked from the tree of paradise, the Lord’s message of peace to us” (Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 262). Section 88 is the Lord’s message of eternal peace to each of us. We are instructed in how we might escape adverse judgments and prepare to meet our Savior.

The circumstances under which section 88 was received were recorded in the Kirtland Council Minute Book. A council of high priests had convened in Joseph’s translating room above the Whitney store in Kirtland. “Brother Joseph arose and said, to receive revelation and the blessing of heaven it was necessary to have our minds on God and exercise faith and become of one heart and of one mind. Therefore he recommended all present to pray separately and vocally to the Lord for to reveal his will unto us concerning the building up of Zion and for the benefit of the saints and for the duty and employment of the elders. Accordingly we all bowed down before the Lord, after which each one arose and spoke in his turn his feelings, and determination to keep the commandments of God. And then proceeded to receive a revelation concerning the duty [of the Elders as] above stated. 9 o’clock PM the revelation not being finished the conference adjourned till tomorrow morning 9 o’clock AM [28th] met according to

adjournment and commenced by prayer thus proceeded to receive the residue of the above revelation” (cited in Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181).

The content of section 88 was received in portions on at least three different dates. Verses 1 through 126 were received on the 27th and 28th of December 1832, and verses 127 through 137 were received on January 3, 1833. The date for verses 138 through 141 is not known. Those high priests present on at least the first two dates were Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, Orson Hyde, Joseph Smith, Sr., Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Newell K. Whitney, Frederick G. Williams, Ezra Thayer, and John Murdock. Brother Williams served as scribe.

This document, which has a strong doctrinal content, contains some of the most marvelous instructions we have on record and is calculated not only to inform, but also to inspire every person who carefully examines it. To study it is a mind-stretching experience. The language is simple and direct, but the meaning has such depth that a mortal cannot grasp its entirety.

Next to section 124, it is the longest section in the Doctrine and Covenants, and next to Section 76, perhaps it is the most magnificent. It certainly ranks with 76, 84, 93, and 132 as a “five star” revelation in terms of its importance.

Section 88 contains a miscellany of materials, and hence the following commentary will be divided into numbered sections, each with its separate subject.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 88 The Olive Leaf

D&C 88:6-10 He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand.

D&C 88:11-12 Light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space.

D&C 88:13 Light which is in all things and giveth life to all things.

D&C 88:15-16 The spirit and the body are the soul of man, and the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.

D&C 88:18-21 The purpose of the earth is to become the celestial kingdom, and they who are not sanctified through the law . . . must inherit another kingdom.

D&C 88:22-24 For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot

abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory.

D&C 88:34-35 That which is governed by law is also preserved by law, and perfected and sanctified by the same.

D&C 88:36-38 All kingdoms have a law given, for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom.

D&C 88:51-61 The parable of the multitude of kingdoms

D&C 88:77-78 And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

D&C 88:81-82 Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor.

D&C 88:118 Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning, even by study and also by faith.

D&C 88:123-124 See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires. Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to sleep longer than is needful; cease to find fault one with another.

Prologue (verses 1-5)

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you who have assembled yourselves together to receive his will concerning you:

2 Behold, this is pleasing unto your Lord, and the angels rejoice over you; the alms of your prayers have come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded in the book of the names of the sanctified, even them of the celestial world.

verse 2 “the alms of your prayers” Alms are gifts of charity or sacrifices for the needy. Alms and prayers are elsewhere linked in scripture (see D&C 112:1; Acts 10:4), but in the beautiful image created here, the time and effort required to pray is equated by the Lord with acts of charity and sacrifice. Remember, the blessing of section 88 was obtained only through fervent collective and individual prayer for a considerable period of time.

“the Lord of Sabaoth” The term “Lord of Sabaoth” means Lord of Hosts or Lord of Armies. It implies ruler over great numbers. *Sabaoth* should not be confused with Sabbath.

The Lord’s hosts or armies consist of ancient Israel, which was called “the armies of the living God” (1 Samuel 17:26, 36); the hosts of heaven, also called armies (Daniel 4:35; Revelation 19:14; D&C 88:112); and the latter-day Church, described as being “terrible as an army with banners” (D&C 5:14) and “the army of Israel” (D&C 105:26, 30-31; 109:73). As the Lord’s army, we are equipped with the “whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11-17; D&C 27:15-18), spiritual armor designed to assist us to use light and truth in the battle against the forces of evil. Jehovah is the “captain” (2 Chronicles

13:12), “leader” and “commander” (Isaiah 55:4), and “man of war” (Exodus 15:3) who will lead us against the armies of evil.

The term “Lord of Sabaoth” perhaps even has a more extensive meaning than is usually applied to it as we learn in D&C 95:7. There we have the unique declaration that the Lord of Sabaoth “is by interpretation, the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end.” Such a definition far exceeds the concept of just being Lord of armies, because it places a time factor of being Lord at the beginning and even being the cause of or initiator of the first day. This special primacy of Jesus Christ is consistent with other concepts in section 88 that speak of Christ as the creator and the sustainer of the universe in an ultimate and infinite manner.

“the book of the names of the sanctified” Elder Joseph Fielding Smith commented on this phrase: “We are not going to be saved in the kingdom of God just because our names are on the records of the Church. It will require more than that. We will have to have our names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and if they are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life then it is an evidence we have kept the commandments. Every soul who will not keep those commandments shall have his name blotted out of that book” (CR, September 1950, 10).

3 Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John.

verse 3 This verse can be a bit confusing. Let us summarize what we know about the Comforters. We know that there are two Comforters. The First Comforter (usually referred as simply “the Comforter”) is the Holy Ghost. This is the Comforter given to the saints on the Day of Pentecost—they received the *gift* of the Holy Ghost. The Second Comforter is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. To receive the Second Comforter is to have a personal visit from the Savior. Please see additional discussion of the Second Comforter in the commentary for D&C 67:10.

Now, what is this verse trying to say? First it is clear that the council of high priests gathered on December 27, 1832, at the time Joseph received section 88 were full of concerns. They had recently learned of the Lord’s giving to Joseph section 86—the parable of the wheat and the tares and section 87—a prophecy on war. The future was obviously going to hold serious trials. The Lord therefore, in section 88, intended to give them a blessing of divine comfort. This council of high priests had already received the Holy Ghost. They had all been baptized, and hands had been laid on their head for the bestowing of the gift of the Holy Ghost. The mortal Jesus also promised his ancient disciples that he would send them another Comforter in addition to the first if they would love him and keep his commandments (see John 14:18, 21, 23). This other Comforter, or the second Comforter, is not the Holy Ghost, but is the resurrected Christ himself.

There is an intimate association between receiving this Second Comforter and being sealed up to eternal life or having one's calling and election made sure (see a discussion of being sealed up to eternal life in the commentary for Helaman 10:4-7 and *Calling and Election Made Sure* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 16). It therefore seems clear that the Lord is holding out to them the promise of one day receiving the Second Comforter and the blessing of being sealed up to eternal life.

Many of the Church's best scriptural scholars have commented on this verse and have drawn different conclusions. As we approach this verse the questions are: What blessing is the Lord giving or at least offering to his disciples gathered in December 1832? the Holy Ghost? the Second Comforter? the blessing of being sealed up to eternal life?

The preponderance of evidence is that the Lord is holding out to this council of high priests, should they prove themselves worthy, the blessing of the Second Comforter with the associated blessing of having their calling and election made sure. The confusion in this verse seems to arise from its structure. The Lord starts out by telling them "Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter." This is likely the promise of the Second Comforter and the promise of being sealed up to eternal life. The difficult part of the verse is the Lord's appearing to identify "another Comforter" as the Holy Spirit of promise by his use of the phrase "even the Holy Spirit of promise." There is no question that the "Holy Spirit of promise" is a name or title used for the Holy Ghost, and this title may have yet another meaning. Since the ultimate promise the Holy Ghost can extend is that of a guarantee of eternal life, and the Holy Ghost is somehow involved in revealing the Savior to an individual who receives the Second Comforter, it appears that the phrase "Holy Spirit of promise" might also be used to mean having one's calling and election made sure. In the verse, the Lord then goes on to speak of the "other Comforter"—doubtless the Second Comforter—"as recorded in the testimony of John." All of the church scriptural commentators agree that verses 18, 21, and 23 in John chapter 14 refer to the Second Comforter, but John 14:16 has caused some confusion with some exegetes feeling that this verse also refers to the Second Comforter and others feeling that it refers to the Holy Ghost.

"my friends" The close relationship of the Lord to his faithful servants is shown in his greeting them as friends. A servant carries out orders as he is commanded. A friend is one with whom the Lord confides his purposes and plans. This subject is more fully explained in John 15:15: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things, that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." The knowledge about to be entrusted to the saints in this revelation is characteristic of that which would be shared by the Master with his faithful friends.

"even the Holy Spirit of promise" The title "Holy Spirit of promise" is clearly one used for the Holy Ghost. For a discussion of the various roles and the

corresponding various titles of the Holy Ghost, see *The Holy Ghost in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 5. When the Second Comforter is received by a faithful disciple, the Holy Ghost has a role to play in this great blessing. The Second Comforter can be received only by an individual who is worthy of having his calling and election made sure. A personal visit from the Savior himself (the Second Comforter) indicates to the individual that he is sealed up to eternal life. His probation is over and his exaltation assured. But this final promise of exaltation and eternal life, like any other blessing, must be witnessed, sealed, and ratified by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the one who judges as to worthiness to receive a blessing, and he is also the one who then brings the blessing, witnesses the blessing, and seals the blessing as binding for all eternity. In this grand role, the Holy Ghost is referred to as the “Holy Spirit of promise.” As mentioned above, the ultimate blessing to a mortal in which the Holy Ghost may participate is that of sealing upon him his exaltation. Hence, one of the uses of the title, “Holy Spirit of promise” may also be to refer to this ultimate blessing.

4 This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;

verse 4 This verse simply emphasizes the intimate relationship between receiving the Second Comforter and having one’s calling and election made sure.

It should be mentioned here that the brethren gathered with the Prophet Joseph on December 27, 1832, had not actually seen the Savior, but rather are receiving the same comforting but conditional promise that the disciples of the mortal Jesus had received in John 14:16-28. Ordinances and sealings necessary for their exaltation had not yet taken place. Verses 3 and 4 were given to the brethren to prepare them for the fulfillment of this promise at some future time. Thus, three stages can be discerned: first, one receives the First Comforter, the Holy Ghost (actually the *gift* of the Holy Ghost). Second, one receives the specific promise of a Second Comforter, who is the risen Lord. Third, one actually receives a guarantee of exaltation from the risen Lord. Receiving this promise on December 27, 1832, did not constitute the fulfillment or final realization of these blessings at this time.

5 Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—

verse 5 “Church of the Firstborn” See D&C 76:54 and its commentary. Here this term has reference to those who inherit or have been sealed up to inherit the celestial kingdom. They belong not only to the earthly Church of Jesus Christ (who himself is the “Firstborn”), but they constitute an eternal Church. The membership of this Church consists only of those who are exalted or are to be exalted and thus have the inheritance of the Firstborn. They are joint heirs with Jesus in all that the Father

has.

The Light of Truth or the Light of Christ (verses 6-13)

Before undertaking a study of these verses, please read and study *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

6 He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;

verse 6 “ascended up on high . . . descended below all things . . . comprehended all things” Consider the personal experiences of Jesus Christ. Because of his personal righteousness, he rose to a position of God and Creator of all things in his premortal existence. He then descended into mortality where he experienced the worst of mortal sufferings (see Philippians 2:5-9). From here he descended into the very bottom of the lowest pits of hell—“below all things”—in atoning for the sins of mankind. He then reached the highest degree of exaltation after arising from the dead. Through these heights and depths he came to comprehend all things. No matter who we are or what we experience, Christ has been there (see D&C 122:7-8; Ephesians 4:7-10). He has infinite compassion for all those who suffer (see Hebrews 2:18; 4:15; Alma 7:11-12).

“that he might be in all and through all things” The omnipresence of the Son of God embraces more than just knowledge through experience. There is a further sense in which Christ is “in all and through all things.” His omnipresence is literal and spatial as well as experiential. It is through his light that his influence and power are not only in all things but “give life to all things” (see verse 13).

The expression **“the light of truth”** is synonymous with “the light of Christ.”

7 Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.

verse 7 “Which truth shineth . . . the light of Christ” Again, see the important chapter, *The Concept of Light* as referenced above.

8 As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made;

9 As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made;

10 And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand.

verses 7-10 “the light of the sun . . . moon . . . stars . . . earth” All energy in the universe is fundamentally and intimately involved with the light of Christ. The light of Christ is the very enabling source of the creative and functional energy of all things, and

thus it gives life to all things in the universe. This includes the radiant light energy of the sun, moon, and stars. The light of Christ is the energy that holds even the atoms and molecules of all creation together. It is the attractive force of gravity.

11 And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

verse 11 “which giveth you light” That “light which shineth” is the light of Christ. When we make spiritual progress; when we partake of increments of the attributes of Christ, those attributes are delivered to us via the medium of the light of Christ. We grow spiritually by being allowed to partake of increments of the light of Christ. When the Spirit of God judges our efforts at obedience worthy and sufficient, he allows us to assimilate increments of the light of Christ (truth) into our own soul. That light becomes part of us. It becomes *our* light. In this way our spiritual eyes are enlightened, and our spiritual understandings are quickened.

12 Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

verse 12 “to fill the immensity of space” All of God’s creations, animate and inanimate, remain under the direct influence of the Creator, and the mechanism for this influence is the light of Christ which shines or radiates from the person of the Savior himself, at a rate of speed far in excess of the speed of light, to fill the universe of all his creations. This is what Paul means when he says, “And by him all things consist [or hold together]” (Colossians 1:17; see also verse 41).

13 The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

verse 13 “which giveth life to all things” Since all living things require energy in order to exist, and since all energy is some form of the light of Christ, the light of Christ is the source of all life. What we normally think of as the physical laws of the universe, the laws by which particles, bodies, and elements are governed and which give stability to existence and make life possible—these are also manifestations of the light of Christ and of his power displayed throughout the universe.

Elder John A. Widtsoe expressed his opinion that “associated with matter-energy was the implication in Joseph Smith’s teachings that the energy in the universe is a form of intelligence; that is, in a manner not fully understood by man, some form of life resides in all matter, though of an order wholly different from the organized intelligence of man or higher living things. Hence, everything in the universe is alive. The differences among rock, plant, beast, and man are due to the amount and organization

of the life element” (Joseph Smith, 149-50). See *The Creation in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 3.

“the law by which all things are governed” The light of Christ imposes physical and spiritual laws upon all mankind. The Savior avoids forcing his will upon us. He makes no effort to alter our agency. But the consequences of our choices, whichever way we may choose, are set by the physical and spiritual laws that govern our universe. Obedience inevitably leads to spiritual growth: though the medium of the light of Christ, portions of that light—increments of the attributes of God—are imparted to man. Disobedience leads to an inevitable failure to grow or even a loss of those attributes which had been previously earned. Since the light of Christ is essential for all things to exist and have life, and also this life is the source of all spiritual growth—all truth—this light is standard or “the law by which all things are governed.”

“who is in the bosom of eternity” God rules his creation from its center; all things revolve around him. According to Joseph Smith, this universal center of time and space, the throne of God, has (or perhaps is *on*) a nearby star called Kolob (see Abraham 3:2-3).

Definition of the Soul of Man and Its Redemption (verses 14-17)

The most correct definition of a soul is: the combination of a spirit and a physical body (D&C 88:15-16). Keeping this definition in mind is helpful in clarifying other passages of scripture dealing with the creation, such as Moses 3:7-9 and Abraham 5:7. The scriptures are not always consistent in this particular use of the word *soul*, as sometimes this term is used to mean only a spirit—see Alma 40:21. Resurrection is the soul’s (the spirit’s) redemption—the spirit is rescued from an otherwise less than fully satisfactory existence by being resurrected.

14 Now, verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead.

verse 14 **“through the redemption which is made for you”** See the commentary for D&C 19:1; 45:17. All men are redeemed from one aspect of the fall of Adam and Eve—our inevitable, eventual death. All mortals will one day be resurrected. Our resurrection is “made for [us].” We don’t even have to earn it.

15 And the spirit and the body are the soul of man.

verse 15 Here is the official definition of “the soul of man.” It consists of the combination of his spirit and his body. In many ancient languages (including the Hebrew, *Nephesh*), the words for *soul* and *self* are the same. The essence of the self (our intelligence) plus its spirit body is the spirit. The combination of the spirit and a body (mortal or resurrected eternal) is the soul. Once born into mortality to receive a physical body, we humans can never again be whole or complete without a body (see

Genesis 2:7; Moses 3:7). Thus, the separation of our spirit and body at death is looked upon as “bondage” to us (D&C 45:17; 138:50) in a way we could not have comprehended as premortal spirits. Our whole soul must include our complete self, both our spirit and our body. The “body part” of our soul is now a mortal body, but in the future will be an eternal resurrected body.

16 And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.

verse 16 Since we (our spirits) cannot be complete beings without our bodies, the process of redemption from death, hell, and the devil (the definition of salvation) cannot be complete until our spirits and bodies are reunited in resurrection. We are redeemed or rescued from unsatisfactory incompleteness by resurrection. The spirits of the righteous may be said to be redeemed from the devil from the moment of their conversion. However, the process of redemption will not be fully completed, or the promise of redemption totally fulfilled, until our whole self, both body and spirit is raised in the great resurrection of the dead.

17 And the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it.

verse 17 “quickeneth” To “quicken” means to bestow life. We have already established that it is only through the light of Christ that all things live (see verse 13). The redemption of our soul has been established to be our resurrection. We are all resurrected because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and death.

“the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it” This phrase says that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit the earth. The poor are those who are “poor in spirit.” The “poor in spirit” are those who sense their estrangement and emptiness and realize their utter dependence upon the Lord. The poverty referred to here is that of the man who is fully conscious of the inadequacy of all human resources. The poor and the meek of the earth are thus the submissive and obedient. The physical earth upon which we now live will, in its sanctified condition, be the celestial kingdom for all those who have lived upon it and are found worthy of that kingdom.

Ultimate Function and Destiny of This Earth (verses 18-21)

“Every created thing has been made for a purpose; and every thing that fills the measure of its creation is to be advanced in the scale of progression, within the bounds of its own kind or kingdom, be it an atom or a world, a protozoan or a man” (James E. Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks By Radio*, 1931, 353-55).

18 Therefore, it must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory;

verse 18 The antecedent of *it* is the earth in the previous verse. The earth itself is being prepared for its eternal celestial existence. Those intelligences that make up the earth who live out their mortal trial sufficiently obedient will be a part of that celestial earth. During their trial here on earth, they will be incrementally justified and sanctified just as we will be. This justification and sanctification will occur in response to their obedience to the laws of God that are given to their kingdom (see verses 36-38). By this incremental justification and sanctification, they will grow spiritually. See *Justification and Sanctification* in volume 1, chapter 17 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

19 For after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father;

verse 19 “**after it hath filled the measure of its creation**” This means after the earth has fulfilled the purpose of its creation—after it has done what it was divinely created and intended to do.

20 That bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified.

verses 18-20 Presently, the physical earth is in a fallen, telestial condition, and there is much wickedness among its “children” (non-human intelligences) which are those intelligences that are included in the inanimate materials of the earth (Moses 7:48). The purpose of this earth, foreordained from its creation, is to become the celestial kingdom wherein may dwell all those embodied intelligences who earn that degree of glory and also wherein will dwell God the Father and Jesus Christ.

To complete its destiny, the earth must go through many of the things that each of us must go through if we qualify ourselves to go to the celestial kingdom. It was created spiritually first, then it became mortal. It was subjected to evil, then it was baptized during the Flood at the time of Noah. At the second coming of the Savior, the earth will be baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and all things that cannot abide a terrestrial glory will be burned away. This cleansing will include even the telestial parts of the physical earth—those materials inhabited by telestial—wicked and disobedient—intelligences. The earth will be raised from its present telestial state to a terrestrial state for the period of the Millennium. At the end of the Millennium, the earth will go through a change analogous to death and resurrection and will be raised from a terrestrial state to celestial glory (see verse 26). Thus will the earth fill “the measure of its creation” by being sanctified and glorified.

How does the physical earth become sanctified? To be sanctified is to grow spiritually: to be purged of evil and to have spiritual gifts added upon. It is to become more like God—more celestial—by virtue of obedience to law. Even those intelligences that are associated with the inanimate materials of the earth have their own kingdoms

(verses 36-38) and their own laws or commandments. They have their unfettered agency. Among them there is obedience and disobedience in every shade of gray.

The earth itself is separate from those human intelligences that inhabit it. The earth is not accountable for its human inhabitants. Rather the intelligences that are embodied by the “inanimate” material earth are accountable for themselves, for their own unique laws. Some of the earth’s intelligences choose to obey, and some choose to disobey. We know that the majority of the earth’s intelligences—those intelligences that inhabit the inanimate things of the earth—have been, are, and will be obedient, and the earth is sealed up to receive its celestial glory by virtue of this general obedience (D&C 29:22-24).

21 And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

verse 21 “sanctified through the law” The “they” spoken of here are the human intelligences that inhabit this earth during their mortal sojourn. As they struggle to obey the “law of Christ,” including repentance when they stumble, they qualify to receive gifts of the Spirit—increments of the attributes of Christ, and concomitantly they have increments of evil (increments of their natural selves) purged from their soul. This (both the purging and the receiving gifts) is the process of sanctification. Sanctification is a two-fold process.

The Role of Law (verses 22-61)

These verses explain that every person will be resurrected, most to glory and some few to no glory, depending upon the laws each person chooses to obey. The law of Christ—the gospel—leads to a fulness of celestial glory. Any deviation leads to less. In these passages, “quicken” has reference to resurrection, and this quickening comes to all. Verses 24, 31, and 33 clearly indicate that the class of persons known as the sons of perdition shall be “quicken,” that is, they will be resurrected in a physical body, but not to a place of glory, for they failed to receive the only gift (the atonement of Christ) that could have redeemed them.

The judgment shall be in the resurrection (verse 28). Those who will inherit the celestial kingdom will come forth in the resurrection with a celestial body. Those bound for the terrestrial kingdom will rise with a body made up of terrestrial elements, and so forth.

22 For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

23 And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

24 And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory.

verses 22-24 “**he who is not able to abide the law . . . cannot abide [the] glory**” Each kingdom of glory has its own law. The higher the law, the higher the glory. That law by which we attempt to govern ourselves here in mortality, even though we succeed at it only imperfectly (see verses 29-31), determines the glory we will ultimately receive in the resurrection. The resurrection and final judgment will employ a process of segregating like with like. The celestial kingdom will be celestial, in part, because non-celestial individuals will simply be removed and will be put somewhere else with people who are just like themselves. This is not only just. It is also merciful. For, on the one hand, we will all receive in eternity what we sought to achieve in mortality (thus satisfying justice), while, on the other hand, we will not be forced to live forever under conditions or law we cannot abide (thus allowing for mercy). Terrestrial people, for example will not belong or be comfortable in the celestial glory. They will not be able to abide the celestial law that applies there. They would prefer a lesser glory. They know they are suited for a lesser glory. They will be happiest in a lesser glory.

verse 24 “**a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory**” Outer darkness.

25 And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law—

verse 25 This verse applies to the vast majority (but not all) of the intelligences that are combined with the elements of earth.

26 Wherefore, it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it.

verse 26 The earth itself was created initially with a spirit body. The earth today has a spirit body just as each of us humans today have a spirit body. Initially the earth's spirit was combined with a mortal or telestial body. When the Savior comes again, the telestial world will “die” (the telestial elements will be removed from the earth), and only terrestrial and celestial elements will remain. It will then be called a terrestrial earth. At the end of the millennium, the terrestrial elements will “die” and be removed from the earth. Then the earth will begin to live (be “quickened”) its eternal celestial existence.

27 For notwithstanding they die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual body.

verses 25-27 See the commentary for verses 17-21. “They” here refers to the intelligences that make up the “inanimate” earth.

verse 27 “**a spiritual body**” The word *spiritual* is used in more than one way in the scriptures. First, it may mean *immaterial* or *nonphysical*, such as a spirit. Second,

spiritual may mean pertaining to things of God or to things of the eternities as opposed to natural or material which pertaining to things of the earth. It is in this latter sense that the word *spiritual* is used in this verse. All resurrected bodies, in this sense, are spiritual, but the celestial body is the most spiritual. This is also the same sense in which Paul uses the term “spiritual body” of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:44. A spirit body is a body composed of spirit matter (D&C 131:7-8) and is not the same as a “spiritual” body.

28 They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened.

verse 28 “They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body” This phrase is at first confusing since the natural body is our mortal, physical body in its present fallen state, and we know that celestial spirits are resurrected with eternal celestial bodies which are “spiritual bodies” (see verse 27) and are not at all “natural” bodies. It is true that when Christ was resurrected, he took up the same body that had been laid in the tomb to demonstrate the reality of the resurrection, but this is not true of the rest of us. Certainly the bodies of most people who have died have been destroyed by various mechanisms including cremation, decay, consumption by animals, etc. While some people propose that there is some physical substance in the body that is never lost, there is no evidence, either from science or from the scriptures, to support this concept. The Prophet Joseph has suggested there is nothing of the natural body in the resurrected body: “There is no fundamental principle belonging to a human system that ever goes into another in this world or in the world to come. . . . If anyone supposes that any part of our bodies, that is, the fundamental parts thereof, ever goes into another body, he is mistaken” (*HC*, 5:339).

How then, do we explain this phrase? Apparently there is a moment in time, when our bodies come forth from the grave, when it is still, in some way, a *natural* body. It then is immediately changed, or quickened, with the glory that we have earned—celestial, terrestrial, or telestial glory. Joseph F. Smith wrote: “The death that came by the fall of our first parents is eradicated by the resurrection of the Son of God You will come forth from your graves, these same mortal bodies as they are now, bearing the marks just as much as Christ’s body bore the marks that were upon him. They will come forth from their graves, but they will be immediately immortalized, restored to their perfect frame, limb and joint. And the poor, unfortunate creature who has lost a leg or an arm or a finger will have it restored to its proper frame, every joint to its place, and every part to its part, and it will be made perfect [Alma 40:23], for that is the law of restoration that God has instituted by which His own purpose cannot fail, by which his

own designs concerning His children must be consummated” (Doxey, *The Latter-day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants*, [Deseret Book Co., 1963] 3:168).

President Smith’s statement here may be confusing as we know that mortal bodies, after death, do invariably experience variable degrees of deterioration and destruction. It is difficult, and even somewhat comically horrifying to imagine all bodies coming forth from the grave. Perhaps it is that the resurrected body is initially a sort of restored and refurbished mortal body not yet imbued with the glory it is destined to receive. It might, then, be termed a “natural” body or, as President Smith has written a “mortal” body.

“even ye shall receive your bodies” This phrase refers to our receiving our resurrected, eternal, “spiritual” bodies.

29 Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

30 And they who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

31 And also they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

verses 28-31 “your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened” See the commentary for verses 22-24. The word *quickened* in these verses means “made alive or revived.” In this case it means resurrected.

The word “fulness” in these verses refers to a perfect, eternal body commensurate with the complete glory of its respective kingdom. The terrestrial body, for example, will receive a “fulness” of terrestrial glory.

32 And they who remain shall also be quickened; nevertheless, they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received.

verse 32 “they who remain” These are the sons of perdition, who will be resurrected (“quickened”), but who will not progress in glory from that time on. Rather, they will regress, having lost their second estate (see Abraham 3:26), and will be consigned after judgment to their own place or condition, one apparently totally without glory (see D&C 76:44-48).

“to enjoy that which they are willing to receive” The use of the work *enjoy* here is surprising. We wonder if it should be placed in italics. Those who are consigned to perdition are perdition by choice. Throughout their mortal lives, then throughout their sufferings in hell before their resurrection, these individuals will not repent, will not bend, will not yield to God nor respond to his love and mercy. Their eternal fate is deliberately and stubbornly selected by them: “I will have my way. I will not yield. I will not bend. I will not obey—no matter how terrible the cost—worlds

without end.” God’s desire, his work and his glory, would be to exalt these sons of perdition, but he cannot, for they will not allow it. As free agents, they choose their fate with full knowledge of the consequences. They knowingly reject God and his plans and desires for their salvation.

A provocative question then remains. What will be the state of mind of the individual who is consigned to outer darkness? We resist the idea that they Lord would require them to spend eternity in agony. We wonder if an eternal state of ennui and lassitude might be their lot. But might it be that they also will end up being consigned to a place and a condition which is to their eternal satisfaction and even happiness? Will they, in fact, “enjoy” their eternal lot? We simply are not given sufficient information to formulate any type of answer to these questions.

33 For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift.

verse 33 “a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift” This verse is most interesting, provocative, and enigmatic. Salvation in any degree of glory is a gift, indeed, the greatest of all God’s merciful gifts to us. Intuitively, we have settled on the notion that the level of salvation gifted to each individual is appropriate for who and what they really are. Each individual will be content and satisfied with the degree of glory he or she inherits. But is it possible that in the judgment, the Lord will offer to an individual a degree of glory that he knows is appropriate for that individual, yet the individual will refuse to accept it? We do know for certain that God will not, and in fact cannot, violate the absolute sanctity of an individual’s agency. This suggests the unbelievable and tragic possibility then, as suggested by this verse, that some individuals will be offered a degree of glory and refuse to accept that offer. They then will elect a lesser degree of glory or no glory at all.

Similarly, in human relationships some people are too proud or too independent to accept gifts from others, and consequently they lose both the rejected gift and also the opportunity to strengthen their relationship with the rejected giver.

34 And again, verily I say unto you, that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same.

verse 34 “that which is governed by law is also preserved . . . and perfected and sanctified by the same” God’s laws are not arbitrary rules designed to test our obedience. They are rules and guidelines by which we may achieve the ultimate happiness in this life and in the life to come. If obeyed, his laws help us enjoy the abundant life Christ promised to those who adhere to his gospel and ultimately they help us to become like him. We read in scripture that “there is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are

predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20-21). God’s law provides us access to his blessings, and obedience to those laws assures us of these blessings. God knows us intimately, and he knows perfectly the potential vicissitudes of this mortal experience. His laws are designed to protect us, to uplift us, to enlighten our minds, and to enlarge our souls. There is nothing of arbitrariness in God’s laws or commandments. They are not arbitrary rules. They do not function as a mere problematic obstacle course just to see how each person will do. Nor are the commandments merely helpful suggestions that can be disregarded at will without consequence. It is only through our obedience to his law that we become like him—that we receive those incremental divine attributes that sanctify and perfect us.

In the scriptures, there is usually a difference between a rule and a law. For example, according to the rabbis, there are 613 rules (do’s and don’ts) that make up the single law of Moses. The term *law*, then, often refers to a whole system or plan made up of many rules. As we choose to live by the law of Christ or the law of Moses, we may not succeed in keeping all the rules incorporated therein, nevertheless, as we choose to govern ourselves according to one law or another in this life, we will eventually receive the fulness of that law’s glory and blessings in the resurrection. The law we accept and live here (though imperfectly) in turn exalts us there, and those who reject all law in this life (perdition) will have no law to protect or preserve them in eternity.

Living the law has a conditioning effect on the individual. Elder Loren C. Dunn said:

When I was younger, I lived to play basketball. It was on my mind constantly. I spent countless hours practicing. Gradually I began to go through the moves automatically, without thinking about them. Physically and mentally I had become conditioned to do certain things by instinct. I had practiced them until they became natural to me.

In like manner, we keep the commandments and teachings of the gospel in order to condition us spiritually. It is not a matter of how many laws we keep and how many we do not keep. We keep the commandments because they are the laws that govern the Spirit [notice “Spirit” is capitalized]. The Spirit in turn will sanctify us, condition us spiritually, and eventually prepare us to live in the kingdom where God is.

The laws that govern the Spirit are nothing more nor less than the laws that govern the Church (*Ensign*, May 1979, 70-71).

35 That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still.

verse 35 This verse is self explanatory and applies to the sons of perdition.

36 All kingdoms have a law given;

37 And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom.

38 And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.

verses 36-38 “All kingdoms have a law given” All creation—all intelligences—have been organized by God and placed under certain laws. We are not given to understand the order or organization of the kingdoms, though we can easily identify a few of them. There are, for example, kingdoms incorporating the intelligences that are associated with the inanimate materials of the earth. There are kingdoms involving the microorganisms, the plants, and the animals. And finally, there is a kingdom of the human family. Each intelligence in all of these kingdoms has the priceless gift of agency, and each may make unfettered choices. There is no intelligence among God’s creations that does not have agency. All of these kingdoms have a law given by the Lord, and the laws or conditions of these separate kingdoms are all different.

Some of the multiple “kingdoms” spoken of here are macroscopic, some microscopic—“either a greater or a lesser kingdom.” Each kingdom is governed by its own laws, and in a way each kingdom is alive. John A. Widtsoe taught:

In a manner not fully understood by man, some form of life resides in all matter, though of an order wholly different from the organized intelligence of man or higher living things. Hence, everything in the universe is alive. . . . This implies clearly that the earth is a living organism. President Brigham Young who was trained in the gospel by the Prophet confirmed the teaching that life and intelligence pervade all things, animate and inanimate. Are this earth, the air, and the water composed of life? . . . We suggest that there is an eternity of organization, and an eternity of intelligence from the highest to the lowest grade, every creature in its order from the Gods to the animalculae. We live then in a living universe which in all its component parts is intelligent (*Joseph Smith, Seeker After Truth, Prophet of God, 1951, 149-50*).

39 All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified.

verse 39 We are not given to know anything about the laws given to the separate orders of God’s creations, though we may assume that some intelligences in each order or kingdom obey more diligently than others. Those who repent and obey qualify for the merciful blessings of Christ’s atonement. Their sins are forgiven them (they are justified). Those who do not obey do not qualify for forgiveness or justification.

40 For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne and governeth and executeth all things.

verse 40 “intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence” “Cleaveth unto” means to be joined together with. In eternity, like will be joined to like. The law of God will sort us out, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that by the law of God we will sort ourselves out. We will all seek and obtain our own reward and will live among those with similar inclinations. In this verse, “intelligence” refers to a fully independent individual in God’s universe.

Another possible meaning for this verse is the point that we have made previously—that spiritual growth is exponential and not linear. That is, with each increment in spiritual growth comes an increment in the rate of spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is therefore self potentiating and self accelerating—in other words, exponential. Rather than referring to the individual essence of a person, this interpretation of the verse regards “intelligence” as a measure of an individual’s spiritual growth—the sum total of all the gifts of the Spirit he has accumulated. The more intelligence he acquires, the more he can cleave unto.

41 He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever.

verse 41 “He comprehendeth all things” “He,” here refers to the Lord. The word *comprehendeth* most often means “to understand.” Here, however, the word has an additional meaning. It means “to encompass, to include, or to be larger than something else.” This verse describes the relationship and influence of Christ on all of creation. Since the light of Christ is in all things and is the force that gives them life and holds them together, Christ himself must “comprehend” all these things (both understand and encompass) in all their aspects and in all their functions. The Creator is larger and greater than his creation, and he understands and is included in the whole of it.

42 And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons;

verse 42 “he hath given a law . . . by which they move” This passage declares that the laws of physical motion, the physics of our universe, are decreed and imposed upon all the heavenly bodies by God through the light of Christ. Thus, the

orbits of the moon around the earth, the earth around the sun, and our galaxy around its center are all functions of the governance and power of God through the light of Christ.

43 And their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets.

verse 43 “comprehend” See the commentary for verse 41. The word comprehend here means “include.”

44 And they give light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years—all these are one year with God, but not with man.

verse 44 “all these are one year with God, but not with man” In Abraham 3:4, we are given the formula relating time, as reckoned by God, to time, as reckoned by man. That verse in Abraham teaches us that “one revolution [of Kolob] [is] a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest. This is the reckoning of the Lord’s time, [It is] according to the reckoning of Kolob” (see also Abraham 5:13; Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8). We obviously have no idea as to what exactly constitutes a year in Kolob’s reckoning of time.

It is clear that the scriptures are unanimous in declaring that time is not reckoned the same with God as it is with human beings (see, for example, D&C 130:4-7; Revelation 10:6). Alma’s statement that “all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men” (Alma 40:8), would seem to caution us against taking any particular formula too literally.

It is difficult to take a precise quantitative meaning away from this verse. The verse is ambiguous and simply seems to suggest that all man’s measures of time may be variable depending on their planets and the locations of those planet, but God’s time is always reckoned in its own consistent way.

verses 45-47 These verses seem to endorse what theologians call the teleological argument for the existence of God. Basically, this argument states that the existence of a glorious creation indicates or implies the existence of a glorious creator. All who have perceived the order and glory of creation or the orderly operation of natural laws have perceived the influence of God in the universe—whether or not they choose to accept this testimony borne by creation concerning its Creator (Moses 6:63).

45 The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God.

46 Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand?

verse 46 “these kingdoms” See the commentary for verses 36-38.

47 Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power.

48 I say unto you, he hath seen him; nevertheless, he who came unto his own was not comprehended.

verse 48 “he hath seen him” The man who has thoughtfully observed the order, power, and majesty of creation has seen God.

“nevertheless, he who came unto his own was not comprehended” The mortal Christ was not generally understood for who he was in spite of the fact that every man should know God from his experience with nature.

49 The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; nevertheless, the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him.

verse 49 “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not” Those unresponsive to the influence of the Holy Ghost cannot perceive the light of Christ. They live in darkness. The phrase “the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not” refers to the Lord’s mercy in allowing his light to shine even to those who do not receive or comprehend it.

To comprehend God the Father and God the Son is the same as to know them—to possess a revealed personal relationship with and testimony of them. No man can perceive and benefit from the light of Christ lest he is worthy of and desires the assistance of the influence of the Holy Ghost.

“the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God” Perhaps here the Lord speaks to those who live in darkness and fail to comprehend God. The day will come when all will be resurrected and stand before him. Then all will know him.

The Lord may also speak here to those who respond to the promptings of his Spirit while still in the second estate. They will come to know or comprehend him. They will have a personal relationship with him, a testimony of him.

“being quickened in him and by him” Here, “being quickened” could mean being resurrected by him. This would apply to those spiritually unresponsive to the Spirit’s promptings. Their day will come when even they will all see and acknowledge God and be resurrected by him.

Those who are responsive to the Spirit are made spiritually alive by him—they are quickened by him.

50 Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am, and that I am the true light that is in you, and that you are in me; otherwise ye could not abound.

verse 50 “Then shall ye know” Only when a man is quickened by the influence of the Spirit can he perceive the light of Christ and come to truly know God.

“that you are in me” This phrase refers to the intimate relationship with Christ available to us if we persist in righteousness.

“otherwise ye could not abound” To *abound* is to spiritually progress, enlarge, improve, and thrive.

verses 51-61 These verses contain a parable unique to the Doctrine and Covenants—the parable of the multitude of kingdoms. According to the book of Moses (Moses 1:27-35) and to the prophet Joseph Smith (see D&C 76:21, 24 and the commentary for these verses), there are countless inhabited worlds like ours among the creations of God, all of which are to receive God’s benevolence. This parable is one of the plainest assertions in the scriptures that there are inhabitants on other worlds, and Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior. As these worlds go through the process of creation, cleansing, sanctification, and so forth that leads to their becoming celestial spheres, there is a time when each will enjoy the actual, physical presence of its Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ. In our case, the Lord will personally visit this earth during the Millennium, though he will likely not dwell here, and during that time all those raised in the first resurrection (that is, with celestial or terrestrial glory; see D&C 45:54; 76:17, 50 and their commentary) will at some time enjoy his personal presence. However, when our millennial day is over, the Lord will leave this earth to visit yet other worlds in their proper turn as they approach completion of their celestial natures. Thus, one by one the Lord personally visits each of his created worlds and all of his righteous servants.

After quoting these verses, President John Taylor wrote: “That is, each kingdom, or planet, and the inhabitants thereof, were [or will be] blessed with the visits and presence of their Creator, in their several times and seasons” (*Meditation and Atonement*, 77). Also, in the 1879 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, Elder Orson Pratt wrote the following footnotes to verses 51-61: “Each planetary kingdom is visited by its Creator in its time and season,” and “The inhabitants of each planet [are] blessed with the presence and visits of their Creator.” Orson Pratt also wrote that as each world passes through its terrestrial millennium to be recreated a glorious, celestial sphere, “then, from that time henceforth and forever, there will be no intervening veil between God and his people who are sanctified and glorified, and he will not be under the necessity of withdrawing from one to go and visit another, because they will all be in his presence” (*JD*, 17:332).

We may speculate that just as the Nephite prophets had their prophecies and signs of Christ’s birth and atonement later verified by the Savior’s visit among them, perhaps the other planets or kingdoms that were created by the Savior also saw signs and heard prophecies that were then later verified by a visit from their Savior.

51 Behold, I will liken these kingdoms unto a man having a field, and he sent forth his servants into the field to dig in the field.

52 And he said unto the first: Go ye and labor in the field, and in the first hour I will come unto you, and ye shall behold the joy of my countenance.

53 And he said unto the second: Go ye also into the field, and in the second hour I will visit you with the joy of my countenance.

54 And also unto the third, saying: I will visit you;

55 And unto the fourth, and so on unto the twelfth.

56 And the lord of the field went unto the first in the first hour, and tarried with him all that hour, and he was made glad with the light of the countenance of his lord.

57 And then he withdrew from the first that he might visit the second also, and the third, and the fourth, and so on unto the twelfth.

58 And thus they all received the light of the countenance of their lord, every man in his hour, and in his time, and in his season—

59 Beginning at the first, and so on unto the last, and from the last unto the first, and from the first unto the last;

60 Every man in his own order, until his hour was finished, even according as his lord had commanded him, that his lord might be glorified in him, and he in his lord, that they all might be glorified.

61 Therefore, unto this parable I will liken all these kingdoms, and the inhabitants thereof—every kingdom in its hour, and in its time, and in its season, even according to the decree which God hath made.

General Instructions and Counsel to Elders and Missionaries (verses 62-86)

General advice is given: Be in tune with God and pray to him often and diligently (verses 62-63, 67). Be careful what you ask for in prayer (verses 64-65). Teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom (verses 77-80). Labor diligently (verses 81-85).

62 And again, verily I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near—

63 Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

64 Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you;

65 And if ye ask anything that is not expedient for you, it shall turn unto your condemnation.

verse 65 “that is not expedient for you” The 1828 edition of *Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language* defines *expedient* as “that which serves to promote or advance.” When we seek what is right and what will move us toward our Heavenly Father or aid the cause of Zion, the Lord will answer our prayers positively. But should we attempt using the power of prayer for selfish or unrighteous goals, we will find ourselves condemned for it. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that “too many times in prayers, things may be asked for which are not expedient but to gratify our vanity or foolish desires, and then if answered the prayer could be to our hurt. We have a wonderful example of this in the case of Martin Harris, when he persisted, after the Lord had refused his request and on his repeated seeking the request was granted.” President Smith also said that “the promise is sure that the Lord will not deny the humble petition which is offered, and it may not be expedient in some prayers that the answer be given as requested. Moreover, it is true that the Lord is not always near. The man who has ignored the Lord, who has not kept his commandments, and who does not pray, may find it a very difficult thing to obtain an answer to his earnest prayer when in distress, and the answer is sorely needed” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:84).

66 Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—in the wilderness, because you cannot see him—my voice, because my voice is Spirit; my Spirit is truth; truth abideth and hath no end; and if it be in you it shall abound.

verse 66 “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” This phrase is usually associated with the person of John the Baptist, who literally called out to Israel from the wilderness outside her towns and cities (see Mark 1:3-4). However, John’s voice cried out the words of Jehovah that prepared Israel for his coming, and so ultimately this phrase refers equally well to the voice of God himself (see D&C 1:38). The settled towns of Israel were then associated with the world of men and the worldliness which existed therein, while the wilderness symbolically represented a loftier plain from which God often spoke through his prophets. Those present when section 88 was received were privileged to hear word of Christ’s coming communicated through the Spirit and spoken by a prophet of God just as ancient disciples heard that preparatory word through John the Baptist.

We also learn here more about the symbolic significance of this phrase (“in the wilderness”). In the case of this phrase’s being applied to the voice of the Lord, we are taught that because the observers could not see God, it was as though he was speaking or crying “in the wilderness.”

“my voice is Spirit; my Spirit is truth” We are reminded that the light of Christ may be referred to as the Lord’s “voice,” his “Spirit,” and “truth.” If a man responds to the light of Christ he shall abound or flourish spiritually.

67 And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

verse 67 “if your eye be single” A man cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24; Moroni 7:11-14). If our every thought, our desires, our aspirations, our hopes, and our dreams are all centered in righteousness; if our reason for being is to build up the kingdom of God, then we have an eye single to the glory of God.

“your whole bodies shall be filled with light” President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught: “As we . . . serve him with an eye single to his glory, there goes from us the darkness of sin, the darkness of selfishness, the darkness of pride. There will come an increased love for our Eternal Father and for his Beloved Son, our Savior and our Redeemer. There will come a greater sense of service toward our fellow men, less of thinking of self and more of reaching out to others” (*Ensign*, March 1984, 5).

68 Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.

verses 68 “sanctify yourselves” As we have discussed previously, the two-fold process of sanctification occurs in response to our obedience to the Lord’s commands. First we have an increment of our natural self burned out of our soul as if by fire. Second, we receive, by personal revelation, an increment of one of the Lord’s attributes—a gift of the Spirit. Sanctification causes us to become a little more like God. Our part of the process is diligent, properly motivated obedience to the commandments of the Lord. Hence, when we obey, we “sanctify ourselves.”

“for he will unveil his face unto you” Here the Lord is likely reiterating his promise made to some of these same individuals the preceding year (see D&C 67:10 and its commentary). But this phrase may also be regarded as a blessed but sobering promise for the rest of us as well. The day will come that each of us will meet him under one of the following circumstances: (1) We may die and see him following our mortal phase (Alma 11:40). (2) He may appear to us here in mortality when our calling and election is made sure—when we receive the Second Comforter. (3) If he returns during our lifetime, we will see him then.

The conditions of our seeing him again will be at his bidding. He will decide how, when, and where. It is inevitable, however, that we will one day see him whether we are prepared or not.

verses 69-76 The Lord instructs the Prophet to call a solemn assembly of the “first laborers in this last kingdom.” This is to be held in Kirtland and is to include a special spiritual manifestation to those who are worthy. Much needs to be done in

anticipation. The laborers are to prepare their hearts and minds and rid themselves of idle thoughts and excess laughter. Those expecting to be invited to attend are to organize themselves, sanctify their lives, and purify their hearts.

69 Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you; cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter far from you.

verse 69 “the great and last promise” This “last” promise is the most recent promise—made in the preceding verse. It is that the brethren present would be privileged to see the Lord if they remained faithful. Brother Robert Matthews wrote: “Certainly the meaning is not that this was the final (or chronologically last) promise [God] would make to his servants. The meaning therefore seems to be that this was the ultimate promise—that is, that when they were ready, they would see his face and stand in his presence. The feeling is also contained in the passage that this was the last promise until they had accomplished the preparation needed to obtain the promise the Lord had given them” (“Olive Leaf,” in *Studies in Scripture*, eds. Millet and Jackson, 1:349).

“cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter” See D&C 59:15 and its commentary. In the context of this verse, the Lord reminds the brethren that his work is serious business and should be viewed as such, though this phrase is neither a condemnation of pondering secular subjects nor a condemnation of humor. Note particularly that it is not laughter that is condemned here, but an *excess* of laughter. The issue is one of focus. Idle thoughts (empty and purposeless) and excess of laughter might indicate one has lost focus on the real purposes of life and is looking elsewhere for immediate, temporal satisfaction.

70 Tarry ye, tarry ye in this place, and call a solemn assembly, even of those who are the first laborers in this last kingdom.

verse 70 “tarry ye in this place, and call a solemn assembly” The leadership of the Church, at least as represented by those present when section 88 was received, were not to go to Missouri, but were to remain in Kirtland until the Lord prepared them for the full blessings they were yet to receive. One preparatory step would be the construction of the Kirtland Temple and the reception by some members of keys and ordinances associated with the temple (see verses 118-26). Within two weeks of receiving section 88 (on January 11, 1833), Joseph Smith wrote to the saints in Missouri informing them of the Lord’s instructions that a temple be built in Kirtland. He further clarified the promise of the Lord that the faithful would, by obedience to these instructions, be blessed with an appearance of the Lord himself (*HC*, 1:316-17; compare D&C 88:69, 75). On a later occasion, the Prophet taught the Twelve, “We must have all things prepared, and call our solemn assembly as the Lord has commanded us, that we may be able to accomplish his great work, and it must be done in God’s own way. The

house of the Lord must be prepared, and the solemn assembly called and organized in it, according to the order of the house of God; and in it we must attend to the ordinance of washing of feet. . . . The endowment you are so anxious about, you cannot comprehend now. . . . You need an endowment, brethren, in order that you may be prepared and able to overcome all things. . . . All who are prepared, and are sufficiently pure to abide the presence of the Savior will see him in the solemn assembly” (HC, 2:308-310).

Some three years following Joseph’s receiving section 88, the commandment in this verse was completed, and the Lord’s blessed promises were fulfilled. The Kirtland Temple was dedicated. Between January and May 1, 1836, a number of meetings and assemblies were held in Kirtland in which there was a remarkable outpouring of spiritual gifts. During the week of March 27, 1836, solemn assemblies were held at the temple dedication and were accompanied by a spiritual outpouring akin to that experienced by the New Testament saints on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2). According to accounts of many of those present at that dedication and other meetings during the week following, including a second dedication session, the gifts of the Spirit were manifested, and “the Savior made his appearance to some, while angels ministered to others” (HC, 2:432). Another solemn assembly was also held the following year on April 6, 1837. Elders who had not attended the earlier assembly were washed and anointed at that time (see Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 182-83).

“the first laborers in this last kingdom” This phrase likely refers to the early leadership of the restored Church in this final dispensation.

71 And let those whom they have warned in their traveling call on the Lord, and ponder the warning in their hearts which they have received, for a little season.

72 Behold, and lo, I will take care of your flocks, and will raise up elders and send unto them.

verse 72 “I will take care of your flocks” The reference here is to the converts made by traveling missionaries and to branches of the Church established in distant areas. The Lord will provide leadership (elders) according to the needs and the faithfulness of his saints.

73 Behold, I will hasten my work in its time.

verse 73 The Lord himself has a plan for the work of the restored gospel in this latter day and will do his part in this latter-day work. We don’t need to worry about how the gospel will finally be made available in this country or in that area. The Lord’s plans are already made and merely await the right time and obedient servants to carry them out.

74 And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean;

verse 74 “And I give unto you . . . a commandment” The leaders of the Church are here commanded to prepare themselves for the blessings of the temple, which will in turn prepare them to receive the fulness of his “great and last promise” (verse 75), that they will be clean and worthy of his personal appearance to them.

“cleanse your hands and your feet” This is a reference to some of the ordinances soon to be received in the temple. The brethren are to prepare themselves for the ordinances of the temple by sanctifying their own lives individually. These ordinances would in turn make it possible for the Lord to keep his promise to the faithful to appear unto them (see verses 68-69, 75).

75 That I may testify unto your Father, and your God, and my God, that you are clean from the blood of this wicked generation; that I may fulfil this promise, this great and last promise, which I have made unto you, when I will.

verse 75 “That I may testify unto your Father” The Father has committed all judgment into the hands of the Son (see John 5:22) and will accept the testimony, the advocacy, or the intercession of the Son in regard to each and every individual (see D&C 29:27-29; 45:3-5; Matthew 10:32-33; 3 Nephi 27:16).

“clean from the blood of this wicked generation” The cleansing agent is the atonement of Jesus Christ. But how do we become free from the blood and sins of this generation? Obviously it is through repentance and abiding the Lord’s commandments, but there is more. We have an obligation to preach the gospel to those who have not been warned so that their fate, should they refuse to repent, cannot be charged to our negligence. A refusal to warn the world of its eternal peril in some form of missionary service leaves members guilty, in some degree, of the blood and wickedness of their generation (see verses 81-82).

76 Also, I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.

verse 76 That is, continue in the regular practice of prayer and fasting.

verses 77-84 These verses instruct the leading elders of the Church to “teach ye diligently” other members of the Church. They originally referred to the School of the Prophets (see verses 127-138) which would prepare other leaders of the Church for their service, not just in frontier America, but throughout the world. The Lord needs informed, educated, knowledgeable, and intelligent people to lead his Church. Such qualifications are needed not to impress the world but to better serve the Lord and his

saints. To be as effective as possible in the Lord's service, church leaders and others must generally have some knowledge of the language and culture of the people whom they serve. In 1832 the instructions given here to establish a School of the Prophets were likely in part at least to prepare church leaders for the foreign missions to which they would soon be called (see verse 84). At a time before there was a Quorum of the Twelve, the Kirtland School of the Prophets served to train those likely to be called into that quorum in the future.

77 And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

verse 77 “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom” Given originally here to the leading elders of the Church, this commandment has now been extended to the whole Church. Our efforts in all our classes, lessons, and sermons should be directed at teaching the doctrine of the kingdom to those who are less knowledgeable than ourselves.

78 Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

verse 78 “and my grace shall attend you” This interesting and important phrase mentions an important principle of the gospel. It promises that if the brethren will study diligently and teach one another what they know, the grace of God will then add to what they learn, and the end result will include what was taught by man and what was mercifully added by the grace of God.

“in theory, in principle, in doctrine” See the commentary on D&C 97:14.

“the law of the gospel” This phrase is a reference to all the principles that together constitute the gospel (see also verse 123 and the commentary on D&C 104:18).

79 Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

verse 79 The Lord condones the study of science, politics, law, and foreign cultures.

80 That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.

81 Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor.

82 Therefore, they are left without excuse, and their sins are upon their own heads.

83 He that seeketh me early shall find me, and shall not be forsaken.

verse 83 “He that seeketh me early” The word *early* here implies “right away,” “in a timely fashion,” “betimes,” “without delay,” etc.

84 Therefore, tarry ye, and labor diligently, that you may be perfected in your ministry to go forth among the Gentiles for the last time, as many as the mouth of the Lord shall name, to bind up the law and seal up the testimony, and to prepare the saints for the hour of judgment which is to come;

verse 84 “to go forth among the Gentiles” The term *Gentiles* here refers to those of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, who are to receive their opportunity to hear the gospel in this dispensation (“the day of the Gentile”) of the restored gospel.

“to bind up the law and seal up the testimony” To “bind up the law” is to impose the law decreed by God upon those who are to receive it. To “seal up the testimony” is to make certain that a knowledge of the gospel and a warning of the fate that awaits the wicked have been given. Those to whom testimony has been born and to whom the law of the Lord has been revealed may then either accept or reject them. But the garments of the saints who have warned them are free of their blood and sins either way.

Joseph Smith later reflected upon this passage, saying that “when you are endowed and prepared to preach the gospel to all nations, kindred, and tongues, in their own languages, you must faithfully warn all, and bind up the testimony, and seal up the law, and the destroying angel will follow close at your heels, and exercise his tremendous mission upon the children of disobedience; and destroy the workers of iniquity, while the saints will be gathered out from among them, and stand in holy places ready to meet the Bridegroom when he comes” (*HC*, 2:309).

85 That their souls may escape the wrath of God, the desolation of abomination which awaits the wicked, both in this world and in the world to come. Verily, I say unto you, let those who are not the first elders continue in the vineyard until the mouth of the Lord shall call them, for their time is not yet come; their garments are not clean from the blood of this generation.

verse 85 “their souls” The antecedent of *their* is the Gentiles and the saints in verse 84.

“the desolation of abomination” See the commentary on D&C 84:117. This passage informs us that for those who will not repent, the desolation they experience here continues into the next life, the spirit world. For those who will not repent even in the spirit world, the abomination of total desolation continues as “outer darkness,” a place reserved for perdition that is outside the created order and is desolate of the light and power of Christ.

“let those who are not the first elders continue in the vineyard” The Lord’s vineyard is anywhere on the earth where his work is being done. Those church missionaries who were not church leaders and were in the mission field at the time this revelation was received are counseled to remain in the mission field until they are called home. Their work is not yet complete (see the commentary on verse 75).

86 Abide ye in the liberty wherewith ye are made free; entangle not yourselves in sin, but let your hands be clean, until the Lord comes.

verse 86 **“Abide ye in the liberty wherewith ye are made free”** The principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ fulfill, supersede, and render obsolete the rules of the law of Moses, just as redemption in Christ supersedes the conditions of the Fall. Therefore, knowledge of and obedience to the law of Christ set his saints free from all other requirements and considerations—including the demands of the law of Moses. This “Christian liberty” was a frequent subject of Paul’s epistles to the saints in the New Testament (see, for example, 1 Corinthians 8:8-9; 10:29; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1, 13). The apostle James spoke of the gospel as another law, “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25), by which the saints were set free from their sins that had been committed under the rules of the law of Moses (see also James 2:10-13). The law of Moses was, completely, a law of justice. The gospel of Jesus Christ includes the law of mercy whereby a man may be made free from his sins.

On the other hand, those who have been set free from sin and error through the atonement of Christ cannot use his sacrifice as an excuse to continue willfully in their sins (compare Romans 6:16). The gospel frees us from sin. It does not sustain us in the continued pursuit of sin. The liberty of the gospel frees us from sin. It does not free us to sin.

The term *abide* is important here as descriptive of our loyalty. Granted that we are all imperfect in our performance. We must “abide” in Christ, giving him our loyalty, while making occasional mistakes. We must not “abide” in anything else. We must not bestow upon any other thing our ultimate loyalty.

Eschatological Materials (verses 87-116)

This large segment of section 88 bears a striking similarity to chapters 7 through 22 of the book of Revelation. It is a prophecy of destruction and calamity but also a message of hope. It is, as with all revealed scripture, an assurance that in the end,

righteousness will triumph over evil; Christ over the devil; the saints over their oppressors. Ultimate victory will come through the Lord Jesus Christ. Parallel passages to these verses may also be seen in D&C 29:14; 43:18-25; 45:26, 42, 48; and 133:22, 49. See also the commentary for these verses. See also Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15-16; Matthew 24:29-31; JS-M 1:23-37; Revelation 11:13. Doctrine and Covenants 133, received before section 88, explains that the sun and moon shall hide their light and the stars be hurled from their places out of shame when confronted by the incomparable glory of the Lord's presence (see D&C 133:49). See, again, the chapters on the Signs of the Lord's Second Coming in volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. See chapter 24, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Introduction*, chapter 25, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Those that Warn*, and chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

87 For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man; and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light; and the moon shall be bathed in blood; and the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig-tree.

88 And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people.

89 For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.

90 And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

91 And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people.

verse 91 "men's hearts shall fail them" People will become disheartened; there will be widespread despair, discouragement, despondency, and depression.

verses 87-91 These signs will occur in the seventh seal. The Lord tells his latter-day servants that after they have carried the message of the gospel to the world, then will come the testimony of nature that his coming is nigh. Certainly we may assume that as of today, mankind's chance for repentance is rapidly coming to a close. God has tried every means to reclaim them, but they have not heard. Now comes heaven's response to the cry of the earth itself: "Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face?" (Moses 7:48). The answer is "now," for judgment has commenced.

92 And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying: Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come. Behold, and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

verse 92 “angels shall fly through the midst of heaven . . . sounding the trump of God” It may well be that this verse describes collectively the activity of all the angels or messengers of God from the restoration to the Lord’s second coming, including the seven angels whose activities will be summarized in verses 94-106. According to Smith and Sjodahl, “These angels are mighty men of God, messengers of the Almighty, who shall call upon the inhabitants of the earth to prepare themselves for the coming of the Bridegroom. Moroni was such an angel [Revelation 14:6-7]” (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 560).

“for the judgment of our God is come” See the account of the testimony of the final seven angels in verses 94-107.

“Low, the Bridegroom cometh” The second coming of Jesus Christ will fulfill the prophecy implicit in the parable of the ten virgins (see Matthew 25:1-13; see also D&C 33:17-18; 65:3-5).

93 And immediately there shall appear a great sign in heaven, and all people shall see it together.

verse 93 “a great sign in heaven” Orson Pratt taught: “After the angels have sounded the trump in the ears of all living (verse 92), we are informed that there will be a great sign in the heavens. It is not to be limited so that only a few of the human family can see it; but it is said, ‘all people shall see it together!’ At least, it is to be like our sun seen over one entire side of the globe, and then passing immediately round to the other, or else it will encircle the whole earth at the same time.” This sign is most often referred to as “the sign of the coming of the Son of Man” or the “sign of the Son of Man in heaven” (JS-T Matthew 24:32-37). This sign occurs at the time of the Lord’s coming in glory.

It is difficult to say exactly what this sign will be. In commenting upon this passage, the prophet Joseph Smith said: “There will be wars and rumors of wars, signs in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. . . . Then will appear one grand sign of the Son of Man in heaven. But what will the world do? They will say it is a planet, a comet, etc. But the Son of Man will come as the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, which will be as the light of the morning coming out of the east” (*TPJS*, 286-87). It will not be recognized by the world for what it is. Rather, the world will conclude that “it is a planet, a comet, etc” (*Ibid.*).

It has been suggested: Could such a dramatic occasion be the re-appearance of the City of Enoch? According to Wandle Mace, this was what Joseph Smith taught (see Sayings of Joseph Smith in “Joseph Smith Papers,” Church Historian’s Library, Salt

Lake City, Utah.) Other suggestions have included the idea that it could be the approach to earth of the Son himself accompanied by his entourage.

verses 94-107 These verses provide us an account of the seven angels that will sound the final warning, by blowing their trumpets, prior to the Lord's second coming (see D&C 77:12; 29:13 and the commentary for these verses). The blowing of these trumpets announces the return of the risen Lord and the beginning of his judgment. As each of the seven blasts is heard, a different category of people is addressed, from the celestial at the first trump (verses 96-98), to the terrestrial (verse 99), the telestial (verses 100-101), and perdition (verse 102). Then Zion is established (see verses 103-104), Babylon falls (see verses 105; see also Revelation 8:2-11, 15), and the saints receive their inheritances (verses 106-107).

A second series of trumpet blasts (see verses 108-10) will herald a review of earth's history and announce the finishing of God's millennial works. These passages agree with D&C 77:12, which states that the two series of blasts mark (1) the preparing and (2) the finishing of the Lord's work, respectively ("the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and the finishing of his work.")

94 And another angel shall sound his trump, saying: That great church, the mother of abominations, that made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, that persecuteth the saints of God, that shed their blood—she who sitteth upon many waters, and upon the islands of the sea—behold, she is the tares of the earth; she is bound in bundles; her bands are made strong, no man can loose them; therefore, she is ready to be burned. And he shall sound his trump both long and loud, and all nations shall hear it.

verse 94 "another angel shall sound his trump" This is not the first of the many angels of God to come to assist with the restoration of the gospel, for there have been many. Rather, this trump is the first of the series of trumpet blasts associated specifically with the end time, the final warning. This sounding of the first trumpet heralds the destruction of the great and abominable church. The sounding of this first trump also brings about the resurrection of the celestial dead and the raising up of the celestial living to meet the Lord in the air (see verses 96-98; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

"That great church, the mother of abominations" This is the great and abominable church described in 1 Nephi 13. It is not a particular church or religious philosophy, but rather it is all influence in the earth that opposes the truth of the living God. It is all that is of the telestial nature upon the earth (see 1 Nephi 22:23; 2 Nephi 10:16).

"that made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" See D&C 35:11 and its commentary.

95 And there shall be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour; and immediately after shall the curtain of heaven be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled;

verse 95 “silence in heaven” Orson Pratt also taught: “Immediately after the sounding of this trump [verse 94], there will be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. Whether the half hour here spoken is according to our reckoning—thirty minutes—or whether it be according to the reckoning of the Lord we do not know. We know the word ‘hour’ is used in some portion of the scriptures to represent quite a lengthy period of time. For instance, we the latter-day saints are living in the eleventh hour, that the eleventh period of time and for aught we know the half hour during which silence is to prevail in heaven may be quite an extensive period of time. . . . During the period of silence all things are perfectly still; no angels flying during that half hour; no trumpets sounding; no noise in the heaven above; but immediately after this great silence the curtain of heaven shall be unfolded as a scroll is unfolded . . . so that the people may gaze upon those celestial beings who will make their appearance in the clouds” (*JD*, 16:328).

“immediately after shall the curtain of heaven be unfolded” A curtain is a veil, and it is possible to understand this passage to mean that the veil which separates this world from the direct presence of Christ the Creator will be removed. Certainly, there will be no more shade in which evil may work. When this curtain or veil is drawn, all things celestial, including the great and abominable church and its works, will be burned by the glory of the presence of Christ (see D&C 29:9 and its commentary). We do not know at this time what the veil or curtain of heaven consists of or how it actually works physically. We only know that what separates us now from the presence of the resurrected Christ will be removed, and a new terrestrial reality will express itself, as though a curtain had suddenly been drawn aside or a scroll had been unfolded before our eyes.

96 And the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet him.

verses 97-102 These verses summarize the sequence of the resurrection. The reader may wish to review the sequence of the resurrection in the introductory commentary for Alma 40:16-20.

97 And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth, for their graves shall be opened; and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven—

verses 96-97 “the saints that are upon the earth . . . And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth” This is the phenomenon to which other

churches have given the name “the rapture” (from the Greek word for being “grabbed” or “caught up”). At his second coming, the Lord Jesus will raise off of the earth those who are to receive celestial glory—the ultimate “gathering” of the saints. Also the righteous dead will be resurrected and caught up to meet the returning Christ. The apostle Paul states that the dead in Christ shall be resurrected first; then the living saints will be raised up (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). During this time, the earth will be cleansed by fire, purified, and raised to a terrestrial glory.

98 They are Christ’s, the first fruits, they who shall descend with him first, and they who are on the earth and in their graves, who are first caught up to meet him; and all this by the voice of the sounding of the trump of the angel of God.

verse 98 “They are Christ’s, the first fruits” These are the first to be resurrected, those who come forth with celestial bodies, the Church of the First Born. They come forth in the “morning of the first resurrection.” These celestial individuals are those who already belong to Christ through the gospel covenant before his coming to the earth. These are the saints who have already accepted the fulness of the gospel and been redeemed from the devil in this life—and those who would have accepted it in this life if only they had had the opportunity (see D&C 137:5-9).

99 And after this another angel shall sound, which is the second trump; and then cometh the redemption of those who are Christ’s at his coming; who have received their part in that prison which is prepared for them, that they might receive the gospel, and be judged according to men in the flesh.

verse 99 “Christ’s at his coming” The sounding of the second trumpet announces the judgment and resurrection of the rest of the just, those of a terrestrial glory. Hence, these will be resurrected with terrestrial bodies. Note that they also come forth in the first resurrection—what we might call the afternoon of the first resurrection. These people will also belong to Christ, but they refused the fulness of the gospel, the celestial law. These are good people, but they allowed themselves to be deceived throughout their probation, largely because they were not comfortable with the celestial law. These will not be redeemed or resurrected until after Christ comes—during the Millennium. The celestial saints belong to Christ from the moment of their entrance into his covenant, Church, and kingdom, which is prior to his second coming. The terrestrial, on the other hand, though they are ultimately numbered among the just and will also belong to Christ, will belong to him only after their redemption during the Millennium—“at his coming.”

100 And again, another trump shall sound, which is the third trump; and then come the spirits of men who are to be judged, and are found under condemnation;

verse 100 “the spirits of men who are . . . found under condemnation”

Those “found under condemnation” are those who will rise after the millennial thousand years and will find themselves with telestial bodies. They come forth in the second resurrection.

101 And these are the rest of the dead; and they live not again until the thousand years are ended, neither again, until the end of the earth.

verse 101 “these are the rest of the dead” Those remaining following the first resurrection (the resurrection of the celestials and the terrestrials) include mostly those who will be resurrected with telestial glory and a very few who will be resurrected with no glory. The former group comprises the vast majority of those to be resurrected in the second resurrection.

“they live not again until the thousand years are ended” To “live again” here is to be resurrected. This expression, then, simply means that the telestials will not be resurrected until after the Millennium.

102 And another trump shall sound, which is the fourth trump, saying: There are found among those who are to remain until that great and last day, even the end, who shall remain filthy still.

verse 102 The fourth trump announces the resurrection of those who steadfastly refuse to repent—those “who shall remain filthy still.” These are the sons of Perdition who will inherit bodies and a kingdom void of glory. They also rise in the second resurrection, following the resurrection of the telestials.

103 And another trump shall sound, which is the fifth trump, which is the fifth angel who committeth the everlasting gospel—flying through the midst of heaven, unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people;

104 And this shall be the sound of his trump, saying to all people, both in heaven and in earth, and that are under the earth—for every ear shall hear it, and every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess, while they hear the sound of the trump, saying: Fear God, and give glory to him who sitteth upon the throne, forever and ever; for the hour of his judgment is come.

verses 103-104 “the fifth angel . . . flying through the midst of heaven”

This language is usually associated with the angel Moroni and his work in the restoration of restoration, particularly with the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon. But these verses do not likely refer to Moroni, as Moroni is one of the many angels who figuratively sound the trump of God before these seven angels and seven trumpets of the end time enumerated here (see the commentary for verses 94-107). Here the fifth angel and fifth trump announce the victory of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, for the wicked will have been destroyed and removed, the earth will be cleansed, and

the remaining mortals, both celestial and terrestrial, will belong to Christ. Therefore, every knee that remains upon the earth will bow before him and every tongue will confess that he is the Lord Jesus Christ.

This does not mean that everyone upon the earth at the beginning of the Millennium will accept the fulness of the gospel and its ordinances, however. Other Christian churches will remain upon the earth during the millennial period. All human beings will be just. All will belong to Christ. But not all will accept the fulness of his gospel and its ordinances in order to receive “the fulness of the Father” (D&C 76:77). Thus, there will be both celestial and terrestrial beings upon the earth during the Millennium.

105 And again, another angel shall sound his trump, which is the sixth angel, saying: She is fallen who made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication; she is fallen, is fallen!

verse 105 “the sixth angel” The sixth trump announces the total destruction of Babylon. With the destruction of the wicked at the Lord’s coming, Babylon will have no more inhabitants. Babylon, the great and abominable church, is telestial at its best (see D&C 133:5, 14), and after the coming of the Savior to the earth, nothing telestial will remain here. Babylon will truly and utterly be fallen.

106 And again, another angel shall sound his trump, which is the seventh angel, saying: It is finished; it is finished! The Lamb of God hath overcome and trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

verse 106 “the seventh angel . . . it is finished” In scriptural symbolism, the number seven often stands for completion or perfection. Thus, the sounding of the seventh trumpet announces the complete victory of Jesus over his enemies and the completion or perfection of his work: “It is finished!”

“trodden the wine-press alone” See D&C 76:107 and its commentary.

107 And then shall the angels be crowned with the glory of his might, and the saints shall be filled with his glory, and receive their inheritance and be made equal with him.

verse 107 “and be made equal with him” The celestial law of consecration requires that we be willing to sacrifice all that we have in order to be equal one with another and that there be no poor among us. Will Jesus Christ obey the law of consecration? Yes, just as he has obeyed all other laws of the kingdom of God. And what will Jesus’s sacrifice and consecration be? It will be his perfection, his righteousness, his glory, and the supreme gift of his atoning sacrifice! As we are willing to be made equal with one another, for better or worse, in temporal things in obedience

to the celestial law, so Christ is willing to be made equal with us in all things in obedience to the same celestial law. It is not blasphemy to assert that we shall in some sense become equal with the Savior in the celestial kingdom. Rather, it is a tribute to his perfect righteousness, obedience, and love for us. It is a measure of his perfect grace that he desires to share all things equally with us, and it is a tribute to his power that he can accomplish this if we are willing. Thus, through his gospel and his grace, we can truly become “joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17).

It is common for some to think of the Church as a collection of individuals all competing with one another for greater or lesser eternal rewards or glory. Perhaps the clear teachings of the law of consecration, the concept of Zion, and the promise of this verse ought to give us pause before accepting such a highly competitive view of the eternities. There, certainly the “abundance mentality” prevails, and will be absolutely no need for the “scarcity mentality.”

verses 108-110 A second series of seven soundings of the trumpet will mark the completion of Christ’s works and herald a review of the true history of the world from the beginning to the end. This revelation will announce to all what really happened historically, including all previously unknown plans, intents, and acts of human beings and all the workings of God throughout the dispensations of time.

108 And then shall the first angel again sound his trump in the ears of all living, and reveal the secret acts of men, and the mighty works of God in the first thousand years.

109 And then shall the second angel sound his trump, and reveal the secret acts of men, and the thoughts and intents of their hearts, and the mighty works of God in the second thousand years—

110 And so on, until the seventh angel shall sound his trump; and he shall stand forth upon the land and upon the sea, and swear in the name of him who sitteth upon the throne, that there shall be time no longer; and Satan shall be bound, that old serpent, who is called the devil, and shall not be loosed for the space of a thousand years.

verse 110 “there shall be time no longer” See verse 44 and D&C 84:100 and their commentaries. Here the word *time* is used as a synonym for mortality. This phrase certainly does not mean that time will no longer be reckoned, since the following period of a thousand years can still be measured by some kind of temporal reckoning. Just as time runs out at the end of a basketball game and there is no more time, so here the sense is that the time allotted to this world for probation and change will have run out.

“Satan shall be bound . . . and shall not be loosed for the space of a thousand years” There has long been a controversy as to whether this binding of

Satan is caused by the righteousness of the people and thus their failure to respond to Satan's promptings or whether it is due to some act of God in which God is able to place limits on the agency of Satan during the Millennium. Perhaps this argument has not been settled, but please see 1 Nephi 22:26 and its commentary which argues that both points of view may have some validity.

111 And then he shall be loosed for a little season, that he may gather together his armies.

112 And Michael, the seventh angel, even the archangel, shall gather together his armies, even the hosts of heaven.

113 And the devil shall gather together his armies; even the hosts of hell, and shall come up to battle against Michael and his armies.

114 And then cometh the battle of the great God; and the devil and his armies shall be cast away into their own place, that they shall not have power over the saints any more at all.

115 For Michael shall fight their battles, and shall overcome him who seeketh the throne of him who sitteth upon the throne, even the Lamb.

verses 111-115 “he shall be loosed for a little season” After the thousand years are ended, “and men again begin to deny their God” (D&C 29:22), Satan will be loosed again “for a little season” (D&C 29:22) to gather his resources and take his last best shot at overthrowing the kingdom of God. His forces will consist solely of those who choose perdition, for all others will by this time have bent their knees, confessed Christ, and been resurrected with some degree of glory. Then Michael, who is Adam, and the forces of God will battle Satan and his followers. Just as there was war in heaven at the creation of the earth (Revelation 12:7-9), so there will be a final cosmic conflict at its end involving both spiritual and physical beings. At least, through the power of Christ, Michael, the same who fell in the beginning, will utterly defeat his old enemy, the serpent, in eternity. This final battle is sometimes referred to in scripture as the battle of Gog and Magog (see, for example, Revelation 20:7-9).

116 This is the glory of God, and the sanctified; and they shall not any more see death.

verse 116 “and they shall not any more see death” With the resurrection of all who have ever lived, including the wicked at the end of the Millennium, and with the banishment of Satan and his followers, those who remain, redeemed in some degree of glory, will never experience death again, neither in themselves nor among their associates. Truly, the final resurrection and the final victory over Satan constitute the death of death, for those who have been resurrected can never again be separated from their bodies (see Alma 11:45; 12:18).

Instructions on Organizing the School of Prophets (verses 117-141)

In the remaining verses of the revelation, the Lord outlines the procedure for the School of the Prophets. This school was the forerunner of all formal educational efforts by the Church. It was actually a seminary for missionaries and church leaders. Section 88 provides instructions concerning the curriculum, the operation of the school, the student body, and the blessings to be derived from complying with the commandment. We are taught that knowledge, wisdom, books, learning, faith, prayer, and fasting are all closely associated. Learning and wisdom are not solely intellectual pursuits but are linked with faith, prayer, and fasting. The School of the Prophets thus presents the highest and best ideal in education. In order for mortal men and women to be able to learn essential truths, there must be a certain mind set and spiritual preparation. Not only is intellectual attainment related to spiritual preparation, but also it is inseparably connected with physical preparation and characteristics as well. Thus the instructions are given that those who were to participate in the school were to cease from lightmindedness, loud laughter, pride, lustful desires, covetousness, idleness, uncleanness, fault finding, and excessive sleep. In addition, they were to practice diligence, study, faith, prayer, love for one another, charity, and were to retire to bed early and arise early.

The School of the Prophets was officially organized in January 1833. Fourteen individuals, twelve high priests and two elders, attended. Orson Pratt was admitted to the school a few weeks later.

Although most rules governing the actions of those who attended the school were gospel principles which all of the saints were expected to follow, some policies of the school marked it as a distinct educational experience. The students frequently gathered at sunrise in the spirit of fasting and prayer. The teacher preceded the students into the classroom and, after offering a personal prayer, admitted others into the room. When the students had gathered, the instructor saluted them with uplifted hands (see verse 120) and cited an oath that had been received by revelation (see verse 133). The students repeated this oath, which included a promise that they were keeping all the commandments of God. The classes often continued until about four o'clock in the afternoon. The students usually fasted during the day and broke their fast before leaving for home by partaking of the sacrament together, eating some bread, and drinking a glass of wine, in harmony with the pattern practiced by Jesus and his disciples.

Another unusual aspect of the school was that members were admitted only after participating in the ordinance of washing of feet. On January 23, 1833, a select group of elders assembled in Kirtland, and "after much speaking, singing, praying and praising God, all in tongues," they followed the procedure outlined in the thirteenth chapter of John's Gospel and participated in this sacred ordinance of washing of feet. According to Joseph Smith, "Each elder washed his own feet first, after which I girded myself with

a towel and washed the feet of all of them.” Before washing the feet of his father, the Prophet requested and received a father’s blessing. Frederick G. Williams washed Joseph’s feet, after which the Prophet pronounced the elders “clean from the blood of this generation” (*HC*, 1:323).

Two months after the school was organized, the Prophet instructed the students to prepare themselves for a day of “revelation and vision.” After the students gathered at sunrise, Joseph counseled them to prepare their minds, for “the pure in heart should see a heavenly vision.” For a brief period, the elders offered personal prayers. Then a powerful spiritual experience occurred. According to minutes kept by Frederick G. Williams, which were later included in the *History of the Church*, “Many of the brethren saw a heavenly vision of the Savior, and concourses of angels, and many other things, of which each one has a record of what he saw” (*HC*, 1:334-35).

This initial School of the Prophets met until April of 1833 and likely never had more than about twenty-five members. It was closely linked to the teachings and ordinances of the temple and was designed to train and prepare future apostles (see D&C 95:17). It is largely this school to which the guidelines of verses 127-141 applied. The participants in this first School of the Prophets studied secular subjects at times but spent a much greater proportion of time studying the scriptures and doctrines of the kingdom. This original apostolic school was open only to the first elders of the Church who were worthy according to the specifications given in this revelation. Subsequent schools were open to a larger number of church leaders who studied the regular curriculum of secular schools of the day as well as church doctrine.

During the winter of 1834-35, one year after the initial school had been organized, the Church organized the School of the Elders which replaced the School of the Prophets. Although Joseph Smith sometimes referred to this new school as the School of the Prophets, there is no evidence that members of the priesthood involved in it participated in the foot-washing ordinance. As with the School of the Prophets, a major purpose of this institution was to train the men who were enrolled to be more effective missionaries and ministers of the gospel. This school was initially held in a thirty by thirty-eight foot room below the printing shop in a building on the lot west of the temple.

Those who attended the school studied such subjects as English grammar, writing, philosophy, government, literature, geography, and ancient and modern history. Although the students explored a variety of disciplines, religious topics received the main emphasis. Under the date of December 1, 1834, the Prophet recorded that the school was well attended, and lectures on theology were delivered regularly. He also recorded that the school absorbed nearly all the time of the students (*HC*, 2:175-76). It was in the School of the Elders that the excellent lessons known as the seven Lectures on Faith were taught.

After the Kirtland Temple was completed in 1836, the School of the Elders was reorganized, again under the name School of the Prophets. Within the walls of the temple, the students participated again in the ordinance of washing of feet, partook of the sacrament, received counsel from the Prophet, and many went forth to serve as missionaries of the Church.

A similar school was held in Missouri for a short time. Parley P. Pratt taught the school in Jackson County. He reported that class membership was about sixty and that he had to travel on foot about six miles each week to reach the class.

The school was eventually discontinued in Kirtland and in Missouri and revived again in the west. The school still exists today but is limited to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. The ordinance of washing of feet is still practiced among these brethren.

Some have suggested that the priesthood meeting today has actually evolved from the School of the Prophets.

117 Therefore, verily I say unto you, my friends, call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you.

verse 117 “call your solemn assembly” The Lord repeats the command he gave in verse 70—see that verse and its commentary.

118 And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.

verse 118 “seek ye out of the best books” The Lord encourages his leaders to seek out the best of human wisdom from the best sources available to them in preparation for their church service. The LDS tradition is certainly not anti-intellectual, as some Christian denominations have been, but rather it encourages secular education. While it would be foolish to put more trust in human reason than in the word of the Lord, “to be learned is good if hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:28-29). President Ezra Taft Benson wrote: “While the gospel includes the more crucial saving truths contained within theology, it also embraces truth in other branches of learning” (*Ensign*, September 1988, 5).

119 Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;

verse 119 This verse is the Lord’s command to the saints to build a temple in Kirtland. This same verse will be repeated during the dedication of the Kirtland temple (see D&C 109:8). As we will learn in section 95, the saints initially ignored this directive from the Lord. Note the intimate association of this verse with the Lord’s instructions for

the School of the Prophets. There is a close association because as soon as the temple in Kirtland is completed, the School of the Prophets is to be held in the House of God. Also evidence shows that the Prophet initially perceived the primary function of the temple to be that of a schoolhouse for those called to the ministry.

Eventually, after the Lord called his saints to repentance (D&C 95:1-3), construction on the temple in Kirtland was begun in 1833 and was completed in the spring of 1836.

“establish . . . a house of God” Note that the command given the saints was not merely to build an important church edifice. Rather it was to establish a house of God. To “establish” means to secure or to set on a firm foundation. They were not just to build. They were to establish, and it takes more to establish a temple than merely to build the building. It takes righteous people to make use of the house of God in all the way listed in verse 119. The term *house* denotes a family dwelling. Establishing the household or the exalted family of God is the very heart and soul of what temples are about.

120 That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord; that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord; that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High.

verse 120 “with uplifted hands unto the Most High” The ancient pattern of Jewish prayer was not on the knees with hands or arms folded, but standing, with the hands lifted to heaven (see Psalm 44:20; 88:9; Isaiah 1:15; Romans 10:21). This is also, approximately, the position of a body on a cross and may be the symbol or type behind Moses on the hill with uplifted hands and a man supporting his arms on either side of him winning victory for Israel at Rephidim (see Exodus 17:10-12).

121 Therefore, cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings.

verse 121 “cease . . . from all laughter” In D&C 59:15, the command was that we not have “much laughter.” In D&C 88:69 we are told not to have an “excess of laughter.” Yet in this verse the wording is “all laughter.” Does this mean we are not to laugh at all? No, for the context is different in each case. Section 88 counsels us to avoid “an excess of laughter” in our daily lives. Section 59 counsels us to avoid “much laughter” on the Sabbath day, and this verse counsels avoiding “all laughter” while engaged in the solemn activities of the School of the Prophets and the temple.

Elder Joseph F. Smith once observed: “I believe that it is necessary for the saints to have amusement, but it must be of the proper kind. I do not believe the Lord intends and desires that we should pull a long face and look sanctimonious and hypocritical. I think he expects us to be happy and of a cheerful countenance, but he

does not expect of us the indulgence in boisterous and unseemly conduct and the seeking after the vain and foolish things which amuse and entertain the world” (*CR*, October 1916, 70).

122 Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege.

verse 122 “let one speak at a time” See 1 Corinthians 14:29-31.

123 See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires.

verse 123 “See that ye love one another” This is obviously an oft-repeated commandment of the Lord (see John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17). This command is the “royal law” of James 2:8 and “the more excellent way” of 1 Corinthians 12:31.

“learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires” See D&C 104:18 and its commentary.

124 Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.

verse 124 “cease to sleep longer than is needful” Time is a stewardship; and excessive lying in bed is a sin. This phrase obviously also implies that appropriate sleep is “needful.”

“arise early” Elder Russell M. Nelson has suggested that “those who feel defeated and downtrodden, look to the early hours of the day for your rescue. . . . The dawning of a brighter day heralds a time of forgiveness. Shadows of yesterday’s grief melt in the rays of early morn’s opportunity” (*CR*, October 1986, 88).

125 And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.

126 Pray always, that ye may not faint, until I come. Behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen.

verse 126 “Pray always” See D&C 10:5 and its commentary.

“I will come quickly” See D&C 33:18 and its commentary.

verses 127-137 With verse 126 of section 88 the original revelation of December 27, 1832 is concluded. The portion from verses 127 through 137 was added on January 3, 1833, and one notices a change in the literary style in this second part. It is equally inspired and informative but seems less poetic and more prosaic.

127 And again, the order of the house prepared for the presidency of the school of the prophets, established for their instruction in all things that are expedient for them, even for all the officers of the church, or in other words, those who are called to the ministry in the church, beginning at the high priests, even down to the deacons—

128 And this shall be the order of the house of the presidency of the school: He that is appointed to be president, or teacher, shall be found standing in his place, in the house which shall be prepared for him.

129 Therefore, he shall be first in the house of God, in a place that the congregation in the house may hear his words carefully and distinctly, not with loud speech.

verse 129 “he shall be first in the house of God” The teacher who presided over each session of the school was to arrive at the classroom first and was to greet class members as they arrived, according to the salutation revealed in verse 133. Note that it was intended that the School of the Prophets would eventually meet in the Kirtland Temple, although most of its meetings were actually held in a room over Newel K. Whitney’s store adjacent to the rooms in which Joseph and Emma Smith then resided.

130 And when he cometh into the house of God, for he should be first in the house—behold, this is beautiful, that he may be an example—

131 Let him offer himself in prayer upon his knees before God, in token or remembrance of the everlasting covenant.

132 And when any shall come in after him, let the teacher arise, and, with uplifted hands to heaven, yea, even directly, salute his brother or brethren with these words:

133 Art thou a brother or brethren? I salute you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in token or remembrance of the everlasting covenant, in which covenant I receive you to fellowship, in a determination that is fixed, immovable, and unchangeable, to be your friend and brother through the grace of God in the bonds of love, to walk in all the commandments of God blameless, in thanksgiving, forever and ever. Amen.

verse 133 This revealed salutation conveys a warm spirit of friendship, indeed a covenant of brotherhood, which ought to prevail in the covenant brotherhood of the priesthood and in the brotherhood and sisterhood of the Lord’s earthly kingdom.

134 And he that is found unworthy of this salutation shall not have place among you; for ye shall not suffer that mine house shall be polluted by him.

verse 134 “he that is found unworthy of this salutation” This first School of the Prophets required a level of righteousness consistent with the fellowship of the temple. Should an individual not be worthy of the salutation described in verse 133, he would be unworthy of entry into the school just as much as he would be unworthy to enter into the temple if it had then been completed and dedicated.

135 And he that cometh in and is faithful before me, and is a brother, or if they be brethren, they shall salute the president or teacher with uplifted hands to heaven, with this same prayer and covenant, or by saying Amen, in token of the same.

136 Behold, verily, I say unto you, this is an ensample unto you for a salutation to one another in the house of God, in the school of the prophets.

137 And ye are called to do this by prayer and thanksgiving, as the Spirit shall give utterance in all your doings in the house of the Lord, in the school of the prophets, that it may become a sanctuary, a tabernacle of the Holy Spirit to your edification.

138 And ye shall not receive any among you into this school save he is clean from the blood of this generation;

verse 138 “clean from the blood of this generation” See the commentary on verses 75 and 85. In the setting of this first School of the Prophets, the ordinance of washing of the feet signified, among other things, that an individual had performed his duty to call the world to repentance and warn of the wrath to come and was therefore clean of the blood of this generation.

139 And he shall be received by the ordinance of the washing of feet, for unto this end was the ordinance of the washing of feet instituted.

verse 139 “the ordinance of the washing of feet” In the institution of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, Jesus took an existing practice of the law of Moses and gave it a new, fuller meaning in the context of the gospel covenant. Jesus did the same thing with the Jewish custom under the law of Moses of washing the feet (see JST John 13:10; see also Genesis 24:32; Luke 7:44). The ancient priests were required, not by custom but by the law, to wash their feet before entering the temple and participating in its ordinances (see Exodus 30:18-21; 40:30-31).

One change instituted by Jesus in the washing of feet was that Jesus himself, in an act of humility and service, washed the feet of the disciples, rather than allowing them to wash their own feet. Joseph Smith described the washing of feet that occurred on January 23, 1833, as recorded in the *History of the Church*, 1:323: “We again assembled in conference; when, after much speaking, singing, praying, and praising God, all in tongues, we proceeded to the washing of feet (according to the practice recorded in the 13th chapter of John’s Gospel), as commanded of the Lord. Each elder washed his own feet first, after which I girded myself with a towel and washed the feet

of all of them, wiping them with the towel with which I was girded. Among the number, my father presented himself, but before I washed his feet, I asked of him a father's blessing, which he granted by laying his hands upon my head, in the name of Jesus Christ, and declaring that I should continue in the Priest's office until Christ comes. At the close of the scene, Brother Frederick G. Williams, being moved upon by the Holy Ghost, washed my feet in token of his fixed determination to be with me in suffering or in journeying, in life or in death, and to be continually on my right hand; in which I accepted him in the name of the Lord."

Although various washings continued in the restored Church, the practice described in verses 139-141 was limited at that time to the first elders of the Church who were being trained and disciplined for leadership in the first School of the Prophets. The initiatory washing of feet and the salutation (verses 133) were not practiced in the subsequent schools in Kirtland or in Missouri, which were open to a broader number of the saints. After the Kirtland Temple was completed, the practices described in verses 139-141 were continued by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, the successors to the original School of the Prophets. These practices continue even today among the First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve.

140 And again, the ordinance of washing feet is to be administered by the president, or presiding elder of the church.

141 It is to be commenced with prayer; and after partaking of bread and wine, he is to gird himself according to the pattern given in the thirteenth chapter of John's testimony concerning me. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1833 February

As the brethren assembled in the School of the Prophets and discussed things of the Kingdom, they also smoked their pipes, chewed their tobacco, and spat all over the floor. Joseph and Emma lived in the same building, and it was Emma's responsibility to clean the filthy floor each evening after the school had adjourned. Emma doubtless wondered aloud in Joseph's presence about the appropriateness of so vile a habit as smoking and chewing tobacco. Perhaps partly as a result of Emma's encouragement, Joseph inquired of the Lord and was given a health law for the good of the saints [**D&C 89 - The Word of Wisdom**].

Section 89 The Word of Wisdom

Since September 1832, after moving from the Johnson farm in Hiram, Ohio, Joseph and Emma had been living in quarters above Newel K. Whitney's store in Kirtland. Their first child to survive infancy, Joseph Smith III, was born there on November 6, 1832, the day the Prophet returned from a short mission to the East with Bishop Whitney. Above Emma's kitchen, located on the ground floor, Levi Hancock had created a small schoolroom by remodeling a former porch.

The only comment made by Joseph on February 27, 1833, when the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom was received, was: "I received the following revelation." Section 89 was the first revelation received after the organization of the School of the Prophets. Brigham Young was later to comment on the events that led to Joseph's inquiry which resulted in this revelation. Although he was not a member of the School of the Prophets in 1833, and was not present on the day the Word of Wisdom was actually received, he was a member of the 1835 school and was familiar with conditions at the earlier meetings which he described as follows:

I think I am as well acquainted with the circumstances which led to the giving of the Word of Wisdom as any man in the Church, although I was not present at the time to witness them. The first School of the Prophets was held in a small room situated over the Prophet Joseph's kitchen in a house which belonged to Bishop Whitney, and which was attached to his store, which store might probably be about fifteen feet square. In the rear of this building was a kitchen, probably ten by fourteen feet, containing rooms and pantries. Over this kitchen was situated the room in which the Prophet received revelations and in which he instructed his brethren. The brethren came to that place from hundreds of miles to attend school in a little room probably no larger than eleven by fourteen [which served as a meeting place for the School of the Prophets between January and April 1833]. When they assembled together in this room after breakfast, the first thing they did was to light their pipes, and while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom, and spit all over the room, and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken. Often when the Prophet entered the room to give the school instructions he would find himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean so filthy a floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter, and he inquired of the Lord relating to the conduct of the elders in using tobacco, and the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom was the result of his inquiry (*JD*, 12:158).

David Whitmer reported that the revelation was received under somewhat different circumstances. He said:

Quite a little party of the brethren and sisters were assembled in the Smiths' house. Some of the men were excessive chewers of the filthy weed, and their

disgusting slobbering and spitting caused Mrs. Smith . . . to make the ironical remark that “It would be a good thing if a revelation could be had declaring the use of tobacco a sin, and commanding its suppression.” The matter was taken up and joked about, one of the brethren suggested that the revelation should also provide for a total abstinence from tea and coffee drinking, intending this as a counter dig at the sisters. Sure enough, the subject was afterward taken up in dead earnest, and the “Word of Wisdom” was the result (*Des Moines Daily News* [Des Moines, Iowa], October 16, 1886).

In February of 1833, many members of the Church used tobacco, drank hard liquor, and regularly partook of tea and coffee. Indeed, of the twenty-two men who were charter members of the School of the Prophets, only two of them never used tobacco in any form. You might well imagine that the room in which the School of the Prophets met was more like a pool hall than a room of religious study—with twenty men spitting or smoking. One might also well imagine that Emma had more than a little to do with pressuring Joseph to inquire of the Lord concerning this matter since it was she who had to clean up the room after the brethren left.

February 1833 was also a time when the temperance crusade was rapidly gaining momentum in various parts of the United States, including Ohio. The American Temperance Society was formed in 1826. By 1831 there were more than two thousand local temperance societies in the United States, with over 150,000 members nationally. Thirty of these societies were located in Ohio, with the largest in Kirtland, where virtually all the Christian churches supported the temperance movement. Merely two years later, in 1833, there were five thousand local temperance societies nationally with a combined membership of one and one quarter million persons. It is interesting to note that on February 1, 1833, the Kirtland Temperance Society marched upon and tore down the distillery in Kirtland and two more in nearby Mentor. Many reformers of the period taught their own health laws. Some critics of the Church have suggested that Joseph created this revelation (and indeed many other revelations) simply by copying from his contemporaries. Again we see the nature of revelation. Just as the Spirit of the Lord had prepared the ground for the restoration in so many other ways, it was also preparing the ground for a remarkable change in American frontier culture. The soil was ready for planting. Section 89 was revealed when circumstances had set the stage and when pressures dictated a need. Even though this revelation was received in a smoke screen (no pun intended) of many other similar sounding health codes, this one was of divine origin and has certainly stood the test of time and scientific scrutiny.

Reports from others who were present at the School of the Prophets on February 27, 1833, indicate that Joseph received the revelation (section 89) on that date in the presence of two or three others, in an adjoining room in which the Prophet received revelations, and then brought the written revelation into the room where the School of the Prophets first met to present to all twenty-two of the brethren in attendance.

Section 89 was published as section 80 in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Although Joseph asked the Lord specifically regarding tobacco, he received not only an answer to that inquiry but also to many other concerns relating to health. However a caveat should be noted. As section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Word of Wisdom is part of the doctrine of the Church. Unfortunately, in some instances the Word of Wisdom has also become part of the culture of the Church and the “hobby horse” of some individual members. Sometimes the Word of Wisdom as church doctrine and the Word of Wisdom as local or individual culture come into conflict with each other. Individual interpretations of section 89 abound (see 2 Peter 1:20), and some persons have elevated their private understanding of section 89 above other principles of the gospel. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Some unstable people become cranks with reference to this law of health. It should be understood that the Word of Wisdom is not the gospel, and the gospel is not the Word of Wisdom. . . . There is no prohibition in section 89, for instance, as to the eating of white bread, using white flour, white sugar, cocoa, chocolate, eggs, milk, meat, or anything else, except items classified under the headings, tea, coffee, tobacco, and liquor” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 845-46).

At present, being obedient to the Word of Wisdom for the Church collectively is interpreted to mean abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, and illegal drugs. No one but the President of the Church has the keys to impose any other specific requirement upon the saints collectively as part of the Word of Wisdom. Individually, however, the Spirit may reveal additional information, advice, or applications to persons for their own benefit, but when this happens, they are expected not to impose their view on others, even if their views are correct (see Alma 12:9; see also the commentary on “more or less” in D&C 10:68; compare 18:13; 93:25; 3 Nephi 11:40).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 89 The Word of Wisdom

D&C 89:18-21 All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings . . . shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones. And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures.

verses 1-3 These first three verses of section 89 were not part of the original revelation but were written by Joseph some time after February 1833 as an inspired introduction and description. They were first included in the revelation in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The text of the revelation itself was usually thought to begin with what is now verse 4. Obviously the introduction itself was inspired of the Lord and was given to Joseph Smith by revelation with the rest of section 89.

1 A Word of Wisdom, for the benefit of the council of high priests, assembled in Kirtland, and the church, and also the saints in Zion—0000

verse 1 “A Word of Wisdom” The use of capital letters in church literature often distinguishes the revelation in section 89, the Word of Wisdom, from other, more general words of wisdom found elsewhere in the scriptures (for example, D&C 46:17; 50:1; 1 Corinthians 12:8).

2 To be sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days—

verse 2 “not by commandment or constraint” *Constraint* means force or compulsion. The precepts of the Word of Wisdom as practiced in the Church today are an excellent example of the principle of “line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 98:12; see also the commentary for that verse). In successive stages over a century or more, the Lord has moved the saints toward collective, total abstinence from coffee, tea, alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. From the day the Word of Wisdom was first received, however, there has never been any question of what the will of the Lord was on these matters or any question that the will of the Lord placed an obligation of obedience upon the saints whether communicated by direct commandment or not. Moreover, the Lord’s previous commandment not to purchase wine or strong drink from their enemies is often overlooked in discussing this verse (see D&C 27:3).

Yet, “many [of the nineteenth century] saints believed that the use of stimulants during sickness, fatigue, and depression was not in violation of the Word of Wisdom. Subsequently, there are many casual references, in Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*, of church members’ drinking wine” (Backman and Cowan, *Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants*, 83). We must remember, however, that in the nineteenth century, without today’s sophisticated pharmaceuticals, alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine of necessity played a much larger role in the relief of pain, fatigue, and depression than they do today, but their imputed efficacy usually exceeded their actual benefits. The supposed medicinal use of these substances was part of the cultural heritage of early church members. In his great mercy, the Lord did not give the Word of Wisdom as a commandment to this first generation of saints who were, by and large, already addicted to one or more of the forbidden substances and who were already culturally conditioned to accept their use both medicinally and socially. A significant difference between nineteenth and twentieth century observance of the Word of Wisdom is that twentieth century saints understood “observance” to require complete abstinence, whereas nineteenth century saints tended to interpret “observance” as moderation in the use of the prohibited items.

Neither Joseph Smith nor Brigham Young nor any of their successors to date have sought to make observance of the Word of Wisdom a test for continuing

membership in the Church. Though church leaders have counseled observance of the Word of Wisdom from the beginning, and frequent attempts were made to impress its importance upon the saints, total abstinence from coffee, tea, alcohol, and tobacco was seldom preached or practiced in the first thirty years after the revelation was received. President Joseph F. Smith explained: “The reason undoubtedly why the Word of Wisdom was given—as not by `commandment or restraint (sic),’ was that at that time, at least, if it had been given as a commandment it would have brought every man, addicted to the use of these noxious things, under condemnation; so the Lord was merciful and gave them a chance to overcome, before he brought them under the law” (CR, October 1913, 14). It might be added that between 1833 and the 1860s, the Church had many other grave issues to occupy its collective attention—that is, mobs and persecution, emigration to Utah, and survival in a harsh environment.

However, as time has passed—as older generations have given way to new ones—and as more effective medical alternatives have become available to the so-called stimulants of the nineteenth century, the Lord has, through his prophets, gradually required increasingly strict adherence to his will as expressed in 1833. By the 1860s, it could be said that “Mormons were temperate and moderate but not abstinent.” Many church leaders did not begin completely to live the Word of Wisdom until several decades after it was received. On September 9, 1851, some eighteen years after the revelation was given, President Brigham Young proposed in a general conference that all saints discontinue the use of tea, coffee tobacco, and whiskey. The motion carried unanimously, and the principle known as the Word of Wisdom was accepted as a binding commandment for all members (*Millennial Star*, 14:35). But the saints were slow to remember their covenants. Repeated admonitions from the prophets to obey the Word of Wisdom met with varying degrees of obedience. By 1861 the saints were still using large quantities of tobacco. Apparently Brigham Young did not completely stop chewing tobacco until 1862! On October 13, 1882, the Lord revealed to John Taylor that the Word of Wisdom should henceforth be considered a commandment to the Church. Soon thereafter, on September 28, 1883, the Quorum of the Twelve collectively resolved to observe the Word of Wisdom in its entirety, and on October 11, 1883, observance of the Word of Wisdom was made a condition for attending the recently revived Schools of the Prophets (Peterson, *Word of Wisdom*, 70-72). These later schools were not the same as the 1833 school but were perhaps more like predecessors of today’s priesthood leadership training meetings.

During October conference in 1908, President Anthon H. Lund of the First Presidency announced that individuals violating the Word of Wisdom should not be called to leadership positions in local units and quorums of the Church. In 1913 the First Presidency instructed the president of the Salt Lake Stake not to recommend young men for missionary service unless they were observing the Word of Wisdom. Many would point to the date of 1923, when Heber J. Grant was president, as the time

in church history when the Word of Wisdom became a binding commandment as we know it today. Even subsequent to this date, compliance among the saints was far from perfect. As late as the October conference of 1942, the First Presidency (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., and David O. McKay) urged the saints to “quit trifling with this law and so live it that we may claim its promises” (*Improvement Era* 45:687, November 1942).

It must be noted that the history of Word of Wisdom observance in the Church does not indicate any change in “the will of God” (verse 2) from earlier times. It has been the Lord’s will since at least February 27, 1833, that the saints observe the Word of Wisdom. The Lord has been merciful, however, in allowing us collectively to change our culture and our habits over time, rather than condemning us all for an inability to observe all things immediately. Moreover, sometimes our focus on what has become a commandment obscures the fact that much of section 89 is still given “not by commandment or constraint,” and allows the saints to use their own best individual judgment in keeping the will of the Lord in the use of meat, grains, fruits, vegetables, etc. At present, observance of the Word of Wisdom (that is, strictly speaking, the commandment to abstain from alcohol, coffee, tea, tobacco, and harmful drugs) is required to be worthy of attending the temple, or to hold a church leadership position.

“the temporal salvation of all saints” The Lord does not give strictly temporal commandments, for all things are spiritual unto him (D&C 29:34-35). However, we do often benefit temporally from our obedience to the commandments of God. This is especially true with the Word of Wisdom. By observing the will of God in this matter, the saints will collectively have better physical health and temporal blessings (see verses 18-21 and their commentary).

Moreover, by ignoring the Lord’s will concerning our temporal salvation, we can put at risk our spiritual salvation. As President Joseph Fielding Smith observed: “The temporal salvation of the children of men is a most important thing, but sadly neglected by many religious teachers. The truth is that the spiritual salvation is dependent upon the temporal far more than most men realize. The line of demarcation between the temporal, or physical, and the spiritual, cannot be definitely seen. The Lord has said that he has not given a temporal commandment at any time. To men some of these commandments may be temporal, but they are spiritual to the Lord because they all have a bearing on the spiritual or eternal welfare of mankind” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:383).

3 Given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.

verse 3 “principle with promise” A grand principle taught us by section 89 is that of self-control, especially the control of physical appetites. The more we deny and control inappropriate appetites, the more spiritually mature we become. In section 89,

the principle or principles are contained in verses 4-17, and the promise or promises may be found in verses 18-21.

“adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints” The Lord’s use of the phrase “weakest of all saints” probably refers to his willingness to be patient with those who are struggling. The Lord is willing to give time to those who are honestly trying to do his will—even “the weakest of all saints.” The atonement of Christ is no less effective for the weaker saints who are, with difficulty, honestly trying to observe the Word of Wisdom than is it for others who are, with difficulty, honestly trying to be honest, kind, or virtuous. Some of the leading brethren of the early Church took a long time to overcome habits of thought and practice in connection with the Word of Wisdom.

However, today there is no way around it. Unless one abstains from coffee, tea, alcohol, tobacco, and the abuse of drugs, one is in violation of the commandment.

4 Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation—

verse 4 “evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men” Violation of the Word of Wisdom is being cunningly cultivated and promoted by people who are perfectly willing to compromise our health—and even our lives—in exchange for money. Now that the mainstream is becoming aware of their evil intentions and of the vicious effects of their products, these same individuals are now targeting less wary game: the young and the uneducated, especially in countries with less sophisticated medical understanding of these evils. A quote from John A. Widtsoe is pertinent: “Throughout the ages the lust for gold has tempted men to place adulterated or dangerous foods upon the market. While pure food and drug laws now protect the people more than in the past, these ‘evils and designs,’ through excessive and misleading advertising, continue to appear in new and deceptive forms” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3:154).

“evils and designs which do and will exist” “I have warned you, and forewarn you” The language of these phrases clearly indicates that in 1833 there was both a present and a future threat to the saints from “conspiring men” concerning issues involving the Word of Wisdom. It is very possible that the first warning is directed at those things specified in 1833 (that is, alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco), while the Lord’s forewarning is directed at future hazards like the scourge of narcotics and other harmful drugs now ravaging our society but not readily available in 1833.

verses 5-7 Here the Lord warns against the use of alcoholic drinks except when wine is used for the sacrament. As mentioned previously (section 27), the use of wine in the sacrament continued until the turn of the century.

5 That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him.

verse 5 “wine or strong drink” “Strong drinks” are those containing alcohol. “Soft drinks” contain no alcohol. The Lord counsels the saints of 1833 against the use of wine or other alcohol-containing drinks, except that wine was permissible for use during the ordinance of the sacrament.

6 And, behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make.

verse 6 “pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make” The Lord is not saying here that the wine used in the sacrament should be merely fresh grape juice. The wine commonly used for the sacrament in the nineteenth century Church was fermented and contained alcohol (see D&C 20:75). Rather, it seems likely that he is again warning the saints against using wine obtain from their enemies, as it might be adulterated or poisoned (see D&C 27:4).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the uniform practice of the Church has been to use water for the sacrament.

7 And, again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.

verse 7 “for the washing of your bodies” Using distilled alcohol was then and is now used for disinfectant purposes.

8 And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill.

verse 8 “but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle” In the folk-medicine traditions of the past there was some interest in the possible medicinal value of tobacco plant when ingested by cattle. It was also used as a poultice for bruises. Today, there seems to be little interest in the use of tobacco for any medical purposes, and certainly the harmful effects of tobacco on health are well documented.

9 And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly.

verse 9 “hot drinks” This term was specifically defined as tea and coffee by the prophet Joseph. The temperature of a drink, of course, has nothing to do with

whether or not it is forbidden by the Word of Wisdom. “Again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly. There are many who wonder what this can mean; whether it refers to tea or coffee, or not. I say it does refer to tea and coffee” (Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, 3:799-801). It is clear that the saints in 1830 understood clearly that the term “hot drinks” referred to tea and coffee (see Peterson, “Word of Wisdom,” 22-24; Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1584).

Speculation by members that the drug caffeine might be the cause of the Lord’s prohibition against tea and coffee has led some to avoid all forms of caffeine in addition to tea and coffee, especially that found in other caffeinated drinks. In spite of popular opinion, chocolate contains little or no caffeine. It does contain a milder stimulant called theobromine. This latter chemical apparently has no tendency to produce habituation. It is not the policy of the Church, nor its collective practice, to forbid either caffeinated drinks or chocolate (see Jacob 4:14 for the blindness that comes from “looking beyond the mark”). President Heber J. Grant said in conference: “I am not going to give any command, but I will ask it as a personal, individual favor to me, to let Coca Cola alone. There are plenty of other things you can get at the soda fountains without drinking that which is injurious. The Lord does not want you to use any drug that creates an appetite for itself” (*CR*, April 1922, 165.) Concerning cola drinks, the First Presidency has issued the following statement: “With reference to cola drinks, the Church has never officially taken a position on this matter, but the leaders of the Church have advised, and we do now specifically advise, against the use of any drink containing harmful habit-forming drugs under circumstances that would result in acquiring the habit. Any beverage that contains ingredients harmful to the body should be avoided” (*Priesthood Bulletin*, February 1972, 2).

The reader should note that caffeine does, in fact function as an addicting or habituating substance. As little as 100-200 mg of caffeine daily (the amount of caffeine in a single cup of coffee is about 100 mg) can result in addiction. This simply means that when the intake of caffeine is suddenly stopped or withdrawn from an individual, a “withdrawal syndrome” results. A “syndrome” is simply a group of symptoms that happen together. The withdrawal syndrome, then, is the group of symptoms that result from the sudden cessation of the intake of all caffeine. It tends to occur within 12-24 hours after the cessation of caffeine. The most prominent symptom of the withdrawal syndrome is headache, often described as “pounding.” Other symptoms may commonly include muscle pain and lethargy. Less common symptoms include nausea and vomiting, depressed mood, or irritability.

verses 10-17 Verses 5 through 9 have warned against things not good for man. These verses (verses 10-17), however, list the things that should be used to maintain good health.

10 And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—

verse 10 “all wholesome herbs God hath ordained” The word *herb* refers to vegetables and plants that are nourishing and healthful for man. Unfortunately, the Lord has left it to us to learn for ourselves which herbs or plants are wholesome, and therefore useful, and which plants are not wholesome. No one in the Church except the prophet has the right to make this determination for others.

Certainly this verse should not be interpreted to be an endorsement of herbal medicine instead of mainstream medicines and doctors. There is no implication here that herbs and herbalists are to be preferred to doctors practicing scientific medicine.

11 Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving.

verse 11 “in the season thereof” Elder John A. Widtsoe understood the term “in the season thereof” to refer to the preferability of fresh foodstuffs to old and possibly spoiled or tainted food (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3:157). This phrase probably has no meaning today because of modern means of refrigeration and preservation.

12 Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly;

verse 12 “they [the flesh of beasts and fowls] are to be used sparingly” The term *sparingly* must be understood according to the standards and norms of frontier America in 1833. At that time, meat was often considered “the staff of life” (verse 14), and when possible, the diets of many Americans consisted largely, or even mostly, of animal flesh. Section 89 seeks instead to establish whole grains as the staff of life, or the primary sustenance of humans, without at the same time forbidding the use of meat except “sparingly” (see verse 14 and its commentary).

Moreover, “when the Word of Wisdom was revealed, methods for preserving meat were still primitive. Spoiled meat can be fatal if eaten, but the chance of spoilage is not as great in winter as in summer. Modern methods of refrigeration now make it possible for meat to be frozen and thereby preserved for later use in any season” (*Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, 210). Refrigeration also makes it possible to keep freshly slaughtered meat without risk of spoilage for longer periods of time, even in summer’s heat. It should be noted that the proper definition of “sparingly” can vary depending on differences in one’s age, activity, weather, or other circumstances.

13 And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.

verse 13 This verse has caused a lot of consternation. While it is probably prudent to eat meat sparingly in all situations, we certainly are not commanded to

become vegetarians (D&C 49:18). The way this verse is written seems to indicate that we should only eat meat in winter or in situations of unusual cold or famine. The confusion is caused by the comma which James E. Talmage placed between the words “used” and “only” when he punctuated the verse in the 1921 edition. If the comma is removed, then the meaning of the verse is considerably changed. If the comma is left, then this verse does fit in the context of verses 12 and 15. Some feel that the verse ought to be interpreted without the comma, but since 1921, several different First Presidencies have had the opportunity to correct the reading of verse 13 and have specifically declined to do so. By default, we are left to interpret the verse as it is now written.

14 All grain is ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth;

verse 14 “All grain is . . . the staff of life” A *staff* is a support, and the *staff of life* is a support or aid that gives life to human beings. All wholesome grains are intended by God to be used by humans and other creatures as food. In fact, grain (not just wheat, but other grains as well) rather than animal flesh should be understood to be the staff of life, or the primary source of human sustenance.

15 And these hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger.

verse 15 There is an ambiguity here involving the word *these*. This adjective can be understood as referring back to all the beasts, the fowls, and the wild animals mentioned in verse 14, or it can be understood as referring to the wild animals alone, since these are mentioned last in the series. President Ezra Taft Benson taught that the antecedent of the word “these” in this verse is the phrase “wild animals that run or creep on the earth” in verse 14. Note in that verse that there is a distinction made between the beasts of the field (domesticated animals) and wild animals. His interpretation is that we should use the domesticated animals for food, and wild animals (deer, elk, moose, antelope, etc.) should be killed and eaten only in periods of famine or hunger. He wrote an article about keeping the Sabbath day holy, and in it he mentioned that one thing we should not do on that day is engage “in sports and hunting wild animals which God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger (see D&C 89:15)” (*Ensign*, May 1971, 7).

16 All grain is good for the food of man; as also the fruit of the vine; that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground—

17 Nevertheless, wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks, as also other grain.

verse 17 “wheat for man” While all grains, fruits, and vegetables are given as food for man (see verses 10-11, 16-17), in frontier America wheat was the most nourishing grain readily available for human beings. Some species are better adapted for the use of some grains than others. This does not mean that a species cannot eat other grains, only that there are some grains more nourishing to it naturally than others.

“mild drinks” Among the several nonalcoholic drinks made with barley in the nineteenth century was barley water, which was made by soaking barley in warm water and saving the broth, “which is reputed soft and lubricating, and much used in medicine” (*Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary*, s.v. “barley-water”). A similar mild drink was made from boiling roasted barleycorns into a stronger flavored drink.

18 And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

verse 18 “walking in obedience to the commandments” The promises of verses 18-21 are based not solely upon living the Word of Wisdom but also upon keeping all of God’s commandments. Keeping the principles of the Word of Wisdom while disobeying the other commandments of God would not entitle an individual to the promised blessings. Thus, it will be seen that the promises made in verses 18-21 do not refer merely to the physical results of healthy living, which results are as readily available to the wicked as the righteous. Observance of the Word of Wisdom may involve our temporal behavior, but its promises are primarily spiritual blessings for obedient saints.

Elder Harold B. Lee taught: “If you would escape from the devastations when God’s judgments descend upon the wicked, as in the days of the children of Israel, you must remember and do what the Lord commands: ‘. . . all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings,’ meaning keep this great law of health, known as the Word of Wisdom to you Latter-day Saints, and in addition thereto ‘walk in obedience’ to the commandments, which would include honesty, moral purity, together with all the laws of the celestial kingdom, then ‘the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them’ (*CR*, October 1968, 62).

“health in their navel” Anciently, the navel or umbilicus was considered to be the cosmic center of a human being since it indicated an individual’s origins and his or her link with eternity past and future. Many ancient peoples and traditions referred to their sacred temples as “the navel of the universe.” For example, both the pagan Greek shrine at Delphi and the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem displayed to visitors, stones considered to be the “omphalos ges” (Greek for “navel of the world”).

19 And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

verse 19 “and shall find wisdom” The revelation is, after all, a word of wisdom. Wisdom is not a physical but a spiritual blessing, bestowed on those who keep the commandment. Once again, section 89 promises much more than just a blessing of health to those who live a healthy lifestyle.

“great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” This phrase refers to revelation. Perhaps one aspect of this blessing has to do with the fact that adherence to the Word of Wisdom is required for entrance into the temple. Perhaps this is, at least in part, because in the temple we are apt to be taught by revelation many of the mysteries of God. Moreover, however, personal revelation is a spiritual, not temporal, blessing promised to those who keep the Word of Wisdom and follow the other commandments.

20 And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

verse 20 This verse does not promise that those who keep the Word of Wisdom will never become weary or faint. It also does not promise that those who obey the health laws of section 89 will never become handicapped by illness or injury. Again, we must keep in mind that the promises here are spiritual in nature rather than purely physical. It is certainly true collectively, and it is often true individually, that those who observe the Word of Wisdom will be healthier than those who do not, and this is part of the significance of section 89 to the saints. But this is neither the ultimate focus nor the full promise of the principles involved. “Run” and “walk” in this verse likely refer to our spiritual struggles and progress in this mortal life, and all the spiritual promises and blessings of the Word of Wisdom are available even to the invalid and the handicapped, if only they will observe the commandments of God.

21 And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen.

verse 21 “and not slay them” The saints who observe the Word of Wisdom will be spared at the last day because they are saints, not because they are healthy. Plenty of healthy, wicked people will be slain at the last day despite their workouts at the gym, their balanced meals, or their drug-free lifestyles. At the last day, the obedient will escape physical destruction, but more importantly, spiritually they “shall run and not be weary” (verse 20), and they will escape spiritual death.

Section 90 Reorganization of First Presidency

Section 90 was received March 8, 1833. Let us briefly review the evolution of the leadership in the Church to date. In the spring of 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James and John. At that time, they also received the apostleship and those keys of the priesthood necessary to restore and preside over the Church of Jesus Christ. In section 20, received in April 1830, it was affirmed that Joseph and Oliver were called of God and were apostles and elders of the Church. They were also designated first and second elders of the Church, respectively (see D&C 20:2-3). This temporary administrative arrangement, with a first and second elder presiding over the Church, remained in place until January 25, 1832, by which time a number of high priests had been ordained. At that time, Joseph Smith was sustained and ordained President of the High Priesthood of the Church (section 75). Six weeks later, on March 8, 1832 (section 81), Sidney Rigdon and Jesse Gause were also called and ordained as counselors to Joseph Smith in the Presidency of the High Priesthood. Jesse Gause was excommunicated from the Church on December 3, 1832. Consequently, on January 5, 1833, Frederick G. Williams, who had served as a clerk to the Presidency since July 20, 1832, was called to replace Brother Gause as a counselor. However, it does not appear that the Presidency was officially reorganized in the modern sense at that time. Exactly one year after Joseph had chosen his original counselors in the Presidency of the High Priesthood, he received, on March 8, 1833, at Kirtland, section 90, which confirms the callings of Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams as counselors in the Presidency. Section 90 also further defines their duties as counselors to Joseph. The counselors were actually ordained ten days later on March 18, 1833.

This new Presidency of the High Priesthood, or *First Presidency*, as it later came to be known, was different from the previous Presidency in that it was organized as a quorum with Joseph's counselors "accounted as equal with [him] in holding the keys" (verses 6) while the President lived and while they were in harmony with him. Since 1833 the term "presidency of the High Priesthood" has been used synonymously with the term "First Presidency of the Church." Such is the case today. Only one man actually holds the keys of the priesthood but the other fourteen apostles (the president's two counselors in the First Presidency, and the twelve members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles) are able to exercise those keys by virtue of their association with the Prophet / President of the Church.

Similarly, though the apostleship had been restored and held by men upon the earth since the spring of 1829, the second leading quorum of the Church, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, would not be officially organized as a quorum until February 14 and 15, 1835, also in a manner directed by the Lord. On the occasion of the death of

the President of the Church, the Quorum of the First Presidency would come to be immediately dissolved, and the surviving members of that quorum would assume their places in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The keys of the priesthood would then reside with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who would then select and ordain the new President (the senior apostle). The President would then become the key holder, select his two counselors, and the Quorum of the First Presidency would again be formed. It is interesting to note that Brigham Young waited three years after the death of Joseph Smith to reorganize the First Presidency. However, since the administration of Lorenzo Snow, it has been the custom to reorganize the Quorum of the First Presidency soon after the funeral of the previous president.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 90:11 Every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue.

D&C 90:24 Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another.

1 Thus saith the Lord, verily, verily I say unto you my son, thy sins are forgiven thee, according to thy petition, for thy prayers and the prayers of thy brethren have come up into my ears.

verse 1 “thy sins are forgiven thee” Again, we are reminded that it was necessary for the Lord to forgive Joseph his sins, not once but repeatedly, as he strived to live, ever more perfectly, the Lord’s commands. Similarly, it is necessary for the Lord to forgive each of us repeatedly.

“according to thy petition” It is not surprising that section 90 was, as were most all of the sections in the Doctrine and Covenants, received in response to Joseph’s prayer for guidance.

2 Therefore, thou art blessed from henceforth that bear the keys of the kingdom given unto you; which kingdom is coming forth for the last time.

verse 2 “the keys of the kingdom” See the introductory commentary for D&C 65 and the commentary for D&C 65:2.

“which kingdom is coming forth for the last time” The concept of “the last days” contains the implication that this restoration of the gospel will be the last in the world’s history.

3 Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come;

verse 3 In D&C 43:3, the Prophet was told that as long as he remained faithful he would hold the keys of the kingdom but if he fell from faithfulness, those keys would

be given to another. A similar promise to Joseph was repeated in D&C 64:5. However, in this verse the Prophet is told, unconditionally, that he would never lose the keys of the kingdom and that they would remain with him not only in this world but in the world to come. This progression may indicate that sometime between September 1831 and March 1833, the nature of the Lord's promises to the Prophet Joseph had changed—amounting to a much stronger assurance that his exaltation was secure (see, for example, D&C 132:49).

“neither in the world to come” Joseph Smith still holds the keys of this dispensation of the gospel, and he still presides over the work of the Church in the spirit world. All who hold the priesthood keys are subject to someone else of higher authority. This was true of Joseph Smith. Michael (Adam) holds the keys for the salvation of mankind under the direction of the Savior, and Joseph Smith functions under the presiding authority of Michael (D&C 78:15-16). Each successor to the prophet Joseph holds the keys of the kingdom subordinate to Joseph.

4 Nevertheless, through you shall the oracles be given to another, yea, even unto the church.

verse 4 “through you shall the oracles be given to another” The *oracles*, as the term is used here, mean the divine revelations (as in verse 5). The process of how Joseph's revelations will be disseminated through his counselors and others is further clarified in verses 6-11 (especially verse 9). The Prophet will receive the word of God and will then share it with his counselors in the Presidency and with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The word will then be delivered to the Church and through the Church to the world (see verse 9). “Whenever new doctrines are to be introduced, they are first presented by the President to his counselors and then to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in a meeting of the council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. If unanimously approved [D&C 107:27], they are then presented to the membership of the Church at a general conference for a sustaining vote” (Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1127). New doctrine (that is, new divine information as opposed merely to policy changes or to clarification of existing doctrine) comes to the Church collectively, and in no other way.

5 And all they who receive the oracles of God, let them beware how they hold them lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall when the storms descend, and the winds blow, and the rains descend, and beat upon their house.

verse 5 “let them beware . . . condemnation” The imagery of this verse calls to mind Matthew 7:24-27: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it

fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” See also D&C 84:54-57.

6 And again, verily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom;

verse 6 “they are accounted as equal with thee” As long as the President of the Church is alive, and as long as his counselors are in harmony with his leadership, they share the keys of the kingdom with him. The important point is made here that the counselors in the First Presidency hold the keys of the priesthood because of their association with the one key holder, the Prophet/President of the Church.

This principle is illustrated clearly in matters involving the keys of the sealing power—the power to bind on earth and have that binding remain in force throughout the eternities (see D&C 132:7). Today, only the Prophet himself holds these keys. When that part of the sealing power required in the temple is bestowed on another, it must be done either by the Prophet himself or one whom he has specifically designated. This point is made perfectly clear in our present Handbook of Instructions: “The senior living Apostle, the President of the Church, is the only person on earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys (see D&C 43:1-4; 81:2; 107:64-67, 91-92; 132:7) (*Handbook 2, Administering the Church*, 2010, 9). For a more thorough discussion of the sealing power, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 11, *The Sealing Power*.

In a practical sense, the priesthood keys are held jointly by members of the Presidency, who are accounted equal with the Prophet/President. Thus, the First Presidency does not consist merely of a single authorized individual plus his assistants, but is rather a quorum of three or more individuals who share jointly the powers of the kingdom. Naturally, the President presides over this quorum, and his counselors defer to his leadership. Though the President presides, every decision of this quorum must be made by the unanimous voice of the quorum (see D&C 107:27). Administratively, it would be correct to say that the Church is governed by quorums rather than by individuals. The Prophet Joseph declared concerning the authority of the Twelve, “The Twelve are not subject to any other than the First Presidency . . . and where I am not, there is no First Presidency over the Twelve” (*HC*, 2:374). Here, Joseph means that when the prophet dies, the Quorum of the First Presidency is temporarily dissolved, and his counselors resume their former positions in the Church and its existing quorums. Until the Quorum of the First Presidency is reorganized, the presiding authority over the Church rests upon the second standing quorum of the Church, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, led by its presiding officer (the senior apostle), until such time as the First Presidency is reorganized (see D&C 107:23-24).

7 As also through your administration the keys of the school of the prophets, which I have commanded to be organized;

verse 7 Presidents Rigdon and Williams also hold the keys of administering the school of the prophets because of their association with Joseph in the First Presidency (“through your administration”).

“school of the prophets” See the commentary for D&C 88:117-141.

8 That thereby they may be perfected in their ministry for the salvation of Zion, and of the nations of Israel, and of the Gentiles, as many as will believe;

verse 8 The antecedent of the pronouns *they* and *their* appears likely to be Presidents Rigdon and Williams in the First presidency. Another, less likely, possibility is that these pronouns refer to participants in the School of the Prophets who will then in turn train the leadership of the Church to minister salvation to the Church and to the world.

9 That through your administration they may receive the word, and through their administration the word may go forth unto the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first, and then, behold, and lo, they shall turn unto the Jews.

verse 9 The Lord continues to address Joseph and the pronouns “they” and “their” refer to Joseph’s new counselors in the First Presidency. All three members of the First Presidency hold the keys of spreading the gospel and gathering Zion.

“unto the Gentiles first” By covenant and promise, when the fulness of the gospel was restored at the time of Christ, it was taken first to the physical and literal descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to the Israelites. In that same dispensation, in the meridian of time, the majority of the children of Israel rejected the gospel. As a result, in this last dispensation the gospel is by and large to be taken first to the Gentiles, that is, to every other nation, kindred, tongue, and people besides the Jews (see D&C 45:9, 25, 28-31 and the commentary for these verses). Obviously, many of the “Gentiles” unto whom the gospel is taken first include those who are descended from the house of Israel. Collectively, the Jews will be the last to receive the gospel in this dispensation.

10 And then cometh the day when the arm of the Lord shall be revealed in power in convincing the nations, the heathen nations, the house of Joseph, of the gospel of their salvation.

verse 10 “the heathen nations, the house of Joseph” In the Old Testament, the term “house of Joseph” is sometimes used to describe specifically the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh specifically (for example, see Joshua 17:17), and sometimes to describe all ten tribes of the northern kingdom collectively (for example, see

Zechariah 10:6). Since Ephraim, Manasseh, and the other ten tribes were eventually scattered among and grafted into every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, the house of Joseph now includes branches (see Genesis 50:22) among all the nations of the earth, including the “heathen,” or non-Christian, nations of the world. The Nephites and Lamanites were “a remnant of the house of Joseph” (3 Nephi 15:12), but other remnants of Joseph can be found and are now being sought out by missionaries among all the nations of the earth. It is probably not a coincidence that the prophet of this final dispensation—the dispensation of the times of the Gentiles when the house of Joseph will be reclaimed from all the world—was named Joseph (see D&C 113:4; Ezekiel 36:24; 37:21; 39:28; 2 Nephi 3).

11 For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ.

verse 11 “in that day” This is the day referred to in verse 10 when the arm of the Lord shall be revealed in power. This day is probably to be understood as the “day” of his coming to earth to establish his millennial kingdom. While the great missionary work of the present-day Church begins to fulfill this prophecy, only after the return of the Savior in power will the promise of everyone’s hearing the fulness of the gospel in his or her own tongue be entirely fulfilled. Until that time, many people will continue to die in ignorance of the gospel. According to Joseph Smith, however, after the second coming of the Lord, all the heathen nations will be taught the gospel, and those who will not accept it “must eventually be destroyed from the earth” (*HC*, 5:212).

President Spencer W. Kimball has said that as he pondered the question of whether or not the time was right for the blacks to receive the priesthood, several verses of scripture affected him, but none more so than verse 11 of section 90. He reasoned, “How are we going to have enough missionaries to speak to all peoples of the world in their own tongue unless we ordain all men to return to their own people?” This of course led to the Official Declaration–2 of September 30, 1978.

12 And now, verily I say unto you, I give unto you a commandment that you continue in the ministry and presidency.

verse 12 The Lord continues to address the Prophet Joseph and his counselors.

13 And when you have finished the translation of the prophets, you shall from thenceforth preside over the affairs of the church and the school;

verse 13 “translation of the prophets” This phrase refers to Joseph’s inspired revision of the books of the Old Testament. Joseph Smith finished his translation of the New Testament (see D&C 45:60) on February 2, 1833, more than a month before

section 90 was received. Since Joseph had already spent considerable time on the Old Testament before beginning the New Testament, the expectation seems to be that his translation of the Old Testament Prophets would also soon be completed.

“the church and the school” That is, the Church of Jesus Christ and the School of the Prophets.

14 And from time to time, as shall be manifested by the Comforter, receive revelations to unfold the mysteries of the kingdom;

15 And set in order the churches, and study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people.

verse 15 “and set in order the churches” This likely refers to the branches of the Church.

“and study and learn” One purpose of the School of the Prophets was to teach the first elders of this dispensation what they would need to know in order to take the gospel to the peoples of the world, including their languages, literature, and cultures.

16 And this shall be your business and mission in all your lives, to preside in council, and set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom.

verse 16 “in all your lives” Absent cases of serious sin or unworthiness, members of the First Presidency are called to serve for life—even when they may be suffering from the effects of extreme age or poor health.

17 Be not ashamed, neither confounded; but be admonished in all your high-mindedness and pride, for it bringeth a snare upon your souls.

verse 17 It is poignant to note here that the Lord knew that both Sydney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams would eventually leave the Church because of “high-mindedness and pride.”

18 Set in order your houses; keep slothfulness and uncleanness far from you.

19 Now, verily I say unto you, let there be a place provided, as soon as it is possible, for the family of thy counselor and scribe, even Frederick G. Williams.

verse 19 “let a place be provided” The reader is reminded that Frederick G. Williams was a resident of Kirtland before joining the Church and that he owned a large farm there. However, when Brother Williams accompanied Oliver Cowdery and the Lamanite missionaries to Missouri, his farm, of necessity, was parceled out to other Latter-day Saint families moving into the Kirtland area from New York, including those of Joseph Smith Senior and Ezra Thayre. In accordance with these instructions in the section 90, other accommodations were now provided for the Williams family, and the following year Frederick G. Williams consecrated his entire farm to the Church without

remuneration. The Williams farm eventually made up part of the parcel of land that provided grounds around the Kirtland Temple.

20 And let mine aged servant, Joseph Smith, Sen., continue with his family upon the place where he now lives; and let it not be sold until the mouth of the Lord shall name.

21 And let my counselor, even Sidney Rigdon, remain where he now resides until the mouth of the Lord shall name.

22 And let the bishop search diligently to obtain an agent, and let him be a man who has got riches in store—a man of God, and of strong faith—

23 That thereby he may be enabled to discharge every debt; that the storehouse of the Lord may not be brought into disrepute before the eyes of the people.

verses 22-23 “let the bishop . . . obtain an agent” Bishop Newel K. Whitney had previously been instructed to employ an agent to help him with the duties of administering the bishop’s storehouse in Kirtland (see D&C 84:113) but had apparently not yet done so. These instructions made it clear that the prospective agent would not simply be an employee, but would consecrate his own time and significant wealth to the building up of Zion as was expected of other church leaders. There is no historical evidence that Bishop Whitney ever did employ an agent to help him.

24 Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another.

verse 24 “remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another” This passage referred originally to the covenant of brotherhood and fellowship entered into by the leaders of the Church and others who attended the School of the Prophets (see D&C 88:133 and its commentary). By extension this would also apply to those who will later make covenants concerning their interrelationships with others in the Kirtland Temple or in any of the subsequent temples.

25 Let your families be small, especially mine aged servant Joseph Smith’s, Sen., as pertaining to those who do not belong to your families;

verse 25 “Let your families be small” Is the Lord suggesting birth control? Not at all! At that time, Joseph Smith, Sr.’s, house was always over full with borders and passers-by. He was so kindly that he could never turn anyone away. This resulted in his being overburdened with guests. The Lord here is suggesting that all saints, especially Joseph Smith, Sr., be cautious about taking in more non-family guests than they can comfortably handle.

26 That those things that are provided for you, to bring to pass my work, be not taken from you and given to those that are not worthy—

27 And thereby you be hindered in accomplishing those things which I have commanded you.

verses 26-27 As church leaders, particularly Father and Mother Smith, continued to open their homes to the saints who were moving into the Kirtland area from the East, certain problems arose. Some members took advantage of the kindnesses of their hosts. The stewardship given to the elder Smith's was used up by others. Other members who were unworthy avoided the responsibilities of consecration but still received its blessings by attaching themselves to more faithful families. In addition, the sheer burden of housing so many individuals in their comparatively small homes became very taxing on them, but it was hard to say "no" to anyone who claimed to be in need. Thus, the Lord here counsels his leaders, and particularly the senior Smiths, who were generous to a fault, to use wisdom and where possible to reduce the number of their dependents who were not actually blood relatives or who were not personally worthy of receiving the blessings of consecration on their own.

verses 28-31 Vienna Jaques is one of the few women mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants. She was a wealthy spinster woman who at age 45, sometime in 1832, joined the Church. She lived in Boston and apparently supported herself there as a nurse. She was converted by the Book of Mormon and visited Joseph Smith in Kirtland where she was baptized. After returning briefly to Boston, Sister Jaques moved to Kirtland sometime before March 1833 and was instructed to consecrate her wealth, including fourteen hundred dollars cash, to the Lord. This, she did without hesitation.

In these verses, the Lord directs that she be sent to Zion and that her expenses of moving there be paid by the Church and that she receive an inheritance in Zion from Bishop Partridge. Sister Jaques arrived in Independence in the summer of 1833 but lost her temporal inheritance when the saints were driven from Jackson County. However, she remained faithful and steadfast for more than fifty years thereafter, moving with the saints in all their wanderings, and finally dying in Salt Lake City in 1884, at the age of ninety-six.

In 1858 at age 70 she was sealed to the Prophet Joseph. Apparently in the early days of the Church, almost any woman who wanted to be sealed to a man who was deceased was granted her wish.

28 And again, verily I say unto you, it is my will that my handmaid Vienna Jaques should receive money to bear her expenses, and go up unto the land of Zion;

29 And the residue of the money may be consecrated unto me, and she be rewarded in mine own due time.

30 Verily I say unto you, that it is meet in mine eyes that she should go up unto the land of Zion, and receive an inheritance from the hand of the bishop;

31 That she may settle down in peace inasmuch as she is faithful, and not be idle in her days from thenceforth.

verses 32-35 In the early days of the Church there were sometimes administrative questions of exactly who presided over whom and in what circumstances. Despite such revelations as D&C 43:3-5 or 64:5, some in Missouri believed that they presided there independent of the prophet Joseph Smith. These verses settle this argument and clarify the administrative situation (see also verses 2-5). Though Bishop Partridge was the bishop in Missouri and really the presiding bishop in the Church, he was subordinate to Joseph and the other members of the First Presidency (see verses 6, 13, 16). Among other faults, Partridge's resistance to Joseph's leadership, as well as the resistance of others in Missouri, did not please the Lord.

32 And behold, verily I say unto you, that ye shall write this commandment, and say unto your brethren in Zion, in love greeting, that I have called you also to preside over Zion in mine own due time.

33 Therefore, let them cease wearying me concerning this matter.

34 Behold, I say unto you that your brethren in Zion begin to repent, and the angels rejoice over them.

35 Nevertheless, I am not well pleased with many things; and I am not well pleased with my servant William E. McLellin, neither with my servant Sidney Gilbert; and the bishop also, and others have many things to repent of.

verse 35 "William E. McLellin" See the introductory commentary for section 66 and D&C 75:6-7 and the commentary for these verses. Bother McLellin was out of favor at this time for at least two reasons. First, he had returned prematurely from two missions in a row, one to the East and one south of Kirtland. Second, he had organized a party of emigrants and led them to Missouri in direct violation of the rules and procedures established by the Lord through the Prophet Joseph, thereby adding to the difficulties of the saints there (see Shipps and Welch, *Journal of William E. McLellin*, 303-05).

36 But verily I say unto you, that I, the Lord, will contend with Zion, and plead with her strong ones, and chasten her until she overcomes and is clean before me.

verse 36 "I, the Lord, will contend with Zion" The Lord announces his intention of chastening the saints in Missouri for their sins and their rebellion. He will not shirk the unpleasant duty of disciplining his own people when necessary (see D&C 97:25-26; 100:13; 101:2-10).

37 For she shall not be removed out of her place. I, the Lord, have spoken it. Amen.

verse 37 “For she [Zion] shall not be removed” At first, this declaration might seem to contradict the historical facts, since the saints were forcibly removed not only from Jackson County but eventually from all of Missouri. However, the meaning here is that Jackson County, Missouri, is and always will be the location of the center place of Zion (see D&C 57:1-3). All the prophecies about the physical Zion will be literally fulfilled, though not in the time frame the early saints envisioned. According to D&C 101:17-20: “Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered. . . . And, behold, there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed, for the work of the gathering of my saints.” In the Lord’s own due time, Zion will be redeemed and established where and how he has declared it.

Brief Historical Setting

Meanwhile, Joseph continued with the revision of the Bible. In March of 1833, he finished with the Old Testament and wondered if he should revise the Old Testament apocryphal books—those fourteen books of doubtful authenticity which were found in all Bible versions prior to the early 1800s, including the King James Bible. The Lord told him not to include them in his revision **[D&C 91 - The Apocrypha]**.

Section 91 The Apocrypha

In D&C 90:13, which Joseph received on March 8, 1833, the Lord counseled Joseph that he was to continue his work on the Joseph Smith Translation by completing his inspired revision of “the prophets,” that is, the Old Testament books. Accordingly, on the very next day, March 9, 1833, Joseph resumed work on the JST in his quarters above Newel K. Whitney’s store.

In Joseph Smith’s King James Bible, which he was using to create his inspired revision, there were fourteen books (or parts of books) between the Old Testament and the New Testament known as the *Apocrypha*. The word “apocrypha” is from the Greek word generally meaning “that which is hidden or secret.” Most latter-day saints are not familiar with the apocryphal Old Testament books because they were eliminated from the King James Bible and all protestant Bibles in the early 1800s. They are still present in some Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles, though there is some skepticism over their authenticity among the leadership of those churches. The apocryphal books are: The First Book of Esdras; The Second Book of Esdras; Tobit; The Book of Judith; The Additions to the Book of Esther; The Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach; Baruch, including the letter of Jeremiah; the Prayer of Azariah and the song of the Three Young Men; Susanna; Bel and the Dragon; the Prayer of Manasseh; the First Book of Maccabees, and the Second Book of Maccabees. Today, if one is interested, these books are available and may be easily found and purchased.

The apocryphal books (with one or two exceptions) first appeared in a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament called the Septuagint (or LXX) which began to circulate in the ancient world in the second century before Christ. Compared to the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) which followed, the Septuagint had more books. There are two possible explanations for this: (1) either the Greek translators in 200 BC added material to their Bible which was not found in the original Hebrew, or (2) the rabbis of the first centuries after Christ removed some books from the Hebrew Bible of which the Septuagint translation, made earlier, still bears witness. Most contemporary biblical scholars favor the first option. This extra material found in the Septuagint Greek translation but not in the Hebrew Bible has come to be called the Apocrypha.

It would appear that on the first day of Joseph’s resuming his translation of the Old Testament, a question arose concerning the exact definition of “the prophets.” Particularly, Joseph wondered whether or not he should “translate” the Apocrypha. The Lord gave him, in essence, the following answer which is the position of the Church on the Apocrypha:

1. These books contain many things which are true, and they are mostly translated correctly.

2. There are also many things contained therein that are not true but are the false traditions of men.

3. There is no need to revise the Apocrypha.

4. Any member of the Church may read the Apocrypha, but he should make certain he has the Spirit with him to help him discern what is true from what is not.

We have come to apply this counsel more widely than to just the Apocrypha. For example, is it all right for a church member to read the Dead Sea Scrolls and accept as true those things which are witnessed as such by the Spirit? Yes, indeed!

Today, there are literally hundreds of pieces of ancient literature that have been discovered that are as old as the Old Testament books in our Bible. We do not accept them as canonized scripture, but certainly acknowledge that they may contain some truths. The scholar in our Church who has done more work in this area than any other is the late Dr. Hugh Nibley.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 91 The Lord gives instructions concerning the Apocrypha

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you concerning the Apocrypha—There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly;

verse 1 “the Apocrypha” Though we used the word *Apocrypha* with and without a capital “a” in the introduction to this section, it is important to understand the word when it is used with either the uppercase or lowercase “a.” The expression “the Apocrypha” (note the capital “A” and also the definite article) refers specifically and exclusively to those fourteen extra books of the Old Testament found in the Greek Septuagint but not in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, strictly speaking, the divine counsel which is given in section 91 about “the Apocrypha” cannot be legitimately applied to any other category of ancient literature.

The adjective apocryphal (with a lowercase “a”) may be used to refer to the Apocrypha (in such expressions as “the apocryphal books of the Greek Septuagint”), but it may also be applied to many other works of ancient literature such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi codices (ancient records discovered in 1945 in Egypt), and the apocryphal books of the New Testament. In other words, it may be used to describe any non-canonical ancient religious manuscript. These manuscripts may be said to be apocryphal literature. These manuscripts also are sometimes referred to by the title *pseudepigrapha*. Because of its usage in describing noncanonical literature, the adjective apocryphal has also come to mean spurious or of doubtful authorship or authenticity. In section 91, the Apocrypha receive a limited endorsement, but this endorsement does not necessarily apply to all apocryphal literature, some of which is frankly spurious.

“There are many things contained therein that are true” Some of the writings in the Apocrypha are historically true or contain spiritually inspiring material. For example, much of our knowledge of Jewish history between the Old and New Testaments comes from 1 and 2 Maccabees and the Wisdom of Solomon, while the Prayer of Manasseh is a moving example of the broken heart of a repentant sinner, though it is probably not really written by the evil king Manasseh.

“it is mostly translated correctly” The problem with the Apocrypha is not the translation, but the nature of the documents themselves. Being historically true is not exactly the same thing as being divinely inspired.

2 There are many things contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men.

verse 2 “many things contained therein . . . are not true” For example, it is easy to see the popular folklore in Tobit, or the pseudosophisticated “wisdom” of Ecclesiasticus. And 2 Maccabees covers much of the same history as 1 Maccabees but “spices things up” considerably to make the event recorded seem more dramatic.

“interpolations by the hands of men” To *interpolate* means to add something between two other things; to interject; to interpose. This language would seem to favor the view that the extra books contain additions that alter the meanings and corrupt the original text.

3 Verily, I say unto you, that it is not needful that the Apocrypha should be translated.

verse 3 “it is not needful that the Apocrypha should be translated” Joseph’s instructions that the Apocrypha did not comprise part of his translation obligation left the very clear implication that the Apocrypha is not to be considered part of the Latter-day Saint canon of scripture. This verse essentially defines the Latter-day Saint biblical canon along Protestant lines: the Old Testament is rightly understood to consist of the books found in the Hebrew Old Testament rather than in the Greek Septuagint.

4 Therefore, whoso readeth it, let him understand, for the Spirit manifesteth truth;

verse 4 “whoso readeth it” It should not be understood that the saints are forbidden to read the Apocrypha or that these books are without merit. The Holy Spirit can bear witness to truth even on the stony ground of the Apocrypha.

5 And whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom;

verse 5 “shall obtain benefit therefrom” The most plausible meaning here is that benefit or edification (temporal and even spiritual) may come to the individual who reads the Apocrypha if he is favored, as he reads, by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

This principle would be just as true if one were reading any other type of literature, such as a newspaper or a good novel, but reading it “by the Spirit.”

6 And whoso receiveth not by the Spirit, cannot be benefited. Therefore it is not needful that it should be translated. Amen.

verse 6 “cannot be benefited” When compared with the scriptures, the Apocrypha is apparently less fruitful soil for spiritual growth without greater than usual assistance from the Spirit. While historians and scholars can find much in these documents of importance to their research, average church members will receive a greater spiritual return on their investment of time by reading the canonized scriptures.

Section 92 The United Firm

See the commentary for sections 78 and 82. In this section, given March 15, 1833, the Lord directs that Frederick G. Williams be admitted into the United Firm. Recall that in section 90, Brother Williams was ordained a counselor to Joseph in the First Presidency, replacing Jesse Gause who apostatized and had been excommunicated three months earlier. As a member of the First Presidency, Brother Williams is virtually automatically admitted into the United Firm which is the mini-United order comprised of the leading brethren of the Church.

For many years the code name for Frederick G. Williams was Shederlaomach which was used for the reasons stated in the background materials for sections 78 and 82. The code names are removed from our current 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord, I give unto the united order, organized agreeable to the commandment previously given, a revelation and commandment concerning my servant Frederick G. Williams, that ye shall receive him into the order. What I say unto one I say unto all.

verse 1 “the united order” We have previously defined the expression “united order” as a group of people who are living the law of consecration and stewardship. Thus the term united order is perfectly appropriate here in referring to the leading brethren in the Church who belonged to the United Firm.

“organized agreeable to the commandment previously given” That is, D&C 78:11 and 82:11-20. See these verses and their commentary.

“What I say unto one I say unto all.” Though the revelation is given by the Lord and received only through the Prophet Joseph, the Lord’s counsel to receive Frederick G. Williams into the United Firm applies to all members of that order.

2 And again, I say unto you my servant Frederick G. Williams, you shall be a lively member in this order; and inasmuch as you are faithful in keeping all former commandments you shall be blessed forever. Amen.

verse 2 “you shall be a lively member in this order” In 1828 the term *lively* was an exact equivalent to our term *active*. It would not be enough for Brother Williams merely to be a member of the Church or of the United Firm. He was to be a “lively member,” that is, one active and involved. Since this is the “only true and living Church” (D&C 1:30) on the earth, its members (or its component parts) must be not only “true” but also “living”—or “lively.”

Brief Historical Setting

1833 May

One of the most important doctrinal revelations given in this generation was received in May 1833. It dealt with the great plan of salvation and the origin, nature, and destiny of man [**D&C 93 - The Origin and Destiny of Man**].

Section 93 The Origin and Destiny of Man

On the 4th of May 1833, a meeting of high priests was held in Kirtland for the purpose of considering ways and means for building of a house in which to hold the School of the Prophets. The saints were far from wealthy, and an undertaking of that kind must have seemed overwhelming to them. The church leaders were men of God, however, and their faith was of the practical kind by which mountains are moved. The commitment was made to begin to raise funds, and two revelations were received two days later on May 6, 1833. These two revelations were sections 93 and 94.

Section 93 is one of the great doctrinal revelations received in this dispensation. Part of this revelation consists of a vision that John the Apostle had seen. Joseph Smith had revealed to him this vision of John, and this made it possible for him to include an account of that vision here (it should be noted that Elder Bruce R. McConkie and others felt strongly that the John referred to in this section was John the Baptist, not John the Beloved Apostle—see *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, volume 1, 70-71).

The revelation deals with the great plan of salvation—the origin and destiny of man. Section 93 has come to be known as the revelation filled with aphorisms since it contains many verses that are pithy, crisp, and concise statements of profound doctrine.

Before beginning a verse by verse tour of section 93, the reader will find it helpful to read two chapters in volume 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine: The Creation*, chapter 3 and *The Concept of Light*, chapter 15.

In the Church, we assign specific meanings to words or phrases that differ from the meaning a person outside the Church might apply to those same words or phrases. In other words the scriptural meaning of some words or phrases is far richer than the secular meanings of those same words and phrases. For example, *eternal life* means more than simply existing eternally. It means exaltation in the celestial kingdom. We understand the *soul* to mean specifically the combination of body and spirit of man (D&C 88:15-16). *Salvation* means being resurrected to a kingdom of glory, but not the same as *exaltation*, and so on. Section 93 introduces several new terms, the meanings of which are not intuitively obvious to a person reading the section for the first time, unless he has learned their specific meaning. These will be discussed in the verse commentary that follows. A couple of these new terms are so fundamental that we should define them before beginning with section 93.

Intelligence. Whenever we encounter the term “intelligence,” we ought to think of two possible meanings:

1. “Intelligence” or “intelligences” are those eternal and uncreated entities utilized by the Father and the Son in the process of creation. The “intelligence” of a man is his essence—who he really is. Intelligences are capable of exercising their agency and

acting for themselves. They have always existed and cannot be destroyed. Each individual, including the Father and the Son, is, at his very center, a single intelligence. In addition, a myriad of lesser accomplished intelligences were embodied with the bodies of plants, animals, or even the inert materials of the earth. The purpose of the existence of each intelligence is to progress toward Godhood which is accomplished through obedience to the laws of God given to them. And there are divine laws or commandments given to each and every category (kingdom) of intelligences (see D&C 88:36-38).

2. “Intelligence” also may refer to that amount of light, spiritual progress, or spiritual growth, an individual (an intelligence) has acquired as a result of his obedience to God’s law. Since the light which emanates from each intelligence contains the complete truth about that intelligence, we may say that his light is his intelligence and vice versa. In speaking of an individual intelligence, we may say that he radiates more or less light or intelligence than another because of his pattern of obedience to the laws of God.

Light and truth. “Light and truth” is another term for the light that is broadcast by each intelligence and therefore “light and truth” is synonymous with intelligence (verse 36). In other words each intelligence is constantly broadcasting knowledge of itself. “Light” refers to its ability to radiate its status, and “truth” refers to the knowledge about itself. The Lord has defined truth as “knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). Each intelligence, then, constantly broadcasts what it truly is, what it has been, and what it will be. The absence of the ability to perceive light from other intelligences including the light which emanates from Christ himself, is referred to as a state of “darkness.” When an intelligence diligently and consistently struggles to obey God’s commandments, he “receiveth truth and light until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things” (D&C 93:28).

To “receive” truth and light may have two meanings. First, it means that the obedient individual will come to be able to perceive the light radiated by other intelligences, including the Savior himself. Second, it means that the same individual will take on increments of the Savior’s light so that it becomes his own light. Eventually he will come to possess and radiate the same light the Savior possesses and radiates. In this way, the obedient comes to “know” spiritual truth. To know a truth is to possess that particular gift of the Spirit. An individual may eventually come to possess a “fulness of truth” (see D&C 93:26,28; 88:107)—that is, he radiates the same light as the Savior, and he has the ability to perceive the light of others.

We have also defined “light and truth” as being synonymous with individual uncreated intelligences. In other words, an intelligence may be referred to as the light which he or she radiates. Also, the phrase “light and truth” teaches us important truths about how intelligences communicate with one another.

Glory. There is a close correlation between the amount of spiritual light an individual possesses and radiates (that individual's "light and truth") and his "glory." We must be cautious, however, about regarding too many terms as perfect synonyms. While an individual's glory certainly correlates with his "light and truth," each individual's light is distinct and unique.

Spirit of truth. The term "Spirit of truth" is most commonly used to refer to the Holy Ghost. It may also be used to refer to the Savior, particularly prior to his mortal ministry. The term "spirit of truth" (small "r") refers to a spirit's capacity, inherited from its eternal parents, to receive light and truth radiated from other intelligences, particularly from the Father and the Son. In other words, "spirit of truth" refers to a person's proclivity to learn spiritual truth.

Armed with these few basic facts, and hopefully armed with the Spirit of God, which we have prayerfully petitioned, let us now read section 93.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 93 The Origin and Destiny of Man

D&C 93:1 Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name . . . and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.

D&C 93:2 I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

D&C 93:12-13 He received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness.

D&C 93:24 Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.

D&C 93:27-28 He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.

D&C 93:29 Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

D&C 93:30 All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself.

D&C 93:33-34 Spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy.

D&C 93:36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

D&C 93:37 Light and truth forsake that evil one.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;

verse 1 "it shall come to pass" While the promise given in this verse is sure, its timing is according to the Lord and not according to man (see D&C 88:68).

"Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face"

To whom does the promise in this verse apply? The Lord is speaking directly to his high priests—the leaders of his earthly Church. Certainly it applies to them. But in this verse the Lord makes it clear that this promise also applies to every righteous individual.

Just when will each righteous soul see the face of the Lord? Before we address that question, let us note that there are two times when every soul—both righteous and unrighteous—shall see the face of the Lord. First, this will occur on that great and last day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth in glory. The sight of him on that occasion will lift up the righteous and incinerate the wicked (see D&C 5:19; 45:44-60). Additionally, we have the promise that at death every man comes face to face with the gatekeeper who certainly must be the Lord Jesus Christ (see Alma 40:11-14 and the commentary for those verses).

Additionally, all who live on the earth during the millennium will see the Lord's face during his millennial reign on the earth (see, for example, 1 John 3:2).

In this verse, it seems most likely the Lord is referring to his remarkable promise extended to many faithful saints of seeing the face of Christ and of receiving him in this life as the second Comforter (see D&C 88:3-4, 68:12 and the commentary for these verses). The individual on the earth who is diligently and persistently righteous who waits patiently may well see the face of the Savior and “know that he is” (the third person way of saying “know that I am”—a state that surpasses faith. The individual will experience a personal visit from the Lord and then know with his earthly senses that the Lord lives. Practically speaking, those of us who strive to follow the Lord and obey his commandments should not expect to literally see his face here on earth. While that is possible, perhaps this promise is more figurative for the majority of us.

“cometh unto me” To come unto Christ is to enter into the covenants of the gospel and thereby become one with Christ as his son or daughter in his kingdom (see D&C 25:1 and its commentary; John 17:21-23). Through coming to Christ and becoming one with him in this way, we cease to belong to this fallen world and become “fellowcitizens with the saints” (Ephesians 2:19-20).

“calleth on my name” To call upon the name of Christ is to seek his power and authority in our lives in our prayers and in our ordinances by doing all that we do “in the name of Jesus Christ.” In this way we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master and our Mediator with Father.

“see my face and know that I am” To know the Savior is to have the Savior revealed to you by personal revelation and therefore possess a deeply personal relationship with him. There is in this verse the same wordplay found in John 8:58 and John 18:6. The great “I Am” is the name of God as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Again, we acknowledge the possibility of seeing the Lord's face here on earth may include a figurative element.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “I have learned that where there is a prayerful heart, a hungering after righteousness, a forsaking of sins, and obedience to

the commandments of God, the Lord pours out more and more light until there is finally power to pierce the heavenly veil and to know more than man knows. A person of such righteousness has the priceless promise that one day he shall see the Lord's face and know that he is" (*Ensign*, March 1980, 4).

2 And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;

verse 2 God, as the ultimate intelligence of our universe, radiates constantly a knowledge of himself—his being, his desires. This has been identified in the scripture as the light which "proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space" (D&C 88:12). The Savior is the medium through which this light is disseminated to our part of the universe, so God's light is sometimes called the "light of Christ" (D&C 88:7). This light or unspoken communication among intelligences is universal. Unfortunately for us humans here in mortality, our receptivity to this ubiquitous light is blunted and varies from individual to individual, from situation to situation, and from time to time.

"the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" In what sense does the light of Christ enlighten every man born into this mortal world? In addition to the obvious fact that the light of Christ gives life to everyone and to every thing upon the earth, there seems to be a certain entitlement or modicum of the light of Christ provided for everyone born into mortality. This ray of the Lord's light provides an inkling of eternal truth to each and every individual and is sometimes referred to as the "light of Christ" or the "spirit of Christ."

3 And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—

verse 3 See also 3 Nephi 11:36 and its commentary. Latter-day Saints accept both the "oneness" or unity of God and also the "threeness" or separateness of God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) as these are taught in the scriptures. However, we reject the attempt to explain this simultaneous oneness and threeness of God by the traditional doctrine of the trinity as developed in post-biblical times. We do not believe that God consists of one being in three co-equal and co-eternal persons. Neither this formula nor even the word trinity can be found in the Bible itself, and the experience of the prophet Joseph Smith in the grove and the teaching of latter-day revelation on this topic make this an impossible concept for the saints.

Sometimes in our desire to emphasize that the Godhead consists of three separate and distinct individuals (the "threeness" of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), we fail to give proper attention to the unity and oneness of God as expressed in this and other passages of scripture. Our disagreement with the non-biblical doctrine of the Trinity should not lead us into denying the scriptural teaching that God, or the Godhead, is somehow perfectly one. Latter-day Saints do believe—must believe—that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God (see, for example, D&C 20:28 and

commentary; Testimony of Three Witnesses; 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 15:1-4; Alma 11:44; Mormon 7:7; John 10:30). These three divine persons, though separate beings, are perfectly one in purpose, one in mind, one in intent, and one in ways we perhaps don't even fully understand. Therefore, to know the mind, heart, and personality of one member of the Godhead is to know the mind, heart, and personality of all three (see John 14:7-9), for they are alike.

In the beginning, the Father shared his power and will—his personality—so perfectly with the Son, and the Son voluntarily accepted it, conformed to it, and obeyed it so perfectly that the Son can now be said in one sense to be both of them (see Ether 3:14; Mosiah 15:2-4, 7; Alma 11:39-40; Mormon 9:12; Isaiah 9:6; JST Luke 10:23). The Father's personality and mind are in the Son, and vice versa. Nevertheless, they remain separate and distinct physical beings.

Just as the three separate persons of the Godhead are one in this manner without compromising their individual existence, so also may faithful disciples truly become one with the Father and with the Son in the same manner without losing their separate or individual existence. As John teaches, the oneness that exists between the members of the Godhead is the same quality or type of oneness that should exist between faithful disciples, or between God and his disciples (see John 17:20-22). This is not a physical oneness, but a oneness of mind and purpose. As we voluntarily conform to the character and obey the will of God as the Son has done before us, God is able to share with us also his divine energy, light, truth, intelligence, and spirit, so that we become more than we once were and more like he is. This is also one reason why Zion cannot be established until the Saints are “are of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18), that is, at one with the heart, mind, and character of God.

Normally, human minds prefer straight lines and clear distinctions and delineations. We prefer blacks and whites to shades of gray. We identify things by their borders, and so we tend to focus on the distinctions between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in order to understand them as individuals. But the message of verse 3 is that such a neat division between their respective roles is sometimes difficult to make—for their complete unity of thought, personality, and purpose usually makes them better understood by their oneness, by the “alike,” than by their differences. This unity of the Godhead is so perfect that it sometimes confuses us, as when Christ speaks as the Father, or when the Holy Ghost speaks as the Son (see Moses 1:6; 5:9; D&C 29:1, 42). As we teach the truth concerning the separate physical natures of the Father and the Son, we must be careful not to separate them in any other sense, for the Father and the Son are “in” each other (John 14:10) and are one in a way difficult for mortals to fully appreciate, though in a way that does not compromise their separate and individual being.

4 The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men.

verse 4 We know that Jesus Christ did apply the titles “Son” and “Father” to himself. He specifically said to the brother of Jared: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son” (Ether 3:14).

“The Father because” On June 30, 1916 the First Presidency published “The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve” (see Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 465-73). In this exposition they acknowledge that Christ is not our literal parent, but that in scripture he is referred to as our “Father” for three of reasons. These include:

1. He is our Father since he is the Creator. “That Jesus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation is set forth in the book *Jesus the Christ* [James E. Talmage], chapter 4. Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is consistently called the Father of heaven and earth in the sense explained above; and since His creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth” (*Ibid.*).

2. Jesus is the “Father” of those who abide in his gospel and thereby become heirs of eternal life. In a revelation given through Joseph the Prophet to Emma Smith the Lord Jesus addressed the Emma as “my daughter,” and said: “for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom” (D&C 25:1). In many instances the Lord has addressed men as his sons (D&C 9:1; 34:3; 121:7).

3. Jesus is the “Father” by divine investiture of authority. In all His dealings with the human family Jesus represents the Father and possesses the Father’s full power and authority. To the Jews he said: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30; see also 17:11, 22). Also he said, “I am come in my Father’s name” (John 5:43; see also 10:25). The same truth was declared by Christ himself to the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 20:35 and 28:10), and has been reaffirmed by revelation in our present dispensation (D&C 50:43).

We may add yet a fourth reason for referring to Jesus Christ as the Father. In his role of Jehovah, God of the Old Testament, he became known as the God or Father of Heaven.

“the Son because” Christ is the Son because:

1. He was born a spirit child of God in the premortal existence.
2. His mortal body was fathered by God the Father.
3. Jesus Christ is completely submissive to the Father and progressed or grew under his tutelage (see verse 5). He did not receive a fulness of light and truth at first, but progressed from grace to grace (see verse 14).

5 I was in the world and received of my Father, and the works of him were plainly manifest.

6 And John saw and bore record of the fulness of my glory, and the fulness of John's record is hereafter to be revealed.

verse 6 “John saw and bore record” Just who is the John Spoken of here? Is it John the beloved apostle of Jesus? Or is it John the Baptist? Verses 7-10 suggest strongly that it is the apostle John. However, some Latter-day Saint writers on section 93, including President John Taylor, Elder Orson Pratt, and Brother Sidney B. Sperry, have concluded that the “John” mentioned here is John the Baptist, and we have already mentioned that Elder Bruce R. McConkie concurs with that idea (see Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement*, 55; Pratt, *JD*, 16:58; Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium*, 472-73). However, verses 7-10 are unmistakably similar to John 1:1-3, the latter having been written by John the Revelator. How then, if the John of verses 7-10 is John the Baptist, do we explain the similarity of verses 7-10 with John 1:1-3? According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “From latter-day revelation we learn that the material in the forepart of the gospel of John (the Apostle, Revelator, and Beloved Disciple) was written originally by John the Baptist. By revelation the Lord restored to Joseph Smith part of what John the Baptist had written and promised to reveal the balance when men became sufficiently faithful to warrant receiving it. Verse 15 of this passage is the key to the identity of the particular John spoken of. This verse should be compared with Matthew’s description of Christ’s baptism in Matthew 3:16-17 to learn the identity of the writer” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:70-71).

Those who hold to the idea that these verses speak of John the Baptist would have us believe that John the Beloved Apostle has incorporated into his account of the Savior’s ministry an account of events surrounding the baptism of Jesus which was somehow transmitted to him from John the Baptist. But why could John the Apostle have described Christ’s baptism as did Matthew in Matthew 3:16-17? Perhaps the identity of the John in this verse should be left as an open question.

“the fulness of my glory” *Glory* is yet another term for light, and therefore “the fulness of my glory” refers to the light emanating from Jesus Christ.

verses 7-17 These verses constitute an alternate version of John 1:1-16. As discussed in the commentary for verse 6, we don’t know for sure whether the “he” in this verse is John the Beloved Apostle or John the Baptist. Whoever this John is, verses 6 and 7 seem to indicate that verses 7-17 of section 93 are quoted from his record (see verse 18).

7 And he bore record, saying: I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was;

verse 7 “And he bore record, saying” It is interesting to note that scholars have long recognized that of the four New Testament gospels, John’s bears the most evidence of editing by a later hand (see, for example, John 21:24, where the pronoun

“we” identifies John’s editors). While verses 7-17 in this section of the D&C are similar to John 1:1-16, the Doctrine and Covenants version of these verses contains important clarifications not found in the New Testament text. Also D&C 93:6, 18 and 1 Nephi 14:25-27 indicate that “the record of John” is yet to be revealed to the Church in its original condition with its original clarity.

8 Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation—

verse 8 “in the beginning” The concept of “the beginning” is a moving target. When was the beginning? Here in this verse it would seem that the premortal world was “the beginning.” Perhaps there is no absolute beginning, as we will be taught that each of us has always existed as an individual intelligence (see verse 29).

“the Word, even the messenger” The *Word* is the Savior. Would it not have been easier to have said, “the Savior, even the messenger”? What was John trying to tell us by identifying the Savior as the “Word”? “Word” is a translation of the rich Greek word *Logos*. *Logos* is a word with great depth and many nuances. It is not merely an assemblage of sounds—a “word” in the usual sense. *Logos* is the outward active expression of a deep inner meaning. That inner meaning may be much more than a single thought or group of thoughts. It may be a book, a group of books, a library, a group of libraries, or much more. In this particular case, the inner meaning is the essence and the will of the Father. Jesus Christ is and ever will be the outward and dynamic expression of both his Father’s essence and his Father’s will.

Are we not thus able to better understand the meaning of such scriptural verses as: “Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (John 14:9). And, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:10-11). And, “And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one” (D&C 93:3). If we wish to learn more about the Father, we merely need to learn more about his Son.

Given this background on the rich concept of the *logos*, are we now better able to understand the richness of the statement that Christ is “the Word, even the messenger of salvation.”

9 The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.

verse 9 This verse contains some titles of the Lord Jesus Christ—each title containing its own individual nuance of specific meaning. This verse is best understood after studying *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15. Christ is “the light.” He was the first spirit child of God; and it is perhaps in that context that we may refer to him as the “Spirit of truth” or the “Great Spirit” (Alma 18:26-29). The several designations of the members of the Godhead certainly overlap and can be confusing. For example, the title “Spirit of truth” can refer to the Savior, as it does here, or it may refer to the Holy Ghost (D&C 50:17-19). Perhaps this confusion is another illustration of the oneness of the Godhead (compare, for example, 1 Nephi 11:11 with 1 Nephi 11:27).

10 The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him.

verse 10 See the parallels to this verse in John 1:3, 10 (also D&C 76:24; 88:41).

“men were made by him” In what sense were men “made by him [Christ]”? Christ did not create the intelligences, as they have always existed. And the spirit birth of man took place by a process of divine procreation involving the Father and his female counterpart, our mother in heaven. The Son’s role in creation was central. He created and now sustains the mortal particles which comprise the mortal body, and perhaps he did participate in some way in the preparation of the spirit bodies into which man’s intelligence was placed.

“by him, and through him, and of him” These phrases illustrate the intimate role of Christ in the creation of all things. He not only created them, but by his power and light he enlivens and sustains them.

11 And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us.

verse 11 See the parallels to this verse in John 1:14. The author of the gospel of John had seen in vision the glory of the premortal Christ and testifies here (in John 1:14) of his divine premortal existence. Here in verse 11, however, John testifies of the glory of the mortal Christ.

Is it possible to be precise in defining the Son’s “glory”? Certainly it has to do with the light which radiates from him, which light contains his character: his greatness, his majesty, his magnificence, his flawless reputation among all the intelligences. He is adored and honored and worshipped. He thus possesses the ultimate glory. We have also learned that the relationship between the Lord’s glory and his power is an intimate one. In fact it is glory or honor that secures for him his power. See *The Power of God* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 14.

“Spirit of truth” Again, as in verse 9, this phrase refers here to Jesus Christ and not to the Holy Ghost. Regarding Christ’s spirit birth in the premortal world, he was the “Firstborn.” In reference to his birth into mortality, he is the “Only begotten of the Father.” Again, his premortal spirit body—“the Spirit of truth”—came and dwelt in the flesh.

verses 12-14 These three verses constitute part of what was taken from the fulness of John’s original record. They are restored here to clarify the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son and to clarify the process through which the mortal Jesus eventually received the fulness of his Father—a process which the saints may emulate. Thus, these verses are the first detailed indication in the restoration scriptures of what has come to be called the principle of eternal progression or of becoming like God. Just as Jesus went through a progression from the beginning until he received the fulness of the Father at his resurrection, so his saints may experience a similar progression “from grace to grace” until we, through Christ, also receive the fulness of the Father (see verse 19).

12 And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace.

verse 12 “he received not of the fulness at the first” The phrase “at the first” refers not to the beginning of time in the premortal state but rather to the beginning of Jesus’s mortal life. President Lorenzo Snow taught of the mortal Christ’s progression here on earth: “When Jesus lay in the manger, a helpless infant, he knew not that he was the Son of God and that formerly he had created the earth. When the edict of Herod was issued, he knew nothing of it; he had not power to save himself; and his [guardian and step-father Joseph] and mother had to take him and [flee] into Egypt to preserve him from the effects of that edict. . . . He grew up to manhood, and during his progress it was revealed unto him who he was, and for what purpose he was in the world. The glory and power he possessed before he came into the world was made known unto him” (*CR*, April, 1901, 3).

A complete knowledge of his own identity, however, was not the only “fulness” he lacked when he was born into this world. He also needed the spiritual growth that would be afforded him by his mortal life and particularly by his atoning sacrifice and death.

“received grace for grace” This interesting expression needs just a bit of explanation. Keep in mind that grace is a term which refers to the love of God—particularly that aspect of his love that inclines him to give to an individual blessings the individual does not fully merit. When the Lord blesses a man under these circumstances, we may say that he gives to that individual “a grace.” These are given by the Lord and received by the individual in the form of blessings or gifts of the Spirit

(see *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 7).

A mortal also has the ability to give “graces” to other mortals. One of the highest forms of obedience to the Lord’s commandments is manifest in the man who is willing to extend, to another mortal, selfless charity when the receiving individual doesn’t really deserve it. In this way one mortal may give a grace to another mortal. In order to give a grace, the giver must sacrifice any concern which he has for himself and give willingly and freely to another. This is particularly challenging in the oft-encountered circumstances where the receiver does not merit, by his actions or speech, being treated charitably (Matthew 5:38-44).

When a man or woman on the earth gives a grace to another, he or she is particularly apt to receive graces from the Lord. The man can thus be said to spiritually progress “from grace to grace.” One way to interpret this expression is to regard the first grace as the one given by the man and the second, the grace given by the Lord. Yet another way to interpret it is that we grow spiritually by a series (hundreds and thousands) of the Lord’s graces. The spiritual growth the Lord Jesus Christ made during his mortal sojourn occurred by this same process.

The ultimate grace the Lord gave to humankind was his atoning sacrifice in Gethsemane and on the cross. The blessings or graces which the Lord then received in turn from the Father were commensurate with this great sacrifice.

13 And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;

verse 13 “continued from grace to grace” The key to this phrase is the word to, indicating that there are levels of grace, or degrees of progress which a man may reach in his spiritual progress. We are invited, of course, to participate in the same process and progress through the same levels.

14 And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first.

verse 14 Jesus Christ is called the Son of God because he is, in literal fact, the spirit offspring of God the Father. Also he is the Son of God because he is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. It is perfectly characteristic of all of the sons of God to begin at a spiritual level far lower than the Father and progress upward toward godhood. Only the Father possessed “the fulness” of spiritual gifts at the beginning of this round of creation.

15 And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son.

**16 And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father;
17 And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.**

verses 15-17 See the parallels to these verses in John 1:32-34. Verse 17 marks the end, in section 93, of the “fulness of the record of John.”

verse 17 “for he dwelt in him” The Father dwelt in the Son. Again we see evidence of the intimate relationship—the oneness—of the Father and the Son (see verse 3 and its commentary).

18 And it shall come to pass, that if you are faithful you shall receive the fulness of the record of John.

verse 18 It would seem that the “fulness of the record of John” may have two distinct meanings. At one level, the Lord may be promising us here that he will one day favor us by giving us additional scripture—a complete and unaltered record of the beloved apostle John. On another level, a man may achieve the great fulness of which John speaks, a fulness of light and truth. Man may grow in glory—grace for grace, truth for truth—and receive eventually of the fulness of the Father’s glory. Recall that in the Lord’s prayer, the Savior prayed that we may become one with him even as he and the Father are one—that is, one in glory or power. When a man receives a fulness of truth or light and truth, he knows all things and is himself a god.

19 I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness.

verse 19 “that you may understand and know how to worship” What does it mean to worship? Just how does the Lord expect us to worship him? What is the best way to worship God? The actual formula for worship is found in verse 20: “For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father.” We worship God by emulating the Son. As Jesus kept the Father’s will and was glorified, so we can imitate Jesus’s course of action, keep his will, and be glorified in him. Just as imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so also it is the truest form of worship. True worship is to imitate the Son of God and conform to his example in seeking God and in moving from grace to grace. Ultimately, the highest and truest form of worship is to become like the One we worship.

20 For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace.

verse 20 See the commentary for verse 19.

21 And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn;

verse 21 “I . . . am the Firstborn” Jesus Christ was the very first of our Heavenly Father’s spirit children in the premortal life (Colossians 1:15: “the firstborn of every creature”)—the birthright Son. Christ was chosen from the very beginning for his role as the Creator, as the Word, and as the Savior of humanity. The doctrine of the Savior’s status as firstborn was reemphasized by an official pronouncement of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve in 1916: “Among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors” (“The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition,” in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:33). Not only is the term Firstborn a declaration of Jesus’s birth status but it is also a significant name-title, one so important that the Savior’s most faithful followers in mortality will share it throughout the eternities. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated that just as The Church of Jesus Christ is the name of the Savior’s earthly Church, “so The Church of the Firstborn is his heavenly church, albeit its members are limited to exalted beings, for whom the family unit continues and who gain an inheritance in the highest heaven of the celestial world (Hebrews 12:22-23; D&C 93:22)” (*Promised Messiah*, 47).

22 And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn.

verse 22 “Those who are begotten through me” are those who obey Christ’s word and thus become members of the “church of the Firstborn”—they eventually inherit celestial glory.

23 Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth;

verse 23 Like Christ, in the premortal existence, we were also “Spirit[s] of truth” or spirit children of our Father in heaven. This is the first real indication in the Doctrine and Covenants of the doctrine of the premortal existence of souls. The great truth implicit in the teaching of this verse is that we are the same species of being as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We have not yet reached their full glory, but through the grace of God and obedience to his principles, we may in time do so.

24 And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;

verse 24 Here is the formal definition of truth. In philosophical terms, this passage is a declaration that there is an objective reality in the universe. Things are not merely whatever they are perceived to be, or believed to be, or interpreted to be. They are as they really are. Reality is objective rather than subjective.

When we learn a spiritual and eternal truth, we do not merely come to a mental realization of this or that truth. Rather, through our obedience to the Lord's commands, a truth is revealed to us. It becomes part of us and transforms and changes us into a being more like God.

There is no such thing as independent categories of truth. To God, truth is one great whole. We cannot say, for example, that "there is scientific truth and spiritual truth, and the two conflict." All truth is before God constantly, and one day scientific truth and spiritual truth will be understood by us as one great consistent whole.

Truth is communicated non-verbally between intelligences. Each constantly communicates his state—present, past, and future. For one who can receive this communication perfectly, all truth is before him continually.

25 And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.

verse 25 There is no such thing as relative truth. With God, all true things are certain. They are as they are, and there is no other way. While the Spirit of God seeks to teach us the objective reality of things in the universe as they really are (see Jacob 4:13), the spirit of Satan, seeks to teach us that truth is subjective or relative—that it is different things to different people. Satan was "a liar from the beginning" because he taught what was not true. He was able to convince many of our Heavenly Father's children that his lies were true. Obedience to or conformity to the facts of existence, to the objective realities of the universe, was never part of his makeup.

26 The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth, and John bore record of me, saying: He received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth;

verse 26 "I am the Spirit of truth" Here the Savior confirms that one of his titles is the "Spirit of truth." We have discussed this point previously and decided that while this title applies to him today and forever, it may also at times allude more to his own premortal existence.

27 And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

verse 27 There is no other way to receive, by personal revelation the eternal truths of the universe and the gifts of the Spirit except through obedience to the laws of God.

"unless he keepeth his commandments" We must remember that in this life we cannot expect to achieve perfection, or perfect obedience. In mortality the requirement is that we desire to keep his commandments (see D&C 6:8-9; 11:21); be "willing to . . . keep his commandments" (D&C 20:77); and "list to obey" his commandments (D&C 29:45; see also Alma 3:27). After the resurrection, there will be

time to perfect our performance, receive the desires of our hearts, and eventually to keep all the commandments, therefore ultimately receiving the fulness of the Father.

28 He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.

verse 28 When we eventually receive, as Christ received, a fulness of light and truth from the Father, it will only be by obedience to gospel principles. Then we shall know all things and be completely “glorified.”

Again, the man who “knoweth all things” is the man who has received all gifts of the Spirit. As discussed previously, to know a spiritual truth is more than having a mental understanding of the facts about that truth. It is to have the truth revealed to your soul only after you have been obedient to the laws on which that truth or blessing is predicated (D&C 130:20-21). The process of receiving spiritual knowledge is the process of spiritual growth—the process of receiving incremental gifts of the Spirit.

29 Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

verse 29 “Man was also in the beginning with God” “Intelligence” or “the light of truth” here refers to the eternal, uncreated element of man. The Prophet Joseph taught that each of us has from all eternity had some native intelligence or light that was and is uncreated by God (*TPJS*, 354). However, we know virtually nothing about conditions before our spirit birth except that each intelligence plus a spirit body make a spirit (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:127). Joseph Smith also taught that “the intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. That is good logic. That which has a beginning may have an end. There never was a time when there were not spirits [sic]; for they are co-equal [that is, co-eternal] with our Father in heaven” (*HC*, 6:311). It should be noted that the Prophet uses here the terms “intelligence,” “spirit,” “mind,” and “mind of man” interchangeably to refer to that native intelligence which existed in us before our spirit birth (*TPJS*, 353-354).

Did we exist prior to this moment of spirit birth as individuals capable of receiving light and truth? What is the nature of “intelligences”? Are they individuals capable of thinking and acting for themselves, or is “intelligence” simply that elementary matter without individual identity from which spirits are organized at their birth as previously maintained in this document? There are actually two schools of thought on this subject in the Church:

1. Intelligences are those eternal and uncreated entities which have co-existed with God forever. We know nothing of their origins and little of their nature. Each intelligence is autonomous and has its own individual identity. Each thinks and acts independently (D&C 93:30). Each has its agency and is not compelled to obey when the Father speaks though each knows, loves, and respects him and is inclined to obey

him. During the process of spiritual creation, some of the intelligences were combined with spirit in the process of divine procreation and became the literal spirit children of Heavenly parents. Your author strongly favors this view.

2. Man did not exist as a separate individual, possessing agency and independence, prior to spirit birth. The spirit was “organized” as uncreated, inanimate eternal element known as “intelligence” was combined with a body of inanimate spirit matter during the process of spirit birth. This view has been advocated by the likes of Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Charles W. Penrose, and Bruce R. McConkie.

30 All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

verse 30 “All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it” As intelligences and as spirit children of our heavenly parents we also had agency. Agency is a principle that is sacrosanct in all the universe. The grand doctrine of agency cannot and will not be violated.

It is easy for us to understand how an intelligence which has been given its agency is “independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself.” But how is “truth” similarly independent? Apparently this statement suggests simply that just as intelligences were not created by God and are coeternal with him, in like manner so is truth co-eternal with him and thus self-existent and independent of him. This may explain a phrase once used by Joseph Smith: “laws of eternal and self-existent principles” (*TPJS*, 181).

31 Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.

verse 31 While agency is vital for the spiritual progress of man, there is also a downside—a risk—to agency. A man’s agency, if exercised wrongly will work to that man’s condemnation.

It is a profound principle indeed that the Gods accomplish their purposes only by a voluntary system of obedience or agency. They apparently learned long ago that any degree of compulsion or violation of agency introduces into the system the seeds of rebellion and revolution.

32 And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation.

verse 32 When the spirit of man obeys the word of God—the gospel law—that spirit is enlightened and is enabled to receive even more light and truth. When the spirit of man disobeys God, he not only loses the light he might have received had he obeyed, but may also lose the light already accumulated from prior obedience.

33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

verse 33 “man is spirit” Here we must point out that the parallels to the Gospel of John in section 93 extend well beyond the first few verses of John chapter one. Here we have a parallel to John 4:24 which states that “God is a Spirit.” Let us digress a bit and address this particular verse in the gospel of John. Some critics of our view have argued that belief in an anthropomorphic God represents a departure from the biblical teachings, since John 4:24 teaches very clearly that “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” But the Latter-day Saints do not dispute this passage at all, unless it is interpreted as limiting God to being merely a spirit. Two of the most fundamental teachings of the New Testament are that Christ is genuinely God and that he at the same time genuinely has a body. He is a physically resurrected being.

Actually John 4:24 should be translated “God is Spirit” rather than “God is a Spirit,” for there is no indefinite article (*a, an*) in the Greek language, and it is always a matter of subjective judgment as to when the translator should add one. The consensus among biblical scholars is that there should not be an indefinite article at John 4:24. John 4:24 is not an essential definition of God, but a description of one of God’s characteristics; it means that God is Spirit for mankind because he brings the Spirit, he communicates with them in the Spirit. There are two other such descriptions in the John’s writings: “God is light” (1 John 1:5), and “God is love” (1 John 4: 8). Paul wrote that “God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). Just as God is not limited to being light and nothing else by 1 John 1:5, or to being love and nothing else by 1 John 4:8, or a consuming fire and nothing else by Hebrews 12:29, so he is not limited to being spirit and nothing else by John 4:24. That God is spirit does not limit him to being a spirit anymore than his being worshipped in spirit (John 4:24) requires worshippers to first jettison their physical bodies. In the LDS view God is spirit, but he is not merely spirit. The phrase “they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” indicates that the people of Samaria, here being addressed, were not worshipping the Father in truth. Christ had told the Samaritan woman just prior: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship.” The Samaritans were Pagans who worshipped graven or carved images. The real God is not a dead image, he has a spirit.

There is yet another sense in which the Father is a personage of spirit—he has a *spiritual body*. The scriptures provide us with the revealed definition of a spiritual body. A spiritual body is a resurrected body of flesh and bones. 1 Corinthians 15:44 speaks of the resurrection and explains: “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body [the mortal body], and there is a spiritual body [the resurrected body].” Also D&C 88:27 speaks of the righteous who will inherit the celestial kingdom. It says: “For notwithstanding they die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual body [a resurrected body].”

Now, let us return to the phrase at hand in verse 33—“man is spirit.” This phrase teaches that part of man’s eternal nature, like that of God, is spirit. We are the same type of being as God.

“the elements are eternal” Joseph Smith declared through revelation that the elements, the building blocks of all physical matter, are themselves eternal. The elements may be organized or disorganized; they may even change their form; and can apparently be transformed from element to energy or back again, but they can neither be created nor destroyed. The elements are co-eternal with God. This doctrine, of course, contradicts the tradition of the historical Christian churches, which has adopted the theological view that God created all things out of nothing (Latin, *ex nihilo*). Most Christian theologians would claim that God made everything out of nothing and that he also created the space to put it in. However, according to modern revelation, space, matter, intelligences, light, and truth are all eternal. God is the organizer, or the builder, of the universe, but the raw materials out of which he creates his worlds and universe, unorganized matter and elements, are as eternal as he is.

“spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy” A common view in traditional Christianity, following Hellenistic Greek ideas, has been that God and all things eternal are spiritual in nature and that nothing physical or material in nature could ever be eternal. Thus, while material elements exist, they are transitory and detract from the spiritual bliss to be enjoyed by non-physical entities in the eternities to come. In one Greek view, the material world was created by mistake by a lesser god known as the demiurge, who, while playing in the mud, so to speak, created physical matter and accidentally trapped spirits within it. For many Greek thinkers, the physical universe was a prison-house in which pure spirits had sadly become entrapped. Many Greeks, therefore, believed that the goal of eternity was to free ourselves from all things physical and to become, like God, totally non-physical in our being (see the discussion in Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 149). While Jews and early Christians believed in the literal resurrection of the dead, many in the Greek world preferred to believe only in the immortality of the soul (spirit). In time, denial of the importance or the eternity of the physical body led Christianity to the denigration of family relations and familial love, or the “continuation of the lives” or “continuation of the seeds” (D&C 132:22, 19; see also verse 30). The restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith taught once again that both matter and spirit are eternal and that true and lasting eternal felicity can occur only when these two eternal entities are permanently joined together by the power of God.

34 And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

verse 34 Since both spirit and matter are eternal, it follows that a fulness of eternal joy can only be had by those who can control and comprehend both of these materials. Were our natures limited to either spirit or element, we could not experience

the full spectrum of reality. To truly comprehend and control the eternal worlds, we must be able to deal with what exists in all its forms. Spirits without physical bodies cannot experience physical reality. To become like our Father in heaven, we must know and control all things, whether of the spirit or of the physical elements. Otherwise, we cannot create as he creates in both spirit and element.

Even with the memory of the pains of mortality, those spirits now inhabiting the postmortal spirit world view the absence of their spirits from their physical bodies as bondage (see D&C 138:50). Without both aspects of eternity, both the spiritual and the physical, they cannot experience a fulness of joy.

35 The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple.

verse 35 “The elements are the tabernacle of God” The 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants teaches that the light which emanates from God, the light of Christ, fills the immensity of space (verses 11-12). It teaches further that this light is “in all things” and “giveth life to all things” (verse 13). Christ is intimately associated with the light that emanates from him. Thus, we may say that Christ is “in all things”—in every atom and molecule (see every Colossians 1:17). Hence, the elements are the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God.

“man is the tabernacle of God” For the same reasons that the elements are the tabernacle of God, man is also the tabernacle of God. That is, the light of Christ permeates every part of matter that makes up man’s physical being, and man has the ability to take upon himself the light of Christ as he obeys the laws of God and grows spiritually. God is thus intimately involved with both aspects of man. Man is the tabernacle of God.

“whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple” The body is sacred, even a temple, because the light of Christ permeates our body. Abuse of this body, then, constitutes the sin of defiling a sacred place. The abuser will not be actually destroyed in terms of ceasing to exist. Rather, he will be cast out of the presence of God.

36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

verse 36 Interestingly, this verse seems to be rather more definitional than profoundly declaratory. The light which emanates from the Lord and fills the immensity of space may be spoken of as the “glory of God.” Man may receive this light, or “light and truth, as he obeys the Lord’s commands. The stage of “light and truth” an individual has achieved through obedience to eternal principles is his “intelligence.” Thus, the level of “light and truth” or the level of God’s glory a man has received is his intelligence. As has been discussed, this intelligence is not the same as the worldly I. Q. of the

individual, nor does it relate to the level of secular education which a man has received. This intelligence, this glory of God, is available to scholars and laborers alike.

37 Light and truth forsake that evil one.

verse 37 Satan, for all of his knowledge and abilities, is excluded from receiving the light of Christ. Thus, he can never progress spiritually. Nor can he read and interpret the light emanating from another individual. God can interpret a man's light and know the truth about him without a word's being spoken. Satan cannot.

Another possible meaning of this verse is that the individual who has acquired light and truth through his obedience has an increased ability to resist (to "forsake") the evil one.

38 Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

verse 38 "Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning" When is the "beginning" to which this verse refers? And what exactly is innocence? Our quest to become like God began very long ago in the premortal world, even prior to our spirit birth. It began as soon as we were exposed to the laws of God. As intelligences, we had no beginning and we have always had our agency. In the period even prior to our spirit birth—after we were selected to part of this round of our Father's creation—when we existed as individual intelligences, we began to progress to become more like God. When we obeyed, we qualified to receive increments of his divine attributes or gifts of the Spirit. When we disobeyed, we did not progress. This same progress continued following our spirit birth. In the premortal world were we always considered to be "innocent"? Certainly not; we find much evidence of accountability for sin in the premortal world. One third of the Father's children rebelled and were cast down to earth, never to receive mortal bodies. Were they accountable for their sins? Indeed they were. Were they considered innocent? Certainly not.

In what way and when, on his long road toward becoming like God, is the spirit of man considered to be innocent? And when is he not considered to be innocent? We might answer these questions by saying that a man is considered to be innocent beginning from the moment of his mortal birth and extending to his reaching the age of accountability, which age is eight years. After reaching that age, if he commits sin, then he is no longer innocent, but rather considered guilty of sin. While all spirits are not considered to be innocent during their premortal phase, every spirit who is born into mortality will be born innocent. Hence, we may include the premortal period as a time when all who were bound for earth might be considered innocent, since they would be forgiven of their sins at the moment of mortal birth. Certainly all of these had committed sin during their premortal experience and were variable in their valor in the cause of Jehovah. Elder Orson Pratt, writing about the nature of sin in our premortal existence,

said: “Among the two-thirds [of God’s spirit children] who remained, it is highly probable, that, there were many who were not valiant . . . but whose sins were of such a nature that they could be forgiven through faith in the future sufferings of the Only Begotten of the Father, and through their sincere repentance and reformation. We see no impropriety in Jesus offering himself as an acceptable offering and sacrifice before the Father to atone for the sins of his brethren, committed, not only in the second, but also in the first estate” (*The Seer*, no. 4, 1:54).

So we may conclude that the word *beginning* in this verse includes the premortal phase of all mortality-bound spirits and the first eight years of the mortal experience. For the sins committed in this period, they are considered innocent. But are we certain that we understand the meaning of the term *innocent*? Let us continue.

Fundamental to our further discussion is the definition of sin. Sin is simply disobedience to or transgression of a law of God—“sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

Next, we must consider in more detail the concept of accountability. An individual may obey or disobey the law both prior to the age of accountability or after he reaches the age of accountability. In both stages, obedience to the law or transgression of the law (sin) has consequences. Obedience inevitably results in spiritual growth—the incremental acquisition by personal revelation of gifts of the Spirit or increments of the attributes of God. We have learned that these gifts are actually received via the medium of the light of Christ. The obedient individual takes on more of the light of Christ and therefore grows in glory and “intelligence”—he grows to become more like God. Disobedience, on the other hand, always results in a failure to grow—the light of Christ is withheld—and habitual disobedience may also result in the loss of spiritual gifts previously received. These consequences of obedience and disobedience are independent of whether or not the individual has reached the age of accountability. One may therefore ask, “Can an unaccountable individual commit sin?” The answer is yes, and he will suffer the consequences of sin just described, but he will not be held accountable for that sin.

What does it mean then to be held accountable for sin? The law of justice is very clear. It stipulates that when an accountable individual commits sin, or violates a law of God, a penalty is assessed. An individual with a penalty is no longer worthy to enter the presence of God. In fact, he is not worthy to enter any kingdom of glory. If the individual is to one day return to the presence of God or enter any other degree of glory, then the penalty must be removed—he must be “forgiven” of his sin. This forgiveness is conditional and dependent on his willingness to commit himself to Jesus Christ and his gospel and strive continually to obey the Lord commands. If he does so commit, then the Savior will appeal to the law of justice on his behalf, and the penalty demanded by the law of justice will be removed—we say that he is forgiven of his sin. He will then be “again, in [his] infant state, innocent before God.” The Savior has earned this vital

privilege—that of being able to dictate the removal of the penalties of sin—by virtue of his atoning sacrifice in Gethsemane and on the cross. And what happens when an unaccountable individual commits sin? He will not be kept out of the kingdom of heaven, or any other kingdom of glory, because of his sin. This occurs either because the law of justice does not penalize the unaccountable individual or the unaccountable individual is automatically and without condition forgiven his sin by virtue of the Savior’s atonement. It is common for a church member to believe that an unaccountable individual is not able to commit sin. Technically, this is incorrect. The unaccountable individual can commit sin and will experience the consequences of that sin relative to his spiritual growth. He will not, however, be kept out of a kingdom of glory because of his sin.

Does this mean that all individuals whose mortal sojourn ends prior to their reaching the age of accountability—that all who suffer mortal death while still in a state of innocence—are automatically admitted to the celestial heaven? Not necessarily. The judgment that determines the degree of glory in which an individual will spend eternity is based on more than whether or not he has any outstanding penalties levied by the demands of justice. Actually all individuals who enter any kingdom of glory will ultimately confess Christ and the blessings of his atonement will be extended to them. They will all be forgiven of their sins. Which degree of glory they inherit is up to the Lord, and it would seem that only a relatively “few” (Matthew 7:13-14; 3 Nephi 27:33) will have progressed satisfactorily so that the Lord will find them worthy of celestial glory (see also the commentary for D&C 137:10). Apparently, many of those considered to be unaccountable at the moment of their mortal death would not be happy in a celestial eternal environment. They would not be able to “abide” the celestial heaven (D&C 84:22-24). The Lord is able to judge each and every individual perfectly based on the individual’s heart (D&C 137:5-9)—he will judge based upon who and what they really are. If they are of celestial character, they will be exalted in that realm. If they fit better in a lesser degree of glory, then that will be their lot.

39 And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

verse 39 “And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth”

Can that wicked one, Satan, really take away light and truth? While he may not be able, by his own doing, remove spiritual gifts from any individual, he certainly uses his considerable abilities to create an environment when individuals may choose to habitually commit sin, which may result in a loss of spiritual gift previously received. The “tradition of their father” refers to secular philosophies which are untrue and may lead many away from the eternal truth. These traditions or philosophies are promoted by Satan.

40 But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

verse 40 “I have commanded you” See, for example, D&C 20:70; 55:4; 68:25, 31-32. We will learn in succeeding verses that the Lord had also given private revelations on this subject to some of the church leaders gathered at the time of this revelation.

verses 41-50 In these verses each member of the First Presidency (Joseph Smith, Sydney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams) and the bishop of the Church in Kirtland (Newel K. Whitney) are rebuked by the Lord for problems with their families. The exact nature of these brethren’s family difficulties are left unspoken here, for they are private matters. It is a credit to the humility and integrity of the Prophet that these verses were not taken out of the revelation by were left in for all to read.

It is worthy of note that the Lord does not hesitate to rebuke pointedly and publicly when his leaders and members neglect the proper instruction of their children.

If children are taught the truth and then stray, the condemnation is upon their own heads. If parents fail to adequately instruct the children and then the children stray, the sins still fall upon the heads of the children, but the condemnation of disobeying this commandment falls upon the heads of the parents.

41 But verily I say unto you, my servant Frederick G. Williams, you have continued under this condemnation;

42 You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

verse 42 This verse contains a most sobering observation, especially for leaders of the Lord’s Church. Though they may be laboring diligently in the kingdom, there is no excuse for neglecting the spiritual education of their children. The Lord tells Frederick G. Williams that some of his current sins are due to the neglect of his family.

43 And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house.

44 Verily, I say unto my servant Sidney Rigdon, that in some things he hath not kept the commandments concerning his children; therefore, first set in order thy house.

45 Verily, I say unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., or in other words, I will call you friends, for you are my friends, and ye shall have an inheritance with me—

verse 45 “I will call you friends” The Lord addresses the Prophet and his associates as “friends.” This indicates that the relationship of these brethren to the Lord

goes beyond just Master and servant, and the Lord holds out to them the real hope of their eventual exaltation.

46 I called you servants for the world's sake, and ye are their servants for my sake—

verse 46 Though the members of the First Presidency are regarded as “friends” of the Lord, they are also very much his servants also laboring for the salvation of the world.

47 And now, verily I say unto Joseph Smith, Jun.—You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked before the Lord;

verse 47 One need not suppose from this verse that the Prophet was guilty of some great, hidden sins, or that he is being rejected here by the Lord. Rather, like all of us, Joseph was human and continued to struggle with the struggles of mortality.

48 Your family must needs repent and forsake some things, and give more earnest heed unto your sayings, or be removed out of their place.

verse 48 One may well suppose that this warning applied less to Joseph's children, who were still very young, and more to Emma, Joseph's parents, or to his brothers and sisters.

49 What I say unto one I say unto all; pray always lest that wicked one have power in you, and remove you out of your place.

50 My servant Newel K. Whitney also, a bishop of my church, hath need to be chastened, and set in order his family, and see that they are more diligent and concerned at home, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place.

51 Now, I say unto you, my friends, let my servant Sidney Rigdon go on his journey, and make haste, and also proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the gospel of salvation, as I shall give him utterance; and by your prayer of faith with one consent I will uphold him.

verse 51 “let my servant Sidney Rigdon go on his journey” Perhaps Sidney was called on a mission at this time. However, either he did not go or his mission was fairly short in duration, for he was back in Kirtland by June 21 and probably by June 3 (*HC*, 1:354, 352). The reader will recall that section 93 was received on May 6, 1833.

“proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” The *acceptable year* or the *acceptable day* of the Lord is the moment, the point in time, when salvation is offered to the souls of men (see also Luke 4:19; D&C 138:31).

52 And let my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Frederick G. Williams make haste also, and it shall be given them even according to the prayer of faith; and

inasmuch as you keep my sayings you shall not be confounded in this world, nor in the world to come.

verse 52 “let my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Frederick G. Williams make haste” The Lord refers to Joseph’s work on the JST. The New Testament of the JST had been completed on February 2, 1833. Work on portions of the Old Testament continued until July 2 of that year.

53 And, verily I say unto you, that it is my will that you should hasten to translate my scriptures, and to obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion. Amen.

verse 53 In this verse the Lord points out the importance of secular education (“history, “countries,” kingdoms,” “laws of . . . man”) as well as the importance of divine revelation (“laws of God”) in the salvation of Zion.

Credit is given for some of the above material on section 93 to Dr. LaMar E. Garrard, a professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University and is taken from his valuable essay on section 93 (*Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 365).

The Savior came to this earth with an assigned mission. He was successful in it and received a fulness of glory, of power, of truth, and of joy. We, also, are on this earth to perform the missions given to us for the furthering of mankind and for the good of God’s kingdom on earth. If we are successful, the rewards are the same—a fulness of glory, power, truth and joy.

Brief Historical Setting

In the late spring of 1833, the interest of the saints was turned by the Lord to building. The saints barely had sufficient funds to maintain themselves, yet they were commanded to begin an active building program. The Lord commanded them to build a church office building and a church printing office [**D&C 94 - Church Building Program**], and he also rebuked the saints for ignoring his commandment to build a temple in Kirtland. He told them to get to work on it immediately [**D&C 95 - Building the Kirtland Temple**]. The saints took the Lord’s chastisement seriously and set to work within a few days of receiving section 95.

The saints contended with almost overwhelming problems and deficiencies as they built the temple. They had no land, money, architectural plans, or construction plans. Yet they did not lack for faith and enthusiasm. They solicited contributions from members in and out of Kirtland, and with the Lord’s help they found a suitable plat of land for the temple site [**D&C 96 - Peter French Farm**].

Section 94 Church Building Program

This revelation was probably received on the same day as section 93, which was March 6, 1833. There has been some confusion over this date, as the oldest copy of section 94 appears in a letter the First Presidency sent to the saints in Zion on August 6, 1833. The language of this letter can be understood to imply that section 94 was received along with section 97 on August 2, 1833. In addition, the Kirtland Revelation Book specifically dates section 94 to August 2 (*Kirtland Revelation Book*, 64). Nevertheless, it is likely that May 6, 1833, is the correct date (see *HC*, 1:346).

Review the background material for section 93. At the meeting of high priests in Kirtland on May 4, held for the purpose of considering ways and means for raising the funds to build the School of the Prophets, a building committee of the Church for Ohio was appointed. Also the group of gathered high priests committed themselves to raise funds to begin the building program in Kirtland. Two days later, the Lord gave section 94.

In this section, the Lord commanded the saints to make plans for building two buildings, a church office building (“a house for the presidency”) and a church printing office (“a house . . . for the work of printing of the translation of my scriptures”). Each building was to be 55 by 65 feet in size, and each was to consist of two stories. The footprint of each building was to be identical in size to that of the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 95:15). The three were to be built side by side on three adjoining lots. Each of the three was to be much like our current temples in that there was to be no unclean person allowed inside any of them (verses 6-8, 12). The saints were not actually to begin building until the Lord gave further specific commandments concerning them (see verse 16).

Today the two lots on which these buildings were to have been built are vacant. They were never built. There is no evidence that the Lord ever gave the commandment to begin the buildings. The Reorganized LDS Church has a beautiful garden area there, from which a visitor may view the temple.

The church building committee for Ohio which had been appointed in the May 4th meeting is confirmed in section 94. It consisted of Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, and Jared Carter. Each of these brethren is given a lot for his inheritance, and as a committee they are appointed to be in charge of the church’s building program.

1 And again, verily I say unto you, my friends, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall commence a work of laying out and preparing a beginning and foundation of the city of the stake of Zion, here in the land of Kirtland, beginning at my house.

verse 1 “a commandment . . . that ye shall commence a work of laying out and preparing” As mentioned, this commandment was not for the saints to actually begin building the two buildings or “the city of the stake of Zion.” Rather, this commandment is to “commence a work of . . . preparing a beginning and foundation” for the buildings and for such a city. It seems likely that the tentative nature of the language here reflects the knowledge that the settlement at Kirtland would not be permanent (see also D&C 64:21).

At the time section 94 was received, only one hundred to one hundred fifty active saints were living in the Kirtland area (Backman and Cowan, *Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants*, 85; Robison, *First Mormon Temple*, 28). Thus, the obligation for building the temple in Kirtland and the two auxiliary structures described here fell on a church population smaller than an average ward today.

“the city of the stake of Zion” The Lord reveals that Kirtland is to be “the city of the stake of Zion” (see D&C 82:13 and its commentary), which means it would be a planned community of saints, with the temple serving as the center point (“beginning at my house”). The city would be laid out by lots north, south, east, and west of the temple. The two lots immediately south of the temple would be for the proposed church administration building and printing office. Three other lots were to be reserved for the members of the building committee in return for their faithful service.

2 And behold, it must be done according to the pattern which I have given unto you.

verse 2 “the pattern which I have given unto you” This likely refers to a pattern for the city itself (not for the buildings themselves), which apparently Joseph had already received. The plans for the buildings were received by revelation in early June.

3 And let the first lot on the south be consecrated unto me for the building of a house for the presidency, for the work of the presidency, in obtaining revelations; and for the work of the ministry of the presidency, in all things pertaining to the church and kingdom.

verse 3 “a house for the presidency” The first lot south of the temple was to be a church administration building.

4 Verily I say unto you, that it shall be built fifty-five by sixty-five feet in the width thereof and in the length thereof, in the inner court.

verse 4 “in the inner court” The specified dimensions of the building (55 by 65 feet) did not apply to the dimensions as measured on the outside of the walls. Rather, they applied to the actual dimensions of the room or rooms inside the walls—the actual working space inside the building.

5 And there shall be a lower court and a higher court, according to the pattern which shall be given unto you hereafter.

verse 5 “a lower court and a higher court” The building would consist of two stories.

6 And it shall be dedicated unto the Lord from the foundation thereof, according to the order of the priesthood, according to the pattern which shall be given unto you hereafter.

verse 6 “it shall be dedicated unto the Lord” Church buildings, even office buildings and printing offices, are dedicated to the Lord for the performance of his work upon the earth. What is said here (verses 6-9) of the proposed structures at Kirtland applies equally to church properties of every sort today. While most of these are not temples, they still belong to the Lord. They are intended for his service, and so they are his houses and are set apart and dedicated to him. Thus, there is an obligation on the part of the saints today to keep church properties clean and undefiled both physically and spiritually, just as there was such an obligation for the saints in Kirtland.

7 And it shall be wholly dedicated unto the Lord for the work of the presidency.

8 And ye shall not suffer any unclean thing to come in unto it; and my glory shall be there, and my presence shall be there.

9 But if there shall come into it any unclean thing, my glory shall not be there; and my presence shall not come into it.

10 And again, verily I say unto you, the second lot on the south shall be dedicated unto me for the building of a house unto me, for the work of the printing of the translation of my scriptures, and all things whatsoever I shall command you.

verse 10 “a house . . . for the work of the printing” The proposed printing office was to publish Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible, which was essentially finished on July 2, two months after section 94 was received (see the supplemental article, *Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision of the Bible—the JST*). In addition, the printing office in Kirtland was also to reprint *The Evening and the Morning Star* which had originally been published in Independence, Missouri, by W. W. Phelps. This reprint of the *Star* was eventually published in the temporary printing office west of the temple, but the saints left Ohio before the Joseph Smith Translation could be published there. However, in 1835, the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was also published at the temporary printing office in Kirtland, Ohio. The *Messenger and Advocate* was also printed there. This temporary printing office building was burned to the ground in January 1838 (Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 197).

11 And it shall be fifty-five by sixty-five feet in the width thereof and the length thereof, in the inner court; and there shall be a lower and a higher court.

12 And this house shall be wholly dedicated unto the Lord from the foundation thereof, for the work of the printing, in all things whatsoever I shall command you, to be holy, undefiled, according to the pattern in all things as it shall be given unto you.

verses 13-14 Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, and Jared Carter had been appointed as the building committee for the Church in Ohio by a conference of high priests held on May 4, 1833, two days before the probable date of section 94's being received. While the Lord directed that these three should receive city lots, the responsibility and burden of constructing homes on these lots was to rest upon the individuals themselves. However, the following year, in April 1834, the United Firm at Kirtland was temporarily dissolved and reorganized. As a result, the lands mentioned in section 94 were distributed differently than was directed here. As a result of "covetousness" in the Church (D&C 104:4), the instruction of section 104 superseded all previous revelations concerning the disposition of properties and funds in Kirtland (see D&C 104:4, 11-16).

13 And on the third lot shall my servant Hyrum Smith receive his inheritance.

14 And on the first and second lots on the north shall my servants Reynolds Cahoon and Jared Carter receive their inheritances—

15 That they may do the work which I have appointed unto them, to be a committee to build mine houses, according to the commandment, which I, the Lord God, have given unto you.

16 These two houses are not to be built until I give unto you a commandment concerning them.

verse 16 The administration building and the printing office are not to be built either in Kirtland or in Missouri until the Lord gives further instructions concerning them. Since building the Kirtland Temple exhausted both the saints and their resources in Ohio and mob action drove the saints from Jackson County in Missouri, these two auxiliary "houses" were never constructed in either location, although a smaller structure was built for church offices, the printing office, and the School of the Prophets in Kirtland.

17 And now I give unto you no more at this time. Amen.

Section 95 Build the Kirtland Temple

In Section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which Joseph had received on December 27, 1832, the Lord commanded the saints to build a temple in Kirtland. They were specifically commanded to organize and “establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (D&C 88:119). It appears that the saints did not take this command seriously. In May of 1833, as alluded to in the background material for section 94, the church leaders committed themselves to build a church office building and a printing shop. No definite plans, however, had been made to start a temple. Thus in section 95, received June 1, 1833, the Lord chastised the saints for their “very grievous sin” of neglecting to build the more important structure, and he commands them to get to work. (Much of the following on the period of building the Kirtland Temple will be quoted or paraphrased from Milton V. Backman, Jr.’s, *The Heavens Resound*, 42-61.)

The brethren took this chastisement seriously, and four days after this revelation was received, without knowing where the money was going to come from, they commenced work on the temple. Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon started digging by hand the trench for the foundation, and George A. Smith hauled the first wagon load of stone. Also, the building committee (Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, and Jared Carter) issued a circular to the saints urging them to extend themselves and contribute to this vital project.

The commandment to build the Kirtland Temple presented major and almost overwhelming challenges. The saints needed architectural plans, construction materials, money to purchase land, and provisions and shelter for the laborers. The saints were so poor and so few in numbers early in 1833 (one hundred to one hundred fifty saints in Kirtland), that, according to Benjamin F. Johnson, when construction of the temple began, “there was not a scraper and hardly a plow that could be found among the saints” to dig the foundation (B. Johnson, *My Life’s Review*, 10-11). Joseph Smith observed: “Notwithstanding the Church was poor, yet our unity, harmony, and charity abounded to strengthen us to do the commandments of God” (HC, 1:349).

In April 1833, the Church had purchased 103 acres from Peter French, the Peter French farm, for five thousand dollars. It was eventually decided to locate the temple on the southeast corner of this property on a wooded plateau overlooking the beautiful Chagrin River valley.

When construction began on the temple, detailed architectural plans were not available. Lucy Mack Smith reported that Joseph asked the brethren to present their views concerning construction of the temple. Some favored a frame building and others suggested a log house. The Prophet reminded the men that they were not building a

house for themselves, but for God. “Shall we, brethren, build a house for our God of logs? No, I have a better plan than that. I have a plan of the house of the Lord given by himself; and you will soon see by this, the difference between our calculations and his idea” (*History of Joseph Smith*, Lucy Mack Smith, 230). According to Truman O. Angell, one of the supervisors in the building of the temple, the Prophet informed his counselors in the First Presidency, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, that the Lord would show them the plans of the house to be built. The three men knelt in prayer June 3 or 4, 1833, and the building appeared before them in vision. After completion of the temple, Frederick G. Williams, as he was standing in the completed temple, said that the hall where they were standing coincided precisely with the room he had beheld in the vision (*Autobiography of Truman O. Angell*, 4).

On July 23, 1833, six weeks after workers had started digging the foundation, twenty-four elders met on the temple site to lay the cornerstones. Throughout the summer and fall of 1833, nearly every able-bodied saint in Kirtland worked on the temple. Only those engaged in missionary service were excused, and many of the missionary elders assisted in this project when they were not preaching in the mission field. Joseph acted as foreman in the stone quarry and frequently worked on the construction project. “Come brethren,” he would say. “Let us go into the stone quarry and work for the Lord.” “Every Saturday,” Heber C. Kimball observed, “we brought out every team to draw stone to the temple.” Usually in one day they could haul sufficient rocks to keep the masons busy for a full week (*JD*, 10:165).

The women also assisted in the project. Emma Smith was in charge of sewing and cooking for the workers. A recent convert to the Church in Canada, Artemus Millet, a skilled mason, was recruited to help in the project.

Throughout the period of the building of the temple, the Church was in great financial distress, and since everyone was working on the temple, funds were sorely needed to sustain the workers. One of the first to contribute substantially to the project was Vienna Jaques (see D&C 90:28-31) who consecrated all of her material wealth to the Church. Another vital contributor was John Tanner, a wealthy farmer and businessman from Bolton, New York. Saints outside of Kirtland were petitioned to give top priority to contributing money to the project. Missionaries were even dispatched from Kirtland, not to preach the gospel, but to solicit contributions from among the saints. It is estimated that the final cost of the temple was somewhere between forty and sixty thousand dollars.

Not only did financial woes plague the project, but the saints also had to deal with constant persecution. During the fall and winter of 1833-34, mobs threatened to tear down the walls of the temple, and men were posted to protect the walls. Heber C. Kimball reported that for weeks some men did not remove their working clothes and slept with rifles in their arms (*The Orson Pratt Journals*, 26).

In the fall and winter of 1833, work on the temple was delayed also by the immediate need to build a building to house the printing press. This latter building was also to house the School of the Prophets. This project thus was given high priority, and construction of both this building and the temple were carried on concurrently. It should be noted that this was not the building commanded in section 94 to be built to house a print shop. Rather, this was a small, temporary building on the northwest corner of the temple site. In the attic of this building the first washings were done. It was later burned down, supposedly by faithful members of the Church to keep the apostates from using the printing press against the Church.

During the summer of 1834, the work on the temple practically stopped as Kirtland members raised an army (Zion's Camp) and collected money to assist the beleaguered saints in Missouri. Since most able-bodied men in Kirtland participated in the Zion's Camp march to Missouri between May and September 1834, few laborers were available to work on the temple (see commentary for Section 103).

Since the temple walls were two feet thick and more than sixty feet high, an enormous amount of stone was needed. The exterior was plastered with stucco made of crushed limestone mixed with clay and bluish river sand. Crushed glass was added so that the bluish tinted walls glistened in the light of the sun.

The building consisted of two large auditoriums built one above the other. The third or attic floor was divided into five rooms. Four tiers of pulpits, arranged like a flight of stairs, were built on the east and west ends of the two main auditoriums. A small hall was constructed across the front of the temple with steep winding stairs on the north and south sides of the vestibule. There was no baptismal font in the Kirtland temple, for that ordinance had not yet been revealed. On the front of the temple was placed the inscription: "House of the Lord. Built by the Church of Christ in 1834."

Under the direction of Brigham Young, a skilled painter, workers began putting finishing touches on the building early in 1836. By March 27, 1836, the building was sufficiently finished to be dedicated. Thus, less than three years after construction began, the saints prepared to dedicate the first temple in this dispensation.

Even though the saints knew that their stay in Kirtland was only temporary, there were several reasons why a temple would be needed there. A sacred temple would be necessary in order for additional priesthood keys and instruction to be transmitted to the prophet Joseph and his associates. Once those keys had been received, a temple would also be necessary for performing some of the ordinances associated with them. Without these further keys, instructions, and ordinances, it would not be possible to organize and train a quorum of Twelve Apostles (see verse 4), and the Church would be hindered or eventually even stopped in its progress. Moreover, without the benefit of a holy temple, individual members could not receive the fulfillment of certain promises made to them in earlier revelations (for example, D&C 76:116-118; 88:68; 93:19-20; see also 97:16).

Scripture Mastery**D&C 95** Build the Kirtland Temple**D&C 95:1** Whom I love I also chasten.**D&C 95:5-6** But behold, verily I say unto you, that there are many who have been ordained among you, whom I have called but few of them are chosen. They who are not chosen have sinned a very grievous sin, in that they are walking in darkness at noon-day.**1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you—****verse 1 “whom I love I also chasten”** “Chasten” should be understood less to mean to correct by punishment, but rather “to purify from errors or faults.” The emphasis here is not on any punishment the saints are to receive, but on their intended correction and their purification from error. There are times when the path to being more like God leads us, of necessity, through suffering for our mistakes, yet God’s primary concern is not that we be punished, but that we be corrected. The primary goal of bringing about repentance is often assisted by chastening which God administers to those whom he loves.**2 Wherefore, ye must needs be chastened and stand rebuked before my face;****3 For ye have sinned against me a very grievous sin, in that ye have not considered the great commandment in all things, that I have given unto you concerning the building of mine house;****verses 1-3 “the great commandment”** This phrase refers to the commandment to build a temple in Kirtland. The saints are here rebuked for failure to start construction on the temple. Almost six months had passed from December 27, 1832, to June 1, 1833, and nothing had been done. Four days after this rebuke, the saints started construction! The Lord chastens those he loves, which chastening prepares a way for their deliverance from temptation and sin.**4 For the preparation wherewith I design to prepare mine apostles to prune my vineyard for the last time, that I may bring to pass my strange act, that I may pour out my Spirit upon all flesh—****verse 4 “For the preparation wherewith I design to prepare mine apostles”**
Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

The Kirtland Temple was necessary before the apostles (who had not yet been called), and other elders of the Church could receive the endowment which the Lord had in store for them. The elders had been out preaching the Gospel and crying repentance ever since the Church was organized and many great men had heard and

embraced the truth, nevertheless the elders could not go forth in the power and authority which the Lord intended them to possess until this Temple was built where he could restore keys and powers essential to the more complete preaching of the Gospel and the administering in its ordinances (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:406).

“to prune my vineyard for the last time” In this final dispensation the Lord’s missionaries are going forth to gather scattered Israel before the appointed day of burning when the vineyard will be purified of corruption. The imagery in this passage is similar to that used in the allegory of the olive tree. Pruning is the cutting off of evil individuals and preserving the righteous for spiritual instruction.

“my strange act” The term “strange act” refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is strange to those outside the Church who view the Church from the perspective of worldly wisdom. Without the spirit, those outside the Church might well regard the gospel as strange. In Isaiah 28:21, the Lord refers to both his immediate and his long-term intentions as “strange” as judged by the worldly leaders of Judah in that day (see Isaiah 28:15-21). From our modern perspective, both the restoration and the second coming of the Lord would be examples of the strange works of the Lord.

5 But behold, verily I say unto you, that there are many who have been ordained among you, whom I have called but few of them are chosen.

verse 5 “many . . . whom I have called but few of them are chosen” To be “called” is to have been foreordained in the premortal existence to keep the Lord’s commandments and labor in his earthly kingdom. To be chosen is to have performed one’s stewardship so faithfully that the individual is eventually sealed up to their exaltation in the celestial kingdom. This verse also leaves us with the warning that some of the saints, though they may have been “called,” may not, in fact be “chosen” (see also D&C 121:34-37).

6 They who are not chosen have sinned a very grievous sin, in that they are walking in darkness at noon-day.

verse 6 “walking in darkness at noon-day” To sin wilfully against God’s light after we already know the truth is not an act of ignorance but an act of rebellion. Those who rebel against what they already know, choose to walk in darkness, even though there may be light all around them, and sinning in rebellion against the light is more “grievous” than sinning in ignorance.

7 And for this cause I gave unto you a commandment that you should call your solemn assembly, that your fastings and your mourning might come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, which is by interpretation, the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end.

verse 7 “call your solemn assembly” The solemn assembly is a meeting that must be held in the temple. The prophet Joseph taught the Twelve, “We must have all things prepared, and call our solemn assembly as the Lord has commanded us, that we may be able to accomplish his great work, and it must be done in God’s own way. The house of the Lord must be prepared, and the solemn assembly called and organized in it, according to the order of the house of God; and in it we must attend to the ordinance of washing of feet. . . . The endowment you are so anxious about, you cannot comprehend now. . . . You need an endowment, brethren, in order that you may be prepared and able to overcome all things. . . . All who are prepared, and are sufficiently pure to abide the presence of the Savior will see him in the solemn assembly” (*HC*, 2:308-310).

“the Lord of Sabaoth” Ordinarily, *sabaoth* in the Old Testament comes from the Hebrew *sabaot*, meaning “hosts” or “armies” (see D&C 87:7 and its commentary). Here, however, it would come from the very similar root *sh-b-t*, the plural of which could be understood in New Testament times as “the first day of the week” (see references in Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 739).

8 Yea, verily I say unto you, I gave unto you a commandment that you should build a house, in the which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high;

verse 8 “I gave unto you a commandment that you should build a house” This phrase refers to the Lord’s prior commandments to build a temple in Kirtland (D&C 88:119; 90:7-9).

“I design to endow those whom I have chosen” See the commentary for D&C 38:32 for “endow.” Many of the brethren had been ordained to the priesthood but not all of them were at that time worthy to receive the ordinances that would be made available in the Kirtland Temple. In D&C 105:33-35, the Lord would instruct the Prophet that the time had come for those who had been ordained, and who were also judged worthy, to receive an endowment of power in the Kirtland Temple. The Far West Record for June 23, 1834, lists those high priests chosen to receive the blessings of the Kirtland Temple. It is important to remember that the complete endowment as we know it today was not revealed to the saints in the Kirtland Temple. Those who were chosen at that time received only preparatory ordinances. The full endowment would eventually be revealed to the saints in the Nauvoo Temple a decade later.

For a discussion of the endowment, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 18, *The Temple*.

9 For this is the promise of the Father unto you; therefore I command you to tarry, even as mine apostles at Jerusalem.

verse 9 “tarry, even as mine apostles at Jerusalem” The resurrected Lord said to his apostles, “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Luke later recalled this same promise of the Lord to his apostles: “And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me” (Acts 1:4). The Lord desired that they tarry until they could receive the endowment.

10 Nevertheless, my servants sinned a very grievous sin; and contentions arose in the school of the prophets; which was very grievous unto me, saith your Lord; therefore I sent them forth to be chastened.

verse 10 “my servants sinned a very grievous sin” The tardiness of the saints in building the temple and the contentions that arose in the School of the Prophets are characterized as sins grievous enough to require the chastening of the Lord.

After reading verse 10, I became concerned that I did not recall any previous reference to contentions in the school of the prophets. The footnotes in our scriptures are not helpful. I consulted my friend Robert J. Woodford whose PhD. dissertation was “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants” (Brigham Young University, 1974). He told me that in covering this matter he was unable to find any extant document that shed light on this episode of contention. The *Joseph Smith Papers* edition on this period is due to be released in November of 2014. Perhaps we will learn more then.

11 Verily I say unto you, it is my will that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it.

verse 11 This verse doubtless gave the faithful saints much courage as they endeavored to build the temple.

12 If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness.

verse 12 “the love of the Father shall not continue” Not that the Father will ever stop loving you, regardless of your eternal reward, but for those who are disobedient and not exalted, that glorious opportunity to dwell in person with the Father and bask in his love eternally will be gone forever.

13 Now here is wisdom, and the mind of the Lord—let the house be built, not after the manner of the world, for I give not unto you that ye shall live after the manner of the world;

14 Therefore, let it be built after the manner which I shall show unto three of you, whom ye shall appoint and ordain unto this power.

verses 13-14 “let the house be built” The temple will be built according to a plan revealed by the Lord.

15 And the size thereof shall be fifty and five feet in width, and let it be sixty-five feet in length, in the inner court thereof.

verse 15 The size of the temple is specified. It will be 55 feet by 65 feet. Actually, these are the dimensions of the “inner court” or the chapel area. When the foyer is included, the outside dimensions of the Kirtland Temple are much greater.

16 And let the lower part of the inner court be dedicated unto me for your sacrament offering, and for your preaching, and your fasting, and your praying, and the offering up of your most holy desires unto me, saith your Lord.

verse 16 “lower part . . . for your sacrament offering” The ground floor of the Kirtland Temple was to serve as a common meetinghouse for the Kirtland saints much like a ward or branch meetinghouse of today. It will be used for the sacrament and other spiritual functions.

17 And let the higher part of the inner court be dedicated unto me for the school of mine apostles, saith Son Ahman; or, in other words, Alphas; or, in other words, Omegas; even Jesus Christ your Lord. Amen.

verse 17 “higher part . . . for the school of mine apostles” The upstairs level will be used for the School of the Prophets. It should be noted that the Kirtland Temple was not built to be an ordinance temple. The Nauvoo temple and all temples built subsequently have been ordinance temples. The Kirtland Temple was more a place of contact with God—a sort of glorified stake center. There were no endowments, baptisms, or sealings done in the Kirtland Temple.

“Son Ahman” See the commentary for D&C 78:20.

“Alphas . . . Omegas” A new term for Christ is used—“Alphas and Omegas.” The “-us” ending is Latin masculine whereas the usual Greek ending “- a” is invariably used for the Greek letters “Alpha and Omega”. There seems to be no precedent for the use of these Latin endings, and their use is puzzling.

Section 96 Peter French Farm

This revelation was received June 4, 1833, the day before work on the construction of the Kirtland Temple began. Some two and one half months previously, a committee of three men had been called to go around Kirtland and find out what properties were available on which to build the temple. Joseph Coe, Moses Dailey, and Ezra Thayer looked over the available properties and recommended purchase of the most expensive piece, the Peter French Farm. It seemed ideal because it was thought that the temple would be built of bricks, and the French Farm contained good clay deposits and a fully operational brick kiln. Also the property could be subdivided among the saints who had consecrated. It was hoped that through their surpluses placed in the Bishop's storehouse, they might pay for the property. Thus, the decision was made to go deeply into debt and borrow the money to buy this farm.

Kirtland was intended to become a city of Zion in accordance with a plot plan drawn by the Prophet. The plan was much like the one for Independence, except this one called for only one temple. The streets and properties were similarly arranged. Even today Kirtland retains many features of the beginnings of this city of Zion.

There were many misgivings held by some as to whether or not the Church should have bought this expensive property, particularly after it was decided to build the temple of stone. "Perhaps we need not have spent the very high price for this choice piece of land. So what should we do with it? And how are we going to get out from under this huge debt? Who should take charge of this church-owned farm and subdivide it among the saints who have consecrated?" All of these questions weighed on the Prophet's mind as he prayed on June 4, 1833 in the presence of a group of gathered high priests in Joseph's translating room adjacent to the schoolroom above Newel K. Whitney's store.

1 Behold, I say unto you, here is wisdom, whereby ye may know how to act concerning this matter, for it is expedient in me that this stake that I have set for the strength of Zion should be made strong.

verse 1 "this stake" Kirtland was the first stake of Zion in this dispensation (see the commentary for D&C 82:13). The "center pole" was in Zion or Independence

2 Therefore, let my servant Newel K. Whitney take charge of the place which is named among you, upon which I design to build mine holy house.

verse 2 "let my servant Newel K. Whitney take charge" In answer to their prayer of inquiry, the Lord informs the brethren that the person with responsibility for the Lord's properties in Kirtland is the bishop in Kirtland, Newel K. Whitney. The building

committee was to oversee construction, but control of church-owned properties and the structures built upon them would remain with the bishop.

3 And again, let it be divided into lots, according to wisdom, for the benefit of those who seek inheritances, as it shall be determined in council among you.

verse 3 “let it be divided into lots” The Bishop is designated to divide the Peter French Farm among those entering the United Order. The Lord’s answer in verses 2 and 3 seems the obvious one, and it is a little puzzling that they even had to ask the Lord.

4 Therefore, take heed that ye see to this matter, and that portion that is necessary to benefit mine order, for the purpose of bringing forth my word to the children of men.

verse 4 “mine order, for the purpose of bringing forth my word to the children of men” Some the newly acquired land was also designated for the literary firm, which consisted of those church leaders responsible for publication of the revelations. Receiving such stewardships, or inheritances, would make it possible for these brethren to devote their full time to the work of the Lord.

5 For behold, verily I say unto you, this is the most expedient in me, that my word should go forth unto the children of men, for the purpose of subduing the hearts of the children of men for your good. Even so. Amen.

verse 5 “this is the most expedient in me” The most important duty of the church leadership at this time in church history is to publish the Lord’s modern revelations to the world.

“subduing the hearts” Making the Lord’s revelations to the Church publicly available to all interested parties not only educates the members, but also informs nonmembers about the actual beliefs of the Church—sometimes with positive results.

verses 6-9 The wealthy farmer John Johnson is called to pay the debt owed by the Church on the farm and become a member of the United Firm.

The reader will recall that Brother Johnson and his family lived in Hiram, Ohio. The Smith and Rigdon families had lived at the Johnson farm while Joseph, with Sidney as scribe, wrote much of the Joseph Smith Translation. Joseph and Emma occupied part of the Johnson home, and Joseph received several revelations there, including section 76. The Johnson home was also the location of several church conferences. There also Joseph and Sidney were tarred and feathered by a mob. Unavoidably, all of these things had put additional burdens upon the Johnson family. For bearing these patiently, the Lord here blesses Brother Johnson and directs that he be made a part of the United Firm. Members of this order consecrated their possessions to the Church,

agreeing to conduct their affairs according to the law of consecration for the benefit of the Church, and Brother Johnson was to put up the security to pay off the Peter French property for the firm (see verse 9).

6 And again, verily I say unto you, it is wisdom and expedient in me, that my servant John Johnson whose offering I have accepted, and whose prayers I have heard, unto whom I give a promise of eternal life inasmuch as he keepeth my commandments from henceforth—

7 For he is a descendant of Joseph and a partaker of the blessings of the promise made unto his fathers—

verse 7 “he is a descendant of Joseph” John Johnson, like many in the Church today, is informed that he is a descendant of Joseph, the son of Jacob (Israel) who was sold into Egypt. His lineage would be through either Ephraim or Manasseh, and he would therefore be heir to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant and the promises made to the Patriarchs, or “his fathers” (see also Abraham 2:6-12).

8 Verily I say unto you, it is expedient in me that he should become a member of the order, that he may assist in bringing forth my word unto the children of men.

9 Therefore ye shall ordain him unto this blessing, and he shall seek diligently to take away incumbrances that are upon the house named among you, that he may dwell therein. Even so. Amen.

verse 9 “incumbrances that are upon the house” This refers to the Peter French property upon which the Kirtland Temple would eventually be built. An encumbrance is a legal claim such as a mortgage or lien attached to a property which shows that money is owed to the holder of the encumbrance. The property, upon which an inn was located, was still under a mortgage when the Church acquired the property.

This simple passage in the Doctrine and Covenants had a profound influence in the life of John Johnson and the history of the Church. John sold his home and farm in Hiram, Ohio, as part of honoring the covenant he had made as a member of the United Firm. The large frame home is still standing today, along with several other buildings on the property. In fact, the home is used as a visitors' center for the Church. It is evident that John was a prosperous farmer in the community. The proceeds from the sale of his farm in Hiram were combined with the money of the order to pay the mortgage on the Peter French farm. It was on a part of this land that the Kirtland Temple was built. This temple and the blessings received in it (among them the preparatory ordinances of the endowment), many great spiritual manifestations, and the long-awaited restoration of priesthood keys held by Moses, Elias, and Elijah were made possible in part by this one man's offering. Therefore, an obscure commandment in the Doctrine and Covenants to an individual not commonly known shows the importance of the covenants made by real people of the 1830s. Further, the implication is that members today who keep their

covenant of consecrating their worldly wealth and time may someday be given the same promise the Lord gave to John Johnson, “Unto whom I give a promise of eternal life inasmuch as he keepeth my commandments from henceforth” (verse 6).

“the house named among you” The temple being discussed among you.

“that he may dwell therein” It is unclear to whom the pronoun *he* refers. It could be John Johnson or the Lord.

Brief Historical Setting

1833 July

By July 1833, the saints had been in Jackson County, Missouri, for about two years. Their presence and their beliefs had proved an increasing irritant to the Missourians, and on July 20 the Missourians’ smoldering anger exploded into overt rage.

Section 97 Zion

This revelation was received August 2, 1833, and the material therein concerns the saints in Zion (Independence).

At the time this revelation was received, the saints had been in Zion for about two years, but they were experiencing severe persecution. On July 20, less than two weeks before this revelation was received, a mob of three hundred to five hundred Missourians destroyed the printing press of W. W. Phelps, together with most copies of the 1833 Book of Commandments which was then being printed. They then took Bishop Edward Partridge into the public square. There they stripped him and covered him with tar and feathers. Some copies of the printed text of the Book of Commandments were rescued by two brave teenage sisters (Backman and Cowan, *Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants*, 3). The mob also demolished the brick home of W. W. Phelps, in which the press was located. They then ransacked the Gilbert and Whitney store. On July 23 (the very same day the cornerstones were laid for the Kirtland Temple), the church leaders were forced to sign an agreement to leave Jackson County by January 1, 1834. The Missourians had had enough of the Mormons, and they meant business. They persecuted the saints without mercy. Despite attempts at legal redress, severe persecution continued, and the majority of the saints were driven from their homes to take refuge in Clay, Ray, Van Buren, Lafayette, and other counties by November of 1833.

Why did the Missourians persecute the Mormons with such violence? What exactly lay behind their vicious animosity? Historians have usually listed several causes:

1. interference with Negroes. Missouri was a southern state, and Black slaves were a part of its economy. The Missourians may have resented the northern settlers for what they may have perceived as their abolitionist or anti-slavery views. Perhaps one of the catalysts for the mob action in Missouri had been an article in the July issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star* entitled "Free People of Color," which was distorted by non-Mormons who claimed falsely that the saints were "tampering with [their] slaves." When the saints in Missouri realized what the reaction to the article had been, they immediately published an "extra" edition of the *Star*, dated July 16 to set the record straight.

2. Collusion with the Indians.
3. The perceived threat of armed aggression by the Mormons.
4. Features of the Mormons' religious beliefs and social customs that were perceived as offensive by the Missourians.
5. The Mormon's growing political power.

Richard L. Bushman has suggested these latter two reasons as most fundamental and central in causing anger among the Missourians. (“Mormon Persecutions in Missouri, 1833,” *BYU Studies* 3:1[1960]).

There is good evidence to suggest that the Mormons did not tamper with slaves as they realized full well the feelings held by the Missourians. The Missouri mobsters, however, commonly charged them with doing so, probably in an effort to excite public sentiment against them (*Ibid.*).

The issue of collusion with the Indians was always peripheral and of little importance. Also, no one seems to have taken seriously the mobsters’ charges of a planned armed aggression. For one thing, the revelations specifically warned against the shedding of blood in order to establish Zion (D&C 63:29-31). Moreover, if the saints had taken up arms against the mobsters, all of the military units in the state would have mobilized in Jackson County’s defense.

The Mormons were regarded as deluded religious fanatics who claimed to converse with God, heal the sick, and perform other miracles. In addition, they were socially impenetrable and could not be assimilated into non-member Missouri society. These factors combined to produce mistrust among the Gentiles.

Perhaps most important among all other factors was the fear among Jackson County gentiles that the Mormons would soon dominate their society and government. It was perceived that they wanted to take over the entire county. Brother Bushman wrote:

There was real substance in the settlers’ fears of Mormon domination. The Latter-day Saints themselves believed Mormon and gentile societies were incompatible. The revelations to Joseph Smith identified Jackson as Zion, and Zion was to be the abode of the righteous only. If the gentiles did not leave, the saints believed, the Lord would destroy them (“Mormon Persecution in Missouri, 1833,” *BYU Studies* 3 (1960): 11-20).

The Mormons believed that God had given them this land for an inheritance, and sooner or later they would take it over. By 1833, the Mormon population of Jackson County was 1200, one third of the county’s population. And the end was not in sight. The Mormon population was growing steadily. Within a few years, it appeared that they would control schools, government, and the courts. Apparently it was the very real prospect of Mormon political supremacy which so frightened the citizens of Missouri. The prospect of being dominated by these “religious eccentrics and fanatics” was simply too much for the Jackson County settlers. It is interesting to note that by the time section 97 was received, there were little more than one hundred people remaining in Kirtland.

These same factors that excited public sentiment against the Mormons in Jackson County will eventually result in fear, hatred, and violent persecution of the church in the areas of Far West and, later on, in Nauvoo, Illinois.

At the time Joseph received section 97, he certainly knew that all was not well in Zion, but he was not aware of these acute, extreme difficulties. Keep in mind that the horse was the fastest means of communication at that time, and that the nearly one-thousand mile distance between Jackson County and Kirtland was more than a two-week journey. Oliver Cowdery was on his way by horse from Independence to inform Joseph of the latest difficulties at the time this revelation was received. He had left Independence for Kirtland on the 25th or 26th of July, 1833 (he had signed the agreement with the mob on July 23 and left Missouri two or three days thereafter). Oliver Cowdery arrived in Kirtland sometime in mid-August. By August 2, many of the Mormons had left Jackson County and had crossed the Missouri River to Clay County. They had no homes, no cabins, and only a few tents and wagons. They were literally gypsies out on the prairie of Clay County.

Yet the tone of section 97 is more that of a business-as-usual revelation. The Lord is giving counsel to the saints in Zion as if nothing had happened. It is obvious that Joseph did not know what was going on in Zion. Certainly the Lord knew. Why didn't he inform Joseph? It would seem that often the Lord simply allows things to happen naturally. Joseph did not receive by revelation more than he had sought for in this case.

Even though Joseph didn't know what had happened, perhaps the Lord gave some clues that serious trouble was brewing in Missouri. Note in verse 7, "The ax is laid at the root of the trees." Also in verse 8, the Lord speaks of sacrifices that will be required of the saints in Zion.

Section 97 contains four descriptions of a Zion people:

1. verse 8—People who "know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me."
2. verse 14—Those that are "perfected in the understanding of their ministry, in theory, in principle, and in doctrine, in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth, the keys of which kingdom have been conferred upon you."
3. verse 18—Zion "shall prosper, and spread herself and become very glorious, very great, and very terrible."
4. verse 21— "for this is Zion—the pure in heart."

Scripture Mastery

D&C 97 Zion

D&C 97:21 For this is Zion—the pure in heart.

1 Verily I say unto you my friends, I speak unto you with my voice, even the voice of my Spirit, that I may show unto you my will concerning your brethren in the land of Zion, many of whom are truly humble and are seeking diligently to learn wisdom and to find truth.

verse 1 “I say unto you my friends” The salutation here is directed to Joseph Smith and the church leaders in Kirtland. Even though there were serious problems among the members in Missouri, church leaders in Kirtland were still the Lord’s “friends.”

“my will concerning . . . Zion” Section 97 contains instructions for the saints in Jackson County, but also important information on the nature and the future of Zion generally.

“many of whom are truly humble” It is easy to overestimate the internal problems of the Missouri saints. Since Zion is ultimately a people “of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18), many of the saints in Missouri could be properly obedient, and yet they will be unable to establish Zion collectively because of the behavior or attitude of a relative few among them. In trying to establish Zion collectively, the behavior of the few does affect the success of the many, and a successful Zion can only have one heart and one mind.

Thus, while the unfaithfulness of one individual may not affect another in establishing Zion in the other’s self or in his family, such unfaithfulness does have a negative impact on the ward, the stake, and the Church collectively. However, the attitude of members toward the less faithful should not be one of force or militancy, but of love and patience. The Lord will prune his own vineyard in due time by bringing chastening trials upon it (see D&C 95:2). Individuals can then self-select for or against the kingdom as they endure these trials or leave the Church because of them.

2 Verily, verily I say unto you, blessed are such, for they shall obtain; for I, the Lord, show mercy unto all the meek, and upon all whomsoever I will, that I may be justified when I shall bring them unto judgment.

3 Behold, I say unto you, concerning the school in Zion, I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion, and also with my servant Parley P. Pratt, for he abideth in me.

verse 3 “the school in Zion” Four days after Joseph received section 97, on August 6, which was still prior to the arrival of Oliver Cowdery in Kirtland, Joseph wrote a letter to the saints in Missouri. In the letter, he wrote, “Having received Brother Oliver’s letter of July 9th as well as one from the brethren composing the school, we now answer them both in one letter as relates to the school in Zion. According to your request, we inquired of the Lord and send this letter—the communication which we received from the Lord concerning the school in Zion. It was obtained August 2nd and reads thus [section 97 follows]” (Woodford, “Historical Development,” 2:1226; Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 200).

The school in Missouri was patterned after the School of the Prophets in Kirtland and was referred to as the School of the Elders, with Elder Parley P. Pratt called as teacher. It was intended to train the Missouri leadership in the principles of the gospel

and also to provide them with an elementary secular education. Elder Pratt recorded his experiences with this school as follows:

In the latter part of summer and in the autumn, I devoted almost my entire time in ministering among the churches holding meetings, visiting the sick, comforting the afflicted, and giving counsel. A school of Elders was also organized, over which I was called to preside. This class, to the number of about sixty, met for instruction once a week. The place of meeting was in the open air, under some tall trees, in a retired place in the wilderness, where we prayed, preached, and prophesied, and exercised ourselves in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Here great blessings were poured out, and many great and marvelous things were manifested and taught. The Lord gave me great wisdom, and enabled me to teach and edify the Elders, and comfort and encourage them in their preparations for the great work which lay before us. I was also much edified and strengthened. To attend this school I had to travel on foot, and sometimes with bare feet at that, about six miles. This I did once a week, besides visiting and preaching in five or six branches a week” (*Autobiography*, 93-94).

4 And inasmuch as he continueth to abide in me he shall continue to preside over the school in the land of Zion until I shall give unto him other commandments.

5 And I will bless him with a multiplicity of blessings, in expounding all scriptures and mysteries to the edification of the school, and of the church in Zion.

6 And to the residue of the school, I, the Lord, am willing to show mercy; nevertheless, there are those that must needs be chastened, and their works shall be made known.

verse 6 “the residue of the school” According to the 1828 edition of *Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language*, the word *residue* meant “that which remains after a part is taken, separated, removed, or designated.” The word did not have the negative connotation that it often does in contemporary English. The Lord has stated his approval of Parley P. Pratt, and he is willing to show mercy to the other members of the School of the Elders in Missouri. However, it appears from the language here that some members of the school required punishment from the Lord for secret sins which he would also make public.

7 The ax is laid at the root of the trees; and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. I, the Lord, have spoken it.

verse 7 “The ax is laid at the root of the trees” This phrase corresponds most closely with the language of Alma (Alma 5:52) but also closely parallels Matthew 3:10 and Luke 3:9. In the Book of Mormon, this warning is given to the people of Alma who had great need to repent of their sins and had before them the great Lamanite wars. In the New Testament, it was delivered to the apostate and wicked Pharisee and Saducee Jews who would soon be destroyed by their failed revolt against Rome. The

same warning is now addressed here specifically to the faltering saints in Missouri, for whom persecutions had already begun but for whom deliverance was still possible if they would only repent. We may conclude that the Lord reserves this particular warning for a people who have brought upon themselves, through their own unrighteousness, devastatingly dangerous circumstances. There is still time to escape, but the need to repent is urgent.

Trees can't move. They can't run away or hide from the woodsman's ax. Their only defense against being cut down for firewood lies in producing valuable fruit. Many of the Missouri saints had traveled there contrary to the instructions of the Prophet (see the commentary for D&C 58:44). Some were arrogant or otherwise foolish in their dealings with the original settlers of Jackson County, and too few were committed to living the law of consecration as they had been commanded. Those who produced no fruit would be cut down and burned.

8 Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.

verse 8 “their hearts . . . are broken, and their spirits contrite” What does it really mean to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit? It is notable that the Hebrew word for “contrite” in the Bible is *dakka*, meaning “bruised,” or “crushed.” The primary definition given for “contrite” in *Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary* is “worn or bruised.” It would seem that we must come to a point of genuine empathetic suffering as we contemplate our Savior’s atoning sacrifice made selflessly and on our behalf. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob wished that all men might “view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world” (Jacob 1:8). The Lord himself urges us all to figuratively “Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet” (D&C 6:37). Surely, with the divine assistance from the Holy Ghost, all celestial-bound men must arrive at a point where they suffer, along with the Savior, not only for their own sins, but for the sins of mankind. Part of this is a genuine and profound empathy for and gratitude to the Savior in his atoning sacrifice. This “broken heart and contrite spirit” can only come by personal revelation in return for our obedience to the Lord’s commands. It is a gift of the Spirit which, once acquired, serves as a constant source of motivation for our continued obedience. See also the commentary for D&C 20:37 (compare Psalm 51:17).

“willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice” In ancient times, covenants were entered into by offering sacrifices. Even contracts or other agreements between individuals were sealed with a sacrifice. In fact, the Hebrew idiom for “make a covenant” is *karat berit*, literally “to cut a covenant,” referring to the animal that was customarily sacrificed and eaten in token of the covenant’s being made (see, for

example, Genesis 33:44-55). According to the law of sacrifice, Abraham offered sacrifices when he covenanted with the Lord (see Genesis 15:9-18). According to the same law, Moses slaughtered oxen to seal the covenant at Sinai (see Exodus 24:3-8). The covenant of the gospel was sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, whose flesh and blood we are symbolically reminded of when partaking of the sacrament. Other covenants are also accompanied by sacrifices—of one kind or another, such as the Lord may require—and without sacrifice of some kind, there is no covenant.

Why this association between covenants and sacrifice? When we enter into covenants with the Lord, why has he always symbolically reminded us of the necessity of sacrifice? Surely animals were sacrificed anciently as a symbolic foretelling of the ultimate sacrifice of the Savior in Gethsemane. But what about today? The Savior's sacrifice has taken place. Why the continued association between covenants and sacrifice as stated in this verse? We must truly possess the spirit of sacrifice as we strive to subdue our natural self and obey the gospel commands—keep our covenants. Just a reminder that *sacrifice* is giving up something wholesome and useful for a higher purpose. Sacrifice in keeping our covenants today is just as pertinent as it ever was anciently. See *The Law and Spirit of Sacrifice in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, verse 17.

“they are accepted of me” The life offering and willingness to sacrifice of some of those in Zion is acceptable to the Lord, but collectively as a Zion people they are not yet acceptable.

9 For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit.

verse 9 “a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land” In the short term, the “goodly land” is Independence, Missouri. However, the Lord's promise here to the faithful saints would be fulfilled in the intermediate future by settlement in the valleys of the mountains in the West and in the long term will be fulfilled by the establishment of Zion during the Millennium (see verse 18).

10 Verily I say unto you, that it is my will that a house should be built unto me in the land of Zion, like unto the pattern which I have given you.

verse 10 “it is my will that a house should be built unto me in the land of Zion” The chief sacrifice that the Lord required of the Missouri saints was that they should build a temple in Independence, just as the Kirtland saints were being required to build one in Ohio. This commandment cannot have been a complete surprise for the Missouri saints, for a temple site had been selected and consecrated two years earlier, yet no further action had been taken. They had received an explicit commandment to proceed, together with rough plans for their temple (a duplicate of the Kirtland Temple).

This was received in a letter dated June 25, 1833, well before section 97 was sent to them (*HC*, 1:362-363; Robison, *First Mormon Temple*, 9-16). However they took no action to begin construction. Section 97 makes it clear that the commandment to build this temple was as binding upon the Missouri saints as building the Kirtland Temple was on the Ohio saints (see D&C 95:3), yet still they took no action.

According to verses 18 and 25-26, had the Missouri saints kept the commandment to build a temple, Zion would have been established, never to be removed. Had the Missouri saints collectively been as committed to building a temple as the Ohio saints were, the Lord would have opened up the way for them to succeed. However, as Elder Parley P. Pratt, who taught the elders in Missouri, observed: “This revelation was not complied with by the leaders and Church in Missouri, as a whole; notwithstanding many were humble and faithful. Therefore, the threatened judgment was poured out to the uttermost, as the history of the five following years will show” (*Autobiography*, 96). The obligation of this commandment was formally removed from the saints as a practical impossibility in 1841 (see D&C 124:49-51), though it would have been possible in 1833 had they collectively proved more faithful.

And yet, it is possible to overemphasize the failings of the Missouri saints, as compared to the body of church members today. These were good people, but they expected a paradise of milk and honey, and the sacrifice of one’s personal expectations in order to build the house of God was as difficult, or even more difficult, then as it is now. According to Brother Parley P. Pratt: “They lived in peace and quiet; no lawsuits with each other or with the world; few or no debts were contracted; few promises broken; there were no thieves, robbers, or murderers; few or no idlers; all seemed to worship God with a ready heart” (*Autobiography*, 93).

11 Yea, let it be built speedily, by the tithing of my people.

verse 11 “let it be built . . . by the tithing of my people” Usually, the term tithing is used in the scriptures to indicate a tenth part of one’s interest, or increase, annually (see D&C 119:4). However, in this verse, the word is used as it is in D&C 64:23 and 85:3 to mean freewill offerings generally. Certainly, more than a tenth part of the saints’ resources would have been necessary to construct a temple in Independence, even as more than a tenth was required in Kirtland. Besides the cost of land and materials, offerings of time and labor would also have been required under the financial aspects of the law of consecration which remained in effect in Missouri and the rest of the Church until 1840 (*HC*, 4:93; Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1481).

12 Behold, this is the tithing and the sacrifice which I, the Lord, require at their hands, that there may be a house built unto me for the salvation of Zion—

verse 12 “for the salvation of Zion” A temple might be likened to a doorway through which the full blessings of heaven are poured out upon the saints. If the saints want those special blessings, they must begin by constructing that portal—a temple. Salvation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom can only come by receiving the ordinances performed in temples (see D&C 131:1-4). Temporally, the very safety and protection sought by the Missouri saints would have been theirs if only they could have built a temple, for the Lord promised if they would do this, they would escape the coming chastening (verses 18, 25). Both temporal and spiritual powers come from the presence of a temple. As President Ezra Taft Benson observed at the dedication of the Jordan River Temple:

The saints have been commanded to stand in holy places, such as this temple, in order to avoid the tribulations which are to come in the latter days. . . .

The saints in this temple district will be better able to meet any temporal tribulation because of this temple. Faith will increase as a result of the divine power associated with the ordinances of heaven and the assurance of eternal associations.

I repeat what I said at the groundbreaking of this temple two years ago: This valley will be preserved, our families will be protected, and our children will be safe guarded as we live the gospel, visit the temple, and live close to the Lord” (*Church News*, August 22, 1981, 8).

13 For a place of thanksgiving for all saints, and for a place of instruction for all those who are called to the work of the ministry in all their several callings and offices;

verse 13 “For a place of thanksgiving” The temple is a place the saints can go and, if they are humble and repentant, put themselves and their loved ones ultimately beyond the powers of Satan. Through the atonement of Christ, whole families can be sealed together in the kingdom of God, and surely any place where we may receive such blessings is “a place of thanksgiving.”

“for a place of instruction” A full understanding of the Lord’s plan comes only with that panoramic view of history from the beginning, to the present, and until the end, that is communicated in the ordinances of the temple. The temple provides us with our own guide to time and space that teaches us who and where we are, what went before, and what comes hereafter. Those who are lost cannot be saved by others who are also lost, but only by those who have their spiritual bearings, who know where they are and how to get home. It is entirely understandable, then, that missionaries and others who are called to the ministry in the kingdom of God should first be instructed in the temple of God before they are sent out to show others the way to God.

14 That they may be perfected in the understanding of their ministry, in theory, in principle, and in doctrine, in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth, the keys of which kingdom have been conferred upon you.

verse 14 “in theory, in principle, and in doctrine” The English word *theory* is derived from the Greek, *theoreo*, meaning “to see or perceive.” Taken in this sense, it does not refer to anything speculative or hypothetical, but to a knowledge of the relationships between individual principles, the sum total of which is doctrine. As *Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary* phrases it, theory is “an exposition of the general principles of any science,” or “the science distinguished from the art.” Note the parallel between this verse and D&C 88:78.

15 And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

verse 15 “do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it” The responsibility for maintaining the sanctity of the temple lies not upon the Lord, but upon the saints themselves. For this reason, it is necessary for the Church, through appointed leaders, to inquire into the life and habits of those wishing to attend the temple. By complying with this requirement, both those who seek recommends and those who grant them participated in a process designed to keep the temple holy, which is the obligation laid upon the saints. The personal desires of those who might want to attend the temple but who will not keep the covenants set forth in the temple cannot be allowed to prevail over the strict command of the Lord. Otherwise, “my glory shall [not] rest upon it,” and the very purposes of temple attendance will be lost to all. The equality of this system is that any member may repent and receive a recommend, but the decision not to repent is also a decision not to attend the temple.

16 Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.

verse 16 “the pure in heart . . . shall see God” This is the same promise made by the Savior in the sixth Beatitude (see Matthew 5:8; 3 Nephi 12:8). Note that the promise here does not guarantee that the pure in heart will see God in the temple, but only that they shall see God (compare Moses 5:4, 10). It also makes no mention of the time line associated with this promise. Although is it possible for the righteous to see God during this mortal existence—the blessing of the Second Comforter—many of the righteous will not see him until after their mortal death.

17 But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples.

verse 17 “I will not come into unholy temples” When the Savior came onto the grounds of the Jerusalem Temple, he drove out those who “made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:12-16)—those who defiled a place that should have been holy. Whether it is applied to our modern temples, or to that temple which is made up of all the members collectively (see Ephesians 2:19-21; 1 Peter 2:5), or that temple which is each member individually (see 1 Corinthians 3:16-17), the principle is the same. When the Savior comes in, that which is unholy must be cast out, for he will not inhabit the same tabernacle with uncleanness.

18 And, now, behold, if Zion do these things she shall prosper, and spread herself and become very glorious, very great, and very terrible.

verse 18 “Zion . . . shall prosper . . . and become very great” The contemporary Church may sometimes underestimate the glorious future of Zion. During the Nauvoo period, the Prophet revealed to the Church in a general conference that “the whole of America is Zion itself from north to south, and is described by the Prophets, who declare that it is the Zion where the mountain of the Lord should be, and that it should be in the center of the land” (*HC*, 6:318-319). Brigham Young added later, “This American continent will be Zion; for it is so spoken of by the prophets. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and will be the place of gathering, and the tribe of Judah will gather there; but this continent of America is the land of Zion” (*JD*, 5:4; Ether 13:2-12). On another occasion, Joseph taught the saints that “the whole of North and South America is Zion,” and in the twentieth century, modern prophets have revealed that “every nation is the gathering place for its own people” (Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 363; Harold B. Lee, *Ensign*, July 1973, 5; Graham W. Doxey, *Ensign*, April 1979, 65). Thus, while the Doctrine and Covenants might have directed the nineteenth century Church to Missouri as the center place of Zion (see D&C 57:1-3), when that holy place is finally established physically, neither the city nor the state will any longer suffice to contain the whole of it.

“and become very . . . terrible” In contemporary English, *terrible* has a certain negative connotation. However, *Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary* offers an alternate meaning for “terrible” that is likely intended here: “adapted to impress dread, terror or solemn awe and reverence.” The power and glory of the physical Zion, when it is established, will impress dread and terror upon the wicked and solemn awe and reverence upon the righteous.

19 And the nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there;

20 And he hath sworn by the power of his might to be her salvation and her high tower.

verse 20 “her high tower” In ancient times, a high tower was a defensive structure and was the most secure place in a city wall or in the city itself. For Zion the power of God will be her defense.

21 Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn.

verse 21 “for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART” Zion is both a people and a place. The Church has now among its members many Zion people and many Zion families. There are doubtless even Zion wards and Zion stakes, for spiritual Zion is the pure in heart. Nevertheless, the physical Zion, which the Church will establish at some time in the future, is not simply “wherever the pure in heart may dwell,” for the formula Zion is the pure in heart describes the people themselves and not necessarily the place where they live. Physical Zion will be established only when a Zion people inhabit a Zion place, when the pure in heart live in a place that has been consecrated to the purposes of the Lord. Ultimately, that physical place will eventually take in all of the American continent and beyond (see Articles of Faith 1:10 and the commentary on verse 18). Eventually, Asia will be Zion for the Asian saints, Africa for the African saints, and so on, for every nation will be Zion for the saints who inhabit it. Surely, there will be administrative centers at all levels, but the time is long past when all the saints can be gathered into one country, let alone into one state or one tiny county.

For a more complete discussion of the meanings of the term *Zion*, see “Meanings of ‘Zion’” in *Zion*, volume 3 chapter 27 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

22 For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it?

23 The Lord’s scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come;

verse 23 “The Lord’s scourge shall pass over by night and by day” The language here is reminiscent of Isaiah 28:15, 18-19. That passage prophesied the invasion of Israel by the Assyrian army together with the destruction and chaos it would cause. Here it refers to the judgments that will come at the end of this dispensation as they are described in D&C 29:14-17; 45:26-33; 40-50; 87:5-8. Whether the Church suffers from such calamities with the rest of the world or is protected from them by the Lord—their “high tower” (see verse 20)—depends upon whether or not they can establish Zion. When the Jackson County saints failed in their attempt to establish Zion, an “overflowing scourge” (D&C 45:31) fell upon them.

“it shall not be stayed until the Lord come” The “overflowing scourge” (D&C 45:31) of the last days will reduce the world, with the exception of Zion, to a state of anarchy and chaos that will continue until the second coming of Christ (see D&C 87:6-8). As the end approaches, all the peoples of the earth will have to choose one

kingdom or the other: the risks and plagues of Babylon, or the joys and the safety of Zion.

24 For the indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works.

25 Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her.

26 But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire.

verses 25-26 “Zion shall escape if . . .” Zion is a pure people (see verse 21) dwelling in a consecrated land (see D&C 57:2-3), who are of one heart and one mind with one another and with their God, dwelling in righteousness with no rich or poor among them (see Moses 7:18). The promise of the Lord is that a truly Zion people will dwell in safety forever (see Moses 7:20), but only if they are truly Zion and thus keep his commandments. In the present text, the immediate commandment requiring the obedience of the Independence saints if they are to establish Zion is that they build a temple (see verses 10-12).

There is no indication that any steps were ever taken in Independence to begin construction of a temple in the two years following the dedication of the temple site. Failing collectively to keep the Lord’s commandment, those saints were completely driven out of Jackson County by the following November, and over the next five years all the woes listed in verse 26 also fell upon them.

27 Nevertheless, let it be read this once to her ears, that I, the Lord, have accepted of her offering; and if she sin no more none of these things shall come upon her;

verse 27 One wonders if there might still have been hope to continue on in Jackson County, by divine intervention, if the saints had built a temple. How would our church history have been different had the Missouri saints been completely steadfast and righteous?

28 And I will bless her with blessings, and multiply a multiplicity of blessings upon her, and upon her generations forever and ever, saith the Lord your God. Amen.

When this revelation was sent to Zion, a copy of section 94 was also included with a note that the same two buildings to be built in Kirtland (the church office building and the building to house the printing press) should also be built there in Zion along with the temple.

Brief Historical Setting

1833 August

As soon as Oliver arrived with the news of the disastrous happenings in Independence, Joseph received another revelation in which the Lord spoke calmly and sensibly to the angry and frightened saints [**D&C 98 - Laws of Retribution, War, and Forgiveness**]. This revelation and other messages of comfort were carried back to the Missouri saints.

Even though the Missourians, by signed contract, had agreed to allow the saints to remain in Jackson County until January 1, 1834, the spirit of persecution knew no such patience. Houses were burned, men were beaten, and many saints were left homeless and were forced to flee across the Missouri River and out of Jackson County.

Section 98 Laws of Retribution, War, and Forgiveness

The Saints are being driven out of Jackson County, Missouri, by force. They had been there for about two years, but in late July 1833 they were angrily persecuted and made to leave. Many had crossed the Missouri River and were camping in the prairies of Clay County with few provisions, clothes, and with little food.

This revelation was received on or just prior to August 6, 1833. See the introduction to section 97. It is not entirely clear when Oliver Cowdery arrived in Kirtland bearing the news that the saints in Independence had been physically attacked by Missouri mobbers. The best guess for his arrival seems to be August 9. It thus seems likely that when he received this revelation, Joseph still did not know specifically of the disastrous happenings in Jackson County. However, in an unpublished letter of July 9, 1833, Oliver Cowdery had written the Prophet from Missouri describing the plight of the saints in Independence. Though this letter has subsequently been lost, it seems likely that Oliver was able to give a rather comprehensive description of the precarious relationship between the saints and the Missourians. This July letter, after all, was written less than two weeks prior to the attack of the mob, and it seems likely that Oliver would have communicated a foreboding feeling about the safety of the saints. Even before he heard of the attack on the saints, Joseph doubtless knew that the saints in Zion were frightened, bitter, frustrated, and discouraged. It is not difficult to imagine the kinds of questions that filled Joseph's heart and the hearts of the saints as they faced the reality of their deteriorating situation in Jackson County. Undoubtedly they were asking even the most basic questions of God: "Wilt thou forsake us?" "Art thou really there?" "Are we going to have to consider a new gathering place?" "Should we retaliate against our persecutors?" "What about the temple we're commanded to build?"

Section 98 speaks to all of the saints, both in Missouri and in Kirtland, calmly, sensibly, and mercifully. It is a beautiful and important revelation on the laws of retribution, war, and forgiveness. As the Lord counsels the persecuted saints, he counsels us as well, for we share their quest. We too must establish Zion.

In this difficult period, the Lord counsels: "Fear not . . . rejoice . . . and give thanks" (verse 1). Wait "patiently on the Lord" (verse 2). These afflictions eventually "shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory" (verse 3). Obey the laws of the land. Don't break the law and try to retaliate against the Missourians (verses 4-7). The law will make you free (verse 8). Seek to elect good and wise men to rule and uphold the laws (verse 10). Whoso layeth down his life for my sake shall be exalted (verse 13). Do not fear your enemies even unto death (verse 14). Even in difficult and stressful situations "renounce war and proclaim peace" (verse 16). If you are obedient, evil shall not prevail against you (verse 22).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 98 Laws of Retribution, War, and Forgiveness

D&C 98:32-38 The Lord's law of war: Behold, this is the law I gave unto my servant Nephi, and thy fathers, Joseph, and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, and all mine ancient prophets and apostles. And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them. And if any nation, tongue, or people should proclaim war against them, they should first lift a standard of peace unto that people, nation, or tongue; And if that people did not accept the offering of peace, neither the second nor the third time, they should bring these testimonies before the Lord; Then I, the Lord, would give unto them a commandment, and justify them in going out to battle against that nation, tongue, or people. And I, the Lord, would fight their battles, and their children's battles, and their children's children's, until they had avenged themselves on all their enemies, to the third and fourth generation.

1 Verily I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea, rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks;

verse 1 "I say unto you my friends" As mentioned, the Lord's salutation here is directed to the entire Church, both those in Missouri and those in the Ohio.

"rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks" No matter the extent of the opposition or how desperate their physical circumstances, the Lord's saints may rejoice and offer thanks for the spiritual blessings of the gospel and for the assurance that if they remain faithful, the kingdom is theirs (see D&C 25:1; 37:27; 38:9; 50:35; 62:9; 78:18; and 82:34).

2 Waiting patiently on the Lord, for your prayers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded with this seal and testament—the Lord hath sworn and decreed that they shall be granted.

verse 2 "Waiting patiently on the Lord" To "wait on" the Lord has two possible meanings, according to *Webster's 1828 American Dictionary*. On the one hand, it means "to attend, as a servant" or "to be ready to serve; to obey" the Lord (compare 2 Chronicles 17:19; Psalm 25:3, 5). On the other hand, it means "to look watchfully," or to wait for the Lord to appear (see Mark 15:43) or to answer the prayers of his saints. The language here strongly favors this latter meaning.

"the Lord of Sabaoth" See the commentary for D&C 87:7.

"and are recorded with this seal and testament" The righteous prayers of the saints have all been recorded in the heavens and will all be granted in the due time of the Lord. This is also the Savior's promise in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 7:7). The seal and testament that guarantee this ultimate fulfillment are God's. God has sealed those prayers, and no power but our own unfaithfulness can break that seal.

He who cannot lie here testifies and swears that our righteous prayers will not be lost, or forgotten, or overlooked, but will all be granted. However, this promise does not guarantee that the righteous prayers of the saints will be granted right now, or even in the short-term or in the intermediate future. Nevertheless, all these things will be granted and fulfilled by the time the exalted saints receive “all that my Father hath” (D&C 84:38; see Romans 8:17, 32).

3 Therefore, he giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant that they shall be fulfilled; and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name’s glory, saith the Lord.

verse 3 “with an immutable covenant” Immutable means “unchangeable” or “unalterable.” This is the gospel covenant or baptismal covenant wherein we agree to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and enter into a solemn covenant to obey the Lord’s commands. The Lord, in turn, has taken an oath to reward us for our obedience in the form of spiritual growth which leads back to our celestial home. This agreement between the saints and their God cannot be changed, altered, or repealed. Though the covenant itself cannot be changed, our covenant relationship with the Lord is quite dynamic depending upon our obedience to the gospel commands.

“all things wherewith you have been afflicted” We should not conclude from this phrase that the Lord deliberately afflicts each instance of suffering upon each man. We are not asked to accept naively or without a second thought that whatever happens is God’s will. Suffering is an intrinsic part of mortality, and will surely befall each man regardless of his circumstances or station. It is a built in part of this mortal trial. Our covenant relationship with the Lord offers no immunity from affliction while we are here on earth. See *Adversity and Suffering in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 1.

“shall work together for your good” We may draw comfort and hope from our covenant relationship with the Lord. No matter what we suffer on this earth, if we are faithful, it will all turn to our good, and we will ultimately return home. In order to return home, however, we must grow, and there is no spiritual growth without some pain. Suffering offers us an opportunity to grow more quickly toward godhood and thus toward our celestial home. The Lord has pointed out in scripture the inevitability and even the desirability of our suffering. The prophet Jacob wrote, “We would to God . . . that all men would believe in Christ, and *view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world*” (Jacob 1:8, italics mine).

A fine distinction must be made here. The Lord does not say that affliction is good, that suffering is good, that trials or abuse are good, or anything of the kind. In the Gethsemane experience of the Savior, we are not asked to believe that his pain was not hideous, that his suffering was not monstrous, that his experience was not grotesquely undeserved. We are asked only to believe that it all worked together for our good.

Neither are the saints asked to believe in the face of their own trials or in the trials of those around them that they should be happy because evil is just good in disguise or because trials are just blessings in disguise. We are also not asked to believe that pain isn't really hideous and evil isn't really ugly. We are only asked to believe that in the end all our pains and trials will not have been for nothing. Rather, they will work for our good.

4 And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them.

verse 4 “concerning the laws of the land” The major theme tying section 98 together might be the answer to the question, “As a member of the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth, what are my obligations as a member of society living under civil authority?” In the context of the United States in 1833, the short answer would be to obey God (see verse 4), to keep the law of the land (see verses 5-8), to vote for good leaders (see verses 9-10), to keep the covenant and keep the peace (see verses 11-22), to observe the higher law of retaliation—as applicable to families (see verses 23-32) and nations (see verses 33-38)—and to observe the law of forgiveness for individuals (see verses 39-48).

5 And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me.

verse 5 “that law of the land which is constitutional” A careful study of the history of the period of the great Reformation and the alterations in the basic religious and secular freedoms that resulted therefrom reveals the clear will of the Lord in the process of winning an acceptable degree of liberty to the people of the United States of America (see D&C 101:80). There can be no question that the Lord's hand was evident in the Declaration of Independence, in the Constitution of the United States of America, in the Bill of Rights, and in the obtaining freedom of religious study and religious worship for the people of this country. Laws must be constantly tested against the Constitution. When they are constitutional, they are acceptable to the Lord and must be obeyed by the saints.

“that principle of freedom” This phrase refers to the principle of freedom underlying the Constitution of the United States. Or it might refer to the Constitution itself. Individual laws are justifiable only to the extent that they conform to that principle of freedom fundamental to the Constitution. According to the prophet Joseph: “The Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner; it is to all those who are privileged with the sweets of its liberty, like the cooling shades and refreshing waters of a great rock in a thirsty and weary land” (*HC*, 3:304).

“belongs to all mankind” Although early saints sometimes assumed a strictly American context for the constitution, there is no reason why contemporary members cannot assume an international context and seek to govern themselves by the principles of freedom as they are found in the Constitution of the United States to the degree that this is politically possible in their individual situations. Many nations that have emerged since 1776 have adopted legal systems styled upon that Constitution. In any case, however, Latter-day Saints “believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law” wherever they might live (Articles of Faith 1:12).

“is justifiable before me” Although it is true that individual members will be justified in obeying the constitutional law of the land, it is not necessarily the case that the constitutional law of the land always defines what the Lord would otherwise ask, prohibit, or allow in a Zion society. Lack of blame, or being justified, is not the same thing as praise or commendation. Being justified by observing the present civil code is our refuge from blame before the Lord in matters of civil law, but one day being commended or praised by the Lord for establishing a Zion society ought to remain our collective hope and aspiration.

6 Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land;

verse 6 “in befriending that law” What a noble word is *befriending*! It says just enough and yet not too much. In fact, to say more or less than this in regard to the civil law “cometh of evil” (verse 7). The law is our friend, and we may, therefore, embrace it. We respect the law, but we do not worship it. Civil law is good, but it is not divine. It may be our partner, but it is not our deity.

7 And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil.

verse 7 “whatsoever is more or less than this” Law which is less than constitutional, which bypasses the constitutional balance of powers (for example, legislation by executive or judicial decree, and so forth) comes of evil and leads to further evil.

Individuals sometimes want to exalt the Constitution too highly by refusing to accept amendments to the Constitution or Supreme Court decisions interpreting the Constitution, consequently revering the civil law to excess. Sometimes the opposite tendency is seen. Either point of view “cometh of evil.” Usually when people say that something is unconstitutional, what they really mean is that in a more perfect world something wouldn’t be allowed. They may even be correct, but that is beside the point. Our present civil law can be less than perfect, less than a Zion law, and yet still be in fact the constitutional law of the land, and we are still bound to obey it.

8 I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free.

verse 8 “I, the Lord God, make you free” The “freedom” referred to here is our individual moral agency. Individual agency is a principle sacrosanct in the universe and applicable to all intelligences. It would seem that it has always been so. God would not, and indeed cannot abrogate this principle, else he would cease to be God. While God did not actually grant agency to each intelligence, here in mortality he has provided us a situation that allows ample freedoms. Thus, we have the latitude to exercise our agency and grow spiritually. We are thus “free indeed.” If you are not comfortable with the concepts of agency and freedom and the significant differences between these concepts, please see *Agency and Freedom* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 13.

“the law also maketh you free” In addition to moral agency that cannot be taken from us, civil law affords us a variable range of political freedoms or liberties depending upon where we live and the laws in force under which we live.

Civil laws are necessary. They limit freedoms of some in order to guarantee freedoms for others. For example, may I own a cow and keep it in my yard? Under what conditions may I drive a car? Should I be free to own a cow, or should my neighbor be free from a next-door neighbor who owns a cow? Should I as a fourteen-year-old be free to drive a car, or should people be free from the danger of immature drivers.

9 Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn.

verse 9 Despite the finest philosophical principles of government embodied in the Constitution and despite the best-intended body of constitutional law based upon those principles, if the men and women who hold elective and appointed offices in any country are wicked, corrupt, or dishonest then the people will live in misery. No system of government, no matter how inspired, can long survive being managed by wicked leaders.

10 Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil.

verse 10 “honest . . . good . . . and wise men” Here is evidence that active participation in government is a religious obligation for the faithful Latter-day Saint. Not only are we commanded to vote, we are commanded to seek out honest, good, and wise candidates for whom to vote. We do not necessarily need to run for office ourselves, but we do need to vote intelligently for men and women of wisdom and of good character.

“whatsoever is les than these cometh of evil” To vote for a less than honest, good, and wise candidate “cometh of evil.”

11 And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.

verse 11 “forsake all evil” To forsake evil here is to abandon it, quit it, or leave it alone. In the present context, this would also include evil political philosophies and evil office seekers (verses 7, 10).

“cleave unto all good” The verb *cleave* has two contradictory meanings: “to split or separate” and “to bond or stick to.” Obviously the latter meaning applies here.

12 For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith.

verse 12 “he will give unto the faithful line upon line” These phrases may be understood in two opposing senses, both of which are true. They are most often understood to mean that God will continue to reveal things to the faithful in an unceasing stream of revelations until finally they know the truth of all things. We know that this is true by such revelations as D&C 42:61 or 76:7.

The other sense of “line upon line, precept upon precept” is that the Lord will give the faithful only a little bit of revelation at a time. Then he will wait and test the reaction of the saints to what has been given. If they prove faithful, he will then add another little bit, another line or precept, then wait and test or try them again, and so on.

In this particular verse, the second meaning is likely, since the Lord explicitly states his intention of testing and trying the saints with the very lines and precepts he is revealing to them. So, in this instance, “line upon line, precept upon precept” means that the Lord will give his saints a little bit of revelation and then test them. If they prove faithful, he will then give them a little bit more and test them again, and so on.

13 And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name’s sake, shall find it again, even life eternal.

verse 13 “whoso layeth down his life in my cause” The Lord seems to say here that he who suffers mortal death because of his being on the Lord’s errand will receive great eternal blessings. A related verse, Matthew 10:39 teaches, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” This verse suggests that he who “layeth down his life” may either forfeit his life or he may dedicate his life and remain alive.

14 Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy.

verse 14 “be not afraid of your enemies . . . even unto death” No one gets through life uninjured, and no one gets out this mortal experience alive. Unfortunately, the faithful have little advantage over the wicked in avoiding the common pains and trials of mortality. And everyone makes enemies. Usually one’s only choice is whether one’s enemies will be found among the wicked or among the righteous. It is certain that the faithful will make enemies and suffer persecution. In fact, the most faithful will often make the bitterest and most vicious enemies, and often they suffer the most persecution, but such persecution, though difficult at the time, is a sure indicator of future joy (see Matthew 5:10-12).

“I will prove you in all things” All our life is a test and a trial, not just in the large and difficult things, but in the little everyday things as well. We don’t normally think of an afternoon at the library, an hour on the internet, or a moment daydreaming as tests, but they are. You can only read one book or magazine at a time. You can only view one screen on the computer at a time. You can only think one thought at a time. And so, with all the books in the library, with all the screens on the internet, with all the thoughts in the universe to read, view, or think, to choose this or that single one—to the exclusion of all others—says something about what our heart desires and, therefore, about what we are.

15 For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me.

verse 15 “abide in my covenant” Can you remain faithful to your covenants even when life turns on you? Can you remain faithful to your covenants when life turns on you so viciously that it seems God himself has turned on you? At some point in life, most people will face a test like Abraham’s (see Genesis 22:1-14). They will reach a point where it seems that God is not living up to his promises or to their expectations. It may seem that he is not keeping his side of the covenant and that when this is pointed out, his only response seems to be, “So what?” At such a time, it would be wise to consider that this may not be a betrayal by God so much as it may be an important question on the final exam of life. The only right answer in this situation is to say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

16 Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children;

verse 16 “Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace” The word “therefore” is important here, because it ties this verse to the last as a conclusion that may be drawn from it. Since you are not worthy of Christ if you do not abide his covenant, then keep his covenant by renouncing war and proclaiming peace. In times

to come, this commandment would prevent the saints from making preemptive strikes or first strikes against their enemies. In addition, it also forbade them from adopting the Old Testament *lex talionis*, or law of retribution—“eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (Deuteronomy 19:21)—that pertained to the lesser law of Moses. Instead, the saints will be given at this time a higher law of retaliation congruent with the principles of the gospel (see verses 32-37). The ancient Nephites also lived the higher law of retaliation (see Alma 48:14-16). It was part of their covenants contained within the Melchizedek Priesthood and the fulness of the gospel.

“turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children” This is one of those scriptures that has more than one correct application. While we normally associate these words from Malachi 4:6 with family history and temple work, it is unlikely that very many in the 1833 Church could have so understood it, since none of the revelations, keys, or temples needed were yet in place. Family history and temple work were unknown doctrines for the most of the saints at this time. Given the context of the passage in this particular verse of renouncing war and proclaiming peace, it is likely that most of the saints would have understood the allusion to Malachi quite literally as making peace between and among families (see also verse 23). Only later would they see the deeper meaning that could be read beneath the surface of extended human families being sealed together through temple ordinances.

17 And again, the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets, and the prophets unto the Jews; lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse, and all flesh be consumed before me.

verse 17 “the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets” Our initial instinct is to understand this passage in terms of the final restoration of Judah in the last days. This may well be so. But, again, since there were very few Jews in the environment of the 1833 Church, it may also be that the term *Jew* was meant to be understood here as it was in D&C 57:4, to refer to Native Americans, with whom the Church then had and continues now to have interest and experience

18 Let not your hearts be troubled; for in my Father’s house are many mansions, and I have prepared a place for you; and where my Father and I am, there ye shall be also.

verse 18 “in my Father’s house are many mansions” The term Father’s *house* refers to the celestial heaven. The word *mansion* is not intended to imply something larger than a house. Rather it is intended simply to convey the sense of varied and multiple personal rewards to the faithful. It also conveys sense of personal closeness with our heavenly family.

19 Behold, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with many who are in the church at Kirtland;

verse 19 Just as section 97 delivers a specific warning and commandments to the Church in Missouri, so section 98 delivers a specific warning to the Church in Kirtland. Remember that at this time there were only about 150 members of the Church in the Kirtland area. Verses 20-22 contain the same kind of promises and warnings that were given to the saints in Missouri in D&C 97:24-27.

20 For they do not forsake their sins, and their wicked ways, the pride of their hearts, and their covetousness, and all their detestable things, and observe the words of wisdom and eternal life which I have given unto them.

verse 20 “they do not forsake their sins” The Lord speaks of the Kirtland saints collectively and not individually.

“observe the words of wisdom” The use of the plural here indicates that the intended meaning is not confined to section 89, what we know as the Word of Wisdom, but refers to all the revelations of the Lord to the saints.

21 Verily I say unto you, that I, the Lord, will chasten them and will do whatsoever I list, if they do not repent and observe all things whatsoever I have said unto them.

22 And again I say unto you, if ye observe to do whatsoever I command you, I, the Lord, will turn away all wrath and indignation from you, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

verses 23-31 The Lord’s law of retribution, retaliation, or revenge for families.

23 Now, I speak unto you concerning your families—if men will smite you, or your families, once, and ye bear it patiently and revile not against them, neither seek revenge, ye shall be rewarded;

verse 23 “I speak unto you concerning your families” These verses do not really speak of family interrelationships but, rather, they discuss family defenses. Notice the plural pronoun ye in these verses, indicating that these verses are directed to families and heads of families and not to individuals.

Since the saints are going to be afflicted by their enemies and persecuted contrary to the law, at what point are they justified in taking the law into their own hands and resorting to violence in retaliation against their enemies? The law of Moses in the Old Testament seemed to allow appropriate retaliation after being injured the first time (see Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:20-21). Because the law of retaliation, the *lex talionis*, or “an eye for an eye” (Matthew 5:38), is both fair and biblical, it could be argued that it was a good standard for the Latter-day Saints. The Old Testament law of

retribution, although strictly just, was part of the preparatory gospel given to ancient Israel, fulfilled with the resurrection of Christ, and was an inadequate law for living the gospel or establishing Zion in the latter days.

“if men will smite you, or your families, once” In effect this verse has the same force as Matthew 5:38-39 in the Sermon on the Mount. There the Savior explicitly states that the law of retaliation in the law of Moses, “an eye for an eye,” is no longer sufficient for a Christian. Now the law must be, “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39).

“revile not against them, neither seek revenge” To be rewarded, it is not enough simply to forgo revenge. We must bear the insult patiently and revile not. That is, we must not lose our temper and lash out physically or verbally. Like Christ our Savior, we must absorb evil and reflect back good.

“ye shall be rewarded” In the Sermon on the Mount, the reward for those who make peace is to be called the children of God (see Matthew 5:9); the reward for those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake is the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 5:10); and loving our enemies is the way in which we become truly our Heavenly Father’s children (see Matthew 5:45).

24 But if ye bear it not patiently, it shall be accounted unto you as being meted out as a just measure unto you.

verse 24 “if ye bear it not patiently, it shall be accounted . . . a just measure unto you” If we retaliate in kind when offended, then it doesn’t really matter who hit whom first. Both sides end up victims to the same extent, and both sides end up aggressors to the same extent, and so justice has no further interest in the matter. We got even; so we’re even. By our own hand, the scales of justice have been balanced, and everything is now fair. The actions of both sides are justified by reason of the penalties they have mutually suffered and exacted. However, had we not retaliated, then the law of justice would have remained outraged, and God would have been obliged to reward us and to demand satisfaction of our enemies.

25 And again, if your enemy shall smite you the second time, and you revile not against your enemy, and bear it patiently, your reward shall be an hundredfold.

26 And again, if he shall smite you the third time, and ye bear it patiently, your reward shall be doubled unto you four-fold;

verse 26 “doubled unto you four-fold” Since the second offense has already paid off a hundred fold (see verse 25), this would seem to make the third offense pay off a total of eight hundred times more than the first offense if we bear it patiently, though the number is likely meant to be symbolic and hyperbolic of overflowing blessings rather than to be taken to mean mathematical literality.

27 And these three testimonies shall stand against your enemy if he repent not, and shall not be blotted out.

verse 27 “these three testimonies” The three attacks, or afflictions, of one’s enemies stand as three witnesses under the law of witnesses that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16; see Deuteronomy 19:15). On the third occurrence, the evil intent of our adversary may be deemed a matter of record. The third time we are injured, his or her behavior cannot be misunderstood as a mistake, or a coincidence, or a misinterpretation. There is a clear pattern of aggression, and we are justified in assuming that this is so.

28 And now, verily I say unto you, if that enemy shall escape my vengeance, that he be not brought into judgment before me, then ye shall see to it that ye warn him in my name, that he come no more upon you, neither upon your family, even your children’s children unto the third and fourth generation.

verse 28 “if that enemy shall escape my vengeance” Sometimes the Lord himself punishes the wicked by bringing upon them the very plagues and destructions they sought to bring upon the saints. Just as Pharaoh planned to slay the firstborn of Israel only to lose his own firstborn, sometimes the Lord takes his own vengeance upon the enemies of the saints.

“ye shall see to it that ye warn him in my name” After the third offense the righteous are under obligation to put an offender on notice that they are liable to retaliation, should they attack yet again. The Lord is interested not in maximizing the scope of retaliation but in minimizing prospects for revenge. Nevertheless, such a warning is sufficient “unto the third and fourth generation” and ought to be taken seriously.

29 And then, if he shall come upon you or your children, or your children’s children unto the third and fourth generation, I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands;

verse 29 “I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands” The testimony of three separate offenses (see verse 27) clearly establishes the continuing evil intent of our enemies. If we issue a fair warning of retaliation against further attacks (see verse 28), then any action we must take to secure justice following a fourth attack will be acceptable to the Lord. Once our enemy’s malice is a matter of record, as well as the repeated nature of his attacks, then any measures we are forced to take may be understood as justifiable self-defense. Note that we are not justified in taking vengeance in such a case, for “vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19; see also verse 45). Rather, we are justified by the principle of self-defense.

30 And then if thou wilt spare him, thou shalt be rewarded for thy righteousness; and also thy children and thy children's children unto the third and fourth generation.

verse 30 “then if thou wilt spare him” It should be pointed out that even after a fourth attack, we are not instructed or required to smite our enemies. We may be justified in doing so, but if we choose not to, we will be further rewarded for our mercy and restraint and will bring blessings upon our heads and upon the heads of our children for generations.

31 Nevertheless, thine enemy is in thine hands; and if thou rewardest him according to his works thou art justified; if he has sought thy life, and thy life is endangered by him, thine enemy is in thine hands and thou art justified.

verse 31 “thine enemy is in thine hands” After a fourth attack, you may continue to extend mercy, but you are not required to do so. You are justified in meting out punishment appropriate to the offense, even if means killing the offender to defend oneself or one's family.

verses 32-38 The Lord's law of retribution, retaliation, or revenge for nations—or the Lord's law of war. Before going to war, the saints have the responsibility first of turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, and raising the ensign of peace. The law of retaliation for the nations is closely akin to that for families as explained in verses 23-31 above. It is that one nation should not proclaim war against another nation until the Lord commands them to do so, and the Lord will not issue such a command until the nation has lifted up an offer of peace not once or twice but three times. Then, after the fourth offense, the Lord will not only command them to retaliate but will assist them in their retaliation.

32 Behold, this is the law I gave unto my servant Nephi, and thy fathers, Joseph, and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, and all mine ancient prophets and apostles.

verse 32 “this is the law I gave unto . . . all mine ancient prophets and apostles” This verse refers to only those ancient prophets and apostles who had the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ including the Book of Mormon prophets. It does not apply to the prophets between Moses and Christ in the Old World who had only the law of Moses and who therefore had a much different standard—that of *lex talionis* or “an eye for an eye.” Deuteronomy 20:10, for example, states that “when thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.” But this is not an offer of peace in the modern sense, and certainly not an offer of peace to foreign invaders, but is merely an offer to allow a city that Israel has attacked to surrender peacefully or be destroyed (see Deuteronomy 20:12-13). The native Canaanite peoples were not given even that choice, however (see Deuteronomy 20:16-17; 1 Nephi 17:32-35, 41). Similar

examples are common between Exodus and Malachi. By comparison, the practice of the Nephites was vastly different and in accord with verses 32-37 (see Alma 48:14-16; 3 Nephi 3:20-21; Mormon 3:10-16). The Savior himself says in the Sermon on the Mount regarding the lesser law of retaliation in the law of Moses and the higher requirement of the gospel: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not [the] evil [doer]: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:38-39). So it would seem that when the Lord took the fulness of the gospel and the holy priesthood away from Israel and gave them the preparatory gospel in its place, he also allowed them to operate under a lesser law of retaliation from Moses until Christ.

33 And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them.

34 And if any nation, tongue, or people should proclaim war against them, they should first lift a standard of peace unto that people, nation, or tongue;

35 And if that people did not accept the offering of peace, neither the second nor the third time, they should bring these testimonies before the Lord;

36 Then I, the Lord, would give unto them a commandment, and justify them in going out to battle against that nation, tongue, or people.

37 And I, the Lord, would fight their battles, and their children’s battles, and their children’s children’s, until they had avenged themselves on all their enemies, to the third and fourth generation.

38 Behold, this is an ensample unto all people, saith the Lord your God, for justification before me.

verse 38 “this is an ensample unto all people” *Ensample* is an old spelling of example. Thus, even when a nation is not led by prophets or does not worship the Lord, the principles of retaliation taught in verses 32-37 would serve as a useful and beneficial example for them to follow.

verses 39-48 These verses deal with the Lord’s law of individual forgiveness. Many people are confused by what they consider to be conflicting instructions in scripture on the topic of forgiveness. On the one hand, the Savior says to forgive “seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21-22) and “of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:9-11). On the other hand, verses 39-48 seem to limit forgiveness to “three strikes and you’re out.”

The crucial distinction that allows us to resolve the apparent conflict is whether the offender in a given instance is repentant or not. If he or she is repentant and asks for our forgiveness, then we, as true children of a merciful Father in Heaven, must grant mercy and forgiveness even as we hope to be forgiven (see Matthew 6:14-15; Luke

17:3-4; also D&C 64:9-11 and the commentary on those verses). Even when an offender is not repentant, we are required to forgive him or her at least three times without harboring any grudge. By extension, then, if we are commanded to forgive the intentional insults of our enemies without harboring a grudge, how much more, then, should we be expected to forgive the unintentional slights or mistakes of our friends! How can there ever be grudges between brothers and sisters or between members or families in the wards and stakes of the Church?

39 And again, verily I say unto you, if after thine enemy has come upon thee the first time, he repent and come unto thee praying thy forgiveness, thou shalt forgive him, and shalt hold it no more as a testimony against thine enemy—

40 And so on unto the second and third time; and as oft as thine enemy repenteth of the trespass wherewith he has trespassed against thee, thou shalt forgive him, until seventy times seven.

41 And if he trespass against thee and repent not the first time, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him.

42 And if he trespass against thee the second time, and repent not, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him.

43 And if he trespass against thee the third time, and repent not, thou shalt also forgive him.

44 But if he trespass against thee the fourth time thou shalt not forgive him, but shalt bring these testimonies before the Lord; and they shall not be blotted out until he repent and reward thee four-fold in all things wherewith he has trespassed against thee.

45 And if he do this, thou shalt forgive him with all thine heart; and if he do not this, I, the Lord, will avenge thee of thine enemy an hundred-fold;

46 And upon his children, and upon his children's children of all them that hate me, unto the third and fourth generation.

verse 46 “**And upon his children, and upon his children's children of all them that hate me**” In the Church, we do not believe in inherited guilt, and it should be pointed out that this verse is descriptive rather than prescriptive. That is, it describes what is going to happen and not what the Lord is going to make happen. In this case, someone of such an evil character as this repeated offender is, by the natural laws of the universe, probably going to raise an equally unpleasant family who also “hate me”—referring to the Lord. Violence and other abusive behaviors are usually learned at home. Should any offspring of such a person turn to the Lord, they would be forgiven, and the chain of evil would be broken (see verses 47-48). But otherwise it will likely take generations for the sins of the fathers to become sufficiently diluted by time to cease influencing their posterity.

“unto the third and fourth generation” This phrase is only symbolic of the three or four offenses of the enemy and the three or four generations that are likely to experience the consequences.

47 But if the children shall repent, or the children’s children, and turn to the Lord their God, with all their hearts and with all their might, mind, and strength, and restore four-fold for all their trespasses wherewith they have trespassed, or wherewith their fathers have trespassed, or their fathers’ fathers, then thine indignation shall be turned away;

48 And vengeance shall no more come upon them, saith the Lord thy God, and their trespasses shall never be brought any more as a testimony before the Lord against them. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

Section 98, along with sections 94 and 97 were taken to the saints in Missouri immediately after section 98 was received. Orson Hyde and John Gould were dispatched to deliver the revelation by horseback.

Section 99 John Murdock called to Preach

In our present-day Doctrine and Covenants, Section 99 is, temporally speaking, out of sequence. Although editions of the D&C since 1876 have listed this revelation as being received in August 1833, earlier editions and other historical records indicate that it was actually given in Kirtland in August 1832. For example, the *Kirtland Revelation Book* records section 99 as having been received August 24, 1832 “by Joseph the Seer and written by F. G. Williams, scribe.” It is further recorded that section 99 was received in Hiram, Ohio. It most likely was received in the John Johnson home in Hiram, as Joseph did not move his family from there back to Kirtland until mid-September 1832. John Murdock’s dairy and journal also record the date of this revelation as August 1832. Section 99 would naturally have fallen between sections 83 and 84.

Like sections 79 and 80, section 99 calls a specific elder to serve a mission. In this case, the call is issued to one of the great men of the early Church, John Murdock. He is called to a mission in the “eastern countries.” Brother Murdock, like Lehi of old, was “a visionary man” (1 Nephi 2:11), joining the Church just seven months after its organization as the missionaries to the Lamanites preached in Kirtland on their way to Missouri. Between November 1830 and March 1831, Brother Murdock preached the gospel of the Restoration and baptized between sixty and seventy persons. A month later, on April 30, 1831, John’s beloved wife Julia, died just six hours after giving birth to twins. On that same terrible night, Emma Smith also gave birth to twins. Emma lived, but her twins died. Being widowed and with five children to care for, John Murdock agreed to having Joseph and Emma adopt the two babies. This they gladly did, naming the girl Julia after her mother and the boy Joseph after his adoptive father. One of the twins, Joseph, died when he was one year old, shortly after the mobbing of Joseph in Hiram, Ohio, in March of 1832. The other twin, Julia, was reared to maturity.

Prior to adopting the Murdock twins and prior to her losing the twins in April of 1831, Emma had lost her firstborn child in 1828. Julia lived to become their eldest child. Fortunately, Joseph and Emma did have other children who lived. Two other children, sons, were born while the family was living in Ohio. Joseph Smith III was born November 6, 1832, and Frederick Granger Williams Smith was born on June 20, 1836. After Joseph and many of the Kirtland Saints moved to Missouri, Emma gave birth to Alexander Hale Smith on June 2, 1838. Shortly after they settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, Don Carlos Smith was born on June 13, 1840. He died fourteen months later, on August 15, 1841. Another infant son, unnamed, died at birth on December 26, 1842, one day after Christmas and three days after the Prophet’s birthday. David Hiram Smith, whom the Prophet never saw, was born in Nauvoo on November 27, 1844, just five months after his father’s martyrdom.

Julia eventually married Elisha Dixon. He was killed in an explosion of a steamship on Red River, Texas. She then married John J. Middleton. They had no children. She died near Nauvoo in 1880.

John Murdock was first mentioned in D&C 52:8 when he received his first mission call to Missouri, just five weeks after the death of his wife. On his return to Kirtland from Missouri, he learned of the death of his young son, Joseph. Nevertheless, he accepted this additional mission call, recorded as section 99, leaving a month later with Zebedee Coltrin on September 27, 1832, after providing for his children as advised in verse 6. In view of his steadfast obedience and faithfulness, it is not surprising that Brother Murdock's private journal contains the following notation of a vision he received after a promise made to him by the prophet Joseph in the School of the Prophets the next spring: "I saw the form of a man [the Savior], most lovely, the visage of his face was sound and fair as the sun. His hair a bright silver grey, curled in most majestic form, his eyes a keen penetrating blue, and the skin of his neck a most beautiful white and he was covered from the neck to the feet with a loose garment, pure white, whiter than any garment I have ever before seen. His countenance was most penetrating, and yet most lovely" (John Murdock Journal, as cited in Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*, 202). He served faithfully in many other callings, including Zion's Camp. He remarried and moved to Missouri in the summer of 1836. Eventually, he moved with the Church to the valleys of the West where he had a major role in founding Beaver, Utah. He was ordained a patriarch and died in Beaver in 1871 at the age of seventy-nine.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto my servant John Murdock—thou art called to go into the eastern countries from house to house, from village to village, and from city to city, to proclaim mine everlasting gospel unto the inhabitants thereof, in the midst of persecution and wickedness.

verse 1 "eastern countries" Based on Brother Murdock's journal, he seems to have understood this to refer primarily to the areas immediately east of Kirtland and in New York state but also to the other eastern states.

2 And who receiveth you receiveth me; and you shall have power to declare my word in the demonstration of my Holy Spirit.

verse 2 "And who receiveth you receiveth me" The Savior taught this principle of representation to his disciples in the time of the New Testament Church (see Matthew 10:40-42; 25:30-35). It is in part an extension of the principle of the divine investiture of authority that is inherent in the priesthood. Just as the Son may speak in the person of the Father (see Moses 1), or the Holy Ghost may speak in the person of the Son (see Moses 5:9), so a properly ordained apostle or prophet may say, "Thus saith the Lord," and then deliver the rest of his message in the first person as though it

were the Lord himself speaking (for example, see Isaiah 50:1; D&C 1). Beyond this, however, anyone—male or female—under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may represent the Lord in many situations, e.g., missionaries, Sunday School teachers, or Relief Society presidents (see D&C 1:38).

“in the demonstration of my Holy Spirit” The language here was not without special significance for John Murdock, for as a child he had had a vision which had caused him to seek for the true church of Christ until he found it in November 1830. One thing that had particularly caused him to lose patience with one church after another was their lack of, or even denial of, the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. Now in this second mission call, this visionary man was promised that he would preach the gospel in power and in the demonstration of the very Holy Spirit he had sought all his life and had only recently received as a gift after his baptism (Black, *Who’s Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*, 201-202).

3 And who receiveth you as a little child, receiveth my kingdom; and blessed are they, for they shall obtain mercy.

verse 3 “blessed are they, for they shall obtain mercy” According to the fifth Beatitude (see Matthew 5:7), it is the merciful who shall obtain mercy, but in the days of missionaries traveling without purse or scrip, to receive penniless strangers—to feed and house and clothe them, to nurse them when they were sick, to hide them from their enemies, as well as to listen to them preach—all of this was merciful indeed. And those who so succored the missionaries would receive the Lord’s mercy.

4 And whoso rejecteth you shall be rejected of my Father and his house; and you shall cleanse your feet in the secret places by the way for a testimony against them.

verse 4 “you shall cleanse your feet” See the commentary for D&C 24:15 (see also Matthew 10:14-15). This ordinance should not be done in such a way as to anger those who have rejected the gospel, but rather should be done discretely “in the secret places by the way for a testimony against them.”

5 And behold, and lo, I come quickly to judgment, to convince all of their ungodly deeds which they have committed against me, as it is written of me in the volume of the book.

verse 5 “I come quickly to judgment” See the commentary for D&C 33:18. **“as it is written of me in the volume of the book”** “The book” referred to here could be (1) the book of Jude, in which the quotation appears (Jude 1:14-15), (2) the book of Enoch (in Jude 1:14-15, Jude was quoting the prophet Enoch), or (3) the Bible itself, which contains the book of Jude.

6 And now, verily I say unto you, that it is not expedient that you should go until your children are provided for, and sent up kindly unto the bishop of Zion.

verse 6 “it is not expedient that you should go until your children are provided for” John and Julia Murdock had three children before Julia gave birth to the twins. With the twins safely in the care of Joseph and Emma, Brother Murdock arranged for his three older children to be taken to Missouri by Caleb Baldwin and arranged for their support there by Bishop Partridge until Brother Murdock could join them. Edward Partridge was a close personal friend of Brother Murdock’s. Brother Murdock wrote in his journal, “Previous to this I had provided for my children and sent them up to the Bishop in Zion, according to the revelation, by Dr. Caleb Baldwin and paid him thirty dollars for carrying them and [other] things. And after making proper preparations according to the revelation I journeyed forth. Sept. 27, 1832. Br. Zebedee Coltrin and myself started on a mission.”

“sent up kindly unto the bishop of Zion” That is, they are to be sent with affection and in such a manner that, having just lost their mother, they will not come to doubt the continuing love of their father. The Lord specifically instructs that they must not feel rejected or abandoned.

7 And after a few years, if thou desirest of me, thou mayest go up also unto the goodly land, to possess thine inheritance;

verse 7 Although Brother Murdock was soon reunited with his children in Missouri, he was also called upon to serve several missions and later become a bishop and patriarch. His daughter Phebe became ill and died in Missouri in 1834, but the two remaining sons lived to adulthood, went west, and served faithfully in the Church. In 1836, Brother Murdock married Amoranda Turner and settled with his children in Missouri, only to be driven from that state with the rest of the Church in February 1839.

8 Otherwise thou shalt continue proclaiming my gospel until thou be taken. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1833 October

As if to teach us that the work must go forward in spite of adversity, Joseph and others left for a one-month mission to Canada in early October. Joseph received a revelation while on this mission [**D&C 100 - Brief Mission to Canada**].

Section 100 Brief Mission to Canada

When Joseph learned the details concerning the mob activities in Missouri from Oliver Cowdery (probably about August 9), he immediately dispatched Brothers Orson Hyde and John Gould to Independence with advice and words of support for the saints in Zion. They carried with them sections 94, 97, and 98.

About six weeks later, on October 5, 1833, Joseph, Sidney, and a convert to the Church named Freeman Nickerson left Kirtland for a short term mission in upstate New York and Canada. Brother Nickerson provided the team and wagon for their conveyance. The Church has in its possession a handwritten journal recorded by Joseph while on this mission.

After traveling as far as Perrysburg, New York, which was the home of Brother Nickerson's father, they stopped for a time. Joseph recorded in his journal that all was well with them, and the Lord was with them. However, he expressed anxiety about his family and the saints in Zion. Thus, on October 12 he inquired of the Lord and received this revelation.

In this section, the Lord reassures Joseph and Sidney that their families are well (verse 1), and that they should keep their minds on their present mission (verses 2-4). They are counseled regarding this present mission (verses 5-8). Sidney Rigdon is called to be Joseph's spokesman to bear "mighty" testimony and to expound the scriptures. Some have suggested that Nephi may have prophesied of this calling of Sidney's—see 2 Nephi 3:18. The Lord reassures them that after a "little season" of chastisement, Zion will be redeemed (verse 13). It is interesting to note that this "little season" has not yet been completed even today. The Lord then advises them that Orson Hyde and John Gould, who were dispatched to Zion to deliver to the exiled saints section 98 and other messages of comfort, made it safely to Missouri.

Why would the Lord pick this time to call Joseph away from Kirtland on a mission? To us today, this mission may seem so untimely. Why would Joseph leave Kirtland at a time when so many stressful things were happening? The saints in Zion were in near desperate circumstances exiled in Clay County. The temple in Kirtland was under construction, but no one knew where the funds were going to come from to complete the project. How could Joseph possibly leave at such a time? It is interesting to speculate.

Perhaps he simply needed a break—an opportunity to get away and gather his thoughts. In this dispensation, several of the prophets have had their "get-aways." George Albert Smith went to a home in Ocean Park, California. Heber J. Grant went to Santa Monica, California. David O. McKay spent time in Laguna Beach, California or Huntsville, Utah. A more likely explanation is that Freeman Nickerson persuaded the Prophet to go. Brother Nickerson wanted Joseph to preach the gospel to his parents.

One wonders if they might have been wealthy and potentially able to provide a much needed infusion of money to the troubled Church. Perhaps also we should regard this as a teaching point from the Lord. Even though the enemy is assailing the Church and waves of the storm are breaking over it from stem to stern, the Lord wants us to always press forward with the work full speed ahead.

The missionaries arrived back in Kirtland on November 4, 1833.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my friends Sidney and Joseph, your families are well; they are in mine hands, and I will do with them as seemeth me good; for in me there is all power.

verse 1 “my friends Sidney and Joseph” It should not be supposed that Brother Nickerson, who accompanied Joseph and Sidney on much of this mission, is being excluded here. However, since he has just arrived home in Perrysburg at this time, he already knows his family is well. Most of the remaining revelation concerns matters of church leadership and is therefore properly directed to Joseph and Sidney.

“your families are well; they are in mine hands” In fulfillment of this assurance, the Prophet recorded in his private journal on his return to Kirtland: “Friday November 1 [1833]. Left Buffalo, N. Y. at 8 o’clock A.M. and arrived at home Monday, the 4th [November 1833] at 10 A.M. found my family all well according to the promise of the Lord, for which blessing I feel to thank his holy name; Amen” (Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 24).

2 Therefore, follow me, and listen to the counsel which I shall give unto you.

3 Behold, and lo, I have much people in this place, in the regions round about; and an effectual door shall be opened in the regions round about in this eastern land.

verse 3 Even though Joseph and Sidney spent only one month on this particular mission, they preached to many large and receptive congregations, they were impressed that the Holy Spirit was planting seeds in many honest hearts, and they baptized at least eighteen individuals (*HC*, 1:421-423). However, the real fruits of their labors would come two years later when Parley P. Pratt would return to the same area in Canada through the “effectual door” that had been opened by Joseph and Sidney. What they had sowed, Brother Pratt harvested, preaching to thousands and baptizing hundreds. Among those converts were John Taylor, a future president of the Church and Mary Fielding who would marry Hyrum Smith and become the mother of President Joseph F. Smith and grandmother of President Joseph Fielding Smith. The month-long mission of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to New York and Canada indeed opened an “effectual door” through which passed hundreds of saints and three future church presidents.

4 Therefore, I, the Lord, have suffered you to come unto this place; for thus it was expedient in me for the salvation of souls.

verse 4 “I, the Lord, have suffered you” I have allowed you.

“it was expedient in me” This might be rephrased in more contemporary English: “It was useful to me,” or “It was advantageous for my purposes.”

5 Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people; speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men;

verse 5 “you shall not be confounded before men” The Lord comforts his missionaries by assuring them that if they preach by the Spirit, the truth of their teachings will carry the day. They will not be embarrassed or shamed by being shouted down or losing in verbal debate.

6 For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.

verse 6 The Lord repeats to Joseph and Sidney the same promise he made when he sent out his New Testament disciples: “Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak” (Matthew 10:19; compare D&C 84:85).

7 But a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall declare whatsoever thing ye declare in my name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness, in all things.

verse 7 “But a commandment I give unto you” The Lord warns his servants to keep in mind that they are on his errand, and must speak in his name. They must also remember that the marvelous gifts promised in verses 5 and 6 are blessings from the Lord and should not become a source of pride.

8 And I give unto you this promise, that inasmuch as ye do this the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record unto all things whatsoever ye shall say.

9 And it is expedient in me that you, my servant Sidney, should be a spokesman unto this people; yea, verily, I will ordain you unto this calling, even to be a spokesman unto my servant Joseph.

verse 9 “Sidney, should be a spokesman” Sidney Rigdon was a well-educated man with magnificent talents as a thinker and a writer but particularly as an orator. He had been a Reformed Baptist minister with several congregations in the Kirtland area before joining the Church in 1831. George Q. Cannon said of Sidney: “Those who knew Sidney Rigdon, know how wonderfully God inspired him, and with what wonderful eloquence he declared the word of God to the people. He was a mighty man in the hands of God, as a spokesman, as long as the Prophet lived, or up to a short

time before his death” (*JD*, 25:126). The Lord had earlier promised Sidney that he would “preach my gospel and call on the holy prophets [that is, the scriptures] to prove [Joseph’s] words” (D&C 35:23).

The appointment of Sidney Rigdon as the spokesman for the prophet Joseph fulfilled an ancient prophecy uttered by that particular Joseph who was sold into Egypt: “And the Lord hath said: I will raise up a Moses. . . and I will make a spokesman for him” (2 Nephi 3:17). Thus, the relationship between Joseph and Sidney would be that of a modern Moses and Aaron with Joseph as Moses the prophet, and Sidney as Aaron his spokesman (see Exodus 4:16). Sidney Rigdon served in this capacity until sometime after his imprisonment in Liberty Jail. During the Nauvoo period, this role was gradually assumed by Hyrum Smith.

The fulfillment of 2 Nephi 3:17-18 and the role of the modern Aaron cannot be confined to Sidney Rigdon alone. In D&C 8:6-7, the Lord had previously told Oliver Cowdery that he had the gift of Aaron, while D&C 28:2-3 explicitly stated that Oliver was to be as Aaron to Joseph, who was to be to him as Moses. When Oliver Cowdery subsequently left the Church, Hyrum Smith received all the blessings, honors, gifts, and positions that Oliver had formerly held (see D&C 124:95). This would include Oliver’s former position of an Aaron to Joseph. And just as Aaron really was Moses’s elder brother, so Hyrum really was Joseph’s elder brother and died with him at Carthage, a true Aaron and a true brother to the last, after Oliver and Sidney had lost that calling.

10 And I will give unto him power to be mighty in testimony.

verse 10 “I will give unto him” That is, I will give unto the prophet Joseph Smith.

11 And I will give unto thee power to be mighty in expounding all scriptures, that thou mayest be a spokesman unto him, and he shall be a revelator unto thee, that thou mayest know the certainty of all things pertaining to the things of my kingdom on the earth.

verse 11 “I will give unto thee” That is, I will give unto Sidney Rigdon.

“to be mighty in expounding all scriptures” Sidney’s calling is to use his knowledge of the scriptures and his gifts of explanation and oratory to preach the truths of the restored gospel as they are revealed through the prophet Joseph Smith. However, Joseph—not Sidney—is the one who receives those revelations. No one on the earth, no matter how intelligent, gifted, or highly placed, has the authority to declare new doctrine to the Church except the prophet.

12 Therefore, continue your journey and let your hearts rejoice; for behold, and lo, I am with you even unto the end.

13 And now I give unto you a word concerning Zion. Zion shall be redeemed, although she is chastened for a little season.

verse 13 Beginning just nineteen days after this revelation was received, the saints were driven out of Jackson county, Missouri, altogether (November 1, 1833). This was the chastening foreseen by the Lord. Some might think that two hundred years or so from the time the promise of redemption was given until its fulfillment might be more than “a little season.” It must be remembered, however, that John the Revelator used “a little season” in a context that seems to describe the dispensation of the fifth seal, which some interpret to last as long as a thousand years (see Revelation 6:10-11). The primary meaning of *redeem* is to recover by purchase what has been lost or sold. The promise of the Lord is that Zion will in time be redeemed, but only when he has prepared “a pure people, that will serve me in righteousness” (verse 16).

14 Thy brethren, my servants Orson Hyde and John Gould, are in my hands; and inasmuch as they keep my commandments they shall be saved.

verse 14 “Orson Hyde and John Gould” These two brethren had been sent at considerable risk to Jackson County with counsel for the saints from the Prophet, and Joseph is concerned that they will run afoul of mobs on their journey. Brothers Hyde and Gould did, in fact, return safely on November 25, and Orson Hyde brought the first accounts of the expulsion of the saints from Jackson County and of their miserable conditions, dispossessed of practically everything they owned and facing the coming winter in the unsettled country north of the Missouri River.

15 Therefore, let your hearts be comforted; for all things shall work together for good to them that walk uprightly, and to the sanctification of the church.

verse 15 “all things shall work together for good” The Lord reiterates the idea that sufferings, while in and of themselves are not good, they tend to produce spiritual growth in the righteous and diligent—in “them that walk uprightly”—(see the commentary for D&C 98:3).

“and to the sanctification of the church” Sanctification is spiritual growth—the incremental receiving of gifts of the Spirit or attributes of God that displace the natural man tendencies of mortals. When the saints suffer and must overcome obstacles, the result is real spiritual growth or sanctification of the Church as a whole.

16 For I will raise up unto myself a pure people, that will serve me in righteousness;

17 And all that call upon the name of the Lord, and keep his commandments, shall be saved. Even so. Amen.

verse 17 “all that call upon the name of the Lord . . . shall be saved” Note that the promise is not that they shall be safe, but that they shall be saved. Many

worthy saints died in Missouri, in Illinois, on the plains, and elsewhere. Righteousness brings no guarantee of physical health and safety in this life, but it is a guarantee of salvation in the kingdom of God in the life to come.

Section 101 Zion: Why Persecuted, When Redeemed

When the agreement was signed on July 23, 1833, between the church leaders and the Missouri mob, it was agreed that the saints be allowed to remain in their homes until January 1, 1834, at which time they consented to be out of Jackson County. However, the spirit of persecution among those Missourians knew no such patience (see also the commentary for section 97). After Oliver Cowdery arrived in Kirtland (probably August 9, 1833) and informed the Prophet of the mobbers' atrocities on July 20, Joseph dispatched Orson Hyde and John Gould to Jackson County with advice for the saints there. Among other things, he advised the saints to exhaust every legal appeal for redress against the mob. On October 30, 1833, the saints in Independence retained the firm of Wood, Reese, Doniphan, and Atchison to pursue their case in the local courts. Within hours the mob was aware of this action and interpreted it as a repudiation by the saints of their illegally coerced promise to leave Jackson County by January 1. The mob also saw this action as the saints' decision to remain and pursue their civil rights instead of leaving Jackson County. The very next day—fittingly enough, Halloween, October 31, 1833—the infuriated mobbers descended again upon the Missouri Saints:

Thursday night, the 31st day of October [1833], gave the saints in Zion abundant proof that no pledge on the part of their enemies, written or verbal, was longer to be regarded; for on that night, between forty and fifty persons in number, many of whom were armed with guns, proceeded against a branch of the Church, west of the Big Blue [River, west of Independence], and unroofed and partly demolished ten dwelling houses; and amid the shrieks and screams of the women and children, whipped and beat in a savage and brutal manner, several of the men: while their horrid threats frightened women and children into the wilderness. . . . On Friday, the first of November, women and children sallied forth from their gloomy retreats, to contemplate with heartrending anguish the ravages of a ruthless mob, in the lacerated and bruised bodies of their husbands, and in the destruction of their houses, and their furniture. Houseless and unprotected by the arm of the civil law in Jackson County, the dreary month of November staring them in the face and loudly proclaiming an inclement season at hand; the continual threats of the mob that they would drive every "Mormon" from the county; and the inability of many to move, because of their poverty, caused an anguish of heart indescribable.

On Friday night, the 1st of November, a party of the mob proceeded to attack a branch of the Church settled on the prairie, about twelve or fourteen miles from the town of Independence . . .

The same night, (Friday), another party in Independence commenced stoning houses, breaking down doors and windows and destroying furniture.

Thursday, November 7th, the shores of the Missouri River began to be lined on both sides of the ferry, with men, women, and children; goods, wagons, boxes, chests, and provisions; while the ferrymen were busily employed in crossing them over. When night again closed upon the saints, the wilderness had much the appearance of a camp meeting. Hundreds of people were seen in every direction; some in tents, and some in the open air, around their fires, while the rain descended in torrents. Husbands were inquiring for their wives, and women for their husbands; parents for children, and children for parents. Some had the good fortune to escape with their families, household goods, and some provisions; while others knew not the fate of their friends, and had lost all of their effects. The scene was indescribable, and would have melted the hearts of any people upon earth . . .

The saints who fled from Jackson County, took refuge in the neighboring counties, chiefly in Clay County, the inhabitants of which received them with some degree of kindness. Those who fled to the county of Van Buren were again driven, and compelled to flee, and those who fled to Lafayette County were soon expelled, or the most of them, and had to move wherever they could find protection (*HC*, 1:426-27, 437-38).

For the next two weeks, mobs attacked the saints' homes and farms between Independence and the Indian Territory and especially along the Big Blue River, west of Independence, virtually unhindered by any civil authority. On November 5, Lieutenant Governor Lilburn Boggs did call out a militia with the stated purpose of disarming both sides in the fighting, but since Colonel Thomas Pitcher and most of this militia favored the mob, the guns of only the Mormons were actually collected. This left the saints defenseless and with no recourse but to flee for their lives from an armed enemy unopposed by any state or local authority. By mid-November twelve hundred saints were scattered on the prairies or across the Missouri River in Clay, Van Buren, and other counties. More than two hundred homes were burned and an estimated \$175,000 in damages inflicted upon the Missouri saints. There were dead and wounded on both sides during the first days of the fighting, but more saints died during the hard winter that followed when they huddled dispossessed in northern Missouri.

The news of the actual expulsion of the saints from Jackson County in early November arrived in Kirtland in bits and pieces. Orson Hyde and John Gould arrived back in Kirtland on November 25. On December 5, Joseph received a letter from W. W. Phelps supplying additional details of the Jackson tragedy. Finally on December 10, the full story reached Joseph from Bishop Partridge and the brethren in Clay County, Missouri. Joseph grieved, "Oh my brethren! my brethren. . . . [W]ould that I had been with you, to have shared your fate. Oh my God, what shall I do in such a trial as this!" (Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 225). During this period, many Kirtland saints agonized over the unknown fate of friends and loved ones. Oliver Cowdery, for example, did not know whether his wife, Elizabeth, whom he had left behind in Jackson

County, was dead or alive or to where she might have fled. In addition, those saints who had fled Jackson County south to Van Buren County in November were driven out by the residents of that county again in December.

While the news of the atrocities in Jackson County, were obviously upsetting to Joseph, they likely did not come as a total surprise. On January 11, 1833, ten months before the expulsion, Joseph wrote to W. W. Phelps: "If Zion will not purify herself, so as to be approved of in all things, in his sight, he will seek another people . . . and they who will not hear his voice, must expect to feel his wrath. Let me say to you, seek to purify yourselves, and also all the inhabitants of Zion, lest the Lord's anger be kindled to fierceness. Repent, repent, is the voice of God to Zion . . . hear the warning voice of God, lest Zion fall, and the Lord swear in his wrath the inhabitants of Zion shall not enter into his rest. . . . This from your brother who trembles for Zion and for the wrath of heaven, which awaits her if she repent not" (*HC*, 1:316, 317; compare Jese, *Personal Writings*, 292-93). In addition, many individuals in Zion, including church leaders, had to be reproved for their hard feelings and disobedience in the years before the expulsion (see, for example, *HC*, 1:316-321). Finally, in August 1833, the Lord had warned Zion directly and specifically one more time: "But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, and with devouring fire" (D&C 97:26).

Joseph wrote to Edward Partridge, the bishop in Missouri, instructing him to use the law to obtain redress and not to sell any of the Mormon land. Five days later he again wrote to the elders in Missouri, reiterating his instructions to Bishop Partridge to hold on to their property and to appeal to the courts, the governor of the state, and the president of the United States for redress.

The Mormon leaders in Missouri lost no time in apprising the Missouri state governor, Daniel Dunklin, of their plight. They petitioned the governor for (1) assistance so that they might "be restored" to their homes in Jackson County, and (2) continuing military protection until peace could be restored. The governor responded within two weeks through the state attorney general Robert W. Wells, and gave the saints the impression that if they wished to return to their property in Jackson County, he would provide an adequate military force and sufficient arms to accomplish that. Within a few days, however, it became apparent that the governor was waffling on his commitment to the Mormons. He used the technique of bureaucratic evasion and continued to maintain that he would guarantee the saints safe return to Jackson County but explained that he felt it was useless for him to do so, since he was unable to supply any continuing protection for the saints. Without that protection, he felt, they would surely be expelled again. He did suggest that the saints might try to raise a force among themselves sufficient to make themselves secure should they return to Jackson County.

By early January 1834, the church leaders in Clay County realized that they had reached an impasse and dispatched Lyman Wight and Parley P. Pratt to make the journey to Kirtland to inform the prophet.

From the time Joseph had learned of the desperate plight of the 2,500 saints in Zion, Joseph had pondered the grave situation. Particularly had he wondered why the Lord had allowed this trial to come upon the saints, and if Zion was to be redeemed, when would it be redeemed? Joseph inquired of the Lord, and on December 16, 1833, the Lord gave this revelation in answer to his petition. Thus, the two main questions answered by the Lord in section 101 are: (1) Why is the Lord allowing this persecution? and, (2) When will Zion be redeemed?

Before we turn to these questions, let us review the concept of Zion. Please review the several possible meanings of the term “Zion” in “Meanings of ‘Zion’” in volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, chapter 27, *Zion*.

For our discussion here, we will consider Zion to be that glorious “city” which will be established in the latter days some time prior to the Lord’s second coming. It will serve as a place of gathering and refuge to those who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church members who establish and live in Zion will be sanctified. They will live and be governed by the principles of the celestial law. Zion will be the abode of Jesus as he administers the government of the earth during the Millennium. It will not be a secret place. Rather, all will know of it, even those who do not dwell there. Zion is described in scripture as “Fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and . . . terrible unto all nations; [such] that the kingdoms of this world [will be] constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (D&C 105:31-32).

In the latter days two places will be called Zion. The first is the city of Jerusalem itself which will be restored to its holy position of grandeur and beauty. It will serve as a gathering place for the tribe of Judah. The second is the New Jerusalem to be built upon the western hemisphere with its center in Jackson County, Missouri. To Zion on the western hemisphere will gather the rest of Israel and those Gentiles without the house of Israel who accept the gospel and are “adopted” into the house of Israel.

The location of Zion is not limited just to the city of Jerusalem and Jackson County, Missouri. In the latter days, wherever there are saints of God who have embraced the restored gospel, there is Zion.

Zion may also be something other than a place. Zion may also be an attitude of acceptance of the gospel, a spirit of obedience, a purity of heart. Just as the title *Babylon* may refer in a specific way to an ancient city or in a general way to the evil that exists in the world, so may the word *Zion* represent either a city or label used to describe all that is truly righteous, wholesome, and in tune with the Spirit of the Lord and his eternal plan. This grand fruition of Zion was not, of course, realized during Joseph’s lifetime. Joseph was willing, and the Lord was willing, but the saints were unprepared.

Let us now turn to the first question answered by the Lord in this section: Why did the Lord allow the persecution and scattering of the saints from Zion? The answer is given in verse 2. The Lord allowed them to be afflicted because of their transgressions. Note verse 6: "There were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes and lustful and covetous desires among them." The consequences of the saints' unpreparedness and sin included not only the persecution of the saints and their expulsion from Zion, but also a long delay in the establishment of Zion. Speaking of the saints' persecutors, the Lord said, "They were found transgressors, therefore they must needs be chastened" (verse 41). However, while the Lord made it clear that the persecutors were not guiltless, the major fault lay with the saints themselves.

Now, wait a moment! Do we really believe the Lord allowed the crude and cruel Missourians to punish his saints? Apparently so. The Babylonians and Assyrians and Romans were all used to punish ancient Israel. Thus we learn that the Lord may use the instruments of wickedness to chastise his Church and people and bring tribulations and afflictions upon them.

Even though the saints stood rightly condemned, we should note that the Lord did not cast them off: "They have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions; yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in the day when I shall come to make up my jewels" (verses 2-3).

Brother Richard D. Draper in his essay entitled "Maturing toward the Millennium" asks an interesting question:

How is it that the early saints could have committed transgressions and yet still be favored by the Lord? In D&C 29:47 the Lord spoke of a time when children begin to become accountable before him. The word "begin" used in that verse may suggest that children do not become accountable all at once but rather grow in accountability. This idea seems to apply to the Church as well. The Lord is more tolerant with the mistakes of youth than the rebellion of the mature. Though the Church has to suffer the consequences of transgression, still it was not cut off from the influence of the Lord. Time was given for maturation and experience before perfection was demanded. The early Church, even with its mistakes, was still the infant from which the spiritual giant would eventually grow. . . . If the Church in its immaturity lost the land of Zion, it did not lose the more important keys of preparing the hearts of a people so that they could establish Zion in the future (*Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 391-93).

It would appear that initially the chastisement from the Lord was not to include the giving up of the saints' lands and homes in Missouri. When the saints in Kirtland first heard of the outrages which had been committed against the saints in Zion, they "concluded with one accord to die with you or redeem you" (*Ibid.*, Monte S. Nyman, 234). This was not an empty promise. The Kirtland saints held meetings to determine how they might proceed to get back the exiles' lands. In verses 55 and 56 the Lord

explained what the saints were to do about the situation: “Go and gather together . . . my servants . . . my warriors . . . and go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard and redeem my vineyard.” These commands from the Lord resulted in a dramatic rescue attempt—Zion’s Camp. See the commentary and Historical Setting for section 103.

Now let us turn to the question of when Zion will be redeemed. Obviously it was not redeemed in Joseph Smith’s day or in the lifetime of Brigham Young or Heber C. Kimball, even though these early brethren believed and preached that the Church would return to Jackson County in their day. Zion has not yet been redeemed, even today. Verses 22 and 23 imply that Zion will not be redeemed until shortly prior to the Lord’s second coming. The Church in the early 19th century was a small, weak, vulnerable, and immature body. Presently we are living in a Church of transition. It is no longer weak and vulnerable, yet it is not the glorious Zion Church of the future. The task of the present Church is to bring to pass the reality of that future Church. The essential element to our becoming a Zion people is the true conversion of the individual members of the Church. Only when enough hearts have given themselves to the Savior can Zion become a reality. Until then, we will remain a Church in transition.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 101 Zion: Why Persecuted When Redeemed

D&C 101:16 (also Psalm 46:10) Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God.

D&C 101:22 Behold, it is my will, that all they who call on my name, and worship me according to mine everlasting gospel, should gather together, and stand in holy places.

D&C 101:43-62 The parable of the nobleman’s vineyard which, inadequately protected due to the failure of the watchmen to build a tower, is invaded by the enemy causing the nobleman’s servants to flee (a parable of the saints in Independence who failed to build a temple as they had been commanded).

D&C 101:80 For this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose.

1 Verily I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance—

verse 1 The Lord speaks to the Prophet Joseph about the saints to have been cruelly persecuted and forced out of Jackson, County, Missouri.

2 I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions;

verse 2 The Lord allows the wicked of the world to afflict his people when his people sin (see Isaiah 7:17-20; 8:6-8). The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Lamanites, the Missourians—though usually wicked themselves and

ripening for their own destruction—have all been permitted at times by God to scourge and afflict his people and purify them of their disobedience. However, this does not render the wicked any less guilty or accountable for their sins against disobedient Israel, for which, in time, they will pay the uttermost farthing.

3 Yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels.

verse 3 “I will own them” I will claim them as my own.

“my jewels” When the Lord comes in glory, he will claim his “jewels”—those who have been obedient to his commandments. The metaphorical imagery here suggests God as the emperor of the universe taking the finest treasures from all his vast domains to make up his “crown jewels.” When this earth has fulfilled its present purpose, God will take the most precious and valuable things upon it, his obedient sons and daughters—his “jewels”—and place them in their proper settings among his treasures (compare Isaiah 62:3; Zechariah 9:16).

4 Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son.

verse 4 “chastened and tried, even as Abraham” Abraham was not a wicked man. Neither were the saints in Missouri, by the standards of the world, a wicked people. However, they were not sufficiently strong collectively to establish the holy Zion of God. Over and over again, the Lord has stated his intent of testing and trying his people (see D&C 58:4; 95:1; 98:12; 136:31), so it should not come as a surprise to the saints when those tests and trials arrive. When such trials are so difficult as to make God himself seem unjust, or even to have broken his promises and betrayed his covenant with the saints, then the seriousness of the test approaches that of Abraham who was commanded—as a test of his faithfulness—to slay his son Isaac (see Genesis 22:1-19).

The Prophet Joseph further explained the principle of an “Abrahamic test” in these words:

For a man to lay down his all—his character and reputation, his honor and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also, counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ [compare Philippians 3:8-9]—requires more than mere belief or supposition that he doing the will of God. . . .

Let us here observe that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation. For from the first existence of men, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It is through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life.

It is vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him (cited in Dahl and Tate, eds., *Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, 92-93).

5 For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified.

verse 5 “endure chastening” To continue trusting in God even when he seems to have abandoned you is to “endure chastening” and pass the test of Abraham. The effect on individuals who do this is the same as it was on Abraham. It sanctifies them, causes spiritual growth in them, and strengthens them. The effect on the saints collectively who do this is to weed out those who cannot be counted on in all times, and in all places, and in all circumstances. After the trials are over, the remaining saints may be fewer in number, but they will also have been strengthened collectively by their endurance of the Lord’s chastening. The less faithful will have departed. Thus, when the Lord chastens his saints, and at some point he always will, the afflicted then self-select for or against his kingdom either by humbly enduring his chastening or by becoming offended and leaving.

6 Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances.

verse 6 “jarrings, and contentions, and envyings” *Jarrings* are interpersonal experiences that are upsetting to those involved. The list of failings here reveals once again that the Missouri saints were not a wicked people by the standards of the world. There were no murderers, no robbers, and none guilty of assault. In a modern LDS ward, such things as “jarrings, and contentions, and envyings” might be written off as everyday personal differences between otherwise faithful members, or as simple personality conflicts. “Lustful and covetous desires” might seem to be minor difficulties in controlling one’s personal thoughts, especially where such thoughts are kept internally and are never acted upon. However, while such personal and internal flaws might be tolerable in a worldly society, the establishing of the physical Zion of God requires that we be of one heart and one mind—no backbiting, no bickering (see D&C 38:24-27). Those of us with “difficult personalities” must repent and smooth down our rough edges, and those with private mental sins must disown them and purge them from within us if ever we are to establish Zion. But, beyond this, we must eliminate these same internal sins even to establish a spiritual Zion in ourselves or in our homes and wards, “for this is Zion—the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21).

7 They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.

verse 7 “They were slow to hearken” By November 1833, the saints in Missouri had had more than two years since the dedication of the temple site in Independence to make progress toward the establishment of Zion. In that time, they had been relatively free from persecution and had grown to a viable community of over twelve hundred persons who very likely had as many or more combined resources than the Kirtland saints. And yet, the specific covenant made at the dedication of the land was not kept, the commandments to purify their internal thoughts and desires were not obeyed, the principles of consecration and stewardship were not universally observed, and as of November 1833 not a single step had been taken toward construction of the temple or even toward preparation of the proposed temple site. Specifically and directly commanded in August 1833 to begin construction of the Independence Temple, the Missouri saints neglected to do so for fear of antagonizing the Jackson County mobs. Having collectively been “slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord” for more than two years, the saints find the Lord in no hurry to answer their prayers when they desperately needed his help. They had taken their personal relationships with God for granted.

8 In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me.

verse 8 “In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me.” Isn't this a problem and a frailty in which most all of us share? When things are going smoothly, we're not too concerned with the Lord and his counsel. Our prayers become routine and mechanical. We often credit ourselves for our blessings in good times and blame God for our afflictions in bad times. Only when we have trials and troubles, do we come to him with intensity and sincerity. For another example of this principle see verses 43 through 62 wherein the Lord gives a parable about Zion referred to as The Parable of the Nobleman and the Choice Piece of Land. The fact is that we have no more rightful claim upon God for help in our times of trouble than he has received obedience and faithfulness from us in our times of peace, although he is often more merciful in this regard than we have any right to expect (see verse 9).

9 Verily I say unto you, notwithstanding their sins, my bowels are filled with compassion towards them. I will not utterly cast them off; and in the day of wrath I will remember mercy.

verse 9 “my bowels are filled with compassion” Webster's 1828 American Dictionary, aside from being “entrails . . . of man,” also defines *bowels* as “the heart,”

“the interior part of anything,” or “the seat of pity or kindness; hence, tenderness, compassion” when used in a scriptural sense.

“I will not utterly cast them off” Though Zion has been chastened and the immediate plans of the saints have been frustrated, the saints have not been rejected as God’s people, and God has not canceled his long-term plans for the physical Zion (see Ether 13:2-6). In his own time, all his intentions and commandments for Zion will be fulfilled at some time in this dispensation by faithful Latter-day Saints.

“in the day of wrath I will remember mercy” In the short term, this statement could refer to the plight of the Missouri saints, who were suffering a day of wrath, but whom the Lord will bless in times to come. More likely, however, this is a reference to the Lord’s day of wrath before his second coming (see D&C 87:5-8; 97:22-25), when the saints as a body will be shown mercy and be spared the fate of the nations through their establishment of Zion.

10 I have sworn, and the decree hath gone forth by a former commandment which I have given unto you, that I would let fall the sword of mine indignation in behalf of my people; and even as I have said, it shall come to pass.

verse 10 “the decree hath gone forth by a former commandment” The “former commandment” referred to is apparently D&C 35:14: “I will let fall the sword in their behalf, and by the fire of mine indignation will I preserve them.”

11 Mine indignation is soon to be poured out without measure upon all nations; and this will I do when the cup of their iniquity is full.

verse 11 “Mine indignation is soon to be poured out without measure upon all nations” Compare with D&C 87:2-3, 6. The term *measure* implies an appropriately gauged portion or a quantity with distinct limits and thus only a partial judgment of the world. But “without measure” tells us that the punishment to come won’t be partial or parceled out a little here and a little there. Rather, it will come like Noah’s Flood with unlimited and overwhelming power to make a full and complete end of all nations.

“when the cup of their iniquity is full” Many contemporary saints like to decry how wicked the world is becoming, and surely it is becoming more wicked all the time. However, by the standards of those societies whom the Lord has destroyed “when the cup of their iniquity is full,” many areas with large numbers of saints are not quite there yet. Good examples of what a society whose cup of iniquity is full can be found in 3 Nephi in the generation before the Savior’s visit to the New World, or in ancient Jerusalem just before Lehi left, or again in Jerusalem in the generation after the death of the Savior (see also Helaman 13:14, 24).

12 And in that day all who are found upon the watch-tower, or in other words, all mine Israel, shall be saved.

verse 12 “And in that day” That is, in the day when the Lord comes to take vengeance upon the nations of the world.

“all who are found upon the watch-tower . . . all mine Israel” In an ancient city, the tower was the strongest and most impregnable fortress in times of attack. It also gave the inhabitants of a city a commanding view of the surrounding territory and of the approach and tactics of their enemies. When the saints are righteous, the Lord himself is their high tower, that is, their defense and their early warning system of approaching enemies (see D&C 97:20). In section 101, the tower also seems to be connected with the temple of the Lord, and the Lord’s true Israel are those who have obeyed him in building a temple and are protected by having received its ordinances. Had the temple in Zion been built in a timely manner, the Missouri Saints would have seen in advance the designs of their enemies and could have taken preventive measures to avoid the loss of the land (see verse 54).

13 And they that have been scattered shall be gathered.

verse 13 In the immediate circumstances, this might refer to those saints who have been scattered onto the plains and into other counties in Missouri, and surely modern Israel would be, and will be, gathered together again. But in the long term, this verse also refers to the great latter-day work of gathering together from among every nation, kindred, tongue, and people all the dispersed of Israel, all the children of Abraham, which we will be best equipped to do after the establishment of the physical Zion when the rest of the world is in chaos and turmoil.

14 And all they who have mourned shall be comforted.

verse 14 “they who have mourned” A repetition of the promise made in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:4). Accepting the gospel offers the individual no protection against grief and mourning, for these are the common lot of mortality. The promise is that the inevitable comfort of the Lord will more than compensate the faithful for all the sufferings and mourning imposed upon them in mortality.

15 And all they who have given their lives for my name shall be crowned.

verse 15 The promise here appears to allude to Revelation 2:10: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

16 Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God.

verse 16 “let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion” Unlike Joseph and the saints, God was not surprised by the loss of Jackson County. Neither did the immediate loss of Zion cause God to change his plans. Though he continually gives his saints opportunities to succeed or fail, according to their faithfulness, his own plans and

designs are never disappointed, for he knows the end from the beginning, and he is never surprised or caught unprepared. The loss of Zion was not a failure on God's part, but the failure of his people to keep their covenants. The disappointed saints must now take refuge in the knowledge that God is still in charge, that he has prepared all things from the beginning, and that his plans have not been thwarted—though the saints have lost their opportunity for a season.

“be still and know that I am God” This is an allusion to Psalm 46:10 which begins, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” In the context of the loss of Zion, the entire psalm should be read, for it is a reassurance that God has power over all of nature and over all the enemies of Israel, and the whole psalm provides exactly the divine reassurance needed by the saints who had been driven out of Zion by their enemies. The exact sense of “be still” in Psalm 46 could be translated as “let it go” or even “stand back” and leave things to God.

17 Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered.

verse 17 “Zion shall not be moved out of her place” Will the Lord change the location of the center place or center stake of Zion to another place now that the saints are scattered? Salt Lake City, for example? No. The center of Zion will always remain in Jackson County. Though her stakes may spread abroad and even fill the entire American continent, or the world, there is no other center place (see verse 20).

18 They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion—

verse 18 “They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return” One way in which the Lord allows the saints to exercise their faith in him is by not revealing his timetable for the fulfillment of his prophecies. In the Lord's own time, saints of this dispensation who are pure in heart—for Zion is the pure in heart (D&C 97:21)—will return to Jackson County and establish a physical Zion. However, it is possible that the phrase “they and their children” should cause us to think in terms of generations rather than in terms of months or years before this event takes place.

“to build up the waste places of Zion” While it is true that the generation in Missouri that persecuted the saints suffered some of the worst devastations of the Civil War, the wasting of Zion referred to here is likely that of the last days, when the scourge of the Lord will descend upon the Gentiles and make a full end of all nations (see verses 9-13 and their commentary). Only then will the saints return to reclaim the lands they once possessed and which were taken from them, and there will be no one left in those waste places to oppose them or to interfere. Referring to this very passage, Elder Orson Hyde commented: “The scripture says, that in the last days his people will go

forth and build up the waste places of Zion. But they must first be made desolate, before they can be called ‘the waste places of Zion.’ Then the hands of the saints will be required to build them up” (*JD*, 10:376).

19 And all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled.

verse 19 The ancient prophets have written of the redemption of Zion, particularly the prophet Isaiah (51:3; 52:9). Zion will ultimately be redeemed and rebuilt by the righteous who will live there in fulfillment of the Old Testament writings, especially the writings of Isaiah.

20 And, behold, there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed, for the work of the gathering of my saints—

verse 20 “there is none other place appointed” One of the immediate problems faced by the Prophet in December 1833 was a rumor spreading among some of the saints that Zion extended as far east as Ohio, and that Zion could therefore be established just as well by settling in Ohio as by trying to carve a living out of the frontier (*HC*, 1:419). Although Joseph had already acted to correct this notion, here the Lord himself makes it absolutely clear. When, in the due time of the Lord, the physical and political latter-day Zion is finally established, the center place will be Independence, Missouri. Zion’s stakes may spread abroad from there, but there will never be another center place.

21 Until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them; and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion.

verse 21 “when there is found no more room for them” While the “center pole” of the Lord’s canopy over the earth will remain Jackson County, the canopy will be secured and strengthened by the stakes of Zion throughout the world. This is the origin of the meaning of the word *stake* as we use it today (see Isaiah 54:2).

The commonly held notion that at some future time all faithful Latter-day Saints will be called to go to Jackson County, Missouri, is surely incorrect. Surely the time has already passed when all the faithful saints could fit in such a small space. From the beginning of this dispensation, the Lord has allowed for stakes of Zion to be built in addition to the center place in Independence, Missouri. These are extensions of Zion inhabited by the pure in heart and connected to the center place just as a tent stake is connected to the center post of a tent and is, therefore, part of the tent. Just as a tent would become unstable if all its stakes were uprooted and placed around the center pole, so Zion would not thrive if all her stakes were moved into one confined, central place. When the center place of Zion is finally established and built up, it will be

strengthened by strong cords attached to many stakes in many places that will already have been established and will contribute to her greatness and her glory.

“for the curtains” Besides holding the center pole steady, tent stakes also keep the tent walls, or “curtains,” firm against the wind or other agitations.

22 Behold, it is my will, that all they who call on my name, and worship me according to mine everlasting gospel, should gather together, and stand in holy places;

verse 22 “should gather together, and stand in holy places” The gathering of the saints of God has been a theme of the gospel since the days of Adam and the Zion of Enoch (see Moses 7:18-21). The ultimate gathering of the saints will take place at the second coming of the Savior when he will gather to himself from off of the earth both the righteous dead and the righteous living. While the righteous are gathered to the Savior at his coming, the earth will be cleansed by fire of all wickedness and receive its paradisiacal or terrestrial glory (see D&C 45:45-50; 88:96-99; Articles of Faith 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Until that ultimate gathering, however, the saints are commanded to gather themselves together and stand in holy places (see D&C 87:8 and its commentary). This gathering need not be in Jackson County, Missouri, or in Salt Lake City, Utah. It can be in one of the many wards and stakes of Zion that have been or will be established before his coming. The great key to understanding this verse is remembering that Zion is the pure in heart (see D&C 97:21). Therefore, wherever the pure in heart have gathered together to call on the name of the Lord is Zion and is a holy place. It is the pure in heart who make a place Zion and holy, and not the other way around. Otherwise—if the place could sanctify the people—the saints would never have lost Zion in 1833.

23 And prepare for the revelation which is to come, when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle, which hideth the earth, shall be taken off, and all flesh shall see me together.

verse 23 “prepare for the revelation which is to come” The coming revelation is the second coming of Christ when his presence will be revealed to all who live upon the earth at the beginning his millennial reign. The brightness and glory of his countenance will glorify the righteous who have prepared for his coming by establishing and gathering to Zion, and it will incinerate the wicked who are caught unprepared in their sins. Preparations for the Savior’s coming have already begun. According to President Ezra Taft Benson, “There is a real sifting going on in the Church, and it is going to become more pronounced with the passing of time. It will sift the wheat from the tares, because we face some difficult days, the like of which we have never experienced in our lives. And those days are going to require faith and testimony and family unity, the like of which we have never had” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 107).

“the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle” The language here is difficult but seems to refer to the veil that shields the earth from the full glory of the resurrected body of Christ (his temple) within the universe he has created (his tabernacle). Christ’s tabernacle or universe contains all things both human and divine—thus creating the need for a separating veil between them. As things now stand, there is a veil that separates and protects the realm of the human from the realm of the divine and presently shields the earth from the full glory of the resurrected Son of God. At his second coming that shield, or veil, shall be removed and all humanity, prepared or not, will be exposed to the full brightness of his glory (see D&C 88:95; Revelation 6:14; Acts 1:9-11). While God and his angels have often passed through the veil in their great redeeming work, on rare occasions and with great faith this protecting veil has also been approached and even pierced by faithful seers from the human side (see, for example, Ether 3:6, 19-20).

24 And every corruptible thing, both of man, or of the beasts of the field, or of the fowls of the heavens, or of the fish of the sea, that dwells upon all the face of the earth, shall be consumed;

verse 24 “And every corruptible thing” *Corruptible* refers to anything that is eventually going to oxidize, spoil, rot, or decay. At the second coming of the Savior, when the earth is raised from a telestial to a terrestrial state (see Articles of Faith 1:10), all living things will fall into two categories, those that are capable of abiding at least a terrestrial glory, and hence will be preserved incorruptible in that paradisiacal state, and those that cannot receive such glory and will be consumed by it as corruptible material. For human beings, the criterion for judgment will be personal righteousness. It has not been revealed what the criteria will be for other living creatures or even whether they will be judged individually or perhaps as classes or species, but all living things will be judged and will be brought into a new ecological balance and a new ecological order.

25 And also that of element shall melt with fervent heat; and all things shall become new, that my knowledge and glory may dwell upon all the earth.

verse 25 “all things shall become new” Not only will there be a new biology for this earth during the Millennium (see verse 24), but there will also be a new chemistry and a new physics. Indeed, the earth will become again as it was in the time of Eden, without the intervening changes caused by the fall or the Flood. The energy involved in raising this present telestial world back to a terrestrial sphere will cause the very elements to melt and to reform in ways that will sustain the terrestrial physical laws of Christ’s millennial kingdom. As the earth was once baptized in water, it will then be baptized by fire and be “born again.” This should not be confused with the further change that will take place at the end of the Millennium when the earth undergoes a

process analogous to death and resurrection to become a celestial sphere (see Revelation 21:1; D&C 77:1; 88:18-20, 25-26).

26 And in that day the enmity of man, and the enmity of beasts, yea, the enmity of all flesh, shall cease from before my face.

verse 26 “the enmity of all flesh, shall cease” At the second coming of the Lord, not only will there be a new biology, chemistry, and physics, but there will be a drastically new world ecology as well. Cats will no longer kill mice just because they are mice. Dogs will no longer chase cats just because they are cats. Nothing that remains upon the paradisiacal earth will harm anything else—ever. The limited details we have regarding these changes are found in Isaiah, where we are told that the wolf will lie down with the lamb, and the lion will eat straw like the ox (see Isaiah 11:6-9; 2 Nephi 21:6-9). But, the physical laws of biology and ecology in a terrestrial world are clearly different than they are in this present telestial world. For human beings, verse 26 means that anyone who continues to hold a grudge or to hate another person for any reason—that is, whose enmity will not cease—is not worthy of the new terrestrial, millennial kingdom. The wicked will have been incinerated already, and there ought not to be “jarrings, and contentions” (verse 6) between the righteous saints of God. And even among the terrestrial mortals who remain, who are the honorable men and women of the earth (see D&C 76:75), there ought not to be malice or evil intent in any degree.

27 And in that day whatsoever any man shall ask, it shall be given unto him.

verse 27 Because all those who inhabit the millennial kingdom will be the terrestrial and celestial righteous, their desires will also be righteous and can be granted without fear of any hidden malicious or evil intent.

28 And in that day Satan shall not have power to tempt any man.

verse 28 Compare D&C 88:110-115 and 84:100 and their commentaries; also Revelation 20:2-3; 1 Nephi 22:26. Satan will be bound and divested of power in two ways: (1) The righteous who remain upon the earth after the second coming of the Savior will pay no heed to him. Satan only has power when men give in to their “natural” inclinations. (2) Satan will actually be restricted in some unspecified way by the priesthood power of the Savior himself so that he cannot function in his accustomed ways.

29 And there shall be no sorrow because there is no death.

verse 29 “there is no death” There will continue to be mortals upon the earth throughout the Millennium. These mortals shall continue to have mortal children, grandchildren, and so forth. But no mortal child born during the Millennium will die prematurely or tragically. No parents will outlive their children. And during the

Millennium when the covenant faithful reach their full age and pass on, there will be no funerals in the present sense, for in the twinkling, or blink, of an eye, they will change from mortality to their resurrected glory and be caught up to rest in the Lord.

There will also be those upon the earth who are “honorable men” (D&C 76:75) but who will not accept the testimony of Jesus while in the flesh or who were not sufficiently valiant in that testimony to merit celestial glory (see D&C 76:74-79). These terrestrial beings are still worthy of the resurrection of the just (see D&C 45:54) when their one hundred years are up. But their curse (see Isaiah 65:20) lies in the fact that they will be changed from mortality to terrestrial resurrection rather than receiving the celestial resurrection that might have been theirs had they accepted the gospel and its covenant obligations. So those who live into the Millennium will pass from mortality to resurrection without experiencing death as we know it, burial, or separation of their spirits from their bodies (see Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 576; Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:300). In fact, from the time of the second coming onward, the spirit prison will be emptied of those who are worthy of the resurrection of the just (a terrestrial or a celestial resurrection), and during the Christ’s millennial reign that great prison will be inhabited only by the spirits of the wicked who are destined to come forth at the last resurrection, the resurrection of the unjust at the end of the Millennium, to inherit telestial glory or to become sons of perdition (see D&C 43:18; 76:84-85; 88:101; Revelation 20:5).

30 In that day an infant shall not die until he is old; and his life shall be as the age of a tree;

verse 30 “his life shall be as the age of a tree” According to the prophet Isaiah in a similar prophecy concerning millennial conditions (see Isaiah 65:20, 22), the age of a tree is to be understood as one hundred years.

31 And when he dies he shall not sleep, that is to say in the earth, but shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and shall be caught up, and his rest shall be glorious.

verse 31 “changed in the twinkling of an eye” The “twinkling of an eye” is a blink. When mortals die during the Millennium, they will simply pass from mortality to a resurrected state in the twinkling of an eye.

“his rest shall be glorious” Ultimately, to enter into the rest of the Lord refers to reaching the end of our probationary state when the test of mortality is over and the struggles of mortality are done. For some, this will occur at death. For others, the probationary state continues through both phases of our probation—both our mortal life and our time in the spirit world prior to our resurrection (*HC*, 1:252). These will enter into the rest of the Lord at their resurrection. See also the commentary for 2 Nephi 21:10.

32 Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—

verse 32 “he shall reveal all things” What a marvelous promise this is! Your author has often (with tongue in cheek) speculated about and yearned for those “post-mortual firesides” at which all things will be revealed. Just imagine that when he comes he will answer all questions! How old is the earth? How and when was it created? When were Adam and Eve placed on the earth? Who gave birth to their bodies? Was the entire earth in a paradisiacal state or only the Garden of Eden? During the Savior’s millennial reign, knowledge of all kinds and of all things will flood the earth, and every question about the whole of this creation will be answered. Oh, hasten the day!

33 Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—

34 Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven.

35 And all they who suffer persecution for my name, and endure in faith, though they are called to lay down their lives for my sake yet shall they partake of all this glory.

verse 35 “they are called to lay down their lives for my sake” The Lord extends special reassurance to those who die as martyrs to the cause of Christ and his earthly kingdom.

36 Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full.

verse 36 “fear not even unto death” What a splendid and reassuring verse! Here the Lord commiserates with the righteous on earth. This life is not always fair, and there is much unavoidable misery in this life. Many good people experience as much or even more pain in this life than they do happiness. No one in this life is truly happy all of the time, and true bliss is a rare and fleeting commodity. The joy we experience here is never entirely full. The fulness of joy yet awaits our being in his actual presence.

37 Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul.

verse 37 This verse and others like it are usually understood to mean we ought to care for the life and future of the spirit rather than the life of the flesh. The word *soul* here may refer to either the spirit or to the spirit plus its resurrected (not its mortal) body. The body here is our mortal self.

The Lord is not counseling us to ignore the health of our mortal body. Rather, he is teaching us to be less concerned about the worldly concerns of this life and more concerned with things of the eternities.

38 And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life.

verse 38 “seek the face of the Lord always” See D&C 93:1.

“in patience ye may possess your souls” This statement likely alludes to Luke 21:19 where the word patience in Greek is *hupomone*, which can mean “patience” and is so translated in the King James Version, but probably would better be rendered “endurance” or “steadfastness.” The familiar phrase “the patience of Job” (James 5:11) is another place in the King James Version where the Greek *hupomone* was clearly meant to refer to Job’s power of endurance rather than to his patiently waiting for anything.

It is obvious that to “possess your souls” means to have exercised righteous control over your spirit and to be consequently resurrected with a celestial body.

39 When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men;

verse 39 “they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men”

Savor is flavor or seasoning. What did the Lord mean in Matthew 5:13 when he said: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men”? Entering the gospel covenant lays upon each member the obligation of making a positive change in the lives of those around them just as salt improves the flavor of most foods in cooking. A little bit of salt can greatly improve the quality and flavor of a lot of food, and just as a little salt goes a long way in seasoning and preserving food, so the influence of individual saints for good is greater than they know if they will only keep their covenants, live the gospel, and serve as a light to the world. Another way of being the “savor of men” is serving as a witness for God at all times and in all things and in all places.

In ancient times, the principal purposes of salt were for seasoning and preserving food. If salt should somehow lose its ability to do those things, if food should lose its salt-ness, it would become worthless and be thrown out in the street with everything else discarded as worthless or unclean. Village streets and alleys were the collective dumps and sewers where all such refuse was trodden into the mud by pedestrian and other traffic.

40 They are called to be the savor of men; therefore, if that salt of the earth lose its savor, behold, it is thenceforth good for nothing only to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men.

41 Behold, here is wisdom concerning the children of Zion, even many, but not all; they were found transgressors, therefore they must needs be chastened—

verse 41 “the children of Zion . . . were found transgressors” The language here, following hard on verses 39-40, would seem to indicate that the Missouri saints who had recently been driven out of Jackson County had collectively been judged as salt that had lost its savor. This apparently applied to a large number of the Missouri saints, perhaps even to a majority of them, though certainly not to all.

42 He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted.

verse 42 Exalting oneself means arrogantly placing oneself above others in value and importance. Abasing oneself is to be humble in considering others to be of equal value and importance as oneself.

43 And now, I will show unto you a parable, that you may know my will concerning the redemption of Zion.

verses 43-62 “a parable . . . concerning the redemption of Zion” In these verses the Lord gives a parable that stresses the need for a temple. We may refer to this parable as The Parable of the Nobleman and the Choice Piece of Land.”

Beyond laying out stones and logs to mark the foundation site, the saints in Zion made no effort to build the temple that would have protected them in times of trial. Instead, they attempted to establish Zion without building a temple, and they put their resources into other enterprises instead. This led first to arguing, then to laziness, and then to breaking the commandments (see verse 50). At that point, the Lord allowed the mobs to descend upon them, first in July and then again in November 1833, and the Missouri saints, whose watchmen were seemingly asleep on duty (see verse 53), found themselves defenseless and unprepared.

The following specific correlations of the parable’s imagery are helpful:

“nobleman”	Savior
“vineyard”	earth
“choice piece of land”	Jackson County
“servants”	saints
“olive trees”	settlements of the saints
“watchmen”	officers or leaders of the Church in Missouri
“watchman”	the one keeping watch from upon the temple
“tower”	the temple the church leaders were commanded to build

“servant”	Joseph Smith, Jr.
“hedge”	a protective structure planted or built to block the intrusion of outsiders
“warriors”	the participants in the Zion’s Camp March

44 A certain nobleman had a spot of land, very choice; and he said unto his servants: Go ye unto my vineyard, even upon this very choice piece of land, and plant twelve olive-trees;

verse 44 “twelve olive-trees” The twelve olive trees represent the settlements of the saints in Zion, twelve being the number figuratively associated with Israel and with the Church.

45 And set watchmen round about them, and build a tower, that one may overlook the land round about, to be a watchman upon the tower, that mine olive-trees may not be broken down when the enemy shall come to spoil and take upon themselves the fruit of my vineyard.

46 Now, the servants of the nobleman went and did as their lord commanded them, and planted the olive-trees, and built a hedge round about, and set watchmen, and began to build a tower.

verse 46 “began to build a tower” At least the land was surveyed and dedicated.

47 And while they were yet laying the foundation thereof, they began to say among themselves: And what need hath my lord of this tower?

48 And consulted for a long time, saying among themselves: What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace?

49 Might not this money be given to the exchangers? For there is no need of these things.

50 And while they were at variance one with another they became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord.

51 And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants of the nobleman arose and were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works, and broke down the olive-trees.

52 Now, behold, the nobleman, the lord of the vineyard, called upon his servants, and said unto them, Why! what is the cause of this great evil?

53 Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you, and—after ye had planted the vineyard, and built the hedge round about, and set watchmen upon the walls thereof—built the tower also, and set a watchman upon the tower, and watched for my vineyard, and not have fallen asleep, lest the enemy should come upon you?

54 And behold, the watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer.

55 And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry;

56 And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money.

verses 55-62 “take all the strength of mine house . . . and redeem my vineyard” This part of the parable refers to Zion’s Camp, which the Lord will explain to the prophet Joseph more fully in sections 103 and 105. Zion’s Camp was an attempt by Joseph Smith and about two hundred brethren from the eastern branches of the Church to redeem Zion by force of arms. For several reasons, which will be discussed in the commentary for section 105, that attempt did not achieve its stated goal of regaining possession of the Jackson County properties.

It is crucial to note that even at this early date when the servant in this parable (Joseph Smith) asks the Lord, “When shall these things be?”—that is, “When will Zion be redeemed?”—the Lord’s answer is vague: “When I will” (verse 60). We are then told that “after many days all things were fulfilled” (verse 62). Thus, it appears that the parable already anticipates a long interval between Zion’s Camp and the eventual redemption of Zion.

57 Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land; break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen.

58 And inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies, that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.

59 And the servant said unto his lord: When shall these things be?

60 And he said unto his servant: When I will; go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you;

61 And this shall be my seal and blessing upon you—a faithful and wise steward in the midst of mine house, a ruler in my kingdom.

62 And his servant went straightway, and did all things whatsoever his lord commanded him; and after many days all things were fulfilled.

63 Again, verily I say unto you, I will show unto you wisdom in me concerning all the churches, inasmuch as they are willing to be guided in a right and proper way for their salvation—

verse 63 **“wisdom in me concerning all the churches”** In the next four verses the Lord will relate his will to the prophet Joseph concerning the continuing latter-day gathering of the saints as alluded to in the parable of the wheat and the tares (see Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; D&C 86 and its commentary).

64 That the work of the gathering together of my saints may continue, that I may build them up unto my name upon holy places; for the time of harvest is come, and my word must needs be fulfilled.

65 Therefore, I must gather together my people, according to the parable of the wheat and the tares, that the wheat may be secured in the garners to possess eternal life, and be crowned with celestial glory, when I shall come in the kingdom of my Father to reward every man according as his work shall be;

verse 65 “Garners” are granaries, or places where grain is kept. In the parable of the wheat and tares, of course, “garners” is used as a metaphor. And what is this word’s literal meaning? Elder David A. Bednar taught: “The garners are the holy temples” (“Honorably Hold a Name and Standing,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 97).

66 While the tares shall be bound in bundles, and their bands made strong, that they may be burned with unquenchable fire.

verses 65-66 Recall that gathering the wheat that it “may be secured in the garners [granaries]” is analogous to the current gathering of Israel by the missionaries of the Church. And the “tares” being “bound in bundles” and “burned” is symbolic of the destruction of the wicked at the time of the second coming of the Lord.

67 Therefore, a commandment I give unto all the churches, that they shall continue to gather together unto the places which I have appointed.

verse 67 “Churches” here means branches of the Church.

“continue to gather together unto the places which I have appointed” While Jackson County in Missouri has always been the center stake of Zion, there were at this time, as there continue to be now, other designated gathering places for the saints such as Kirtland in the East and Clay County, Missouri, in the West.

68 Nevertheless, as I have said unto you in a former commandment, let not your gathering be in haste, nor by flight; but let all things be prepared before you.

verse 68 **“let not your gathering be in haste . . . but let all things be prepared”** One reason for the loss of Zion in Jackson County was the disobedience of the saints regarding this very commandment. The numbers of the saints in Jackson County rose so rapidly that the original settlers were greatly alarmed, and social and economic relations were strained beyond their limits.

69 And in order that all things be prepared before you, observe the commandment which I have given concerning these things—

70 Which saith, or teacheth, to purchase all the lands with money, which can be purchased for money, in the region round about the land which I have appointed to be the land of Zion, for the beginning of the gathering of my saints;

verses 69-70 “purchase all the lands with money” Once again, the Lord clearly commands that Zion must be purchased with money. Despite the foolish, loose talk of some, there would not at this time be any conquest in Missouri like that of Joshua taking the promised land from the Canaanites by force (D&C 105:28-32). If there is bloodshed over Zion at this time, the saints will lose the battle, will be driven from place to place, and few of them will stand to receive an inheritance in Zion (see D&C 63:27-31).

71 All the land which can be purchased in Jackson county, and the counties round about, and leave the residue in mine hand.

verse 71 The Lord wants the saints to continue buying land in Missouri as close to the center stake of Zion as possible. As for the properties controlled by the mobs, the Church is to let that issue be resolved by the Lord for the present. If this is done in a slow and controlled manner, the Church, particularly the members still in the eastern counties, can purchase lands near Zion that will lead toward the eventual redemption and establishment of Zion itself (see D&C 105:28-32).

72 Now, verily I say unto you, let all the churches gather together all their moneys; let these things be done in their time, but not in haste; and observe to have all things prepared before you.

73 And let honorable men be appointed, even wise men, and send them to purchase these lands.

74 And the churches in the eastern countries, when they are built up, if they will hearken unto this counsel they may buy lands and gather together upon them; and in this way they may establish Zion.

75 There is even now already in store sufficient, yea, even an abundance, to redeem Zion, and establish her waste places, no more to be thrown down, were the churches, who call themselves after my name, willing to hearken to my voice.

verse 75 The Church has perhaps never lacked the physical resources to establish Zion. It has only lacked the collective commitment and righteousness to establish Zion. In 1833, as now, if all the saints in all the wards and branches of the Church were personally obedient to the will of the Lord and collectively dedicated to establishing Zion, there would be more than sufficient resources available to accomplish the task.

76 And again I say unto you, those who have been scattered by their enemies, it is my will that they should continue to importune for redress, and redemption, by the hands of those who are placed as rulers and are in authority over you—

verse 76 “importune for redress . . . According to the law and constitution of the people” The dispossessed Jackson County saints are instructed to exhaust every legal avenue, successful or not, in seeking to regain their lost properties, retain their rights, and be fairly compensated for their losses. The saints obeyed these instructions and pursued their rights unsuccessfully under the laws of Missouri and of the United States for years to come.

77 According to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles;

verse 77 See D&C 98:5 and its commentary.

78 That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment.

verse 78 “That every man may act . . . [and] be accountable” The enjoyment of political freedom as guaranteed by the Constitution allows men the political freedom to express their moral agency to the fullest degree of any political system on earth and therefore to be accountable for their choices to the fullest degree, since their actions are freely chosen and not coerced by government. The greater the political freedom, the greater the moral accountability. In this case, the laws of Missouri and the Constitution of the United States to which the saints applied, and which were ignored by their enemies, as God knew they would be, increased the guilt and accountability of those enemies before the coming judgments of God.

79 Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another.

verse 79 “bondage” The bondage described here may be of at least two types—either governmental tyranny over population groups or personal tyranny over individual slaves.

80 And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood.

verse 80 The Lord confirms that his hand was involved in the establishment of the Constitution of the United States of America.

In an insightful article, Lynn D. Wardle has outlined how the Lord’s hand began to move over the earth well before the Constitutional Convention of 1787 (“The

Constitution as Covenant,” *BYU Studies* 27:3). Dr. Wardle points out that in the seventeenth century pilgrim immigrants brought with them to this country a strong tradition of “covenant theology.” Covenant theology is essentially the idea that in the eyes of God the only proper civil government for man on earth is that which guarantees the freedom of the individual, limited governmental control over the people, and popular sovereignty or the right of the people to govern themselves. Man enters into a covenant with God and with his fellow man to guarantee this form of government. These early settlers also brought with them a spirit of divine destiny—the sense that God was about to move upon the earth and do something momentous and far-reaching. They felt that the new world was a special land prepared and reserved by God for his special purposes, and that they had been brought to the new world by the hand of God to bring to pass his purposes in this chosen land.

The concepts of covenant theology were firmly established in the religious teachings of these early inhabitants of the thirteen colonies. When the constitution of the United States was drawn up, it was natural that these ideas be written into that document. The same theology contained the seeds that eventually manifest themselves in the Revolutionary War.

verses 81-85 In these verses, the Lord relates the Parable of the Importunate Woman and the Unjust Judge. This parable may also be found in Luke 18:1-8. The parable tells of a woman who seeks redress from an unjust judge who is initially disinclined to grant it. Finally, however, he does grant the redress only because of the woman’s persistent importuning.

81 Now, unto what shall I liken the children of Zion? I will liken them unto the parable of the woman and the unjust judge, for men ought always to pray and not to faint, which saith—

82 There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man.

83 And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying: Avenge me of mine adversary.

84 And he would not for a while, but afterward he said within himself: Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

85 Thus will I liken the children of Zion.

verses 81-85 In this modern revelation, given through Joseph Smith to the infant Church at a time of great persecution, the parable’s widow is likened to the latter-day Church. Mobs had driven the saints from their homes. Threats of death against individuals of the Church were many. The people had lost household furniture, clothing, livestock, and other personal property, and many of their crops had been destroyed. The Lord’s application of this parable to our dispensation is that the saints ought to

importune at the feet of all appropriate government officials in sequence. And, by this patient process, if they do not obtain redress for what they have lost, then the Lord will intercede and in his hot displeasure he will cut off all of these unjust stewards and judge them harshly and immediately.

86 Let them importune at the feet of the judge;

87 And if he heed them not, let them importune at the feet of the governor;

88 And if the governor heed them not, let them importune at the feet of the president;

verses 87-88 At this time, the governor of the state of Missouri was Daniel Dunklin. The president of the United States was Andrew Jackson. Jackson was succeeded by President Martin Van Buren in January 1837.

89 And if the president heed them not, then will the Lord arise and come forth out of his hiding place, and in his fury vex the nation;

verses 88-89 “in his fury vex the nation” If the saints cannot receive justice from those appointed to administer justice under the Constitution, then judgment will be poured out upon the nation by the Lord himself. Joseph took to President Martin Van Buren some 491 claims for damages done to the property of the saints in Missouri, totaling almost two million dollars. President Van Buren just laughed at the Prophet, telling him that his cause was just but he could do nothing for him lest he lose the vote of Missouri. It is presumed that the Lord’s fury was seen in the form of the Civil War which is further commented upon in D&C 105:15.

90 And in his hot displeasure, and in his fierce anger, in his time, will cut off those wicked, unfaithful, and unjust stewards, and appoint them their portion among hypocrites, and unbelievers;

91 Even in outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

verse 91 “Even in outer darkness” Contemporary usage of the term “outer darkness” in the Church usually reserves it for the fate of those who become sons of perdition after the final judgment. However, it is probably used here also for that awful but temporary state shared by the wicked, the unfaithful, unjust stewards, hypocrites, and unbelievers enumerated in verse 90. In other words, it means that awful hell prepared for the wicked between death and resurrection where they will suffer the inevitable consequences of their sinful behavior before being brought forth in the last resurrection to receive a glory according to their works.

92 Pray ye, therefore, that their ears may be opened unto your cries, that I may be merciful unto them, that these things may not come upon them.

93 What I have said unto you must needs be, that all men may be left without excuse;

verse 93 “that all men may be left without excuse” If the Lord knows that the search of the saints for justice and all of their expensive legal quests and petition in seeking their constitutional rights will come to naught, then why does he command them to pursue them? The answer to this question lies in this one verse—that all those who have persecuted the saints contrary to the laws of man and God may stand without excuse when his judgments are poured out upon them in this life and/or the next.

94 That wise men and rulers may hear and know that which they have never considered;

verse 94 “know that which they have never considered” The reference appears to be an allusion to a messianic passage in Isaiah dealing with the gathering of Israel in the latter days (see Isaiah 52:15). Something no one wise or powerful had considered of any significance, the restored gospel, will prove to be the most significant work of all in the latter days.

95 That I may proceed to bring to pass my act, my strange act, and perform my work, my strange work, that men may discern between the righteous and the wicked, saith your God.

verse 95 “my strange act” See the commentary for D&C 95:4. To the world, who will eventually learn that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the one true and restored Church in this final dispensation, that fact will be too bizarre for words. It is part of the “strange” work of the Lord.

96 And again, I say unto you, it is contrary to my commandment and my will that my servant Sidney Gilbert should sell my storehouse, which I have appointed unto my people, into the hands of mine enemies.

verse 96 “it is contrary to my commandment . . . [to] sell my storehouse” At first it might seem to be to the saints’ advantage to sell the Jackson County properties, and especially the Gilbert and Whitney Store and its resources, for what cash they could get, especially if there was little hope of retrieving those assets anyway. However, these properties and resources were consecrated to the Lord and were sacred. To sell sacred, consecrated, and holy things to the Lord’s enemies would involve the saints in some degree of complicity in their desecration as a matter of principle and would therefore be a grievous sin. It would be better to hold onto a rightful claim that would never be recognized by wicked men than to give up such a claim for money.

97 Let not that which I have appointed be polluted by mine enemies, by the consent of those who call themselves after my name;

98 For this is a very sore and grievous sin against me, and against my people, in consequence of those things which I have decreed and which are soon to befall the nations.

99 Therefore, it is my will that my people should claim, and hold claim upon that which I have appointed unto them, though they should not be permitted to dwell thereon.

100 Nevertheless, I do not say they shall not dwell thereon; for inasmuch as they bring forth fruit and works meet for my kingdom they shall dwell thereon.

101 They shall build, and another shall not inherit it; they shall plant vineyards, and they shall eat the fruit thereof. Even so. Amen.

verses 100-101 “they shall dwell thereon” Even at this point, if the saints were to be dedicated and faithful, Zion could possibly still be redeemed in their lifetime (see verses 74-75). However, it is more likely that this promise is meant in a millennial context to be fulfilled in the due time of the Lord.

Disobedience was the major cause for the afflictions and expulsion of the saints from Missouri in 1833. Even though the saints were driven out of Jackson County, the Lord still holds forth the promise of an eventual redemption of Zion in that place. Obedience to the gospel principles is a requirement for all who would participate in the cause of Zion.

Brief Historical Setting

1834 February

By February 1834, the workload placed upon the First Presidency was more than they could handle. They needed help in administering the affairs of the Church. At a meeting of church leaders in February 1834, Joseph formed a “Church Council,” later called the “High Council,” to assist in the administrative duties of the Church. It consisted of the First Presidency and twelve high priests, and its jurisdiction included the entire Church. The minutes of this meeting are preserved for us in the Doctrine and Covenants [**D&C 102 - The High Council**]. In July of 1834, the Prophet organized a second High Council in Missouri.

Section 102 The High Council

On February 17, 1834, an important meeting was held at the home of Joseph Smith in Kirtland. It was attended by twenty-four high priests and about thirty-six other brethren, making a total of about sixty in attendance. The minutes of this meeting were recorded, and about a year later it was decided to include these minutes in the new 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. These minutes now make up section 102 of the Doctrine and Covenants. While all of the material in the Doctrine and Covenants is scripture, including section 102, the latter is not really revelation in a formal sense. Certainly inspired ideas were included in these minutes, however.

By February of 1834, Joseph had been President of the Church for almost two years, and the First Presidency had been organized for the same length of time. The First Presidency, you will recall, was first organized in March 1832 (see section 81). Since the presidency had been organized, they had received an almost overwhelming number of people who had complaints, problems, or accusations. The Presidency had been asked to make decisions and judgments and help solve myriad disputes. The brethren of the First Presidency simply did not have time to deal with these problems and still attend to their other responsibilities. Some other mechanism of dealing with these problems had to be found. For the purpose of addressing this dilemma, the above mentioned meeting of brethren was called.

At the meeting, Joseph preached to those assembled about the ancient councils of the Church and how they had operated under the leadership of Moses and Peter and other great leaders. Actually, it was revealed to Joseph in vision how Peter and the other apostles presided over these councils. These councils had reviewed disputes and had rendered judgments. Joseph proposed that the time was right to form such a council in this dispensation that could help in dealing with the problems of the saints. He then laid out the organization of a council. In the original manuscript of section 102, this council was referred to as the “church council,” but before this revelation was first published in 1835, the name was changed to “high council.”

This original high council was unique. We don't have it in the Church today. It was composed of the First Presidency of the Church plus twelve high priests, a total of fifteen brethren. The twelve high priests were expected to do much of the leg work leaving the First Presidency relatively free to do other things. The high priests to be included were selected by the First Presidency. The council could not act without a majority of the members being present. When some of the high priests were absent, other worthy high priests could be appointed to temporarily sit on the council. Whenever a vacancy occurred due to death or excommunication or other cause for removal, the First Presidency would nominate another high priest to fill the vacancy. The nominee would then be sanctioned by the general council. In the absence of the President, one of the

other councilors could preside. Joseph Smith presided over the council when he was available.

The purpose of the council was initially mostly judicial, but later the council functioned in a more administrative role. When the council met to consider a problem—a major transgression by an individual—the twelve members would cast lots, and every councilor drew a number from one to twelve. Those who drew even numbers were the ones appointed to stand up in behalf of the accused to “prevent insult and injustice.” The odd-numbered councilors spoke for the Church to make certain that its interests were fairly represented. If the case was a simple one, only two councilors were called upon to speak, one from each side. If it was a little more difficult, then two from each side were selected. If the case was even more complex, then three from each side were asked to speak, but never more. After the evidence was given, the President would give his decision. A majority of the council was necessary to sustain a decision.

It should be noted that this council was not a stake high council as we understand a stake high council today. The jurisdiction of this high council was the entire Church, and it was presided over, not by a stake president, but by the President of the Church. It was not until the Nauvoo period that we had stake presidents presiding over bishops and wards. The organization of this high council, however, does serve as a prototype for our stake high councils today. The high council courts (more appropriately called disciplinary councils) today follow the same procedures as described in section 102. Some have referred to the meeting of February 17, 1834, as the meeting in which the first stake in this dispensation was organized in Kirtland. This is really not true, for there never was a stake president called as such in Kirtland.

Section 102 included instructions for other temporary, ad hoc, councils that could function outside the Kirtland area. These also consisted of twelve high priests. If an individual was dissatisfied with the decision of such a temporary council, then he could appeal the decision to the First Presidency. Later, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was formed as a more permanent traveling high council, and no appeal was possible from this council.

On July 7, 1834, the Prophet organized a second high council in Clay County, Missouri, with David Whitmer as president and William W. Phelps and John Whitmer as his counselors.

The following quotation, from Milton V. Backman, Jr.’s, book *The Heavens Resound* is perhaps too long to be included in this material, but it gives such a delightful picture of how this initial high council functioned, that I will include it:

No single offense was consistently considered by the Kirtland high council; members were tried for a variety of improprieties of behavior. One member was accused of speaking (possibly praying) so loudly during a prayer meeting that he disturbed others living in the vicinity and of not articulating so that he could be understood by those in attendance. His loud cries were considered by his accusers as

disturbing rather than edifying. One man was excommunicated for abandoning his family and leaving his wife and children destitute and without sufficient food or firewood. Several persons were tried for breach of contract, two for lack of charity, and one for failing to attend meetings and to fulfill his promise to serve as a missionary. In 1836 one of the seventies was charged with “singing songs or ditties” in a store in Kirtland that were considered incompatible with the dignity of his office and calling; this same member was also accused of smoking his pipe and drinking rum, wine, and other alcoholic beverages in the Johnson tavern. Several persons were charged with publicly condemning the behavior of Joseph Smith. One person claimed that Joseph Smith was possessed of an evil spirit when he chastised a new convert, but the court ruled that the Prophet was justified in his criticisms.

Most individuals tried by the Kirtland high council were members of the priesthood, but a few women and some couples were asked to appear before this ecclesiastical body. Several women were charged with injuring the character of others by spreading malicious gossip. One brother and sister were found guilty of “unlawful matrimony.” Most religious communities in America at that time believed that dancing was improper; since the Prophet had not published a revelation relating to that subject, it seemed natural that, while he was on a trip to Missouri in 1837, the high council would consider the actions of some of the saints who had attended a ball and would rule that dancing “with the world,” in which they had been engaged, was improper.

Some who appeared before the high council court were charged with teaching incorrect doctrines. One person was accused of rejecting the revelations and commandments received by Joseph Smith; another, of preaching “heretical” doctrines, and one small group, of embracing revelations allegedly received by one of the saints who did not have the authority to receive revelation for the entire Church.

A high percent of those who were accused of transgressions and were asked to appear before the Kirtland high council complied with the request, and in nearly all instances members confessed their faults during the trial and agreed to correct their failings. Only a few members were excommunicated from the Church by this court, generally individuals who were found guilty of what were considered the most serious offenses, such as “unlawful matrimony” and apostasy. In nearly all instances the court ruled that fellowship would be withdrawn from those who had been found guilty until satisfaction had been made, and generally the accused persons, after admitting their mistakes and promising to correct them, retained their standing in the Church. The high council courts attempted to help rather than condemn individuals. The high councilors sought to correct the improper behavior patterns of the saints, to reconcile contesting members, and to establish greater harmony in the Church. Disciplining members by exposing problems and withdrawing the hand of fellowship was occasionally considered necessary as a means of helping the saints to better understand their failings and prompting changes that would enable them to strive more diligently for perfection.

The first high council of the Church was not merely a judicial body; it had administrative responsibilities as well. Acting under the direction of the presidency of the Church, the Kirtland high councilors approved men for ordination to the Melchizedek priesthood, assigned missionaries to labor in various parts of North America, and recommended that some members settle in Kirtland and that others migrate to Missouri. They agreed to encourage Emma Smith to proceed with the publication of a hymnal in compliance with a revelation that Joseph Smith had received. They recommended that Joseph Smith, Sr., be paid ten dollars a week plus expenses for his services as Patriarch to the Church, and that Frederick G. Williams be paid the same for serving as his scribe. And in October 1837, the high council appointed a committee to ask John Johnson, Jr., to desist from selling spiritous liquors to those who were in the habit of becoming intoxicated and to report to church authorities the names of any Mormons who drank alcoholic beverages in his tavern (246-48).

The original minutes of this meeting were recorded by Oliver Cowdery and Orson Hyde. Joseph Smith, however, spent most of the night following the council correcting their notations. This he said he did under the inspiration of God.

Two days later the corrected minutes were read to the council and accepted by them. At the meeting, under the direction of Joseph Smith, forty-three members (nine high priests, seventeen elders, four priests, and thirteen others), excluding the First Presidency and excluding also the twelve high priests who were called to form the council, formed a voting body or committee. This body approved the twelve high priests as well as the First Presidency who were called to serve as members of this first high council.

For a summary of the courts (disciplinary councils) we have in the church today, see the commentary materials for section 107 under "The Church Judiciary."

It will be observed that in some ways the first high council of the Church prefigured the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles which was organized a year later in February 1835. Once the Quorum of the Twelve was organized, and there were functioning high councils in the stakes of the Church, there was no need for general churchwide high councils. Nevertheless, section 102 remains as a model of organization and procedure for all future stake high councils. Verses 30-32 were added to this revelation by Joseph Smith in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants after the organization of the Quorum of the Twelve to distinguish the decisions of that quorum from those of the high councils in Kirtland and Missouri.

Finally, a note of interest. Today in the Church, a *councilor* is a member of a *council* such as a stake high council. A *counselor* is one who serves to advise or *counsel* a priesthood leader such as a bishop, stake president, or the President of the Church. Thus, one who serves under the leader in a bishopric, stake presidency, or the First Presidency is a counselor in that body. For years in the Church we referred to all

these brethren as counselors and councilors. It wasn't until the turn of the century that these titles were standardized.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 102 The High Council—Instructions for Church Disciplinary Councils

1 This day a general council of twenty-four high priests assembled at the house of Joseph Smith, Jun., by revelation, and proceeded to organize the high council of the church of Christ, which was to consist of twelve high priests, and one or three presidents as the case might require.

verse 1 “a general council . . . assembled” To avoid confusion, it must be remembered that a “general council” of high priests, elders, priests, and members (see verse 5) had met on this occasion to nominate and sustain twelve high priests and a presidency as a “high council.” The two bodies should not be confused.

2 The high council was appointed by revelation for the purpose of settling important difficulties which might arise in the church, which could not be settled by the church or the bishop’s council to the satisfaction of the parties.

verse 2 “for the purpose of settling important difficulties which . . . could not be settled by the church or the bishop’s council” The cases which were to come before this high council were only those which could not be settled by the lesser councils or “courts.” The first level tribunal in the Church in those days was the teachers quorum. Next, the two bishops, as they met in council with their counselors, could hear the cases. If these two courts could not settle an issue or if further appeal was desired, then a case could be brought before this high council.

Today, the judicial functions of the Church almost always address cases involving serious transgression on the part of members. Bishops are the common judges in Israel and will act on all cases of transgression in their wards, with the most difficult cases being referred to the stake presidency and high council for resolution. Only the stake president, presiding over a stake high council, may excommunicate a member holding the Melchizedek Priesthood.

3 Joseph Smith, Jun., Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were acknowledged presidents by the voice of the council; and Joseph Smith, Sen., John Smith, Joseph Coe, John Johnson, Martin Harris, John S. Carter, Jared Carter, Oliver Cowdery, Samuel H. Smith, Orson Hyde, Sylvester Smith, and Luke Johnson, high priests, were chosen to be a standing council for the church, by the unanimous voice of the council.

verse 3 “a standing council for the church” That is a high council. In this verse the reader will find three instances of the word council. The first and third refer to

the forty-three member council of high priests, elders, priests, and members (see verse 5) which have been convened to select a high council, and the second instance refers to the high council that is being appointed.

4 The above-named councilors were then asked whether they accepted their appointments, and whether they would act in that office according to the law of heaven, to which they all answered that they accepted their appointments, and would fill their offices according to the grace of God bestowed upon them.

5 The number composing the council, who voted in the name and for the church in appointing the above-named councilors were forty-three, as follows: nine high priests, seventeen elders, four priests, and thirteen members.

6 Voted: that the high council cannot have power to act without seven of the above-named councilors, or their regularly appointed successors are present.

verse 6 “the high council cannot have power to act without seven . . . present” The newly installed high council must have a quorum of seven (a majority) of its twelve members present in order to conduct business.

7 These seven shall have power to appoint other high priests, whom they may consider worthy and capable to act in the place of absent councilors.

8 Voted: that whenever any vacancy shall occur by the death, removal from office for transgression, or removal from the bounds of this church government, of any one of the above-named councilors, it shall be filled by the nomination of the president or presidents, and sanctioned by the voice of a general council of high priests, convened for that purpose, to act in the name of the church.

verse 8 “whenever any vacancy shall occur” in 1834 a high priest was nominated to the high council by the First Presidency of the Church and then ratified by an ad hoc general council of high priests convened for that specific purpose.

Today, Members of the high council are called by the stake president and sustained by the membership of the stake according to the law of common consent (D&C 26).

9 The president of the church, who is also the president of the council, is appointed by revelation, and acknowledged in his administration by the voice of the church.

verse 9 “appointed by revelation” The underlying truth of the entire restoration is the divine calling of the prophet Joseph Smith. It is this calling and that of Joseph’s successors that are acknowledged by the voice of the entire Church twice yearly, at each semiannual general conference of the Church. Local authorities, officers, and teachers are similarly sustained at semiannual stake conferences and also at ward conferences.

10 And it is according to the dignity of his office that he should preside over the council of the church; and it is his privilege to be assisted by two other presidents, appointed after the same manner that he himself was appointed.

verse 10 “appointed after the same manner” The president’s two counselors are also to be appointed by divine revelation and accepted by sustaining vote.

11 And in case of the absence of one or both of those who are appointed to assist him, he has power to preside over the council without an assistant; and in case he himself is absent, the other presidents have power to preside in his stead, both or either of them.

verse 11 “the other presidents have power to preside” We learn that in this original high council either counselor could preside over the council, in the absence of the president, either alone or with the other counselor present. This is not the case today in local high councils met as a disciplinary council. Unless otherwise directed by the First Presidency, the stake president himself must preside over stake high council disciplinary meetings.

12 Whenever a high council of the church of Christ is regularly organized, according to the foregoing pattern, it shall be the duty of the twelve councilors to cast lots by numbers, and thereby ascertain who of the twelve shall speak first, commencing with number one and so in succession to number twelve.

verse 12 “cast lots by numbers” Drawing numbers randomly assures that no human agency can bias the proceedings for or against the accused in a disciplinary council, since no one knows in advance which council members will be appointed to speak or which ones will be appointed to represent the interests of the accused.

verses 13-17 In a disciplinary council meeting, all of the council members are committed to seeing that truth and justice prevail. Toward this end, half of the councilors, those who have randomly drawn even numbers, are charged with defending the rights of the accused. The other half are charged with defending the rights of the Church, or with the aggrieved party or parties. The facts of the case are then presented by one, two, or three pairs of councilors—depending on the degree of difficulty. This is not an adversarial procedure, however. There is no prosecution and no defense. No one argues a case or tries to persuade the council. No one attempts to “win” a verdict. There is only one object, which is to arrive at the truth and to let fairness and justice prevail.

13 Whenever this council convenes to act upon any case, the twelve councilors shall consider whether it is a difficult one or not; if it is not, two only of the councilors shall speak upon it, according to the form above written.

14 But if it is thought to be difficult, four shall be appointed; and if more difficult, six; but in no case shall more than six be appointed to speak.

15 The accused, in all cases, has a right to one-half of the council, to prevent insult or injustice.

16 And the councilors appointed to speak before the council are to present the case, after the evidence is examined, in its true light before the council; and every man is to speak according to equity and justice.

17 Those councilors who draw even numbers, that is, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12, are the individuals who are to stand up in behalf of the accused, and prevent insult and injustice.

18 In all cases the accuser and the accused shall have a privilege of speaking for themselves before the council, after the evidences are heard and the councilors who are appointed to speak on the case have finished their remarks.

verse 18 “a privilege of speaking for themselves before the council” A basic principle of justice in any dispute is that both sides of the case be allowed to speak for themselves freely and without prejudice.

19 After the evidences are heard, the councilors, accuser and accused have spoken, the president shall give a decision according to the understanding which he shall have of the case, and call upon the twelve councilors to sanction the same by their vote.

verses 19-22 “the president shall give a decision” While the councilors offer valuable preparation, advice, and deliberation, they do not make the decision of the council. The decision in a disciplinary council lies with the president alone. The councilors then vote to sustain his decision after the fact. Should the high council vote not to sustain the president’s decision, the proceedings can be reviewed for possible errors. If errors are found, then a rehearing of the case may take place. But if there are no substantial errors, the original decision stands, and there is no rehearing provided a simple majority of the council sustains the president in his decision.

20 But should the remaining councilors, who have not spoken, or any one of them, after hearing the evidences and pleadings impartially, discover an error in the decision of the president, they can manifest it, and the case shall have a re-hearing.

21 And if, after a careful re-hearing, any additional light is shown upon the case, the decision shall be altered accordingly.

22 But in case no additional light is given, the first decision shall stand, the majority of the council having power to determine the same.

23 In case of difficulty respecting doctrine or principle, if there is not a sufficiency written to make the case clear to the minds of the council, the president may inquire and obtain the mind of the Lord by revelation.

verse 23 “the president may inquire . . . of the Lord” It should be remembered that in its original context, the president in verse 23 was the prophet Joseph Smith who was entitled to receive new doctrine for the Church by revelation. In the modern Church, stake presidents are still entitled to receive revelation and inspiration from the Lord concerning matters before the high council, and it is customary for them to retire briefly and seek the Lord’s confirmation in prayer before reaching their decision. However, no one but the prophet receives new doctrine in the Church today (see D&C 28:2; 43:3-6).

24 The high priests, when abroad, have power to call and organize a council after the manner of the foregoing, to settle difficulties, when the parties or either of them shall request it.

verses 24-29 “The high priests, when abroad” *Abroad* means outside of Kirtland. These verses allow for the creation of local, ad hoc high councils in the outlying areas of the Church. These are created only in urgent situations by a member of the high council when he is away from Kirtland, and the high council in Kirtland must appoint one of their own members to preside over these ad hoc high councils. A careful record of the proceedings of the council are then sent to the high council in Kirtland. If the verdict of the ad hoc council is unsatisfactory to either party, then appeal for a re-hearing may be made to the high council in Kirtland.

25 And the said council of high priests shall have power to appoint one of their own number to preside over such council for the time being.

26 It shall be the duty of said council to transmit, immediately, a copy of their proceedings, with a full statement of the testimony accompanying their decision, to the high council of the seat of the First Presidency of the Church.

verse 26 “a copy of their proceedings” We see in this requirement the continuing growth of central record keeping for the Church. Today, all decisions of disciplinary councils affecting membership are to be forwarded to church headquarters.

27 Should the parties or either of them be dissatisfied with the decision of said council, they may appeal to the high council of the seat of the First Presidency of the Church, and have a re-hearing, which case shall there be conducted, according to the former pattern written, as though no such decision had been made.

verse 27 “they may appeal” Today, the decision of any disciplinary council may be appealed to a higher church council. The decision of a bishop’s council may be appealed to a stake high council, and a stake high council decision may be appealed to the First Presidency. However, the Council of the First Presidency may choose to hear such an appeal or not and is not obligated to hear it (see verse 33).

28 This council of high priests abroad is only to be called on the most difficult cases of church matters; and no common or ordinary case is to be sufficient to call such council.

29 The traveling or located high priests abroad have power to say whether it is necessary to call such a council or not.

verses 30-32 These verses were not part of the original revelation, but were added by Joseph as he was preparing the revelation to be published in 1835. They were added to distinguish the roles of the general high council of the Church from that of the newly formed Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The high council, when it functions abroad, or outside of Kirtland, is here referred to as “the traveling high priests abroad.” The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is referred to as “the traveling high council.” We learn that the Council of the Twelve Apostles is a court of last appeal, unless there is a question of transgression by one or more of its members.

30 There is a distinction between the high council or traveling high priests abroad, and the traveling high council composed of the twelve apostles, in their decisions.

31 From the decision of the former there can be an appeal; but from the decision of the latter there cannot.

32 The latter can only be called in question by the general authorities of the church in case of transgression.

33 Resolved: that the president or presidents of the seat of the First Presidency of the Church shall have power to determine whether any such case, as may be appealed, is justly entitled to a re-hearing, after examining the appeal and the evidences and statements accompanying it.

34 The twelve councilors then proceeded to cast lots or ballot, to ascertain who should speak first, and the following was the result, namely: 1, Oliver Cowdery; 2, Joseph Coe; 3, Samuel H. Smith; 4, Luke Johnson; 5, John S. Carter; 6, Sylvester Smith; 7, John Johnson; 8, Orson Hyde; 9, Jared Carter; 10, Joseph Smith, Sen.; 11, John Smith; 12, Martin Harris.

After prayer the conference adjourned.

OLIVER COWDERY and ORSON HYDE, clerks

Brief Historical Setting

Shortly after the high council was organized in Kirtland, two delegates arrived in Kirtland representing the exiled saints in Missouri. They petitioned the high council in Kirtland as to how and by what means Zion was going to be redeemed. It was apparent to the high council that in spite of three months of using legal channels in Missouri, no progress had been made in securing protection for the saints sufficient to allow them to return to their lands in Jackson County. They concluded that direct assistance must be given to their afflicted brethren. Prior to this meeting of the high council, Joseph had prayed and received an answer to the question of what must be done for the saints in Zion **[D&C 103 - Zion's Camp]**. With Joseph's inspired prompting, the high council reached a decision that an army must be gathered to go up to Zion and redeem the exiles. This army would be called "Zion's Camp." For two and one-half months there was a pause in the temple building project in Kirtland as the Church recruited men and contributions of money and goods to help the destitute members in Missouri.

1834 May

During the first week in May, an army of just over one hundred men marched from Kirtland, led by the Prophet Joseph. As they marched, they experienced great hardships. They recruited men to join them as they traveled, and by the time they reached Missouri they numbered just over two hundred men. The hope of Zion's Camp was that once they joined the exiled saints, they would inform the Governor of Missouri they were prepared to return to their lands in Jackson County and take them back by force. The Governor had previously promised Joseph by letter his full support in assisting the exiles to win back their lands. It was expected that the Governor would call out the Missouri militia to protect them as they returned to their homes.

While camped at Salt River in Missouri the army learned that the Missouri Governor not only refused to call out the militia, but he refused to allow the Mormons the right to bear arms in Jackson County. Even more devastating was the realization that armed Missourians were waiting to destroy any Mormon who dared return to Jackson County. Hopes of ever seeing their exiled brethren return to their homes were dashed! Angered and frustrated, the men of Zion's Camp resumed their march. While camped at Fishing River on June 22, 1834, Joseph received a revelation **[D&C 105 - Zion's Camp Disbanded]** in which the Lord told the men he had accepted their sacrifice, and they would not have to fight in Missouri. They were, in effect, disbanded! They had marched a thousand miles through all manner of trial and privation to rescue their beleaguered brethren in Missouri, and now they were disbanded thirty miles before they reached their destination!

As a cruel denouement to this experience, a tragedy struck Zion's Camp about this time. A cholera epidemic broke out among the members of the Camp and within two weeks, thirteen members of the Camp had died.

Section 103 Zion's Camp

On February 24, 1834, the newly formed high council of the Church met at the house of the Prophet for the purpose of receiving Lyman Wight and Parley P. Pratt, who had arrived in Kirtland on February 22 as delegates from the brethren in Missouri. They came to Kirtland to report on conditions among the exiles driven from Jackson County.

Of these events Parley P. Pratt recorded:

After making our escape into the county of Clay—being reduced to the lowest poverty—I made a living by day labor, jobbing, building, or wood cutting, till some time in the winter of 1834, when a general conference was held at my house, in which it was decided that two of the elders should be sent to Ohio, in order to counsel with President Smith and the Church at Kirtland, and take some measures for the relief or restoration of the people thus plundered and driven from their homes. The question was put to the conference: “Who would volunteer to perform so great a journey?”

The poverty of all, and the inclement season of the year made all hesitate. At length Lyman Wight and myself offered our services, which were readily accepted. I was at this time entirely destitute of proper clothing for the journey; and I had neither horse, saddle, bridle, money for provisions to take with me; or to leave with my wife, who lay sick and helpless most of the time.

Under these circumstances I knew not what to do. Nearly all had been robbed and plundered, and all were poor. As we had to start without delay, I almost trembled at the undertaking; it seemed to be all but an impossibility; but “to him that believeth all things are possible.” We were soon ready, and on the first of February we mounted our horses, and started in good cheer to ride one thousand miles through a wilderness country. We had not one cent of money in our pockets on starting.

We traveled every day, whether through storm or sunshine, mud, rain or snow; except when our public duties called us to tarry. We arrived in Kirtland early in the spring, all safe and sound; we had lacked for nothing on the road, and now had plenty of funds in hand. President Joseph Smith and the Church in Kirtland received us with a hospitality and joy unknown except among the saints; and much interest was felt there, as well as elsewhere, on the subject of persecution.

The President inquired of the Lord concerning the matter, and a further mission was appointed us [section 103] (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 107-9).

When the council was called to order, and prayer had been offered by the Prophet, these two brethren delivered their message concerning the condition of the brethren in Clay County, Missouri. They stated that the brethren in Missouri were anxious to know how and by what means Zion was to be redeemed. In Clay County they had been able to obtain food and clothing from the citizens in exchange for their labor. Thus, their immediate needs were met, but the idea of being driven from their

homes still pained them, and they desired to know what the Lord would direct in the matter of reinstating them to their lands. None of them had broken their covenant by selling their lands except William E. McLellin, who had sold thirty acres to the enemy, and he would have sold seven more acres if a brother had not come to the rescue and purchased them (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:481-82).

Much of the following material regarding those trying days of our Church's history is taken from Milton V. Backman, Jr.'s, book *The Heaven's Resound* (174-91). Some of this material has been edited to fit our purposes.

As the council reviewed the reports of brothers Wight and Pratt, they recognized that in three months of using available legal channels in Missouri, no progress had been made toward securing protection for the saints if they were to return to their lands. They had been informed that the Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin had promised to provide an armed force to guard the Mormons while they returned to their homes in Jackson County, but Dunklin was unwilling or unable to retain that force in the county after the Mormons had returned. They realized that unless an appropriate additional armed force, perhaps one made up of members of the Church from Kirtland and the eastern branches, remained in the county after their return, the saints would certainly be driven from their homes again. They also realized that a fair court of inquiry could not be held in Jackson County. They thus concluded that unless an army of the saints was sent to Missouri to provide the needed help, then they would be in effect abandoning the Missouri saints. Thus, the leaders in Kirtland realized that they had to come to the direct assistance of their afflicted brethren. In section 101:43-62, the Lord gave a parable that described how a nobleman's vineyard, which had not been sufficiently protected, was invaded by an enemy, and the nobleman's servants subsequently fled. The nobleman, after rebuking his servants for failing to comply with all his instructions, commanded one of his men to gather the remainder of the servants, to take "all the strength" of his house, which consisted of his warriors, and to then redeem his vineyard.

Actually Joseph had received section 103 on February 24, 1834, before the meeting of the high council. In essence, it is an answer to the question of Elders Pratt and Wight: How is Zion to be redeemed? When these brethren asked their question, Joseph had his answer ready. It was with Joseph's inspired prompting that the council reached the decision that an army must be gathered to go up to Zion to redeem the exiles. At one point in the meeting, Joseph arose and announced that he was going to Zion to assist in its redemption. He then requested the council to approve his decision, and the priesthood bearers sanctioned the resolution without a dissenting vote. When he called for recruits to travel with him, about thirty or forty men immediately volunteered. They also unanimously agreed that Joseph Smith should serve as the "commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel," an army that was to be called "Zion's Camp."

Section 103 specified that eight men were to become missionaries, not to preach the gospel, but rather to promote the cause of Zion's camp (verses 37-40). One of these missionaries, Joseph Smith, was compared in the revelation to the servant who had been instructed by the "lord of the vineyard" in the parable in section 101 to gather the strength of his house for the recovery of his lands. Another missionary, Sidney Rigdon, was specifically commanded to inform members in the east of the plight of the exiled Missouri saints and to ask for their support relative to the restoration and redemption of Zion (verse 29). Two other missionaries, Parley P. Pratt and Lyman Wight, were told not to return to Missouri until an acceptable army had been organized (verse 30).

By revelation, members of the Church also learned what the Lord considered a satisfactory force. The army ideally was to consist of five hundred volunteers. If five hundred men could not be recruited, an army of three hundred was to be organized. And if three hundred could not be found, then an army of at least one hundred was to be formed. If an army of one hundred could not be found, the Lord in essence told them to forget it (verses 30-34). The revelation further instructed the saints to organize into companies of tens, twenties, fifties, and one hundreds (verse 30).

While the saints were receiving specific instructions by revelation concerning the organization of Zion's camp, they were also warned that the "redemption of Zion" would be delayed if the saints continued to "pollute their inheritance." Though members in the east were to be granted an opportunity to assist the exiles in the west, the successful completion of this mission was predicated largely upon the Missouri saints' living in harmony with the commandments of the Lord. The revelation further specified that Zion would not be redeemed until after much tribulation at which time the Lord would manifest his power (verse 11-15).

The Lord included in this section another sobering test of discipleship (see verses 27-28).

For two and one-half months, leaders of the Church recruited men in the east to march in Zion's Camp and concurrently gathered contributions of money and goods to help destitute members in Missouri. In the latter part of February, the eight missionaries called by revelation left Kirtland and headed east. Traveling two by two, they followed different routes, "visiting the churches and instructing the people." During their mission, Elder Pratt met Wilford Woodruff for the first time and told the young convert it was his duty to prepare to travel to Zion. Wilford Woodruff settled his business affairs, said farewell to relatives in Richland, New York, and traveled by wagon to Kirtland, arriving there on April 25.

Although the request for volunteers was fairly successful, Joseph Smith was not pleased with the response to the plea for help in redeeming Zion. Most of the Kirtland saints who participated in the march to Zion enlisted on the day the Prophet announced

his decision to travel to Missouri. Only a few others volunteered during the two and a half months of ardent recruiting.

On April 21, Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight left Kirtland and followed a northern route westward, with instruction to seek for recruits in Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. By prior arrangement, they were to lead those who joined them to a designated place in eastern Missouri where they would meet up with the main force of Zion's camp. About sixteen men in the Pontiac (Michigan) Branch volunteered to join the march to Zion, and three of them took their wives with them. As they continued west, a few other recruits, including Charles C. Rich, joined them. After crossing the Mississippi at Quincy, Illinois, this company of Zion's Camp, known as "Hyrum's division," traveled to the Salt River, where they joined the much larger company directed by Joseph Smith.

Only a few elders, including Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon, were left behind. These men were to supervise the construction of the temple and direct the affairs of the Church in Kirtland.

The call to join Zion's Camp was issued six days after Brigham Young married Mary Ann Angell, yet he was one of the first to enlist. Before answering the Prophet's call, the new couple had been busy securing a house, planting a garden and establishing a home for Brigham's two daughters, who, following the death of Brigham's first wife, had been cared for by Vilate Kimball, wife of Heber C. Kimball. Now, Mary Ann assumed these responsibilities and began preparing for the absence of her husband.

Since many of the men had to leave their families with little or no money, and there would be no income while they were away, members planted gardens so the women and children could harvest corn and other crops during the army's absence.

On May 1, 1834, the first volunteers for the redemption of Zion marched from Kirtland. This strange group of approximately twenty soldiers, clad in a variety of homespun clothes, were armed with muskets, pistols, swords, bayonets, and dirks (daggers), and they were accompanied by four baggage wagons. Although May 1 had been designated as the day the army of Israel was to begin the one-thousand mile journey to Missouri, most of the men in Kirtland were not ready to begin the march by that date. Consequently, the Prophet instructed the advance party to proceed south to New Portage, Ohio, where they were to wait for others to join them.

On Monday, May 5, the Prophet assumed his new role as "commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel" and led about eighty-five men (which, coupled with the twenty who had departed on May 1, was the minimum number set by revelation) from Kirtland. About half of this segment of the army consisted of Kirtland saints, while the others had been gathered from the eastern branches of the Church. Most of these men and the others who later joined them, were young. George A. Smith and Benjamin Winchester were but sixteen. The average age of the men of the army was about twenty-eight, the same age as their leader, Joseph Smith. A few of the men were much older. Samuel

Baker from Norton, Ohio, was nearly eighty. Martin Harris and Freeman Nickerson were in their fifties, and Frederick G. Williams was forty-six.

While some of the men feared that they might never again embrace their wives and children, others marched briskly in anticipation of an exciting and rewarding adventure. Although the men marched from Kirtland with mixed emotions, they were united in the belief that not only would they aid the stricken saints in Missouri with money and supplies, but also they would help them regain their land in Jackson County. The hope was that after Zion's Camp had joined the exiled saints, members of the Church in Missouri would inform the governor that they were prepared to return to their lands. The governor, they hoped, would then be bound to call out the militia to protect them as they returned to their homes in Jackson County. Other members of the Church would subsequently move to Zion so that the saints there would be sufficiently strong in numbers to protect themselves. Elders Cowdery and Rigdon instructed the members in Kirtland to begin preparing immediately, as circumstances permitted, to move to the West.

On May 8, the army of Israel resumed their long march west. Volunteers had continued to arrive at the encampments south of Kirtland, enlarging the number of troops to over 130, with twenty baggage wagons. As they proceeded through a long range of beech woods, their wagons became mired in mud, but, aided by heavy ropes, the men managed to pull the wagons along the muddy trails. As they marched across the open plains of Indiana, they suffered from the blazing heat of the sun and the relentless pain of blistered, bleeding feet. Though they were aware of threats that Missourians would not permit a Mormon army to enter their state, the men of Zion's Camp spent two days ferrying across the Mississippi River, and then they continued west across the rolling fields of Missouri.

As Joseph's division of Zion's Camp continued its relentless march, it was gradually strengthened with additional volunteers, arms, stores, and money. Recruiting officers continued to seek help from saints living in the states where the army was traveling. One of these recruiting officers was Parley P. Pratt. Instead of marching with other members of the army, he rode from one farmhouse to another, locating Latter-day Saints and asking them to help their oppressed brethren in the west. Sometimes he would ride all day and night to remain near the army, and on occasions he would ride into camp, enjoy breakfast with the other troops, secure a fresh horse, and then resume his recruiting activities. As a consequence of the efforts of various recruiters, about fifty additional men joined this division of Zion's Camp.

On June 3, an incident occurred which has probably aroused more interest in the church than is warranted. Members of Zion's Camp dug up a skeleton near the Illinois River. It is well-documented that Joseph made statements about this deceased person and his historical setting. Joseph said that his name had been Zelph, and he was a "white Lamanite" who had died in battle while fighting under a leader named

Onandagus. It is not clear when this Zelph might have lived and died. It is also not clear what Joseph might have meant by the designation “Lamanite.” He may have intended to say that Zelph was a cultural Lamanite who lived in Book of Mormon times, or he might have meant that Zelph was a descendant of earlier Lamanites of the Book of Mormon period. In 1834, the term Lamanite might also have been the equivalent of “Indian.” In a letter written to Emma at that time, Joseph referred to the members of Zion’s Camp as “wandering over the plains of the Nephites” (Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Zelph Story [1834],” *BYU Studies* 29:2). Apparently in 1834 Joseph believed that parts of the Book of Mormon story took place in that part of North America. By 1842 he likely had changed his ideas and felt that most of the Nephite history took place in Central America (*Ibid.*).

On June 7, Joseph’s division encamped in some woods by a spring near the settlement where the Salt River Branch of the Church was located. The next day, a Sunday, as the men were resting and attending to their religious duties, they were joined by Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight, who were leading the other company of about twenty men. Zion’s camp had reached its maximum numerical strength—the army of Israel now numbered about 207 men, eleven women, and eleven children. They now had twenty-five baggage wagons. After the two divisions combined, the Prophet continued as commander-in- chief, with Lyman Wight serving as second officer.

As Zion’s Camp continued its long march west, many factors combined to create internal disorder. Many of the men were fearful of the many possible dangers ahead. Some grumbled because of changes in their accustomed life-style, and a few questioned the decisions of the leaders. There were also personality clashes. For forty-five days the men lived and marched together, covering twenty-five to forty miles most days, and suffering from thirst, hunger, and fatigue. Many complained of “sore toes, blistered feet, long drives, scanty provisions, poor quality bread, bad corn dodger, ‘frowzy’ butter, strong honey, [and] maggoty bacon and cheese.” The grumblers often complained to Joseph and blamed him for their discomfort. George A. Smith observed that “even a dog could not bark at some men without their murmuring at Joseph.”

Once they reached Missouri, the members of Zion’s camp felt that all they had to do was to notify Governor Dunklin that they were ready to restore the saints to Jackson County, and the governor would provide the necessary armed force to protect them. While camped at Salt River, however, they learned that the governor had changed his mind about helping the saints in the repossession of their Jackson County property. The camp members were taken by surprise and many believed they had been betrayed. Parley P. Pratt asserted that the governor had refused to carry out the duties of his office because he feared such action would lead to civil war. As he left the governor’s office, Elder Pratt mumbled, “The poor coward ought, in duty to resign; he owes us this, morally at least, in justice to the oath of his office” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 115). Governor Dunklin not only dealt a serious blow to the hopes of the saints by

refusing to call out the militia, but he also put another impediment in their path by announcing on June 6 that Mormons had “no right to march to Jackson County in arms.” In fairness, it seems probable that Dunklin had originally made his promise of military assistance to guard the Mormons back to their homes in good faith. But in the intervening six months, as the situation in Jackson County deteriorated, he perceived that an armed conflict would inevitably ensue if the Mormons returned to the county, and he pragmatically withdrew his promise in order to avert a civil war. His initial promise of assistance had undoubtedly been a contributing factor in the creation of Zion’s Camp, and his withdrawal of that promise removed any opportunity for the camp to play a lawful role in recovering the saints’ lands. Zion’s Camp had not been organized as a vigilante movement. Rather, it had been Joseph’s clear intention to work within the law and in cooperation with the state of Missouri in returning the Jackson County saints to their homes under guard and in protecting them once they were there.

The saints recognized that an armed enemy was waiting to destroy all Mormons who dared enter Jackson County. Angered and frustrated by the governor’s pronouncements, the men of Zion’s Camp resumed their march. As they traveled, they learned that their enemies were not only prepared to repulse any saints who crossed the Missouri River, but were also planning a surprise attack on Zion’s Camp. On June 19, shortly after entering Clay County, the army encamped near a hill overlooking Fishing River. While they were setting up camp, five men approached on horseback and swore the Mormons would “see hell before morning.” They warned that sixty men from Richmond and seventy from Clay County were coming to join with an army from Jackson County, and this force would utterly destroy the Mormons. According to one observer, when this warning was delivered to the Zion’s Camp army, there was not a cloud in the sky; but as the sun set, clouds quickly gathered, and a violent thunderstorm struck the region. Some of the members of Zion’s Camp sought shelter in a log Baptist meetinghouse near their encampment. The fury of the storm broke branches from trees, destroyed crops, and disrupted the plans of the mob to crush the saints. Rain soaked the gunpowder of the enemy, and the swollen and turbulent Fishing River prevented the mob from crossing to the saints’ encampment. The saints were not harmed, though they did get wet and some of their tents were blown down. However, members of the mob did not fare so well. Some of them “had holes made in their hats” by lightning, some suffered damage to their rifle stocks, and many of their horses fled in fright and pain. Charles C. Rich recorded that the storm exceeded in severity any storm he had ever witnessed, while Heber C. Kimball concluded, “It was evident the Almighty fought in our defense.” Elder Woodruff added that following the storm, Joseph informed Zion’s Camp that “God is in this storm.”

The difficulties of the saints in Missouri became even more apparent when they failed to work out a satisfactory compromise with representatives from Jackson County

at a meeting in Liberty, Missouri, on June 16. Indeed the cause of the exiled saints in Missouri was beginning to look hopeless. Even the army of Israel, Zion's Camp, appeared helpless to lend any meaningful aid to their homeless brethren and sisters.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 103 Zion's Camp

1 Verily I say unto you, my friends, behold, I will give unto you a revelation and commandment, that you may know how to act in the discharge of your duties concerning the salvation and redemption of your brethren, who have been scattered on the land of Zion;

verse 1 Section 103 contains specific instructions for instituting what had been commanded of the saints in parable form—see D&C 101:43-62

2 Being driven and smitten by the hands of mine enemies, on whom I will pour out my wrath without measure in mine own time.

verse 2 “on whom I will pour out my wrath without measure in mine own time” This prophecy by the Lord has both a specific and a general fulfillment. Specifically, it refers to the coming Civil War and other calamities when the very individuals who drove out the saints would personally feel the wrath of God in that same generation. More generally, it also refers to the tribulations at the second coming of Christ when all the wicked will feel his wrath “without measure” (see D&C 87:6).

3 For I have suffered them thus far, that they might fill up the measure of their iniquities, that their cup might be full;

verse 3 The Lord suffered the wicked mobbers in Missouri to win an initial triumph over the saints so that their actions would provide ample evidence for the coming judgment. Thus, all those who have persecuted the saints contrary to the laws of man and God may will without excuse when his judgments are poured out upon them in this life and/or the next.

4 And that those who call themselves after my name might be chastened for a little season with a sore and grievous chastisement, because they did not hearken altogether unto the precepts and commandments which I gave unto them.

verse 4 “they did not hearken” See D&C 101:7-8 and the commentary for these verses.

5 But verily I say unto you, that I have decreed a decree which my people shall realize, inasmuch as they hearken from this very hour unto the counsel which I, the Lord their God, shall give unto them.

6 Behold they shall, for I have decreed it, begin to prevail against mine enemies from this very hour.

7 And by hearkening to observe all the words which I, the Lord their God, shall speak unto them, they shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are subdued under my feet, and the earth is given unto the saints, to possess it forever and ever.

verses 5-7 Remarkably, the Lord makes it clear that the exiled saints in Missouri could still prevail over their enemies beginning from that very hour if they began to hearken diligently to the Lord's counsel.

8 But inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of the world shall prevail against them.

verse 8 Unfortunately, the saints at that time collectively chose to meet the second of these two conditions and received the terrible consequences decreed to accompany that choice.

9 For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men;

verse 9 Jesus Christ is the Savior of all mankind. However, he often allows his saints the opportunity and joy—and therefore the responsibility and obligation—of sharing in his redemptive work and becoming with him “saviours . . . upon mount Zion” (Obadiah 1:21). Although this phrase includes our obligation to perform temple work, nothing in scripture limits it to this application alone. Missionaries who preach the gospel to the living; parents who lovingly raise and teach their children; saints who serve in the Church; and members who light the path and ease the burdens of their neighbors—all these in some degree serve their Lord and are, therefore, his agents as saviors on mount Zion.

10 And inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

verse 10 “salt that has lost its savor” See the commentary on D&C 101:39-40.

verses 11-14 Once again the Lord, as he does in verse 5-8 gives the conditional promise that if the saints can purify themselves, they will establish Zion; albeit after much tribulation (verse 12). And, if they become polluted, they will be thrown down once again (verse 14).

11 But verily I say unto you, I have decreed that your brethren which have been scattered shall return to the lands of their inheritances, and shall build up the waste places of Zion.

verse 11 “shall build up the waste places of Zion” See the commentary for D&C 101:18.

12 For after much tribulation, as I have said unto you in a former commandment, cometh the blessing.

verse 12 “in a former commandment” The reference is to D&C 58:4 which says, “For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand.” Keep in mind that the word *commandment* often means “revelation.”

13 Behold, this is the blessing which I have promised after your tribulations, and the tribulations of your brethren—your redemption, and the redemption of your brethren, even their restoration to the land of Zion, to be established, no more to be thrown down.

verse 13 “no more to be thrown down” This restoration of Zion will take place after the Lord’s second coming.

14 Nevertheless, if they pollute their inheritances they shall be thrown down; for I will not spare them if they pollute their inheritances.

verse 14 “if they pollute their inheritances” The land of Zion is, for the Saints, a land of promise—a land of their inheritance. If they dwell there in righteousness and obedience, they will be blessed as promised. If they turn to disobedience and unrighteousness, they pollute the land of their inheritance, and they will be scourged off the land (Leviticus 18:24-28; Deuteronomy 29:24-29; 2 Nephi 1:7; Ether 2:9). The Lord will not tolerate disobedience in Zion, the saints’ land of inheritance.

15 Behold, I say unto you, the redemption of Zion must needs come by power;

verse 15 “the redemption of Zion must needs come by power” This prophecy could have an immediate or a long-term fulfillment. The immediate fulfillment would be the reinstatement of the Missouri saints upon their lands in Jackson County through the efforts of the armed forces of Zion’s Camp in conjunction with the state of Missouri, providing the saints of that generation hearken to the voice and commandments of the Lord (see verses 6, 13). The long-term fulfillment would be the final establishment of Zion when the Lord himself, at his coming, assigns the inheritances of the faithful saints.

We will learn that the “redemption of Zion . . . by power” does not mean the redemption of Zion by force. Rather, the eventual redemption of Zion by power refers to the spiritual power of the saints, particularly after they have entered into the highest covenants of mortality in the temple and they lived up to those covenants. This power is the “endowment” with which the Lord blesses those who keep their temple covenants. See *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 18, *The Temple*.

16 Therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel.

verse 16 “like as Moses” Joseph Smith is the latter-day prophet like Moses (see 2 Nephi 3:15, 18-21).

17 For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm.

verse 17 “the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham” Note that here and in the verses following, the emphasis is on the Church’s descent from Abraham and Jacob (Israel) rather than from Israel after its fall at Sinai (see verses 19-20; see also D&C 84:23-27 and the commentary for those verses). The restored gospel is not a restoration of Old Testament Israel with its lesser law after its sin at Sinai. Rather, it is a restoration of the Abrahamic covenant as it was handed down to Moses anciently before Israel rejected the higher law and also of its continuation in the New Testament Christianity in the meridian of time. Between Moses and Jesus was a period of generalized apostasy.

18 And as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be.

verse 18 “your fathers” This phrase apparently refers to Patriarchs and also to the generation led out of Egypt by the power of God.

19 Therefore, let not your hearts faint, for I say not unto you as I said unto your fathers: Mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence.

verse 19 “Mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence” Despite popular belief and Hollywood’s representations, the presence of the Lord did not travel with the children of Israel in the wilderness under the banner of the lesser law after their great sin at Sinai (see Exodus 23:20; 33:3). The apostle Paul, relying upon the Greek Septuagint text of Deuteronomy 33:2, plainly states that the law of Moses was delivered to Israel after their sin, not by God but by angels (see Galatians 3:19).

20 But I say unto you: Mine angels shall go up before you, and also my presence, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land.

verse 20 “and also my presence” Unlike the twelve tribes during their forty years in the wilderness, the Lord promises that his very presence will accompany the saints of Zion’s Camp who go up to redeem Zion if they hearken unto his counsel.

21 Verily, verily I say unto you, that my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. is the man to whom I likened the servant to whom the Lord of the vineyard spake in the parable which I have given unto you.

verse 21 The Lord identifies Joseph Smith as the servant in the parable of the nobleman and the vineyard in D&C 101:43-62 (see especially verse 55).

22 Therefore let my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. say unto the strength of my house, my young men and the middle aged—Gather yourselves together unto the land of Zion, upon the land which I have bought with money that has been consecrated unto me.

23 And let all the churches send up wise men with their moneys, and purchase lands even as I have commanded them.

verses 22-23 These two verses specifically command the eastern branches of the Church to send men and money to Missouri to purchase and hold on to more land in and around Zion.

verses 24-27 These verses doubtless encouraged the saints who volunteered for Zion’s Camp to fight for their legal and God-given rights against mob rule.

It should be noted that it was clearly the Lord’s intention to act within the law and to purchase any lands upon which the saints will dwell in Missouri. However, when those lands were stolen from them by lawless individuals, the saints were justified in arming themselves and fighting for their rights against mob rule.

24 And inasmuch as mine enemies come against you to drive you from my goodly land, which I have consecrated to be the land of Zion, even from your own lands after these testimonies, which ye have brought before me against them, ye shall curse them;

25 And whomsoever ye curse, I will curse, and ye shall avenge me of mine enemies.

verse 25 “ye shall avenge me of mine enemies” The mobs in Missouri had not merely fought against the saints, they had fought directly against the establishment of Zion and against properties and possessions consecrated to the Lord for the holiest of purposes. In addition, it should be noted that by this time the enemies of the saints in Missouri had come against them more than three times. Assuming that the approach of Zion’s Camp would constitute a warning to the mobs in Missouri, any further attack

upon the saints in that state would, according to D&C 98:28, justify retaliation according to the principles given the saints by the Lord.

26 And my presence shall be with you even in avenging me of mine enemies, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

verse 26 “unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” See the commentary for D&C 98:46.

27 Let no man be afraid to lay down his life for my sake; for whoso layeth down his life for my sake shall find it again.

28 And whoso is not willing to lay down his life for my sake is not my disciple.

verses 27-28 These two verses must have been most sobering to those early saints, and they are equally sobering to the saints today!

verses 29-34 Parley P. Pratt and Lyman Wight were assigned, with Sidney Rigdon and others to raise volunteers for Zion's Camp. The goal was five hundred. The minimum, one hundred. Eventually just over two hundred participated in the Zion's Camp march.

29 It is my will that my servant Sidney Rigdon shall lift up his voice in the congregations in the eastern countries, in preparing the churches to keep the commandments which I have given unto them concerning the restoration and redemption of Zion.

30 It is my will that my servant Parley P. Pratt and my servant Lyman Wight should not return to the land of their brethren, until they have obtained companies to go up unto the land of Zion, by tens, or by twenties, or by fifties, or by an hundred, until they have obtained to the number of five hundred of the strength of my house.

31 Behold this is my will; ask and ye shall receive; but men do not always do my will.

32 Therefore, if you cannot obtain five hundred, seek diligently that peradventure you may obtain three hundred.

verse 32 “Peradventure” means perhaps or possibly.

33 And if ye cannot obtain three hundred, seek diligently that peradventure ye may obtain one hundred.

34 But verily I say unto you, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not go up unto the land of Zion until you have obtained a hundred of the strength of my house, to go up with you unto the land of Zion.

35 Therefore, as I said unto you, ask and ye shall receive; pray earnestly that peradventure my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., may go with you, and preside in the midst of my people, and organize my kingdom upon the consecrated land, and establish the children of Zion upon the laws and commandments which have been and which shall be given unto you.

36 All victory and glory is brought to pass unto you through your diligence, faithfulness, and prayers of faith.

37 Let my servant Parley P. Pratt journey with my servant Joseph Smith, Jun.

38 Let my servant Lyman Wight journey with my servant Sidney Rigdon.

39 Let my servant Hyrum Smith journey with my servant Frederick G. Williams.

40 Let my servant Orson Hyde journey with my servant Orson Pratt, whithersoever my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., shall counsel them, in obtaining the fulfilment of these commandments which I have given unto you, and leave the residue in my hands. Even so. Amen.

verses 37-40 These pairings were for the purpose of recruiting volunteers and funds for Zion's Camp. Sidney Rigdon, for example, participated in the recruitment (see verse 38) but did not make the journey to Missouri.

Section 104 Reorganization of United Order and United Firm

The United Firm had been established by revelation (see sections 69 and 70, 78 and 82, and 92). The United Firm was a separate united order consisting of the leading brethren of the Church, that was created to manage the temporal affairs of the Church. It was a type of business partnership in which the partners controlled the business interests and properties of the Church and used the financial means at their disposal to finance the various programs of the Church. Initially they shared the responsibilities of holding church properties in trust, and they lived off the earnings of these properties. After taking from the earnings of these properties sufficient monies for their needs, they gave the surplus to the bishops' storehouses for use by the poor. In fact, this body was assigned primary responsibility for the care of the poor. The brethren of the United Firm had continued to purchase land and jointly operate the various business ventures owned by them in Missouri and Kirtland.

The spring of 1834, while arrangements were being made for the march to Missouri by Zion's Camp, was a time of great financial strain for the Church. Before the saints from Kirtland and the East could hope to go to the aid of the Missouri saints, the Prophet Joseph had to solve crushing financial problems in the Church. As Joseph wrote to Orson Hyde on April 7, "Unless we can obtain [financial] help, I myself cannot go to Zion, and if I do not go, it will be impossible to get my brethren in Kirtland, any of them, to go; and if we do not go, it is in vain for our eastern brethren to think of going" (*HC*, 2:48).

Two years earlier, in April 1832, the United Firm had secured a five-year loan for \$15,000, an immense sum at the time, primarily for purchasing goods and property in Missouri (see Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 48). When the saints were driven out of Jackson County, not only did they suffer staggering financial losses and abject poverty, but the United Firm also lost its collateral on this loan and its primary means of paying it back. Added to this were other debts incurred by the order on behalf of the Church in Missouri and in Kirtland. The provisioning of Zion's Camp also would require a great outlay of funds, as did continuing construction of the Kirtland Temple. Further, an apostate name Philastus Hurlbut was trying to acquire property owned by the United Firm by suing church leaders, and the church's leaders' having to defend themselves in court was causing escalating legal fees. And, as always, the needs of Kirtland's poor saints also had to be met. For all of these reasons, the Church in the spring of 1834 was deeply in debt.

At a conference in Avon, New York, on March 17, 1834, Joseph Smith proposed, besides raising volunteers and contributions for Zion's Camp, also raising two thousand dollars to pay the debts of the Church in Kirtland (*HC*, 2:44). On April 7, 1834, Joseph wrote in Kirtland, "Bishop Whitney, Elder Frederick G. Williams, Oliver Cowdery, Heber

C. Kimball, and myself, met in the council room, and bowed down before the Lord, and prayed that he would furnish the means to deliver the [United] Firm from debt, that they might be set at liberty; also that I might prevail against that wicked man, Hurlbut, and that he might be put to shame” (*HC*, 2:47-48). Two days later, Hurlbut lost his lawsuit, was put under bond to keep the peace, and was forced to pay court costs.

On April 10, 1834, the members of the United Firm met in council. This council agreed that the United Firm, as it was then organized, be dissolved. Further, they agreed that the properties owned jointly by the Firm be divided among its members and that each receive his share as his individual stewardship for which he was accountable before the Lord (*HC*, 2:49). Apparently this was done to protect the assets held by the United Firm. It seems that creditors who might have had a claim against assets of the United Firm could then not collect by seizing property allotted to its individual members. This was not an attempt to avoid paying the debts of the Church (see verse 78), but was done to protect church property while gaining time to raise additional funds. Even so, actual dissolution of the United Firm was postponed for two weeks, apparently in the hope that funds could be raised in time and dissolution could be avoided.

This dissolution of the United Firm was simply a reorganization since the Firm apparently continued to function in the role of governing board of the United Order in Kirtland. However, we don’t have any reference to the United Firm after this reorganization.

Thirteen days after this reorganization, on April 23, 1834, Joseph met in council with members of the United Firm and received from the Lord section 104. The Lord instructed that the order was to be dissolved and reorganized into two separate United Firms, one in Kirtland and one in Missouri, though members of the Firm were still to receive individual stewardships. In a separate, unpublished revelation received the same day, members of the Firm in Kirtland were instructed to forgive each other their personal debts and their debts to the United Firm. All of these developments, together with the Lord’s financial instructions contained in section 104, allowed the Prophet Joseph to meet the Church’s most challenging financial problems and, thus, to begin preparations in earnest for Zion’s Camp.

It should be noted that in section 104 and its heading, the use of the terms “order,” “United Order,” and “united order” refer consistently to the United Firm. This usage may cause confusion since the same term—“united order” may also be used in two other ways: (1) It may refer to a group of saints who are living the law of consecration and stewardship. We may refer to this group of saints as a “united order.” (2) The term “united order” may be used to refer to the law of consecration and stewardship itself. This is probably a careless usage. We have noted previously in these notes (see sections 78 and 82) that the set of principles by which a group of people enter into an agreement for their common temporal welfare is the law of consecration and stewardship. The term “law of consecration and stewardship,”

however, is a relatively modern term, and in 1834 the law or set of principles may have been referred to by Joseph Smith as the “united order.”

Scripture Mastery

D&C 104:12-14 That every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him. For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine.

D&C 104:17 The earth is full, and there is enough and to spare.

D&C 104:18 If any man shall . . . impart not his portion, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

1 verily I say unto you, my friends, I give unto you counsel, and a commandment, concerning all the properties which belong to the order which I commanded to be organized and established, to be a united order, and an everlasting order for the benefit of my church, and for the salvation of men until I come—

verse 1 “the order which I commanded to be organized and established”

This order is the United Firm, and the commandment is section 78.

“an everlasting order” The everlasting or eternal aspect of the United Firm is the covenant of consecration that each person enters into when he enters the kingdom of God or when he covenants to live the law of consecration and stewardship.

2 With promise immutable and unchangeable, that inasmuch as those whom I commanded were faithful they should be blessed with a multiplicity of blessings;

3 But inasmuch as they were not faithful they were nigh unto cursing.

4 Therefore, inasmuch as some of my servants have not kept the commandment, but have broken the covenant through covetousness, and with feigned words, I have cursed them with a very sore and grievous curse.

verse 4 “inasmuch as some of my servants have not kept the commandment” The United Firm at that time consisted of about a dozen members in both Kirtland and Missouri.

“with feigned words” “Feigned words” are words that misrepresent or conceal one’s true intent or meaning. The speaker has a hidden agenda or hidden purpose. In this case, the hidden purpose of the guilty parties is covetousness, or the desire to get personal gain.

5 For I, the Lord, have decreed in my heart, that inasmuch as any man belonging to the order shall be found a transgressor, or, in other words, shall break the

covenant with which ye are bound, he shall be cursed in his life, and shall be trodden down by whom I will;

verse 5 “he shall be cursed in this life” The order is, of course, the United Firm. Why should covetousness, or the desire for personal gain, be so seriously punished by the Lord in this case? The answer lies in the terms of the covenant made by those who entered the United Firm. D&C 78:5-7 specifically requires members of the order to be equal in earthly things that they might be equal in heavenly things and to be equal temporally if they hope for a place in the celestial world. The desire by members of the order to benefit personally and get unshared gains breaks this most solemn covenant.

6 For I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in these things—

verse 6 All agreements with God are strictly voluntary. He forces no one to heaven. One of the most sacrosanct principles of eternity is the law of agency. Nevertheless, once we choose to enter a covenant with God of our own free will, he will keep his word—and he expects us to keep ours. Those who know God’s commandments, have made covenants with him, and then of their own accord choose to break those covenants, in a way, mock God or treat him with ridicule or contempt. These face consequences far more stringent than those who have sinned without the knowledge of God’s law or without having made covenants with the Lord (that is, without the ordinances of baptism and the temple).

7 And all this that the innocent among you may not be condemned with the unjust; and that the guilty among you may not escape; because I, the Lord, have promised unto you a crown of glory at my right hand.

verse 7 “that the innocent among you may not be condemned with the unjust” This verse refers in part to the reorganization of the United Firm into personal stewardships of private property as commanded in verses 11-13. By making each member accountable for his own stewardship, the common property of the entire order could not be liable to seizure through the actions of any single member. It is possible that the unsuccessful lawsuit of Philastus Hurlbut illustrated the hazards of collective ownership and therefore of collective legal liability. Further, individual accountability over stewardships within the Church makes financial mismanagement easier to detect and assess than does collective accountability.

8 Therefore, inasmuch as you are found transgressors, you cannot escape my wrath in your lives.

9 Inasmuch as ye are cut off for transgression, ye cannot escape the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.

verse 9 “ye cannot escape the buffetings of Satan” To be “cut off” is to be excommunicated and therefore to be denied the shield of the gospel covenant, the atonement, and the priesthood—to be turned over to the buffetings of Satan and his minions both here in this life and in the spirit world to come (see also D&C 78:12 and its commentary).

10 And I now give unto you power from this very hour, that if any man among you, of the order, is found a transgressor and repenteth not of the evil, that ye shall deliver him over unto the buffetings of Satan; and he shall not have power to bring evil upon you.

11 It is wisdom in me; therefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall organize yourselves and appoint every man his stewardship;

verse 11 “appoint every man his stewardship” The corporate holdings of the order, the United Firm, were to be divided up into individual parcels of private property. In most cases, these allotments reflected the informal division of property already in existence between the brethren at the time this revelation was received.

Until 1981, public versions of section 104 contained coded names in place of (or along with) the names of the stewards and the properties listed here. This was originally necessary to protect these individuals from enemies seeking to attach their assets by lawsuits (see also the introductory commentary for section 43).

12 That every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him.

13 For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures.

14 I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine.

verses 12-14 The importance of section 104 goes far beyond the division of property in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1834. Here the Lord elaborates upon the principles of individual stewardship and accountability in the Church and kingdom of God already laid down in the law of the Church (see D&C 42:59). Each person born into mortality brings with him or her a variety of godly attributes earned through their obedience over a considerable period of time in the premortal world. The veil through which we pass between the pre-existence and mortality prevents ready memory, but it does not completely prevent us from finding and refining those considerable abilities we formerly possessed once we arrive here on earth. The Lord expects us to do so and then utilize those abilities for the building up of the kingdom of God on earth. Each man and woman in the kingdom (in fact, in the world) is a steward over these premortal gifts or

“talents,” and each of us will be required—individually—to account to the Master for our use of those abilities—that stewardship.

”all things therein are mine” God is the Creator, and therefore the owner, of the physical universe and all it contains. In reality we own nothing, not even our lives. This fact is foundational to the law of consecration and stewardship.

15 And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine.

verse 15 “it is my purpose to provide for my saints” Note the profound similarity between this phrase and Moses 1:39: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”

16 But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low.

verse 16 “that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low” The primary meaning of “exalted” here is economic. The poor will be lifted up out of their poverty by drawing the rich back down to the middle class. In a Zion society, everyone will be middle class, economically speaking (that is, there will be no rich or poor among them; 4 Nephi 1:3; Moses 7:18).

17 For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.

verse 17 “the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare” Prior to Adam’s being placed on the earth, the earth was ready and then some: “there [was] enough and to spare.” If the resources of the earth are stewarded in righteousness, there will be enough of everything to last until the Savior comes. All shortages are man-made and due to greed, or due otherwise to the Babylon system of world economics.

This verse has been used on occasion by General Authorities as an argument against birth control. The argument of population control to avoid a using up of the earth’s resources is rendered invalid by this verse.

18 Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

verse 18 “according to the law of my gospel” The law of the gospel in its most basic and essential form is the new commandment given by the Savior to his disciples to selflessly love one another (John 13:34-35; D&C 88:123). This love is the opposite of covetousness. Thus, when we obey the law of the gospel, we “cease to be covetous” and impart “as the gospel requires” (D&C 88:123). James, the brother of Jesus, called this “the royal law” (James 2:8).

“lift up his eyes in hell” The allusion here is to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-26). Those who insist on taking and keeping more than their portion of the earth’s bounty in this life will suffer the pains of hell in the life to come, like the rich man in Jesus’s parable.

verses 19-46 The specific Kirtland properties belonging to the United Firm are parceled out to each member as his individual stewardship. Though these will still be managed as stewardships for the Lord, they will legally be recognized as private property. This arrangement gave the church holdings at that time more legal protection and provided for more individual accountability on the part of the stewards.

19 And now, verily I say unto you, concerning the properties of the order—

20 Let my servant Sidney Rigdon have appointed unto him the place where he now resides, and the lot of the tannery for his stewardship, for his support while he is laboring in my vineyard, even as I will, when I shall command him.

verse 20 “the place where he now resides” The descriptions in the revelation were not meant to be legally precise, nor did they need to be. In most cases, it will be seen that the individuals named were already living on the premises described. The only thing that changed was the legal ownership—from the United Firm to the individuals.

21 And let all things be done according to the counsel of the order, and united consent or voice of the order, which dwell in the land of Kirtland.

22 And this stewardship and blessing, I, the Lord, confer upon my servant Sidney Rigdon for a blessing upon him, and his seed after him;

23 And I will multiply blessings upon him, inasmuch as he will be humble before me.

24 And again, let my servant Martin Harris have appointed unto him, for his stewardship, the lot of land which my servant John Johnson obtained in exchange for his former inheritance, for him and his seed after him;

25 And inasmuch as he is faithful, I will multiply blessings upon him and his seed after him.

26 And let my servant Martin Harris devote his moneys for the proclaiming of my words, according as my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., shall direct.

27 And again, let my servant Frederick G. Williams have the place upon which he now dwells.

28 And let my servant Oliver Cowdery have the lot which is set off joining the house, which is to be for the printing office, which is lot number one, and also the lot upon which his father resides.

29 And let my servants Frederick G. Williams and Oliver Cowdery have the printing office and all things that pertain unto it.

30 And this shall be their stewardship which shall be appointed unto them.

31 And inasmuch as they are faithful, behold I will bless, and multiply blessings upon them.

32 And this is the beginning of the stewardship which I have appointed them, for them and their seed after them.

33 And, inasmuch as they are faithful, I will multiply blessings upon them and their seed after them, even a multiplicity of blessings.

34 And again, let my servant John Johnson have the house in which he lives, and the inheritance, all save the ground which has been reserved for the building of my houses, which pertains to that inheritance, and those lots which have been named for my servant Oliver Cowdery.

35 And inasmuch as he is faithful, I will multiply blessings upon him.

36 And it is my will that he should sell the lots that are laid off for the building up of the city of my saints, inasmuch as it shall be made known to him by the voice of the Spirit, and according to the counsel of the order, and by the voice of the order.

verse 36 “laid off” That is, “set aside” or “reserved.”

37 And this is the beginning of the stewardship which I have appointed unto him, for a blessing unto him and his seed after him.

38 And inasmuch as he is faithful, I will multiply a multiplicity of blessings upon him.

39 And again, let my servant Newel K. Whitney have appointed unto him the houses and lot where he now resides, and the lot and building on which the mercantile establishment stands, and also the lot which is on the corner south of the mercantile establishment, and also the lot on which the ashery is situated.

40 And all this I have appointed unto my servant Newel K. Whitney for his stewardship, for a blessing upon him and his seed after him, for the benefit of the mercantile establishment of my order which I have established for my stake in the land of Kirtland.

41 Yea, verily, this is the stewardship which I have appointed unto my servant N. K. Whitney, even this whole mercantile establishment, him and his agent, and his seed after him.

verse 41 “his agent” The identity of the “agent” is not certain, though it might well be Orson Hyde, since he worked for Bishop Whitney and later had the store deeded to him for a short time.

42 And inasmuch as he is faithful in keeping my commandments, which I have given unto him, I will multiply blessings upon him and his seed after him, even a multiplicity of blessings.

43 And again, let my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., have appointed unto him the lot which is laid off for the building of my house, which is forty rods long and twelve wide, and also the inheritance upon which his father now resides;

verse 43 “my house” This, of course, is the temple which is under construction in Kirtland.

44 And this is the beginning of the stewardship which I have appointed unto him, for a blessing upon him, and upon his father.

45 For behold, I have reserved an inheritance for his father, for his support; therefore he shall be reckoned in the house of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun.

46 And I will multiply blessings upon the house of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., inasmuch as he is faithful, even a multiplicity of blessings.

47 And now, a commandment I give unto you concerning Zion, that you shall no longer be bound as a united order to your brethren of Zion, only on this wise—

verse 47 “no longer be bound as a united order to your brethren of Zion” Until this time, the United Firm, both in Kirtland and Missouri, had been a single entity with two branches—one in Kirtland and one in Zion (Independence).

verses 48-50 The Lord here directs that the United Firm in Kirtland be separated from the United Firm in Missouri.

48 After you are organized, you shall be called the United Order of the Stake of Zion, the City of Kirtland. And your brethren, after they are organized, shall be called the United Order of the City of Zion.

49 And they shall be organized in their own names, and in their own name; and they shall do their business in their own name, and in their own names;

50 And you shall do your business in your own name, and in your own names.

51 And this I have commanded to be done for your salvation, and also for their salvation, in consequence of their being driven out and that which is to come.

verse 51 “for your salvation” It is likely the *salvation* meant here is primarily the financial salvation of the Church. One reason the separation of the orders was necessary was so that the debts incurred by the Missouri order and losses suffered through subsequent persecution would not bankrupt the entire Church. The Lord intended the saints to pay all their debts (see verse 78), and this legal separation gave the Kirtland leadership additional time in which to raise the necessary funds (see verses 84-85).

“and that which is to come” The Missouri persecutions were not over in April 1834, nor would they be for years to come.

52 The covenants being broken through transgression, by covetousness and feigned words—

verse 52 The Lord repeats the substance of verse 4 but in a context that points more directly at the Missouri members as the original transgressors of the order.

53 Therefore, you are dissolved as a united order with your brethren, that you are not bound only up to this hour unto them, only on this wise, as I said, by loan as shall be agreed by this order in council, as your circumstances will admit and the voice of the council direct.

verse 53 “by loan” The Kirtland order could make future loans to its sister order in Missouri if conditions warranted.

54 And again, a commandment I give unto you concerning your stewardship which I have appointed unto you.

55 Behold, all these properties are mine, or else your faith is vain, and ye are found hypocrites, and the covenants which ye have made unto me are broken;

verse 55 “all these properties are mine” The Lord reminds the brethren that regardless of who holds legal title to the properties described in this revelation, they are all, in fact, both by right of creation and by covenant obligation—his (see verses 12-14). For a steward to accept legal title out of the Church’s necessity but then take personal control and ownership away from the Church would be hypocrisy at least and breaking of the covenant at worst.

56 And if the properties are mine, then ye are stewards; otherwise ye are no stewards.

57 But, verily I say unto you, I have appointed unto you to be stewards over mine house, even stewards indeed.

58 And for this purpose I have commanded you to organize yourselves, even to print my words, the fulness of my scriptures, the revelations which I have given unto you, and which I shall, hereafter, from time to time give unto you—

verse 58 “even to print my words, the fulness of my scriptures” In the strictest sense, “the fulness of my scriptures” refers to Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible. Grammatically, however, the entire verse may also be understood to include all of God’s revelations both past and future, as God’s words and as the fulness of his scriptures. Moreover, the copy of section 104 found in the *Kirtland Revelation Book* and dated August 18, 1834, contains some extra lines at this point, directing the brethren to secure copyrights for the Book of Mormon, “the articles and covenants,” “all my commandments,” “and also the copyright of the New translation of the Scriptures.”

(*Kirtland Revelation Book*, 105; see also Woodford, “Historical Development,” 2:1351-53, 1366). This would seem to support identifying the Joseph Smith Translation as part of “my words, the fulness of my scriptures” along with the other revelations specified in the *Kirtland Revelation Book*.

One purpose (actually the original purpose) for the organization of the United Firm (then, the Literary Firm) was to print the scriptures of this dispensation—the Book of Commandments (or the Doctrine and Covenants) and Joseph’s inspired revision of the Bible.

59 For the purpose of building up my church and kingdom on the earth, and to prepare my people for the time when I shall dwell with them, which is nigh at hand.

verses 60-77 The saints are to create two treasuries and appoint a treasurer over each. The first was “the sacred treasury of the Lord” (verses 60-66). The monies that were placed in this treasury were the profits (“avails”) from the sale of the scriptures, and they were to be used only for “sacred and holy purposes” at the discretion of the United Firm or by commandment from the Lord. The second treasury (verses 67-78) is unnamed but might well be called the general or mundane treasury. This other treasury was to be created from the profits of all other types of stewardships. These monies also were to be spent at the discretion of the United Firm.

Even though the United Order in Missouri had ceased to function with the expulsion of the saints in the fall of 1833, the Lord did not officially absolve them of their responsibility to live the law of consecration until June 22, 1843 (see D&C 105:34).

60 And ye shall prepare for yourselves a place for a treasury, and consecrate it unto my name.

61 And ye shall appoint one among you to keep the treasury, and he shall be ordained unto this blessing.

62 And there shall be a seal upon the treasury, and all the sacred things shall be delivered into the treasury; and no man among you shall call it his own, or any part of it, for it shall belong to you all with one accord.

63 And I give it unto you from this very hour; and now see to it, that ye go to and make use of the stewardship which I have appointed unto you, exclusive of the sacred things, for the purpose of printing these sacred things as I have said.

64 And the avails of the sacred things shall be had in the treasury, and a seal shall be upon it; and it shall not be used or taken out of the treasury by any one, neither shall the seal be loosed which shall be placed upon it, only by the voice of the order, or by commandment.

65 And thus shall ye preserve the avails of the sacred things in the treasury, for sacred and holy purposes.

66 And this shall be called the sacred treasury of the Lord; and a seal shall be kept upon it that it may be holy and consecrated unto the Lord.

67 And again, there shall be another treasury prepared, and a treasurer appointed to keep the treasury, and a seal shall be placed upon it;

68 And all moneys that you receive in your stewardships, by improving upon the properties which I have appointed unto you, in houses, or in lands, or in cattle, or in all things save it be the holy and sacred writings, which I have reserved unto myself for holy and sacred purposes, shall be cast into the treasury as fast as you receive moneys, by hundreds, or by fifties, or by twenties, or by tens, or by fives.

69 Or in other words, if any man among you obtain five dollars let him cast them into the treasury; or if he obtain ten, or twenty, or fifty, or an hundred, let him do likewise;

70 And let not any among you say that it is his own; for it shall not be called his, nor any part of it.

71 And there shall not any part of it be used, or taken out of the treasury, only by the voice and common consent of the order.

72 And this shall be the voice and common consent of the order—that any man among you say to the treasurer: I have need of this to help me in my stewardship—

73 If it be five dollars, or if it be ten dollars, or twenty, or fifty, or a hundred, the treasurer shall give unto him the sum which he requires to help him in his stewardship—

74 Until he be found a transgressor, and it is manifest before the council of the order plainly that he is an unfaithful and an unwise steward.

75 But so long as he is in full fellowship, and is faithful and wise in his stewardship, this shall be his token unto the treasurer that the treasurer shall not withhold.

76 But in case of transgression, the treasurer shall be subject unto the council and voice of the order.

77 And in case the treasurer is found an unfaithful and an unwise steward, he shall be subject to the council and voice of the order, and shall be removed out of his place, and another shall be appointed in his stead.

78 And again, verily I say unto you, concerning your debts—behold it is my will that you shall pay all your debts.

verse 78 “pay all your debts” Again, it must be emphasized that the purpose of these reorganizations was never to avoid paying their individual debts or the debts of

the Church but to allow church leaders the additional time necessary to raise the needed funds and avoid bankruptcy.

79 And it is my will that you shall humble yourselves before me, and obtain this blessing by your diligence and humility and the prayer of faith.

80 And inasmuch as you are diligent and humble, and exercise the prayer of faith, behold, I will soften the hearts of those to whom you are in debt, until I shall send means unto you for your deliverance.

81 Therefore write speedily to New York and write according to that which shall be dictated by my Spirit; and I will soften the hearts of those to whom you are in debt, that it shall be taken away out of their minds to bring affliction upon you.

verse 81 “write speedily to New York” The church’s unsecured loans were held by New York banks. Here the Lord promises, if Joseph is diligent and humble, to soften the hearts of the lenders to allow him to renegotiate the loans.

82 And inasmuch as ye are humble and faithful and call upon my name, behold, I will give you the victory.

83 I give unto you a promise, that you shall be delivered this once out of your bondage.

84 Inasmuch as you obtain a chance to loan money by hundreds, or thousands, even until you shall loan enough to deliver yourself from bondage, it is your privilege.

verses 83-84 “this once . . . a chance to loan money” In other words, this one time, the Lord will permit Joseph to loan (borrow) additional funds to renegotiate the debt of the Church.

85 And pledge the properties which I have put into your hands, this once, by giving your names by common consent or otherwise, as it shall seem good unto you.

verse 85 “And pledge the properties” Not only will the Lord allow Joseph to borrow money for the needs of the Church, but he will allow the Prophet to put up the properties of the Church, including even the Kirtland Temple, as collateral on the loans. Eventually, as much as \$14,000 had to be borrowed to complete construction of the Kirtland Temple (Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland*, 164).

86 I give unto you this privilege, this once; and behold, if you proceed to do the things which I have laid before you, according to my commandments, all these things are mine, and ye are my stewards, and the master will not suffer his house to be broken up. Even so. Amen.

Section 105 Zion's Camp Disbanded

Let us now return to Zion's Camp and the discouraging circumstances in which they found themselves when we left them in section 103. Governor Dunklin of Missouri had not only refused to call out the Missouri state militia to ensure the saints' safe passage back to their homes in Jackson County, but he also refused to allow the saints to arm themselves and provide for their own protection. Attempts to work out a satisfactory compromise agreement with the residents of Jackson County had failed, and the saints learned that the residents of Jackson County were armed and waiting to attack them should they attempt to return there. Because it had never been Joseph's intention to go to war contrary to the laws of the state and of the nation, the governor's change of policy effectively changed the mission of Zion's Camp. Joseph used the donated funds and supplies to aid the Missouri saints in Clay County.

In these overwhelmingly discouraging circumstances, while camped near Fishing River on June 22, 1834, Joseph received this revelation. In section 105 the Lord, in essence, told the saints that in consequence of their transgressions, the time was not yet right for Zion to be redeemed. They would yet have to wait "a little season." The Lord informed Zion's Camp that he had accepted their sacrifice, and they would not have to fight in Missouri. They were in effect disbanded as an army. They had marched a thousand miles, through all manner of trial and privation to rescue their beleaguered brethren in Missouri, and now they are disbanded thirty miles before they reached their destination! They had come to fight and were emotionally committed to do so, and now they are denied on the very threshold of their goal!

Let us now pick up Milton V. Backman's account of these frustrating times as he recorded it in his book, *The Heavens Resound*, 192-200. We will edit his account to fit our purposes.

After the Prophet informed Zion's Camp that the Lord had accepted their sacrifices, and they would not have to fight the Missourians to help the saints in Missouri regain their lands, some of the men expressed deep disappointment. According to Nathan Tanner, some were so frustrated that they vented their feelings by attacking bushes with their swords and cutting the plants to shreds. A few men simply walked out of camp and apostatized.

As a cruel denouement to this experience, a tragedy struck the camp at this time. On June 21, Ezra Thayer and Joseph Hancock became ill with cholera. Three days later, while the army was encamped on the bank of Rush Creek, about two miles east of Liberty, some of the men who were standing watch were suddenly struck by the disease and fell to the ground, as though they had been shot. The epidemic continued to spread, causing severe diarrhea, vomiting, and cramps. On the evening of June 26, three of the afflicted died. Before the epidemic ended, about seventy persons, including

Joseph Smith, had been stricken, and twelve of the soldiers as well as one of the women traveling with Zion's Camp, Betsy Parrish, had died. The epidemic spread also to some of the Missouri members, and Newell K. Whitney's business partner, Algernon Sidney Gilbert, died. The epidemic subsided about two weeks after it began.

On July 3, two months and two days after the first members of Zion's Camp left Kirtland for Missouri, the army finally and officially disbanded when Joseph Smith authorized General Lyman Wight to discharge every member of the camp who had faithfully served during the long march west. After securing their releases, the men scattered. Some returned to their families in the east, while others remained in Missouri, and some returned to the mission field. On that same day the Prophet organized a high council in Missouri to assist Bishop Edward Partridge in administering the affairs of the Church in that part of the country. Joseph also distributed the funds and other donations collected from the eastern saints to those in need in Missouri.

Accompanied by sixteen other men who had marched in Zion's Camp, Joseph Smith began his journey back to Kirtland on July 9. The party had two horse-drawn wagons, a buggy, and several extra horses. During the journey, they camped at many of the same sites where they had stayed while traveling west. The Prophet arrived in Kirtland about August 1, after a journey of some eighteen hundred miles.

Why would the Lord have allowed this apparent fiasco to occur? Surely he knew the Zion's Camp army would not have a chance to fight, and yet he allowed them to make this terrible trek. Why did he do it? Even the press made fun of the Mormons. The Painesville Telegraph referred to this event as one of the wildest "goose chases" in history. Some suggested that Joseph Smith could not be a true prophet for getting the Church involved in this affair. As if to rub salt into the wound, the march to Missouri even aggravated the problems of the saints living there. Spurred to action by rumors that the saints were planning an invasion and a massacre of the citizens of Jackson County, some of the Missourians prepared for war, thereby intensifying antagonism against the saints.

Though Zion's Camp failed to help the Missouri saints regain their lands and was marked by some dissension, apostasy, and unfavorable publicity, many members of the Church recognized positive results from the journey. Through the act of volunteering, the members demonstrated their faith in a living prophet and their interest and concern for the exiled saints in Missouri by traveling to their assistance and taking them money and supplies.

Also, the journey to Missouri proved to be a test to determine those who could best serve in positions of ecclesiastical leadership. On Sunday, February 8, 1835, Joseph Smith invited Brigham Young and his brother Joseph Young to meet with him in his Kirtland home. He told Brigham Young that he was to be one of the twelve special witnesses who were "to open the door of the gospel to foreign nations." Then he said to Joseph Young, "Brother Joseph, the Lord has made you President of the Seventies."

He further instructed these men to call a meeting of all brethren. The following Saturday, February 14, members of the priesthood crowded into the new schoolhouse next to the rising temple and listened to instructions from the Prophet. He told the men of Zion's Camp who were present that God had not "designed" all their trials and suffering "for nothing." "It was the will of God," he stated, "that those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard." In February 1835, two new quorums, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (who were chosen by the three Book of Mormon witnesses) and the First Quorum of the Seventy, were organized. Into these quorums were placed many of the men who had sacrificed by marching west with Zion's Camp. In fact, nine of the original twelve Apostles called in 1835, all seven presidents of the First Council of the Seventy, and all other sixty-three original members of that quorum had served in the army of Israel that marched to western Missouri in 1834.

The most enduring legacy of Zion's Camp was that it provided valuable training and experience for members of the Church. That the leaders benefited from this experience is evident by their application of the principles they learned while they later marched west under the direction of Brigham Young. The practical training and knowledge derived from participation in Zion's Camp was not considered by many of the men to be as valuable as the spiritual benefits they received during the march to Missouri. Many declared that they were blessed abundantly as they traveled under the direction and tutelage of the Prophet.

For some participants, Zion's Camp was a failure. For many others, it was one of the most challenging, rewarding, and faith-promoting experiences of their journey through life.

As we will soon learn, once Joseph is back in Kirtland, he will be commanded by the Lord to continue to raise funds for the purchase of land in Jackson and other counties in Missouri (see D&C 105:28-29). Also the saints in Missouri will continue to petition the courts and legislature of that state for restitution of their losses. Missouri's Governor Dunklin stated at that time, "As yet none has been punished for these outrages, and it is believed that under our present laws, conviction for any violence committed against a Mormon cannot be had in Jackson County." Then with obvious circular reasoning, Governor Dunklin further said, "Your only remedy for injuries done must be in and through the courts of justice" (*HC*, 2:172, 178).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 105 Zion's Camp Disbanded

D&C 105:5 And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.

1 Verily I say unto you who have assembled yourselves together that you may learn my will concerning the redemption of mine afflicted people—

verse 1 “mine afflicted people” The Missouri saints.

2 Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now.

verse 2 “the transgressions of my people” This should not be limited to the Missouri saints alone. The Lord had originally requested five hundred volunteers from Kirtland and the East for the Zion’s Camp march, and Joseph had set out originally with barely one hundred. There had been complaining and contentions among members of Zion’s Camp along the way, leading eventually to the scourge of cholera as punishment. Both the Missouri and the Kirtland churches had been warned in previous revelations about their sins (see D&C 95:2-6; 98:19-21; 101:2, 6-8, 50).

3 But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

verse 3 “and do not impart of their substance” The primary transgression which has prevented the saints from redeeming Zion is their failure to live the celestial law of consecration by giving of their substance for the benefit of the poor among them. Because this is a basic requirement for establishing Zion, the Missouri properties cannot be “redeemed” (verse 2) based on any other principles (see verse 5).

One incident related by Heber C. Kimball, a member of Zion’s Camp, illustrates the selfishness of some of the Missouri saints:

While we were here [Clay County, Missouri], the brethren being in want of some refreshment, Brother Luke Johnson went to Brother Burgett to get a fowl, asking him for one to make a broth for Elder Wilcox and others; but Brother Burgett denied him it, saying “in a few days we expect to return back into Jackson County, and I shall want them when I get there.” When Brother Johnson returned he was so angry at Burgett for refusing him, he said, “I have a great mind to take my rifle and go back and shoot his horse.” I told Luke to never mind, that such actions never fail to bring their reward.

Judge how we felt, after having left the society of our beloved families, taking our lives in our hands and traveling about one thousand miles through scenes of suffering and sorrow, for the benefit of our brethren, and after all to be denied of a small fowl to make a little soup for brethren in the agonies of death. Such things never fail to bring their reward, and it would do well for the saints never to turn away a brother who is penniless and in want, or a stranger, lest they may one day or other want a friend themselves (*Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 62).

4 And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;

verse 4 “are not united” Compare D&C 38:27: “And if ye are not one ye are not mine.”

5 And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.

verses 1-5 Zion can only be built up according to the principles of the law of consecration—the “celestial law.” Two principles of this celestial law, which the saints were not living (and because they were not living them they were prevented from establishing Zion at that time), were unity and caring for the poor and unfortunate.

6 And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer.

verse 6 “my people must needs be chastened” “Chastened” should be understood here to mean partly “corrected by punishment” but also “purified from errors or faults.” The emphasis here is not on the punishment the saints are to receive, but on their intended correction and their purification from error. There are times when the path to being more like God leads us of necessity through suffering for our mistakes, yet God’s primary concern is not that we be punished, but that we be corrected. Still, the primary goal of bringing about repentance is often assisted by punishment which God administers in love to those whom he loves.

7 I speak not concerning those who are appointed to lead my people, who are the first elders of my church, for they are not all under this condemnation;

verse 7 “the first elders of my church” Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery are not among the transgressors (see D&C 20:2).

8 But I speak concerning my churches abroad—there are many who will say: Where is their God? Behold, he will deliver them in time of trouble, otherwise we will not go up unto Zion, and will keep our moneys.

verse 8 “churches abroad” This is the usual designation for congregations outside of Kirtland, Ohio.

“Where is their God?” The Lord addresses the skepticism of those Latter-day Saints who are waiting to see whether or not God will redeem Zion before they will commit their money to Zion’s Camp or to the larger interests of establishing Zion at all. This, of course, is backwards. While it might make good sense in the logic of Babylon, in the Lord’s economy the blessings only come after the trail of one’s faith or after much tribulation (see D&C 58:4; Ether 12:6).

9 Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion—

verse 9 “mine elders should wait for a little season” This is the statement that fell so hard onto the ears of the members of Zion's Camp. The redemption of Zion must wait a “little season.”

10 That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands.

verse 10 The Lord is ready for the redemption of Zion, but the Church is inadequately prepared.

It may be said that there are eight requirements that must be met before we, as a Church, will be allowed to establish Zion. This verse lists three: 1. be better prepared; 2. be taught more perfectly; and 3. have greater experience in living the gospel. The others are: 4. we must be endowed with power from on high (verse 11); 5. become a great army of people (verse 31), 6. become sanctified (verse 31); 7. learn obedience (verses 3, 6); and 8. become united (verse 4).

As an interesting exercise, compare the saints of that day with the ones of today using these eight items as criteria. You should conclude that we have made much headway in all areas.

11 And this cannot be brought to pass until mine elders are endowed with power from on high.

verse 11 “endowed with power from on high” Aside from the collective unfaithfulness of the saints at that time, another great difficulty facing the elders in trying to redeem Zion was their lack of knowledge of the power to be received in the house of the Lord. The Kirtland Temple would be dedicated in March 1836, at which time some of the ordinances of the temple will be available to these elders and church leaders. Thus, the “little season” (verse 13) was originally a two-year period during which the elders would wait for certain ordinances in the Kirtland Temple before Zion could be redeemed. However, further transgressions will cause that little season to be extended until “after many days,” when the Lord will accomplish all things pertaining to Zion (verse 37).

12 For behold, I have prepared a great endowment and blessing to be poured out upon them, inasmuch as they are faithful and continue in humility before me.

verses 11-12 “a great endowment” Before Zion can be reestablished, the saints needed an endowment from on high—perhaps the temple ordinances or the keys of the priesthood to be received in the Kirtland Temple (see also verses 18 and 33).

13 Therefore it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion.

verse 13 “it is expedient in me” One of the definitions of *expedient* in *Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* is, “Useful; profitable.”

14 For behold, I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for, as I said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfil—I will fight your battles.

verse 14 “I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion” The Lord tells the elders of Zion’s Camp that at this time he does not require them to fight in Missouri. Most members of Zion’s Camp were grateful that the Lord had accepted their offering and that they did not have to fight. However, a few, caught up in the spirit of war and bloodshed, were disappointed, and some even apostatized when the Camp was disbanded without fighting.

“I will fight your battles” The Lord had promised the saints ten months earlier in D&C 98:37 that he would fight their battles.

15 Behold, the destroyer I have sent forth to destroy and lay waste mine enemies; and not many years hence they shall not be left to pollute mine heritage, and to blaspheme my name upon the lands which I have consecrated for the gathering together of my saints.

verse 15 “the destroyer I have sent forth” The Lord had already set in motion the historical events that would lead to the destructions prophesied upon his enemies. There would still be a process of “many years” during which the saints would seek out and exhaust in vain all the legal remedies of the nation (see D&C 101:85-89; see also the introductory commentary for section 87). Nevertheless, the eventual outcome of the struggle is sure when the Lord fights one’s battles. He will eventually do so, and Zion will be established.

16 Behold, I have commanded my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., to say unto the strength of my house, even my warriors, my young men, and middle-aged, to gather together for the redemption of my people, and throw down the towers of mine enemies, and scatter their watchmen;

verse 16 The Lord’s reference here is to D&C 101:43-62 (especially verses 55-57) which is the parable of the nobleman’s vineyard which, inadequately protected due to the failure of the watchmen to build a tower, is invaded by the enemy causing the nobleman’s servants to flee (this is a parable of the saints in Independence who had failed to build a temple as they had been commanded). We will learn in the following verse that these “young men, and middle-aged,” the strength of the Church, commanded to establish and protect the vineyard, have not as yet responded to the Lord’s command.

17 But the strength of mine house have not hearkened unto my words.

verse 17 Taken all together, the Church had not obeyed sufficiently to redeem Zion at this time. When the Lord requested five hundred men, he eventually got two hundred, but only one hundred and five set out from Kirtland in early May. Many in the Church were waiting to see how Zion's Camp turned out before contributing their money (see verse 8), and even if the governor had supported the saints in returning to Jackson County, the Lord would not allow Zion to be redeemed until the saints learned to impart of their substance to the poor and afflicted among them (see verses 3, 5).

18 But inasmuch as there are those who have hearkened unto my words, I have prepared a blessing and an endowment for them, if they continue faithful.

19 I have heard their prayers, and will accept their offering; and it is expedient in me that they should be brought thus far for a trial of their faith.

verses 18-19 Nevertheless, there were a sufficient number of faithful saints for the Lord to accept their offering as part for the whole. Zion might not be redeemed at this time, but the endowment of power from on high might still be given—if they continued faithful. These faithful saints, like the patriarchs of old, had been tested with a trial of their faith. Among the blessings that followed the suffering of Zion's Camp were the preparatory ordinances of the Kirtland Temple. Also, nine of the original Quorum of the Twelve and all of the First Quorum of the Seventy would be called from those who volunteered for Zion's Camp. A further blessing that is sometimes overlooked is that the elders were not required to fight any battles or to shed blood.

The Lord reserves a special blessing of “power from on high” for those who strive most valiantly. This special blessing is given today as the “endowment” for those who keep their most sacred and most difficult covenants entered into in the temple. The temple in Kirtland was a preparatory temple and all the covenants now available in our temple were not available then. The experience of the Zion's Camp march was thought to be an exercise in valiance similar to successfully keeping one's temple covenants. Some of the endowment of power would be received by those who participated valiantly in the Zion's Camp March. Also some of this endowment would obviously be available to those who participated in the ordinances of the Kirtland Temple (see verse 33). For a discussion of the endowment of “power from on high,” see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 18, *The Temple*.

20 And now, verily I say unto you, a commandment I give unto you, that as many as have come up hither, that can stay in the region round about, let them stay;

verse 20 “let them stay” It should perhaps be noted that even though the Kirtland Temple was yet to be finished and the Church would yet receive important ordinances there, the geographical center of the Church had clearly shifted to the west.

The Lord commands that those members of Zion's Camp who wished to remain in Missouri should be allowed to do so.

21 And those that cannot stay, who have families in the east, let them tarry for a little season, inasmuch as my servant Joseph shall appoint unto them;

22 For I will counsel him concerning this matter, and all things whatsoever he shall appoint unto them shall be fulfilled.

23 And let all my people who dwell in the regions round about be very faithful, and prayerful, and humble before me, and reveal not the things which I have revealed unto them, until it is wisdom in me that they should be revealed.

verse 23 “**reveal not the things which I have revealed unto them**” The Church in Jackson County had made some rather foolish public relations errors that contributed to their being driven out of that place. Here the Lord counsels the saints in Clay County and elsewhere in Missouri to be more wise in what they say to the “old settlers” about the future of Zion.

24 Talk not of judgments, neither boast of faith nor of mighty works, but carefully gather together, as much in one region as can be, consistently with the feelings of the people;

verse 24 “**Talk not of judgments**” The Lord commands the saints to practice good public relations and avoid arousing negative feelings among the people of the region. Certainly, few things would be more frightening to the old settlers than talk of “judgments” or “mighty works” misinterpreted as threats from the saints aimed at the non-Latter-day Saint population of Missouri. Here the Lord instructs his saints to be non-threatening in their conversation and behavior toward those not of their faith.

25 And behold, I will give unto you favor and grace in their eyes, that you may rest in peace and safety, while you are saying unto the people: Execute judgment and justice for us according to law, and redress us of our wrongs.

verses 25-28 “**I will give unto you favor and grace in their eyes**” The Lord counsels the Missouri saints not to brag about doctrinal plans for the redemption of Zion, so as not to antagonize the Missourians. They should “keep it under their hats” until the time is right. If the saints will only be wise and prudent in their public relations, the Lord will bless them with peace and safety. This policy will also allow Joseph and the Church time to prosper and accomplish the purposes of Zion by peaceful means, while at the same time collecting the strength to provide security for the Church in the exercise of its rights. The army of Israel is not for conquest, for the Lord fights Israel's battles (see D&C 98:37; 105:14). Rather, the army is only for security in the exercise of Israel's rights (see verse 30).

26 Now, behold, I say unto you, my friends, in this way you may find favor in the eyes of the people, until the army of Israel becomes very great.

27 And I will soften the hearts of the people, as I did the heart of Pharaoh, from time to time, until my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and mine elders, whom I have appointed, shall have time to gather up the strength of my house,

28 And to have sent wise men, to fulfil that which I have commanded concerning the purchasing of all the lands in Jackson county that can be purchased, and in the adjoining counties round about.

29 For it is my will that these lands should be purchased; and after they are purchased that my saints should possess them according to the laws of consecration which I have given.

verses 28-29 Even after the saints had been driven from Jackson County by mobs, and even after Zion's Camp had marched to Clay County under arms, the Lord still insists that the only way property shall be acquired for Zion is by legal purchase. This restates his instructions to the saints first delivered in July 1831 in D&C 57:4 and often repeated (see, for example, D&C 58:37, 49-52; 63:27-30; 101:70-71).

verses 30-32 These verses express long-term millennial goals and prophecies of the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth.

30 And after these lands are purchased, I will hold the armies of Israel guiltless in taking possession of their own lands, which they have previously purchased with their moneys, and of throwing down the towers of mine enemies that may be upon them, and scattering their watchmen, and avenging me of mine enemies unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

verse 30 The Lord assures the members of Zion's Camp and the saints in general that the Church will eventually acquire sufficient lands in Jackson County on which to found Zion, that he will hold the saints guiltless for their failures in establishing Zion (see the parable in D&C 101:43-62), and that he will fight the saints' battles for them.

31 But first let my army become very great, and let it be sanctified before me, that it may become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon, and that her banners may be terrible unto all nations;

32 That the kingdoms of this world may be constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ; therefore, let us become subject unto her laws.

33 Verily I say unto you, it is expedient in me that the first elders of my church should receive their endowment from on high in my house, which I have commanded to be built unto my name in the land of Kirtland.

verse 33 “the first elders of my church should receive their endowment from on high in my house” See the commentary for verse 11.

34 And let those commandments which I have given concerning Zion and her law be executed and fulfilled, after her redemption.

35 There has been a day of calling, but the time has come for a day of choosing; and let those be chosen that are worthy.

verse 35 “a day of calling . . . a day of choosing” To be “called” is to have been foreordained in the premortal existence to keep the Lord’s commandments and labor in his earthly kingdom. Thus, the “day of calling” is that premortal day in which spirit hands were laid on the heads of the potential future leaders in the Lord’s earthly kingdom. To be “chosen” is to have performed one’s stewardship so faithfully that the individual is eventually sealed up to their exaltation in the celestial kingdom (see also D&C 121:34-37 and the commentary for those verses). Thus, the “day of choosing” is imminent, the day of the great final judgment. In a more limited sense, the “day of choosing” will also occur when the prophet Joseph selects those Missouri saints who are worthy to receive the ordinances of the Kirtland Temple when it is completed (see verse 36).

36 And it shall be manifest unto my servant, by the voice of the Spirit, those that are chosen; and they shall be sanctified;

verse 36 “it shall be manifest unto my servant” On June 23, 1834, the day after section 105 was received, Joseph Smith assembled a council of Missouri high priests and selected fifteen to travel to Kirtland to receive ordinances when the temple is completed there. They were Edward Partridge, William W. Phelps, Isaac Morley, John Corrill, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, A. Sidney Gilbert, Peter Whitmer Jr., Simeon Carter, Newel Knight, Parley P. Pratt, Christian Whitmer, Solomon Hancock, Thomas B. March, and Lyman Wight.

37 And inasmuch as they follow the counsel which they receive, they shall have power after many days to accomplish all things pertaining to Zion.

verse 37 “after many days” Even when faithful saints have been endowed with power from on high, the Lord reveals that it will still be after many days that all things pertaining to Zion will be accomplished.

38 And again I say unto you, sue for peace, not only to the people that have smitten you, but also to all people;

verse 38 “sue for peace” To sue, in this context, means to appeal, woo, or court.

39 And lift up an ensign of peace, and make a proclamation of peace unto the ends of the earth;

40 And make proposals for peace unto those who have smitten you, according to the voice of the Spirit which is in you, and all things shall work together for your good.

verses 39-40 Note the irony of the Lord's closing this revelation on Zion's Camp with these two verses. The armed force of saints were sent to Missouri to redeem the persecuted saints there by force if necessary. But here, the Lord closes this revelation with a commandment to seek and proclaim peace.

41 Therefore, be faithful; and behold, and lo, I am with you even unto the end. Even so. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1834 November

During the month of November, Oliver Cowdery's oldest brother, Warren, was called by revelation to be branch president of the small branch where he lived in Freedom, New York [**D&C 106 - Warren A. Cowdery**].

Section 106 Warren A. Cowdery

Among Joseph's labors during the summer of 1834, he worked with his own hands quarrying stone for the Kirtland Temple. On October 16, he undertook a month-long mission to Michigan, returning to Kirtland in late November. Joseph's greatest ecclesiastical concern during this time seems to have been for the preparation and training of church leaders. When construction of the Kirtland printing office was finished (D&C 94:10), a room was set apart specifically for "the school." This School of the Elders (sometimes called the "School of the Prophets") was designed to train the elders for their ministries and to prepare them for ordinances in the Kirtland Temple. No initiatory ordinances, however, were actually performed at these meetings. It was in this School of the Elders that the *Lectures on Faith* were first delivered to the Church. The Prophet wrote of this month of preparation as follows: "No month ever found me more busily engaged than November; but as my life consisted of activity and unyielding exertions, I made this my rule: When the Lord commands, do it. . . . I continued my labors daily, preparing for the school [of the Elders], and received the following" [section 106]. Two copies of section 106, neither of which is the original, exist in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. These both state that the revelation was received on November 25, 1834, at Kirtland, Ohio. By this time it been roughly five months since the Prophet Joseph had received section 105 and disbanded Zion's Camp.

Earlier in 1834, actually in March, Joseph Smith and others had traveled through western New York State preaching the gospel and gathering volunteers and donations for the Zion's Camp march. Joseph was warmly received in the small town of Freedom in Cattaraugus County. He therefore organized a branch of the Church there.

Section 106 was directed to Warren A. Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery's oldest brother who lived in Freedom, Cattaraugus County, New York. Oliver had eight brothers and sisters in all. Warren was about eighteen years older than Oliver and had been born and reared in Freedom. Warren was the first postmaster in Freedom, and he also practiced medicine there and ran the local apothecary. He had lived in Freedom forty-three years when he joined the Church.

This revelation appoints Brother Cowdery to be the presiding high priest or branch president of the small branch in Freedom. He moved with his family to Kirtland in 1836 where he served briefly as a scribe for the Church. He was one of the twenty-seven scribes or amanuenses that Joseph used during his term as prophet. In 1837 he, along with Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Warren Parrish, assisted in writing the prayer for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. He left the Church in 1838, as did his brother Oliver, but there is no record of his returning to the Church as did Oliver. He died February 23, 1851, in Kirtland, still out of harmony with the Church.

An interesting note is that Warren Cowdery's son, Hervey, in 1836, lived with Joseph and Emma as an indentured servant. While at the Smith's, he worked for them, and in return received his board, room, and education.

1 It is my will that my servant Warren A. Cowdery should be appointed and ordained a presiding high priest over my church, in the land of Freedom and the regions round about;

verse 1 “a presiding high priest over my church” Warren is called to preside over the Church in his hometown and also in the surrounding territories. In this respect, he was more like a district or mission president than a modern bishop or branch president. A conference held in his area the following April included fifteen different branches. Warren is also called to minister to the needs of the local branch in Freedom and the saints in the surrounding area.

2 And should preach my everlasting gospel, and lift up his voice and warn the people, not only in his own place, but in the adjoining counties;

3 And devote his whole time to this high and holy calling, which I now give unto him, seeking diligently the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and all things necessary shall be added thereunto; for the laborer is worthy of his hire.

verse 3 “devote his whole time” Brother Cowdery's call was to full-time service in the Church. As this would make it impossible for him to support his family through his previous occupation(s), he was from the time of this calling, to be supported by the Church.

“the laborer is worthy of his hire” The Lord does not ask for full-time service that will leave the worker destitute. Elder Bruce R. McConkie observed: “In the true church we neither preach for hire nor divine for money. . . . All our service in God's kingdom is predicated on his eternal law which states: ‘The laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish’ (2 Nephi 26:31). We know full well that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and that those who devote all their time to the building up of the kingdom must be provided with food, clothing, shelter, and the necessities of life. We must employ teachers in our schools, architects to design our temples, contractors to build our synagogues, and managers to run our businesses. But those so employed, along with the whole membership of the Church, participate also on a freewill and voluntary basis in otherwise furthering the Lord's work” (CR, April 1975, 77).

4 And again, verily I say unto you, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night—

verse 4 “a thief in the night” The themes of night and day, or dark and light, in this verse and the next may refer as much to the spiritual condition of those alive upon

the earth at the second coming of the Savior as to the time of his arrival. The wicked are always asleep in the dark. They are even in the dark at noonday (D&C 95:5-6). Thus Paul says, "It is high time to awake out of sleep" (Romans 13:11), and "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the [spiritually] dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14).

5 Therefore, gird up your loins, that you may be the children of light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief.

verse 5 "children of light" Those who have obeyed the gospel are entitled to the Holy Ghost which enlightens their minds. They will spiritually comprehend the signs of the times and are wise enough to continue to live in accordance with the gospel light. The coming of the Lord will not overtake them as does a thief who succeeds under cover of darkness, when people are not prepared for him. The source of all light is the Savior himself (D&C 88:6-13).

"that day shall not overtake you as a thief" The world will neither expect nor be prepared for Christ's second coming. However, the children of light, though they may not know the exact hour or day, will be living in such a way that they are prepared for his coming at all times. When that day comes, they will not need a wakeup call, a timeout, or even a few moments notice to repent and prepare themselves to meet the Lord. They will already be awake, dressed "in robes of righteousness," and ready for the Bridegroom (D&C 109:76).

6 And again, verily I say unto you, there was joy in heaven when my servant Warren bowed to my scepter, and separated himself from the crafts of men;

verse 6 "joy in heaven" The term "bowed to my scepter" means that he accepted the gospel and joined the Church. This verse suggests that angels are aware of our individual lives and choices and that they have a strong interest in our success (compare Matthew 18:10; Luke 15:10; D&C 62:3). In the same manner, God and the heavens wept at the choices of the disobedient in the days of Enoch and Noah (Moses 7:28-29), and they undoubtedly weep or rejoice at individual choices made today.

"the crafts of men" This expression is likely meant in the negative sense, that is, priestcrafts.

7 Therefore, blessed is my servant Warren, for I will have mercy on him; and, notwithstanding the vanity of his heart, I will lift him up inasmuch as he will humble himself before me.

verse 7 "the vanity of his heart" He is called to his position in spite of his imperfection. This is certainly true of all of us that are called to positions in the Church. In this particular instance, perhaps the Lord identifies a specific weakness that will

eventually lead to his spiritual downfall, as described in the introductory comments for this section.

8 And I will give him grace and assurance wherewith he may stand; and if he continue to be a faithful witness and a light unto the church I have prepared a crown for him in the mansions of my Father. Even so. Amen.

verse 8 “if he continue to be a faithful witness” Warren is given a conditional promise of exaltation similar to the one each of us has from the Lord.

Section 107 Priesthood and Church Government

Section 107 is one of the great revelations of this dispensation. It is the most important revelation having to do with priesthood and church government.

Before reading this background material and before commencing your study of section 107, try taking, just for fun, the following Pre-Quiz for section 107. It will test your knowledge of priesthood and church government. All of the answers to this quiz will be contained in the material that follows.

Pre-Quiz for Section 107

1. Who chose the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation?
2. Name the eight offices that have been in the Melchizedek priesthood since the gospel's restoration (be careful with this question—it is tricky).
3. What is the official title for the President of the Church?
4. Name the four offices in the Aaronic Priesthood.
5. Name the eight priesthood quorums in our current Church government (also name one that formerly existed but does not currently exist).
6. What is the difference between a quorum and a council?
7. Name the ten ruling councils in our Church government.
8. Name the three standing or permanent disciplinary councils (courts) in the Church.
9. Which members of the Church may not be tried in one of the standing courts? In which special court must some be tried?
10. Name the “supreme court(s)” in the Church, or those from which no appeal is possible.
11. What are the possible decisions that can be rendered by a Church court or disciplinary council?

In a Kirtland High Council meeting on January 18, 1835, Joseph announced that the time had come to choose the Twelve Apostles, and on February 8, Joseph instructed Brigham and Joseph Young to call a conference the following Saturday, February 14, 1835. The conference on that day was attended by all of the participants of Zion's Camp who lived close enough to Kirtland to attend. From this group of Zion's Camp participants nine of the twelve members of the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation were chosen by the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon—Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and David Whitmer. The three members of the first Quorum of Twelve that had not served on the Zion's Camp march were William McLellin, John Boynton, and Thomas B. Marsh. Thomas Marsh was already in Missouri at the time of the march and did not have the opportunity to enlist. Recall that in section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord had given the Book of Mormon witnesses

the honor and commandment of eventually choosing the Quorum of the Twelve. That commandment was given six years previously in June 1829.

The men selected for the first Quorum of the Twelve were all equal in authority, but at a later time Joseph designated the order of seniority in which they should sit in council. He placed them according to age, from the eldest to the youngest. Thus, according to age, the men comprising this first Quorum of the Twelve were: Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, William E. McLellin, Parley P. Pratt, Luke Johnson, William Smith, Orson Pratt, John F. Boynton, and Lyman E. Johnson.

On February 28, 1835, two weeks after the selection of the Twelve, Joseph Smith called the First Quorum of the Seventy with their seven presidents. These were all chosen from among those who had participated in Zion's Camp. According to one of those selected, Joseph Young, Joseph Smith later said to the elders in Kirtland concerning the purpose of Zion's Camp, "Brethren, some of you are angry with me because you did not fight in Missouri; but let me tell you, God did not want you to fight. He could not organize his kingdom with twelve men to open the gospel door to the nations of the earth, and with seventy men under their direction to follow in their tracks, unless he took them from a body of men who had offered their lives, and who had made as great a sacrifice as did Abraham. Now the Lord has got his Twelve and his Seventy, and there will be other quorums of Seventies called, who will make the sacrifice, and those who have not made their sacrifices and their offerings now, will make them hereafter" (*HC*, 2:182). Zion's Camp had not been about war at all (*D&C* 105:37-40). It had been about sacrifice, so that the highest quorums of the Church might be organized with men who had put all things in the Lord's hands.

When they were first called, this first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles scarcely knew what to do. It was a new calling to them. They had little concept of what an apostle should do, day to day. The Prophet met with them periodically and gave them instructions. In such a meeting held March 12, 1835, it was decided that the Twelve should leave for a mission through the eastern states to the Atlantic coast and hold conferences with the several branches of the Church en route. It was further decided that they should leave for this mission on May 4.

In anticipation of this mission, the Twelve presented a letter to Joseph on March 28, 1835, requesting that he inquire of the Lord on their behalf, so that they might have a special revelation to take with them on their journey. They wanted to be able to draw comfort from this revelation while they were away from Kirtland. In their letter, they wrote, "The time when we are about to separate is near; and when we shall meet again, God only knows; we therefore feel to ask of him whom we have acknowledged to be our Prophet and Seer, that he inquire of God for us, and obtain a revelation, (if consistent) that we may look upon it when we are separated, that our heart may be comforted. Our worthiness has not inspired us to make this request, but our unworthiness. We have

unitedly asked God, our heavenly Father, to grant unto us through his Seer, a revelation of his mind and will concerning our duty the coming season, even a great revelation, that will enlarge our hearts, comfort us in adversity, and brighten our hopes amidst the powers of darkness” (*HC*, 2:209-10).

As a consequence of this request, Joseph did inquire of the Lord, and on March 28, 1835, most of section 107 was received. Actually section 107 is a composite of at least five separate revelations. Verses 1 through 52 and 56 through 58 as well as 78 through 87 were received on March 28, 1835. Verses 53 through 55 were part of the “patriarchal” blessing Joseph gave to his father on December 18, 1833. Verses 59 through 69a, 71, 72, 74, 75, 89, 91, 92, 99, and 100 were all received during the conferences held a few years previously in November 1831 (during these same conferences, sections 1, 67, 68, 69, 70, and 133 were also received). Verses 90 and 93 through 98 are about the Seventy. Joseph made public in January 1835 that he had received a vision about the Seventy, and we may assume that these verses came from that vision. Verses 69b and 70, 73, 76, 77, and 88 are about bishops and their duties. We don’t know when Joseph received this portion of the revelation, but it was some time after November 1831. Church organization has developed line upon line since its organization in 1830. Even the office of apostle was not completed until the final keys were restored by Moses, Elias, Elijah, and the Savior in 1836 (see section 110). Undoubtedly the entire restoration of priesthood organization is still being completed. An example is the re-organization of the First Quorum of the Seventy as General Authorities by President Spencer W. Kimball with the Lord’s inspiration in 1975 and the subsequent continued addition of Quorums of the Seventy.

Section 107 was the beginning of the “quorum” in the Church (more about the “quorum” below). By February 1835 there were a few ordained offices in the priesthood, but there were no quorums as yet.

Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote an interesting overview of Section 107:

On that day The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints received a revelation which is one of the most remarkable documents in the possession of man. It stands absolutely unique; there is none like it. . . . It sets forth in plainness and simplicity, the organization of the quorums of the priesthood; the mutual relations of the quorums to one another; the judicial system of the Church is foreshadowed and outlined; and there is a wonderful picture of the early priesthood. I doubt whether any other such documents, of the same small extent, the same few number of words, lies at the foundation of any other great human institution. . . . It is so comprehensive in its brevity, so magnificent in its simplicity, that we have found no occasions, up to the present, to wish that it might have been more complete (*CR*, April 1935, 80-81).

It is suggested that the reader may wish to review *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 12, *Priesthood* before studying this section. Particular attention should be paid, in that article, to the specific uses of the word *priesthood*.

For our study of section 107, we will not follow the verses in the usual numerical sequence. Rather, we will follow a subject outline, and the verses that pertain to each individual subject will be considered as they pertain to that subject. Each verse in section will be considered, and a few verses will be considered twice, if the verse seems to pertain to more than one outline topic. In a few instances, the verse and its commentary will simply be repeated.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 107 Priesthood and Church Government

D&C 107:99-100 Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand.

The outline for section 107 begins here:

1. The Two Priesthoods (verses 1-7)

The work to be done in the kingdom of God may be divided into the spiritual and the temporal. As someone said in jest, “Someone has to lay on hands, and someone has to fertilize the fitzers.” The Melchizedek Priesthood administers in spiritual matters, while the Aaronic Priesthood has charge of the temporal affairs of the Church. Even the work of the Aaronic Priesthood is, in a very real sense, spiritual work—it is God’s work (D&C 29:34).

1 There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood.

verse 1 “two priesthoods” The use of the word *priesthoods* refers to the group of men or boys who have been given God’s authority or authorization to labor in his earthly kingdom.

We may figuratively represent the amount of authority inherent in each of the three priesthoods by drawing three concentric circles (all three circles share a common center point). The largest is the Melchizedek Priesthood, the next largest the Aaronic Priesthood, and the smallest, the Levitical Priesthood. We thus see that these priesthoods are not separate and distinct, but all are contained within the Melchizedek Priesthood. Just as there is only one God, so there is ultimately only one power of God—one priesthood.

Levi was the third son of Jacob and lived about 1700 BC. Aaron, Moses’ brother, was born of the tribe of Levi and lived about 1500 BC. Anciently, all the sons or descendants of Levi could hold the Levitical priesthood, but only the descendants of Aaron had the right to hold the Aaronic priesthood. The holders of the Aaronic Priesthood could preside in the Levitical priesthood. When the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood was taken away from Israel at Mount Sinai (D&C 84:25-27), a

lesser portion of it, the Aaronic Priesthood, was allowed to remain to administer the ordinances and performances of the law of Moses. Although the Old Testament sometimes equates priests with the Levites, a distinction was usually made anciently within the lesser priesthood (D&C 84:26) between Levites (anyone descended from the tribe of Levi) and priests, who were descended from Levi exclusively through the family of Aaron, the brother of Moses. A priest had to be descended from Aaron (Numbers 18:1). Thus, all Aaronic priests were Levites, but not all Levites were Aaronic priests. Levites were authorized to labor in the Temple as doorkeepers, singers, musicians, and so forth, but only those descended from Aaron (the Aaronic priests) would normally slay the sacrifices—although the Levites could flay, or skin, the slaughtered animals (2 Chronicles 29:34; 35:11). The ancient distinction between Aaronic priests and Levites might be described as similar to the distinction in the modern Church between priests on the one hand and deacons and teachers on the other.

2 Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest.

verse 2 “Melchizedek was such a great high priest” The biblical story of Melchizedek can be found in Genesis 14:18-20. To this short passage, the Prophet Joseph added his inspired translation, JST Genesis 14:25-40, which informs us that Melchizedek was a high priest after the order of Enoch and that as king of Salem he established peace and righteousness. Melchizedek was also known to the Book of Mormon prophet Alma, who described him as a type, or foreshadowing, of the coming Son of God, and who was the king of Salem and the prince of peace (see Alma 13:14-19). Melchizedek accomplished, after the Flood, what Enoch had accomplished before it—the sanctification of an entire people and the establishment of a physical Zion. He was, therefore, in this respect at least, the greatest high priest from Enoch to the coming of the Savior (Alma 13:19), even blessing, ordaining, and receiving tithes from Abraham (compare D&C 76:57).

3 Before his day it was called the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.

4 But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood.

verse 4 “to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name” See the commentary on D&C 63:61-62 which discusses the taking of the name of the Lord in vain. Before Melchizedek’s day the higher priesthood was called “The Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God.” It was subsequently named after the great high priest Melchizedek to avoid the too frequent repetition of the name of Deity.

Elder Matthias F. Cowley, commenting on this verse, said: “Let us stop and reflect upon that for a moment. It does not imply, when they called the priesthood after the order of the Son of God, that they did it irreverently, or that they were profaning the name of Deity: but the change was made ‘to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name.’ This ought to impress us with the sacredness that the Almighty places upon his holy name” (CR, October 1901, 16).

“the church, in ancient days” “Ancient days” here is the time between Melchizedek and Moses, when the Church, under the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, was organized upon the earth. Though Moses attempted to establish the Church and the fulness of the gospel among the children of Israel, they would not as a nation receive it (D&C 84:23-27) and were given the law of Moses in its place. According to the Prophet Joseph, “God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last [that is, highest] law from Moses. . . . The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law. . . . The law revealed to Moses in Horeb [that is the fulness of the gospel] never was revealed to the children of Israel as a nation” (HC, 5:555).

5 All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood.

verse 5 There is no legitimate authority to act for God upon the earth except the Melchizedek Priesthood and its appendages—the various callings within that priesthood. Thus, the president of the Church, holding all the keys of this priesthood, presides over and directs all the ordinances and activities of the Church and its members (verses 91-92). There can be no claim of exemption from the president’s authority, since there is no priesthood or authority upon the earth beyond that for which the president personally holds all the keys.

6 But there are two divisions or grand heads—one is the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood.

verse 6 “there are two divisions or grand heads” This verse is virtually a repeat of verse 1. In this verse, the Lord does not intend to say that there are three different kinds of priesthood, since “all priesthood is Melchizedek” (Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 509). Obviously, the Lord classifies the Aaronic and Levitical priesthoods as one, yet we know there are subtle differences (see verse 1 and its commentary).

7 The office of an elder comes under the priesthood of Melchizedek.

verse 7 “The office of an elder” An elder holds the Melchizedek Priesthood; there is no higher order of priesthood which he may subsequently receive. However, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder may be set apart for specific offices within the priesthood and may be given keys of the priesthood necessary for performance of his

duties in those offices. An apostle, for example, is an elder who has received a special calling and who holds with his quorum the keys of the kingdom.

2. Melchizedek Priesthood Authority (verses 8-12, 18-19)

As the Lord outlined the work to be done in the Church by the priesthood, he defined the various job assignments, and for each category of job assignments he created a different office in the two priesthoods.

There are six offices within the Melchizedek Priesthood: elder, high priest, patriarch, apostle, seventy (general or area authority), and president of the high priesthood of the Church (Prophet President of the Church). In the early history of the Church we had a seventh office in the Melchizedek Priesthood—that of “assistant president” of the Church. Only two men held that office, Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith. Also in the relatively recent past we had an eighth office, the office of seventy, who was a member of a stake quorum. It is of interest that the seventies were originally intended to be general authorities forming a quorum of equal authority with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve but serving under the First Presidency (see verses 24-26, 33). This is the role which they now occupy in the Church, though there was an interim period in the Church where the seventies were not general authorities, but rather were organized into stake quorums.

Each of these six officers today holds the same priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood, but each office implies a new special focus or responsibility within the Melchizedek Priesthood. There is also considerable overlap of responsibility. All of the offices have responsibility for temple and genealogical work, but the high priest is the specialist. The high priests have responsibility for welfare services, but the elder is considered the specialist.

8 The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things.

verse 8 “The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency” The right of presidency is roughly equivalent to holding the keys of the priesthood. It is the right to administer or direct the work of the Church, though “presidency” itself is not an exclusive right of the priesthood. For example, Relief Society and other auxiliary presidents in the Church need not personally hold the priesthood, though they operate under the direction of those who do.

The rights and powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood reside in the priesthood itself and do not flow from without the priesthood. Thus, an apostle, patriarch, high priest, seventy, or elder is each empowered by the same Melchizedek Priesthood and that priesthood is greater than any of its component parts or offices. All priesthood holders are subordinate to and operate under the direction of those who hold the keys

of the priesthood power. *Priesthood* is the authority to perform the work. *Keys* are the right to direct the work.

“to administer in spiritual things” “Spiritual things” are likely to be contrasted here with the “outward [or physical] ordinances” of the Aaronic Priesthood mentioned in verse 14. When divided (albeit roughly) into these two categories, spiritual things are quite literally those ordinances or performances that directly invoke the action of the Holy Spirit, whereas outward ordinances are physical tasks or performances. Thus, preparing and passing the sacrament are physical actions that may be performed by the Aaronic Priesthood. Bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost or sealing couples in marriage are ordinances requiring the operation of the Holy Spirit and must, therefore, be administered by the Melchizedek Priesthood.

9 The Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, have a right to officiate in all the offices in the church.

verse 9 “Presidency of the High Priesthood” This is the First Presidency of the Church. This term should not be understood to mean merely presidency over high priests, which would include every stake presidency. The “Presidency of the High Priesthood” is set over the whole of the high, or Melchizedek, Priesthood—including over all the apostles, seventies, patriarchs, high priests, and elders.

10 High priests after the order of the Melchizedek Priesthood have a right to officiate in their own standing, under the direction of the presidency, in administering spiritual things, and also in the office of an elder, priest (of the Levitical order), teacher, deacon, and member.

verse 10 “High priests” High priests have the right to officiate as presiding officers, or presiding high priests, over whatever stewardship the First Presidency may direct. Thus, mission presidents, stake presidents, area presidents, and so on, are—in terms of their priesthood authority—presiding officers, or presiding high priests.

“also in the office of an elder, priest (of the Levitical order), teacher, deacon, and member” This rather awkwardly-worded phrase seems to teach that the high priests also preside over elders, priests, teachers, deacons, and other members.

11 An elder has a right to officiate in his stead when the high priest is not present.

12 The high priest and elder are to administer in spiritual things, agreeable to the covenants and commandments of the church; and they have a right to officiate in all these offices of the church when there are no higher authorities present.

verse 12 “administer in spiritual things” See the commentary for verse 8.

verses 18-19 Note that these two verses are listed out of order, in keeping with the outline of section 107 we are following. This pattern, as already mentioned, will pertain to the remainder of the commentary on section 107.

18 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

verse 18 Only the Prophet President of the Church can exercise all of the keys of the kingdom, though most of the keys are held jointly with his counselors (see D&C 90:6 and its commentary). Actually, the president's counselors and the members of the Quorum of Twelve all hold most all of the keys but only exercise them by virtue of their association with the president. The president is the only man on earth who primarily exercises all of the keys of the priesthood. These keys make possible the blessings enumerated in the following verse.

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

3. Aaronic Priesthood Authority (verses 13-17, 20)

The job assignments or offices in the Aaronic Priesthood are four: deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop.

The specific scriptural callings of the deacons, teachers, and priests are found in D&C 20:46-59.

The bishop is president of the priests' quorum in each ward.

13 The second priesthood is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations.

verse 13 "conferred upon Aaron and his seed" Descendants of Aaron held the lesser priesthood not only by calling and ordination bestowed upon a righteous individual, but rather by right of birth. Aaronic priests were not required to enter into an "oath and covenant" agreement with the Lord as do Melchizedek priesthood holders today (Hebrews 7:21), though they were washed, anointed, clothed, and consecrated to the Lord's service (Leviticus 8:1-36; Exodus 28:41).

14 Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances.

verse 14 The priesthood of Aaron has power in administering the "outward" or temporal ordinances of the Church (baptism, sacrament). The term "lesser priesthood"

is found in scripture only in the Doctrine and Covenants. Since “all priesthood is Melchizedek,” the *lesser* priesthood is a limited form of the Melchizedek Priesthood and is therefore “an appendage” to it, adapted to the physical or “outward” ordinances of the preparatory gospel known as the law of Moses (verses 10, 14, 20; D&C 84:26-27).

15 The bishopric is the presidency of this priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same.

verse 15 A bishop is an office in the Aaronic Priesthood (D&C 68:14-21). The one who holds the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood in all the Church, under the direction of the First Presidency, is the Presiding Bishop of the Church, and it is this office that is described here. Locally, the bishop of a ward, under the direction of the stake president, holds the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood in that ward and is the president of the ward’s priests’ quorum. Normally, those with callings in a ward bishopric are high priests who, by virtue of being high priests, may also function in the offices of the lesser priesthood (verses 10, 17). The ward bishop also presides over the Melchizedek Priesthood holders in his ward. Nevertheless, a male firstborn descendant of Aaron has the legal right to serve as the Presiding Bishop of the Church and president of the Aaronic Priesthood—the equivalent of the ancient Jewish high priest. This privilege does not apply to the position of a ward bishop, however.

16 No man has a legal right to this office, to hold the keys of this priesthood, except he be a literal descendant of Aaron.

17 But as a high priest of the Melchizedek Priesthood has authority to officiate in all the lesser offices, he may officiate in the office of bishop when no literal descendant of Aaron can be found, provided he is called and set apart and ordained unto this power by the hands of the Presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

20 The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments.

verse 20 “The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood” The Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys of the ministering of angels, such as the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, and to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Under the auspices of the lesser priesthood, Israel as a nation was entitled to be visited by angels and to live a preparatory gospel that lacked the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood and its keys. A comparison of this verse with D&C 84:25-27 suggests that the “letter of the gospel” mentioned in this verse might be the preparatory gospel of repentance, baptism, and the law of carnal commandments (that is, the do’s and don’ts of the law of Moses). Note that the lesser

priesthood has no authority to perform confirmations, sealings, or other higher ordinances and receives no oath from God concerning the powers of godliness or the gift of eternal lives as does the Melchizedek Priesthood. Therefore, the lesser priesthood cannot offer the hope of exaltation in the kingdom of God.

“agreeable to the covenants and commandments” That is, in accordance with the previous revelations and particularly with the Articles and Covenants of the Church as contained in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

4. Priesthood Councils (verses 27-32)

The Kingdom of God on the earth is a kingdom of law and order. God is the law giver and supreme judge, but he has delegated authority and the necessary keys to the leaders of his ruling councils.

In the early years of the Church, no distinction was made between a quorum and a council. Today we say that a quorum is simply a body of the priesthood bearers, but a council is an administrative, decision-making body of priesthood bearers called together under the direction of a priesthood president or a key holder. Councils exist for the discussion and regulation of church affairs. They decide matters of policy or discipline.

In these verses the “quorums” referred to are the Quorum of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) are also priesthood councils. Examples of other priesthood councils are: all quorum presidencies, stake presidencies, and the stake high councils. Keep in mind, however, that to function as a council, the stake high council must include the stake president. There is no priesthood council without a divinely appointed key holder at its head.

These verses indicate the three requirements for proper decision making in the Church’s councils:

1. Unanimity. The unanimity does not come from compulsion or duress in any form. It comes from universal agreement and common consent to righteous principles as facilitated by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost. Elder Boyd Packer, speaking of the regular weekly meetings of the council that consists of of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles, said: “. . . the decisions of this council are not consummated unless they are unanimous. They must be unanimous or there is no decision” (Fall Faculty Workshop, BYU 1973, 5-6).

2. The presence of a majority (half plus one) of the council members is required. Again, decisions are not made by majorities—there must be unanimity—but a majority of the council’s members must be present. This majority may function as a council—assuming the presence of its president or someone with the authority of its president—is present.

3. The council must function “in all righteousness.”

A summary of the ruling councils of the Church, then, would include: The Council of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve (often these two function

together as a “council of fifteen”), the councils or quorums of seventy, all priesthood quorum presidencies, the stake high councils, and the councils of the stake presidencies and bishoprics.

27 And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other—

verse 27 “every decision made by either of these quorums” It is appropriate to substitute the word *council* for “quorums” here and *councils* for “quorums” in verse 30. In this verse the Lord is referring to the councils of the seventy and the twelve apostles (see verses 25 and 26).

28 A majority may form a quorum when circumstances render it impossible to be otherwise—

29 Unless this is the case, their decisions are not entitled to the same blessings which the decisions of a quorum of three presidents were anciently, who were ordained after the order of Melchizedek, and were righteous and holy men.

30 The decisions of these quorums, or either of them, are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity;

31 Because the promise is, if these things abound in them they shall not be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord.

32 And in case that any decision of these quorums is made in unrighteousness, it may be brought before a general assembly of the several quorums, which constitute the spiritual authorities of the church; otherwise there can be no appeal from their decision.

verse 32 “a general assembly of the several quorums” No one in the Church is immune from the obligation of presiding in righteousness (compare D&C 121:36-37). In the case of an unrighteous decision’s being made by a presiding quorum of the Church, it could be reviewed only by a general assembly composed of the membership of all the leading quorums together. Such a council would be composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the First Quorum of the Seventy.

“otherwise there can be no appeal from their decision” It is only by means of this “general assembly of the several quorums” that an appeal can be made.

5. Priesthood Quorums (verses 21-26, 33-37)

There are or have been actually nine priesthood quorums in our church government. They are: The Quorum of the First Presidency, The Quorum of the

Twelve Apostles, the Quorums of the Seventy (including general authority Seventies and area authority Seventies), the deacons quorum, the teachers quorum, the priests quorum, the elders quorum, the seventies quorum (stake), and the high priests quorum. The first three quorums mentioned are also ruling “councils” of the Church. The other priesthood quorums are not ruling councils, but the presidency of each quorum is a ruling council. It should be also noted that the seventies quorum in a stake no longer exists in the Church.

These verses were significant because they tempered the earlier supremacy of the First Presidency of the Church by equally dispersing presiding priesthood authority among the five councils of the Church government which then existed. These were the Council of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, the First Council of Seventy, and the two high councils—one in Kirtland and one in Missouri (see section 102). Today of course, these latter two councils do not exist, and thus the presiding authority over the Church is held equally by each of the first three councils. These three councils hold the “keys of presidency.” That is, at the death of the president of the high priesthood, the Council of the Twelve selects his successor. Similarly, if something should happen to incapacitate the majorities of both the Council of the Twelve and the Council of the First Presidency, then the First Council or Quorum of the Seventy would meet to select the President of the Church and to reorganize the ruling councils of the Church.

As the Council of the First Presidency formulates its decisions, the members always confer with the Council of the Twelve who, by revelation, are appointed to act with them in the government of the Church. When a judgment is reached unanimously and proclaimed by these councils jointly, it becomes binding upon all members of the Church. Though it is not an official name, we sometimes refer to the combination of these two councils as the “council of fifteen apostles.”

One note on the council of the First Presidency. It must have at least three members: the President, who is the senior apostle upon the earth, and two counselors. The counselors need not be apostles, and more than two counselors may be called.

21 Of necessity there are presidents, or presiding officers growing out of, or appointed of or from among those who are ordained to the several offices in these two priesthoods.

verse 21 “Of necessity there are presidents, or presiding officers” Because God’s house is a house of order (D&C 132:8), there must be provision for orderly government within the Church. President Joseph F. Smith stated, “Every man should be willing to be presided over; and he is not fit to preside over others until he can submit sufficiently to the presidency of his brethren” (*Improvement Era*, December 1917, 105).

verses 22-39 These verses describe in order the governing councils or quorums of the whole Church, thereby defining what, together with the Presiding Bishopric (verse 15), would today be called general authorities.

22 Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.

verse 22 “three Presiding High Priests” In March 1835, the three presiding high priests or First Presidency, of the Church were Joseph Smith Jr., Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams. Oliver Cowdery was at that time also an assistant president of the Church. These brethren had previously been chosen by the body of the high priesthood ordained, and upheld (or sustained) to this presidency between January 25, 1832, and March 18, 1833.

“chosen by the body” At the original organization of the first presidency of the Church in 1832, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had not yet been established (that took place in 1835). Therefore, in the case of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, “chosen by the body” meant chosen by the body of the high priesthood, which then served as a governing council of the Church. Joseph Smith had been so chosen at a conference of high priests in Amherst, Ohio, on January 25, 1832. By the time of Joseph Smith’s death on June 27, 1844, the Quorum of the Twelve had been formally organized and “formed a quorum, equal in authority and power” to the First Presidency (verse 24). Therefore, with the organization of the Twelve and of the Seventy in 1835, and with the hierarchy of authority established by revelation in section 107, the whole body of the high priesthood was no longer a governing council. According to verses 22-26, with the death of Joseph Smith and the dissolution of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve became the presiding quorum and Brigham Young, the president of that quorum, became the *de facto* (in fact, in reality) presiding officer of the Church. President Young was ordained president of the Church and formally reorganized the First Presidency on December 5, 1847. In the Church today, “chosen by the body” has been interpreted to mean chosen by the Quorum of the Twelve.

23 The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

verse 23 “The twelve traveling councilors” This term refers to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and is also the name given to them in D&C 102:28-30. Some of their qualifications were identified in D&C 18:27-39. The Quorum of the Twelve hold collectively all the keys and authority held by the First Presidency. However, those keys reside individually in and can be exercised fully by only one person—the president of

the Church. He alone can exercise all those keys. When the president dies, the First Presidency is dissolved, and the Quorum of the Twelve, presided over by the president of the Twelve, possesses and can exercise collectively all the keys, power, and authority necessary to continue the work of the Church and to reorganize the First Presidency.

“special witnesses of the name of Christ” The principal calling and function of an apostle is to be a special witness of the name of Christ to all the world. This calling requires that a special witness be given to each apostle. However, we need not expect that the apostle must have actually seen the risen Lord. As President Joseph Fielding Smith observed: “It is their privilege to see him if occasion requires, but the Lord has taught that there is a stronger witness than seeing a personage, even of seeing the Son of God in a vision. Impressions on the soul that come from the Holy Ghost are far more significant than a vision” (*Improvement Era*, November 1966, 979).

Additionally, we may distinguish between being witnesses of Christ and being witnesses of the *name* of Christ. The latter term refers to all that is encompassed by or done in the name, and therefore by the authority, of the Savior. The twelve are not only special witnesses of the person of Christ but are also witnesses of all that is done or known upon the earth in and through the name of Jesus Christ. Each and every aspect of the Lord’s earthly kingdom has been established through the name and authority of Jesus Christ. The Twelve are therefore special witnesses of all aspects of the Lord’s earthly kingdom.

24 And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned.

verse 24 “equal in authority and power to the [First Presidency]” The language here should not be understood to say that the Church is governed simultaneously by three separate but equal leadership bodies. That would inevitably lead to confusion, and God’s house is a house of order. Verse 33 makes it clear that the Twelve officiate “under the direction of the Presidency,” while verse 34 similarly requires that the Seventy act “under the direction of the Twelve.” Smith and Sjodahl in their *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* wrote: “It should be understood that this condition of equality could prevail only when the ranking quorum is no longer in existence, through death or otherwise. When the First Presidency becomes disorganized on the death of the president, then the Quorum of Twelve Apostles becomes the presiding quorum, or council, of the Church. . . . So with the Seventies, they would become equal only on the condition that the first two quorums ceased to exist” (700).

25 The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

verse 25 “The Seventy” The Seventy were to function as general authorities of the Church, forming a quorum equal in authority to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The special calling of the Seventy is to preach the gospel, especially to the Gentiles, in all the world. According to President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Seventy is an office “that carries with it the responsibility of bearing apostolic witness of the name of Christ” (*CR*, April 1984, 73). As to the other duties of the Seventy, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “The Seventies are to constitute traveling quorums, to go into all the earth, whithersoever the Twelve Apostles shall call them” (*TPJS*, 68; also *D&C* 124:139-40).

26 And they form a quorum, equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named.

33 The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews.

verse 33 “The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council” At this time in the history of the Church there were high councils organized both in Kirtland and in Missouri (Zion). These are referred to as the “standing high councils” (verse 36) or the “high council in Zion [or Kirtland].” The Twelve, on the other hand comprised a “Traveling Presiding High Council.”

34 The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews;
35 The Twelve being sent out, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and first unto the Gentiles and then unto the Jews.

verses 34-35 “first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews” The Jews, who were the first people to receive the preaching of the gospel at the time of Christ, will be the last to receive it in this dispensation. The scriptural principle, which has other applications as well, is “that the first shall be last, and that the last shall be first” (*D&C* 29:30; *Matthew* 19:30; *Luke* 13:30). Consequently, the Twelve “are to travel and preach among the Gentiles, until the Lord shall command them to go to the Jews.”

verse 35 “The Twelve being sent out, holding the keys” We have discussed the fact that the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, collectively as a quorum, hold all of the keys which have been vouchsafed to man on earth. Brigham Young taught that the

office of apostle itself, the apostleship, contains—built in—the keys necessary to organize and build up the kingdom of God on earth (Brigham Young, *JD*, 1:134-35).

36 The standing high councils, at the stakes of Zion, form a quorum equal in authority in the affairs of the church, in all their decisions, to the quorum of the presidency, or to the traveling high council.

37 The high council in Zion form a quorum equal in authority in the affairs of the church, in all their decisions, to the councils of the Twelve at the stakes of Zion.

verses 36-37 “**The standing high councils . . . form a quorum equal in authority**” This phrase may seem a surprise to the reader at first, but its meaning is self evident. At the time this revelation was given, there were two standing high councils in the Church. The one in Kirtland was presided over by Joseph Smith and the First Presidency. The other in Missouri, was presided over by what was called “the Presidency of the Church in Zion,” consisting of David Whitmer, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer. It has been suggested in other settings that these two standing councils are exactly equivalent to modern stake presidencies and high councils. This is not exactly the case. Rather, those in the two high councils were considered at that time to be general authorities presiding over domestic affairs of the two main bodies of the saints, while the Twelve and the Seventy focused on the preaching of the gospel to the world. Nevertheless, a modern stake president does hold the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood in that stake under the direction of the general authorities and, with the assistance of his counselors and the high council, directs the functions of the Church in that stake. In this their organization and function are somewhat analogous to that of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve over the Church. However, a local stake president and high council are not exactly equivalent to the high councils mentioned here (what modern stake is presided over by the president of the Church, for example?). Neither does a stake president and high council hold all the keys and authority once held by those earlier standing councils.

6. The Church Judiciary (verses 72, 76-84)

There are three “standing courts” or permanent courts in the Church. A term preferable to “court” today is “disciplinary council.” These three are:

1. bishop’s court (D&C 107:72) This court is made up of the ward bishop and his two counselors. It may try any member of the Church within the boundaries of the ward. It has authority to disfellowship any member of the Church (except the members of the First Presidency), and it may excommunicate any member except those who hold the Melchizedek priesthood.

2. stake high council court (D&C 102) This court consists of the stake presidency and twelve high priests of the stake—usually members of the stake high council. It has the authority to try and excommunicate any member of the Church except a member of

the First Presidency. This court may serve as an appellate court or court of appeal for those tried in a bishop's court. If a court is convened in a place where there is no stake organized, high priests may organize a court after the manner of a high council court (D&C 102:24-28). Such a court is referred to as an "elders' court."

3. court of the First Presidency (D&C 102:30-32; 68:22-24; 107:79) This court consists of the members of the Council of the First Presidency meeting alone or they may call twelve high priests to assist them. This is the supreme court of the Church from which there is no appeal.

There is one special court referred to in verse 82 as the "common council of the church" (D&C 107:82). This is the court of the Presiding Bishopric. It is convened only for one purpose—that of trying a member of the First Presidency. It consists of the three members of the presiding bishopric and twelve high priests whom they select to assist them. Again, it is a supreme court from which there can be no appeal.

After a court meets and hears the case of a member of the Church, the bishop or president must render a decision which then is sustained by vote of the members of the court. The possible decisions of a court are: (1) acquittal, (2) guilty but put on probation, the terms of which are defined by the court, (3) disfellowshipment, and (4) excommunication.

72 And also to be a judge in Israel, to do the business of the church, to sit in judgment upon transgressors upon testimony as it shall be laid before him according to the laws, by the assistance of his counselors, whom he has chosen or will choose among the elders of the church.

verse 72 Although, in context, this verse seems to refer primarily to the Presiding Bishop of the Church, its content is applicable to the ward bishop.

The two main duties of a bishop are to minister in the temporal affairs of the Church and to be a judge in Israel. He therefore maintains and distributes the physical resources of the Church and also determines individual worthiness for participation in the ordinances and activities of the Church.

76 But a literal descendant of Aaron has a legal right to the presidency of this priesthood, to the keys of this ministry, to act in the office of bishop independently, without counselors, except in a case where a President of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, is tried, to sit as a judge in Israel.

verse 76 We have already discussed that a literal descendant of Aaron has the right to be the Presiding Bishop of the Church and may serve without counselors, after being approved by the First Presidency of the Church.

If the President of the Church or a member the First Presidency were to err, what court or disciplinary counsel would try the case? As mentioned in the introduction for this section it is the court of the Presiding Bishopric.

“except in a case where” In this verse we learn that a Presiding Bishop of literal Aaronic descent and serving without counselors may not try the case of a member of the First Presidency.

77 And the decision of either of these councils, agreeable to the commandment which says:

verses 76-77 These two verses were added to this revelation for clarity in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

verse 77 This verse is at first difficult to understand, but it simply extends the exception made in verse 76 to the “decision of either of these councils”—the two courts mentioned in verses 78-84. In other words, it explains that the court mentioned in verse 76—the Presiding Bishopric court presided over by a literal descendant of Aaron—does not have as much authority as either the court of the First Presidency (verses 78-81) or the “common council of the church” (Presiding Bishop’s court presided over by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder) mention in verses 82-84.

“agreeable to the commandment which says” This phrase simply returns us to the text of the earlier revelation which resumes in verse 78.

verses 78-81 These verses describe the “supreme court” of the Church, the Court of the First Presidency described in the introduction to this section.

78 Again, verily, I say unto you, the most important business of the church, and the most difficult cases of the church, inasmuch as there is not satisfaction upon the decision of the bishop or judges, it shall be handed over and carried up unto the council of the church, before the Presidency of the High Priesthood.

79 And the Presidency of the council of the High Priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve, to assist as counselors; and thus the Presidency of the High Priesthood and its counselors shall have power to decide upon testimony according to the laws of the church.

80 And after this decision it shall be had in remembrance no more before the Lord; for this is the highest council of the church of God, and a final decision upon controversies in spiritual matters.

81 There is not any person belonging to the church who is exempt from this council of the church.

verses 82-84 These verses describe the special court, “the common council of the church,” the court of the Presiding Bishopric which is convened only for the purpose of trying a member of the First Presidency.

Joseph Fielding Smith, in his book *Church History and Modern Revelation*, wrote of this particular court: “The special court, or council, presided over by the presiding

bishopric has been called into existence several times. The Prophet Joseph Smith was tried before this council on charges made against him by Elder Sylvester Smith after the return of Zion's Camp. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Frederick G. Williams were each tried by this tribunal" (3:21).

82 And inasmuch as a President of the High Priesthood shall transgress, he shall be had in remembrance before the common council of the church, who shall be assisted by twelve counselors of the High Priesthood;

83 And their decision upon his head shall be an end of controversy concerning him.

84 Thus, none shall be exempted from the justice and the laws of God, that all things may be done in order and in solemnity before him, according to truth and righteousness.

7. Duties of the Quorum of the Twelve (verses 22-24, 38-39, 58-59) and the Presidents of Priesthood Quorums (verses 60-63, 85-90)

The Twelve are to choose (sustain and approve) the First Presidency of the Church. In verse 22 the "body, appointed and ordained to that office" refers to the Council of the Twelve. They are traveling special witnesses for Christ to the Jew and Gentile (verse 23). The Twelve are a quorum equal in authority to the First Presidency (verse 24). The Twelve are a traveling presiding council over the Church under direction of the First Presidency (verse 33). They are also to ordain patriarchs—"evangelical ministers" (verse 39). They may "ordain and set in order all other officers of the Church" (verse 58), and they are to "travel among all nations" (verse 98).

verses 22-24 See the commentary for each of these verses above.

22 Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.

23 The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

24 And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned.

38 It is the duty of the traveling high council to call upon the Seventy, when they need assistance, to fill the several calls for preaching and administering the gospel, instead of any others.

verse 38 The Quorum of the Twelve is directed to call specifically upon the Quorum(s) of the Seventy for assistance in their preaching and in their administration of the Church.

39 It is the duty of the Twelve, in all large branches of the church, to ordain evangelical ministers, as they shall be designated unto them by revelation—

verse 39 “to ordain evangelical ministers” An evangelical minister or evangelist is a Patriarch.

58 It is the duty of the Twelve, also, to ordain and set in order all the other officers of the church, agreeable to the revelation which says:

verse 58 “to ordain and set in order all the other officers of the church”

This is an important passage, and one that is sometimes overlooked, relative to the succession in church leadership. It is the duty of the Twelve to set in order all other offices of the Church, including the First Presidency (verses 66, 82, 91).

“agreeable to the revelation which says” The revelation referred to here had been received in November 1831 and had not previously been published in the Book of Commandments, but it had been recorded in the *Kirtland Revelation Book*. Joseph Smith added that earlier revelation to the text of section 107 as verses 59-100 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

59 To the church of Christ in the land of Zion, in addition to the church laws respecting church business—

verse 59 “To the church of Christ in the land of Zion” The 1831 revelation spoken of in the previous verse and recorded in the *Kirtland Revelation Book* had been given to the saints in Missouri.

verses 60-63 Here, the Lord speaks of the presidents, or presiding officers, of the priesthood quorums. Verse 60 describes the elders quorum president. Verse 61 describes the bishop (the president of the priests quorum), and verse 62 describes the teachers and deacons quorum presidents. The president holds the keys of the work of the quorum and has the right to direct its affairs. He also may conduct stewardship interviews with quorum members. The quorum president is the immediate line of authority for any priesthood holder.

The presidencies of priesthood quorums are also councils. If we are to exercise God’s power (the priesthood), then we must learn to receive God’s direction. His direction largely comes through his agents—these presidents of priesthood councils—who are called to preside over us. As the Lord’s direction is given to us through these presiding intermediaries, we receive one of the essential tests of faith and obedience here on earth. President Joseph F. Smith said: “Every man should be willing to be

presided over, and he is not fit to preside over others until he can submit sufficiently to the presidency of his brethren” (*Improvement Era* 21:105).

While the holders of the Melchizedek priesthood have the right of presidency, they cannot exercise that right without first receiving the special and temporary conferral of the pertinent presiding authority or priesthood keys.

60 Verily, I say unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts, there must needs be presiding elders to preside over those who are of the office of an elder;

61 And also priests to preside over those who are of the office of a priest;

62 And also teachers to preside over those who are of the office of a teacher, in like manner, and also the deacons—

63 Wherefore, from deacon to teacher, and from teacher to priest, and from priest to elder, severally as they are appointed, according to the covenants and commandments of the church.

verse 63 “according to the covenants and commandments of the church”

That is, according to section 20, the Articles and Covenants of the Church.

verses 85-90 The duty of a quorum president is to sit in counsel with members of the quorum and teach them their specific quorum and priesthood duties. This obligation applies as much to the president of a deacons quorum as to an elders quorum president. The Lord also here limits the size of each of the local quorums as they were constituted in 1831. Verse 90 clarifies that these presidencies are local, in contrast to the Quorums of the Twelve and of the Seventy, which have the obligation to travel into all the world (see also verse 98).

85 And again, verily I say unto you, the duty of a president over the office of a deacon is to preside over twelve deacons, to sit in council with them, and to teach them their duty, edifying one another, as it is given according to the covenants.

86 And also the duty of the president over the office of the teachers is to preside over twenty-four of the teachers, and to sit in council with them, teaching them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants.

87 Also the duty of the president over the Priesthood of Aaron is to preside over forty-eight priests, and sit in council with them, to teach them the duties of their office, as is given in the covenants—

88 This president is to be a bishop; for this is one of the duties of this priesthood.

89 Again, the duty of the president over the office of elders is to preside over ninety-six elders, and to sit in council with them, and to teach them according to the covenants.

90 This presidency is a distinct one from that of the seventy, and is designed for those who do not travel into all the world.

8. Brief History of the Patriarchal Order (verses 40-52)

In the earliest days of the Church, from Adam to the Flood, the government of the Church was “patriarchal” in nature. That is, the presiding officer of the Church was both a presiding high priest and a patriarch, and the office descended from father to son. This pattern of church government is referred to as the patriarchal order. It is preserved in the Church, in this dispensation, only as regards the office of “patriarch of the Church.” Since that office has now been deleted from our church government, the patriarchal order does not exist in our church government. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught, “. . . the most important part of the patriarchal order is preserved for worthy members of the Church. Those married in the temple in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage become inheritors of all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the patriarchs and thereby enter into the patriarchal order” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., 559).

These verses have given rise to the mistaken notion that the “patriarchal priesthood” is a unique priesthood or authority distinct from, and somehow more lofty and more sacred than the Melchizedek Priesthood. This is no reason to suppose that there is any priesthood on the earth other than the Melchizedek Priesthood. No patriarch on this earth has ever operated by any authority other than the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Actually the organization of the Melchizedek Priesthood may exist in two forms even today—the quorum and the patriarchal order. In the family, the organization is patriarchal—that is, the father presides. In the ward and stakes the Melchizedek Priesthood is organized by quorums. If a stake president (or even the President of the Church) were to enter a family home, the father of the family would preside, not the president.

40 The order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed, to whom the promises were made.

verse 40 “The order of this priesthood” This phrase refers to the Melchizedek Priesthood in its patriarchal form (see the discussion above).

verses 41-52 The order of descent outlined in these verses is the same as is found in Moses 6:10-25, 8:1-11, and Genesis 5.

41 This order was instituted in the days of Adam, and came down by lineage in the following manner:

42 From Adam to Seth, who was ordained by Adam at the age of sixty-nine years, and was blessed by him three years previous to his (Adam's) death, and received the promise of God by his father, that his posterity should be the chosen of the Lord, and that they should be preserved unto the end of the earth;

43 Because he (Seth) was a perfect man, and his likeness was the express likeness of his father, insomuch that he seemed to be like unto his father in all things, and could be distinguished from him only by his age.

verse 43 "he (Seth) was a perfect man" Noah (Genesis 6:9) and Job (Job 1:1, 8) were also called "perfect" men, but this must not be understood in the philosophical sense of "unimproveable" or even as "sinless" but rather as "perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32).

44 Enos was ordained at the age of one hundred and thirty-four years and four months, by the hand of Adam.

45 God called upon Cainan in the wilderness in the fortieth year of his age; and he met Adam in journeying to the place Shedolamak. He was eighty-seven years old when he received his ordination.

46 Mahalaleel was four hundred and ninety-six years and seven days old when he was ordained by the hand of Adam, who also blessed him.

47 Jared was two hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam, who also blessed him.

48 Enoch was twenty-five years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam; and he was sixty-five and Adam blessed him.

49 And he saw the Lord, and he walked with him, and was before his face continually; and he walked with God three hundred and sixty-five years, making him four hundred and thirty years old when he was translated.

50 Methuselah was one hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam.

51 Lamech was thirty-two years old when he was ordained under the hand of Seth.

52 Noah was ten years old when he was ordained under the hand of Methuselah.

9. The Ancient Priesthood Conference at Adam-ondi-Ahman (verses 53-56)

verses 53-55 These verses had been received by revelation on December 18, 1833. The Prophet Joseph had met on that day with several of the elders and with members of the Smith family to dedicate the printing office. He also ordained his father, Joseph Smith Sr., to the office of patriarch of the Church and blessed him with words contained in these three verses.

53 Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

verse 53 “he called . . . the residue of his posterity who were righteous”

Though not found in the Old Testament, the idea that Adam had called his posterity together shortly before his death and blessed them and prophesied of the future (verse 56) was widely accepted in ancient Judaism and early Christianity. Once again, Joseph Smith here provides details in complete harmony with ancient traditions concerning an event on which the Bible is silent.

“the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman” See the commentary on D&C 78:15, 20; D&C 116. This valley is located about eight-five miles north of present-day Independence, Missouri. It will also be the site of another meeting with Adam before the second coming of Christ.

54 And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel.

verse 54 We have commented on Adam previously. It would be beneficial for the reader to review these previous comments—see the commentary for D&C 27:11; 29:26; and 78:16.

55 And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever.

56 And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation.

57 These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time.

verse 57 “the book of Enoch” As Mormon edited the records of the Nephites to produce the Book of Mormon, so, apparently, Enoch had gathered the records of the prophets before the Flood to produce a book of Enoch. Such a compilation might have constituted the scriptures of the time before Noah. This record was known anciently (Jude 1:14-15; D&C 99:5) and was a common theme in Jewish and Christian literature, but it is no longer extant. None of the pseudepigraphical books of Enoch now known to us—there are at least three, plus the fragments from Qumran—represents the original book of Enoch, for none of them contains all of the information promised here.

10. The President of the High Priesthood of the Church (verses 64-67, 91-92)

We may refer to him as the prophet or the President of the Church, but his official title is “President of the High Priesthood of the Church.”

64 Then comes the High Priesthood, which is the greatest of all.

verse 64 “the High Priesthood” The Melchizedek Priesthood.

65 Wherefore, it must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High Priesthood of the Church;

verse 65 “President of the High Priesthood of the Church” Though we may regard this title as the official title of the President of the Church today, a note on the origin of the title is of interest. These verses were originally given in November 1831. At that time, there were no quorums of the First Presidency, the Twelve, or the Seventy, and the Church was still small enough that the collective body of the high priests served in some capacities as the equivalents of modern general authorities. Thus, in November 1831, it was entirely natural for Joseph Smith to be referred to as President of the High Priesthood of the Church.

66 Or, in other words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church.

67 From the same comes the administering of ordinances and blessings upon the church, by the laying on of the hands.

verse 67 The President, of course, holds all of the keys of all of the ordinances and blessings which belong to the Church.

91 And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses—

92 Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.

verses 91-92 The president of the Church is to preside over the whole of the modern Church, just as Moses presided over the children of Israel, having all of the keys, power, and gifts of the ancient prophet.

11. The Office of Bishop (verses 68-76)

A bishop must be a high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

68 Wherefore, the office of a bishop is not equal unto it; for the office of a bishop is in administering all temporal things;

verse 68 “the office of a bishop is not equal unto it” The antecedent of “it” here is the office of President of the High Priesthood of the Church in verse 67. Differing from the common view of the Christian world, this revelation clarifies that a bishop has less authority than an elder or high priest in administering spiritual things. Modern bishops preside over the spiritual concerns of wards today because they are also presiding high priests in addition to being bishops.

69 Nevertheless a bishop must be chosen from the High Priesthood, unless he is a literal descendant of Aaron;

verse 69 Again, this verse does not refer to a ward bishop, but rather to the Presiding Bishop of the Church, the modern equivalent of the ancient Jewish high priest. He must be a high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood except when he is the firstborn literal descendant of Aaron, and he may serve holding only the Aaronic Priesthood and he may serve without counselors.

70 For unless he is a literal descendant of Aaron he cannot hold the keys of that priesthood.

71 Nevertheless, a high priest, that is, after the order of Melchizedek, may be set apart unto the ministering of temporal things, having a knowledge of them by the Spirit of truth;

verse 71 “having a knowledge of them by the Spirit of truth” Modern bishops have the advantage over the literal descendants of Aaron in that they hold the gift of the Holy Ghost.

73 This is the duty of a bishop who is not a literal descendant of Aaron, but has been ordained to the High Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.

74 Thus shall he be a judge, even a common judge among the inhabitants of Zion, or in a stake of Zion, or in any branch of the church where he shall be set apart unto this ministry, until the borders of Zion are enlarged and it becomes necessary to have other bishops or judges in Zion or elsewhere.

75 And inasmuch as there are other bishops appointed they shall act in the same office.

76 But a literal descendant of Aaron has a legal right to the presidency of this priesthood, to the keys of this ministry, to act in the office of bishop independently, without counselors, except in a case where a President of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, is tried, to sit as a judge in Israel.

12. The First Council of Seventy (verses 93-98)

Whereas other quorums are presided over by a president and counselors, we learn here that the seventy are to have seven presidents chosen from their own

number. One of these presidents is to preside over the other six, lest there be more than one head and resulting disorder. Since the Church has become sufficiently large that the First Quorum of the Seventy cannot handle its administrative affairs, the Lord has authorized a Second Quorum of the Seventy and even a third and more until there are seven Quorums of the Seventy if necessary.

93 And it is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy;

verse 93 “it is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy”

Verses 93-98 were not part of the November 1831 revelation that makes up most of verses 59-100. They were added to section 107 by the prophet Joseph Smith for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and refer to his earlier vision of the organization of the Seventy. That vision was not recorded, but the Prophet alluded to it several times in his writings, and it led to the organization of the Twelve and the Seventy (see *HC*, 2:182).

94 And the seventh president of these presidents is to preside over the six;

95 And these seven presidents are to choose other seventy besides the first seventy to whom they belong, and are to preside over them;

96 And also other seventy, until seven times seventy, if the labor in the vineyard of necessity requires it.

97 And these seventy are to be traveling ministers, unto the Gentiles first and also unto the Jews.

98 Whereas other officers of the church, who belong not unto the Twelve, neither to the Seventy, are not under the responsibility to travel among all nations, but are to travel as their circumstances shall allow, notwithstanding they may hold as high and responsible offices in the church.

13. Other verses

99 Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.

100 He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. Even so. Amen.

verses 99-100 Section 107 closes with a solemn warning. With the information revealed in section 107 and prior revelations (D&C 20, 68, and 84), the duty of every man and also his place in the organization of the Church has been made clear. With this great revelation on priesthood comes the obligation of learning and performing the duties of the priesthood as they have been revealed. Now that it has been revealed,

neither those who know their duty but won't do it (the slothful) nor those who neglect even to learn their priesthood obligations, will be accounted worthy to stand—either now in their present offices or later with the saints of God in his celestial kingdom.

Indeed we see in section 107 a formidable and sturdy organization that should endure all manner of adversity even into the eternities. Charles W. Penrose once likened the Church organization to “. . . the Irishman's wall. He built it five feet high and eight feet thick, and when they asked him the reason, he said that if the wind came and blew it over it would be higher than it was before” (CR, October 1905, 41-42).

Brief Historical Setting

1835 May

On May 4, 1835 the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, ordained the previous February, departed on their first mission.

1835 July

On July 3, 1835, Mr. Michael Chandler arrives in Kirtland with his Egyptian mummies and the two papyrus scrolls from which Joseph will later translate the book of Abraham.

1835 September

The first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants is published in mid-September (the Book of Commandments had been published in 1831).

1835 November

A second term of the School of the Elders is begun on November 3, 1835. It will be moved to the third floor of the temple in January and continue to meet there until the temple dedication.

1835 December

By Christmas of 1835, work on the Kirtland Temple is nearing completion. It will be dedicated in another three months.

On the day after Christmas, Brother Lyman Sherman, who was a member of Zion's Camp and who had been called to the First Quorum of Seventy in February 1835 came to Joseph asking for a blessing [**D&C 108 - Strengthen the Brethren**].

Section 108 Strengthen the Brethren

Lyman R. Sherman is perhaps one of the lesser-known stalwarts of the Church during the Ohio and Missouri periods. Baptized in January 1832, he was, according to his brother-in-law Benjamin Johnson, the person “first known to have spoken in the gift of tongues by the power of God in this dispensation” (Black, *Who’s Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*, 261). A faithful participant in Zion’s Camp, Sherman was selected and set apart as one of the seven presidents of the Quorum of the Seventy on February 28, 1835. Since he had previously been ordained a high priest, however, he was eventually released from the First Quorum of the Seventy in April 1837. In 1837 and 1838, Brother Sherman was called to serve on the high councils of Kirtland, Ohio, and Far West, Missouri, respectively. On January 16, 1839, Joseph Smith wrote to Sherman from Liberty Jail, calling him to become a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Brother Sherman died, however, at the age of thirty-four at Far West on January 27, 1839 before receiving Joseph’s letter. He died not knowing he had been called to be an apostle.

On the day after Christmas 1835 he felt inspired to go to Joseph and ask for a revelation, that he might better know his duty in the kingdom. Section 108 was thus received. Joseph recorded the circumstances of Brother Sherman’s visit to him in Kirtland and the reception of section 108 as follows: “Commenced again studying the Hebrew language, in company with Brothers Parrish and Williams. In the meantime, Brother Lyman Sherman came in, and requested to have the word of the Lord through me; ‘for,’ said he, ‘I have been wrought upon to make known to you my feelings and desires, and was promised that I should have a revelation which should make known my duty” (*HC*, 2:345).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 108:7 Strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings.

1 Verily thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Lyman: Your sins are forgiven you, because you have obeyed my voice in coming up hither this morning to receive counsel of him whom I have appointed.

verse 1 “Your sins are forgiven you, because you have obeyed my voice in coming up hither this morning” It would appear that Brother Sherman had been wrestling with the impression that he ought to seek out the Prophet and receive instructions from the Lord, and part of him resisted doing so (verse 2). Fortunately, he made the right decision and obeyed his spiritual prompting the same morning he received it. The decision to inquire of the Lord likely presupposes Brother Sherman’s

intention of doing whatever the Lord might instruct him to do through the Prophet Joseph. In response to Brother Sherman's spiritual sensitivity, his obedience to the Spirit, and his willingness to receive further instructions from the Lord, his sins are forgiven him on this occasion, and he is assured of his good standing.

2 Therefore, let your soul be at rest concerning your spiritual standing, and resist no more my voice.

verse 2 “resist no more my voice” How do we perceive the voice of the Lord? It would seem that it may come both through inward personal promptings and through a call from the Lord's servants.

3 And arise up and be more careful henceforth in observing your vows, which you have made and do make, and you shall be blessed with exceeding great blessings.

verse 3 “be more careful henceforth in observing your vows” At this point in time, what vows or covenants had Brother Sherman entered into? He had entered into the covenant of baptism and had also accepted and received the oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood (D&C 84:33-42). He had also accepted a divine calling as one of the presidents of the First Quorum of Seventy. The exhortation to observe the vows which he had made and would yet make included those vows Brother Sherman was shortly to make in the Kirtland Temple (verse 4).

4 Wait patiently until the solemn assembly shall be called of my servants, then you shall be remembered with the first of mine elders, and receive right by ordination with the rest of mine elders whom I have chosen.

verse 4 “Wait patiently until the solemn assembly” Lyman Sherman is told to wait patiently until a meeting is held called a “solemn assembly.” A solemn assembly is a special gathering of the Church, or a representative body thereof, for extraordinary sacred worship, blessing, or instruction (Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1380-81). Between January and May of 1836, there were several solemn assemblies of the brethren held in connection with the completion and dedication of the Kirtland Temple (see the commentary for section 109). A little less than one month following the reception of section 108, on January 22, 1836, Brother Sherman attended a special meeting in the temple with the leading councils and general authorities of the Church to receive initiatory ordinances of washing and anointing. It is likely, however, that the solemn assembly referred to here—if only one is intended—was the twenty-four hour meeting held on Wednesday, March 30, 1836, three days after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. On that occasion, most of the priesthood holders in Kirtland received initiatory ordinances in the temple. Lyman Sherman had by then been presented and sustained by the Church as one of the presidents of the Seventy and on March 29 had,

with other general authorities, also received the ordinance of washing of the feet in the temple.

For many years, the chapter heading for this verse incorrectly taught that this verse implied a promise to ordain him an elder. We now know that he was already a seventy and a high priest at the time of this revelation. This error has been corrected in our current 1981 edition.

5 Behold, this is the promise of the Father unto you if you continue faithful.

6 And it shall be fulfilled upon you in that day that you shall have right to preach my gospel wheresoever I shall send you, from henceforth from that time.

verse 6 “in that day that you shall have right to preach my gospel” After the dedication of the Kirtland Temple and its associated assemblies, Brother Sherman had been called, ordained, sustained, and given the initial elements of the endowment. He was equipped as a president of the Seventy to preach the gospel and build up the kingdom wherever the Lord directed him to go in the world.

7 Therefore, strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings.

verse 7 “strengthen your brethren” Joseph Smith repeatedly taught that the first step to apostasy was speaking evil of the Lord’s anointed—the church leaders. “No man or woman can have the Spirit and at the same time do and speak evil against their brethren” (*Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 1967, 465).

“in all your conversation” In the nineteenth century, *conversation* meant—as it does also in the King James Bible—all of one’s behavior or deportment. The word was not limited to a person’s vocal expressions.

8 And behold, and lo, I am with you to bless you and deliver you forever. Amen.

Section 134 Relationship Between Church and Secular Government

Based on when it was written, this section is out of chronological order. During the summer of 1835, the Prophet Joseph and Frederick G. Williams left Kirtland on a missionary journey to the state of Michigan. While they were gone, the Assistant President of the Church, Oliver Cowdery, was left in charge in Kirtland. At the time, preparations were being completed for printing a new collection of the revelations in a book to be titled the *Doctrine and Covenants*. (Remember that the 1833 edition was published under the title *A Book of Commandments*.) A committee had been appointed the previous September to ready an up to date collection of revelations for publication.

An assembly of the Church was convened in Kirtland on August 17, 1835, for the purpose of canonizing this book of scripture. The saints accepted all the revelations in the collection and also voted to include two other documents written by Oliver Cowdery. One dealt with the Church's views on the relationship between secular government and religious groups. The other was a statement on marriage. The latter topic seemed important since there were rumors in the air that polygamy was being practiced in the Church. Actually, Joseph had received the revelation on celestial/plural marriage some four years previously in 1831, and he may have begun to practice the principle as early as 1835. Joseph was not even present. He didn't arrive back in Kirtland until August 23, one week after the assembly.

When the two statements were read to him, Joseph apparently had some misgivings about each of them. The statement on marriage contained the following verse: "Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication and polygamy: we declare that we believe one man should have one wife, and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again" (D&C [1835] 101:4). This statement is obviously contrary to the doctrine of plural marriage, but since the Lord had not yet allowed Joseph to share the doctrine with anyone, except perhaps his most trusted and intimate associates, Joseph decided it was acceptable as written, and allowed it to stand.

Both statements were printed in the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* and in subsequent editions until 1876 when Orson Pratt removed the statement on marriage and replaced it with our section 132, the revelation on celestial/plural marriage. The statement on government has remained in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and is currently section 134. It is not revelation but rather a statement of belief. It has, however, been accepted by the Church as canonized scripture.

Not a lot of commentary is required on the text of section 134, as the text is largely self-explanatory. However, it is helpful to divide the text up into the following topics. The verses of this section will be reordered to correspond with their subject material:

Man's Responsibility to Support Secular Government (verses 1, 3, 5-6, 8)

The support of secular government is basic to our beliefs. The twelfth Article of Faith states: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law."

Government is absolutely necessary, for without it there would be anarchy. The question is not *whether* there should be government but rather which form of government would best benefit the people. Elder Erastus Snow declared: "Even the monopoly of the one-man power as in Russia, or the monopoly of the aristocracy as in other parts of Europe . . . is far better than no government at all. . . . not that they are always the best forms of government for the people, or that they afford liberty and freedom to mankind, but that any and all forms of government are better than none at all, having a tendency as they do to restrain the passions of human nature and to curb them, and to establish and maintain order to a greater or less[er] degree. One monopoly is better than many; and the oppression of a king is tolerable, but the oppression of a mob, where every man is a law to himself and his own right arm is his power to enforce his own will, is the worst form of government" (*JD*, 22:1551).

Brigham Young commented upon the concept of man's responsibility to support secular government: "Sustain the government of the nation wherever you are, and speak well of it, for this is right, and the government has a right to expect it of you so long as the government sustains you in your civil and religious liberty, in those rights which inherently belong to every person born on the earth" (*Millennial Star*, 17 July 1852: 321).

This statement of Brigham's, as well as verses 1 and 3 suggest that there is a limit to the allegiance owed secular governments. The men that administer governments are to be held accountable for the righteous ("in equity and justice") administration of their offices. This implies that if a government is exercising unrighteous dominion over its subjects, those subjects may not be obliged to obey.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 134 The relationship between the Church and secular Government

1 We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society.

verse 1 "governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man" Is this literally true? Were "governments [really] instituted of God?" God gave to Adam a perfect form of government, but through the ages humankind has modified it to such a point that the influence of God is not acknowledged. Satan has used many governments to meet his ends. Certainly many, if not most, of our world's current governments are not God-inspired. It is true, however, that God would have us subject

ourselves to the laws of an orderly government for our own protection, peace, and happiness. He is the author of the principle of secular law. God will hold each individual, whether ruler or subject, accountable for his support of righteous principles of government.

3 We believe that all governments necessarily require civil officers and magistrates to enforce the laws of the same; and that such as will administer the law in equity and justice should be sought for and upheld by the voice of the people if a republic, or the will of the sovereign.

6 We believe that every man should be honored in his station, rulers and magistrates as such, being placed for the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty; and that to the laws all men show respect and deference, as without them peace and harmony would be supplanted by anarchy and terror; human laws being instituted for the express purpose of regulating our interests as individuals and nations, between man and man; and divine laws given of heaven, prescribing rules on spiritual concerns, for faith and worship, both to be answered by man to his Maker.

verse 6 “both [human laws and divine laws] to be answered by man to his Maker” God will hold us accountable not only for violations of his law but also for violation of temporal laws. President Joseph Fielding Smith declared: “No member of the Church can be accepted as in good standing whose way of life is one of rebellion against the established order of decency and obedience to law. We cannot be in rebellion against the law and be in harmony with the Lord, for he has commanded us to ‘be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign (D&C 58:22)” (CR, April 1971, 48).

8 We believe that the commission of crime should be punished according to the nature of the offense; that murder, treason, robbery, theft, and the breach of the general peace, in all respects, should be punished according to their criminality and their tendency to evil among men, by the laws of that government in which the offense is committed; and for the public peace and tranquility all men should step forward and use their ability in bringing offenders against good laws to punishment.

Government’s Responsibility to Secure Man’s Inherent Rights and Individual Freedoms (verses 2, 5, 11)

Governments are to use their power and authority, not to coerce individuals, but to uphold and guarantee their divine, inherent, individual rights. These essential rights are:

1. free exercise of conscience
2. right and control of property
3. protection of life

When protection by the law may be inaccessible for any reason, man has the right to defend himself, his government, his property, or his friends and family from unlawful assaults.

2 We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.

verse 2 President David O. McKay quoted former United States Supreme Court justice George Sutherland as follows: “It is not the right of property which is protected, but the right to property. Property, per se, has no rights; but the individual—the man—has three great rights, equally sacred from arbitrary interference: the right to his life, the right to his liberty, and the right to his property. The three rights are so bound together as to be essentially one right. To give a man his life, but deny him his liberty, is to take from him all that makes life worth living. To give him liberty, but take from him the property which is the fruit and badge of his liberty, is to still leave him a slave” (From George Sutherland’s speech before the New York State Bar Association, 21 January 1921, as reported in *CR*, October 1962, 6).

5 We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience.

11 We believe that men should appeal to the civil law for redress of all wrongs and grievances, where personal abuse is inflicted or the right of property or character infringed, where such laws exist as will protect the same; but we believe that all men are justified in defending themselves, their friends, and property, and the government, from the unlawful assaults and encroachments of all persons in times of exigency, where immediate appeal cannot be made to the laws, and relief afforded.

Government’s Responsibility to Guarantee Religious Freedom (verses 4, 7)

This concept is also basic to our beliefs as stated in Article of Faith number eleven: “We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of

our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”

4 We believe that religion is instituted of God; and that men are amenable to him, and to him only, for the exercise of it, unless their religious opinions prompt them to infringe upon the rights and liberties of others; but we do not believe that human law has a right to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men, nor dictate forms for public or private devotion; that the civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience; should punish guilt, but never suppress the freedom of the soul.

verse 4 “religion is instituted of God” For an individual to have and maintain the rights of free exercise of conscience, government must not interfere with control over religion. One role of government is to protect the right to freely exercise one’s conscience. Elder David O. McKay declared: “When a man uses this God-given right [the right to govern] to encroach upon the rights of another, he commits a wrong. Liberty becomes license, and the man a transgressor. It is the function of the state to curtail the violator and to protect the violated” (CR, April 1940, 118).

7 We believe that rulers, states, and governments have a right, and are bound to enact laws for the protection of all citizens in the free exercise of their religious belief; but we do not believe that they have a right in justice to deprive citizens of this privilege, or proscribe them in their opinions, so long as a regard and reverence are shown to the laws and such religious opinions do not justify sedition nor conspiracy.

verse 7 “proscribe them in their opinions” To proscribe means to outlaw or forbid the use or exercise of.

The Necessity for a Proper Separation Between Church and State (verses 9-10, 12)

These verses declare the proper relationship of law between churches and government. The violation of laws that are God-given and apply to religion, such as violations of moral law, disobedience to church regulations, or the preaching of false doctrine, must be dealt with by a church without government interference. Matters that are civil or criminal in nature must be dealt with by government without the interference of religion. Churches should not have authority over the right to property or life nor be allowed to inflict physical punishment upon the members. Civil complaints should be dealt with in civil courts, criminal complaints should be dealt with in criminal courts, and religious complaints should be dealt with in religious councils.

The First Presidency of the Church stated in the Conference Report for April 1907, 14:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints holds to the doctrine of the separation of church and state; the noninterference of church authority in political matters; and the absolute freedom and independence of the individual in the performance of his political duties. We declare that from principle and policy, we favor: the absolute separation of church and state; no domination of the state by the church; no church interference with the functions of the state; no state interference with the function of the church, or with the free exercise of religion; the absolute freedom of the individual from the domination of ecclesiastical authority in political affairs; the equality of all churches before the law.

However, President Ezra Taft Benson has taught that there may be danger in too much separateness between church and state:

I support the doctrine of separation of church and state as traditionally interpreted to prohibit the establishment of an official national religion. But I am opposed to the doctrine of separation of church and state as currently interpreted to divorce government from any formal recognition of God. The current trend strikes a potentially fatal blow at the concept of the divine origin of our right and unlocks the door for an easy entry of future tyranny. If Americans should ever come to believe that their rights and freedoms are instituted among men by politicians and bureaucrats, then they will no longer carry the proud inheritance of their forefathers, but will grovel before their masters seeking favors and dispensations—a throwback to the feudal system of the Dark Ages (*God, Family, Country*, 1974, 283-84).

Do we in the Church really believe in an absolute separation of church and state? Ultimately, we do not since it is our doctrine that eventually—during the millennial thousand years—Jesus Christ himself will stand at the head of the government of the world, the so-called Political Kingdom of God.

9 We do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government, whereby one religious society is fostered and another proscribed in its spiritual privileges, and the individual rights of its members, as citizens, denied.

verse 9 “We do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government” No government should support a particular religion over another, nor should a religion be allowed to unduly influence government to the detriment of other religions.

10 We believe that all religious societies have a right to deal with their members for disorderly conduct, according to the rules and regulations of such societies; provided that such dealings be for fellowship and good standing; but we do not believe that any religious society has authority to try men on the right of property or life, to take from them this world’s goods, or to put them in jeopardy of either

life or limb, or to inflict any physical punishment upon them. They can only excommunicate them from their society, and withdraw from them their fellowship.

12 We believe it just to preach the gospel to the nations of the earth, and warn the righteous to save themselves from the corruption of the world; but we do not believe it right to interfere with bond-servants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them contrary to the will and wish of their masters, nor to meddle with or influence them in the least to cause them to be dissatisfied with their situations in this life, thereby jeopardizing the lives of men; such interference we believe to be unlawful and unjust, and dangerous to the peace of every government allowing human beings to be held in servitude.

verse 12 “we do not believe it right to interfere with bond-servants” This statement must be understood in the context of the 1830s, when the issues of slavery and states’ rights in the United States were being debated and when slavery was legal in some states. The issue of the legal rights of slaveholders was something that the missionaries faced as they proselyted in the Southern States. At another time, the prophet Joseph counseled the missionaries: “It should be the duty of an Elder, when he enters into a house, to salute the master of that house, and if he gain his consent, then he may preach to all that are in that house; but if he gain not his consent, let him not go unto his slaves, or servants, but let the responsibility be upon the head of the master of that house, and the consequences thereof, and the guilt of that house is no longer upon his skirts” (*HC*, 2:263).

Brief Historical Setting

1836 January

Since the spring of 1833, work on the Kirtland Temple had progressed almost continuously—having been interrupted only in the spring and early summer of 1834 in order to raise funds and gather recruits for the Zion’s Camp project. The temple was sufficiently completed so that it could be dedicated on March 27, 1836.

Prior to the dedication of the temple and for some time after, the Lord poured out his power, and the saints were favored with a great many extraordinary spiritual experiences. This remarkable period was ushered in on the night of January 21, 1836, when a group of brethren gathered in the nearly completed temple to receive instructions and participate in the ordinance of “anointings.” During the activities of this evening, Joseph had unfolded to him one of the great visions of the ages [**D&C 137 - Vision of the Celestial Kingdom**].

Section 137 Vision of the Celestial Kingdom

As the sun was setting on the evening of Thursday, January 21, 1836, about forty men entered the nearly completed Kirtland Temple. Although the outside plastering had been completed, workers were busy at the time plastering and painting the interior. These priesthood bearers climbed the circular staircase to the third, or top, floor, an attic which had been divided into five classrooms. Some of the men gathered with Joseph in the west room which was being used as a classroom for the study of Hebrew. This was referred to as the “translating room.” Joining Joseph in that room were his two counselors, his father (who was serving as Patriarch), Hyrum Smith, the two bishoprics (one from Missouri and the other from Kirtland), and Joseph’s scribe, Warren Parrish. The twenty-four members of the two high councils gathered in two adjoining rooms. While members of the high councils waited and prayed, the others participated in the ordinance of anointing their heads with holy oil. The Presidency then met with the high councils of Kirtland and Zion in the adjoining rooms.

The Presidency then anointed Father Smith with oil and gave him a blessing. Each member of the Presidency gave Father Smith a blessing separately. All of the Presidency then laid hands upon the head of Joseph Smith “and pronounced upon my head many prophecies and blessings, many of which I shall not notice at this time. But as Paul said, so say I, let us come to visions and revelations” (*HC*, 2:380). Then followed the vision recorded in section 137. Section 137 is only a portion of the revelation recorded in the *History of the Church*. The remainder of the revelation does not pertain to the subject for which this portion was included in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Before this remarkable vision ended, the high councilors from Kirtland and Missouri joined Joseph and the others in the west room where they also received their anointings.

During this evening, angels ministered not only to Joseph but also to many others who had received their anointings. Some of them saw the face of the Savior, and the spirit of prophecy and revelation was poured out in power. Oliver Cowdery also bore his testimony of the experience: “The glorious scene was too great to be described. I only say that the heavens were opened to many, and great and marvelous things were shown” (*Journal of Edward Partridge*, January 21, 1836; *Cowdery Sketch Book*, January 21, 1836). This solemn assembly probably continued until after midnight, for the Prophet recorded in his diary that he retired between one and two o’clock in the morning.

Even though this vision has been known and used by the Church since that day, it was not canonized and accepted as part of the standard works until April 3, 1976. Under the direction of President Spencer W. Kimball, the First Presidency and the

Quorum of the Twelve approved the addition of this revelation to the Pearl of Great Price. Those assembled in general conference sustained the proposal, and this vision was made part of the standard works. On June 22, 1979, the First Presidency announced that this revelation would be moved from the Pearl of Great Price to the Doctrine and Covenants, where it would become known as section 137. The reason given for this change was to accommodate the cross-referencing system that would be instituted in the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The importance of canonizing this revelation, along with section 138 in the Doctrine and Covenants, was commented on by Elder Boyd K. Packer: “We live in a day of great events relating the scriptures. It has been only a short time since two revelations were added to the standard works. . . . I was surprised, and I think all of the Brethren were surprised, at how casually that announcement of two additions to the standard works was received by the Church. But we will live to sense the significance of it; we will tell our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren, and we will record in our diaries, that we were on the earth and remember when that took place” (“Teach the Scriptures,” in *Charge to Religious Educators*, 21).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 137 Vision of the Celestial Kingdom

D&C 137:1-4 I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof.

D&C 137:5-9 All who would have received the gospel if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom. . . . For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.

D&C 137:10 All children . . . who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven.

verses 1-4 The glorious description of the celestial kingdom!

1 The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell.

verse 1 “whether in the body or out I cannot tell” The experience of the Prophet and those who were with him when this revelation was received is similar to what Nephi experienced when, as he sat pondering the things taught by his father, he was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord to a high mountain or to what Paul observed when he—“whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell” (2 Corinthians 12:3)—was caught up to the third heaven. The prophet Joseph explained the process of revelation this way: “All things whatsoever God in his infinite wisdom has seen fit and proper to reveal to us, while we are dwelling in mortality, in regard to our mortal bodies, are revealed to us in the abstract, and independent of affinity of this mortal tabernacle, but are revealed to our spirits precisely as though we had no bodies at all; and those

revelations which will save our spirits will save our bodies” (Dahl and Tate, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 355).

2 I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire;

3 Also the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son.

verse 3 “whereon was seated the Father and the Son” Again the Prophet was privileged to see God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. He had previously seen them in the Sacred Grove during the First Vision (see JS-H 1:15-20), at the Morley farm when the office of high priest was introduced (see D&C 52), at the John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio (see D&C 76), and at the Whitney store in Kirtland about the time when the keys of the First Presidency were granted to his counselors (see D&C 90).

4 I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold.

verses 2-4 “I saw the transcendent beauty” These verses describe the physical nature of the celestial kingdom. Even the gate has transcendent beauty, and the streets appear to be paved with gold. The blazing throne of God and his Son reflects the glory of these two exalted beings. It is a physical place with physical beings living within it. Note the difficulty the Prophet has in describing a celestial place with terrestrial language. He had to use comparative language (“like unto circling flames of fire”) to describe what he saw.

5 I saw Father Adam and Abraham; and my father and my mother; my brother Alvin, that has long since slept;

verse 5 “I saw . . . my father and my mother” It is interesting and intriguing to note that some of those whom he saw in the celestial kingdom (for example, Joseph’s father and mother) were not yet deceased, and his father was even with him in the room when he received this revelation! Thus, the Prophet saw the future destiny of his parents and that they would eventually be in the celestial kingdom with God.

“Alvin” Alvin Smith was close to his younger brother Joseph. Alvin had been supportive when Joseph announced to the family that he had seen the Father and the Son and, later the angel Moroni. Alvin died November 19, 1823, at the age of twenty-five. His death was very difficult for Joseph, for he relied on the wisdom and support of his older brother and loved him deeply. Since Joseph did not understand as yet the concepts of salvation and exaltation, he was perplexed when he saw his brother Alvin in the celestial kingdom, for Alvin had died before the Church was fully organized; before the keys of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were restored; and before anyone could be baptized into the Church. Joseph had learned by revelation that baptism was the gate to the celestial kingdom, yet he saw Alvin there.

6 And marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins.

verse 6 The Prophet wondered how Alvin, who had not been baptized, could nevertheless be in the celestial kingdom. The answer is given in the next three verses.

Two and one-half months after this revelation was given, the keys of the work for the dead were restored to the earth so that baptisms for the dead could eventually be performed for the faithful, including Alvin, who have departed this earth without that privilege. Hyrum Smith was baptized in behalf of Alvin in the Mississippi River in Nauvoo in 1841 (see Black and Black, *Annotated Records of Baptisms*, volume 6).

7 Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God;

verse 7 “All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry” Here is an important principle. It is clear that the Savior has the ability to judge a man based not only on his overt behaviors and actions, but also on his thoughts and the intents of his heart. The Lord earned this ability by virtue of his atoning sacrifice in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross (Hebrews 2:18; Alma 7:11-12; see also John 5:22). This mortal existence provides the opportunity for most people to adequately demonstrate who they really are in their “heart of hearts” relative to gospel law. However, some lives are cut short or for other reasons they miss the opportunity of being exposed to gospel principles. For these the Lord can and will judge them based on the intents of their hearts—what they would have thought and how they would have behaved had they the opportunity to learn principles of the gospel. In other words, each individual will ultimately be judged and assigned a degree of glory based on who they really are. Those who would have earned a celestial reward will be granted their exaltation. Conversely, those who would have received a lesser reward will be accordingly blessed.

8 Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom;

verse 8 The antecedent of “it” in this verse is a knowledge of the gospel adequate to allow a man to be judged based on his thoughts and actions relative to that gospel.

9 For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.

verse 9 “according to the desire of their hearts” Some have wondered if this verse does not contain a “loophole” in the plan of salvation. A loophole is defined as a means of escape or evasion; especially a means or opportunity of evading a law or contract. Does this verse suggest that any individual may live pretty much as he or she pleases and then, when the time arrives for them to be judged by the Lord, state clearly their desire to be exalted? Another verse of scripture which makes the same suggestion is Alma 29:4: “I ought not to harrow up in my desires, the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.”

Have we discovered a loophole in the plan of salvation? We have not. The key here is the meaning of “desire of their hearts” and “their wills.” These expressions refer to who a man really is and not merely what he is willing to say. We are judged by an all-knowing Lord based on who we have become, or who we would have become had we had adequate exposure to the law of the gospel. The Savior knows us perfectly and can render this judgment without a word’s being spoken. When the Lord judges an individual according to “his heart,” he judges based upon what that individual truly is. There can be no pretense, no facades, no ulterior motives, no hypocrisy. The Lord’s sees through all of that. Nothing can be hidden from him.

10 And I also beheld that all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven.

verse 10 Taken as an isolated verse, out of context of section 137, this verse has caused some confusion. We should not try to interpret verse 10 without placing it in the context of verses 6 through 9. Taken in its proper context, this verse teaches that all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability who would have received the gospel had they been allowed to tarry are saved in the celestial kingdom. Each child who dies before age eight years will be judged fairly by an all-knowing Lord who knows them individually and perfectly and loves them beyond understanding. Some will be exalted, and others will be rewarded lesser degrees of glory—according to the “desires of their hearts” (see the commentary for verse 9). In the Lord’s wisdom, each of us will be placed eternally where we are comfortable—where we belong (Mormon 9:3-4).

Brief Historical Setting

1836 March

The temple dedicatory service itself on March 27, 1836, lasted seven hours, and we have accounts of remarkable spiritual manifestations that occurred during that convocation. Sidney Rigdon conducted, and Joseph read the dedicatory prayer which

had been revealed to him the previous day [**D&C 109 - Kirtland Temple Dedicatory Prayer**].

Section 109 Kirtland Temple Dedicatory Prayer

By January 18, 1836, the Kirtland Temple was finished sufficiently that the Hebrew School and School of the Elders began meeting there, and between January 21 and March 30, church priesthood leaders and other members received washings and anointings in the temple.

The Kirtland Temple was dedicated March 27, 1836. During a fifteen-week period prior to the dedication, beginning on January 21, and extending until after the dedication to May 1, 1836, there was truly a Pentecostal outpouring of the Lord's power such as never has occurred before or since in the history of the Church. There were visions of heavenly messengers, visions of the Lord Jesus himself, unusual spiritual manifestations, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Some saints communicated with heavenly beings, and some prophesied.

During this remarkable season, the prophet Joseph received three revelations that are included in our current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants—sections 109, 110, and 137.

When the initial command was given to build the Kirtland Temple, in December 1832 (see the commentary for section 95), there were only about 150 members (about twenty families) living in Kirtland township. These people were not only few in numbers, but, as we have discussed previously, they lacked land, money, and knowledge of architecture. Within three years, the church membership in Kirtland increased to 1,300.

As we briefly summarize this rich period of church history, we will borrow from Milton V. Backman, Jr.'s, book *The Heavens Resound*, chapter 16.

Many of the unusual spiritual manifestations occurred in the Kirtland Temple at meetings in which members of the priesthood were receiving, or were preparing to receive, the Kirtland Temple version of the endowment. Like many aspects of the restored gospel, the endowment ordinance has evolved over time. The temple endowment as we understand it today was never given in Kirtland, but was first given in Nauvoo. The endowment in the Kirtland Temple was a partial or preparatory endowment that consisted largely of a group of preparatory ceremonies including the washing ceremony, the ordinance of anointing, and the washing of feet.

The ordinance of washing the body was first performed at the home of Joseph Smith on January 16, 1836, when Joseph and others washed and perfumed their bodies, confessed their sins, and entered into a covenant to be faithful to God.

Some of the first reports of communion with heavenly beings in Kirtland occurred while bearers of the priesthood were participating in a second ordinance revealed through the Prophet in January 1836, the ordinance of anointing with sacred or consecrated oil. This ceremony, like the washing of the body, was designed to purify the saints in preparation for receiving the remainder of the endowment. It was

performed in the temple after they had cleansed their bodies in their own homes or in other buildings in the community.

When the first group in this dispensation to receive their anointings gathered on Thursday, January 21, 1836, little did they realize that that night one of the great visions of the ages would be unfolded, and many would commune with the hosts of heaven (Section 137 was received that evening) (*Journal of Edward Partridge*, January 21, 1836; *Autobiography of Heber C. Kimball*, 33).

Other memorable meetings were held on January 22 and 28 and February 6, as Joseph met with and instructed the priesthood brethren in the ordinance of anointing with oil. Visions, prophesyings, and speaking in tongues were also reported at these meetings.

Not all the spiritual manifestations that occurred in Kirtland in 1836 followed the administration of ordinances. Some of the most memorable events occurred on Sunday, March 27, the day the temple was dedicated.

On the day preceding the dedication, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, and Warren Parrish met in the translation room on the third floor of the temple to make final preparations for the dedication to be held the following day. Oliver Cowdery reported that during this meeting he assisted the Prophet "in writing a prayer for the dedication" of the temple (*Cowdery Sketch Book*, March 26, 1836).

On the morning of the dedication, long before the doors of the temple were opened, a large crowd gathered. Joseph estimated that by seven o'clock a.m., more than five hundred persons were waiting near the temple doors. At eight o'clock, the temple doors were opened, and members of the First Presidency helped to seat the congregation of about eight hundred in the main hall of the temple. Many were disappointed that they could not find a seat, since all were full. Included in those turned away were many who had sacrificed much of their time and material wealth for the building of the temple. Since so many had been unable to attend the session on March 27, the service was repeated the following Thursday, March 31. The saints sat in pews on the main floor of the temple, while church leaders occupied the pulpits at the eastern and western ends of the hall. The Melchizedek Priesthood leaders sat at the east end, and the Aaronic Priesthood leaders sat on the west.

The service began at nine o'clock with President Sidney Rigdon conducting. After a hymn, President Rigdon offered the invocation. Another hymn followed, and then Sidney Rigdon spoke eloquently for two and a half hours. Sidney then called upon all present to acknowledge Joseph Smith as Prophet and Seer, which all unanimously did by standing. After a fifteen-minute intermission, Joseph spoke. He presented the names of the officers of the Church for the sustaining vote of all present. He then read the dedicatory prayer (section 109) which had been given him by revelation. Many were troubled that Joseph read the prayer rather than offering it spontaneously. This prayer set the pattern for subsequent dedicatory prayers. They are written under the spirit of

revelation, and they are read at the time of dedication of a sacred edifice. Following the dedicatory prayer, the choir sang a hymn that had been written for the dedication by W. W. Phelps, *The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning*.

There are three corroborating accounts of the visitation of an angel at the dedication service on March 27. The Prophet Joseph wrote that “Frederick G. Williams arose and testified that while Sidney Rigdon was making his first prayer an angel entered the window and took his seat between Father Smith and himself, and remained there during the prayer” (*HC*, 2:427). Heber C. Kimball also recorded that “During the ceremonies of the dedication, an angel appeared and sat near President Joseph Smith, Sr., and Frederick G. Williams, so that they had a fair view of his person. He was a very tall personage, black eyes, white hair, and stoop shouldered; his garment was whole, extending to near his ankles; on his feet he had sandals. He was sent as a messenger to accept of the dedication” (Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* [Salt Lake City] 103). Truman O. Angell wrote that the angelic being seen by Frederick G. Williams and Joseph Smith, Sr., during Sidney Rigdon’s prayer was Simon Peter, the ancient apostle. “F. G. Williams being in the upper east stand . . . rose and testified that midway during the prayer an holy angel came and seated himself in the stand. When the afternoon meeting assembled Joseph, feeling very much elated, arose the first thing and said the personage who had appeared in the morning was the angel Peter come to accept the dedication” (Truman O. Angell, *Journal*, 5).

Following some closing remarks by Hyrum Smith and Sidney Rigdon and a short prayer by President Rigdon, the congregation sealed the proceedings of the meeting with the Hosanna Shout: “Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna to God and the Lamb!” This is shouted three times with each series of hosannas sealed with three amens. After the congregation had participated in the Hosanna Shout, Brigham Young arose and spoke briefly in an unknown tongue which was interpreted by David W. Patten. At about four o’clock p.m., the seven-hour service was concluded.

During the dedicatory service there were many unusual manifestations of the Spirit reported. George A. Smith declared that during this assembly, he saw the temple filled with the hosts of heaven. He also recalled that David Whitmer reported that he saw three angels proceed along the south aisle of the temple (George A. Smith, *JD*, 2:215 and 11:10). Several witnesses reported they saw an unusual light on the top of the temple. Others mentioned that they heard heavenly singing coming from the roof of the building. Several saints who were in Kirtland that night observed angels hovering around the outside of the temple, and during the priesthood meeting some heard a vibrant sound, like a mighty rushing wind, that penetrated the temple (*Cowdery Sketch Book*, March 27, 1836).

The season of unusual spiritual manifestations continued even after the dedication service. Two days after the temple dedication, the Presidency met with the two bishops and their counselors in the temple to participate in the ordinance of

washing of feet. The next morning some three hundred priesthood holders received this ordinance in the temple, and many spiritual manifestations occurred.

One of the most significant visions of the ages took place in the Kirtland Temple seven days after its dedication. On Sunday, April 3, 1836, section 110 was received during which the Savior appeared to Joseph and Oliver.

At two additional priesthood meetings held in the spring of 1836, members reported that they beheld the hosts of heaven and enjoyed various spiritual gifts. These were held on April 6 and May 1.

Not all manifestations of spiritual gifts mentioned by persons in Kirtland, in the spring of 1836, occurred within the walls of the temple. Some affirmed that they witnessed the healing power of God or experienced unusual blessings during meetings in their homes. Lorenzo Snow stated that in many instances “the sick were healed, the deaf made to hear, the blind to see, and the lame to walk” (E. R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, 11). A woman named Prescindia Huntington reported that one day an excited young girl rushed to her door and in bewilderment said that a meeting was being held on top of the temple. “I went to the door,” Prescindia declared, “and there I saw on the temple angels clothed in white covering the roof from end to end. They seemed to be walking to and fro; they appeared and disappeared. This was in broad daylight, in the afternoon” (Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 207).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 109 Kirtland Temple Dedicatory Prayer

D&C 109:8 Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.

1 Thanks be to thy name, O Lord God of Israel, who keepest covenant and showest mercy unto thy servants who walk uprightly before thee, with all their hearts—

verse 1 Section 109 is one of two inspired prayers included in the Doctrine and Covenants. The other is section 65 (section 65 is a modern version of the Lord’s Prayer as revealed to Joseph in October 1831 in Hiram, Ohio). This prayer in section 109 begins almost exactly as does the prayer Solomon offered at the dedication of the first Jerusalem Temple (compare 1 Kings 8:23).

2 Thou who hast commanded thy servants to build a house to thy name in this place [Kirtland].

3 And now thou beholdest, O Lord, that thy servants have done according to thy commandment.

4 And now we ask thee, Holy Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of thy bosom, in whose name alone salvation can be administered to the children of men, we ask thee, O Lord, to accept of this house, the workmanship of the hands of us, thy servants, which thou didst command us to build.

verse 4 It is interesting to note, in section 109, the person to whom Joseph is praying. Note that in verse 4 he is praying to the Father in the name of the Son. Now this we would understand to be perfectly appropriate. He also addresses the Father in several other verses—10, 14, 22, 24, 29, 47. Note, however, in verses 34, 42, 56, and 68, he addresses Jehovah. Did Joseph know who Jehovah was in 1836? Of course he did! In section 109, Joseph is praying to Deity which included the Father and the Son who are jointed in perfect unity in all things aside from their individual persons.

5 For thou knowest that we have done this work through great tribulation; and out of our poverty we have given of our substance to build a house to thy name, that the Son of Man might have a place to manifest himself to his people.

verse 5 **“out of our poverty we have given of our substance”** When the Ohio saints were first commanded to build the temple in 1833, only about 150 members lived in Kirtland. Of that number, only ten owned sufficient property even to be taxed by the city. The total of properties owned by Latter-day Saints was 189 acres, of which 184 acres made up the two church farms in the area. According to Benjamin F. Johnson: “There were but few saints in Kirtland, and those all of the poorer class . . . such was the poverty of the people at the time of breaking ground for its foundation, that there was not a scraper and hardly a plow that could be obtained among the saints” (*My Life’s Review*, 15-16). Brigham Young remembered that the members were “too few in numbers, too weak in faith, and too poor in purse, to attempt such a mighty enterprise.” They were “a mere handful of men, living on air, and a little hominy and milk, and often salt or no salt when milk could not be had; the great Prophet Joseph, in the stone quarry, quarrying rock with his own hands; and the few then in the Church, following his example of obedience and diligence wherever most needed” (*JD*, 2:31). Two and a half years later, the Kirtland Temple was finished, a magnificent stone and plaster building costing as much as \$60,000, and Kirtland had a Latter-day Saint population of around 1,300.

“the Son of Man” “‘Man of Holiness’ is the name of God the Father in the Adamic language. The ‘name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time’ (Moses 6:57). Son of Man (with a capital M) is Jesus Christ and is a shortened version of Son of Man of Holiness” (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 2:273).

“might have a place to manifest himself to his people” A dedicated temple creates a space consecrated to God, reclaimed from the power of Babylon, and unpolluted by fallen, worldly influences. If such sacred space is kept holy, it symbolizes

or represents a part of the celestial kingdom upon the earth, and communion between the saints and their God can take place on a grander scale there than on unhallowed ground. In a structure consecrated for this purpose—and kept holy by the saints—Jesus Christ himself can more readily appear to those who are worthy.

6 And as thou hast said in a revelation, given to us, calling us thy friends, saying—Call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you;

verse 6 “as thou hast said in a revelation” Beginning in this verse and through verse 9, Joseph quotes from D&C 88:117-120.

“Call your solemn assembly” A solemn assembly is described by the prophet Joel as a special meeting at the temple to which the leaders and members of the house of Israel would come fasting, after sanctifying themselves, to worship and receive sacred instructions on issues that concerned the whole people. Joel further prophesies that after such an assembly, the Spirit of God will be poured out upon the saints and the gifts of the Spirit will be manifest (Joel 1:14; 2:15-18, 27-29). The solemn assembly referred to here was actually a series of events beginning in January 1836 and lasting through May of that year, including meetings of the School of the Elders, the organization of the priesthood quorums, the dedication of the temple, and the anointing and blessing of most of the priesthood holders in Kirtland who labored on the temple.

7 And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study and also by faith;

8 Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;

9 That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord, that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord, that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High—

10 And now, Holy Father, we ask thee to assist us, thy people, with thy grace, in calling our solemn assembly, that it may be done to thine honor and to thy divine acceptance;

11 And in a manner that we may be found worthy, in thy sight, to secure a fulfilment of the promises which thou hast made unto us, thy people, in the revelations given unto us;

verse 11 “a fulfilment of the promises” Some of these promises can be found in D&C 38:32; 76:116-18; 88:68; 93:19-20; 97:14, 16; 105:11-12, 18.

12 That thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house;

verse 12 “that thy holy presence may be continually in this house” Elder Bruce R. McConkie, in his book *The Mortal Messiah*, asked and then answered a question: “What is a temple? It is a house of the Lord; a house for Deity that is built on earth; a house prepared by the saints as a dwelling place for the Most High, in the most literal sense of the word; a house where a personal God personally comes. It is a holy sanctuary, set apart from the world, wherein the saints of God prepare to meet their Lord; where the pure in heart shall see God according to the promises; where those teachings are given and those ordinances performed which prepare the saints for that eternal life which consists of dwelling with the Father and being like him and his Son” (1:98).

13 And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord’s house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.

verse 13 “that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord’s house may feel thy power” If God indeed accepts and sanctifies the temple, and if his presence is truly there, then all who enter with righteous motives will feel the power and presence of the Lord.

14 And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith, as thou hast said;

verse 14 “taught words of wisdom out of the best books” Keep in mind that the Kirtland Temple also served as a school. It housed the School of the Elders, the School of the Prophets, and the Hebrew School. The Kirtland High School also met in the temple attic. The passage alluded to here is found in D&C 88:118.

15 And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing;

16 And that this house may be a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory and of God, even thy house;

verses 17-19 These verses are taken from D&C 88:120.

17 That all the incomings of thy people, into this house, may be in the name of the Lord;

18 That all their outgoings from this house may be in the name of the Lord;

19 And that all their salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with holy hands, uplifted to the Most High;

20 And that no unclean thing shall be permitted to come into thy house to pollute it;

verse 20 “no unclean thing shall be permitted” The responsibility for maintaining the sanctity of the temple lies not upon the Lord, but upon the saints themselves. For this reason, it is necessary for the Church, through appointed leaders, to inquire into the life and habits of those wishing to attend the temple. By complying with this requirement, both those who seek recommends and those who grant them participated in a process designed to keep the temple holy, which is the obligation laid upon the saints. The personal desires of those who might want to attend the temple but who will not keep the covenants set forth in the temple cannot be allowed to prevail over the strict command of the Lord. Otherwise, “my glory shall [not] rest upon it” (D&C 97:15), and the very purposes of temple attendance will be lost to all. The equality of this system is that any member may repent and receive a recommend, but the decision not to repent is also a decision not to attend the temple.

21 And when thy people transgress, any of them, they may speedily repent and return unto thee, and find favor in thy sight, and be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house.

verse 21 “And when thy people transgress” Note a parallel here to the dedicatory prayer of Solomon in 1 Kings 8:30, 35-36. Note also that it is not *if* thy people transgress, but *when* they transgress, for “all men sin” (verse 34). Nevertheless, saints are not to wallow in their sins or even to become comfortable with them, but rather, as soon as they realize they are sinning, they should begin to repent and return to the Lord. This part of the dedicatory prayer, the prayer for forgiveness, was answered specifically for Joseph and Oliver the following week when the Savior appeared in the temple, saying “Behold, your sins are forgiven you” (D&C 110:5).

22 And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them;

verse 22 “that thy servants may go forth” This verse summarizes some of the reasons that missionaries receive their temple endowments before entering the mission field. It is so that they can have “the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house.” Some of these blessings include: being “armed with thy power” (D&C 38:32); having “thy name upon

them” (D&C 20:77, 79); being “filled with the glory of the Lord . . . in the Lord’s house” (D&C 84:32); and having “mine angels round about you to bear you up” (D&C 84:88).

“and thine angels have charge over them” Do we believe in guardian angels in the Church? Is there any official church doctrine on this? We certainly do believe there are angels doing the bidding of God here on earth, including providing protection at times to us mortals. We do not necessarily believe, however, that at birth each of us is assigned one specific guardian angel to watch over us throughout our lives.

23 And from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hand, to fulfil that which thou hast spoken by the mouths of the prophets, concerning the last days.

24 We ask thee, Holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations and for eternity;

verse 24 “to establish the people that shall worship” To “establish” means more than just to create or build. It also means to make stable or secure. This prayer pleads for a firm and sure foundation forever for those who worship in the temple.

25 That no weapon formed against them shall prosper; that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself;

verse 25 “no weapon formed against them shall prosper” This promise is a repeat of that given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in D&C 71:9 and applies to all who have worshiped in the temple. Those who dig a pit for the saints will eventually fall in it themselves (1 Nephi 22:14). Though evil may seem to prosper in the immediate present, in time it will fail and its designs will be thwarted.

26 That no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house;

verse 26 “upon whom thy name shall be put in this house” Although it is true that members take the name of Christ upon them at the time of their baptism and subsequently each time they partake of the sacrament, this verse clarified that there is a further sense of receiving “the name” specifically linked to the temple (compare D&C 110:7). Those who take upon themselves God’s name are empowered to act “in the name” of God.

27 And if any people shall rise against this people, that thine anger be kindled against them;

28 And if they shall smite this people thou wilt smite them; thou wilt fight for thy people as thou didst in the day of battle, that they may be delivered from the hands of all their enemies.

verses 27-28 Note the parallel to Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:44-45.

29 We ask thee, Holy Father, to confound, and astonish, and to bring to shame and confusion, all those who have spread lying reports abroad, over the world, against thy servant or servants, if they will not repent, when the everlasting gospel shall be proclaimed in their ears;

verse 29 "confound . . . all those who have spread lying reports abroad"

The proportion of any population that actually hears the real truth and then hates the truth is usually fairly small. Satan, who has been "a liar from the beginning" (D&C 93:25), must therefore misrepresent the truth about the Church and the gospel to create the kind of universal hatred that brings persecution. Jesus explained to his New Testament followers that "whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). They will be wrong, of course, but they will think that in opposing the Church, they are fighting a great evil. Because of those who "spread lying reports," Jesus, the one sinless human being who ever lived, was crucified as a vile criminal. Because of lying reports, the early Christians were persecuted and martyred in the Roman world. And because of lying reports, the modern Church has suffered unjust opposition from the moment of the restoration until the present time.

One also sees in this verse and in the four following verses, a specific plea for protection of the Church from the mobs in Missouri (verse 47) and Ohio. The saints had been driven out of Jackson County and were already having a hard time with the Missourians in Clay, Ray, and Caldwell Counties. Things will get worse before they get better, for the saints will be driven out of Kirtland and out of Missouri and eventually even out of Nauvoo, Illinois. When a majority of the nation chooses to ignore its own laws out of hatred for the saints because of lying reports, Joseph Smith warned that those enemies would "be oppressed as they have oppressed us, not by 'Mormons,' but by others in power. They shall drink a drink offering, the bitterest dregs, not from the 'Mormons,' but from a meaner source than themselves. God shall curse them" (HC, 6:95).

30 And that all their works may be brought to naught, and be swept away by the hail, and by the judgments which thou wilt send upon them in thine anger, that there may be an end to lyings and slanders against thy people.

31 For thou knowest, O Lord, that thy servants have been innocent before thee in bearing record of thy name, for which they have suffered these things.

32 Therefore we plead before thee for a full and complete deliverance from under this yoke;

verse 32 “deliverance from under this yoke” A *yoke*, of course, is the bar laid across the necks of animals or slaves by means of which they are controlled or compelled.

33 Break it off, O Lord; break it off from the necks of thy servants, by thy power, that we may rise up in the midst of this generation and do thy work.

34 O Jehovah, have mercy upon this people, and as all men sin forgive the transgressions of thy people, and let them be blotted out forever.

verse 34 “O Jehovah” See the commentary for verse 4. It is not automatically incorrect in praying to “God” to address the Son as well as the Father. The Jews, of course, prayed directly to Jehovah from the time of Moses. Under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the Nephites prayed directly to Jesus when he appeared to them after his resurrection, even after being instructed twice to pray to the Father in the name of the Son (3 Nephi 18:19; 19:6; see also 20:31; 27:7). Alma the Younger appealed directly to Jesus for deliverance from the pains of hell (Alma 36:18), and God heard and answered his prayer. While it is important always to maintain the separate persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and it is important to pray to the Father in the name of the Son, as we have been instructed, it would be foolish to be scandalized should an inspired prayer to “God” include God the Son as well as God the Father. One must not forget that in several senses of the word, Jesus is also the Father.

Though we call upon the Father in the name of the Son, it should not be assumed that God the Son or God the Holy Ghost are therefore excluded from our prayers. Elder Bruce R. McConkie gave this additional insight: “We pray to the Father, and . . . our answers come from Jehovah” (*Promised Messiah*, 337).

35 Let the anointing of thy ministers be sealed upon them with power from on high.

verse 35 “Let the anointing of thy ministers be sealed” The prayer here is that those who had received, or who soon would receive, the washings and anointings in the temple will enjoy a direct outpouring of power from the heavens through the Spirit as a consequence of the holy ordinances they had received.

36 Let it be fulfilled upon them, as upon those on the day of Pentecost; let the gift of tongues be poured out upon thy people, even cloven tongues as of fire, and the interpretation thereof.

verse 36 “as upon those on the day of Pentecost” The day of Pentecost (from the Greek *pentecostos*, meaning “fiftieth”) was a Jewish festival held fifty days after Passover. On the Day of Pentecost after the resurrection of the Savior, the early Christian Church received a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a public manifestation of his gifts (Acts 2:1-12). A similar outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit at

Kirtland would complete the endowment of power promised the saints if they would build there a temple to the Lord (D&C 38:32; 95:8). We have documented previously, in this commentary, how these gifts of the Spirit were, indeed, abundantly poured out upon the saints of that day.

“cloven tongues as of fire” At an evening meeting of the priesthood quorums on the day of the temple dedication, the prophet Joseph called on those in attendance to speak from their hearts. George A. Smith was the first to do so. As he spoke, a noise like a mighty wind was heard to fill the temple, and many congregation spoke in tongues while others interpreted. Some saw visions, and the Prophet himself saw a bright light like a pillar of fire rest on the temple (*HC*, 2:428).

37 And let thy house be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, with thy glory.

38 Put upon thy servants the testimony of the covenant, that when they go out and proclaim thy word they may seal up the law, and prepare the hearts of thy saints for all those judgments thou art about to send, in thy wrath, upon the inhabitants of the earth, because of their transgressions, that thy people may not faint in the day of trouble.

verse 38 “the testimony of the covenant” Before the judgments of the end can befall the world, authorized witnesses must be sent to testify of the truth of the gospel covenant and to raise a voice of warning to all people (verse 40; D&C 1:2-26). That testimony of the truth and the authority to bear it to the nations, and, thus, to seal up the law (see verse 46), are part of the endowment of power prayed for and received in the Kirtland Temple.

39 And whatsoever city thy servants shall enter, and the people of that city receive their testimony, let thy peace and thy salvation be upon that city; that they may gather out of that city the righteous, that they may come forth to Zion, or to her stakes, the places of thine appointment, with songs of everlasting joy;

verse 39 “come forth to Zion, or to her stakes” Note that the gathering of the saints in the latter days need not be to the center place of Zion but will also be to the stakes of Zion wherever they may be located (compare verse 59).

40 And until this be accomplished, let not thy judgments fall upon that city.

41 And whatsoever city thy servants shall enter, and the people of that city receive not the testimony of thy servants, and thy servants warn them to save themselves from this untoward generation, let it be upon that city according to that which thou hast spoken by the mouths of thy prophets.

verse 41 “untoward generation” *Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* defines untoward as “froward [willfully contrary], perverse, refractory; not easily guided or taught.”

42 But deliver thou, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, thy servants from their hands, and cleanse them from their blood.

verse 42 “cleanse them from their blood” It is possible for those who know the gospel and who are aware of the coming judgments of God to be guilty of negligence—negligence of their obligation to warn the ignorant and the wicked. This failure to warn those in danger amounts to a sort of spiritually negligent homicide. In order to escape implication in the sins of the wicked and in the judgments they will incur, the saints must attempt to warn the wicked of their peril and lead them to the safety of the gospel covenant. Only if they have met this obligation to warn their neighbors can the righteous be cleansed of the blood of a wicked generation when the prophesied judgments come.

43 O Lord, we delight not in the destruction of our fellow men; their souls are precious before thee;

44 But thy word must be fulfilled. Help thy servants to say, with thy grace assisting them: Thy will be done, O Lord, and not ours.

45 We know that thou hast spoken by the mouth of thy prophets terrible things concerning the wicked, in the last days—that thou wilt pour out thy judgments, without measure;

46 Therefore, O Lord, deliver thy people from the calamity of the wicked; enable thy servants to seal up the law, and bind up the testimony, that they may be prepared against the day of burning.

verse 46 “seal up the law, and bind up the testimony” The phrase “seal up the law, and bind up the testimony” in this verse is found in other scriptures. Isaiah used this phrase but in reverse order: “Bind up the testimony, seal the law” (Isaiah 8:16). Two other revelations from the Doctrine and Covenants transpose the verbs seal and bind to read: “to bind up the law and seal up the testimony” (D&C 88:84; see also 133:72). According to this passage of scripture, these actions of binding and sealing the testimony and the law fit into a divine sequence: the saints must first receive their temple endowments, then they warn the world’s inhabitants of God’s coming judgments; this is followed by the binding up of the testimony and the sealing of the law; finally the judgments of God will come (D&C 88:84; 109:38, 46; 133:72). After the Lord’s servants have testified to and warned the nations, they will figuratively “bind,” “tie up,” “shut up” or close their testimonies and “affix [a] seal” to the law of God (the prophetic word). In effect, we may say that the Lord’s servants “close the file” or even pronounce “case closed.” Joseph Smith explained these things to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on November 12, 1835: “But when you are endowed and prepared to preach the Gospel to all nations, kindreds, and tongues, in their own languages, you must faithfully warn all, and bind up the testimony, and seal up the law,

and the destroying angel will follow . . . upon the children of disobedience; and destroy the workers of iniquity, while the saints will be gathered out from among them, and stand in holy places ready to meet the Bridegroom when he comes” (*TPJS*, 92). In summary, then, God’s judgments follow the Saints’ warning voice to the world.

47 We ask thee, Holy Father, to remember those who have been driven by the inhabitants of Jackson county, Missouri, from the lands of their inheritance, and break off, O Lord, this yoke of affliction that has been put upon them.

48 Thou knowest, O Lord, that they have been greatly oppressed and afflicted by wicked men; and our hearts flow out with sorrow because of their grievous burdens.

49 O Lord, how long wilt thou suffer this people to bear this affliction, and the cries of their innocent ones to ascend up in thine ears, and their blood come up in testimony before thee, and not make a display of thy testimony in their behalf?

verse 49 “not make a display of thy testimony in their behalf” Joseph asks the Lord how long he will listen to the saints’ cries before he exercises his power on their behalf—before he will intercede. Some early manuscripts and printed copies of the dedicatory prayer read “make a display of thy power in their behalf.”

50 Have mercy, O Lord, upon the wicked mob, who have driven thy people, that they may cease to spoil, that they may repent of their sins if repentance is to be found;

verse 50 “that they may cease to spoil” That they may cease to plunder or rob.

51 But if they will not, make bare thine arm, O Lord, and redeem that which thou didst appoint a Zion unto thy people.

verse 51 “make bare thine arm” Show thy power.

52 And if it cannot be otherwise, that the cause of thy people may not fail before thee may thine anger be kindled, and thine indignation fall upon them, that they may be wasted away, both root and branch, from under heaven;

53 But inasmuch as they will repent, thou art gracious and merciful, and wilt turn away thy wrath when thou lookest upon the face of thine Anointed.

verse 53 “the face of thine Anointed” The “a” in *anointed* was first capitalized in the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The capitalization clarifies that Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Hebrew, “anointed one”), is meant here rather than the saints who are anointed in the temple (see verse 80). It is Jesus’s atoning sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God from those who repent (compare D&C 45:4-5).

54 Have mercy, O Lord, upon all the nations of the earth; have mercy upon the rulers of our land; may those principles, which were so honorably and nobly defended, namely, the Constitution of our land, by our fathers, be established forever.

verse 54 It is understandable that those whose constitutional rights had been so violated in Missouri and Ohio would pray for the eternal establishment of the principles upon which those rights were founded.

55 Remember the kings, the princes, the nobles, and the great ones of the earth, and all people, and the churches, all the poor, the needy, and afflicted ones of the earth;

verse 55 “Remember . . . the churches” This injunction refers not to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (compare verse 56) but to the other churches and denominations of the world that their hearts might be softened to hear and accept the truth of the restoration of the gospel.

56 That their hearts may be softened when thy servants shall go out from thy house, O Jehovah, to bear testimony of thy name; that their prejudices may give way before the truth, and thy people may obtain favor in the sight of all;

57 That all the ends of the earth may know that we, thy servants, have heard thy voice, and that thou hast sent us;

58 That from among all these, thy servants, the sons of Jacob, may gather out the righteous to build a holy city to thy name, as thou hast commanded them.

verse 58 “to build a holy city to thy name” The holy city, of course, is Zion. The prayer is for additional stakes of Zion to be established so that the work of the gathering might be accomplished more quickly.

59 We ask thee to appoint unto Zion other stakes besides this one which thou hast appointed, that the gathering of thy people may roll on in great power and majesty, that thy work may be cut short in righteousness.

60 Now these words, O Lord, we have spoken before thee, concerning the revelations and commandments which thou hast given unto us, who are identified with the Gentiles.

verse 60 “us, who are identified with the Gentiles” Joseph Smith and the rest of the Latter-day Saints are identified with the Gentiles. The title page of the Book of Mormon states that that inspired record would “come forth in due time by way of the Gentile.” The prophet Nephi also foretold that “other books” would come forth in the latter days “from the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:38-39). Nephi later clarified for his brothers that “the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah [shall] come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed” (1 Nephi 15:13).

Since at least the period of 732 to 722 BC, when the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, the blood of Israel has been scattered among every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. For almost three thousand years, they and their descendants have intermarried and mixed their blood with that of the Gentiles. Given these facts, it would seem to be a difficult task to find anyone today, anywhere on earth, who does not have a single Israelite ancestor somewhere in the last 150 or so generations of his or her family tree. It would be similarly difficult to find any descendant of the lost ten tribes who does not also have the blood of the Gentile in his veins. Thus, Israelite bloodlines have been preserved among the Gentile nations, and most Gentiles have some Israelite ancestry in their genealogy. For this reason, the scriptures sometimes refer to the modern Church as Israel and sometimes, as here, as “the Gentiles.” Church members are Israelites by virtue of descent from one or more ancient Israelite ancestor, through whom they are also heirs of the promises made to the Patriarchs, and they are Gentiles by virtue of their culture and ethnicity and probably by the vast majority of their ancestors.

President Joseph Fielding Smith stated: “Let us also remember that we are of the Gentiles! By this I mean that the Latter-day Saints have come to their blessings through the Gentile nations. President Brigham Young . . . said that Joseph Smith was a pure Ephraimite. This is true; yet Joseph Smith came also of Gentile lineage. So do most all members of the Church. We may boast of our lineage, and rejoice in the fact that patriarchs have declared us to be of Ephraim, but at the same time let us not despise the Gentiles, for we are also of them. If it were not so the scriptures would not be fulfilled” (*Way to Perfection*, 140).

61 But thou knowest that thou hast a great love for the children of Jacob, who have been scattered upon the mountains for a long time, in a cloudy and dark day.

verse 61 “the children of Jacob, who have been scattered” Jacob is Israel, and his children are the children of Israel in all twelve tribes. The modern restoration of the gospel must ultimately bring about the restoration of Israel, and so Joseph prays, in ascending order, for Jerusalem (verse 62), for “the house of David” (verse 63), for the tribe of Judah (verse 64), and for “all the scattered remnants of Israel” (verse 67). This part of the inspired prayer was answered within the week, when Moses appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the temple on April 3, 1836, and delivered to them the keys of the gathering of Israel.

62 We therefore ask thee to have mercy upon the children of Jacob, that Jerusalem, from this hour, may begin to be redeemed;

63 And the yoke of bondage may begin to be broken off from the house of David;

64 And the children of Judah may begin to return to the lands which thou didst give to Abraham, their father.

verses 62-64 In all of these verses, Joseph prays for the descendants of Judah (“Jerusalem,” “the house of David,” and “the children of Judah”).

65 And cause that the remnants of Jacob, who have been cursed and smitten because of their transgression, be converted from their wild and savage condition to the fulness of the everlasting gospel;

verses 62-65 We believe in the gathering of Israel. There are two gathering places. Most of Israel will gather in Zion, the New Jerusalem, on the American continent, but the tribe of Judah will gather in old Jerusalem. There they will eventually receive the gospel.

66 That they may lay down their weapons of bloodshed, and cease their rebellions.

67 And may all the scattered remnants of Israel, who have been driven to the ends of the earth, come to a knowledge of the truth, believe in the Messiah, and be redeemed from oppression, and rejoice before thee.

verses 68-76 This portion of the dedicatory prayer petitions God for the welfare of Joseph and his family (verses 68-70), for the leaders of the Church and their families (verse 71), and for the members of the Church and their families, particularly the poor, the sick, and the needy (verses 72-76).

68 O Lord, remember thy servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., and all his afflictions and persecutions—how he has covenanted with Jehovah, and vowed to thee, O Mighty God of Jacob—and the commandments which thou hast given unto him, and that he hath sincerely striven to do thy will.

69 Have mercy, O Lord, upon his wife and children, that they may be exalted in thy presence, and preserved by thy fostering hand.

70 Have mercy upon all their immediate connections, that their prejudices may be broken up and swept away as with a flood; that they may be converted and redeemed with Israel, and know that thou art God.

verse 70 “all their immediate connections” This phrase refers to the immediate circle of Joseph’s friends and relatives.

71 Remember, O Lord, the presidents, even all the presidents of thy church, that thy right hand may exalt them, with all their families, and their immediate connections, that their names may be perpetuated and had in everlasting remembrance from generation to generation.

verse 71 “even all the presidents of thy church” The prayer is for all those who hold leadership positions, that is, for those who preside in the Church. This petition would include everyone from general authorities to local leaders, and priesthood quorum leaders, at all levels of administration.

72 Remember all thy church, O Lord, with all their families, and all their immediate connections, with all their sick and afflicted ones, with all the poor and meek of the earth; that the kingdom, which thou hast set up without hands, may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth;

verse 72 Joseph’s next several requests refer to the fulfillment of specific scriptures concerning the Church in the latter days. Verse 72 prays for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel concerning the latter-day kingdom (Daniel 2:44-45; see also D&C 35:27; 65:2). Verse 73 refers to the fulfillment of several scriptures which prophesy that the Church will “come forth out of the wilderness.” These prophecies may be found in JST-Revelation 12:5-7; D&C 5:14; Song of Solomon 6:10; D&C 33:5; and D&C 105:31. Verse 74 refers to Revelation 21:2; Isaiah 61:10; Isaiah 64:1; D&C 133:40, 44; Isaiah 40:4-5. Verse 75 refers to 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Verse 76 refers to 2 Corinthians 5:2-4; Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 7:9; 19:8; 1 Peter 5:4; JST-Hebrews 11:40; and D&C 58:4.

73 That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;

74 And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens, and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted, the rough places made smooth; that thy glory may fill the earth;

75 That when the trump shall sound for the dead, we shall be caught up in the cloud to meet thee, that we may ever be with the Lord;

76 That our garments may be pure, that we may be clothed upon with robes of righteousness, with palms in our hands, and crowns of glory upon our heads, and reap eternal joy for all our sufferings.

77 O Lord God Almighty, hear us in these our petitions, and answer us from heaven, thy holy habitation, where thou sittest enthroned, with glory, honor, power, majesty, might, dominion, truth, justice, judgment, mercy, and an infinity of fulness, from everlasting to everlasting.

verse 77 “O Lord God Almighty, hear us” This verse and the next mark the climax of the prayer, in which God is asked to accept the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. This part of the prayer was answered on April 3, 1836, when the Savior appeared to Joseph and Oliver in the temple and accepted its dedication (D&C 110:7).

78 O hear, O hear, O hear us, O Lord! And answer these petitions, and accept the dedication of this house unto thee, the work of our hands, which we have built unto thy name;

verse 78 “O hear, O hear, O hear us, O Lord!” The threefold “O hear, O hear, O hear,” is reminiscent of the threefold “Holy, holy, holy,” called the *trishagion*, with which the seraphim and other heavenly beings praise God (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). This connection is likely intended because the saints are associated with the praise of the seraphim in the following verse (verse 79). The threefold address may be linked symbolically to the threefold nature of the Godhead.

79 And also this church, to put upon it thy name. And help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne, with acclamations of praise, singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb!

verse 79 “And also this church, to put upon it thy name.” The dedicatory prayer presented not only the Kirtland Temple to the Lord for his acceptance and approval but also the Church itself. Both the building and its builders sought to have the name of the Lord, symbolizing his ownership and his authority or power placed upon them. The Lord’s acceptance of this house (D&C 110:6-7) of necessity also implied the acceptance, collectively speaking, of those who sacrificed to build it.

“those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne” Apparently there are animal-like creatures that reside in God’s presence called seraphs or seraphim (Isaiah 6:6). The singular form is seraph. Seraphim are apparently a high order of animals that serve the Lord in his heavenly court. Their name comes from the Hebrew root *sarap*, which means “to burn.” The name seraphim is plural and therefore means “the burning ones” or “bright, shiny ones” which likely refers to their glory.

Many animals and plants live in God’s presence, and it is likely that we have never heard of or seen many of them. John the Revelator saw and heard such animals in God’s presence (Revelation 5:8-14), and Joseph Smith recorded how these animals praised and glorified God (*TPJS*, 291-92).

In D&C 109:79, Joseph Smith describes Seraphs in God’s presence. Joseph refers to them as “bright, shining seraphs.” Joseph also taught that God dwells in “everlasting burnings” and that righteous beings (human and animal) dwell with him in a state of continual burning or glory (*TPJS*, 372-73, 347, 361).

Another type of winged heavenly creature that deserves mention is the cherub (singular) or cherubim (plural). Ezekiel teaches that cherubim also have hands and faces (Ezekiel 10:7, 14). Mesopotamian tradition and art represent them as winged bulls with human faces, but this need not necessarily correspond with the truth.

An alternate explanation of seraphim and cherubim is that they are angels in the celestial presence of God who belong to the human family. Based on the evidence contained in this verse, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Seraphs are angels who

reside in the presence of God. . . . It is clear that seraphs include the unembodied spirits of pre-existence, for our Lord ‘looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made.’ Whether the name seraphs also applies to perfected and resurrected angels is not clear” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 702-03).

“Hosanna to God and the Lamb” The word “Hosanna” is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that literally means “save now.” Its meaning might be extended to something like “grant us salvation.” It is often associated with the arrival of the Lord at his temple, whether Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem to visit the temple there, or the arrival of the divine presence at a temple dedication in the modern Church. We might also shout “Hosannah” whenever the word, Spirit, or presence of God is manifested among us. This line may be most readily recognized from the chorus of W. W. Phelps’s hymn “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning,” which was composed specifically for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple and which has been sung at every temple dedication since that time.

80 And let these, thine anointed ones, be clothed with salvation, and thy saints shout aloud for joy. Amen, and Amen.

verse 80 “these, thine anointed ones” That is, the saints who had received and would yet receive their initiatory ordinances in the Kirtland Temple.

The temple was a magnificent structure of stone, timber, and plaster which so far exceeded what the saints had thought possible that its completion was deemed a miracle of God. The temple seated about 1,000 persons on its ground floor, which the Kirtland Saints used as a meetinghouse, much like a modern chapel. The upper story was very similar to the ground floor and was used by the School of the Prophets and the School of the Elders and for priesthood quorum meetings. An attic story of the temple provided administrative space and offices for the First Presidency and other general authorities. It as in one of these spaces, for example, that the Egyptian mummies and papyrus rolls were kept after the temple was completed.

Brief Historical Setting

1836 April

Seven days after the dedication on Sunday, April 3, after a large priesthood meeting that included instruction and administration of the sacrament, Joseph and Oliver retired near one of the pulpits behind a curtained partition to kneel in prayer. As they did so, a glorious vision was granted to them. They were visited not only by three messengers who restored vital priesthood keys, but also by the Lord Jesus Christ himself who stood upon the breastwork of the pulpit [**D&C 110 - Restoration of Keys of the Priesthood**].

Section 110 Restoration of Keys of the Priesthood

Both the ground floor and the upper floor of the Kirtland Temple could be divided into halves or into quarters by lowering heavy curtains hung from the ceilings. This allowed the temple to be divided into separate meeting rooms or classrooms as needed. In addition, the pulpits at the ends of each hall were also surrounded by their own curtains, or veils, which could be raised or lowered to create a space separated from the rest of the temple and from the congregation. It was in this smaller space of the veiled pulpits at the west end of the ground floor that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the series of visions recorded as section 110.

By early April 1836, many priesthood bearers had received the partial endowment which the Lord had revealed prior to that date. This partial endowment included the ordinances of washings, anointings, and the washing of feet. The full temple endowment was not to be revealed to the Prophet Joseph until 1842 in Nauvoo. The complete temple endowment was therefore received incrementally over a period of a few years.

A major event in the restoration of the temple ordinances and, indeed, one of the most significant visions of the ages took place in the Kirtland Temple, seven days after its dedication, on Easter Sunday, April 3, 1836. In the morning, a congregation of more than eight hundred heard sermons delivered by Thomas B. Marsh (then President of the Twelve) and David W. Patten (also an apostle). In the afternoon, the Presidency and the apostles participated in administering and passing the sacrament. Then Joseph Smith, the President of the High Priesthood, and Oliver Cowdery, who had been ordained Assistant President of the Church in December 1834, retired behind the curtains, which had been lowered near the pulpits, and knelt in prayer. As they did so, the heavens were opened to them, and they participated in the glorious series of revelations recorded in section 110.

Joseph's own account of the events of this important day is as follows: "Attended meeting in the Lord's House, and assisted the other Presidents of the Church in seating the congregation, and then became an attentive listener to the preaching from the stand. Thomas B. Marsh and David W. Patten spoke in the forenoon to an attentive audience of about one thousand persons. In the afternoon, I assisted the other Presidents in distributing the Lord's Supper to the Church, receiving it from the Twelve, whose privilege it was to officiate at the sacred desk this day. After having performed this service to my brethren, I retired to the pulpit, the veils being dropped, and bowed myself with Oliver Cowdery, in solemn and silent prayer. After rising from prayer, the following vision was opened to both of us" (*HC*, 2:434-35).

In New Testament times during the Savior's ministry on earth, Peter, James, and John had an experience strikingly analogous to this experience had by Joseph and

Oliver. The experience of Peter, James, and John is recorded in Matthew 16 and 17. Approximately six months before the death of the Savior, he spoke with his disciples at Caesarea Philippi. The Lord asked his disciples, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter was commended for his testimony and told that his witness had come by revelation. Peter was then told that he was to receive the “keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Within one week, the Lord’s promise was fulfilled. Jesus took his chief apostles, Peter, James, and John, to a high mountain to pray. On that mountain (probably Mount Hermon located near Caesarea Philippi) Jesus was “transfigured,” that is, he showed himself to his three apostles in his glory. He granted this great blessing and privilege to them as an additional witness to them of his true identity. Moses and Elijah appeared and bestowed upon the three apostles the keys of the priesthood.

What are these keys? And why is it necessary that they be restored? Keys are the right of presidency, the directing power to carry out specific priesthood functions here on earth. Peter, James, and John and also Joseph and Oliver already had the Melchizedek Priesthood and apostolic authority. What additional authority or power did they need? Section 110 contains the answers! Read on!

The oldest manuscript of section 110, in the handwriting of Warren Cowdery, appears in Joseph Smith’s journal and was written sometime in 1836. The revelation was first published in the *Deseret News* (November 6, 1852) and was first included in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876 at the direction of Brigham Young.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 110 Restoration of the Keys of the Priesthood

D&C 110:1-4 We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow.

Vision of the Lord Jesus Christ (verses 1-10)

1 The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

verse 1 “The veil was taken from our minds” This veil separates the realm of the divine from the realm of the human and the temporal. To create the conditions for mortal probation, or testing, this veil was drawn across our minds at birth, and it will not be entirely removed until the resurrection. Until then, the veil is a barrier to the flow of information from God’s side to our own. Through obedience and righteousness, the veil can become thinner for an individual, thus allowing a greater flow of light and knowledge from God. In some cases, the veil can be temporarily removed altogether. The Lord has promised that “the veil of darkness shall soon be rent” (D&C 38:8), and the Prophet Joseph counseled that “could we all come together with one heart and one mind in

perfect faith the veil might as well be rent today as next week or any other time” (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 20).

2 We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

verse 2 “the breastwork of the pulpit” The word *breastwork* usually refers to a low wall built for defensive purposes. It is the same as a parapet. Here, it seems likely it refers to a raised border or wall around the edge of a pulpit.

“under his feet was a paved work of pure gold” In a vision of the celestial kingdom received ten weeks earlier, on January 21, 1836, Joseph described the streets of that kingdom as having “the appearance of being paved with gold” (D&C 137:4). Likewise, John described the street of the heavenly city as being “pure gold” in his vision (Revelation 21:21). What a change from usual human values is shown in a city where gold is used for paving the streets!

3 His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

verse 3 “His eyes were as a flame of fire” The description of the Lord in his glory given here is similar to that given in the book of Revelation (1:14-16). John’s revelation was also received “on the Lord’s day” (Revelation 1:10). There are other similarities between the description of Jesus’s appearance to Joseph and Oliver in section 110 and his appearance to John in Revelation (for example, “the first and the last”—D&C 110:4 and Revelation 1:11). It may be that the use of simile here (his eyes were as a flame, etc.) is influenced by the language of John in Revelation 1:11, 14-16.

4 I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.

verse 4 “I am the first and the last” The language of this verse is reminiscent of the Gospel of John. In that Gospel, Jesus uses the statement “I am” over and over as a play upon the name of God as revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:14, compare John 8:58; 18:4-6). In this verse, the three additional “I am” statements might be understood to refer to Jesus’s roles as Creator (Revelation 1:8, 11), as the Lamb of God (Revelation 5:6, 12), and as Redeemer (1 John 2:1; D&C 45:3), respectively.

5 Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice.

verse 5 “Behold, your sins are forgiven you” Each time a mortal person stands in the presence of Deity, that Deity pronounces that his sins are forgiven. A cleansing is necessary for a mortal to be able to abide the presence of God. The

forgiveness of sins (justification) is also intimately related to the process of spiritual growth (sanctification) and occurs repeatedly throughout our lives as we strive to obey. The Lord does not reveal to an individual an increment of an attribute of God (gift of the Spirit) without first justifying or forgiving that individual.

6 Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name.

verse 6 “who have, with their might, built this house” The blessing pronounced here by the Savior is for all who sacrificed their means to build the Kirtland Temple. It was possible to donate toward the building of the temple but to do it perfunctorily or not “with one’s might,” that is, without a real, material sacrifice and therefore to miss out on the blessing pronounced here.

7 For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house.

verse 7 “I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here” In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the prophet Joseph asked, among other things, that the Lord would “accept the dedication of this house” (D&C 109:78). The Lord answers that prayer in this verse. What comfort this verse must have been for those saints who sacrificed to build the temple.

“and my name shall be here” Although it is true that members take the name of Christ upon them at the time of their baptism and subsequently each time they partake of the sacrament, this verse clarified that there is a further sense of receiving “the name” specifically linked to the temple (compare D&C 110:7). Those who take upon themselves God’s name are empowered to act “in the name” of God.

8 Yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house.

verse 8 “I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them” For a convenient summary of some of the known divine appearances and other spiritual manifestations to the saints in the Kirtland Temple, see the introductory commentary to section 109.

9 Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house.

verse 9 “the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice” All of those belonging to this great final dispensation of the gospel who hope to be exalted in the celestial kingdom of God rely, among other things, upon the keys of the priesthood delivered to Joseph and Oliver in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836.

10 And the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands; and this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people. Even so. Amen.

verse 10 “this is the beginning of the blessing” The dedication and acceptance of the Kirtland Temple marked the beginning of the reception by the saints of the blessings of the temple in the latter days. Indeed, more blessings would be received by Joseph and Oliver that very day with the visits of Moses, Elias, and Elijah. However, the endowment at Kirtland consisted of preparatory or initiatory temple ordinances only, including the washing of feet and other washings and anointings. The full endowment ceremony as known today was not received until 1842 in Nauvoo, Illinois.

Vision of Moses (verse 11)

11 After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

verse 11 “After this vision closed” Joseph and Oliver did not have one single vision but rather a series of visions in the Kirtland Temple, in which prophets holding priesthood keys from prior dispensations appeared one after another to bestow those keys upon their modern counterparts. It should be noted that section 110 was a joint vision witnessed by Joseph and Oliver simultaneously and therefore uses the first-person plural we and us throughout. Oliver Cowdery was at this time the assistant president of the Church (1834-37) and therefore received the visions and keys together with Joseph. He was not, however, equal in authority to Joseph (D&C 43:2-4; 107:91-92).

“Moses . . . committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel” Moses restored the “keys of the gathering of Israel.” He was the prophet entrusted with the task of gathering ancient Israel out of their bondage in the world (Egypt) and establishing them in a promised land of their inheritance. Moses holds the keys, or the right to preside, over that particular work, and if ever that work is to be accomplished, it must be through Moses—with his approval and with his keys and authority—or it cannot be done. Moses had once before committed these keys to Peter, James, and John for use in their dispensation of the meridian of time, but they were not able to gather Israel (Matthew 17:1-13). It was for this reason—the physical transmission of priesthood keys to Peter, James, and John—that Moses did not die at the end of his mortal ministry but was translated, or taken up bodily from the earth without experiencing death. Both Moses and Elijah were changed from translated beings to resurrected beings after the

resurrection of Christ, and thus they appeared in the Kirtland Temple as resurrected rather than translated beings (D&C 133:55; 138:41, 45, 51).

During his mortal ministry, the prophet Moses promised Israel that in the day of their repentance “the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee” (Deuteronomy 30:3-4). The fulfillment of that ancient promise is one of the greatest works of the latter days, and only Moses could give the keys to Joseph and Oliver for the work to begin.

Consequently each president of the Church holds the keys or power to gather modern Israel. Even as Moses held the keys to lead ancient Israel out of bondage in Egypt, so the President of the Church received the keys to call and lead modern Israel out of the bondage of today’s world. He has the keys not only to gather Israel from the “four parts of the earth,” but also he has the keys for “leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north” (see also D&C 133:26- 34 and Jeremiah 16:14-16). The earliest recorded commandment of the Lord in this dispensation to begin the gathering was given in September of 1830 (D&C 29:7).

It must be noted that the terms “Israel,” “Ephraim,” and the “ten tribes” are often used synonymously in scripture (see, for example, 1 Nephi 17 and Isaiah 7). This ambiguity can lead to difficulty if one is not sure in which context “Israel” is being used. After the reign of Solomon (about 975 BC), “Israel” usually means just the ten tribes in the north of Palestine (as in Hosea 1:11). This usage leads to further ambiguity, for in some passages of scripture, “the gathering of Israel” refers to the eventual gathering of all twelve tribes, whereas in other passages it may refer only to the restoration of the ten tribes.

“and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north” There have been at least two main theories regarding the “lost” ten tribes in this dispensation. Each has had its advocates among the brethren. First, some have suggested that the ten tribes are not really lost but rather are scattered or dispersed among the nations of the earth. They are “lost” in identity but not in person. We know where they are but we don’t know who they are. Also they no longer know who they are. Second, they are thought by some to still be living together as a group in some obscure location. A subterranean location “in the north”—near the north pole has even been suggested. It has even been theorized that they may be living together on some extra-terrestrial sphere, such as another planet. It would seem that the former theory is the more likely and that the “land of the north” is only a figurative allusion.

If the ten tribes are scattered throughout the earth, then why is their location so often referred to as “the north” (Jeremiah 3:12), “the land of the north” (Zechariah 2:6), or “the north countries” (Ether 13:11)? There are several possible reasons. One may

simply be that the tribes are scattered predominantly, though not exclusively, throughout the northern hemisphere. Another reason is the geography of Israel itself. Even though Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome (the powers most responsible for scattering Israel) were actually located to the east and the west of Palestine, because of the topography of the land, historically their armies approached Palestine from the north to the south and departed from the south to the north. This meant that their captives were always carried away “into the north.”

Another reason “the north” had evil connotations in Jewish symbolism was that the northernmost city of Israel, Dan, later became particularly associated with idolatry and apostasy (1 Kings 12:28-30). This may be the reason why Dan, the tribe of the north, was later omitted from John’s list of the twelve tribes in his Revelation (7:4-8). Another reason why the “north” symbolized evil for the ancients was that they oriented themselves on maps and so forth, not to the north, as we do, but to the east toward the rising sun. This put their right hand, which was associated with good things and clean uses, on their south, while the left hand, associated with unclean uses, was to the north. Benjamin, which means “son of the right hand,” was a favorite of Jacob and settled, of course, in the south (or right-hand side) of the promised land. Good things, like the gold of Ophir or the Queen of Sheba, came from the right, or south, while bad things, like the armies of Assyria and Babylon, came from the left, or north. Even today, as every “lefty” knows, the right hand still gets preferential treatment. Anciently, the two hands, and the two directions they represented, were not “right and left” but “right and wrong.” This concept is reflected in the Latin word for “left,” which is *sinister*. So, anciently, the north was associated symbolically with idolatry, apostasy, and political defeat, and, as the direction of the left hand, with uncleanness. The gathering of Israel will bring the ten tribes back from this figurative north land—even though they are actually scattered in all four directions (3 Nephi 20:13; Psalm 107:3; Isaiah 42:5-6).

And yet, part of the gathering of Israel in the latter days will include a literal return of all the twelve tribes of Israel to their ancient inheritances in the Old World. Just as the ten tribes were literally taken out of the Holy Land to the north and thence to all nations, so shall their return, at some future time, be literally from among all nations to re-enter the Holy Land from the north. The children of Ephraim, one of the ten tribes, who have been “wanderers among the nations” (Hosea 9:17), have already begun to be gathered and have begun “to push the people together” (Deuteronomy 33:17). Eventually, that gathering will bring about the restoration of all the tribes of Israel. Besides the establishment of an American Zion, this will include a formal return of representatives from each of the ten northern tribes to their former inheritances in Palestine and also a return of Judah and Benjamin to Jerusalem and their inheritance in the south. The breach between the two kingdoms (Judah and Israel) will be healed, and Israel will be restored—all its twelve tribes—to all of its biblical inheritance in fulfillment of the promises made to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

However, it must be added that not all the descendants of Israel who will be gathered in the latter days could possibly fit into Palestine in the Old World or into Jackson County in the New. These two locations will likely be administrative centers with other stakes or gathering places located throughout the world.

People are “gathered” in two separate ways—spiritually and temporally. They are gathered spiritually as they are led out of the captivity of apostasy and accept the Savior and his gospel and are “restored to the true Church and fold of God” (2 Nephi 9:2). They are gathered temporally as they go where the saints of God are congregated.

In the early days of the Church, a convert evidenced his devotion to the faith, after baptism, by relocating to where the “body of Christ” was found—in those days Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, or the Great Basin. It is clear, however, that as early as 1833 the Prophet Joseph understood that the time would come when the concept of gathering would change. In D&C 101:21 we read that a day would eventually come “when there is found no more room for them [the gathering saints]; and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion.” By the end of the 19th century, saints were told to remain in their native lands and thus to build up the stakes of Zion in all the earth. In August of 1972, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, in speaking to some saints in Mexico and Central America, said: “The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is Mexico; the place of gathering for the Brazilian, Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth. Japan is for the Japanese; Korea is for the Koreans; Australia is for the Australians; every nation is the gathering place for its own people” (*Ensign*, July 1973, 5).

Thus, through Moses’s visit, the keys of gathering Israel are restored. The Church could now begin to gather Israel. But, wait a moment! Hadn’t they already been doing missionary work and thus “gathering Israel?” How did we have the authority to do missionary work before Moses’s visit? The answer is that the process of gathering Israel and thus the keys of this process include more than just missionary work. The world must be prepared for the gathering by establishing Zion, so that Israel might have a place to gather. The Jews also must gather to the area of Israel, and we have dedicated that land for their return on more than one occasion. Certainly missionary work is an important part of the gathering, but there are other things which we, as a Church, must do to prepare.

To how many places will the tribes of Israel be gathered? And who will be gathered to each place? Contemporary saints often think of “the gathering of [all] Israel” as having two component parts: the establishment of Zion (the New Jerusalem) on the American continent and the return of the Jews to the Jerusalem of old. This much is true. The New Jerusalem, the American Zion, will be primarily inhabited by the posterity of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh. Judea, together with Old Jerusalem, will be

returned to the tribe of Judah—the Jews. There is yet another aspect of the gathering. It is the “leading the ten tribes from the land of the north” to their ancestral inheritances in the Holy Land. It is true that the Jews will gather to the land of Palestine, but the rest of the Holy Land will be settled by the other tribes of Israel according to their ancient inheritances (Ether 13:6; Hosea 1:11).

Vision of Elias (verse 12)

12 After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.

verse 12 “After this, Elias appeared” There’s that confusing name again—Elias! Who is this Elias who appeared to Joseph and Oliver? Before considering Elias’s identity, review the three possible definitions of Elias in the commentary for D&C 27:6. Because of this verse of scripture, Elder Bruce R. McConkie postulated yet a fourth possible explanation for the name “Elias” in his book *Mormon Doctrine*. He suggested that there might have been a prophet in the days of Abraham whose name was “Elias.” Elder McConkie admitted that we know nothing else about such a prophet, and he even suggests that this Elias may have been Melchizedek or even Abraham himself—after all, we will learn that this Elias did restore to the earth the “dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” (see below). To summarize, we don’t know for sure who this Elias was. He might have been Noah, a prophet named Elias from the days of Abraham, or another “Elias” or messenger such as Melchizedek or Abraham. We do know that this Elias was not Elijah, because Elijah will appear to Joseph and Oliver in the next verse.

“committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” So Elias came and gave to Joseph and Oliver something called “the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham.” What is that? When Abraham was on the earth, he was blessed that his posterity or seed would become as numerous as “the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Genesis 22:15-18). Thus, the “dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” is the divine promise that in this world, and continuing into the next phase of man’s existence, his posterity will continue to increase until they become as innumerable as the stars or the sands upon the sea shore. Thus, because of these keys restored by Elias, all who receive celestial marriage in the temple become heirs of the blessings and “promises of the fathers.” That is, they receive the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Those who receive the ordinance of celestial marriage are promised a posterity as numerous as the dust particles of the earth, “both in the world and out of the world” (D&C 132:30-32). This implies, of course, that the procreative process will continue into the next phase of our existence.

Those descendants of Abraham who would hope to receive these “promises of the father” have a solemn obligation. They are the custodians of the gospel on the

earth. Whenever it has been lost from the earth, it has been restored through Abraham's descendants. While the gospel is on the earth, Abraham's family has the responsibility to share it with others. President David O. McKay's "every member a missionary" was not just a catchy slogan to keep us busy. It was a reiteration of a sacred obligation and covenant that each of Abraham's descendants made in their premortal existence. In order to claim the blessings made to Abraham's posterity—exaltation and innumerable posterity—we must also assume the obligations of the covenant people.

Vision of Elijah (verses 13-15)

13 After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

verse 13 "Elijah the prophet . . . stood before us" Please review the material on Elijah in the background material for section 2.

Elijah was the prophet of the ninth century BC, whose story is told in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2, and who was the last of the Old Testament prophets to hold the keys of the sealing power. Like Moses, Elijah did not die but was translated (2 Kings 2:11) so that he could return and physically bestow his priesthood keys upon Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:3). For roughly one thousand years from Elijah to Christ, the power to perform temple sealings, it seems was not upon the earth.

14 Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

15 To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

verses 14-15 "spoken of by the mouth of Malachi" Again, see the introductory commentary for section 2.

What exactly did Elijah restore? He restored the keys of the sealing power. This may seem like a question with an all-too-obvious answer, but what precisely is the sealing power? Apparently there are three distinct correct answers to this question. The general sealing power consists of three separate parts, each with a distinct definition:

1. In the first, the root "seal" in "sealing power" is interpreted as meaning connect. The sealing power is the power to connect people together in families for eternity. Specifically, "sealing" refers to the marriage of a husband and wife and to the joining together of children and parents in relationships that are to endure forever. The sealing together of husband, wife, and children in eternal family units is the culminating

ordinance of the priesthood, to which all other ordinances are preparatory. It must be performed by one holding the “sealing power.”

2. In the second definition, to “seal” does not mean to connect. Rather it means to certify as authentic. Signets and “seals” have been used for centuries to indicate authenticity or proper authority. In the secular world today licenses, diplomas, legal documents, and the like, bear seals that officially attest to their authenticity. So it is with matters of the eternities. This sealing power is the priesthood power given to the Lord’s authorized servants to perform certain acts on earth and have them recognized (sealed) or validated in heaven. In this context, the word “seal” appears many times in the scriptures. Jesus Christ was “sealed” by God the Father (John 6:27). Paul reminded ancient saints that God had anointed and “sealed” them (2 Corinthians 1:21-22) and told others they “were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest [assurance] of our inheritance until the redemption” (Ephesians 1:13-14). John spoke of the servants of God being sealed in their foreheads (Revelation 7:3). This is the authority by which “all covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations” can be “made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” and receive “efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection of the dead” (D&C 132:7). Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “All things that are not sealed by this power have an end when men are dead. Unless a baptism has this enduring seal, it will not admit a person to the Celestial Kingdom . . . All things gain enduring force and validity because of the sealing power” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 615-16).

3. But there is even more to this sealing power! Consider the account of the Lord’s giving to Nephi, the son of Helaman, the “sealing power.” Just exactly what is this power that the Lord is bestowing upon Nephi? It is defined in the verses which follow: “And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done. And if ye shall say unto this mountain, be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done. And behold, if ye shall say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass. And now behold, I command you, that ye shall go and declare unto this people, that thus saith the Lord God, who is the Almighty: Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction” (Helaman 10:8-11). So what is this awesome power? It is simply the power possessed by its recipient to ask for anything he feels is appropriate, and it shall be brought to pass by divine mandate. And how did Nephi qualify to receive this great blessing? The Lord previously explained to him: “I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee *according to thy word*, for [I know that] thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will” (Helaman 10:5, italics mine). The bestowal of this power is a manifestation of the Lord’s ultimate confidence in its recipient that the power will not be misused. In this context, the prophet Elijah, who also possessed the sealing power at the time of the wicked Israelite king Ahab, sealed up the heavens so that there

would be no rain: “As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1).

The mission of John the Baptist in restoring the Aaronic Priesthood and the mission of Peter, James, and John in restoring the Melchizedek Priesthood were vitally important, but they would have come to nothing were it not for the return of the prophet Elijah. For Elijah brought the power to seal all that was done in the Church and make it as sure and certain in heaven as upon the earth. He brought the power to seal up the saints to eternal life (Revelation 7:3; D&C 68:12). He brought the power to seal all contracts, covenants, and relationships—including, most importantly, family relationships—with the power, or guarantee, of Almighty God (D&C 132:7). As Joseph Smith said, “While the spirit of Elias is a forerunner, the power of Elijah is sufficient to make our calling and election sure” (Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 208). A partial analogy might be to say that John the Baptist prepares for a contract by providing pen, paper, and ink. Peter, James and John draw up an air-tight legal document and see that it is properly signed and witnessed. Then Elijah, like a notary public, applies the great seal that makes it a “done deal” both here and hereafter.

The president of the Church today holds and exercises the keys and power of sealing on earth, including all of its three vital parts. The president can designate parts of this power to others for the purpose of the administration of the Kingdom of God on the earth. For example, general authorities of the Church, the presidencies of temples, and a limited number of officiators in each temple receive part of this sealing power during their tenure. After one is approved by the First Presidency to receive the sealing power, the president of the Church, one of his counselors, or a member of the Twelve Apostles specifically designated by the president confers the sealing power upon him by the laying on of hands. This is the specific authority to perform the temple sealing ordinances, the eternal connecting together of families.

It makes sense that such power would have been given to faithful prophets in the Old Testament and among the Nephites as well as apostles of the New Testament. One might well wonder if the original and unspoiled Old Testament may have contained such promises. We know that our present Old Testament does not.

Elijah came to “plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers” whereby the “hearts of the children [should] turn to their fathers” (D&C 2:2). Through the temple ordinances, God’s promises to the fathers—the promises pertaining to the gospel and eternal increase (Abraham 2:8-11)—are extended to all God’s children. The hearts of the children turn to the ancient fathers because the children are now participants in and recipients of the blessings of the fathers. Being profoundly grateful for such privileges, members of the Church (motivated by the “Spirit of Elijah”) also find their hearts turning to their more immediate fathers, and they do all within their power (through genealogical research and subsequent temple work) to insure that the blessings of the ancient fathers are enjoyed by ancestry as well as posterity.

We have previously read the following: “If it were not so [that is, if Elijah had not come to restore the powers by which families could be sealed everlastingly], the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his [Christ’s] coming” (D&C 2:3). Why? Simply because the earth would not have accomplished its foreordained purpose—to establish on its face a family system patterned after the order of heaven. All covenants entered into by man upon the earth would be of no force in the eternities. If there were no binding and sealing powers whereby families could be cemented forever, then the plans and designs and schemes and activities of mortal man would be basically purposeless from an eternal perspective. (Some of the above material quoted or paraphrased from the essay on D&C 110 by Milton V. Backman, Jr., and Robert L. Millet in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 422-29.)

When we say that “families” can be cemented together forever, we may give the mistaken impression that in the celestial heaven, for all eternity, there will be several families all sealed into those separate family groups. This is an error. In the celestial kingdom, there will only be one family. And every individual in that kingdom will be sealed to each and every one of the celestial beings there. Those doing genealogical research are not only seeking to seal families “vertically.” That is, they are not just pursuing one or two names and following them back in time as far as possible. They are also extending their research “laterally.” That is they seeking to find the connections and seal many family names together. It is by this process that ultimately every celestial being will be sealed to every other celestial being, and that one family will persist and be added to eternally. It is exciting to contemplate just what roles this family will play in the eternal lives of each of us who is blessed with a celestial resurrection!

It has been taught that Sunday April 3, 1836, was the day of the annual Jewish Seder or Passover meal. This was that night that Jews throughout the world left out a cup in the hope that the Prophet Elijah would return to the earth to announce the coming of the Messiah. Elijah did return that day, but not to the Jews. He returned to the temple in Kirtland, Ohio (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *CR*, April 1936, 75). To be more precise, however, Stephen D. Ricks has pointed out that in 1836 the seder would actually have taken place on the evening of April 1. “Thus, it would be inaccurate to claim an absolute chronological correspondence of the two events. However, in view of the long-standing use of the word Passover for the entire week following the fifteenth of Nisan, it would certainly be correct to say that Elijah came during the Passover season” (“The Appearance of Elijah and Moses in the Kirtland Temple and the Jewish Passover,” *BYU Studies* 23:4 [1983]).

16 Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.

verse 16 “the keys of this dispensation” “This dispensation” refers to the present dispensation of the fulness of times. All of the keys given to prophets of previous dispensations of the gospel on the earth are now restored to earth. The “great and dreadful day of the Lord,” of course is the day of his second coming to earth.

Brief Historical Setting

1836 June

When the saints fled Jackson County, Missouri, in the fall of 1833 and the winter of 1833-34, many of them crossed the Missouri River into Clay County. As already mentioned, the people of Clay County generally warmly welcomed the saints into their midst. It was understood, however, that the saints’ stay in Clay County would be temporary. When it became evident that the exiles would not be able to return to Jackson County very soon, if at all, the people of Clay County became uneasy. Particularly were the old settlers concerned because some of the saints began buying land and building homes, and they gave the appearance of settling permanently.

On June 29, 1836, a mass meeting was held at the court house in Liberty, and a resolution was passed calling upon the saints to withdraw from the county. In delivering the resolution to the saints, a committee of Missourians verbally offered to assist the saints in finding another suitable location if they would agree to move. Two days later, the saints held a meeting of their own and adopted a reply to the Missourians’ resolution. Essentially they agreed to move in order to keep the peace.

At this time, northern Missouri was sparsely settled and was suggested to the Church as a suitable site where they might live alone—unmolested and in peace. In the fall of 1836, a number of families began moving to Far West, then located in Ray County. The Missourians seemed satisfied and even expressed the idea that if the Mormons were willing to settle that prairie country, “let them have it and welcome.” The northern part of Ray County was even divided into two additional counties to accommodate the saints. One of these, Caldwell, would be “especially for Mormons.” The other, Daviess, was considered “the Missourians’.” A representative to the state legislature from Clay County, Alexander W. Doniphan, was helpful to the saints and played a major role in the creation of Caldwell and Daviess Counties. Doniphan would later establish himself as a genuine friend of the saints, and would even intervene at a critical moment, and probably become instrumental in saving the life of Joseph Smith.

An agreement was reached that the Mormons would live only in Caldwell County and that they would not settle in other counties without consent of the settlers already there. This was, of necessity, only a verbal agreement since any such agreement in writing was obviously an unconstitutional restraint for any free citizen.

The saints rapidly left Clay County and moved north. They did make agreements with the citizens of Dewitt in Carroll County and those of Daviess County to allow some

Mormon settlements in those areas. These concessions were made by the Missourians in exchange for money.

Caldwell County in 1836 was a wilderness. By the spring of 1838, however, the population was more than 5,000. In Far West, by that time, there were “one hundred and fifty houses, four dry goods stores, three family groceries, half a dozen blacksmith shops, a printing establishment, and two hotels. A large and comfortable school house had been built in 1836 and served also as a church and courthouse” (B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:425).

Section 111 The Salem Experience

In the summer of 1836, a Brother Jonathan Burgess, a member of the Church from Massachusetts, came to Joseph and told him of a widow lady of Salem, Massachusetts, who was now deceased. Before her death, Brother Burgess had learned that this lady, also a member of the Church, had a treasure chest in her basement filled with gold, silver, jewels, and other precious things. Brother Burgess had spoken with her about her treasures and asked her what she intended to do with them. She told him that she intended to give them to the Church. Thus it seemed that the treasure was available for the taking, if only they could find it. Brother Burgess was the only one who had visited the home and knew of its location. The news of this treasure came at an opportune time, since the Church was struggling with an increasingly serious plague of debts.

Many factors had contributed to this debt. The loss of all church assets in Jackson County, Missouri, was estimated at \$175,000. Funds had been raised and spent in support of the displaced Missouri members. The costs of provisioning Zion's Camp had seriously depleted the resources of the saints who had contributed. The Church was still under divine commandment to raise money to purchase additional lands in Missouri (D&C 105:29). Finally, Joseph had borrowed tens of thousands of dollars to pay the financial demands of building the Kirtland Temple. It should be noted that the debts of the Church during this period were not due to foolishness or mismanagement. Rising land values in the Kirtland area had made it possible to keep securing loans for the Church with church-owned property used as collateral. Thus, the Church was land rich and cash poor. The debt problem was largely one of cash flow rather than of net worth.

So Joseph decided to take a trip to Salem to see if he could locate this treasure. He took with him Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery. They traveled first to New York City, where they spent several days with the church's creditors, and then they continued on to Salem, Massachusetts, arriving there on August 4. They were joined in Salem by Brigham Young and Lyman E. Johnson who were doing missionary work in the area. They rented a house in Salem and began looking for the widow's house. Brother Burgess met with them briefly and told them all he remembered about the house and its location, and then he disappeared. It seems that it had been some years since Brother Burgess had actually met with this woman, and considerable building had occurred since then, so that locating the house was going to be difficult. The group was in Salem for weeks looking for the treasure. They divided their time between preaching, sight seeing, and looking for the widow's house. They never found the house or the treasure.

While in Salem, in the house they had rented, Joseph received, in the presence of Brigham Young and Lyman E. Johnson, a revelation—section 111. A copy of section 111 in the handwriting of Willard Richards was included in the Manuscript History of the Church sometime before January 4, 1844. The revelation was first published in the *Deseret News* (December 25, 1852, 9) and was first included in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876.

1 I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies.

verse 1 A classic verse of scripture! Do we sense that the Lord may have had tongue-in-cheek here? What is a “folly” anyway? Perhaps it is best described as an honest mistake or an unwise decision made with good intentions.

In this verse and in subsequent verses, the Lord gives us a great example of how to deal with a folly committed by someone over whom we have responsibility. The Lord could have rebuked his young prophet and not let him off the hook for making this nearly fruitless trip to Salem. This would certainly have been embarrassing for Joseph and damaging to his self esteem. Instead, the Lord points out positive features of Joseph’s trip to Salem and provides encouragement for the “treasure” seekers. How often are we guilty of anger or abuse, both verbal and physical, when we are affected or inconvenienced by a folly of someone over whom we have authority—a child, an employee, or even a friend?

2 I have much treasure in this city for you, for the benefit of Zion, and many people in this city, whom I will gather out in due time for the benefit of Zion, through your instrumentality.

verse 2 “I have much treasure in this city for you” The Lord teaches that there is more treasure than just gold and silver here in Salem. This other treasure includes genealogical records (see verse 9).

“many people in this city, whom I will gather out in due time” In addition to the genealogical records, the Lord may be alluding to other potential treasures—contact with influential people, and potential converts.

Five years later, Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester were sent back to Salem. They were given a copy of the Salem revelation and told to fulfill it. They arrived in Salem in September 1841. They preached at public meetings, published a pamphlet, and challenged the notorious Mormon apostate, John C. Bennett, to public debate. Their efforts bore fruit. Within a year there were ninety members in Salem.

3 Therefore, it is expedient that you should form acquaintance with men in this city, as you shall be led, and as it shall be given you.

verse 3 “form acquaintance with men in this city” Joseph’s account of his time in Salem reveals a great deal of public relations work as well as public lectures and sermons. Joseph Smith and his associates visited most of the important people and places in the city, and several newspapers covered their activities while they were in Salem. It appears from all accounts that their visit left the community with a generally positive impression.

4 And it shall come to pass in due time that I will give this city into your hands, that you shall have power over it, insomuch that they shall not discover your secret parts; and its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours.

verse 4 “And it shall come to pass in due time” It seems likely that, even as of today, the whole story of Salem, Massachusetts, and Zion in the latter days has not yet been played out.

“they shall not discover your secret parts” In the Old Testament, this statement is a Hebrew idiom for being thoroughly and publicly humiliated. The Hebrew could be translated more literally “uncover your private parts,” and carries the connotation of being publicly stripped and humiliated (1 Samuel 5:9; Isaiah 3:17). In the context here, it is a promise that the brethren will not be publicly embarrassed or shamed.

“its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours” It would be hard to make a more explicit reference to financial treasure than this, and there will come a time when the wealth of Salem will be brought to adorn Zion’s fair head.

5 Concern not yourselves about your debts, for I will give you power to pay them.

verse 5 Two years before, the Lord had given Joseph Smith specific instructions and promises concerning his debts and those of the Church (D&C 104:79-86). The Lord had told Joseph that “in temporal labors thou shalt not have strength, for this is not thy calling” (D&C 24:9). Again, the Lord challenged the leaders of the Church to have faith in allowing him to deal with both Church debt and the redemption of Zion in his own due time. The promise concerning debt has been fulfilled. The promise concerning the physical Zion has not—as yet.

6 Concern not yourselves about Zion, for I will deal mercifully with her.

7 Tarry in this place, and in the regions round about;

verse 7 “Tarry in this place” One might think that Joseph, having learned that his purpose for going to Salem was “folly,” would have wanted to return promptly to Kirtland. But the Lord wanted Joseph in Salem for reasons of his own, and he would show Joseph where to go and what to do.

8 And the place where it is my will that you should tarry, for the main, shall be signalized unto you by the peace and power of my Spirit, that shall flow unto you.

verse 8 The word *signalized* means made evident, prominent, or eminent.

9 This place you may obtain by hire. And inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city;

verse 9 “**This place you may obtain by hire**” Joseph’s temporary lodgings on Union Street were acceptable to the Lord to serve as his base of operations in Salem.

“**inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city**” The Lord counsels Joseph to begin to do genealogical research. Salem was the county seat of Essex County, and many genealogical records were kept there. It was in that county that Robert Smith, the first of the Smith family in America, settled. Salem was the residence of many of the pioneer immigrants to America whose descendants joined the Church. The Smith family records were there in Salem.

10 For there are more treasures than one for you in this city.

11 Therefore, be ye as wise as serpents and yet without sin; and I will order all things for your good, as fast as ye are able to receive them. Amen.

verse 11 “**be ye as wise as serpents and yet without sin**” The Lord commands them to summon all their resources to do the Lord’s work and to remain pure. The dangerous “serpent” was prototypical of astuteness and cunning in the ancient world. Therefore, the Lord’s servants, in order to remain safe in the world, need to be “as wise as serpents.”

Brief Historical Setting

The spiritual high of the completion and dedication of the Kirtland Temple was followed by one of the lowest periods of our church’s history. The year following the Temple dedication saw a spirit of apostasy sweep through the Church. This apostasy even involved several members of the Quorum of the Twelve.

1837 July

In July 1837 the Lord warned Thomas B. Marsh that, as President of the Twelve, he should bring his quorum back into line [**D&C 112 - Thomas B. Marsh and the Quorum of Twelve**].

Section 112 Thomas B. Marsh and the Quorum of Twelve

This revelation was given July 23, 1837, through the prophet Joseph to Elder Thomas B. Marsh, then President of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. To assist in understanding section 112, some additional material on Brother Marsh is important. Also, at this point, it is vital to understand the difficult circumstances that had developed in Kirtland. As a resource for this latter material we will borrow from Milton V. Backman, Jr.'s, book *The Heaven's Resound* (310-66). Some materials will be quoted and some paraphrased.

The life of Thomas B. Marsh was, in a way, a tragedy. Had he not erred, he might well have become the President of the Church. Review the material on Brother Marsh in the introductory commentary for section 31. Recall also that section 31 was a personal revelation to him.

In the late spring of 1837, Brother Marsh, who was then President of the Twelve, received reports about an increasing opposition to the Prophet that was developing among some of the apostles. He thus decided it was necessary for the Quorum of the Twelve to meet together in Kirtland, and July 24 was set as the date for that meeting.

Prior to this meeting, Joseph had been inspired of the Lord to take positive action because of the ominous problems besetting the Church. He later wrote: "In this state of things, and but a few weeks before the Twelve were expecting to meet in full quorum, God revealed to me that something new must be done for the salvation of his Church. And on or about the first of June, 1837, Heber C. Kimball, one of the Twelve, was set apart by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, prayer and laying on of hands, of the First Presidency, to preside over a mission to England, to be the first foreign mission of the Church of Christ in the last days" (*HC*, 2:489). Joseph also sent apostle Orson Hyde to England with Elder Kimball, along with Willard Richards, an elder, Joseph Fielding, a priest, and others. These brethren departed from Kirtland on June 13, 1837.

When President Thomas Marsh arrived in Kirtland in July, he was distraught to learn that two of his quorum had already been sent to Europe by the First Presidency without his approval. Apparently, Marsh believed that only he, as quorum president, had authority to call the Twelve on foreign missions. Two months previously, in May of 1837, Brother Marsh had learned that Parley P. Pratt was planning, on his own, to go to England to preach the gospel. Elder Marsh felt that he should be the one deciding who should go to England and when they should go. He was thus upset with Parley, and on May 10, 1837, he wrote to Parley (unpublished letter) and ordered him not to go to England but rather to report to the meeting in Kirtland on July 24. The Quorum of the Twelve were charged with the responsibility of preaching the gospel abroad, and Thomas B. Marsh was president of that quorum. He thus felt that he should have been consulted before any missionaries were sent to England. He let Joseph know that he

considered Joseph's meddling in the affairs of the Quorum unwarranted. He obviously didn't understand the role of a prophet. The prophet can and must do whatever the Lord directs him to do.

It was in this setting that section 112 was received. A bit of irony occurred when section 112 was received on the very day that the missionaries in England preached the first sermon on British soil, July 23, 1837. It was also, of course, received one day before Brother Marsh was to meet with the Twelve. Section 112 gave Brother Marsh some direction in dealing with the rest of the Quorum, provided him with information concerning the future of his quorum, and instructed him on the relationship between his quorum and the First Presidency, especially with respect to foreign missions. Elder Marsh himself acted as scribe when this section was received.

At the time section 112 was received, some other problems were brewing in the life of Brother Marsh, but he was still in the Lord's favor. His major problems would come later. Let us jump to a year or so later and consider an incident in the life of Thomas Marsh that will define an important watershed in his apostasy. In 1838 in Far West, Missouri, the Marshes lived near the George HARRISES. Sister Harris and Sister Marsh shared a cow. They milked the cow and shared the milk. During this time, it became apparent to Sister Harris that Sister Marsh was sharing the milk but keeping an inordinate share of the cream for herself. Sister Marsh was accused and was angry and offended. Elder Marsh also became angry and defensive. Instead of quickly righting the wrong, Elder Marsh refused to admit any wrong doing on the part of his wife. The Marshes were warned to repent by the bishop. When they did not, a court was held and they were excommunicated in March of 1839.

After the death of his wife, Brother Marsh traveled to Florence, Nebraska, and was rebaptized in 1857. He came to Utah the same year. He settled in Spanish Fork and later moved to Ogden. He was a poor, shattered, and broken down old man. On several occasions, both in public and in private, he was heard to say, "If any of you want to see the effects of apostasy, look upon me" (*Succession in Priesthood*, Taylor, 11-13).

At the time section 112 was received, there were considerable problems within the Church in Kirtland, and members of the Quorum of the Twelve were involved. Joseph summarized this period of time by saying, "It seemed as though all the powers of earth and hell were combining their influence in an especial manner to overthrow the Church . . . many became disaffected toward me as though I were the sole cause of those very evils . . . which were actually brought upon us by the brethren not giving heed to my counsel" (*HC*, 2:487-89).

Let us look at this troubled time to help us understand the breadth of the problems that beset the Church.

The year following the dedication of the Kirtland Temple saw a spirit of pride, selfishness, disaffection, and apostasy sweep through the quorums of the Church. In the summer of 1837, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, witnesses to the Book of

Mormon, and other priesthood leaders met in the upper room of the Kirtland Temple. Throughout the preceding year many of these same individuals had witnessed, in that building, some of the most remarkable spiritual manifestations ever experienced in the history of the restoration movement. Now they were meeting to oppose the leadership of Joseph Smith. At this assembly, some persons who had once been faithful supporters of the Prophet recommended that he be replaced as president of the Church by David Whitmer. Others vehemently opposed this motion, including Brigham Young, and the brethren in attendance barely avoided coming to blows. According to Brigham Young, at this time “the knees of many of the strongest men in the Church faltered (Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 17).

The historical roots of apostasy among Kirtland saints reached back to a policy of community improvement and expansion, followed by a period of improved economic conditions, followed in turn by a year of economic disasters. After the temple was dedicated, many of the saints concentrated on enlarging their homes, erecting new dwellings and shops, and beautifying their community. A master plan for the improvement of Kirtland was drafted by Joseph in 1836. According to this plan, Kirtland was to be divided into rectangular plots and square blocks, with streets bisecting each other at right angles. In the fall and early winter of 1836, the saints were involved in various construction projects, seemed to be happy, and were participating in a vibrant program of community growth.

During this era of rapid growth, church leaders and other members were acquiring additional property in Kirtland. The land was needed to put into effect Joseph’s plan. After the temple was completed, many members who now had more time to devote to farming pursuits wanted enlarged farms to raise their standard of living and to adequately support their families. Property held by the members in 1836 was not considered sufficient to meet current needs and future plans. Additional land was needed, not only for those who had settled in Kirtland, but also for others who would be immigrating there. Joseph and other leaders of the Church undoubtedly viewed the future optimistically.

While members of the Church were increasing their property holdings in Kirtland, land prices rose sharply, and it seemed that inflationary conditions would continue. According to an editorial appearing in the June 1837 issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*, the price of land in Kirtland during the preceding year had increased some eight hundred percent.

To secure the money needed for economic expansion, many of the saints were forced to borrow. Lenders were willing to extend credit to the saints seeking financial assistance, since the land they pledged for security could be reclaimed if need be. Since Kirtland was expected to continue growing, with land values increasing at a normal inflationary rate, creditors assumed that the Mormons could manage all the debts they had accumulated.

Another factor contributed to the looming financial problems of the saints. During construction of the Kirtland temple, members of the Church in the East and other areas of North America had sent contributions to Kirtland which temporarily bolstered the town's economy. These donations decreased after the temple was dedicated, and this decrease in cash inflow occurred at a time when the debts of the Kirtland saints were at a maximum. Because of the consequent cash flow deficiency, church leaders sought a means to transform into cash some of the assets they and other members possessed in land. One means to which they now gave consideration was the establishment of a bank in Kirtland.

Banks provided loans, a medium of exchange, and a safe depository for money. To meet public demand of a readily acceptable medium of exchange, banks would provide notes or currency in exchange for promissory notes of individuals and businesses. This currency was backed by, and could be redeemed for, specie or precious metal coin. The currency was also secured by real estate. This bank currency could be used quite readily to secure goods and services. Local bank currency was generally accepted only within a small geographical area served by that bank, and it was heavily discounted by banks outside that particular area.

On November 2, 1836, leaders of the Church in Kirtland, probably with the help of a non-Mormon attorney, drafted an article of agreement providing for the organization of a banking institution to be called the Kirtland Safety Society Bank. Orson Hyde then traveled to Columbus with a petition directed to the Ohio legislature, requesting approval for the incorporation of a banking institution. Church leaders, assuming that the legislature would grant the request, also sent Oliver Cowdery to Philadelphia to secure plates for the printing of currency. On January 1, 1837, Oliver Cowdery returned with the plates—but Orson Hyde returned with discouraging news. The legislature had refused to consider the Mormons' petition.

The saints, disappointed by the rejection of their request to incorporate a bank in Kirtland, decided to reorganize and to create a private joint-stock company. Since they could not call it a bank, they named it the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company. They probably assumed that individuals had a legal right to organize a private company that engaged in banking activities, since other unchartered or unauthorized banks were organized in Ohio before and after the Kirtland Safety Society was constituted. There were, however, laws against the formation of such unauthorized banks.

Many persons in the Kirtland area initially supported the formation of the Kirtland Safety Society. Church leaders served as officers—Joseph Smith as treasurer and Sidney Rigdon as secretary. Both members and non-members bought stock in the company, most of the stock being purchased during the last three months of 1836, before the company was constituted. Two hundred investors purchased (primarily with

gold and silver) shares in the company, with subscriptions totaling about twenty thousand dollars.

On January 2, 1837, the Kirtland Safety Society opened its doors for business. Using the plates that Oliver had secured, the company issued its first notes during the first week of January, stamping on some of the currency words that changed “Bank” to “anti-Bank-ing Co.” This first issue consisted of \$1, \$2, and \$3 denominations and amounted to about ten thousand dollars. Additional notes of denominations ranging from \$1 to \$100 were issued in February and March, bringing the total to perhaps one hundred thousand dollars. This amount far exceeded the amount of gold and silver coin placed on deposit in the bank. Thus, it was impossible to redeem all of the currency or bank notes for specie. This one hundred thousand dollars in currency was felt to be adequately backed by real estate, however.

Shortly after the Kirtland Safety Society began to function, serious problems interfered with its successful operation. Opponents of the Church, realizing the institution could not survive a run on the bank, tried, with some considerable success, to shake the confidence of those holding the currency. A run on the institution resulted. On January 23, Sidney Rigdon announced that the Society could no longer redeem its notes with specie. Thereafter, its notes were subject to heavy discounts.

In February, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and other leaders of this company were charged with violating an 1816 Ohio statute that prohibited the issue and circulation of unauthorized bank notes or currency and fixed a penalty of one thousand dollars for officers of institutions that violated this law. In June Joseph resigned as an officer in the company and withdrew his support of the institution. In August Warren Parrish was caught defrauding the bank of funds by counterfeiting or indiscriminately printing currency that had no backing. In October a jury found Joseph and Sidney guilty of violating the law, and a judgment amounting to one thousand dollars was assessed them. Finally, in November the company closed its doors.

As the Prophet had struggled to prevent the Kirtland Safety Society from collapsing, he produced serious financial difficulties for himself. He had invested more than any other single investor except John Greene. In February and March, when the company was experiencing financial difficulties, he increased his subscriptions. To obtain money to invest, he made three loans and sold some property. He accumulated debts amounting to approximately one hundred thousand dollars. Although he had assets in land and goods that were of greater value in some respects, he was unable to immediately transform these assets into a form that could be used to pay his creditors.

Many forces combined to destroy the Kirtland Safety Society. The success of any banking institution depended upon public support, and anti-Mormon newspapers branded its currency as “worthless rags.” Banks did not possess sufficient specie to satisfy large demands for redemption of their currency. Since the capital backing the Kirtland Safety Society was primarily in the form of land, in order for the society to

continue as a successful business enterprise, supporters had to prevent individuals from securing large amounts of the Safety Society notes. Enemies of the church, however, managed to obtain sufficient quantities of the notes to initiate a run on the institution, forcing it to suspend payment in specie a few weeks after the first notes were issued. Another reason for the failure of the company was the fact that the operations of the Kirtland Safety Society were in violation of the laws of Ohio. When church leaders decided in January 1837 to charter a bank in Kirtland, they and their legal advisers had not understood that forming a company with banking powers would be considered illegal.

The demise of the Kirtland Safety Society intensified the economic problems of the Kirtland saints. The two hundred individuals who invested in the bank lost nearly everything they subscribed. As the months passed, many still held bills that had no redeemable value. When the company failed, many persons lost their savings, and a few were ruined financially. It has been estimated that the financial losses approached \$40,000, almost the total cost of building the Kirtland Temple. This loss was sustained by persons whose income averaged about four hundred dollars annually. In the spring of 1837, the Church also found itself heavily in debt, and many creditors were unable to extend credit or postpone dates when debts were due. Joseph and other church leaders were in an awkward and embarrassing position. While the Prophet's creditors pressured him to pay for supplies he had purchased, he was unable to apply this same pressure on members of the Church who had purchased goods from him on credit.

As a result of failure of the Kirtland Safety Society, critics have accused Joseph Smith using poor judgment and of being a false prophet. They used the demise of the bank as an argument against the divinity of Mormonism. In a thoughtful article ("The Failure of the Kirtland Safety Society," *BYU Studies* 12:4 [1972]), Scott H. Partridge has pointed out that opening a bank in the United States in the 1830s was risky business because of the difficult economic climate, and half of them eventually failed. He wrote:

Even a casual student of Mormon history must admit that the early leaders of the Church undertook tasks that "good judgment" would have cautioned them not to undertake. The sending of missionaries to England during the darkest hour of persecution; the building of the Kirtland Temple; the establishment of Nauvoo and the construction of its temple; the long trek west to the Rocky Mountains; the establishment of a viable independent economy in the isolation of Utah Territory—all were actions that more timid souls would not have undertaken. [The] . . . willingness to take great risks in the hopes of great gains was a characteristic pragmatic philosophy. . . [It] . . . tried new things and . . . turned to other programs when failures occurred. The historian can logically judge that the establishment of the Kirtland Safety Society was the result of poor judgment, but at the same time should acknowledge that given more favorable economic conditions it might well have succeeded—as did other even more difficult undertakings attempted by the early Mormon leaders. The establishment of the Kirtland

Safety Society was one of many activities undertaken with the goal of establishing Mormonism on a solid footing in Western America. That it should fail given the circumstances is not particularly surprising. What is important is that after its failure, those responsible recognized their failure and tried again in other ways.

In the summer of 1837, in the midst of financial reversals, Joseph was involved in what he called “malicious and vexatious lawsuits.” Enemies of the Church continually harassed him, indicting him on one charge after another. Most of the legal proceedings against Joseph were cases involving debts. During 1837, seventeen lawsuits were filed against Joseph for debts involving claims of more than thirty thousand dollars.

On July 27, 1837, Joseph set out on a trip to visit the saints in Canada, accompanied by Sidney Rigdon, Brigham Young and others. They got only as far as Painesville, Ohio, where the Prophet was arrested. After a preliminary hearing, he was released by the court for lack of evidence. Within a short time he was again arrested by the sheriff, and again he was released. In fact, on that day he was arrested six times, charged with various offenses, and each time the case was dismissed for lack of evidence. After spending all day in Painesville, Joseph and his companions returned to Kirtland. They commenced their mission again the next day.

As he returned from Canada, Joseph was again detained in Painesville. According to an account by Mary Fielding, based on information she learned from the Prophet, he and Brigham Young were seized by a mob when they were about four miles from home. Taken to a tavern in Painesville, they escaped through the kitchen door, aided by a house keeper who was a member of the Church. The mob, upon learning of their disappearance, took up the chase. Joseph and Brigham fled through dense woods and along muddy roads, hiding in swamps and behind trees and logs. At times their pursuers, carrying blazing torches, were so close that the two men feared their own heavy breathing might be heard. At dawn they finally reached Kirtland.

During this period of economic distress and increasing opposition against the Church, many converts apostatized. Eliza R. Snow observed that even many of the saints who had received marvelous spiritual blessings during the period of the temple dedication left the Church. Sister Snow attempted to explain the sequence of events that led to this tragic apostasy. She commented that following the temple dedication, the saints found that “prosperity was dawning upon them.” As economic conditions improved, some became “haughty in their spirits” and were lifted up in pride. As individuals “drank in the love and spirit of the world,” she added, “the Spirit of the Lord withdrew,” and “they were filled with pride and hatred toward those who maintained their integrity” (*Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, Snow, 20).

At the same time pride was manifest among the saints, a spirit of selfishness emerged. As the saints were anticipating the commencement of an era of prosperity, some developed an inordinate desire to become suddenly and vastly wealthy.

In an article in the *Messenger and Advocate* in May 1837, editor Warren Cowdery suggested that the unbridled desire to accumulate worldly wealth led some of the saints into mercenary and deceptive business practices in Kirtland. He wrote of unscrupulous brethren who were taking advantage of others and, after obtaining their money, deserting them. Cowdery especially warned church members who were planning to immigrate to Kirtland to beware of individuals who approached them shortly after their arrival and inquired concerning their financial status. Some persons were reportedly taking advantage of newcomers by describing unusual investment opportunities that would lead to financial gain and abundant blessings from the Lord, but actually would eventually deprive the investors of their savings.

In addition to pride and selfishness, a third major force leading to an apostasy in Kirtland was criticism of the prophet Joseph. He was criticized for his business transactions, for excessive borrowing, for speculation in land, and for supporting a banking institution that was experiencing serious problems. Some critics blamed the Prophet for the economic reversals of 1837, failing to recognize that Joseph was a mortal, subject to the weaknesses of the flesh, and was not directed in all of his personal affairs by the Lord. He became a scapegoat upon which many tried to unload their problems. A rumor was circulated that the Kirtland Safety Society had come about through revelation and Joseph Smith had predicted the company would never fail, so some persons claimed the demise of that institution was evidence he was a fallen prophet. Recognizing that he had been misrepresented, Joseph testified before the Kirtland high council that he had never uttered nor authorized a statement concerning the infallibility of the banking company. He declared, in September 1837, that he had always maintained that “unless an institution was conducted on righteous principles, it would not stand” (*HC*, 2:510).

In mid-1837 many members living in Kirtland, including some who had been called to serve in the highest positions of responsibility, rejected the leadership of Joseph Smith, declaring that he was no longer a true prophet. While Joseph was lying in bed with a debilitating illness during the month of June, apostates circulated a rumor that he was suffering because of his transgressions in leading the Church into a desperate financial situation. When Heber C. Kimball began his mission that same month to England, he said that John F. Boynton, one of the Twelve, called him a fool for leaving home at the call of a “fallen prophet.”

Parley P. Pratt was among those who censured the Prophet and Sidney for their “business transactions.” He admitted that “under feelings of excitement, and during the most peculiar trials,” he wrote a letter condemning the actions of the men. After the letter was published by a non-Mormon in what Elder Pratt called a garbled form, he recognized his mistake and sought forgiveness from the Church and those whom he had offended (*Elders’ Journal* 1 [August 1838], 50).

Another factor that precipitated an apostasy of members in Kirtland was immorality. Referring to the priesthood leaders who left the Church in the fall of 1837, George A. Smith observed that after the “spirit of adultery or covetousness” had seized control “of their hearts . . . the Spirit of the Lord left them” (George A. Smith, *JD*, 7:115). A few members in Kirtland entered into the practice of plural marriage without the authorization of church leaders, justifying their actions by asserting that Joseph Smith had taken a plural wife. Indeed, the Prophet had received revelation relative to eternal and plural marriage in the early 1830s and may have been practicing plural marriage before 1835. It was also asserted that Joseph Smith’s practicing of plural marriage provided members with an excuse to justify their transgressions, and caused others to leave the Church because they did not understand the eternal principles involved in this marital law and found the idea of polygamy abhorrent.

In the fall of 1837, while Joseph was visiting the saints in Missouri, criticism of him was rampant and reached an ugly schismatic dimension. The selfishness, murmuring, lust, and contention that had been manifest among the saints in Kirtland led to a “great apostasy.” Repudiating the Prophet’s leadership, about thirty priesthood bearers renounced the Church and organized a new church in Kirtland under the leadership of Warren Parrish. They adopted the name “Church of Christ” and tried to seize control of the temple.

Between November 1837 and June 1838, possibly two or three hundred Kirtland saints withdrew from the Church, representing from ten to fifteen percent of the membership there. Many of the apostates had served in major positions of responsibility. During a nine-month period, almost one-third of the General Authorities were excommunicated, disfellowshipped, or removed from their Church callings. Among those who left the Church during this stormy period were the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris), four Apostles (John F. Boynton, Lyman E. Johnson, Luke S. Johnson, and William E. McLellin), three of the original presidents of the First Quorum of Seventy, and two of the presidents of Seventy who were serving in 1837. One member of the First Presidency, Frederick G. Williams, was released from his calling. Although some of these leaders were not excommunicated until after they had moved to Missouri, the roots of their apostasy stem back to transgressions that occurred in Kirtland. Almost half of those who were excommunicated, disfellowshipped, or dropped from their position of responsibility in 1837 or 1838 later repented and returned to the Church.

Some of the apostates became bitter enemies of the saints and organized to expel them from Kirtland. Dissidents tried to seize the property of the saints and threatened to kill members of the Church. Enemies outside the Church were also involved in oppressive actions. Extreme security measures became necessary. While some members guarded the temple twenty-four hours a day, others slept near the Prophet, to preserve his life from his enemies.

When Brigham Young described conditions existing in Kirtland on December 22, 1837, the day of his departure from that community, he claimed that he fled for his life because of the fury of the mob. After making hasty preparations for a journey of more than eight hundred miles, he left his wife and his three-year-old son and one-year-old twins, mounted his horse, and galloped southward. His flight was the beginning of a mass exodus from Kirtland. Between the end of December 1837 and the middle of July 1838, probably more than sixteen hundred members of the Kirtland branch migrated west, abandoning their homes and beginning a new colonizing adventure in the wilderness of western America.

Three weeks after the first saints left Kirtland, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon also fled. "Persecution became so violent," Lucy Mack Smith observed, that "Joseph regarded it as unsafe to remain any longer in Kirtland" (*History of Joseph Smith*, Lucy Mack Smith, 247). He and Sidney rode from Kirtland on the night of January 12, 1838, fleeing from disgruntled creditors, angry apostates, and civil authorities. They rode southward under cover of darkness and arrived the next morning in New Portage, about sixty miles from Kirtland. Three days later, after the Prophet's wife, Emma, and their children arrived in Norton, the group continued their journey in covered wagons. Though the weather was bitterly cold, the Prophet wrote that a mob, armed with pistols and guns, followed him for about two hundred miles. During the pursuit, his enemies once stayed in a home where the saints were sleeping, with only a partition separating the Smith family from their pursuers. That night, the Smiths listened to "their oaths and imprecations, and threats" concerning actions they would take if they seized the Mormon leader. On other occasions, members of the mob passed Joseph and his family but failed to recognize them.

Joseph and his family and traveling companions traveled through Indiana and Illinois, crossed the Mississippi River, and headed across the state of Missouri toward Far West. When they were within 120 miles of their destination, they were met by some saints from Far West who had brought wagons, money, and provisions for them. When they were eight miles from the city, they were met by another escort group, and on March 14, as they reached the outskirts of Far West, a large number gathered to welcome them.

Although most of the saints went west in small groups of less than fifty, one company of more than five hundred persons traveled in a body that was called "Kirtland Camp," and sometimes the "Kirtland Poor Camp" as they were, for the most part, the poorest of Kirtland's inhabitants. On July 5, participants in the Kirtland Camp party gathered in a clover field about one hundred rods south of the temple. That day many pitched their tents, and at night they slept near their wagons and teams. The next day, about noon, a stream of about fifty-nine wagons began rolling from Kirtland. Included in this first company and those who followed shortly thereafter were about 515 pioneers

with twenty-seven tents, ninety-seven horses, twenty-two oxen, sixty-nine cows, and one bull. After the company left, only a few Latter-day Saints remained in Kirtland.

Throughout the journey to Missouri, the presidents of the First Council of Seventy served as the governing council of Kirtland Camp. This journey, as documented in the journals of participants, was an arduous yet colorful one. Roughly half of the Kirtland Camp actually made the entire journey to Far West. The other half dropped out along the way, mostly due to illness. Most who dropped out remained at Springfield, Illinois, and later gathered at Nauvoo after the main body of saints had been driven from Missouri.

On October 2, the wagons of Kirtland Camp rolled into Far West, having traveled eight hundred seventy miles from Kirtland. As they neared the end of their journey, they were met by Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, Sidney Rigdon, and a few other church leaders who escorted them during the last five miles. At the request of the Prophet, members of Kirtland Camp resumed their travels on October 3, and the next day they settled twenty-two miles north of Far West at the place that Joseph Smith had identified, through revelation, as the location where Adam blessed his children and predicted what would befall his posterity. The Lord named this place, "Adam-ondi-Ahman." It is ironic that Kirtland Camp had arrived in Far West less than a month before Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs' Extermination Order drove them out of the state.

Doctor Davis Bitton has chronicled the decline of the church in Kirtland after the great body of saints had left by the summer of 1838 ("The Waning of Mormon Kirtland," *BYU Studies* 12:4 [1972]). He notes: "It is surprising how long it took for Mormonism in Kirtland to fade away." In November 1839 Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball stopped in the village of Kirtland on their return from their mission in England. They found "a good many friends and brethren who were glad to see [them]." The Kirtland Temple was still being used, and Brigham Young preached a sermon there. Brigham Young noted that many of those church members who remained in Kirtland lacked the "energy" or "disposition" to move to Missouri. In October 1840, Almon W. Babbitt was named to preside over the Kirtland saints which were said at that time to be between 300 and 400 strong. Under his leadership this number grew to about 500 by October 1841, but in the October 1841 conference in Nauvoo, Brother Babbitt was disfellowshipped for teaching false doctrine. Still Mormonism did not disappear quickly. Justin Brooks succeeded Brother Babbitt and in the conference of October 1842 there were still "500 to 700" in attendance. By April 1843 the Kirtland saints were strongly encouraged to move to Nauvoo. Apparently many did move, and from the spring of 1845 it becomes difficult to document the activities of any saints left in Kirtland. At the end of 1845, it was reported that a group of "rioters" seized control of the Kirtland Temple. The temple was later used as a Kirtland community hall. From that time on it would seem that very few committed saints, several partly committed members, many apostates, and a few splinter groups remained.

The trials of the Kirtland saints did not end when they reached the Missouri frontier. On October 27, 1838, less than one month after the Kirtland Camp arrived there, Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued one of the most intolerant decrees uttered by an executive in the history of the United States. After telling General John B. Clark of the Missouri militia that the “Mormons must be treated as enemies,” the governor ordered him to exterminate or drive members of the faith from that state (*HC*, 3:175). Some of the participants in the Kirtland Camp had settled in a community called Haun’s Mill, and on October 30, Missouri militiamen suddenly attacked the saints living there. The threats of death they had heard while crossing Missouri became a reality. Seventeen saints were killed, and thirteen others were wounded.

Throughout the long winter of 1838-39, hundreds of Latter-day Saints fled again from persecutors. Many had been forced to abandon Kirtland in 1838, and now they were being driven from the state of Missouri. Fortified by their faith, many of the former Kirtland saints settled in Iowa and Illinois and helped build a new city, Nauvoo, on the banks of the Mississippi River. Within a few years, they would once again have to abandon their homes, cross a vast wilderness, and begin a new life in the great basin of western America.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 112 Thomas B. Marsh and the Quorum of Twelve

D&C 112:10 Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.

verses 1-11 Counsel on missionary work. Remember that the Twelve have responsibility for missionary work. Even Thomas B. Marsh had strayed somewhat, but he had repented, and the Lord had forgiven him.

1 Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Thomas: I have heard thy prayers; and thine alms have come up as a memorial before me, in behalf of those, thy brethren, who were chosen to bear testimony of my name and to send it abroad among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, and ordained through the instrumentality of my servants,

verse 1 “**I have heard thy prayers; and thine alms have come up as a memorial before me**” *Alms* are gifts of charity or sacrifices for the needy. Alms and prayers are elsewhere linked in scripture (see D&C 88:2; Acts 10:4). This scriptural passage contains two phrases which form a parallelism—that is, both phrases have the same meaning (1) “I have heard thy prayers” and (2) “Thine alms have come up as a memorial before me”. Thus, we learn that the Lord regards Thomas Marsh’s prayers on behalf of his brethren in the Quorum of Twelve as alms or deeds of charity or sacrifice given on behalf of his brethren. In the beautiful image created here, we learn that the

time and effort required to pray is equated by the Lord with acts of charity and sacrifice. At this time, it had been almost two and one half years since the Twelve had been called (February 14, 1835) and almost two years since they had returned from their joint mission to the eastern states. Time and distance had rendered the quorum less than united. William McLellin had lost confidence in Joseph and moved from Kirtland in August 1836 (Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 231-32). Lyman Johnson, Luke Johnson, and John Boynton had become disaffected from the Church over the Kirtland Safety Society Bank (*HC*, 2:509) and were disfellowshipped on September 3, 1837, less than a month and a half after this revelation was received. Even Parley P. Pratt and Orson Pratt had briefly criticized the Prophet (see Woodford, “Historical Development,” 2:1475-830). Orson Hyde had briefly wavered. Understandably, the quorum president, Thomas B. Marsh, had prayed for his brethren and desired at this time to know the Lord’s will for them.

2 Verily I say unto you, there have been some few things in thine heart and with thee with which I, the Lord, was not well pleased.

verse 2 When Elder Marsh and his fellow apostle David W. Patten arrived in Kirtland from Missouri, they were at first upset to learn that the First Presidency had interfered with their plans for a full quorum meeting by sending Elders Kimball and Hyde to England. Elder Marsh believed that the opening of foreign missions was his prerogative, and he resented what he considered an intrusion of the First Presidency in beginning this work. There is also some evidence that Elder Marsh had wanted personally to open the mission to England. These feelings may have been among those that displeased the Lord.

3 Nevertheless, inasmuch as thou hast abased thyself thou shalt be exalted; therefore, all thy sins are forgiven thee.

verse 3 By July 23, the date of this revelation and one day before the scheduled meeting of the Twelve, President Marsh had humbled himself and approached the Prophet in a spirit of reconciliation. As a result, in this and the following verses, the Lord assures Elder Marsh of his good standing and his continued calling as president of the Twelve.

verses 4-9 In these verses, the Lord promises Thomas Marsh that he will preach the gospel to all the world—to the Gentiles and to the Jews. Obviously, here as always, the Lord’s blessings and promises are conditional and contingent upon the continued faithfulness of the one who is blessed. Unfortunately, very little of this blessing was ever realized, for Elder Marsh left the Church the following year.

Of interest, perhaps, is that the Quorum of the Twelve did undertake a mission to the British Isles between 1839 and 1841. By that time, however, Marsh himself had become disaffected from the Church, and Brigham Young presided over the mission.

4 Let thy heart be of good cheer before my face; and thou shalt bear record of my name, not only unto the Gentiles, but also unto the Jews; and thou shalt send forth my word unto the ends of the earth.

5 Contend thou, therefore, morning by morning; and day after day let thy warning voice go forth; and when the night cometh let not the inhabitants of the earth slumber, because of thy speech.

verse 5 “Contend thou, therefore, morning by morning” In 1828 “contend” had more than one meaning. In D&C 18:20, for example, it means “to quarrel,” and the saints are commanded not to contend in this particular sense. In this passage, however, it means “to strive,” “to dispute earnestly,” or “to defend and preserve,” and it is part of Elder Marsh’s apostolic calling (*Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary*, s.v. “contend”).

6 Let thy habitation be known in Zion, and remove not thy house; for I, the Lord, have a great work for thee to do, in publishing my name among the children of men.

verse 6 “Let thy habitation be known in Zion, and remove not thy house” Since 1832 Thomas Marsh had moved his residence at least four times, not counting extended visits to Kirtland. As president of the Quorum of the Twelve, it was important for him to maintain a more or less permanent address from which he could always be reached. It was natural that Elder Marsh might be tempted at this time to move yet again, from Missouri to Kirtland, to give greater support to the Prophet and be closer to quorum members. Yet, the Church was soon going to move to Missouri, and Elder Marsh’s home in Far West would be at its center. In 1841, when Brigham Young returned from his mission to Great Britain, the Lord informed him he also was to remain at home and to “send my word abroad” (D&C 126:3), more or less as Elder Marsh is here instructed.

7 Therefore, gird up thy loins for the work. Let thy feet be shod also, for thou art chosen, and thy path lieth among the mountains, and among many nations.

verse 7 “gird up thy loins . . . Let thy feet be shod” The ancient Hebrews wore loose-fitting robes that were cumbersome if they had to work, run, or walk long distances. Hence, to prepare for any of these activities they would gather their loose clothing, bring it between their legs and tuck it in their sash. In this way they were left unencumbered. Hence, in biblical language, to “gird up your loins” is to prepare for a journey or for work. An equivalent modern expression might be “Roll up your sleeves.”

The phrase “let thy feet be shod” has a parallel meaning. The Lord is saying, “be ready to travel.” In 1837, Brother Marsh accompanied the prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon to Canada (see also Ephesians 6:15).

8 And by thy word many high ones shall be brought low, and by thy word many low ones shall be exalted.

9 Thy voice shall be a rebuke unto the transgressor; and at thy rebuke let the tongue of the slanderer cease its perverseness.

10 Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.

verse 10 “Be thou humble” While this exhortation and promise has universal application, there is some indication that Thomas B. Marsh had a particular problem with personal pride. Certainly it was pride that will lead to his initial disaffection with the Church in 1838. At that time, knowing his wife to be in the wrong, he apparently expected preferential treatment because of his high church office. When he did not receive this, he is quoted as saying “that he would sustain the character of his wife, even if he had to go to hell for it. . . . and what next? He went before a magistrate and swore that the Mormons were hostile towards the State of Missouri” (George A. Smith, *JD*, 3:283-84). He thus contributed to the expulsion of the saints from that state and the misery of many of his former friends. President Heber C. Kimball said of Marsh’s apostasy: “About the time [Marsh] was preparing to leave this Church, he received a revelation in the Printing Office. He retired to himself, and prayed and was humble, and God gave him a revelation and he wrote it. There were from three to five pages of it; and when he came out, he read it to brother Brigham and to me. In it God told him what to do, and that he was to sustain Brother Joseph and to believe that what Brother Joseph had said was true. But no; he took a course to sustain his wife and oppose the Prophet of God, and she led him away. . . . She led him some eighteen years; and as soon as she died he came to Winter Quarters—now Florence, and has written to us, pleading for mercy. We have extended it to him, and he will probably be here this season or the next” (*JD*, 5:28-29). Marsh was rebaptized on July 16, 1857, and died in Ogden, Utah, in January 1866.

11 I know thy heart, and have heard thy prayers concerning thy brethren. Be not partial towards them in love above many others, but let thy love be for them as for thyself; and let thy love abound unto all men, and unto all who love my name.

verse 11 “Be not partial towards them in love above many others” In other words, don’t care for the Twelve more than you care for other members. Rather, love the Twelve, each of them equally, as much as you love yourself, and let that same level of love spill over to all men.

12 And pray for thy brethren of the Twelve. Admonish them sharply for my name's sake, and let them be admonished for all their sins, and be ye faithful before me unto my name.

verse 12 “Admonish them sharply . . . for all their sins” Section 112 is essentially a warning to Thomas Marsh and a call to bring his brethren of the Twelve back into line. As outlined above (see the commentary for verses 1 and 2), the state of the Quorum of the Twelve was a sorry one and some of them needed to be “admonish[ed] sharply.”

13 And after their temptations, and much tribulation, behold, I, the Lord, will feel after them, and if they harden not their hearts, and stiffen not their necks against me, they shall be converted, and I will heal them.

verse 13 “after their temptations, and much tribulation” Elder Harold B. Lee taught:

As I have labored among the brethren here and have studied the history of past dispensations, I have become aware that the Lord has given tests all down through time as to this matter of loyalty to the leadership of the Church. I go back into the scriptures and follow along in such stories as David's loyalty when the king [Saul] was trying to take his life. He wouldn't defile the anointed of the Lord even when he could have taken his life. I have listened to the classic stories in this dispensation about how Brigham Young was tested, how Heber C. Kimball was tested, John Taylor and Willard Richards in Carthage Jail, Zion's Camp that received a great test, and from that number were chosen the first general authorities in this dispensation. There were others who did not pass the test of loyalty, and they fell from their places.

I have been in a position since I came into the Council of the Twelve to observe some things among my brethren, and I want to say to you: Every man my junior in the Council of the Twelve, I have seen submitted as though by Providence, to these same tests of loyalty, and I wondered sometimes whether they were going to pass the tests. The reason they are here today is because they did, and our Father has honored them. . . . and it is my conviction that every man who will be called to a high place in this Church will have to pass these tests not devised by human hands, by which our Father numbers them as a united group of leaders willing to follow the prophets of the Living God, and be loyal and true as witnesses and exemplars of the truths they teach (*CR*, April 1950, 101).

“and I will heal them” Most of the time when the concept of conversion is mentioned in the four standard works, it is mentioned in association with “healing”—certainly a healing of the spirit.

14 Now, I say unto you, and what I say unto you, I say unto all the Twelve: Arise and gird up your loins, take up your cross, follow me, and feed my sheep.

verse 14 See the commentary for verse 7. All of these exhortations were delivered by the Savior to his original Twelve during their mortal ministries (see, for example, Mark 2:14; Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23; 12:35, 37; John 21:16). Members of the modern Quorum of the Twelve have the same obligation as did their ancient counterparts.

15 Exalt not yourselves; rebel not against my servant Joseph; for verily I say unto you, I am with him, and my hand shall be over him; and the keys which I have given unto him, and also to youward, shall not be taken from him till I come.

verse 15 “rebel not against my servant Joseph” This commandment was of particular importance at the time. The Kirtland apostasy eventually included a member of the First Presidency (Frederick G. Williams), all three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon (Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and David Whitmer), and four of the Quorum of the Twelve (William McLellin, Luke S. Johnson, Lyman Johnson, and John Boynton), although three of these men—Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and Luke S. Johnson—subsequently returned to the Church.

“the keys . . . shall not be taken from him” Joseph Smith alone, as president of the Church, exercised all the keys of the kingdom of God on the earth. Although some in Kirtland were talking of replacing Joseph as president of the Church, the Lord assures Elder Marsh—without qualification—that this would not happen. According to Brigham Young, “The keys of the Priesthood were committed to Joseph, to build up the Kingdom of God on the earth, and were not to be taken from him in time or in eternity” (ed. John A. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 138). Joseph Smith still holds the keys of this dispensation even today, and all subsequent church presidents have functioned by those keys as passed to them in succession from Joseph.

“and also to youward” The word “youward” is not found in any dictionary, old or new. Its meaning is likely “to you” or “toward you.” In its context, it seems to mean “to Thomas Marsh and to all of the apostles”—that is, the Lord has given the priesthood keys both to Joseph and to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles (see verse 16).

16 Verily I say unto you, my servant Thomas, thou art the man whom I have chosen to hold the keys of my kingdom, as pertaining to the Twelve, abroad among all nations—

verse 16 Thomas Marsh is reassured by the Lord that he is called to his office and that he is still in the good graces of the Lord. Though he presided over the Twelve, and the Twelve were given the keys of the kingdom, Marsh needed to learn that as long as Joseph was alive, the Twelve exert their keys only through the prophet Joseph and not independently of him. Neither he nor any member of the Quorum of Twelve can exercise those keys without the permission of the Prophet. Both Marsh and the rest of the Twelve were to understand themselves as extensions of the keys and authority of

the prophet Joseph Smith, who alone bore the responsibility of all the Church in all the world.

17 That thou mayest be my servant to unlock the door of the kingdom in all places where my servant Joseph, and my servant Sidney, and my servant Hyrum, cannot come;

verses 17 “Joseph . . . Sidney, and . . . Hyrum” The Lord names those in the First Presidency. Hyrum? Is Hyrum Smith a member of the First Presidency? The historical record is somewhat obscure, but it is clear that between the spring and fall of 1837, Frederick G. Williams was replaced as second counselor in the First Presidency by Hyrum Smith. President Williams had become disaffected with Joseph Smith over the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society, and he had been charged with misconduct in May of 1837, although no formal action was taken against him at that time. Joseph still referred to Williams as “President” Williams on June 16, 1837 (*HC*, 2:445), and a conference of the Church in Kirtland unanimously sustained Williams as a member of the First Presidency on September 3, 1837. Nonetheless, D&C 112:17 and 20 make it clear that Hyrum Smith was already functioning in the First Presidency by July 23, 1837, and Joseph referred to Hyrum as “President” Smith as early as June 12, 1837 (*HC*, 2:492). The same conference in Kirtland that sustained Frederick G. Williams in the First Presidency also sustained Hyrum Smith as an “assistant councilor” in that presidency (*Kirtland Council Minute Book*, 234-35). A conference of the Church in Missouri held two months later, on November 7, 1837, rejected Brother Williams altogether and voted to sustain Hyrum Smith in his place (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 122).

Although the formal release of Frederick G. Williams as second counselor in the First Presidency and the formal sustaining of Hyrum Smith in his stead did not take place until November 7, 1837, it is clear that in the eyes of the Lord, Brother Williams was no longer functioning in that capacity by the time of this revelation (July 23, 1837) and that Hyrum Smith was already working in his place. Frederick G. Williams was eventually excommunicated, but he was rebaptized on August 5, 1838 and died a faithful member of the Church.

“where my servant[s] . . . cannot come” The Twelve, not the First Presidency, are called to preach abroad. The presence at home of the First Presidency was required at that time to preside over the whole Church (see verse 18).

18 For on them have I laid the burden of all the churches for a little season.

verse 18 The word “churches” refers to all of the branches of the Church at that time.

19 Wherefore, whithersoever they shall send you, go ye, and I will be with you; and in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you, that they may receive my word.

verse 19 “whithersoever they shall send you, go ye” The antecedent of the pronoun *they* is the First Presidency. Receiving keys of the priesthood does not render a man a law unto himself. Neither can one who holds keys consider himself independent of the chain of authorities through whom he has received them. Elder Marsh needed to understand that his office as president of the Quorum of the Twelve did not make him or his quorum members exempt from the call and authority of the First Presidency. On the other hand, a quorum leader does not need to give permission, or even necessarily be aware of, every call made to any member of his quorum. Every man who receives keys of the priesthood becomes an extension of the authority that gave him those keys (verse 20). The president of the Church does not become, by virtue of holding the keys of the kingdom, independent of Christ. Neither is the president of the Twelve, by virtue of his keys, independent of the authority of the First Presidency, and so on down the line.

20 Whosoever receiveth my word receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth those, the First Presidency, whom I have sent, whom I have made counselors for my name’s sake unto you.

verse 20 “whom I have made counselors . . . unto you” Elder Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “The First Presidency, the Lord said, were to be counselors to the twelve. By this is meant that the twelve should not go forth without the counsel and direction of the First Presidency” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 3:73).

21 And again, I say unto you, that whosoever ye shall send in my name, by the voice of your brethren, the Twelve, duly recommended and authorized by you, shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation whithersoever ye shall send them—

verse 21 “the Twelve . . . shall have power to open the door of my kingdom” As the Church has been restored in the latter days, it has been an apostolic privilege from the beginning to dedicate new lands for the preaching of the gospel and to direct the work in those lands. Under the direction of the First Presidency “the Twelve had the authority (keys) to regulate the affairs of the Church among all nations” (Smith and Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 735).

22 Inasmuch as they shall humble themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit.

23 Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face.

verse 23 “darkness covereth the earth” Compare Isaiah 60:2; Genesis 6:11-12; Moses 8:28-29. The comparison made here to the days of Noah implies that a destruction awaits the earth now on a scale like that of Noah’s Flood (compare Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26).

24 Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord.

verse 24 “vengeance cometh speedily” Compare D&C 97:22-26; Zephaniah 1:14-15. This is the great and dreadful day of the Lord before which Elijah would be sent (Malachi 4:5-6) and of which the saints are to warn the world (D&C 1:9-14).

25 And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord;

verse 25 “And upon my house shall it begin” The great sifting, refining, and cleansing of the last days, of which the Kirtland trials were but a foretaste, will begin with the Lord’s own house and with his own people. When the saints have been refined and purified, then Zion can be established as a refuge from the scourges that will pass upon the world. Elder Melvin J. Ballard declared: “Therefore we stand in peril, many of us! For do you thing that the Lord who has given us greater light and greater knowledge than the world, will pass us by in our sins and our transgressions? I say to you that if we do not live better than the world, if our standard of morality is not in excess of theirs, if we do not observe the law and maintain it better than any other people, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves, and we shall stand under great condemnation before the Lord, because we know more than anybody else. The light and knowledge that the Lord has given to us places us in a very peculiar position, and if we are not careful the judgment of the Lord shall begin at the house of the Lord” (CR, October 1922, 59).

26 First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord.

verse 26 Brigham Young reported attending a meeting in the Kirtland Temple in June 1837, a month before this revelation was received, in which some leading members of the Church proposed that David Whitmer replace Joseph Smith as president of the Church (Backman, *Heavens Resound*, 310-11). While verses 25-26 apply equally well to every member and every instance of disloyalty and blasphemy in the last days, they also had a specific application to the words and actions of disloyal members at the Kirtland Temple in the summer of 1837.

27 Therefore, see to it that ye trouble not yourselves concerning the affairs of my church in this place, saith the Lord.

verse 27 “trouble not yourselves concerning the affairs of my church in this place” The Twelve are specifically charged with taking the gospel to the world (verses 16, 19, 21) and are not to worry about the overall administration of the Church—at this time headquartered in Kirtland—which is the stewardship of the First Presidency.

28 But purify your hearts before me; and then go ye into all the world, and preach my gospel unto every creature who has not received it;

29 And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

verse 29 “shall be damned” Compare Mark 16:16. The verb *to damn* comes from a Latin root meaning “to condemn,” or “to pronounce guilty.” It is unrelated to the similar verb *to dam*, meaning to stop or to block one’s progress. Despite common confusion of these two verbs, and though the effect of being damned might also be to be dammed (as several writers have pointed out), “to be damned” does not merely mean having one’s progress stopped. It means to be condemned, to be judged guilty or worthy of punishment. In a spiritual sense it means being declared guilty of sin, the exact opposite of being “justified” or declared innocent of sin. President Spencer W. Kimball stated that to be “damned means stopped in progress” (“Marriage and Divorce,” an address, 29), illustrating the close relationship between being damned and being dammed. Thus, those who, through the exercise of their agency, choose darkness over light are stopped in their progress of acquiring light and truth” (D&C 93:27). They literally descend toward hell and darkness (2 Nephi 26:10). Joseph Smith taught that “if we are not drawing towards God . . . we are going from him and drawing towards the devil. . . . As far as we degenerate from God, we descend to the devil and lose knowledge, and without knowledge we cannot be saved; thus, we are damned!” (HC, 4:588). In answer to the question, “Will everybody be damned, but Mormons?” the Prophet responded, “Yes, and a great portion of them, unless they repent, and work righteousness” (TPJS, 119).

30 For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given, for the last days and for the last time, in the which is the dispensation of the fulness of times.

verse 30 “the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders” See the commentary on verse 20.

“is the power of this priesthood given” At the time this revelation was given, the specific priesthood power referred to here, which was held by the First Presidency

and by the Twelve, was the keys of the kingdom of God. In 1837 the Twelve did not hold the same keys which the Twelve hold today. In that day, the president of the Twelve held keys with a limitation—“as pertaining to the Twelve, abroad among the nations” (verse 16). The rest of the Twelve also held these keys of the kingdom but only as “recommended and authorized by [the president of the Twelve]” and for opening the door of the gospel in foreign lands (verse 21). Keep in mind that there is never more than one individual at a time upon the earth who actively holds and exercises all the keys of the priesthood (D&C 132:7).

Eventually, however, the Twelve would become fully endowed and would individually receive all of the keys which could then be exercised by the Quorum as a whole after the prophet president was dead. That event, as recorded by Wilford Woodruff, occurred in Nauvoo, Illinois, in late February 1844. After completing the endowment of the twelve, Joseph Smith said, “Brethren, I have had great sorrow of heart for fear that I might be taken from the earth with the keys of the Kingdom of God upon me, without sealing them upon the heads of other men. God has sealed upon my head all the keys of the kingdom of God necessary for organizing and building up of the Church, Zion, and the kingdom of God upon the earth, and to prepare the saints for the coming of the Son of Man. Now, brethren I thank God I have lived to see the day that I have been enabled to give you your endowments, and I have now sealed upon your heads all the powers of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods and Apostleship, with all the keys and powers thereof, which God has sealed upon me; and I now roll off all the labor, burden and care of this Church and Kingdom of God upon your shoulders” (Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:134). Nevertheless, even though the Quorum of the Twelve would from this time forward be individually “prophets, seers, and revelators,” there is never more than one head of the kingdom of God on the earth. Only one mortal has control of all the keys, and that is the president of the Church (D&C 132:7). When the president dies, then all of the keys reside in and can be exercised by the Twelve as a Quorum.

“for the last time” There will never be another falling away and subsequent restoration of the gospel before the coming of the Lord. No one will be allowed to overthrow the Church prior to his coming—the Lord solemnly avers that this is so.

“the dispensation of the fulness of times” A dispensation is an occasion on which the gospel has been given or “dispensed” to a new people or in a new time. Dispensations are not necessarily preceded by apostasy, since Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, and Abraham are all generally considered to be heads of dispensations, and yet they were ordained by mortal predecessors (D&C 84:13-15). Each dispensation has operated under more or less the totality of priesthood keys, although not all the keys were given to every dispensation. When the world has reached the fulness of its times and dispensations, one last dispensation, the one during which we now live, will gather together in one at one time all the knowledge, keys, powers, and

ordinances that have ever been held in all previous dispensations of the gospel collectively.

President John Taylor defined this final “dispensation of the fulness of times” as follows:

We have had, in the different ages, various dispensations; for instance what may be called the Adamic dispensation, the dispensation of Noah, the dispensation of Abraham, the dispensation of Moses . . . the dispensation of Jesus Christ, when he came to take away the sins of the world by the sacrifice of himself, and in and through those various dispensations, certain principles, powers, privileges, and Priesthoods have been developed. But in the dispensation of the fulness of times a combination or a fulness, a completeness of all those dispensations was to be introduced among the human family. If there was anything pertaining to the Adamic (of what we may term more particularly the patriarchal) dispensation, it would be made manifest in the last days. If there was anything associated with Enoch and his city, and the gathering together of his people, or of the translation of his city, it would be manifested in the last days. . . . If there was anything associated with the Apostleship and Presidency that existed in the days of Jesus, or that existed on this continent, it would be developed in the last times; for this is the dispensation of the fulness of times, embracing all other times, all principles, all powers, all manifestations, all Priesthoods, and the powers thereof that have existed in any age, in any part of the world . . . shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this the dispensation of the fulness of times” (*JD*, 22:298-99).

31 Which power you hold, in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation;

verse 31 “in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation” In receiving and holding the priesthood keys of the kingdom of God, the modern apostles and prophets are united with their predecessors and counterparts since the beginning of time, and all the knowledge, keys, and powers of God scattered through the ages are collected and welded together in one last fulness in preparation for the coming of the Son of Man and the end of the world (see D&C 128:18). Thus, part of the great gathering of the last keys is the gathering together into one complete whole all the gospel truth and light that have ever existed in any degree in all the various ages and dispensations of history.

32 For verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation, which ye have received, have come down from the fathers, and last of all, being sent down from heaven unto you.

33 Verily I say unto you, behold how great is your calling. Cleanse your hearts and your garments, lest the blood of this generation be required at your hands.

verse 33 “how great is your calling” Upon those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and its keys, in these last days, depend all the souls of the children of God in this dispensation and the work of building Zion, that the earth might be spared from total destruction at the coming of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6). Therefore, “how great is your calling”!

“lest the blood of this generation be required at your hands” Given the powers and keys described in section 112, the task of taking the gospel to the world in this generation falls upon those who are blessed to hold its keys and powers in any degree. Should those who hold the powers and keys of the priesthood do their duty and warn their neighbors and build Zion, then they will be held guiltless when those who have been so warned refuse to be cleansed by the atonement of Christ or to gather to safety in Zion. On the other hand, should we fail in our duty to preach the gospel and to build Zion, then the blood of those we should have warned, but didn’t, will come upon our garments because of our negligence.

34 Be faithful until I come, for I come quickly; and my reward is with me to recompense every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega. Amen.

verse 34 “I come quickly . . . I am Alpha and Omega” See the commentary on D&C 33:18 and 19:1.

Character Vignette

Brigham Young

Born in Vermont on June 1, 1801, he was about four and one-half years older than the prophet Joseph. He was taught early by his parents to live a strictly moral life, but it was not until he was twenty-six years of age that he gave serious thought to religion. He joined the Methodist Church, married Miriam Works, and worked for a number of years as a carpenter and painter. In the spring of 1829 he moved to Mendon, New York, a small town some fifteen miles southeast of Rochester where his father also resided. A year later he saw, for the first time, a copy of the Book of Mormon that was left at the house of his brother Phineas by Samuel Smith, the brother of the Prophet. He failed to receive a witness of it after just one reading. Nevertheless he continued to study and pray.

In the fall of 1831, two missionaries preached in the vicinity of Mendon, and Brigham was moved by their testimonies. In January 1832, he traveled with his brother Phineas and his friend and neighbor Heber C. Kimball to Columbia, Pennsylvania, to learn more about the Restoration from members of a small branch of the Church there. The three brethren remained with the branch in Columbia for about a week during which time their faith was much strengthened in the mission of the modern Prophet. After returning to Mendon, Brigham hitched up his horse and traveled by sleigh to Kingston,

Canada, to find his elder brother Joseph, then a preacher in the Methodist Church. On meeting his brother, Brigham related what he had learned of the restoration, and Joseph rejoiced at hearing the glad tidings. Together they returned to Mendon where they arrived in March 1832.

On April 6, 1832, Joseph Young was baptized. Eight days later, after almost two years of investigating the Church, on the 14th of April, Brigham was baptized and confirmed at the water's edge. He was ordained almost immediately an elder in the Church. One week after his baptism, Brigham gave his first sermon. He declared "[After I was baptized] I wanted to thunder and roar out the Gospel to the nations. It burned in my bones like fire pent up, so I [commenced] to preach. . . . Nothing would satisfy me but to cry abroad in the world, what the Lord was doing in the latter days" (*JD*, 1:313). During the summer of 1832 he preached in Mendon and vicinity and assisted in raising up several branches of the Church. On September 8, 1832, his wife died of "consumption" leaving him with two small children, both girls. Brigham felt the impulse to "cry abroad" so strongly that he enlisted the assistance of Vilate and Heber C. Kimball to care for his daughters and abandoned his trade to devote himself wholeheartedly to building the "kingdom of God." That fall, after Miriam's death, he, Heber Kimball, and several relatives traveled to Kirtland, Ohio, where he first met the twenty-six-year-old Prophet Joseph Smith. Invited to evening prayer in the Smith home, Brigham was moved by the Spirit and spoke in tongues, the first speaking in tongues witnessed by the Prophet.

Character Vignette

Heber C. Kimball

Born June 14, 1801, he was almost the exact same age as Brigham Young and four and one-half years older than the Prophet. His parents were American born, but of Scotch extraction. At age nineteen he was apprenticed to his elder brother Charles to learn the potter's trade. He worked two years as an apprentice, then worked for his brother as a journeyman potter. Both he and his brother moved to Mendon, New York, where the latter established a pottery. While there, Heber married Vilate Murray and joined the Baptist Church. In the fall of 1831, he heard missionaries of the Church preach in company with Brigham Young. Then followed the visit to the branch of the Church in Columbia, Pennsylvania, mentioned in the Character Vignette on Brigham Young. After his return from Columbia, he was baptized on April 15, 1832. During the summer of 1832, he was ordained an elder, and with Joseph, Phineas, and Brigham Young, he succeeded in raising up several small branches of the Church. In September 1832, he made the journey to Kirtland spoken of in the aforementioned vignette.

Brief Historical Setting

1838 March

Shortly after arriving in Far West, Joseph received a revelation answering some questions that had arisen relative to certain verses in the book of Isaiah [**D&C 113 - Book of Isaiah**].

Section 113 Book of Isaiah

The Church's many troubles in Kirtland have been previously discussed above. Joseph had been seriously ill during the summer of 1837, and he was gone from Ohio much of the remainder of the year on a mission to Canada and a trip to establish sites for stakes at Far West. By the time Joseph returned to Kirtland in December 1837, the spirit of apostasy and persecution had grown so strong that the lives of church leaders were in peril. Many of the faithful leadership had already moved to Far West. Brigham Young was forced to leave Kirtland on December 22, having infuriated the mob by his unflinching public support of the prophet Joseph. Finally, on January 12, 1837, the Lord warned Joseph to leave Kirtland as soon as possible to save his own life. The Lord also warned Joseph to counsel the remaining saints to leave (*Jessee, Papers of Joseph Smith, 2:255*). Joseph left that very night and eventually arrived with his family at Far West on March 14, 1838, after a hard winter journey. Although the last large group of faithful saints did not leave Kirtland for Missouri until July 6, 1838, and faithful saints from the East and from Europe continued to gather to Kirtland until the 1840s, the Ohio period of church history had essentially come to an end. The headquarters of the Church and the designated gathering place for the saints was now the city of Far West in Caldwell County, Missouri.

Between 1836 and 1838, at the request of non-Latter-day Saints in Missouri, the saints in Missouri had largely moved from Clay County and other places to Caldwell County, which had been created primarily as a place of settlement for them. By the winter of 1838, the city of Far West was thriving and thousands of saints had settled on tens of thousands of acres of land they had purchased, cleared, and improved. A temple site in Far West had been dedicated in order that the blessings of heaven might continue to be poured out upon the saints.

Even in Far West there was strife within the Church, partially in reaction to the troubles in Kirtland. Shortly before Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon arrived in Far West in March 1838 (they arrived March 14, 1838), the Church in Missouri had rejected the leadership of David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer (February 5-9, 1838), and the latter two men had been excommunicated. Shortly thereafter on April 12 and 13 respectively, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were also excommunicated.

In mid April 1838, a month after his arrival in Missouri, Joseph began keeping a record book for the First Presidency known as the *Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith* (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 159; Cook, *Revelations*, 224-25; the text of this record can be found in *Jessee, Papers of Joseph Smith, 2:211-316*). Sometime between March 16 and March 29, under circumstances that are unknown, Joseph posed several questions concerning passages in Isaiah 11 and 52. The answers to these questions were recorded at Far West in the *Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith*

sometime in April 1838 in the handwriting of George W. Robinson, the First Presidency clerk at that time. Another copy, in the handwriting of Willard Richards and dating from before the death of Joseph Smith, is also found in the *Manuscript History of the Church*. This copy dates the revelation as March 1838 (Woodford, “Historical Development,” 2:1495-96). Because the answers provided by Joseph Smith to these questions clearly indicate that they were received by revelation, Brigham Young later directed that they be added to the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The question-and-answer format of this revelation is similar to that of section 77, with which section 113 shares other similarities, including the use of “figurative expressions” (D&C 77:2) common to apocalyptic imagery. As in section 77, the questioner in section 113:1-6 is unidentified, but since the answers are recorded as revelation to the prophet Joseph, he probably posed the questions to the Lord in both sections. It may be recalled that Isaiah 11 was part of the angel Moroni’s first message to the young Joseph Smith (JS-H 1:40), and it is therefore understandable that this chapter and its meaning would continue to be of special interest to the Prophet.

Section 113 is one of three sections in the Doctrine and Covenants that deal with scripture interpretation. The other two are sections 74 (1 Corinthians 7:14) and 77 (book of Revelation).

Acknowledgment is given to Kent P. Jackson and his essay “Revelations Concerning Isaiah” found in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 330-34. We will draw upon material in that essay for the following analysis.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 113 The Book of Isaiah

1 Who is the stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah?

2 Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ.

verses 1-2 Isaiah 11 is a prophecy concerning these latter days and deals not only with the period of restoration in which we now live but also with the period of the Millennium. When the angel Moroni first appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, he quoted Isaiah 11, informing Joseph that it was about to be fulfilled (JS-H 1:40). This is a further indication that Isaiah was writing in chapter 11 about the latter days. In the 11th chapter of Isaiah, Isaiah speaks of an individual called the “stem of Jesse” who will judge the inhabitants of the earth in righteousness.

Before trying to understand these two verses, let us consider the tree analogy used by Isaiah. Picture in your mind’s eye a stout tree with a solid root structure under the ground. Protruding from the ground is a trunk, stump, or “stem.” Branches, shoots, or “rods” are growing out of that trunk. When the tree is used as an analogy to illustrate

genealogical succession, the sequence is root to trunk to branches, or root to stem to rod.

The roots of Isaiah's tree represent the descendants of Jesse, the house of David. Jesse himself is the ancestor of the roots, and therefore, in our analogy, we may consider him the seed of the tree from which the roots sprang. Jesse was the father of David and thus was the father of all the kings of Judah. The trunk or "stem" of the tree, which is referred to as the stem of Jesse, represents one particular descendant of Jesse. This verse explains that this stem is Jesus Christ. Jesus descended from Jesse.

3 What is the rod spoken of in the first verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse?

4 Behold, thus saith the Lord: It is a servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power.

verses 3-4 Isaiah refers to a "rod" (branch or shoot according to the tree metaphor) that will "come out of" (descend from or grow out of) the "stem of Jesse"—a descendant of Jesus Christ. The Lord indicates that this "rod" is a "servant . . . of Christ," who is partly a descendant of Jesse, the tribe of Judah, and partly a descendant of Ephraim, of the house of Joseph, "on whom there is laid much power." We will assume that this "rod" is Joseph Smith (see 2 Nephi 3:17 in which Joseph Smith is identified with a "rod"). Elder Bruce R. McConkie expressed his opinion: "Are we amiss in saying that the prophet here mentioned is Joseph Smith, to whom the priesthood came, who received the keys of the kingdom, and who raised the ensign for the gathering of the Lord's people in our dispensation? And is he not also the 'servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power?' (D&C 113:4-6). Those whose ears are attuned to the whisperings of the Infinite will know the meaning of these things" (*Millennial Messiah*, 340).

We already know of Joseph Smith's descent from Joseph (see 2 Nephi 3:7). We have no evidence, however, of Joseph Smith's being a descendant of Jesse other than these verses. Perhaps the descent from Jesse refers to something other than genealogical ancestry. Might it, for example, refer to the lineage of those holding the keys of the Kingdom of God on the earth, the so-called patriarchal order?

verse 4 "on whom there is laid much power" Two years earlier, on April 3, 1836, Joseph Smith had received the fulness of the keys of the priesthood under the hands of heavenly messengers in the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110:16).

5 What is the root of Jesse spoken of in the 10th verse of the 11th chapter?

6 Behold, thus saith the Lord, it is a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days.

verses 5-6 Here is introduced the second of the two latter-day servants of Christ. He is at least in part a “root” or descendant of Jesse and the tribe of Judah. This individual is also understood to be the prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. who, in the latter days, shall function as an ensign for the Gentiles and for the gathering of Israel. We should not be confused by the use of the term “root” in Isaiah’s tree metaphor. There is no need to assume a genealogical sequence from root to trunk to twig (rod). In the Old Testament, “root” is often used to mean offspring and not ancestor, since it stems from the trunk as does the twig. Thus “root of Jesse” does not necessarily mean Jesse’s ancestor which Joseph Smith clearly is not.

verses 7-10 The other two questions answered in section 113 are regarding Isaiah 52, a prophecy of the redemption and restoration of Israel in the last days.

A word of caution regarding the interpretation of ancient scripture is perhaps appropriate here. As we read the inspired writings of the prophets such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, we ought always to keep in mind that more than one interpretation of their revelations may be possible. Fundamentally, these prophets were speaking to the people of their own day and addressing the issues and problems that existed then. We may find application in their words to us and to our time, and it may be legitimate and appropriate to do so, but the application to our time may not be what the prophet had primarily in mind. An interesting specific example is our modern interpretation of Ezekiel 37:15-17. Since Orson Pratt pronounced that these verses—which include the concepts of the “stick of Judah” and the “stick of Joseph”—refer to the Bible and the Book of Mormon, that meaning has become thoroughly and irreversibly entrenched in our culture. The question one might ask is, “What did Ezekiel intend by those verses?” When Ezekiel wrote, between 592 and 570 BC, the people of Judah were held captive by Babylon. Ezekiel lived in a colony of exiles from Jerusalem. He addressed, in his writings, the whole of Israel. In his day Israel was in shambles. The Kingdom of Judah was separated from the Kingdom of Israel (the Kingdom of Israel had been taken captive between 732 and 722 BC by Assyria), and Judah was in chains living under Babylonian domination. His people doubtless would have petitioned him, “Ezekiel, where is God? Are we not the covenant people? Have we been abandoned by God?” At this time of great anguish it seems likely that Ezekiel would have wanted to reassure them that they had not, in fact, been abandoned by God, but that one day God would take the two parts of Israel broken off from one another and reunite them in their own land and under their own rule, out of bondage. Read verses 21 and 22 of Ezekiel 37. It seems less likely that the captive Israelites would have been comforted to know that there would eventually be a Bible and a Book of Mormon centuries hence. Now,

certainly, it may be that God intended Ezekiel 37:15-17 to speak to these of our day and announce that there would be both a Bible and a Book of Mormon, but it is not clear that Ezekiel was aware of this interpretation. Joseph Smith never referred to the “stick of Joseph” meaning the Book of Mormon (the Lord through Joseph did, however, use the term “stick of Ephraim” in referring to the Book of Mormon in D&C 27:5). Another thoughtful exegete, Brother James E. Talmage, also avoided ever referring to this modern interpretation.

Hugh Nibley has explained the use of the word *stick* in Ezekiel 37:15-17:

Ezekiel is probably referring here to an institution which flourished among the ancient Hebrews but was completely lost sight of after the Middle Ages until its rediscovery in the [nineteenth] century. That is the institution of the tally-sticks. . . . When a contract was made, certain official marks were placed upon a stick of wood in the presence of a notary representing the king. . . . The stick was split down the middle, and each of the parties kept half as his claim-token. . . . When the time for settlement came and the king’s magistrate placed the two sticks side by side to see that all was in order, the two would only fit together perfectly mark for mark and grain for grain to “become one” in the king’s hand if they had been one originally (*Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 319-20; see also Nibley, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 15-22, 286-87, 298).

7 Questions by Elias Higbee: What is meant by the command in Isaiah, 52d chapter, 1st verse, which saith: Put on thy strength, O Zion—and what people had Isaiah reference to?

verse 7 “Questions by Elias Higbee” Elias Higbee was the elected judge of Caldwell County, Missouri, and a member of the Far West Stake high council. He had joined the Church in 1832 and moved to Jackson County. Expelled with the saints in 1833, he moved to Caldwell County, where he lived at the time section 113 was received. Later, Judge Higbee was driven from the state of Missouri in 1839, losing all he possessed. He went to Washington with Joseph Smith to seek redress from the federal government and continued to serve as a lobbyist for the Church in Washington. Judge Higbee died June 8, 1843, in Nauvoo of cholera. Joseph Smith preached at his funeral (Black, *Who’s Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*, 134-36).

“the command in Isaiah, 52d chapter, 1st verse” The command of the Lord to “Put on thy strength, O Zion” is the rallying cry for the latter-day Israel, particularly to their priesthood leaders, to gather Israel: “Roust out your priesthood leaders.”

8 He had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel; and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power which she had lost.

9 What are we to understand by Zion loosing herself from the bands of her neck; 2d verse?

verse 9 The “bands of her neck” refers to the bonds, chains, or fetters used to restrain a captive. Israel is about to become free from the curses that God has placed upon her, especially the curses of being scattered among the Gentiles and losing the priesthood, and she will receive revelations from God.

10 We are to understand that the scattered remnants are exhorted to return to the Lord from whence they have fallen; which if they do, the promise of the Lord is that he will speak to them, or give them revelation. See the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses. The bands of her neck are the curses of God upon her, or the remnants of Israel in their scattered condition among the Gentiles.

verse 10 “the scattered remnants are exhorted to return” In Hebrew, the word translated “return” also means “repent.” This is another indication that the “return” of Israel will come about through the acceptance of the principles of the gospel.

Brief Historical Setting

1838 April

In the spring of 1838 while many, including several General Authorities, were leaving the Church, a stabilizing influence was provided by the three senior members of the Quorum of the Twelve—Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, and Brigham Young. In April 1838, Brother Patten received his own personal revelation [**D&C 114 - David W. Patten**]. He was a man of great physical and spiritual strength, and he possessed boundless courage. He was tragically killed by Missourians at the Battle of Crooked River a few months later in October 1838.

A few months of peace followed the saints’ settling in Far West. The Lord instructed them to establish themselves there and build a temple. The Lord also decreed that Far West would be the new “gathering place” [**D&C 115 - Far West**].

Section 114 David W. Patten

In the spring of 1838 while many, including several General Authorities, were leaving the Church, a stabilizing influence was provided by the three senior members of the Quorum of the Twelve—Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, and Brigham Young.

In February 1838 the Church in Missouri had rejected the leadership of the presidency of the Church in Missouri, David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer. On March 10, 1838, the latter two men had been excommunicated. The Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon arrived in Far West on March 14, 1838. About a month thereafter, on April 12 and 13 respectively, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were also excommunicated. About the same time, three more Apostles, Luke Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson, and John Boynton, were cut off, and less than a month later a similar fate befell William E. McLellin. This was a time in which the Prophet could no longer be entirely certain on whom he could rely. Men he counted as brothers, both in Kirtland and in Missouri, had betrayed him or had simply lost their conviction that he was still a prophet. In such a time, the example of Elder David W. Patten, to whom section 114 is addressed, and who would literally lay down his life for his friends in this same year, stood like a rock and an anchor.

David W. Patten was born in 1799 in Vermont and was therefore about six years older than the Prophet. He was baptized into the Church on June 15, 1832. He served several missions for the Church, and in December 1833 he was sent to Clay County bearing dispatches to church leaders in Missouri. He remained in Missouri until the arrival of Zion's Camp in June 1834. He was ordained one of the original twelve Apostles of this dispensation on February 15, 1835. In 1836, he and his wife, Phoebe Ann were called to settle in Far West, Missouri, to strengthen the Church there. "Elder Patten has become almost legendary in the history of the Church for his courage and personal power in the face of adversity. He was a fearless defender of the faith and also of the Prophet Joseph. Elder Patten stood six feet, one inch tall and weighed over two hundred pounds; he was a man of great physical strength" (Boone, "Instructions and Assurance from Far West," 439). A biographer recorded that on one occasion he picked up a man bodily and threw him out of the house for continually disturbing a preaching meeting. On another occasion, he went outside to meet a mob bent on doing bodily harm to him and his fellow missionaries. Upon hearing of their intentions, he bared his chest and invited them to shoot him if it would satisfy them. Instead of shooting, they began to fear and ran as if in peril of their own lives.

According to Elder Wilford Woodruff's account of still another situation, he and other elders, including Elder Patten, were asked to appear before a judge on charges of "testifying that Christ would come in this generation and that we promised the Holy Ghost to those whom we baptized." Elder Patten spoke in the missionaries' defense

and “delivered a speech of about twenty minutes, holding the audience spell bound while he told them of their wickedness and the abominations that they were guilty of, also, of the curse of God that awaited them if they did not repent, for taking up harmless, inoffensive men for preaching the gospel of Christ.” At the conclusion of his remarks, the judge indicated that Elder Patten must have been armed with weapons to speak so boldly when all else was against him. To this Elder Patten remarked, “I have weapons that you know not of, and they were given me of God, for he gave me all the power I have.” This became a lifelong theme or motto for Elder Patten.

Another story of interest is reported by Lycurgus A. Wilson in his book, *Life of David W. Patten*, 50. He reports a recollection of David W. Patten while the latter was serving a mission in Tennessee in 1834: “As I was riding along the road on my mule I suddenly noticed a very strange personage walking beside me . . . His head was about even with my shoulders as I sat in my saddle. He wore no clothing, but was covered with hair. His skin was very dark. I asked him where he dwelt, and he replied that he had no home, that he was a wanderer in the earth and traveled to and fro. He said he was a very miserable creature, that he had earnestly sought death during his sojourn upon the earth, but that he could not die, and his mission was to destroy the souls of men. About the time he expressed himself thus, I rebuked him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by virtue of the holy priesthood, and commanded him to go hence, and he immediately departed out of my sight . . .” This man was later “identified” as Cain who was cursed to be a “fugitive and a vagabond in the earth” (Moses 5:37). This story has given rise to the unlikely “doctrine” that Cain is still upon the earth.

On April 6, 1838, Thomas B. Marsh was sustained as president of the Church in Missouri with Brigham Young and David W. Patten as assistant presidents.

According to the prophet Joseph Smith, David Patten had confided to him sometime in the early summer of 1838 that he, Patten, had been praying and “had asked the Lord to let him die the death of a martyr.” The Prophet expressed sorrow at such a request, “for,” according to Wilson, the Prophet stated, “when a man of your faith asks the Lord for anything, he generally gets it.” David defended the rights of the saints—their lands and property—as if he really believed he could achieve such an honor [become a martyr].

At the Battle of Crooked River in October of 1838, Elder David Patten’s unusual desire to die as a martyr was to be granted. A mob of some thirty or forty men had taken three of the saints prisoners. The vocalized intent of the mob was to kill their captives and then return to burn others of the saints out of their homes in the Far West area. The Prophet directed Elder Patten, who was characterized as “Captain Fear Not,” to take a group of brethren, about seventy-five in number, and in a show of force disperse the mob and free the captives. In both of these objectives the saints were successful, but in the process of the charge, one of the mobbers, hiding behind a tree, shot Elder Patten in the stomach. Two other Latter-day Saints were killed, and several

others were wounded. David was taken back toward Far West where he was met by his wife, the Prophet, and other leading brethren of the Church. Of his sad reunion and parting, Heber C. Kimball reported: “During this removal, his sufferings were so excruciating that he frequently desired us to lay him down that he might die; but being desirous to get him out of the reach of the mob, we prevailed upon him to let us carry him among his friends. . . . Although he had medical assistance, his wound was such that there was no hope entertained of his recovery, and of this he was perfectly aware.” To his wife, Phoebe Ann, he issued a challenge: “Whatever you do else, oh, do not deny the faith!” To the brethren who no doubt desired the faith to heal such a willing and capable leader in the cause of truth, he asked: “Brethren you have held me by your faith, but do give me up, and let me go, I beseech you.” And then to the Lord he prayed, “I feel that I have kept the faith, I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me. . . . Father, I ask thee in the name of Jesus Christ, that thou wouldst release my spirit and receive it unto Thyself.” According to his request, the elders “committed him to God, and he soon breathed his last, and slept in Jesus without a groan, his noble wish to die as a martyr being fulfilled” (*Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 439-41). Two days later Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued his infamous extermination order.

Speaking in his funeral, the Prophet Joseph said of him, “There lies a man that has done just as he said he would—he has laid down his life for his friends” (*HC*, 3:175).

Elder Patten was thus the first Apostle martyred in this dispensation. The Lord would later say of Brother Patten, “[He] is with me at this time” (D&C 124:19).

On April 17, 1838, a personal revelation was given to David W. Patten. Actually section 114 is one of the two similar revelations received by the Prophet Joseph on April 17, 1838. It is measure of the respect he felt for Elder Patten that President Brigham Young later directed that the first of these two revelations, the one addressed Elder Patten, be included in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, leaving the second, addressed to President Young himself, uncanonized (Woodford, “Historical Development,” 2:1500-03).

1 Verily thus saith the Lord: It is wisdom in my servant David W. Patten, that he settle up all his business as soon as he possibly can, and make a disposition of his merchandise, that he may perform a mission unto me next spring, in company with others, even twelve including himself, to testify of my name and bear glad tidings unto all the world.

verse 1 Brother Patten is called to prepare to fulfill a mission with the rest of the Twelve in England in the spring of 1839. He obviously did not have the opportunity to serve this mission since he was killed in October 1838.

At the time of this revelation, Elders Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde of the Quorum of the Twelve had already opened the British Mission and were in England. We will learn in section 118 that the Lord will call the Twelve to go, as a Quorum, to Britain in the spring of 1839. Although this call had been the desire of President Thomas B. Marsh, he also did not have the opportunity to go to England, as by the end of 1838, he had left the Church. The Quorum of the Twelve began their mission to the British Isles in the spring of 1839, departing according to commandment from the temple site at Far West on April 26, 1839, under the leadership of Quorum president Brigham Young.

2 For verily thus saith the Lord, that inasmuch as there are those among you who deny my name, others shall be planted in their stead and receive their bishopric. Amen.

verse 2 “there are those among you who deny my name” Of the original Quorum of the Twelve, six left the Church and one, David Patten, was killed in Missouri. Those excommunicated were Thomas Marsh, William E. McLellin, Lyman Johnson, Luke Johnson, and John F. Boynton. Thomas B. Marsh and Luke Johnson eventually returned to the Church. Orson Hyde was dropped from the quorum at about this same time. In addition to these apostles, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and W. W. Phelps were also excommunicated, although Oliver Cowdery and W. W. Phelps returned to the Church. Of the original Twelve, according to Joseph Smith in May 1843, “there have been but two but what have [not] lifted their heel against me—namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball.”

“others shall be planted in their stead” See the commentary for D&C 118:6. In 1838 and 1839, John E. Page, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and George A. Smith were called to fill vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve. Willard Richards was called into the quorum in 1838 and was ordained in April 1840 after serving in Britain for three years.

“and receive their bishopric” The Greek word translated “bishop” in the King James Bible is *episcopos*, which means, literally, an overseer or a supervisor. The word *bishopric* is used here in the broader sense of a manager, rather than the specific sense of an Aaronic Priesthood bishop. Actually, the word “bishopric” is used here, essentially as a synonym for “stewardship” but more precisely indicating a stewardship as a supervisor.

Section 115 Far West

On April 26, 1838, nine days after his receiving of section 114, Joseph inquired of the Lord as to what the saints, now located in Far West, should do. Should they remain in Far West? Should they leave? And if they leave, where should they go? The answer was given in section 115. The Lord told them to stay in Far West, build up a city, dedicate a temple site, and build a temple.

Since its organization eight years earlier on April 6, 1830, the Church had been known by several names, including “The Church of Christ” (D&C 20:1; 107:59), “The Church of Jesus Christ,” “The Church of God,” and “The Church of the Latter-day Saints” (*HC*, 3:24). The first three titles proved to be too common among several Protestant denominations to adequately identify and distinguish the restored Church from many others with similar or identical names. The last title, “The Church of the latter-day Saints,” was sufficiently distinctive to identify the restored Church from all others, but it also failed to properly identify Christ as its head and source (3 Nephi 27:8). The minor difficulty of a sufficiently distinctive yet technically correct formal name for the Church was solved by revelation found in section 115. The Church would be called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (verses 3-4).

Section 115 also identified Far West, Missouri, as an official gathering place for the Latter-day Saints and headquarters of the Church as of April 26, 1838 (verses 7-8). By that time about five thousand Latter-day Saints were living in the immediate vicinity of Far West. The following months would bring even more, including the last large migration of faithful saints from Kirtland to Missouri. Known as the Kirtland Camp, it consisted of about five hundred of the poorest of the Ohio saints. These hardy faithful traveled nine hundred miles to gather in Adam-ondi-Ahman in the summer of 1838, only to be driven from the state of Missouri beginning in November and lasting into the next spring because of the Extermination Order of Governor Lilburn Boggs.

The oldest copy of section 115, which appears to be roughly contemporary with the revelation itself, is located in the *Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith*, the First Presidency record book kept by clerk George W. Robinson. The revelation was first printed in the *Elders' Journal*, where it was labeled “An Extract of Revelation.” This fact, combined with a reference to the revelation as “lengthy” in a letter from Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, dated April 30, 1838, have caused some to suppose that section 115 must originally have been longer than it now appears. The *Scriptory Book* manuscript, however, does not support this conclusion. Section 115 first appeared in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants at the direction of Brigham Young.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 115 Far West

1 Verily thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and also my servant Sidney Rigdon, and also my servant Hyrum Smith, and your counselors who are and shall be appointed hereafter;

verse 1 “my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. . . . and your counselors” The situation of the First Presidency at this time was a little complicated but not unclear. As of September 3, 1837, the First Presidency consisted of its three “presidents” (D&C 107:22) and four assistant counselors. The three presidents were President Joseph Smith Jr. and his first and second counselors, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams. The four assistant counselors were Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith Sr., Hyrum Smith, and John Smith (the brother of Joseph Smith Sr., and therefore the Prophet’s uncle) (*HC*, 2:509). Frederick G. Williams was released from the First Presidency and replaced by Hyrum Smith on November 7, 1837. Oliver Cowdery, who had been an assistant president, had been excommunicated on April 12, 1838, two weeks before section 115 was received. At the time section 115 was received, the three presidents—Joseph Smith Jr., Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith—were still being assisted by Joseph Smith Sr. and John Smith. By revelation (D&C 107:22), there are to be three presiding high priests in the First Presidency of the Church; however, these three may be assisted by any number of others who are called and sustained for that purpose. As Joseph made clear when his First Presidency counselors were sustained on September 3, 1837, only three high priests preside over the whole Church. The additional assistant counselors were called to assist the three presidents but not to preside (D&C 107:22).

2 And also unto you, my servant Edward Partridge, and his counselors;

verse 2 Edward Partridge was the bishop of the Church in Missouri. At this time his counselors were Isaac Morley and Titus Billings.

3 And also unto my faithful servants who are of the high council of my church in Zion, for thus it shall be called, and unto all the elders and people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, scattered abroad in all the world;

4 For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

verse 4 Elder B. H. Roberts provided us with a sublime description of the name of the Church: “The appropriateness of this title is self evident, and in it there is a beautiful recognition of the relationship both of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the saints to the organization. It is ‘The Church of Jesus Christ.’ It is the Lord’s; he owns it, he organized it. It is the sacred depository of his truth. It is his instrumentality for promulgating all those spiritual truths with which he would have mankind acquainted. It is also his instrumentality for the perfecting of the saints, as well as for the work of the ministry. It is his in all these respects; but it is an institution which also belongs to the

saints. It is their refuge from the confusion and religious doubt of the world. It is their instructor in principle, doctrine, and righteousness. It is their guide in matters of faith and morals. They have a conjoint ownership in it with Jesus Christ, which ownership is beautifully recognized in the latter part of the title. 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' is equivalent to 'The Church of Jesus Christ,' and 'The Church of the Latter-day Saints" (*HC*, 3:24 footnote).

It should also be noted that since the administration of President Harold B. Lee, the formal title of the Church always begins with an upper case T: *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (*Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 383).

5 Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations;

6 And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth.

verse 6 "Zion . . . for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm" Note that it is in Zion, wherever she is established in all her stakes, and not exclusively in Far West or even in Missouri, that the saints will find refuge at the last day. Concerning the importance of stakes, President Ezra Taft Benson said: "Only after a stake is organized may the full church program be authorized for the benefit of the members. This means priesthood quorums, for young men and adult males, and the auxiliary programs of the Church. These exist to assist families and individuals in building and strengthening testimonies of the gospel and in preparing for spiritual growth during our probation on earth. . . . Stakes are a defense for the saints from enemies both seen and unseen. The defense is direction provided through priesthood channels that strengthens testimony and promotes family solidarity and individual righteousness" (*Ensign*, January 1991, 2-4).

"wrath . . . poured out without mixture" The allusion in this phrase is likely to Revelation 14:10; 16:1-19, in which God's wrath is depicted as being poured out upon the earth and upon the wicked as though from a vial or container. Jews anciently mixed table wine with water to avoid intoxication, but when the wrath of God is poured out at the end of the world for the wicked to drink, it will be strong and undiluted, that is, "without mixture."

verses 7-16 The Lord commands that a temple be built in Far West. As directed, the cornerstones were laid on July 4, 1838. The Lord cautions the saints not to go into debt to build the temple, notwithstanding the importance of the temple. This was perhaps the beginning of the current Church policy not to dedicate a Church edifice until all costs are paid.

7 Let the city, Far West, be a holy and consecrated land unto me; and it shall be called most holy, for the ground upon which thou standest is holy.

verse 7 “the ground upon which thou standest is holy” The Lord had revealed to the saints in D&C 107:53-56 that Adam had lived and taught his children the gospel in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Before the end of 1838, it was known that Adam-ondi-Ahman was located only thirty miles or so north of Far West. The prophet Joseph Smith also taught that Jackson County, fifty-five miles south of Far West, had been the location of the Garden of Eden. This puts Far West in the middle of sacred ancient geography. We do not know why the site of Far West itself was particularly holy ground, but it has been suggested the Far West may have been the location of the killing of Abel by his brother Cain (see McConkie and Stewart, *Life of Joseph Fielding Smith*, 340; see also Dyer, *Center Place of Zion*, 14-15). Additionally, events of the nineteenth-century Church in Far West, as well as events yet in the future, render this ground holy for the Latter-day Saints.

8 Therefore, I command you to build a house unto me, for the gathering together of my saints, that they may worship me.

verse 8 The Lord designates Far West as a site for construction of a temple. This was the third temple the saints had been commanded to build (the first two were Kirtland and Independence), although of these only the Kirtland Temple was ever completed. When section 115 was received there was actually no house, or temple, recognized by the Lord as his. He had promised to make holy the temple in Kirtland, but had declared also that if it should be defiled it should no longer be his house and his name would not be upon it. On April 3, 1836, he accepted that house, but in the summer of 1837 it had been polluted and apostates, wicked in spirit, had taken possession of that temple, hence the Lord rejected it as a sacred spot, a sacred temple. Now came the command to build another house on ground that was consecrated. Although the Church retained legal ownership of the Kirtland Temple until as late as 1846, actual possession of the building passed to several different parties, and the church’s claim was not recognized after the exodus to the West.

“that they may worship me” This commandment is a specific reference to temple worship, as opposed to weekly services in ward meetinghouses. What does it really mean to worship the Lord? In D&C 93:19-39, the Lord taught the saints that the highest form of worship was to imitate him and to become like him. It would seem that there are, then, at least two forms of worship. One of them is when we, in a quiet and spiritual setting, commit ourselves—indeed bind ourselves by covenant—to obey him and therefore become like him. The ideal place for this type of worship is during the sacrament service in a sacrament meeting or in a holy temple. The second type of worship is the actual doing—the real and immediate overcoming of our natural self and

obeying the commandments. This important type of worship is done outside of Church and outside of a temple as we go about our daily lives.

Temple worship is especially important because it is only in a temple that we can fully contemplate the highest covenants we enter into with the Lord—those which we enter into in the temple. Covenants are, of course, designed by the Lord to help us become like him.

verses 9-12 The saints are commanded in these verses to gather speedily to Far West, begin construction on the temple in July 1838, and after halting for winter, resume construction on April 26, 1839, finishing the structure as soon thereafter as possible.

9 And let there be a beginning of this work, and a foundation, and a preparatory work, this following summer;

10 And let the beginning be made on the fourth day of July next; and from that time forth let my people labor diligently to build a house unto my name;

11 And in one year from this day let them re-commence laying the foundation of my house.

12 Thus let them from that time forth labor diligently until it shall be finished, from the corner stone thereof unto the top thereof, until there shall not anything remain that is not finished.

13 Verily I say unto you, let not my servant Joseph, neither my servant Sidney, neither my servant Hyrum, get in debt any more for the building of a house unto my name;

verse 13 “let not my servant . . . get in debt any more” The Kirtland Temple had been built by the individual sacrifices of the saints and the personal indebtedness of church leaders. The Lord had sanctioned this debt at that time so that the temple could be completed and the fulness of priesthood keys might be restored. From this time forth, however, the Lord commanded the entire Church collectively (“my people,” verses 15-16) to bear the financial burden of temple building, and it is presently the policy that no church-owned building be dedicated until it is fully paid for.

14 But let a house be built unto my name according to the pattern which I will show unto them.

15 And if my people build it not according to the pattern which I shall show unto their presidency, I will not accept it at their hands.

16 But if my people do build it according to the pattern which I shall show unto their presidency, even my servant Joseph and his counselors, then I will accept it at the hands of my people.

verses 14-16 The patterns of the Kirtland and Independence Temples had been revealed to the First Presidency in 1833. The Lord here reveals that the design of the Far West Temple will also be revealed to the First Presidency, but he prepares the Church to expect differences between the new temple and what they had built in Kirtland. Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “If this temple at Far West was not built according to the Lord’s plan, he said he would not receive it. We have good reason to believe that his plan contemplated many changes not found in the house in Kirtland. The keys for the sealing of both the living and the dead had been revealed since the Kirtland Temple was built. The doctrine of salvation for the dead had been hinted at, but not yet clearly revealed. The Lord certainly intended to place in this new temple if it should be built according to his plan, the provisions that were found in the Nauvoo Temple and all the other temples erected since that day, so that the ordinance of baptism for the dead, and all the ordinances of the gospel could be given to both the living and the dead, as outlined by the Lord to the Prophet, January 19, 1841” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 3:116).

17 And again, verily I say unto you, it is my will that the city of Far West should be built up speedily by the gathering of my saints;

verse 17 “Far West should be built up speedily by the gathering of my saints” The haste commanded here represents a change in policy from earlier commandments concerning the gathering to Missouri (see D&C 58:56; 63:24; 101:68). What was earlier to be done “not in haste” (D&C 63:24) was now commanded to be accomplished “speedily.” In a revelation received January 12, 1838, the Lord commanded the presidency and their families in Kirtland to move west “as soon as it is practicable.” The Lord added, “Let all your faithful friends arise with their families also, and get out of this place [Kirtland, Ohio], and gather themselves together unto Zion” (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:255). Doctrine and Covenants 117:1-5 contains a rebuke to church leaders lagging behind in Kirtland. The reasons for the change from “not in haste” to “speedily” may lie in the different demographics involved in Caldwell County as compared to Jackson County. As suggested by Smith and Sjodahl (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 743), had the saints gathered quickly enough and in sufficient numbers to sparsely populated northwestern Missouri and then constructed the “tower” of defense represented by a temple there, they might never have been dislodged from such a stronghold. Jackson County, on the other hand, with its “old settlers” already firmly established, required preparation, diplomacy, and gradual immigration for the saints to become secure there. Unfortunately, in neither county did sufficient numbers of the saints obey the Lord’s instructions. Beginning in November 1838 the saints were dislodged from Caldwell County and from Missouri altogether, just as they had previously been driven out of Jackson County in November 1833.

18 And also that other places should be appointed for stakes in the regions round about, as they shall be manifested unto my servant Joseph, from time to time.

verse 18 “other places should be appointed for stakes in the regions round about” If the saints were to move to Far West as quickly as was necessary and in sufficient numbers to become secure there, then the organization of additional stakes was necessary to accommodate them all. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon had already visited Missouri in the fall of 1837 to designate locations for additional stakes (*HC*, 2:514). According to an uncanonized revelation received by the prophet Joseph on January 12, 1838, only the First Presidency is empowered to authorize the organization of a new stake of Zion: “No stake shall be appointed, except by the First Presidency, and this Presidency be acknowledged, by the voice of the same, otherwise it shall not be counted as a stake of Zion” (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:255). Among other things, this revelation distinguished the powers of the First Presidency, as compared to those of the presidency of the Church in Missouri, regarding the formation of new stakes (Cook, *Revelations*, 228, 333). The question of which presidency had authority to perform what task had already been raised by the high council in Missouri (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 107-10; *HC*, 2:483-84).

19 For behold, I will be with him, and I will sanctify him before the people; for unto him have I given the keys of this kingdom and ministry. Even so. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1838 July

Some of the saints were reluctant to leave Kirtland to gather in Far West. They were rebuked by the Lord [**D&C 117 - Far West Is the Gathering Place**]. This rebuke was received on July 8, 1838, following a memorable Independence Day celebration in Far West during which the cornerstones of the temple at Far West were laid. Also at this commemoration, Sidney Rigdon delivered a forceful speech in which he warned, under penalty of death, the Missourians and others to leave the saints alone, as the Mormons would not tolerate any further harassment. This speech had unfortunate consequences, as it proved to inflame prejudice against the Church.

Three additional revelations, now found in the Doctrine and Covenants, were received on July 8, 1838. On that date, Joseph also inquired of the Lord as to his will concerning the Twelve. In response, the Lord called them to go to Great Britain to preach the gospel. This call to serve was unusually specific, as it not only designated the date they were to depart, April 26, 1839, but it also specified their point of departure—the temple site at Far West [**D&C 118 - The Twelve Called to Preach in England**]. The Twelve later followed the Lord’s instructions to the letter, even though by April 1839 the saints had been expelled from Missouri and had been warned not to try to return.

The Twelve's mission to England in 1839 and other missions to Great Britain that followed were extravagantly successful. More than five thousand converts resulted, and many of them migrated to America to join the saints between 1840 and 1850. These proved to be a vitally important infusion to the strength of the Church.

Also on July 8, 1838, the Lord gave a new law concerning financial contributions to the Church **[D&C 119 and 120 - The Law of Tithing]**.

By the summer of 1838, a spirit of peace and optimism prevailed in Far West. As many as twelve thousand saints had gathered in Missouri. Not all of them had gathered in Far West, Caldwell County. Some had settled in Adam-ondi-Ahman, Daviess County on the north, and Dewitt, Carroll County, on the east.

As has been mentioned previously, most of the saints fleeing Kirtland went west in small groups, but one group of more than five hundred persons traveled in a body called "Kirtland Camp." They arrived in Far West in October 1838, but at Joseph's request they continued their journey twenty-two miles to the north to a place on the Grand River called Spring Hill where they settled. The Lord had previously changed the name of Spring Hill to "Adam-ondi-Ahman" **[D&C 116 - Adam-ondi-Ahman]**.

Section 116 Adam-ondi-Ahman

The reader is invited to review the “Brief Historical Setting” immediately preceding section 111. In the spring of 1837, Lyman Wight and others in Missouri had settled on the Grand River in a place called Spring Hill, twenty-two miles north of Far West in Daviess County, Missouri. Brother Wight established a ferry-boat business across the Grand River.

In December 1837 Oliver Cowdery, Lyman Wight, and others were appointed to explore Daviess County to find other sites where settlements of the saints could be established. Undoubtedly because of Lyman Wight’s influence, Spring Hill was selected, and in May 1838 Joseph made a trip there to inspect the area. While there on May 19, 1838, Joseph received a revelation, Section 116, in which the Lord renamed Spring Hill “Adam-ondi-Ahman.” Of that day in May, the Prophet Joseph wrote: “This morning we struck [took down] our tents and formed a line of march, crossing Grand River at the mouth of Honey Creek and Nelson’s Ferry. Grand River is a large, beautiful, and deep and rapid stream, during the high waters of spring, and will undoubtedly admit of navigation by steamboat and other water craft. At the mouth of Honey Creek is a good landing. We pursued our course up the river, mostly through timber, for about eighteen miles, when we arrived at Colonel Lyman Wight’s home. He lives at the foot of Tower Hill (a name I gave the place in consequence of the remains of an old Nephite altar or tower that stood there), where we camped for the Sabbath. In the afternoon I went up the river about half a mile to Wight’s Ferry, accompanied by President Rigdon, and my clerk, George W. Robinson, for the purpose of selecting and laying claim to a city plat near said ferry in Daviess County . . . which the brethren called ‘Spring Hill,’ but by the mouth of the Lord it was named Adam-ondi-Ahman, because, said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet” (*HC*, 3:34-35; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 244-45).

The term “Adam-ondi-Ahman” is an interesting one. The earliest use we find of the term dates to 1832. In March of that year, Joseph received section 78, and the term “Adam-ondi-Ahman” was found in that revelation, even in the earliest manuscripts (D&C 78:15). The name was revealed again, this time with the significance of the location, in the patriarchal blessing of Joseph Smith, Sr., on December 18, 1833 (*TPJS*, 38-39). In 1835 the term was published in a hymn composed by W. W. Phelps entitled “Adam-ondi-Ahman.” This hymn was sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836. The term is also found in D&C 107:53, received in March of 1835. In verses 53-55 of section 107, which essentially repeated the information about Adam-ondi-Ahman given to Joseph Smith, Sr., in his earlier patriarchal blessing, the Lord teaches the significance of the name. We are taught that it is a revealed term which may have

originated from the pure Adamic language. We don't actually know its precise meaning. The term "Ahman" means God and "Adam," of course, refers to the first mortal male. As nearly as we can judge, the term means something like "Adam in the presence of God" or "Adam walks with God" or perhaps "the place where Adam dwelt, the Valley of God." It is the place where Adam and Eve made their abode after they left the Garden of Eden.

The early brethren of the Church taught that the Garden of Eden was located in western Missouri, the place the early Church referred to as "Zion." This would include Jackson County and the area northward, including Far West and reaching to Adam-ondi-Ahman.

It is staggering to contemplate the historical significance of the place Adam-ondi-Ahman. It has been described as a "place of beginnings." "The area of Adam-ondi-Ahman was the site of the first death and murder on this earth. The first family relationships and associations were developed. In short, his area was truly a place of beginnings" (*Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants*, Otten and Campbell, volume 2, 278-79). It was at Adam-ondi-Ahman that the family of mortals had its beginning. It was there that mortal man learned to work by the sweat of his brow. It was there that the first mortal children were born to the first mortal parents. Mortal man first learned to communicate with his God in those valleys. It was there that Adam built an altar and began to offer righteous sacrifice. On one occasion, Joseph Smith identified the site of Adam's altar. Elder Heber C. Kimball recalled being with the Prophet in Daviess County, Missouri, on that occasion and described the experience as follows:

The Prophet Joseph called upon Brother Brigham, myself, and others saying, "Brethren, come, go along with me, and I will show you something." He led us a short distance to a place where were the ruins of three altars built of stone, one above the other, and one standing a little back of the others, like upon the pulpits in the Kirtland Temple, representing the order of three grades of Priesthood. "There," said Joseph, "is the place where Adam offered up sacrifice after he was cast out of the garden." The altar stood at the highest point of the bluff. I went and examined the place several times while I remained there (*Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 209-10).

An ancient meeting of significance was held there, three years before Adam's death (see D&C 107:53-56). He gathered together Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, along with others of his righteous posterity and there bestowed on them his last blessing. John Taylor commented on this ancient gathering:

Adam, before he left the earth, gathered his people together in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and the curtain of eternity was unfolded before him, and he gazed upon all events pertaining to his descendants, which should transpire in every subsequent period of time, and he prophesied to them. He saw the Flood and its desolating influence; he saw the introduction again of a people in the days of Noah; he

saw their departure from the right path. He saw Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets make their appearance and witnessed the results of their acts; he saw nations rise and fall; he saw the time when Jesus would come and restore the gospel and when he would preach that gospel to those who perished in the days of Noah; and in fact he saw everything that should transpire upon the earth, until the winding up scene. He was acquainted with the day in which we live and the circumstances with which we are surrounded (*JD*, 17:372).

An important meeting will yet be held there sometime before the Lord's coming in glory, as described in the background material for section 45. The world and even the Church at large shall not know of this meeting—only those who are officially called to attend. A year after section 116 was received, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

Daniel in his seventh chapter speaks of the Ancient of Days; he means the oldest man, our father Adam, Michael, he will call his children together and hold a council with them to prepare them for the coming of the Son of Man. He (Adam) is the father of the human family, and presides over the spirits of all men, and all that have had the keys must stand before him in this Grand Council. This may take place before some of leave this stage of action. The Son of Man stands before him [Adam], and there is given him glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ, that which was delivered to him as holding the keys of the universe, but retains his standing as head of the human family (*HC*, 3:386-87).

This meeting will take place at Adam-ondi-Ahman sometime before the second coming of the Savior. This meeting should not be confused with its ancient parallel, which took place three years before the death of Adam and which Joseph Smith also saw in vision and described. "I saw Adam in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. He called together his children and blessed them with a patriarchal blessing. The Lord appeared in their midst, and he (Adam) blessed them all, and foretold what should befall them to the latest generation. This is why Adam blessed his posterity; he wanted to bring them into the presence of God" (*HC*, 3:388).

The Adam-ondi-Ahman Stake was organized on June 28, 1838, with John Smith as president and Reynolds Cahoon and Lyman Wight as counselors.

The oldest copy of section 116 is the entry in Joseph Smith's *Scriptory Book* under the date of Saturday, May 19, 1838, in the handwriting of George W. Robinson. The entry itself was probably made sometime shortly after that date. Another manuscript, in the hand of Willard Richards, is found in the *Manuscript History of the Church* and was copied prior to March 2, 1844. The revelation was first published in the *Deseret News* for April 2, 1853, and first appeared in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants at the direction of Brigham Young.

Section 116 consists of only one short verse and is thus the shortest section in the Doctrine and Covenants. The text of this verse was altered somewhat in the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. This was one of only a few changes that were

made in our new edition. Formerly, section 116 was an incomplete sentence, and one had to read the introduction as part of the text in order for it to be complete. In the 1981 edition, the heading is separated from the single verse of scripture, and each is a complete sentence.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 116 Adam-Ondi-Ahman

1 Spring Hill is named by the Lord Adam-ondi-Ahman, because, said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

verse 1 “as spoken of by Daniel the prophet” See Daniel 7:9, 13-14.

Section 117 Far West Is the Gathering Place

Section 117 is only one of five revelations received by Joseph on July 8, 1838. Following the Independence Day celebration, during which the cornerstones of the temple at Far West were laid on July 4, a conference was held between July 6 and 8. Joseph received these five revelations on the final day of the conference. Four are included in the Doctrine and Covenants as sections 117 through 120. One of them has never been printed in the Doctrine and Covenants. It contained instructions to Frederick G. Williams and W. W. Phelps, who had been excommunicated from the Church, regarding what they needed to do to return to fellowship in the Church (*HC*, 3:46).

The Lord had made it clear in section 115 that he wanted as many saints as possible to gather to Zion and as rapidly as possible (D&C 115:17). After “Kirtland Camp” left Kirtland on July 6, 1838, only a few members remained there. It is estimated that by September only 260 members were left in Kirtland. Kirtland Camp arrived in Far West in October. See the commentary on Kirtland Camp in the introductory commentary for section 112. When the Kirtland Camp left Ohio for Missouri, two notable Ohio church leaders were missing from their number, William Marks, who will later be called to preside as stake president at Far West, and Bishop Newell K. Whitney. They had remained behind in an attempt to protect investments in Kirtland without simply walking away from them. Joseph, living in Far West, could not have known who was traveling in Kirtland Camp, but the Lord knew. Hence, on the date mentioned, which was two days after the departure of Kirtland Camp from Kirtland, Joseph received this revelation which called William Marks and Newell K. Whitney to give up the Ohio properties and to come to Far West (“Zion”).

It is apparent that these two had become entangled in the spirit of apostasy in Kirtland. Yet, the Lord knew that they were salvageable. Section 117 is basically a rebuke of Brothers Marks and Whitney.

William Marks had been appointed a member of the Kirtland high council in September 1837. He also served as an agent to Bishop Whitney, and he was president of the stake in Kirtland.

The oldest copies of sections 117-120 are located in the *Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith, Jr.*, and are roughly contemporary with the revelations themselves. There are several other manuscript copies of section 117, including one in the handwriting of Newel K. Whitney, to whom this revelation was addressed. Section 117 was first published in the *Deseret News* for April 2, 1853, and first appeared in the Doctrine and Covenants in the 1876 edition at the direction of Brigham Young.

1 Verily thus saith the Lord unto my servant William Marks, and also unto my servant Newel K. Whitney, let them settle up their business speedily and journey from the land of Kirtland, before I, the Lord, send again the snows upon the earth.

verse 1 William Marks was a relatively new member of the Church, having been converted about three years before this revelation. He had risen rapidly in the leadership of the Church in Kirtland. After serving on the Kirtland high council and as an agent for Newel K. Whitney, he was called as Kirtland Stake president in 1838. This revelation also called him to be a stake president at Far West. He, however, never made it to Missouri, as the Extermination Order was issued before he and Bishop Whitney could arrive in Far West. They met the saints in Quincy, Illinois. Newel K. Whitney had been the bishop of the Church in Kirtland since 1831.

“before, I, the Lord, send again the snows” Since this revelation was received in July 1838 and reached Marks and Whitney in August, the Lord is still giving these brethren a short time to settle up what affairs they could before the snow fell.

2 Let them awake, and arise, and come forth, and not tarry, for I, the Lord, command it.

3 Therefore, if they tarry it shall not be well with them.

verse 3 “if they tarry it shall not be well with them” In section 117, we find an implicit chastening of President Marks and Bishop Whitney. Many members of the Kirtland Camp had simply left their property in Kirtland and started for Missouri as the Lord had commanded. Whitney and Marks had not. Perhaps, however, as stake president and presiding bishop, they felt an obligation to continue managing their stewardships for maximum profit to the Church. In addition, Newel K. Whitney owned a mercantile store and other property in Kirtland. It is easy to see how their church stewardships and their own financial interests might have become intertwined in their thinking, clouding their judgment and causing them to remain in Kirtland.

Yet, both of these brethren were faithful in the kingdom, and when they received the command contained in this section, they responded immediately by settling their affairs and leaving for Missouri. By the time they arrived at the Missouri border, however, the Missouri saints were fleeing that state for Illinois and Iowa as a result of Governor Boggs' Extermination Order of October 27, 1838. Therefore, they traveled to Illinois. President Marks never entered Missouri, and Bishop Whitney got only as far as St. Louis before recrossing the Mississippi River to Illinois.

4 Let them repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous desires, before me, saith the Lord; for what is property unto me? saith the Lord.

verse 4 “Let them repent of all their . . . covetous desires” It is clear that Marks and Whitney were basically concerned about financial matters, at least partly for their own interests.

“for what is property unto me?” All property is the Lord's anyway (D&C 104:14). The Lord assures them that he does not need their property (nor does he need ours). Rather they need to give him what he does require—obedience to his commands.

5 Let the properties of Kirtland be turned out for debts, saith the Lord. Let them go, saith the Lord, and whatsoever remaineth, let it remain in your hands, saith the Lord.

verse 5 “Let the properties of Kirtland be turned out for debts” Rather than continuing to manage the Kirtland properties for possible income, President Marks and Bishop Whitney are commanded to liquidate them to satisfy the debts of the Church in Kirtland.

6 For have I not the fowls of heaven, and also the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the mountains? Have I not made the earth? Do I not hold the destinies of all the armies of the nations of the earth?

verse 6 The earth is the Lord's. He has promised that his saints will receive it all. Yet, during this period of mortal probation, it serves his purposes to test and try the saints with unfulfilled wants and needs. The point of our mortal probation is not to acquire money or property but to learn obedience and righteousness.

7 Therefore, will I not make solitary places to bud and to blossom, and to bring forth in abundance? saith the Lord.

verse 7 Those intelligences that inhabit the plants, animals, and inanimate things of the earth honor and obey the Lord and do his bidding.

8 Is there not room enough on the mountains of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and on the plains of Olaha Shinehah, or the land where Adam dwelt, that you should covet that which is but the drop, and neglect the more weighty matters?

verse 8 “the mountains of Adam-ondi-Ahman” See section 116 and its commentary.

“the plains of Olaha Shinehah” In Abraham 3:13, the Lord revealed to Abraham that the word *Shinehah* signifies the sun and that *Olea* signifies the moon. If *Olaha* is a variant form of *Olea*, then Elder Janne M. Sjodahl may have been correct in suggesting that the term means “the plains of the moon and the sun” in the language of Adam (cited in Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 3:125-26). The “plains of Olaha Shinehah” is apparently an area near Adam-ondi-Ahman. The term Shinehah was also used by the prophet Joseph as a code word for the city of Kirtland in early editions of the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 82:12-13; 104:21, 40, 48).

“that you should covet that which is but the drop” “The drop” is used here in contrast to “the more weighty matters.” “The drop” therefore refers to that which is of trivial importance and here refers to the properties of the Church left behind in Kirtland. In contrast, the “more weighty matters” which are being neglected include obedience to the Lord’s command to gather to Far West and Mark’s and Whitney’s own obligations to have provided leadership and support for the poor of the Kirtland Camp.

9 Therefore, come up hither unto the land of my people, even Zion.

verse 9 The two are instructed to gather with the saints in Far West.

10 Let my servant William Marks be faithful over a few things, and he shall be a ruler over many. Let him preside in the midst of my people in the city of Far West, and let him be blessed with the blessings of my people.

verse 10 Brother Marks is appointed by revelation to be president of the stake at Far West. This would have allowed Thomas B. Marsh, Brigham Young, and David H. Patten, who were acting in Far West as presidents pro tempore, to be released from that calling and resume their apostolic responsibilities. Brother Marks never assumed this position because of the Mormon expulsion from Missouri. He later became president of the stake in Nauvoo. William Marks was later to leave the Church. He was ambivalent over the right of the Twelve to govern the Church after Joseph’s death. He sympathized with Sidney Rigdon’s claim to the church presidency and left the Church. He was later to assist in the founding of the Reorganized LDS Church in 1860, and he served as a counselor in their First Presidency.

11 Let my servant Newel K. Whitney be ashamed of the Nicolaitane band and of all their secret abominations, and of all his littleness of soul before me, saith the Lord, and come up to the land of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and be a bishop unto my people, saith the Lord, not in name but in deed, saith the Lord.

verse 11 **“Let my servant Newel K. Whitney be ashamed of the Nicolaitane band”** The term “Nicolaitane band” refers to an apostate heretical sect in New Testament times that apparently fit into the *Gnostic* category—that is, they had their own version of Christ’s gospel which they considered more sophisticated and more acceptable than the saints’ version. They considered themselves intellectually a cut above other saints. Elder Bruce R. McConkie suggested that the “Nicolaitans” in the ancient Church were “members of the Church who were trying to maintain their church standing while continuing to live after the manner of the world” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:446).

Apparently a group, in some rough way comparable to the Nicolaitans, had risen up in Kirtland, and Bishop Whitney was sympathetic with them. They somehow sought personal gain from the destruction of the Kirtland Anti-Banking Society. Nicolas, in New

Testament times, was one of seven men appointed by the Apostles to preside over the distribution of food and common goods (see Acts 6:5). Nicolas was believed to have apostatized from the true faith and become a founder of the “Nicolaitans” (see Revelation 2:6, 15). There is evidence that Nicolas’ followers labored to put items in the “storehouse” but not entirely for the use of the poor. Nicolas and his followers glutted themselves with the surpluses. Notice that Newell K. Whitney had the same job that Nicolas had—he was a bishop in the law of consecration. William Marks was his agent. Perhaps Bishop Whitney and Brother Marks were trying somehow to capitalize on the economic turmoil created when so many saints abandoned Kirtland.

“come up to the land of Adam-ondi-Ahman” Bishop Whitney, responding to section 117, left Kirtland for Missouri in the fall of 1838. He did not make it to Missouri, however. He learned of the extermination order en route, and because of the subsequent turmoil involving the saints, he was unable to join the saints until 1839 in Nauvoo.

12 And again, I say unto you, I remember my servant Oliver Granger; behold, verily I say unto him that his name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord.

verse 12 “Oliver Granger” Oliver Granger was a man of great integrity and great business skills who could have made himself wealthy had he not consecrated his time and talents to the service of the kingdom. Notably, he was nearly blind. Brother Granger had arrived in Far West in June 1838, but when section 117 was received the following month, he was sent to Kirtland with a copy of that revelation for President Marks and Bishop Whitney. He remained in Kirtland conducting business for the First Presidency until October 1838, when he returned briefly to Far West. The exodus from Missouri prevented Granger from returning to Ohio until 1840, where he continued to conduct the business of the Church in Kirtland until his death on August 25, 1841. As long as the world stands, this revelation (section 117) and the Lord’s glorious commendation of Oliver Granger will be sacred scriptures for the Latter-day Saints.

Some have poked fun at the Church because of verse 12. They accuse us of disregarding our scriptures. Here the Lord states that Oliver Granger’s name will be held in “sacred remembrance from generation to generation,” and yet few members of the Church recall anything about the life of this faithful brother!

13 Therefore, let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, saith the Lord; and when he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord.

verse 13 “the redemption of the First Presidency” This phrase refers to the financial redemption of the First Presidency and the restoration of their reputation for honesty, which Granger brought about by his skillful management of church affairs in

Ohio. Among several published tributes to the skill and integrity of Brother Granger is the following: “To all persons that are or may be interested. I, Horace Kingsbury, of Painsville township, Geauga County, and state of Ohio, feeling the importance of recommending to remembrance every worthy citizen who has by his conduct commended himself to personal acquaintance by his course of strict integrity, and desire for truth and common justice, feel it my duty to state that Oliver Granger’s management in the arrangement of the unfinished business of people that have moved to the Far West, in redeeming their pledges and thereby sustaining their integrity, has been truly praiseworthy, and has entitled him to my highest esteem, and ever grateful recollection” (*HC*, 3:174).

“his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase” Note the contrast between this praise for Oliver Granger and the rebuke of Brothers Marks and Whitney in verses 3 and 4. The latter two had been putting increase before their own obedience.

14 Therefore, let him come up hither speedily, unto the land of Zion; and in the due time he shall be made a merchant unto my name, saith the Lord, for the benefit of my people.

verse 14 “unto the land of Zion” Granger attempted to establish his family in Far West in October 1838 but was driven out of the state by the Extermination Order of Governor Boggs. He moved back to Kirtland as Joseph Smith’s business agent in 1840. There he died (September 1841) and is buried.

“a merchant unto my name” Oliver Granger would remain “the Lord’s businessman” for the remainder of his life. All his financial skills were consecrated to the Lord’s name, and all his decisions and actions were made and done in the Lord’s name.

15 Therefore let no man despise my servant Oliver Granger, but let the blessings of my people be on him forever and ever.

16 And again, verily I say unto you, let all my servants in the land of Kirtland remember the Lord their God, and mine house also, to keep and preserve it holy, and to overthrow the moneychangers in mine own due time, saith the Lord. Even so. Amen.

verse 16 “to overthrow the moneychangers” Faithful saints were still living in Kirtland in the summer of 1838, and the stake was not disbanded there until 1841. Nevertheless, there were factions among those who professed to be saints, and it was difficult to know who really was on the Lord’s side. Many different parties struggled for control of the Kirtland Temple, and there were deep differences of opinion concerning its proper uses and function. Many Kirtland members thought of the temple as a financial resource and thus became “moneychangers.” Note, for example the

disagreement over public “exhibitions” in the temple and Oliver Granger’s correct refusal to hand over the temple keys to some church leaders in Ohio who favored using the building for profane purposes (Backman and Cook, *Kirtland Elders’ Quorum Record*, 53-55).

Character Vignette

Wilford Woodruff

He was born March 1, 1807, in Connecticut. His father, paternal grandfather, and great-grandfather were born of strong constitutions and were noted for their arduous manual labors. At an early age he worked with his father in a flour mill.

As a youth, Wilford was influenced by a Robert Mason who was called “old Prophet Mason.” Mason taught that no man had authority to administer in the things of God without revelation from God; that the extant religions were without that authority; and that the time would come when the true Church would be established with its gifts, manifestations, and authority. This led young Wilford to hold himself aloof from the churches of the day and to pray for the coming of an inspired man to show the way.

Beginnings at age twenty years, he managed three flour mills in succession. In the spring of 1832, he and his brother Azmon moved to Richland, New York, purchased a farm and a saw mill, and settled down to work. On December 29, 1833, he and his brother heard the gospel preached by missionaries. They both believed at once, read the Book of Mormon, received a divine testimony of its truthfulness, and offered themselves for baptism. He was baptized and confirmed December 31, 1833. For three years prior to his baptism, he had been impressed with the conviction that God was about to set up his Church on the earth in these last days. Hence, he was prepared to receive the truth when it was presented to him by the elders.

He eventually was called to go to Kirtland, and he sold his businesses and moved there in April 1834. There he met with the Prophet, and one week later he joined the company of volunteers organized by Joseph known as Zion’s Camp to go to Missouri to help the suffering saints in that state. He later fulfilled memorable missions to the southern states, the Fox Islands, and, after his ordination to the Quorum of the Twelve, to the British Isles.

Character Vignette

John Taylor

He was born November 1, 1808, in Milnthorp, England, not far from Lake Windemere. At the age of seventeen, John was appointed to be a Methodist preacher, and he was very active and earnest in his ministerial labors. In 1832 he moved with his family to Toronto, Canada, and there continued as a Methodist minister. While living in Toronto, John made a number of educated and influential friends who were not quite satisfied with the doctrines of their churches, as those doctrines did not seem to agree

with the teachings of the Bible. This group of friends organized themselves to seek for greater religious light. It was under these circumstances that Parley P. Pratt arrived in Toronto and preached to this group seeking the truth. John was converted and was baptized May 9, 1836. He was then ordained an elder and commenced his missionary labors. He immediately went forth to preach the gospel. In the summer of 1836 he traveled to Kirtland to meet with the Prophet Joseph. There he received instructions to return to Canada and preside over the branches of the Church that had recently been organized in that land.

He journeyed to Kirtland in May 1837, when the Church was on the verge of collapse due to apostasy, and he defended the Prophet against the rising tide of apostasy. He even rescued the floundering Parley P. Pratt. He was later ordained an Apostle in December 1838 in Far West..

Character Vignette

Willard Richards

He was baptized in Kirtland by his cousin Brigham Young in 1836. In April 1840, while serving a mission in England, he was ordained an apostle by Brigham Young in Preston, England. He is thus the only man to be ordained an apostle outside the United States. He would yet remain faithful in the Church and eventually serve as counselor to President Brigham Young in Utah.

Character Vignette

John E. Page

After he was baptized in 1833 in Ohio, he served two missions in Canada and baptized nearly six hundred converts. He was ordained an apostle in December 1838 in Far West. In 1839 he failed to serve a mission with others of the Twelve. He was appointed to accompany Orson Hyde to Jerusalem in 1840 but did not complete that mission. He later left the Church and was excommunicated in 1846.

Section 118 The Twelve Called to Preach in England

Section 118 is another of the four canonized revelations received on July 8, 1838, at the conference of elders in Far West (see the introductory commentary for section 117).

Four members of the original Quorum of the Twelve had fallen into apostasy and had been excommunicated. They were William E. McLellin, Lyman E. Johnson, Luke Johnson, and John F. Boynton. Of these, only one returned to the Church. Luke Johnson was rebaptized in 1846 and went west with Brigham Young. In addition to these losses, William Smith, the Prophet's brother, was known to be unreliable in the performance of his apostolic duties. If the Twelve were to continue as an active and effective quorum of the Church, something had to be done. As a result of the difficulties and vacancies in the quorum, Joseph, in the company of Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, Edward Partridge, Isaac Morley, Jared Carter, Sampson Averd, Thomas B. Marsh, and Joseph's clerk, George W. Robinson (in whose hand this revelation was recorded in Joseph's *Scriptory Book*) asked: "Show us thy will, O Lord, concerning the Twelve" (*HC*, 3:46). Section 118 was given in response.

This revelation specifies the four new Apostles who would fill the void left by those who apostatized. They were John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards. Of these, two later became Presidents of the Church and Brother Richards would later serve as counselor in the First Presidency, and only John E. Page would eventually leave the Church. Wilford Woodruff wrote in his journal that when he was notified by mail that he was to be one of the apostles, it was only a confirmation of what the Lord had already revealed to him.

The earliest manuscript of section 118 is the *Scriptory Book* copy, which is contemporary with the revelation and may in fact be the original written copy. Another early copy is in supplemental material added to the end of the *Kirtland Revelation Book* sometime after the Kirtland period. There is also an April 1840 manuscript of section 118 in the handwriting of Willard Richards recorded in his own journal, which is all the more interesting because Elder Richards was one of those called to the apostleship in this revelation. Obviously, section 118 would have been important to him. Other early manuscripts and printed editions witness the present text. Section 118 was added to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876 at the direction of President Brigham Young.

Section 118 also instructed the Twelve to "take leave of my saints in the city of Far West, on the twenty-sixth day of April next, on the building-spot of my house, saith the Lord." This is the only revelation in the Lord's book that has a day, month, and year specified when certain things were to be accomplished. This command was interpreted literally by the Twelve, as we will learn from the material that follows.

Some notes regarding the mission of the Twelve to England are of interest. Credit is given to Brother David F. Boone, as much of the following material will be extracted from his essay "A Time For Commitment" contained in the book *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 1984.

The apostles took seriously and literally the directions the Lord gave them in section 118 as to the way in which their mission should be commenced. However, complying with the specifics of section 118 presented some problems. Between the time the revelation was given (July 8, 1838) and the date the apostles were to leave on their mission (April 26, 1839), the saints had been forced to leave Far West, and indeed Missouri altogether. Elder David W. Patten had been killed by the mob; President Thomas B. Marsh had been excommunicated; and the prophet Joseph had been arrested and incarcerated in the jail at Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. Those Missourians who remained in the area were antagonistic and were certainly capable of thwarting any attempts by the Mormons to return to Far West. A mob of Missourians under the leadership of a protestant minister, Samuel Bogart, were privy to the exact dates the saints were planning to return, and they warned the saints against returning to that area. Elder Wilford Woodruff wrote: "It was as much as a man's life was worth, especially one of the Twelve, to be found in that State [Missouri]; and when the day came on which we were commanded by the Lord in that revelation to go up and lay the corner-stone of that Temple and there take the parting hand with the saints, to cross the waters to preach the gospel in England [verse 5], the inhabitants of Missouri had sworn that if all the revelations of 'Old Jo Smith' were fulfilled, that one should not be, because it had a day and a date to it" (*JD*, 18:123). Members of the mob had stated, "If they (the Twelve) come, they will get murdered; they dare not come to take their leave here; that is like all the rest of Joe Smith's damned prophecies" (*HC*, 3:307). Apostates and other enemies in Missouri gloried in the opportunity to prove Joseph Smith a false prophet by preventing the fulfillment of D&C 115:11 and 118:5.

On March 18, 1839, Brigham Young, who had succeeded Thomas B. Marsh as senior apostle in the Quorum, called a meeting of the Twelve and other leaders in Quincy, Illinois. At that meeting, George A. Smith, the Prophet's cousin, was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve in place of Thomas Marsh, but he was not ordained at this time. Brigham Young then asked his quorum their feelings about the commanded departure from Far West the following month. He later wrote: "Many of the Authorities considered, in our present persecuted and scattered condition, the Lord would not require the Twelve to fulfil his words to the letter, and, under our present circumstances, he would take the will for the deed; but I felt differently, and so did those of the Quorum who were with me. I asked them, individually, what their feelings were upon the subject. They all expressed their desires to fulfil the revelation. I told them the Lord God had spoken, and it was our duty to obey and leave the event in his hands

and he would protect us” (Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 25, as cited in Porter, “Brigham Young and the Twelve in Quincy,” 140).

No one could have blamed the Twelve had they decided not to return to Far West in view of their scattered and persecuted condition. However, under the leadership of Brigham Young (Thomas B. Marsh, the President of the original Quorum of the Twelve, had been excommunicated in March 1839), they decided, the dangers notwithstanding, to follow the Lord’s instructions explicitly. Therefore, knowing the futility of trying to keep their visit a secret, and trusting in the protective hand of the Lord, five of the apostles (Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, and John E. Page) and several other saints arrived at the temple lot at Far West on the morning of April 26, 1839, just after midnight.

President Wilford Woodruff later gave this account of how the Twelve fulfilled their instruction:

On the 18th of April, 1839, I took into my wagon Brigham Young and Orson Pratt; Father Cutler took into his wagon John Taylor and George A. Smith, and we started for Far West. On the way we met John E. Page, who was going with his family to Quincy, Illinois. His wagon had turned over, and when we met him he was trying to gather up with his hands a barrel of soft soap. We helped him with his wagon. He then drove into the valley below, left his wagon, and accompanied us on our way. On the night of the 25th of April we arrived at Far West, and spent the night at the home of Morris Phelps. He had been taken a prisoner by the mob, and was still in prison.

On the morning of the 26th of April, 1839, notwithstanding the threats of our enemies that the revelation which was to be fulfilled this day should not be fulfilled; notwithstanding ten thousand of the saints had been driven out of the state by the edict of the governor; and notwithstanding the prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum Smith, with other leading men, were in the hands of our enemies in chains and in prison, we moved on to the temple grounds in the city of Far West, held a council [with the few remaining saints], and fulfilled the revelation and commandment given to us. We also excommunicated from the Church thirty-one persons who had apostatized and become its enemies. The “Mission of the Twelve” was sung, and we repaired to the southeast corner of the temple ground, where, with the assistance of Elder Alpheus Cutler, the master workman of the building committee, we laid the southeast chief cornerstone of the Temple, according to revelation [D&C 115:8-11]. There were present of the Twelve Apostles: Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, John E. Page, and John Taylor. They proceeded to ordain Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith to the apostleship [as they sat upon the cornerstone of the Far West Temple]. . . .

Bidding goodbye to this small remnant of the saints who remained on the temple ground to see us fulfill the revelation and commandment of God, we turned our backs on Far West, Missouri, and returned to Illinois. We had accomplished the mission without a dog moving his tongue at us, or any man saying, “Why do ye so?” We

crossed the Mississippi River on the steam ferry, entered Quincy on the 2nd of May, and all of us had the joy of reaching our families once more in peace and safety. Thus the word of God was complied with (Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 101-02; see also Brigham Young, "History," in *Millennial Star* 25 [12 September 1863]: 584).

The entire group of saints left the site before dawn on April 26, 1839, before their enemies were aware of their presence. It is not surprising that the enemies of the Church, who would have accepted the failure of this mission as proof Joseph Smith was a false prophet, did not find its miraculous fulfillment to be any indication he was a true prophet. Before the seven apostles reached Quincy, they learned to their joy that the Prophet and his companions had escaped from their imprisonment in Missouri. Joseph reached Quincy on April 22, 1839. The apostles arrived on May 2. The Missouri period of early church history had come to an end. The Illinois period had begun.

The mission to Great Britain was undertaken against much opposition. In general the missionaries had little or no money. Many were ill. And some left their wives and families destitute. Perhaps, most of all, the Church could ill-afford to have them gone. They left at a time of persecution and scattering, and they were the backbone of the Church. Their absence would be a real hardship for the Church to bear.

Joseph knew, however, that it was vital at that time that church membership, which had been depleted by apostasy, be increased, so that the coming persecutions should not deal a fatal blow to the Church. Heber C. Kimball, along with Orson Hyde, had previously served a mission to Great Britain. Prior to sending these two brethren to Great Britain in 1837, the Prophet had said, "Something new must be done for the salvation of the Church." This and subsequent missions to Great Britain did prove to be the literal salvation of the Church, as the thousands of British converts who responded to the call to gather provided the critical mass of saints with the strength to survive and prosper.

In the mission field, Brigham Young served chiefly as an administrator over the mission. He gathered hymns for the first hymnal for the British saints. Elder Young also manifest an unusual gift for healing the sick. For counselors in the mission presidency he chose Heber C. Kimball, who had previously served a mission there in 1837-38, and Willard Richards. The latter had served previously with Elder Kimball in England and had remained in England to do missionary work when Heber C. Kimball returned home. Brother Richards had met and married his wife in England and had assumed the administrative duties in the absence of any members of the Twelve. Shortly after the arrival of the apostles, Willard Richards was ordained a member of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Parley P. Pratt's duties were also somewhat administrative. He was a writer and the editor of the *Millennial Star*, the Church's publication in England. He was

chosen to remain in England after the other members of the Twelve returned home in 1841.

Orson Pratt, Parley's brother, was involved in opening of new areas for proselyting. He spent almost his entire mission in Scotland.

John Taylor worked in the Liverpool area. While there he converted a family named Cannon. Sister Cannon was actually John Taylor's sister. While crossing the ocean to emigrate to America, she died. Shortly after arriving in Nauvoo, Brother Cannon also died. This left a young son, George Q. Cannon, homeless, and he was taken in by the John Taylor family. George Q. Cannon later became prominent in church affairs and served for many years in the First Presidency of the Church.

Wilford Woodruff was guided by the Spirit to a congregation of some 600 former Methodists who had banded together to pray that the Lord would send them the truth. All but one joined the Church, and many of them gathered with the saints in Nauvoo. This group of 600 converts, however, made up only a third of the 1,800 converts that Elder Woodruff reported during his stay in the British Isles.

Between 1840 and 1850, over five thousand converts from the British Isles came to America and bolstered the number of saints in the Nauvoo area. As Joseph had prophesied, this and other missions to Great Britain were not simply another proselyting venture—they were the salvation of the Church.

While it is true that the Spirit of the Lord influenced many British people to join the Church, and indeed, the "field" was "white, already to harvest," we should also acknowledge that economic factors may have contributed to the success of the British mission. England was in the throes of a recession, and the economic future of many in Britain looked bleak. The prospect of gathering to America offered real hope to many. It is possible that economic motivation played some role in the explosive success of the British missionaries. Some may have even joined the Church largely to get to America. Indeed, in the early 1850s, many were excommunicated when it was learned that they joined the Church largely to obtain financial assistance in relocating to America.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 118 The twelve called to preach in England

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: Let a conference be held immediately; let the Twelve be organized; and let men be appointed to supply the place of those who are fallen.

verse 1 "Let a conference be held immediately" "Conference" here meant a meeting of the remaining members of the Quorum of the Twelve for the purpose of implementing the instructions contained in section 118. This meeting was held in the following day, July 9, 1838.

“let the Twelve be organized” The Quorum of the Twelve had originally been organized on February 14, 1835. Section 118 confirms to the Prophet that the Quorum was to continue, as it did in Acts 1:15-26, by new apostles’ being called to fill the places of those who had fallen. The meeting of the Twelve on July 9 was conducted by President Thomas B. Marsh, with Elders David W. Patten, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, and William Smith attending. Sidney Rigdon also attended, representing the First Presidency, and George Robinson, Joseph Smith’s clerk, recorded the minutes. It is possible that others were present as well. It was decided at this meeting that Thomas B. Marsh would notify Wilford Woodruff of his new calling by letter, because Elder Woodruff was then serving a mission in the Fox Islands off the coast of Maine. Sidney Rigdon was to notify Willard Richards, who was serving a mission in England at the time, of his new calling.

2 Let my servant Thomas remain for a season in the land of Zion, to publish my word.

verse 2 Quorum president Thomas B. Marsh was to remain at Far West and continue publishing the *Elders’ Journal*, which was, for the brief time Joseph Smith lived in Missouri, the official publication of the Church.

3 Let the residue continue to preach from that hour, and if they will do this in all lowliness of heart, in meekness and humility, and long-suffering, I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that I will provide for their families; and an effectual door shall be opened for them, from henceforth.

verse 3 **“Let the residue continue to preach from that hour”** “That hour” refers to the reorganization of the Quorum of the Twelve by the appointment of its new members. The rest of the Quorum, besides President Marsh who was to remain in Missouri, were from the hour of their appointment to continue preaching the gospel.

“I will provide for their families” A discussion of how the families of the apostles would be provided for while the Twelve served full-time missions was part of President Sidney Rigdon’s presentation at the July 9 meeting (*HC*, 3:47).

4 And next spring let them depart to go over the great waters, and there promulgate my gospel, the fulness thereof, and bear record of my name.

verse 4 **“let them depart to go over the great waters”** At the time of this revelation, Heber C. Kimball had just returned from his first apostolic mission to Great Britain, having, with his companions, converted nearly fifteen hundred people. Now he and his entire quorum were asked to return overseas, this time as the Twelve Apostles of the Lord. This would be the first time in this dispensation that the Twelve would labor overseas as a group.

5 Let them take leave of my saints in the city of Far West, on the twenty-sixth day of April next, on the building-spot of my house, saith the Lord.

verse 5 See the introductory commentary for this section which contains the moving story of the apostles' literal compliance with this command.

6 Let my servant John Taylor, and also my servant John E. Page, and also my servant Wilford Woodruff, and also my servant Willard Richards, be appointed to fill the places of those who have fallen, and be officially notified of their appointment.

Sections 119 and 120 The Law of Tithing

These two sections were among the five revelations received on July 8, 1838 at the conference in Far West (see the introductory commentary for section 117). They were received on that occasion in response to the Prophet Joseph's prayer, "O Lord, show unto thy servant how much thou requirest of the properties of thy people for a tithing" (*HC*, 3:44).

The Lord had given to the Church the law of consecration whereby a man consecrated all that he owned to the Lord, and in return he was given his stewardship or those things he needed to support his family. Some members had tried to live this celestial law, but in almost all instances they had failed miserably. After 1833 the saints' financial situation was desperate. Many factors had accumulated against them including the huge losses in Jackson County, the many resources needed to fund Zion's Camp, the costs of building the Kirtland Temple, the failure of the Kirtland Anti-Banking Safety Society with the subsequent loss of many Kirtland assets, the forced migration from Kirtland to Far West, and the commandment to build another temple in Far West without incurring debt (*D&C* 115:13). These factors, collectively, put impossible burdens upon the minority of the saints who were still attempting to live the law of consecration. The United Order did not appear to be workable, and the commandment that the saints live in such an order was withdrawn for the time being. Zion, we are told, can never be built up except by the principles of the celestial law or the law of consecration (*D&C* 105:5). It is important to note that while the concept of the United Order has been put "on hold," the law of consecration itself has not been withdrawn and is still a gospel principle we are expected to live. We enter into a covenant to do so in the temple. Obviously, some are called upon to consecrate more than others, and the important thing is our willingness to consecrate what we have to the Lord's work when asked.

Since the concept of the United Order had failed, it now became necessary that a law of contribution be given to the entire Church. In December of 1837, Joseph had appointed a committee to adopt a plan whereby revenue could be raised to defray church expenses. The recommendation of this committee was that a voluntary tithing program be established, the donation to be based on assets, not income. Their recommendation provided for a yearly inventory with the bishop. This initiative was never implemented, but it undoubtedly served as a precursor to sections 119 and 120.

Also on a previous occasion, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had promised the Lord, while suffering because of their debts in 1834, that they would give one-tenth of all that the Lord should give unto them as an offering to be bestowed upon the poor. The law of tithing, therefore, is not a substitute for the law of consecration. Rather, it is

a part of that law. It is the part which provides money for the financial operations of the whole Church (*HC*, 2:174-75).

The Prophet, on July 8, 1838, prayed for instructions and was given sections 119 and 120.

These sections are the origin of the law of tithing. This law had not been given previously to the Church in this dispensation. The term “tithing,” however, is used previously in the Doctrine and Covenants (64:23, 85:3, and 97:11). As used previously, the term is simply a generic one that refers to a “contribution” or “free-will offering.” The word “tithe,” however, contains the intrinsic meaning of the concept of “a tenth.” The payment of one-tenth of one’s increase for the support of the community or the maintenance of a religious institution has been a well-established practice in the past among Christians as well as ancient Israel (the above taken from Stephen A. Ricks’s essay, “A Standing Law Forever” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 456).

As outlined in section 119, the law of tithing included two types of contributions. First, as a new convert came into the Church, they were “required” to donate all of their “surplus property” (verse 1). That is, an inventory of their assets was to be taken by the bishop, and then the amount of “surplus” was determined and contributed to the Church. Joseph Smith gave the guideline as to who should be the judge of what is considered “surplus” when Brigham Young asked him, “who shall be the judge of what is surplus property?” Said he, “Let them be the judges themselves . . .” (*Far West Record*, 89-93). In verses 4 and 5 of section 119, this process is referred to as being “tithed.” Again, the word “tithed” is used here in its general sense and not specifically referring to a “tenth.”

The second type of contribution was then to be an annual contribution of a tenth of one’s “interest”—income or increase.

It is interesting to note that at the time the law of tithing was given in 1838, this process of contributing one’s “surplus” to the Church was very analogous to the process, in the law of consecration, where one contributed all that one owned and then received back the essential stewardship. In both cases the member had what was essential, and the Church controlled the surplus. In actual practice, however, even in 1838, few members actually caught the true spirit of this part of the law. In the words of Orson Pratt, “Who in the world among all the Latter-day Saints would have any surplus property if it is left to his own judgment?” (*JD*, 16:157, 17:110). Also Brigham Young observed: “Some were disposed to do right with their surplus property, and once in a while you would find a man who had a cow which he considered surplus, but generally she was of the class that would kick a person’s hat off, or eyes out, or the wolves had eaten off her teats. You would once in a while find a man who had a horse that he considered surplus, but at the same time he had the ringbone, was broken-winded,

spavined in both legs, and had the pole evil at one end of the neck and a fistula at the other, and both knees sprung” (*JD*, 2:306-7).

Perhaps because many of the saints had trouble finding any “surplus” property among their possessions, more specific guidelines were later given to the saints regarding the “pre-assessment” part of tithing. In 1841, the Twelve wrote to the saints regarding the proposed temple at Nauvoo: “the tithing required is one-tenth part of all anyone possessed at the commencement of the building, and one-tenth part of all his increase from that time until the completion of the same” (*HC*, 4:473). Also in a general epistle of the First Presidency to the Church in 1854 the “Law of Tithing” (this is the first time this specific term was used) was interpreted to mean that all should initially pay one-tenth of their entire property and thereafter pay one-tenth of all their increase.

The practice of the law of tithing has evolved so that today we are not asked to any kind of “pre-assessment,” but rather we pay only a tenth of our increase.

The question of what precisely constitutes a man’s income or increase has long been a difficult one. Is tithe-able income that income before taxes or after taxes? before expenses or after expenses? and what constitutes legitimate expenses? In a letter dated March 19, 1970, the First Presidency counseled as follows:

Dear Brethren:

Inquiries are received at the office of the First Presidency from time to time from officers and members of the Church asking for information as to what is considered a proper tithe.

For your guidance in this matter, please be advised that we have uniformly replied that the simplest statement we know of is the statement of the Lord himself, namely, that the members of the Church should pay “one tenth of their interest annually” which is understood to mean “income.” No one is justified in making any other statement than this.

We feel that every member of the Church is entitled to make his own decision as to what he thinks he owes the Lord and to make payment accordingly.

Sincerely your brethren,

Joseph Fielding Smith

Harold B. Lee

N. Eldon Tanner

There still remain many different ways of calculating our tithing obligation. What a man owes is up to the man himself, and he must justify it only with his bishop and the Lord. The Lord’s Church would survive without our tithing contributions, but, in an eternal sense, we would not. The payment of tithing is more for our own benefit than for the Lord’s. The law of tithing is, in the final analysis, a spiritual, not a temporal law.

Prior to section 120, the consecrated monies and properties had been controlled by the bishop of the Church. Section 120 gave this responsibility to a church council consisting of the First Presidency, the bishop and his counselors, and the church high

council. Today the distribution of tithes is the responsibility of the Council for the Disposition of Tithes, consisting of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric.

The earliest copies of sections 119 and 120 are found in the *Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith* in the handwriting of George W. Robinson. These copies are essentially contemporary with the original revelation. Other early manuscripts exist in the handwriting of Newel K. Whitney, Edward Partridge, Frederick G. Williams, and Willard Richards. Section 119 was first added to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1844. Section 120 first appeared in the Doctrine and Covenants in the 1876 edition at the direction of President Brigham Young.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 119-120 The Law of Tithing

Section 119

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my church in Zion,

verse 1 “I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop” See the introductory commentary for this section.

2 For the building of mine house, and for the laying of the foundation of Zion and for the priesthood, and for the debts of the Presidency of my Church.

verse 2 “For the building of mine house” That is, for the temple at Far West.

3 And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people.

verse 3 “the beginning of the tithing of my people” This phrase can be interpreted in two ways: (1) First, the donating of all of a family’s surpluses to the bishop is the first step in paying one’s tithing. (2) Second, these sections, sections 119 and 120 mark the beginning of the principle of tithing—giving one tenth of one’s interest or income to the Church each year.

4 And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord.

verse 4 “one-tenth of all their interest annually” This phrase and the 1970 statement of the First Presidency quoted in the introductory commentary, are the only specific authoritative scriptural quantitative guidelines for the payment of one’s tithing.

“this shall be a standing law unto them forever” It is often said that the law of consecration is a celestial law, while the law of tithing is a lesser or terrestrial law. Because tithing was part of the law of Moses, which was a terrestrial, preparatory law

(D&C 84:27), it is sometimes assumed that the practice is only preparatory in nature and was originally intended to be done away with that law. This cannot be entirely correct, however, for the obligations of the law of consecration and of tithing overlapped for the Church between July 8, 1838, when tithing was instituted, and March 6, 1840, when Joseph announced that the law of consecration was, collectively at least rescinded (*HC*, 4:93). During this period, the consecration of surplus, if any, and the payment of tithing by all was the system by which the Church observed the celestial law of consecration. “There is no evidence that Mormon leaders or members perceived the economic plan embodied in section 119 to be an ‘inferior law’ of church economics. On the contrary, the 1838 program was viewed by the saints simply as a new phase of consecration” (Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration*, 7).

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery began observing the covenant of tithing on November 29, 1834—three and one half years before the rest of the Church. In their personal covenants, they specified that the amount to be given the Lord would be a tenth “and that our children after us shall remember to observe this sacred and holy covenant” (*HC*, 2:175). It would be difficult to argue that Joseph and Oliver were entering into a “lesser law” than consecration, because the law of consecration had been given to the whole Church—including Joseph and Oliver—in 1831 and was not rescinded until 1840.

It might be fair to say, however, that the principle of tithing can be lived as either a “lesser law” or as a form of the law of consecration. If an individual understands that ten percent of his increase belongs to the Lord and ninety percent belongs to himself, then this is essentially the Old Testament view (Leviticus 27:30-34) and represents a “lesser” or preparatory principle. One who is tithed, even in this sense, will not be burned at the last day (D&C 64:23) and will receive all the blessings promised for keeping this law in a terrestrial manner. On the other hand, if an individual, particularly one who is endowed, understands that one hundred percent of his income is consecrated to the Lord, that ten percent is to be paid to the Lord immediately while the remainder is a stewardship to be managed for the good of the kingdom, and that any or all of it may be required by the Lord at any time, then this represents the present form of the law of consecration. One who is tithed in this sense is observing the law in a celestial manner and will receive all of its even greater and higher blessings. What makes the difference between the lesser law of tithing and the consecrated law of tithing is the covenant understanding of the individual and the intent of his or her heart. To give the Lord nothing is disobedience. To give the Lord ten percent and keep ninety percent is obedience to the lesser law. To give the Lord everything and then manage ninety percent for him as his steward is obedience to the law of consecration. Thus, in one form or another, the principle of tithing will be a standing law to the Church forever.

5 Verily I say unto you, it shall come to pass that all those who gather unto the land of Zion shall be tithed of their surplus properties, and shall observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide among you.

verse 5 “shall be tithed of their surplus properties” At this time in the church’s history, the first step in living the law of tithing was to consecrate or give one’s surplus properties to the bishop of the Church. At that time, merely paying tithing without first consecrating one’s surplus would have been unsatisfactory to the Lord. Ananias and Sapphira leaned in Acts 5:1-11 that one cannot enter into the covenant of consecration for building Zion while holding back from the Lord an individual surplus, a private safety net, or a contingency fund just in case Zion fails.

6 And I say unto you, if my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you, it shall not be a land of Zion unto you.

verse 6 “if my people observe not this law” The Church collectively did not observe the law of consecration of surplus and payment of tithing sufficiently well to establish a physical Zion. Four months after this revelation was received, most Latter-day Saints were driven from the State of Missouri, beginning with the Extermination Order of Governor Lilburn Boggs. While the method of their expulsion from the state was through the wickedness of the mobs and the misuse of government, the reason for their expulsion was their failure to sanctify the land by keeping the Lord’s statutes and judgments and thus making it truly a land of Zion.

“sanctify the land of Zion unto me” We have discussed the concept of *sanctification* previously. It is often associated with *justification*. While justification means forgiving or removing the penalties of sin, sanctification means purging of worldly or “natural” elements and rendering more heavenly—more like God. Apparently both individuals and land can become sanctified. For further discussion of the concept of sanctification, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*.

This rather enigmatic phrase seems to mean that if the saints will pay their tithing, their land will be sanctified by the Lord’s blessings and serve the saints as a true land of Zion. But what does this imply? What does it mean for a land to be sanctified? What benefits and blessings are afforded the saints when they reside on a sanctified land of Zion?

Elder James E. Talmage taught that the physical land itself may become sanctified and more productive: “Do you know that the soil can be sanctified by the tithing of its products? The land can be sanctified [Malachi 3:10]. There is a relationship between the elements and forces of nature and the actions of men (CR, October 1929, 68).

President David O. McKay taught that the Lord affords blessings of protection when the saints pay their tithing: “If all would thus lose themselves unselfishly in the law of tithing, there would be sufficient in the Lord’s storehouse to insure the comfort and education of every person in need in the Church. The Church would thus become the best, the safest insurance society in the world. The time will come when tithing as a sufficient means of protection will be even more fully understood than it is today” (*Treasures of Life*, 285).

Elder Melvin J. Ballard taught that the law of tithing is a “law of inheritance” and that by paying their tithing the saints become entitled to live on the celestial globe—the most perfectly sanctified land of Zion. He said: “Do we not hope and expect to have an inheritance in the celestial kingdom, even upon this earth in its redeemed and sanctified state [see D&C 88:25-26; 130:9]? What are the terms under which we may obtain that inheritance? The law of tithing is the law of inheritance. It leads to it. No man may hope or expect to have an inheritance on this celestial globe who has failed to pay his tithing. By the payment of his honest tithing he is establishing a right and a title to this inheritance, and he cannot secure it upon any other terms but by complying with this and other just requirements; and this is one of the very essential things (*CR*, October 1929, 50-51).

A land that provides sufficient resources, safety, and security for all of the Lord’s people is a land sanctified unto the Lord, a true land of Zion.

7 And this shall be an ensample unto all the stakes of Zion. Even so. Amen.

verse 7 At the time this revelation was received, there was only a stake at Far West and one at Adam-ondi-Ahman, which had just been organized on June 28, 1838. The principle of tithing was to be applied to all future members as a means for establishing and sanctifying all future stakes of Zion.

Section 120

Prior to section 120’s being received, several different bodies had the responsibility of managing the various incomes from stewardships and consecration in the Church. With the revelation on tithing contained in section 119, it became necessary for the Lord to specify how the funds collected by tithing the saints would be handled. The Prophet Joseph recorded in his *Scriptory Book*, “Revelation given the same day July 8th 1838, making known the disposition of the properties tithed, as named in the preceding revelation” (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:259).

Printed versions of the Doctrine and Covenants between 1853 and 1978 gave the incorrect date of July 18, 1838, for section 120, an error that has been corrected in the 1979 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants and in subsequent printings.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord, the time is now come, that it shall be disposed of by a council, composed of the First Presidency of my Church, and of the bishop and his council, and by my high council; and by mine own voice unto them, saith the Lord. Even so. Amen.

verse 1 “it shall be disposed of by a council” Section 120 creates the body in the Church known as the Council on the Disposition of Tithes. This council consists of the First Presidency of the Church, the Presiding Bishopric of the Church (“the bishop and his council”), and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (“my high council”). Any expenditure of the sacred tithing funds of the Church must be approved by this council.

This council met for the first time on July 26, 1838. It was decided at that time that the First Presidency would use whatever funds they felt necessary for governing the Church and accomplishing the Church’s mission upon the earth and that the remainder would then be turned over to the Presiding Bishopric (*HC*, 3:47).

In April 1911 the First Presidency of the Church, during the presidency of Joseph F. Smith, stated: “The funds thus received are not the property of the President of the Church or his associates, nor of the presiding bishopric, nor of the local bishops. They belong to the Church and are used for Church purposes (Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:229).

Brief Historical Setting

1838 August

During the next three months, the spirit of peace and optimism, which had developed among the saints in Far West, was shattered. On October 27, 1838, the Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued an order to his state militia to kill or drive out of the state by force every Mormon! Why?! What happened? How could conditions change so drastically—from peace in July of 1838 to an “extermination order” in October? Let us proceed on to section 121 to learn the reasons.

Section 121 The Spirit of the Priesthood

After Joseph had been forced out of Kirtland in January 1838 due to increasing apostasy and threats on his life, he made his way to Far West, Missouri. After his arrival there on March 14, 1838, the Church was blessed with several peaceful and prosperous months. A spirit of optimism resulted as crops were planted, plans for a temple in Far West were made, and as many as twelve thousand saints gathered in Missouri. Not all were gathered in Far West, Caldwell County. Other significant settlements were also established in Adam-ondi-Ahman (shortened to “Diahman”), Daviess County on the north, and Dewitt and Carroll Counties on the east. On March 29, 1838, Joseph wrote to members still remaining in Kirtland, “The saints at this time are in union; and peace and love prevail throughout; in a word, heaven smiles upon the saints in Caldwell. . . . We have no uneasiness about the power of our enemies in this place to do us harm” (*HC*, 3:115).

Caldwell County, the reader will recall, was created specifically for Mormon immigration. It would seem that many native Missourians expected that such immigration would thereafter be limited to Caldwell County and that the saints would not gather in significant numbers to any other Missouri county. Although Joseph Smith made some effort to keep LDS immigration centralized, by and large the saints did not feel constrained to settle only near Far West and rightly viewed such restrictions as a violation of their constitutional rights to purchase land wherever it was for sale and to settle wherever they pleased. We will see that trouble with the mobs began not in the saints’ population centers but in the smaller settlements outside Caldwell County.

In July 1838, conditions in Missouri were peaceful. Three months later, on October 27, 1838, the Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued the “extermination order.” What happened to cause this? Who were to blame? The saints? The Missourians? Let us look at the history of the period and the precipitating factors.

The Missourians feared that the Mormons might be able to exercise political control over the districts where they settled, since they were a cohesive, single-minded group that were likely to vote as a block. This fear manifest itself in August 1838, during the Missouri state elections. Some of the following material will be extracted from Orson F. Whitney’s account of the period recorded in the *History of Utah, August 1838 – March 1839*, volume 1, 142-64. Some of these materials will be quoted, and some will be adapted for our use.

William P. Peniston was a candidate for representative to the legislature from the district. Peniston had been prominent in anti-Mormon activities himself and feared the political clout of the Mormons. He thus started a major campaign to try to prevent the saints from voting. He labeled the Mormons as “horse thieves” and “robbers,” and his

“party” stood ready at any time to become a mob to counter any attempts of the Mormons to vote.

The Church denied his allegations and insisted upon their right to vote. On August 6, 1838, twelve unarmed Mormons traveled to Gallatin, the Daviess County seat, to vote. Peniston’s mob of more than a hundred men set upon the Mormons who stoutly defended themselves. Clubs, stones, and fists were used, and even knives were unsheathed by some of the assailants. No lives were lost, but several on both sides were wounded. The Mormons withdrew without voting, and the election proceeded.

This incident, particularly as exaggerated and distorted by incendiary speeches and articles in the local press, contributed to a general anti-Mormon conflagration in the area. All of Daviess County and some surrounding areas were aroused by the rumor of the “riot at Gallatin.” The Missourians began organizing and arming themselves. We will come back to the brewing storm produced by the Gallatin incident in a moment, but first let’s consider other possible reasons for the rising anti-Mormon sentiment in Missouri.

One contributory factor was a speech delivered by Sidney Rigdon at the Independence Day celebration on July 4, 1838, in Far West. He delivered an emotional oration in which he declared an end to persecution of, and mob rule over, the saints. With indignation he declared “from this day and this hour we will suffer it no more. . . . The man, or set of men who attempt it, do it at the expense of their lives. And that mob that comes on us to disturb us, it shall be between us and them a war of extermination; for we will follow them until the last drop of their blood is spilled; or else they will have to exterminate us, for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed.” He did add that the saints would never become the aggressors or infringe upon anyone’s rights, but that the saints would “stand for our own until death” (B.H. Roberts 1:44).

It is understandable why this kind of speech might be given by a people who had been cruelly persecuted—it was simply the expression of a justifiable human emotion. But the effect of the speech, which was printed by the saints in their newspaper, was overtly inflammatory. It presented almost a war-like posture which was disconcerting to the Missourians.

The suspicions and fears thus produced among the Missourians were furthered by rumors that a secret organization existed in the Church called the “Danites,” whose members were bound together by secret oaths and covenants and whose avowed purpose was seeking vengeance against enemies of the Church. The rumor held that this secret society functioned under the leadership of Joseph Smith himself.

The apparent truth about the Danites has been advanced by Dean C. Jessee and David J. Whittaker after their study of the personal journals of Albert Parry Rockwood who joined the Church in Kirtland in 1837 and lived in Missouri in 1838. (“The Last Months of Mormonism in Missouri: The Albert Parry Rockwood Journal

[1838-39],” *BYU Studies* 28:1 [1988].) Rockwood’s journal suggests several important facts about the Danites that have been previously been misunderstood:

1. The actual origin of the “Army of Israel” dates well before 1838. It goes back to Zion’s Camp in 1834 (see D&C 105:31). Then the militia operations of the Church were tied to divine injunctions to redeem Zion, a central part of Joseph Smith’s mission to establish the latter-day kingdom of God in Missouri. It is clear that Zion’s Camp was established as a defensive or protective operation for the saints in Missouri who had been evicted from their homes in Jackson County. This militia operation seems likely to have been the precursor for the Danites.

2. Rockwood’s account of the organization of the Danites indicates that it involved the entire Mormon community. Its structure consisted of companies of tens, fifties, and hundreds. Various groupings of the Danites provided all kinds of community service, not just bearing arms. Some groups of Danites were to build houses. Others were to gather food or care for the sick, while still others were to help gather the scattered saints into the community. Working in groups, the Danites served the interests of the whole community. It was hardly a secret organization working under the cover of darkness.

3. Rockwood reveals that the name Dan came not from the warrior tribe of Dan (Genesis 49:16-17; Deuteronomy 33:22; 1 Chronicles 12:35) as critical sources have alleged, but rather from the book of Daniel, “because the prophet Daniel has said the saints shall take the kingdom and possess it forever” (Daniel 2:44). Early Mormons consistently used the book of Daniel in their own self-understanding of the mission of the Church (see especially D&C 65:2). The “stone cut out without hands” was to fill the whole earth. This stone was, in their minds, the kingdom of God, and this belief evidenced their urgent and immediate millennial expectations. The kingdom of God was not to be established by bloodshed or lawbreaking (see D&C 58:19-22; 98:4-7; 105:5).

4. It seems clear that the original intent of the Danites was to more fully organize modern Israel into an integrated community with each person contributing to the benefit of the whole. It is clear also that that a more radical fringe of the Danites was organized and spirited by Sampson Avard. Under his direction some of the Danites may have become involved in some illegal activities such as stealing from Mormon dissidents. As soon as Avard’s role in the Danites was discovered by Joseph, he was excommunicated from the Church. It is unfair and entirely inaccurate and misleading to equate the Danites with this radical fringe led by Sampson Avard. Avard would later show his true apostate colors and testify as the star witness against the prophet Joseph in Richmond, Ray County, in November of 1838 just prior to Joseph’s incarceration in Liberty Jail. In that testimony he painted a sinister picture of the Danites as a secretive, militaristic organization operation outside the law. He characterized them as a band of

armed men bound by secret oaths who had engaged in illegal activities against non-Mormon neighbors. Thus was born the fallacious legend of the Danites.

Another important factor in the anti-Mormon feeling was simply religious bigotry which doubtless was fueled by Satan's urging. The Mormons were different in their beliefs and form of worship, and this spawned mistrust and resentment.

Many have suggested that the fact that the saints were largely easterners, many of whom had feelings against slavery, was also a factor. The saints were an industrious, hard-working people who watched out for one another, and these qualities were somehow threatening to some of the Missourians among whom the saints lived.

The sum total of these smoldering embers culminated in a raging conflagration by the end of October. The fuse was perhaps lighted by the incident at Gallatin mentioned above.

When Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs learned of the situation in Daviess County, he directed the Missouri militia to muster and put down the insurrection. General Alexander Doniphan and others were dispatched, and they marched to the camp of the mobocrats near Diahman and ordered them to disperse. The mob protested that they were merely acting in self-defense. Doniphan then went to Diahman and conferred with Colonel Lyman Wight, commanding the Mormon force, "the Host of Israel." He found them willing to disband, but only if the enemy would also disperse and also surrender any of their (the mobocrats') number accused of offenses against the laws, to be dealt with by legal authority. The prisoners and weapons taken by the Mormon militia were delivered up at the demand of General Doniphan. On September 15, Doniphan returned to Gallatin to join his fellow generals Atchison and Parks.

The report of these officers to the governor was essentially that affairs in Daviess County were not so bad as rumor had represented, and that the governor had been misled as to the intent of the Mormons. The Mormons, so far as could be learned, had been acting on the defensive, showing no hostile intent or inclination to resist the laws. They (the generals) reported that on their arrival in Daviess County, they found a large body of Missouri men from other counties who had not been called out by proper authority. These were armed and in the field to assist the people of Daviess County against the Mormons. This mob of Missourians, they observed, were still threatening to drive the Mormons out by force.

The scene now changed to Dewitt in Carroll County. Enraged at being thwarted in their designs upon Diahman, the mob army moved to Dewitt and laid siege to that town on October 2. The church's commander in Dewitt, Colonel Hinkle, waited forty-eight hours and then ordered the fire returned. The bombardment continued at intervals for nine days. During that period, Joseph made his way into Dewitt through much difficulty and danger from Far West. He found the saints in Dewitt thoroughly defeated by the Missourians. Their provisions were exhausted. Their cattle and horses stolen.

Their houses burned; and they themselves were threatened with death if they attempted to leave town.

With the help of non-Mormon friends in the area, an appeal was made to Governor Boggs in behalf of the beleaguered saints. The Governor replied that the quarrel was between the Mormons and the mob, and that they should “fight it out.”

Finally the Mormons were permitted to evacuate Dewitt, which they did on October 11. The homeless refugees fled to Far West. Now some eight hundred strong, the mob army turned again to Diahman.

The Battle of Crooked River was fought on the 25th day of October. Crooked River is a town located in northern Ray County about half way between Far West and Richmond. A band of Missourians had been committing atrocities in that vicinity. They had captured three Mormons and had boasted of their intent to put the three to death on the following night. Colonel Hinkle dispatched Captain David W. Patten (see commentary for D&C 114) to rescue the three and to disperse the troublesome band of marauders. Leaving Far West about midnight, the fearless Captain Patten and his company of seventy-five men came upon the Missourians at day-break. Patten ordered his men to charge, and the mob was scattered and fled across the river. They left the three prisoners behind and abandoned their camp to the victorious Mormons. However, Captain Patten and two others were fatally wounded. One of the Missourians was killed.

Two days later on October 27, 1838, Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued the infamous order to Major General John B. Clark, giving him command of an overwhelming force of militia, to proceed at once against the Mormons. “Their outrages are beyond all description,” said the Governor, and “they must be exterminated or driven from the state.”

Among the first fruits of the evil edict of Missouri’s chief executive was the Haun’s Mill massacre. Haun’s Mill was situated on Shoal Creek, about ten miles due east of Far West. Here dwelt recently arrived immigrants who were awaiting an improvement in the war-like conditions before continuing on to a more permanent settlement. On October 30 at about four o’clock in the afternoon, a company of 240 Missourians fell upon the little settlement and butchered in cold blood, without warning or provocation, seventeen men and boys. The bodies were stripped and mutilated. The camp was then plundered, and horses and wagons were driven off.

Meanwhile, an army of nearly three thousand Missourians, commanded by General Lucas advanced upon beleaguered Far West. The entire region surrounding Far West was now overrun by marauding bands, who were shooting, burning, and plundering, wherever Mormons were to be found. Saints who survived these raids fled into Far West looking vainly for safety.

The inhabitants of the doomed city, their mails having been stopped, had not yet heard of the Governor’s extermination order, and they supposed the army of General

Lucas to be an overwhelming military mob. Though greatly outnumbered by the besieging force, they prepared to make a vigorous defense by hastily throwing up some rude fortifications.

It was at this critical juncture that Colonel George Hinkle, who was commanding the defenders at Far West, earned himself a place in infamy by entering into negotiations with General Lucas. Without consulting his associates or the church leadership, he agreed upon a treaty, the terms of which were:

1. The Mormon leaders were to be delivered up to be tried and punished.
2. The members of the Far West Militia were to surrender their arms.
3. An appropriation was to be made of the property of all Mormons who had taken up arms to help cover the damages said to be caused by them. This was afterward construed to cover all the expenses of the militia in making war against the saints.
4. The Mormons, as a body, excepting such as should be held as prisoners, were to forthwith leave the state. The prisoners were to include all Mormon participants in the Crooked River battle who were to be tried for murder.

The observance of these conditions, it was agreed, would avert bloodshed. The alternative was an immediate assault upon the city.

Under the pretense of arranging a conference between the Church's leaders and the besieging generals, and without notifying those leaders of the treaty he had entered into, Colonel Hinkle on October 31, delivered up to General Lucas the following persons who had been demanded by the Missourians: Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, Lyman Wight, and George W. Robinson. Later were added to the list: Hyrum Smith, Amasa M. Lyman, and others. They were placed under strong guard as prisoners of war. Parley P. Pratt, in his autobiography, described the arrest of this group of Mormons:

As we approached the camp of the enemy, General Lucas rode out to meet us with a guard of several hundred men. The haughty General rode up, and, without speaking to us, instantly ordered his guards to surround us. They did so very abruptly, and we were marched into camp surrounded by thousands of savage looking beings, many of whom were dressed and painted like Indian warriors. These all set up a constant yell, like so many bloodhounds let loose upon their prey, as if they had achieved one of the most miraculous victories that ever graced the annals of the world. If the vision of the infernal regions could suddenly open to the mind, with thousands of malicious fiends, all clamoring, exulting, deriding, blaspheming, mocking, railing, raging and foaming like troubled sea, then could some idea be formed of the hell which we had entered.

In camp we were placed under a strong guard, and were without shelter during the night, lying on the ground in the open air, in the midst of a great rain. The guards during the whole night kept up a constant tirade of mockery, and the most obscene

blackguardisms and abuse. They blasphemed God; mocked Jesus Christ; swore the most dreadful oaths; taunted Brother Joseph and others; demanded miracles; wanted signs, such as "Come, Mr. Smith, show us an angel." "Give us one of your revelations." "Show us a miracle." "Come, there is one of your brethren here in camp whom we took prisoner yesterday in his own house, and knocked his brains out with his own rifle, which we found hanging over his fireplace. He lays speechless and dying. Speak the word and heal him, and then we will all believe." "Or, if you are apostles or men of God, deliver yourselves, and then we will be Mormons." Next would be a volley of oaths and blasphemies; then a tumultuous tirade of lewd boastings of having defiled virgins and wives by force, etc., much of which I dare not write; and, indeed, language would fail me to attempt more than a faint description. Thus passed this dreadful night (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 203-5).

The heart had been decisively taken out of the saints' resistance, and the next day the Mormons were compelled at gun point to sign away their property to pay the expenses of the war waged upon them. They had made no agreement to do so, but Hinkle had made it for them. The town of Far West was given up to pillage. Nameless crimes were committed by the ruthless soldiery and their yet more ruthless allies, the mob guerrillas. Women were sexually abused, some of them until they died, within sight of their agonizing husbands and fathers who were powerless to protect them.

On the evening of November 1, General Lucas convened a court-martial, consisting of the principal officers of his army and seventeen Christian preachers. By a majority vote of this kangaroo tribunal, Joseph Smith and his fellow prisoners, none of whom were permitted to be present during their trial, were sentenced to be shot at eight o'clock the next morning in the public square at Far West in the presence of their wives and children. General Doniphan refused to assent to this decision, denouncing it as "cold-blooded murder," and he threatened to withdraw his brigade from the scene of the proposed execution. This caused Lucas and his murderous colleagues to hesitate, and finally to reconsider their action. On the morning set for the execution, they decided, in lieu of killing the prisoners, to parade them in triumph through the neighboring counties.

A poignant description of this moment in history was written by Joseph himself:

Myself and fellow prisoners were taken to the town, into the public square, and before our departure we, after much entreaty, were suffered to see our families, being attended all the while by a strong guard. I found my wife and children in tears, who feared that we had been shot by those who had sworn to take our lives, and that they would see me no more. When I entered my house, they clung to my garments, their eyes streaming with tears, while mingled emotions of joy and sorrow were manifested in their countenances. I requested to have a private interview with them a few minutes, but this privilege was denied me by the guard. I was then obliged to take my departure. Who can realize the feelings which I experienced at that time, to be thus torn from my companion, and leave her surrounded with monsters in the shape of men, and my

children, too, not knowing how their wants would be supplied; while I was taken far from them in order that my enemies might destroy me when they thought proper to do so. My partner wept, my children clung to me, until they were thrust from me by the swords of the guards (*HC*, 3:193).

After being taken to Independence, Missouri, where they were paraded before the populace of that town, they were taken to Richmond, Missouri, where they were held for three weeks. While there, they were subjected to conditions and circumstances that were both humiliating and degrading. While in Richmond, an incident occurred which has been preserved for us by Parley P. Pratt:

In one of those tedious nights, we had lain as if in sleep, till the hour of midnight had passed, and our ears and hearts had been pained, while we had listened for hours to the obscene jests, the horrid oaths, the dreadful blasphemies, and filthy language of our guards, Colonel Price at their head, as they recounted to each other their deeds of rapine, murder, robbery, etc., which they had committed among the "Mormons" while at Far West and vicinity. They even boasted of defiling by force wives, daughters, and virgins, and of shooting or dashing out the brains of men, women, and children.

I had listened till I became so disgusted, shocked, horrified, and so filled with the spirit of indignant justice, that I could scarcely refrain from rising upon my feet and rebuking the guards, but I had said nothing to Joseph or anyone else, although I lay next to him, and knew he was awake. Of a sudden he arose to his feet and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

"Silence! Ye fiends of the infernal pit! In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I shall die this instant!"

He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon, calm, unruffled, and dignified as an angel, he looked down upon his quailing guards, whose knees smote together, and who, shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet until an exchange of guards.

I have seen ministers of justice, clothed in ministerial robes, and criminals arraigned before them while life was suspended upon a breath in the courts of England. I have witnessed a congress in solemn session to give laws to nations. I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, or thrones and crowns and of emperors assembled to decide the fate of kingdoms. But dignity and majesty have I seen but once, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 210-11).

While in Richmond, several apostate Mormons testified against the prisoners. These included Samson Avard, George M. Hinkle, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer. The witnesses tried to portray the Church as a temporal organization hell bent

on filling the earth and subduing all other peoples. On this type of testimony the Missourians tried to base a charge of treason.

During their trial in Richmond, another apostate, William E. McLellin, and some others plundered and robbed the houses of some of the saints in Far West including the house of Sidney Rigdon and that belonging to the widow of David W. Patten. He further disgraced himself by coming to the jail in Richmond and asking the sheriff for permission to have the “privilege” of flogging the Prophet. “Permission was granted on condition that Joseph would fight. The sheriff made known, to Joseph, McLellin’s earnest request, to which Joseph consented, if his irons were taken off. McLellin then refused to fight unless he could have a club, to which Joseph was perfectly willing; but the sheriff would not allow them to fight on such unequal terms” (*Millennial Star*, volume 36, 808-9).

On December 1, 1838, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, Alexander McRae, and Caleb Baldwin were removed to Clay County and placed in the jail at Liberty, Missouri. This jail was a two-story structure approximately twenty-two feet square, built of rough-hewn limestone. Inside the outer wall was another wall of oak logs. The two walls were separated by a twelve-inch space filled with loose rock, the whole presenting a formidable barrier four feet thick. The interior of the jail was divided into upper and lower rooms. The lower, or dungeon, was lighted only by two small windows grated with heavy iron bars.

In Liberty Jail the captives continued to be treated with great barbarity. Brother Alexander McRae later related that “our food was very coarse, and so filthy that we could not eat it until we were driven to it by hunger.” On more than one occasion, the prisoners felt that their food was poisoned, and on at least one occasion the guards claimed that they were being fed cooked human flesh which the guards referred to as “Mormon beef,” implying that it was from the body of one of their slain comrades.

Sidney Rigdon was released apparently within a few weeks of being imprisoned because of ill health. He apparently had uncontrolled epilepsy and suffered repeated seizures. The chronicity of this illness is not known, but it has been suggested that it had its beginnings when Sidney was brutally mobbed with Joseph in 1832 in Hiram, Ohio (see commentary for section 81). Another possible cause of Sidney’s health problems was an accident he had when he was a boy. He was dragged by a horse for a considerable distance with his foot caught in the stirrup. He sustained severe head injuries in this mishap. Even though he was not mentally incapacitated, his brother noted a distinct personality change thereafter. Later, in Nauvoo, Sidney manifest some paranoid thinking. He came to believe that Joseph was trying to destroy him. When he worked as a postmaster, he opened and read all of Joseph’s mail, both incoming and outgoing. One cannot help wondering if Sidney eventually apostatized because of a mental unbalance caused by organic disease of his brain rather than by ideological differences with the Church.

As months passed, various efforts were made by legal process to free the prisoners. Among those actively engaged in their behalf were Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, who, being comparatively unknown by the Missourians, had escaped arrest and incarceration. The prisoners also had other friends in high places, including General Doniphan and Judge Hughes of the supreme court of Missouri who both favored their release. It was conceded by many that they were illegally held, but owing to the prevailing prejudice, the prisoners' friends were powerless to do much for them. During this period, an interesting term was coined for non-Mormon friends of the Church. They were referred to as "Jack Mormons." The term was actually coined by Thomas Sharp, the editor of an anti-Mormon publication, the *Warsaw Signal*. Today we have changed the meaning of this term to be almost opposite that of its original usage.

Again and again the captives were put on trial, but nothing was proved against them. All of the prisoners but Sidney Rigdon were remanded to jail for the entire winter of 1838-39, and they remained incarcerated a total of four and a half months. On April 16, 1839, while being transferred for arraignment from Daviess County to Boone County, the prisoners were allowed by their guards to escape, and they eventually made their way to Quincy, Illinois.

While Joseph and the others were in Liberty Jail, the burdens of assuming leadership of the Church and leading the saints out of Missouri were capably assumed by Brigham Young, the President of the Quorum of the Twelve. Under his guidance, the saints migrated eastward back across the Mississippi River. By April 20, 1839, nearly all of the saints, variously estimated to number from twelve to fifteen thousand, had left the state of Missouri. Many settled in the town of Quincy, Illinois, and its surrounding area, but a few settled in the then territory of Iowa. The saints in Quincy were warmly received by those who lived there.

Acknowledgment for the following is given to Brother James R. Christianson and his essay "A Ray of Light in an Hour of Darkness" found in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*. Some of his materials will be quoted and others adapted for our use.

The long winter months spent in captivity were distressing to Joseph. His own miseries were compounded by reports that the saints in general were suffering greatly. The Lord blessed him, during this period, with comforting insights into the overall perspective of his mission and that of the kingdom of God. It was during these months, while helplessly separated from family and friends, that he experienced some of the highest highs and lowest lows of his life. It was here, at least partly, in the unmerciful fires of persecution that he was steeled and molded into a fully mature and confident prophet of God.

By March 1839, most of the saints were safely in Illinois. Though their future was in doubt, they were, at least for the moment, safe from further persecution.

On March 19, 1839, Joseph received letters from Emma, from brothers Don Carlos and William, and from Edward Partridge. The letters in general were positive in their tone, reassuring the Prophet that his family and the saints were well and expressing the hope that they might all be soon reunited. The following day, March 20, 1839, the Prophet dictated a seventeen-page letter with Alexander McRae serving as scribe (Caleb Baldwin did some transcribing as well). The letter was addressed to the saints in general and to Bishop Partridge in particular. The letter was signed by each of the five prisoners. After reviewing and correcting his epistle, Joseph determined that he had more to say, and proceeded to dictate twelve additional pages. These pages were not dated.

This letter (actually the combination of both letters) has been called “one of the greatest letters ever penned by the hand of man.” It was sent to Emma with instructions that she and Joseph’s extended family read it first and then share a copy with the Church. The letter was first published in the *Times and Seasons* in May 1840. In 1876 Orson Pratt in Salt Lake City took scissors and paste and excerpted portions of it which he divided into three different sections. These have become sections 121, 122, and 123 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The entire letter, before Orson Pratt extracted portions of it, may be found in the *History of the Church*, volume 3, 289-305.

These three sections, “literarily” speaking, are a new high water mark for the Doctrine and Covenants. Note particularly the exquisite discourse comprising the last twelve verses of section 121 and the vocabulary and expressions of verse 5 of section 123.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 121 The Spirit of the Priesthood

D&C 121:7-10 Thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment. Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee.

D&C 121:18-22 Wo unto them . . . who swear falsely against my servants. They have offended my little ones.

D&C 121:33 What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven.

D&C 121:34-37 Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven.

D&C 121:39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men.

D&C 121:41-43 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion and long suffering.

D&C 121:45-46 Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.

1 O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

verse 1 “O God, where art thou?” By the time he wrote his letter, Joseph and the others had been in Liberty Jail for nearly four months. The language and tone of these first few verses suggest that Joseph is feeling a modicum of despair—that God has withdrawn himself from Joseph and the saints. Joseph pours out his heart to God, praying for deliverance for himself and for the scattered and persecuted saints.

“where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place” A pavilion is a movable tent, like the tabernacle that traveled with Moses and the Israelites in the desert and represented the dwelling place of God with Israel.

2 How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?

verse 2 “the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants” These are the wrongs committed against the saints. Joseph prays, in effect, “How long will you continue to allow the atrocities committed against thy people?”

“thine ear be penetrated with their cries” How long before you will hear and respond to their cries for thy help?

3 Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them, and thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them?

verse 3 “how long . . . before thine heart shall be softened” Implicit in this phrase is the unstated fact that the Lord’s heart is hardened against the saints because of their collective disobedience in Missouri.

“and thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them” *Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary*, aside from being “entrails . . . of man,” also defines “bowels” as “the heart,” “the interior part of anything,” or “the seat of pity or kindness; hence, tenderness, compassion” when used in a scriptural sense.

4 O Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven, earth, and seas, and of all things that in them are, and who controllest and subjectest the devil, and the dark and benighted dominion of Sheol—stretch forth thy hand; let thine eye pierce; let thy pavilion be taken up; let thy hiding place no longer be covered; let thine ear be inclined; let thine heart be softened, and thy bowels moved with compassion toward us.

verse 4 “maker of heaven, earth, and seas, and of all things that in them are” Maker of all things in existence.

“the dark and benighted dominion of Sheol” *Benighted* means morally ignorant, unenlightened. *Sheol* is the Hebrew word for the grave, the spirit world, or the realm of the dead. It is often translated as hell.

“let thine eye pierce . . . thine ear be inclined” Please see and hear and take notice of us.

“let thy pavilion be taken up” Not only does the Prophet plead to see the dwelling place of God (verse 1), but he pleads for its covering panels to be raised or removed to reveal the presence of the Lord himself.

5 Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies; and, in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs.

verse 5 “avenge us of our wrongs” Avenge the wrongs wrought against us. This prayer for justice was answered by the great destructions in Missouri at the time of the Civil War (see D&C 87:1-3).

In an uncanonized portion of his letter, Joseph further lamented the treatment the saints had received in Missouri thus:

But, oh? the unrelenting hand! The inhumanity and murderous disposition of this people! . . . it cannot be found among the heathens; it cannot be found among the nations where kings and tyrants are enthroned; it cannot be found among the savages of the wilderness; yea, and I think it cannot be found among the wild and ferocious beasts of the forest—that a man should be mangled for sport! women be robbed of all that they have—their last morsel for subsistence, and then be violated to gratify the hellish desires of the mob, and finally left to perish with their helpless offspring clinging around their necks.

But this is not all. After a man is dead, he must be dug up from his grave and mangled to pieces, for no other purpose than to gratify their spleen against the religion of God.

They practice these things upon the saints, who have done them no wrong, who are innocent and virtuous; who loved the Lord their God, and were willing to forsake all things for Christ’s sake. These things are awful to relate, but they are very true. It must needs be that offenses come, but woe unto them by whom they come (HC, 3:290-91).

6 Remember thy suffering saints, O our God; and thy servants will rejoice in thy name forever.

verses 7-33 These verses were from the first letter Joseph sent through Emma to the Church, dated March 20, 1839. According to Joseph, these words were whispered to him by the divine voice of inspiration. They are the principal part of God’s answer to the questions and pleas of Joseph and the Church in verses 1-6.

7 My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

verse 7 When Orson Pratt extracted portions of Joseph's letter for inclusion in the Doctrine and Covenants, he selected some of the finest materials, but he rejected some eloquent and meaningful materials as well. For example, in the *History of the Church*, note the paragraph which immediately precedes verse 7:

We had been a long time without information; and when we read those letters [those from Emma, Don Carlos, and William Smith, and Bishop Partridge] they were to our souls as the gentle air is refreshing, but our joy was mingled with grief, because of the sufferings of the poor and much-injured saints. And we need not say to you that the floodgates of our hearts were lifted and our eyes were a fountain of tears, but those who have not been enclosed in the walls of prison without cause of provocation, can have but little idea how sweet the voice of a friend is; one token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling; it brings up in an instant everything that is passed; it seizes the present with the avidity of lightning; it grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger; it moves the mind backward and forward, from one thing to another, until finally all enmity, malice and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings and mismanagements are slain victorious at the feet of hope; and when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, my son, peace be unto thy soul

This letter is the product of a mighty prophet of God. It is his counsel to the saints. Certainly it contains inspired thoughts and concepts, but it is not a revelation containing the direct words of God in the format of "thus saith the Lord" which is found in many sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. Note, however, that Orson Pratt's editing causes verse 7 to appear as if it were the Lord speaking to Joseph in his hour of affliction. One cannot, however, deny the influence of the Lord's revelation in the letter.

"thine afflictions shall be but a small moment" Joseph was imprisoned from his arrest on October 31, 1838 until his "escape" on April 16, 1839. This his "small moment" of affliction, during which he was actually imprisoned, was about five and one half months.

8 And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

verse 8 "if thou endure it well" It is clear that suffering here in mortality can have the effect of lifting one spiritually or, in other circumstances, of tearing one down. What factors determine whether the suffering produces growth or spiritual deterioration? Surely the attitude with which we engage the suffering is an important factor. It would seem that when afflictions occur, we must, like children, submit willingly, meekly and humbly to the chastening hand of the Lord. Then he will exalt us. On the other hand, if suffering fills one's soul with resentment and anger, then there is less chance of its

producing spiritual growth. Some might even use their suffering for personal gain—constantly seeking attention and sympathy from others. This too, may mitigate the amount of spiritual growth which results from suffering.

It is interesting to contrast the experiences of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in Liberty Jail in regard to enduring it well. They both were imprisoned and accused falsely for the sake of their religion; however, although Sidney was released months before the Prophet, he was clearly a broken man. He complained at the time that he had suffered more than the other saints, more than even Jesus Christ himself (*Times and Seasons* 5 [October 1844]: 667). He was never again a strength to the kingdom and, in fact, did many things to obstruct its progress from that time on. Joseph Smith, on the other hand, when he left prison in Missouri, went to Nauvoo, led the saints in building a great city there, and continued to serve faithfully as the Lord's anointed prophet until his death at Carthage, Illinois, in June 1844. In fairness to Sidney Rigdon, however, we must acknowledge that he may have suffered significant depression or other mental illness which contributed to his dysfunction (see the commentary on Sidney in the introductory commentary for this section).

9 Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

10 Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.

verse 10 “Thou art not yet as Job” You haven't yet “got it as bad as Job had it.” At least you still have faithful friends. Although he was innocent of wrongdoing, Job was accused of sin by his wife and his closest friends. All of them accused him of having secretly caused his own misfortunes by some hidden iniquity, and they all urged him to confess his guilt (see Job 4:7-8, 17; 8:6, 20; 22:5, 23). The friends and family of Joseph Smith, however, stood by him in misfortune and continued to believe in his innocence and good character.

11 And they who do charge thee with transgression, their hope shall be blasted, and their prospects shall melt away as the hoar frost melteth before the burning rays of the rising sun;

verse 1 “hoar frost” Hoar is an old English word for “white.” Hoar frost is the white frost which covers the branches of trees in the morning. It melts immediately when the rays of the sun strike it.

12 And also that God hath set his hand and seal to change the times and seasons, and to blind their minds, that they may not understand his marvelous workings; that he may prove them also and take them in their own craftiness;

verse 12 “God hath set his hand and seal” Like a king pressing his signet ring into the wax of a proclamation to make it official, so God has set his seal to what is prophesied here concerning the enemies of the saints.

“to change the times and seasons” In other words, to intervene in history and arrange events so that they bring about the result predicted by God. The wicked will not discern the hand of God at work in the events of history until it is too late to avoid destruction.

13 Also because their hearts are corrupted, and the things which they are willing to bring upon others, and love to have others suffer, may come upon themselves to the very uttermost;

verse 13 “may come upon themselves to the very uttermost” This is a necessary corollary of the Golden Rule (see Matthew 7:12). What the wicked have sought to inflict upon others, they will inevitably suffer themselves.

14 That they may be disappointed also, and their hopes may be cut off;

15 And not many years hence, that they and their posterity shall be swept from under heaven, saith God, that not one of them is left to stand by the wall.

verse 15 “not many years hence” At least a partial fulfillment of this prophecy came about with the judgments and destruction that began with the Civil War twenty-two years later.

“not one of them is left to stand by the wall” This expression is an adaptation of an Old Testament expression that refers to male offspring. In the Old Testament, males are those who “pisseth against the wall” (1 Samuel 25:22). In other words, they will become deficient in male posterity.

16 Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, saith the Lord, but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

verse 16 “Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed” To “lift up the heel against” is a biblical expression that describes unfeeling violence against someone (see Psalm 41:9). It is used in the Bible to characterize the enmity of Judas and Satan toward Jesus Christ, the anointed Messiah (see John 13:18; Genesis 3:15). In this verse, however, the pronouns *they* and *them* indicate that “mine anointed” is meant to be plural and, therefore, refers to all the saints who have received sacred anointings, rather than only to the Savior or to the prophet Joseph.

verses 17-22 These verses seem to be directed specifically at apostates who turned against the Prophet and the saints in Missouri and who sought to protect

themselves from the mobs by swearing to false charges against their former friends. Without repentance, individuals such as these would be severed from the blessings of the temple (see verse 19), the bounties of the earth (see verse 20), and from any right to or blessing of the priesthood for themselves and their posterity (see verse 21). These are the same curses inflicted upon Cain. For Cain, the land would not yield its strength (Moses 5:37). Martin Harris was threatened with the same sort of things if he would not repent (D&C 19:33). Among those that might be included here were Thomas Marsh, Orson Hyde, and William W. Phelps. Although these three individuals eventually repented of their treachery, were forgiven by the saints, and returned to the Church, they could never undo the hardships they had earlier caused their friends by their betrayal in Missouri. Many others who turned traitor to the saints to save themselves never did repent and return, including, for example, Sampson Avard and William McLellin. Joseph Smith taught:

From apostates the faithful have received the severest persecutions. Judas was rebuked and immediately betrayed his Lord into the hands of his enemies because Satan entered into him. There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the gospel with full purpose of heart, which, if sinned against, the apostate is left naked and destitute of the Spirit of God, and he is, in truth, nigh unto cursing, and his land is to be burned. When once that light which was in them is taken from them, they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, of all their powers should be enlisted against the truth and they, Judas like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 67).

17 But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves.

18 And those who swear falsely against my servants, that they might bring them into bondage and death—

19 Wo unto them; because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house.

20 Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them.

verse 20 “they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them”

President Harold B. Lee said in general conference, “I remember hearing President [Heber J.] Grant on several occasions say: ‘Whenever certain individuals who are not living good lives begin to compliment me and to speak well of me, I say to myself, Heber J. Grant, what’s the matter with you; you must not be doing your duty, or this kind of people wouldn’t feel so kindly toward you’” (CR, October 1947, 11-12).

If a man is encouraged by his associates to apostatize from the Church, and he does leave the Church, he cannot count on the continued friendship of those who encouraged his fall.

21 They shall not have right to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them from generation to generation.

verse 21 “They shall not have right to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them” Again, as has been discussed previously, we do not believe that a man is guilty of sin because his father sinned. The Lord does not punish a man because of his father’s sins. Unfortunately, however, a man born into an apostate household has a great disadvantage in hearing and believing the gospel in this mortal life. The son of an apostate father is likely to become indoctrinated by his father’s evil point of view. The son, however, will be judged on his own merit and not for his father’s misdeeds (the reader is referred to the section entitled “Three factors in the judgment” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 19, *The Essence of the Lord’s Atonement*).

President Spencer W. Kimball explained how apostates bring this curse upon themselves. “Among church members rebellion frequently takes the form of criticism of authorities and leaders. They ‘speak evil of dignities’ and ‘of the things that they understand not’ says Peter (2 Peter 2:10, 12). They complain of the programs, belittle the constituted authorities, and generally set themselves up as judges. After a while they absent themselves from church meetings for imagined offenses and fail to pay their tithes and meet their other church obligations. In a word, they have the spirit of apostasy, which is almost always the harvest of the seeds of criticism. . . . Such people fail to bear testimony to their descendants, destroy faith within their own homes, and actually deny the ‘right to the priesthood’ to succeeding generations who might otherwise have been faithful in all things” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 43).

22 It had been better for them that a millstone had been hanged about their necks, and they drowned in the depth of the sea.

23 Wo unto all those that discomfort my people, and drive, and murder, and testify against them, saith the Lord of Hosts; a generation of vipers shall not escape the damnation of hell.

24 Behold, mine eyes see and know all their works, and I have in reserve a swift judgment in the season thereof, for them all;

25 For there is a time appointed for every man, according as his works shall be.

verse 25 “there is a time appointed for every man” All persons upon the earth have a time appointed for their personal judgment, a time when they will answer to God for what they have done in the flesh. For most, this time occurs at death, when they are subjected to the “partial judgment” and assigned to either paradise or prison (“hell”) in the world of spirits. In his book *Gospel Doctrine*, Joseph F. Smith taught of

this “partial judgment” which occurs at the time of our death (448). In this judgment, which is meted out by the “gatekeeper”—surely and necessarily Jesus Christ himself—all will be assigned to either a state of paradise or a state of prison. This is a vital judgment since all assigned to paradise will continue on to their exaltation, and most all of those assigned to prison will eventually inherit a lesser degree of glory in the terrestrial or telestial kingdoms. Apparently those who have not received the gospel will be judged by the Lord according to how they would have responded had they received it (D&C 137:7-9). Surely other judgments will follow involving those in spirit prison prior to their resurrection.

For some others, this time of judgment will come in connection with the second coming of the Savior, when they will or will not—depending upon their works—be preserved through the fire of his glory as the earth is changed from a telestial to a terrestrial state.

verses 26-32 These verses describe some of the blessings to be enjoyed by those who inherit the coming millennial kingdom. Every one of their questions will be answered through the revelatory power of the Holy Ghost, even questions not answered for great prophets in previous dispensations, even questions to which the angels themselves have desired to know the answers (see 1 Peter 1:12). This privilege will be granted to all saints (see D&C 101:32-34).

26 God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now;

verse 26 “the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost” The mysteries revealed by the Holy Ghost are unspeakable in more than one sense of the word. First, words may simply lack the power to express some things one may feel and know by the Spirit. Second, some information, though known to many in the Church, is received by a covenant that it be kept sacred and unspoken except in special times and places. Third, individuals who receive doctrinal knowledge directly through the Holy Ghost that has not been revealed to the Church generally and is not already available in the scriptures receive it with a strict commandment to keep it to themselves (see Alma 12:9). It is a serious breach of trust for one so favored to make this kind of personal revelation public, for this function is the prerogative of the prophet alone as he may be directed by the Lord (see D&C 43:3-5).

27 Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory;

verse 27 “Which our forefathers have awaited . . . as held in reserve” We sometimes forget that while all things revealed in prior dispensations will be restored in

this dispensation, the opposite is not true. That is, many aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ that we already enjoy were withheld from former-day saints, and it will be in this dispensation only—the dispensation of the fulness of times—that every question will eventually be answered.

28 A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest.

verse 28 “A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld” The use of the future tense here, together with linking this time to the coming judgment (see verse 25) and the fact that not everything has yet been revealed to the Church (verses 28-32), all indicate that the time for all things to be revealed has not yet occurred but should probably be associated with the second coming of Christ.

“whether there be one God or many gods” This is the first mention of the plurality of Gods—see also verse 32. How are we to regard these mentions of the plurality of gods? Is this a pronouncement of doctrine—a confirmation that there is, in fact, a plurality of gods? Some have suggested that this reference was not a pronouncement of doctrine or a revelation in itself but rather as an example of the kind of question that will be answered when the proper time comes. Others feel that this reference was fulfilled and that the question was answered in the King Follett Discourse. These verses are in the original letter, but were excluded from the *Times and Seasons* account. Because of this, some have erroneously assumed that this “doctrine” was added later.

29 All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

verse 29 “All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers” These terms are used in the New Testament to indicate different spiritual powers—usually understood as different spiritual ranks, glories, or types of angels or other heavenly beings (see Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:21; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10, 15). The terms are also used in D&C 132:19 in a manner that suggests grades or degrees of spiritual power inherited by those sealed up with Christ in the new and everlasting covenant. All spiritual powers, both good (as in this verse) and evil (see Ephesians 6:12), function by divine permission or authority, and all are subject to Christ and will be subject also to those who rule with him.

30 And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—

31 All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and

set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—

verses 31-32 These verses promise to the earthbound righteous scientist eventual answers to all of his queries regarding the ultimate questions of astronomy, physics, and all fields of science.

“and all their glories, laws, and set times” A beginning of this information has already been given to this dispensation in the books of Moses and Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price (see, particularly, Abraham 3 and the Explanation to Facsimile 2). As the explanation to figures 9-21 in Abraham Facsimile 2 specifically states, however, the time for all such things to be revealed has not yet arrived.

32 According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest.

verse 32 “the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods” The idea of the premortal heavenly council was common in the ancient Near East and can be found in Psalm 82:1, Job 38:7, and elsewhere (see Revelation 12:7-9; 1 Enoch 8-11; Jubilees 10; see also John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1, lines 35-49).

“The Eternal God of all other gods” is none other than our own Heavenly Father, the Father of spirits, and the Father of Jesus Christ. There is likely no intent in this verse of describing any other or any higher deity. Because God is also called a “God of gods” in the Bible (Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalm 136:2), it will be seen that this verse does not in itself supply any information about the nature of God or about the premortal council that is not already found in the Bible—nor likely was it intended to. These would be topics appropriate for “a time to come” (verse 28). It is true, however, that Joseph Smith introduced the subject of the “plurality of gods” in remarks made at the funeral of King Follett in Nauvoo on April 6, 1844.

Joseph likewise taught that through the grace of God and the ordinances of the gospel, human beings, as literal children of God, could progress to become like Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 1 John 3:2) and ultimately like our Father in Heaven. In this instance, the “plurality” of gods consists of the members of the Godhead and also those who through the gospel of Christ take upon them the divine nature to become joint heirs with Christ of all that the Father has (see 2 Peter 1:3-4; Romans 8:17; D&C 84:38). Joseph Smith taught that to truly understand either ourselves or God, we have to know that we and God are of the same species, and he is literally the Father of our spirits (see Hebrews 12:9), that he was once as we are now, and that by following his example as revealed through the Son of God, we can become in the future as he now is (see Philippians 2:5-6). It should be noted that there is perilously little in any of this—except by inference and supposition—to support any

detailed doctrine of divine beings other than our Heavenly Parents and their exalted children. And because we do not have Joseph Smith's explanation of just what he intended to convey in his statements in Nauvoo on the plurality of gods, which are still technically outside the standard works, they should probably be understood as a small beginning rather than as the expansive completion of latter-day revelation to be received on this topic.

“reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof” We are succinctly reminded that the occasion for answering every question of the type exemplified in verses 28-32 will be the “time appointed” (verse 25) or the “time to come” (verse 28), when all that is unknown will be made known in the day of judgment and resurrection.

33 How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.

verse 33 “How long can rolling waters remain impure?” This phrase suddenly introduces a new idea into section 121 without a transition. It is helpful to look at the paragraph in the *History of the Church* which precedes verse 33: “But I beg leave to say unto you, brethren, that ignorance, superstition, and bigotry placing itself where it ought not, is oftentimes in the way of the prosperity of this Church; like the torrent of rain from the mountains, that floods the most pure and crystal stream with mire, and dirt, and filthiness, and obscures everything that was clear before, and all rushes along in one general deluge; but time weathers tide; and notwithstanding we are rolled in the mire of the flood for the time being, the next surge peradventure, as time rolls in, may bring to us the fountain as clear as crystal, and as pure as snow; while the filthiness, floodwood and rubbish is left and purged out by the way. How long can rolling waters remain impure?”

Look also at the paragraph which follows verse 33: “What is Boggs or his murderous party, but wimbling willows upon the shore to catch the floodwood? [As far as I can determine, Joseph's intended meaning for the word “wimbling” here is unknown, but it certainly doesn't sound like a very positive term.] As well might we argue that water is not water, because the mountain torrents send down mire and roil the crystal stream, although afterwards render it more pure than before; or that fire is not fire, because it is of a quenchable nature, by pouring on the flood; as to say that our cause is down because renegados, liars, priests, thieves, and murderers, who are all alike tenacious of their crafts and creeds, have poured down, from their spiritual wickedness in high places, and from their strongholds of the devil, a flood of dirt and mire and filthiness and vomit upon our heads.” [“Roil” means to stir up a liquid and make it cloudy, muddy, or unsettled.]

In summary, then, the ignorance, superstition, bigotry, and lies of those who apostatize or otherwise fight against the Church have often hindered the prosperity of the Church. But even though they muddy up the water for awhile, the stream rolls on and is eventually cleansed again. The apostates who are the floodwood and rubbish are left behind. And who is it that catches them and prevents them from continuing downstream? It is the “wimbling willows” upon the shore—in other words, those who are without the Church who are its critics.

verses 34-46 These verses form the theme of section 121—“The Spirit of the Priesthood.” Simply stated, these verses declare that many have hands laid upon their heads in the premortal world and have been foreordained to receive the priesthood. However, only a relative few will so honor their priesthood and live the gospel here on earth that they will provide significant leadership in the kingdom and be able to utilize their priesthood power in this life and earn exaltation in the life to come.

According to Elder John Carmack, Joseph Smith in these verses established “a constitution for the individual in exercising the priesthood” (“Missouri Era,” 4). At the end of the Missouri period, Joseph had witnessed many, who had been called to the kingdom, wither away or use their calling in wickedness and thus fail to become elect. Certainly, if there is a “constitution” defining the necessary terms and uses of individual priesthood power, it is in these verses.

34 Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

verse 34 “there are many called, but few are chosen” The moment of one’s calling may be when spirit hands are laid upon our spirit heads in the premortal world and we are foreordained to certain works in mortality, or it may be when we are called to service here in mortality in the Lord’s earthly kingdom. It is not sufficient, however, merely to be called. The call is merely God’s invitation to serve. To be chosen or elected is to be sealed up to exaltation in God’s heavenly kingdom, and this can come only after one has responded to the call and has magnified that call. The time between the call and the choosing is one’s time of probation, or testing. Being “chosen” usually occurs after a lifetime of faithful endurance, though some receive this blessing while still in the flesh (see 2 Peter 1:10, 18-19).

“And why are they not chosen?” This verse, when placed in context in Joseph’s letter, specifically warns against one particular form of unrighteousness. The reader should note the thoughts in the *History of the Church* that preceded the recording of verse 34 in that record:

And if there are any among you who aspire after their own aggrandizement, and seek their own opulence, while their brethren are groaning in poverty, and are under sore trials and temptations, they cannot be benefited by the intercession of the Holy

Spirit, which maketh intercession for us day and night with groanings that cannot be uttered. We ought at all times to be very careful that such high-mindedness shall never have place in our hearts; but condescend to men of low estate, and with all long-suffering bear the infirmities of the weak. Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen . . . (3:299).

35 Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

verse 35 We are reminded by this verse that the vital struggle here in mortality is between our “natural” self and our “spiritual” self. See *The “Natural Self” and “Spiritual Self”* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5.

36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

verse 36 “the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven” A man holding the priesthood has the authority to act for God. Under certain well-defined circumstances God allows the priesthood holder to borrow his divine power in order that the man may accomplish his objectives. And what are those circumstances? The priesthood holder is empowered to do only what God would do in a given situation. When the priesthood holder moves outside those limits, his connection to God’s power is broken, and he is no longer authorized or empowered to exercise the priesthood (see also D&C 46:30). It is impossible to use the power of God to do wickedness.

37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

verse 37 “but when we undertake to cover our sins” Those who hold the priesthood must either constantly and repeatedly repent of their sins and continuously improve spiritually, or they may cover their sins and pretend to a worthiness they do not possess. The latter course causes one’s priesthood to be withdrawn. Should such a man, though unrepentant, subsequently be called upon to exercise his priesthood in an appropriate manner, the ordinance he performs will be recognized by heaven for the sake of those who are blessed. However, the unworthy priesthood holder will be held accountable, as were the sons of Eli (see 1 Samuel 2:12), for polluting his sacred calling.

“to gratify our pride” Pride wants to rule; priesthood wants to serve. President Ezra Taft Benson taught, “Pride does not look up to God and care about what is right. It looks sideways to man and argues who is right. Pride is manifest in the spirit of contention. Was it not through pride that the devil became the devil? Christ wanted to *serve*. The devil wanted to *rule*. Christ wanted to bring men to where he was. The devil wanted to be above men. Christ removed self as the force in his perfect life. It was not my will, but thine be done [Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42]” (*CR*, April 1986, 6, emphasis added).

“to exercise control or dominion or compulsion” Agency is an inviolable principle of the universe. Even God cannot violate it. Priesthood power always operates within the limits of the agency of the governed. It authorizes, enables, and allows. Wickedness inevitably attempts to compel, override agency, and force compliance. If a bishop were to wonder how he might make his ward obey; or if a husband were to ask how he might make his wife obey; then both have already lost their right to preside. Any dominion that is to become everlasting must flow unto its possessor voluntarily or “without compulsory means (verse 46)—for there is no compulsion in the mansions of the Father.

“in any degree of unrighteousness” The priesthood does have the right to preside and govern. But the priesthood alone, unassociated with personal righteousness, does not. The potential to act for God, priesthood authority, can be transmitted by ordination; but power in the priesthood comes from ordination, from personal righteousness, and from the consent of those for whom priesthood authority is to be exercised. The power of the priesthood cannot exist without all three of these elements.

Bishop H. Burke Peterson observed in relation to this verse: “From this I understand that there is a difference between priesthood authority and priesthood power. Power and authority in the priesthood are not necessarily synonymous. All of us who hold the priesthood have the authority to act for the Lord, but the effectiveness of our authority—or if you please, the power that comes through that authority—depends on the pattern of our lives; it depends on our righteousness” (*CR*, April 1976, 50).

“Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” In contemporary English, to say “amen” to something is generally understood as confirming or affirming it. As an affirmation, “amen” means roughly “so be it,” “thus,” or “even so.” In this phrase, however, a condition applies that gives “amen” a different nuance. The phrase does not mean that the priesthood should not be used unrighteously. Rather it means that that it cannot be so used. It is impossible for the priesthood to be used to empower acts that are contrary to God’s will.

38 Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God.

verse 38 “to kick against the pricks” An ox or other plow animal is turned right or left by being jabbed or pricked with a long, sharpened pole called a goad. When a stubborn animal resists the will of its owner by turning toward and kicking back against the pricking of the goad, all it accomplishes is to injure itself on the sharpened point. The Lord applied this imagery to the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul had apparently resisted the subtle promptings of the Spirit as it tried to guide him, and like a stubborn ox, he kicked against the pricking of the Lord’s goad—to his own greater injury (see Acts 9:5).

39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

verse 39 Unrighteous men see authority as personal power rather than as an opportunity for service. If they don’t have power, they will try to obtain it by whatever means necessary. This verse points out that positions of absolute authority are dangerous for even the most righteous among us.

40 Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

verse 41 The phrase “by virtue of the priesthood” means only or just because of one’s ordination to the priesthood. As we have discussed, ordination alone is not sufficient. Any given member of the Church will respond favorably to a priesthood holder and allow that priesthood holder to have influence in his or her life when he or she perceives that the priesthood holder is selfless and cares only for serving others. It is the righteous virtues and self-sacrifice of an ordained individual that invite others to sustain his leadership. President Spencer W. Kimball remarked, “We have heard of men who have said to their wives, ‘I hold the priesthood and you’d better do what I say.’ Such a man should be tried for his membership. Certainly he should not be honored in his priesthood” (*Korea Area Conference Report*, March 1975, 52-53).

“love unfeigned” *Unfeigned* means “not pretended.” Priesthood leaders cannot preside properly over those whom they do not genuinely love.

42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

43 Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

verse 43 “Reproving betimes with sharpness” To reprove is “to correct,” particularly when it is done gently. Most people, if asked the meaning of the word “betimes,” would say something like “once in a while.” “Betimes” actually means early or “at the right time,” or even “before it is too late.” “Sharpness” is probably most aptly interpreted to mean in a focused, specific way not condemning the individual as a whole. McConkie, Millet, and Top in their book *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume IV* comment on the word “sharpness” and add a different slant to its meaning: “Testifying with ‘sharpness,’ as Moroni is here using the word, does not mean he was being contentious or mean-spirited. It means direct and to the point. It means not couched in soft, comfortable language but focused on what need to be said more than on how to say it” (359). In other words, we should gently correct, in a timely manner, with truth—the plain and unvarnished truth.

Two principles of correction, then are to reprove early and with direct truth. We may summarize a few additional essential principles of correction as follows: Tell them where they went wrong. Explain the short term and long term consequences of their actions. Teach them how to prevent the problem from recurring. And leave them with hope of forgiveness.

“then showing forth afterwards an increase of love” An obligation equal to that of reproofing the wayward—when prompted by the Holy Ghost—is the obligation subsequently to demonstrate an increase of genuine love for the reproofed so that he or she knows the reproof came from the Lord.

44 That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dew from heaven.

verse 45 “let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly” To *garnish* means “to adorn or decorate.”

“then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God” Mosiah 2:38 explains that the guilt of the unrepentant will cause them to shrink from the presence of God in an agony of soul (see also 2 Nephi 9:14). One of the great privileges of faithfulness is the right to confidence that one will be welcomed and comfortable in the presence of God.

“the doctrine of the priesthood” Elder Bruce R. McConkie said that the doctrine of the priesthood is “that we have power, by faith, to govern and control all things, both temporal and spiritual; to work miracles and perfect lives; to stand in the

presence of God and be like him because he have gained his faith, his perfections, and his power, or in other words the fulness of his priesthood” (*Ensign*, May 1984, 32). The doctrine of the priesthood is thus the total of all the knowledge and behavior necessary to become as God, to be exalted and qualified to govern one’s own everlasting dominion.

“shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven” As the dews from heaven come quietly and gently, often unnoticed, in the early hours of the morning, so we are promised that the doctrine of the priesthood will come quietly and without fanfare as we learn and practice the lessons taught in verses 35-45.

46 The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

verse 46 “The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion” Even though the gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred upon a member of the Church, it does not follow that the Holy Ghost will always be with that person. But as we learn and implement correctly the doctrine of the priesthood, as we become more like our Heavenly Father, we enjoy more frequent and increased companionship of the Spirit until eventually he may become our constant companion.

“an unchanging scepter of righteousness” A *scepter* is a physical symbol of royal power and authority. This phrase implies that the exalted become eternally kings and queens over their own dominions—if they have abided by the conditions described in verses 35-45. The blessings and dominions bestowed upon the exalted will be unchanging and everlasting. They can never thereafter be taken away.

“without compulsory means” This phrase implies that the blessings and dominions bestowed upon the exalted will be unchanging and everlasting. They naturally and inevitably flow to the righteous priesthood holder. They can never thereafter be taken away. They continue to flow unto the individual because of the individual’s voluntary submission to the commandments. No compulsory means are involved. God forces no one.

Section 122 Why the Lord Allows Adversity

See the background materials for section 121. The text recorded in section 122 is found on pages 4-6 of the second part of that correspondence and follows without interruption the text of D&C 121:34-46. Like section 121, section 122 was first included in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants at the direction of President Brigham Young. We do not know the details of how specific portions of Joseph's letters were selected for canonization or why they were divided as they now are into sections 121, 122, and 123.

Generally speaking, section 122 is the Lord's word to Joseph Smith in his time of trial.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 122:7-8 The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?

verses 1-4 The Lord's affirmation of Joseph's standing as prophet. By this time Joseph was not the untested prophet of earlier years. He had withstood adversity in many forms. He was now a fully mature prophet of God who spoke powerfully for Deity.

1 The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

verse 1 "hell shall rage against thee" One necessary sign of the truth or of the validity of a prophet is that he is hated and persecuted by the wicked (see Matthew 10:34-39; John 15:18-20). It would seem that if a man encounters no violent opposition from some elements in the world, he is not of God (see Luke 6:26).

2 While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.

verses 1-2 "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name" The Lord assures Joseph that despite his present wretched and humble circumstances, his name is destined to be known around the globe, both by those who would hate him and those who would love him. At the time this revelation was given, Joseph's name was not widely known outside Ohio, New York, and Missouri, although there was an occasional mention of him in the press of the Eastern States. With the exception of a small number of English converts, he was virtually unknown to the world beyond the eastern United States and Canada.

This revelation was directed to the prophet Joseph and refers throughout to events in Joseph's own life. But because Joseph addressed the letter containing it

specifically to the Church through Emma, the principles taught here are equally applicable to other saints who may find themselves similarly afflicted or who may also be asking Joseph's question, "O God, where art thou?" (D&C 121:1). Thus, as the Prophet, Joseph here receives answers both for himself and for the Church.

3 And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors.

verse 3 A *traitor* is, by definition, someone who has, in fact, turned against another. "Thy people" refers to the saints collectively rather than individually. It is understandable how, after long months in Liberty Jail, Joseph might have needed divine assurance that his isolation from the saints did not mean alienation from them. Some individual church members did turn against him from time to time because of the testimony of apostates or simply because they stood still while the Church moved on. At this time in particular, several of Joseph's former friends had slandered his name or offered perjured testimony against him in Missouri courts, hoping to save themselves or their property. Nevertheless, Joseph always enjoyed the loyalty of a majority of the saints, who remained unmoved by the lies of enemies in or out of the Church.

4 And although their influence shall cast thee into trouble, and into bars and walls, thou shalt be had in honor; and but for a small moment and thy voice shall be more terrible in the midst of thine enemies than the fierce lion, because of thy righteousness; and thy God shall stand by thee forever and ever.

verse 4 "their influence shall cast thee into trouble" The antecedent of the word "their" is "the testimony of traitors" in the prior verse. The Lord promises Joseph, as he did his ancient apostles, that he will have trouble for the sake of the truth as long as he remains in the world (see Matthew 10:34-39; John 15:18-20; 16:2).

"more terrible . . . than the fierce lion" This divine promise applied to Joseph Smith personally, but it also applies to the biblical Joseph and to his descendants generally. The ancient Joseph, like his modern counterpart, was also sold into bondage by false brethren who had cast him into a pit (see Genesis 37:20, 24). Both the ancient and the modern Joseph were falsely accused of crimes and unjustly imprisoned. But eventually ancient Joseph was justified and sat on the throne of Egypt. Even so has the prophet Joseph been vindicated by the fruits of his mission, and he has taken his place at the head of this dispensation forever (see D&C 90:3). The voice of influence of the prophet Joseph individually (see verse 4) and of the descendants of ancient Joseph more generally shall become more terrible and fierce in this dispensation than a lion among the sheep (see Isaiah 5:29; Micah 5:8; 3 Nephi 20:16; 21:12).

5 If thou art called to pass through tribulation; if thou art in perils among false brethren; if thou art in perils among robbers; if thou art in perils by land or by sea;

6 If thou art accused with all manner of false accusations; if thine enemies fall upon thee; if they tear thee from the society of thy father and mother and brethren and sisters; and if with a drawn sword thine enemies tear thee from the bosom of thy wife, and of thine offspring, and thine elder son, although but six years of age, shall cling to thy garments, and shall say, My father, my father, why can't you stay with us? O, my father, what are the men going to do with you? and if then he shall be thrust from thee by the sword, and thou be dragged to prison, and thine enemies prowl around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb;

7 And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

verses 5-7 The Lord enumerates many possible trials and persecutions, most of which Joseph had already experienced firsthand. Even President Thomas B. Marsh and Elder Orson Hyde of the Quorum of the Twelve had sworn affidavits falsely accusing Joseph of actions against the state of Missouri. After the Prophet's arrest at Far West, the militia held him and the other prisoners on the town square. As they were preparing to move the brethren to Independence, the Prophet requested a private audience with his family, but he was denied. He was not allowed even to see his parents and could speak only briefly in front of his guards to Emma and his children. "Who can realize the feelings which I experienced at that time, to be thus torn from my companion, and leave her surrounded with monsters in the shape of men, and my children, too, not knowing how their wants would be supplied; while I was to be taken far from them in order that my enemies might destroy me when they thought proper to do so. My partner wept, my children clung to me, until they were thrust from me by the swords of the guards" (*HC*, 3:193). The Lord then assures Joseph that all of these adversities "shall give thee experience and be for thy good." Literally in "the hands of murderers," Joseph and his companions were "dragged to prison" and eventually "cast into the pit" at Liberty Jail.

Brother George Q. Morris in general conference reminded us of the role of adversity in our lives:

The Lord said to Adam that for his sake the earth was cursed, and that he should eat his food in sorrow all the days of his life [Moses 4:23]. The scriptures say that man is born unto trouble as the "sparks fly upward" [Job 5:7], which means that it is in the design of God that we should have these adversities and experiences in the world. In the midst of life, death and a sea of trials and troubles are ever with us. So none of us is free from them, and it follows that we should find some way of meeting them

successfully. . . . “Sweet are the uses of adversity, which like a toad, though ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head” (Shakespeare). . . .

The prophet Joseph Smith one time said, when someone had remarked that somebody had an affliction because of his sins, that it is an unhallowed statement to make, [and] that afflictions come to all. And M. Henry said: “Extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions

So, in adversity we may have that which will exalt us, or we may have that which will degrade us. We may have that which, if we indulge in self-pity and bitterness, may destroy us. In all our adversities there are these two elements, and the determining factor is how shall we endure them? Shall we endure them well? If not, they may destroy us (*CR*, October 1958, 70-72).

The philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said that suffering “operates revolutions in our way of life” and causes us to become, instead of a “sunny garden flower,” a “banyan of the forest, yielding shade and fruit to wide neighborhoods of men.” Brother Orson F. Whitney, in commenting on this statement of Emerson’s said: “How true! To whom do we look, in days of grief and disaster, for help and consolation? . . . to those who have suffered and out of their experience in suffering they bring forth the riches of their sympathy and condolences as a blessing to those now in need. Could they do this had they not suffered themselves?” (*Improvement Era*, November 1918, 22:5-7).

Elder James E. Faust offered the following powerful statement on the same topic:

Here then is the great truth. In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, we pass through a refiner’s fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. In this way the divine image can be mirrored from the soul. It is part of the purging toll exacted of some to become acquainted with God. In the agonies of life, we seem to listen better to the faint, godly whisperings of the Divine Shepherd (*Ensign*, May 1979, 53).

“the sentence of death passed upon thee” When Joseph and his companions were betrayed and arrested at Far West, they were held overnight in the camp of the Missouri militia. At about midnight, commanding General Samuel D. Lucas issued an order to General Alexander Doniphan: “You will take Joseph Smith and the other prisoners into the public square of Far West and shoot them at 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.” General Doniphan, deeming it to be an illegal order, refused to carry it out, declaring: “It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning at 8 o’clock; and if you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God.” The execution obviously did not take place (*HC*, 3:190-91).

“if thou be cast into the deep” It appears that at this point the Lord’s examples turn from the literal, which Joseph had already suffered, to the figurative, which he might possibly suffer. There is no trial that Joseph or the saints had suffered, or would suffer,

or could suffer that is not included in the phrase “all these things” at the conclusion of this verse. Similarly, no possible human suffering can be excluded from the declaration of verse 8 that “the Son of Man hath descended below them all.”

“if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee” In making his atoning sacrifice in Gethsemane and on the cross, Jesus Christ was taken into the very jaws of hell, was subjected for a time to all the malice and power of Satan, and experienced vicariously the perils and pains of all men—even the damned. In his resurrection, he triumphed over them all. Here Joseph Smith is told that if he should be called upon to suffer to a lesser degree such horrible feelings as these, the experience would be ultimately for his own good. Elder Neal Maxwell has taught, “The whole experience in Liberty Jail, as Joseph indicated, was such that without it he could not possibly have understood certain dimensions of suffering” (*But For a Small Moment*, 7). Like our Savior and like the Prophet Joseph, it is possible for innocent people to be called upon to suffer terrible things—even approaching the pains and perils of hell. Such experiences, if we endure them in faith, will teach us Christlike compassion, patience, faith, and other virtues through suffering innocently as the Savior did—though on a much smaller scale—and will ultimately make us more like him and be for our good (see Jacob 1:8; D&C 6:37).

“all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” It is true that people suffer for their own poor decisions—for their sins—but given the precedent for innocent suffering set by the Savior and his prophets and disciples, most certainly punishment for sin should not be our first or only answer to the question of why people suffer. See *Adversity and Suffering in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 1.

8 The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?

verse 8 “The Son of Man hath descended below them all” The mortal experiences of Jesus Christ plus his very real experience of all that hell can inflict, in Gethsemane and on Calvary, have given him personal knowledge of every possible form of human suffering. There is no human trial or pain with which he is not intimately acquainted and which he did not ultimately overcome. Having experienced the sum total of what anyone has ever suffered, his compassion is as infinite as was his agony. Alma taught: “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy; according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor [help or aid] his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11-12; see also Mosiah 3:7; 14:6, 11; Hebrews 2:18).

“Art thou greater than he?” Sidney Rigdon, though released from jail months before Joseph and his companions, was not improved by the experience; rather he was broken by it. Sidney later complained that Jesus’s suffering was nothing compared to his own, thus indeed holding himself greater in that respect than his Master (*HC*, 3:264; see also Young, *Times and Seasons* 5 [October 1844]: 666). Again, we remind the reader that Sidney certainly suffered emotional injury and probably some degree of mental illness. The Lord, who knows Sidney intimately and perfectly, will judge him fairly. Joseph, on the other hand, humbly accepted his cross, and the Lord soon delivered him from bondage a better man, a better disciple prepared for the climax at Carthage.

If Joseph or any of the saints are truly followers of the Savior, should they expect to be excused entirely from the difficult path our Savior followed? Are we too good to suffer in a small way as he suffered, if and when it might be asked of us? Should the innocent servants expect to be spared their minutest share of what their Master, Model, and Guide bore entirely and alone (see Matthew 10:22-25, 38-39)?

9 Therefore, hold on thy way, and the priesthood shall remain with thee; for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever.

verse 9 “hold on thy way” The expression “hold on thy way” means, in our modern terminology “hang in there.”

“the priesthood shall remain with thee” In D&C 43:3, the Prophet was told that as long as he remained faithful he would hold the keys of the kingdom but that if he fell from faithfulness, those keys would be given to another. A similar promise to Joseph was repeated in D&C 64:5. However, in D&C 90:3 the Prophet is told, unconditionally, that he would never lose the keys of the kingdom and that they would remain with him not only in this world but in the world to come. This progression may indicate that sometime between September 1831 and March 1833 (the date of section 90), the nature of the Lord’s promises to the prophet Joseph had changed—amounting to a much stronger assurance that his exaltation was secure (see, for example, D&C 132:49).

“their bounds are set, they cannot pass” Though, in some sense, here in mortality, we are left alone to experience the trials that mortality offers, ultimately the limits of these trials are set by an all-knowing and living God. While we must not attribute every mishap or evil event in our lives as the “will of God,” we can and should hold firmly to the idea that if we are faithful, our eternal future is secure. Joseph Smith, for example, had a mission to perform, and if he was faithful, his life would be preserved until his mission was completed—no matter what any man or any devil might do. A year or so before his death, Joseph Smith declared, “I know what I say; I understand my

mission and business. God Almighty is my shield; and what can man do if God is my friend? I shall not be sacrificed until my time comes; then I shall be offered freely" (*HC*, 5:259).

Section 123 Committee on Persecution

See the background material for section 121. The text of section 123 is found in the second part of the correspondence written from Liberty Jail by the Prophet Joseph. Section 123 was also first included in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants at the direction of President Brigham Young.

In this section, based on the principle that “out of the books they will be judged” (D&C 128:8), Joseph recommends making a record which might be used as a testimony against the saints’ persecutors. It would consist of all libelous articles (in newspapers, books, encyclopedias, magazines) written against the Church; affidavits documenting the abuses—both personal and to property—committed against the saints; and the names of all those Missourians who had a hand in their persecution.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 123:12 There are many . . . who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.

1 And again, we would suggest for your consideration the propriety of all the saints gathering up a knowledge of all the facts, and sufferings and abuses put upon them by the people of this State;

2 And also of all the property and amount of damages which they have sustained, both of character and personal injuries, as well as real property;

3 And also the names of all persons that have had a hand in their oppressions, as far as they can get hold of them and find them out.

4 And perhaps a committee can be appointed to find out these things, and to take statements and affidavits; and also to gather up the libelous publications that are afloat;

verses 1-4 “gathering up a knowledge of all the facts, and sufferings and abuses” The saints suffered much evil at the hands of the mobs and the Missouri state militia who acted contrary to the laws and constitutions of both the State of Missouri and the United States. It was the responsibility of the saints to seek redress for all they had suffered and lost—no matter how unlikely they might be to find success in that effort. The law of witnesses goes back to Old Testament times (see Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16) and has always been part of the gospel. Even when reparation or satisfaction is unlikely, it is important that a true record of wrongs, libels, and slanders against the Lord’s people be kept. If the mobs, the courts, or the nations will not grant the saints justice, then there will be at least two witnesses, the record kept on earth by the Church and the record kept in heaven (see 3 Nephi 27:23-26), to stand against them at the Day of Judgment.

verse 4 “**a committee can be appointed to find out these things**” A committee was appointed on May 4, 1839 by a general conference of the Church held in Quincy, Illinois. It was presided over by the prophet Joseph, who by that time had escaped from confinement in Missouri. Almon Babbitt, Erastus Snow, and Robert Thompson were charged with the responsibility of becoming “a traveling committee to gather up and obtain all the libelous reports and publications which have been circulated against The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as other historical matter connected with said Church, which they can possibly obtain” (*HC*, 3:346). Erastus Snow wrote that the committee was also “to insert and refute them in a church history which would be compiled by us after the conference” (Erastus Snow Journal, as quoted in Cook, *Revelations*, 242). On the following day, the same conference appointed Lyman Wight to collect sworn affidavits verifying crimes against the saints, which were to be sent to the federal government in Washington, D. C. These and other sworn accounts were later used, without success, to petition the governments of Missouri and the United States for redress.

In 1839, church members commenced writing affidavits of their Missouri experiences and swearing to their authenticity before civil authorities, including justices of the peace, clerks of the court, clerks of the circuit court, clerks of county commissioner’s courts, and notary publics in two counties in Iowa and ten counties in Illinois. Thus, the saints took every precaution to send sworn, legal documents authenticated by the seals of local government officials. They even sent documents authenticating the officials themselves. During the ensuing years the Mormons presented these documents to the federal government in an effort to obtain reparation [compensation] for their sufferings in Missouri (Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions*, xix).

Since 1839 the Church has continued to keep a record and collect the writings of anti-Mormons and others who libel or otherwise attack the Church. Today, our church historian’s office has the most nearly-complete existing collection of anti-Mormon materials. It has been intentionally and systematically added to since 1839.

5 And all that are in the magazines, and in the encyclopedias, and all the libelous histories that are published, and are writing, and by whom, and present the whole concatenation [a connected series of events] of diabolical rascality and nefarious and murderous impositions that have been practised upon this people—

verses 6-14 The saints have a claim upon God for his promise to fight their battles for them (see D&C 98:32-37; 105:14). However, that promise and their claim to it come with two conditions. First, the saints must be in the right, or, if they have been in the wrong, they must first repent. Second, the saints must first exhaust all of their own efforts and resources and every avenue of legal appeal without success in getting

justice from the world. So, even though it was unlikely that the state or national governments would ever give the saints redress for the wrongs committed against them, it was “an imperative duty” that the whole story be recorded to bear witness before God (see verse 7), to justify the action of the saints and their families (see verse 7), to memorialize those who suffered and were martyred (see verse 9), and to make available to future generations the truth in all its horrid details (see verse 11).

6 That we may not only publish to all the world, but present them to the heads of government in all their dark and hellish hue, as the last effort which is enjoined on us by our Heavenly Father, before we can fully and completely claim that promise which shall call him forth from his hiding place; and also that the whole nation may be left without excuse before he can send forth the power of his mighty arm.

verse 6 “present them to the heads of government” That is, the governments of the responsible state and nation.

“that the whole nation may be left without excuse” If the two conditions described in the commentary above for verses 6-14 are met, then the nation is left without excuse.

7 It is an imperative duty that we owe to God, to angels, with whom we shall be brought to stand, and also to ourselves, to our wives and children, who have been made to bow down with grief, sorrow, and care, under the most damning hand of murder, tyranny, and oppression, supported and urged on and upheld by the influence of that spirit which hath so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children, and filled the world with confusion, and has been growing stronger and stronger, and is now the very mainspring of all corruption, and the whole earth groans under the weight of its iniquity.

verse 7 A remarkably eloquent and long, single sentence!

8 It is an iron yoke, it is a strong band; they are the very handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell.

verses 7-8 The false notions that are handed down from one generation to the next and which are “supported and urged on” by Satan, are “the very mainspring of all corruption, and the whole earth groans under the weight of its iniquity.” These false traditions are “the very handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell.” This doctrine has supporting scripture, particularly in the Book of Mormon (for example, see Alma 12:9-11; also Moses 7:26).

9 Therefore it is an imperative duty that we owe, not only to our own wives and children, but to the widows and fatherless, whose husbands and fathers have been murdered under its iron hand;

10 Which dark and blackening deeds are enough to make hell itself shudder, and to stand aghast and pale, and the hands of the very devil to tremble and palsy.

11 And also it is an imperative duty that we owe to all the rising generation, and to all the pure in heart—

12 For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it—

verse 12 This verse does not merely reflect a shallow concern over image, “spin,” or public relations. Rather, it contains the essential rationale for our doing missionary work today. God has charged the saints with breaking down the prejudices and misconceptions that people hold about the Church by correctly representing themselves to the world individually as the ambassadors of Jesus Christ and collectively as the kingdom of God upon the earth. This task requires a correct representation of our history as well as of our theology.

13 Therefore, that we should waste and wear out our lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness, wherein we know them; and they are truly manifest from heaven—

14 These should then be attended to with great earnestness.

15 Let no man count them as small things; for there is much which lieth in futurity, pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things.

16 You know, brethren, that a very large ship is benefited very much by a very small helm in the time of a storm, by being kept workways with the wind and the waves.

verses 15-16 “Let no man count them as small things” One may well ask whether or not the project suggested in section 123 was worthwhile and pertinent at the time it was written. After all, the saints at that time were having trouble even supplying themselves with the necessities for survival. Why expend time and effort doing tedious historical research or writing a detailed history? It is because the saints documented the actions of the mobs and the suffering of the saints, that the truth concerning the persecutions of the Missouri period has been preserved for generations and the judgment of history has, for the most part, been that the saints were innocent victims of the state-sponsored persecutions.

verse 16 “Workways” is an unusual word that seems to mean “properly aligned.”

17 Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.

verse 17 “let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power” This is a foundational principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ on both the temporal and the spiritual level. In temporal things, if the saints first exhaust all their own resources to support their families or to magnify their callings and assignments but are unsuccessful, then the faithful may turn to the Church for additional aid and resources. In spiritual things, if the saints commit themselves to the Lord unreservedly but still remain imperfect—and this, of course, applies to all of us—then we may turn to the Lord to provide through the atonement of Jesus Christ the perfection and celestial worthiness we seek (see Moroni 10:32-33; D&C 76:68-69; Philippians 3:9). Whether temporally or spiritually, the Lord expects us cheerfully to accomplish all that we can do (see 2 Nephi 25:23; Alma 24:11). Then, with faith in him, we may confidently stand back and trust him to do what we cannot yet do, and ultimately we will see the salvation and power of God, not only in our personal lives but also in the Church and in world history.

One bit of wisdom in Joseph’s letter from Liberty Jail, that was not included in section 123 by Orson Pratt, is so choice that I must include it here. In referring to precious gospel principles that some unhallowed men are not yet mature enough to handle, Joseph said, “Children, you know, are fond of tools, while they are not yet able to use them.”

Another bit of counsel from the Prophet’s letter that did not make it into the canon, but is of interest, is the following: “I would further suggest the impropriety of the organization of bands or companies, by covenant or oaths, by penalties or secrecies. . . . Pure friendship always becomes weakened the very moment you undertake to make it stronger by penal oaths and secrecy.”

In April 1839, the prisoners were removed from Liberty Jail and taken to Daviess County for trial. Fearing they would not receive a fair trial in Daviess County, they asked for a change of venue to another county. They were granted a change to Boone County. Hence, the prisoners, in the custody of a sheriff and four additional, men started for Boone County with a two-horse team and wagon. Passing through Diahman, the prisoners were allowed to purchase two horses from one of the guards in exchange for some clothing and a promissory note. The prisoners then were told by the sheriff of the authorities’ plan to allow the prisoners to escape. Hence, when the sheriff and three of the guards were drunk, the brethren mounted the two horses (the one sober guard assisted them in doing so), and ten days later they arrived among the saints in Illinois.

Section 124 Nauvoo

Section 124 is the longest revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants. It was received January 19, 1841, in Nauvoo, nearly two years after the Prophet and his associates were allowed to escape from custody in Missouri and join the saints in Illinois. It contains the Lord's instructions concerning Nauvoo. Some of these instructions are concerned with rather mundane matters, and a few with more lofty and inspirational topics.

The most recent previous revelation prior to Section 124 was received in March of 1839 in Liberty Jail. Never in the early church history had such a hiatus occurred between the canonical revelations received by Joseph! What had happened in the almost two years since Joseph and the others were allowed to escape captivity in Missouri?

For the following historical review, I will draw from B. H. Roberts' *A Comprehensive History of the Church* (volume 2, 1-16). Some of this material will be quoted, and some edited for our use.

As the saints made their exodus from Missouri in the winter and spring of 1838-39, many settled in Quincy, Illinois on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River. A kindly reception was given the Mormon exiles by the people of Quincy. Expressions of sympathy and material aid were provided the saints; not only by those in Quincy, but also by many throughout the state including Governor Carlin. It would be unfair to detract from the warm welcome given the exiles on their arrival in Illinois, but the political leaders of Illinois doubtless realized the potential benefit to the state of twelve to fifteen thousand industrious and hard-working people as a needed labor force. And, should they be recruited into one political party or another, they formed a potential source of increased voting power.

A Doctor Isaac Galland lived in Commerce, Illinois, a small settlement fifty miles north of Quincy, also on the eastern shore of the Mississippi. He owned considerable land in Commerce and the surrounding vicinity. He wrote to the Church in Quincy and offered some farm land in Commerce for rent in case the saints wished to settle there.

Joseph Smith arrived in Quincy on April 22, 1839. Two days later, a conference was held and a committee appointed to select a place for the gathering of the exiled saints. On May 1, the committee purchased a farm in Commerce from Dr. Galland for nine thousand dollars and another smaller farm in Commerce for five thousand dollars from Hugh White.

Joseph later described the area of Commerce as it appeared in May 1839:

The place was literally a wilderness. The land was mostly covered with trees and bushes, and much of it was so wet that it was with the utmost difficulty that a footman could get through, and totally impossible for teams. Commerce was unhealthy, very few

could live there; but believing that it might become a healthy place by the blessing of heaven to the saints, and not a more eligible place presenting itself, I considered it wisdom to make an attempt to build a city (B.H. Roberts, *CHC* 2:9).

Additional lands were soon purchased in Commerce from Dr. Galland and others. The terms on which Dr. Galland allowed the saints to buy land were very favorable. He sold at a reasonable price, and he provided long-term credit. He joined the Church on July 3, 1840. He later left the Church and died a nonmember. Isaac Galland's true motives in his dealings with the Mormons have since been questioned. Conventional wisdom has it that though he seemed to be an altruistic benefactor, he turned out to be a promoter who sold lands he didn't own and a swindler who made off with some of the church's funds. Lyndon W. Cook has questioned these conclusions and has pointed out that Galland was never actually reprimanded by the Church for being a swindler or a thief. Brother Cook concluded:

While some questions regarding Isaac Galland's Mormon-related activities remain unanswered, research confirms that Dr. Isaac Galland was clearly a Mormon benefactor. His correspondence with political leaders and his extensive landholdings combined in assisting the saints to gather again. Joseph Smith declared that the distinguished Dr. Galland was the "instrument of the Lord" in providing a place of refuge for the homeless, persecuted saints. Although his primary motivation for aiding the saints appears to have been financial gain, it is quite possible that without Isaac Galland there might never have been a Nauvoo ("Isaac Galland – Mormon Benefactor," *BYU Studies* 19:3 [1979]).

Some lands were also purchased in Iowa just across the Mississippi River from Commerce. The name Commerce was changed by Joseph to "Nauvoo," a word apparently of Hebrew derivation which means "beautiful location," carrying with it also the idea of "rest."

During the spring and summer of 1839, the saints continued to gather at Nauvoo. Nauvoo was a swampy, mosquito-infested area, and by July of 1839 a malaria epidemic had swept through the saints. Many of the saints became infected, including the Prophet. On the morning of July 22, Joseph's house was crowded with unwell saints whom he was trying to nurse back to health. In his house and yard were many saints camped in tents, many of whom were prostrate with the fever of malaria. While Joseph prayerfully considered the sorry plight of the saints, the Spirit of God rested upon him, and he was immediately healed. He arose from his sick bed and began to administer to the sick in his house and yard—all of whom immediately recovered. He then went from house to house healing the faithful. In company with some other brethren, he then crossed the river to Montrose and healed the saints who had settled on the Church-owned lands there, including Wilford Woodruff, Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, and John Taylor.

One remarkable anecdote is told of Joseph's healing mission. A Brother Elijah Fordham was affected by the illness to the point of being semiconscious and apparently moribund. "Bending over him, the Prophet asked the dying man if he knew him, and believed him to be a servant of God. In a whisper, Brother Fordham replied that he did. Joseph then took him by the hand, and with an energy that would have awakened the dead, he commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ to arise from his bed and walk. Brother Fordham leaped from his bed, removed the bandages and mustard plasters from his feet, dressed himself, ate a bowl of bread and milk, and accompanied the brethren to the other houses on their mission of love" (B.H. Roberts, *CHC* 2:19).

In the fall of 1839, the Church in Nauvoo began to print the *Times and Seasons*, the fourth major periodical begun by the Church. The previous three were *The Evening and Morning Star* in Independence, the *Messenger and Advocate* in Kirtland, and the *Elders' Journal* in Far West. The editor of the *Times and Seasons* was the Prophet's brother, Don Carlos Smith, who served in that capacity until his premature death in August 1841 at the age of 25.

In late October 1839, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Elias Higbee, and Orrin P. Rockwell (the latter was the horse team driver) left Nauvoo for Washington, D.C., to appeal to President Martin Van Buren, seeking redress for the wrongs done the saints in Missouri. En route, Joseph's company passed through Springfield, the capital of Illinois. While there, they met a few men who would later become prominent in church affairs. Dr. Robert D. Foster was consulted regarding Sidney Rigdon who was ill. Dr. Foster accompanied the party for several days to provide Sidney with medical attention. William Law was a convert to the Church who was passing through Springfield while leading a small company of saints from Canada to Nauvoo. While in Springfield, Joseph stayed in the home of Judge James Adams who treated the Prophet with kindness and became a staunch and reliable friend during the remainder of Joseph's lifetime.

Sidney Rigdon became so weak during the journey that it became necessary to leave him near Columbus, Ohio, and Orrin P. Rockwell and Dr. Foster remained with him. Joseph and Elias Higbee arrived in Washington on November 28.

An incident occurred as the party approached Washington which borders on the romantic. The coachman stopped his horses in front of one of the many public houses they passed en route, to get his grog. While he was still in the public house, the horses took fright and dashed down the road at break-neck speed. The passengers, as might be expected, became terror-stricken, and one woman in her excitement tried to throw her babe out of the window. She was prevented, however, by Joseph Smith, who calmed her fears and persuaded the rest of the passengers to keep their seats. He then opened the door of the coach and succeeded in climbing up the side of the vehicle to the driver's seat. Gathering up the reins, he stopped the horses before any accident occurred either to coach or passengers.

Needless to say, the Prophet's heroism drew from his fellow passengers their warmest expressions of admiration and gratitude. No terms were sufficiently strong to convey their admiration of his daring. Among the passengers were several members of congress who proposed mentioning the incident to congress, for they believed that body would reward his conduct by some public act. With this object in view they asked for his name and were dumbfounded to learn that they had been saved from their imminent peril by the courage of the "Mormon Prophet." After that, the profusion of thanks and admiration was stayed, "and," said the Prophet, "I heard no more of their praise, gratitude or reward" (Roberts, *CHC* 2:19-30).

The delegation called upon President Van Buren who treated them insolently, and their presence seemed an annoyance to him. He acknowledged the rightness of their cause but refused to help. He said, "Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you. If I take up for you, I shall lose the vote of Missouri."

Petitions were also filed with a senate committee asking them to investigate the situation. Joseph and Brother Higbee held public meetings in both Philadelphia and Washington in which they delivered the gospel message. Brother Higbee was left in Washington to look after the petitions before the senate committee. These, predictably, came to naught. Joseph returned to Nauvoo in March of 1840.

At the April 1840 conference of the Church, two apostles, Orson Hyde and John E. Page, were called on a mission to the Jews in large cities of Europe and other places, including London, Amsterdam, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. They left in mid-April but lingered in the eastern states until January 1841. They were then sharply reprovved and told "to hasten their journey towards their destination" (*HC*, 4:274). By then, Elder Page had lost the spirit and was not inclined to fulfill his mission. Orson Hyde, however, set sail at once for Europe. He reached Jerusalem in October, and on Sunday morning, October 24, 1841, on the Mount of Olives, he dedicated Palestine for the return of the Jews. After traveling for more than a year in Europe and completing his mission, he returned to Nauvoo, arriving there in December of 1842.

The summer of 1840 saw death reap a rich harvest among the early stalwart members of the Church. Bishop Edward Partridge died in May at the age of 45. Because of trials and persecutions in Jackson and Caldwell Counties, he had lost his earthly possessions, and his health was broken as well. He lived to see Illinois and Nauvoo but was never in robust health following the persecutions in Missouri. The Prophet's father, Joseph Smith, Sr., died in September of 1840. The eulogy at his funeral service was preached by a talented young man with unusual writing ability, Robert B. Thompson, whose own untimely death occurred about a year later in August 1841.

In September of 1840, John Cook Bennett came to Nauvoo. He was a strikingly handsome, talented, sophisticated, and well-educated individual who was a practicing physician and a high ranking officer in the militia of the state of Illinois. He quickly found

favor with Joseph, who saw in him great potential, and he was moved into the inner circles of influence in the city and in the Church. He had connections at the Illinois state capital and was instrumental in obtaining charters for the city of Nauvoo, the University of Nauvoo, and the Nauvoo Legion. He was elected mayor of Nauvoo, chancellor of the University of Nauvoo, and major general of the Nauvoo Legion. He was ordained an “assistant president” of the Church in April 1841 (probably a temporary counselor of sorts). This position was to be temporary until Sidney Rigdon recovered from an illness.

Bennett’s meteoric rise in power and influence was followed by a fall just as dramatic. In the summer of 1841, it was learned that this self-proclaimed bachelor had an estranged wife and children in Ohio. When confronted with this information, Bennett confessed, made a great show of contrition, and was allowed to remain in fellowship. He apparently had learned something of the doctrine of polygamy, then being taught by the Prophet to a few intimate friends. He began using his position, his reputation, and his personal magnetism to proposition and seduce several women in Nauvoo, both married and unmarried, under the guise of practicing the new marriage covenant—“spiritual marriage” he called it. He was found out, and many of the women whom he had seduced testified against him. He was excommunicated in May of 1842, and almost immediately published a series of letters in a Springfield, Illinois, newspaper in which he claimed to have been coerced into confessing to his misdeeds. He accused Joseph of being a lascivious, power-mad charlatan. These letters caused a sensation around the state and were picked up by other newspapers. They were even published as a book, *The History of the Saints, or, An Expose’ of Joe Smith and Mormonism*. His determined articulate opposition to the Church, both in print and in lectures throughout the country, helped eventually to bring about the destruction of Nauvoo and the Prophet Joseph.

In the summer of 1840, the state of Missouri renewed its attacks upon the Church. Some Missourians tried to discredit the saints by conveying stolen goods from Missouri to the vicinity of Commerce. When these goods were found, they hoped that suspicion might rest upon the people in whose neighborhood the stolen objects were discovered. Also a group of Missourians kidnapped four Mormon men near Quincy and dragged them back to Missouri. The four were threatened, abused, tormented, and then released. When the Illinois Governor Carlin was approached to assist in obtaining redress for this kidnapping, he made some pretensions in the direction of assisting the saints, but nothing came of it. The Illinois governor’s regard for the saints, though he had initially received them warmly, was beginning to cool.

Shortly thereafter, Governor Carlin agreed to Governor Boggs’ request to extradite Joseph Smith and others back to Missouri, charging them with being fugitives from justice. When the Missouri sheriff traveled to Nauvoo with his extradition order, Joseph and the other brethren were “not at home” and “could not be found,” so the sheriff returned empty handed.

A charter was granted to the city of Nauvoo by the Illinois legislature in December of 1840. The charter gave the saints full powers to govern themselves, restricting them only in that they could do nothing inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States or the constitution of Illinois. On February 1, 1841, John C. Bennett was elected the first mayor of Nauvoo.

The Nauvoo charter also contained two other specific charters: one for the establishment of a university in Nauvoo, and another for the organization of an independent military body to be called the “Nauvoo Legion.” The “Legion” was to have a commanding officer known as the lieutenant-general and a second officer, the major-general. In February 1841, when the Legion was actually organized, Joseph Smith and John C. Bennett were chosen to fill these two offices respectively. By September there were almost fifteen hundred men in the Legion, and at the time of the Prophet’s death in June 1844, the Legion numbered about five thousand. The men of the Legion shared an enthusiasm for military display, and since they were drilled by competent military officers, the Legion became the best body of militia in the state of Illinois. The Nauvoo Legion excited the jealousy and envy of the rest of the militia in the surrounding counties. The laudable efforts of the Legion to become an efficient military body for the purpose of assisting in the execution of state and national laws were construed by their enemies to mean a preparation for rebellion. Some in Illinois began to fear the spread of Mormonism by conquest of the sword. Hence, that which was intended to offer protection to the saints and support the state was interpreted as a threat to many in Illinois.

Section 124 was received shortly after the governor of Illinois signed the charter for the city of Nauvoo along with several other charters, including one for the University of Nauvoo. This revelation became something of a blueprint for the development of Nauvoo and the Church for the rest of Joseph Smith’s life.

The principal items addressed in section 124 are the proclamation to the king and rulers of the earth, sending the gospel to all nations (verses 1-14), the construction of the Nauvoo House (verses 22-25, 56-83), the construction of the Nauvoo Temple (verses 26-28), the priesthood ordinances to be performed in the temple (verses 29-44), and the organization of the priesthood quorums (verses 123-145). The Prophet recorded no background information about this revelation.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 124 Nauvoo

D&C 124:49 It behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, I am well pleased with your offering and acknowledgments, which you have made; for unto this end have I raised you up, that I might show forth my wisdom through the weak things of the earth.

verse 1 “for unto this end have I raised you up” The Lord reiterates the role of the prophet Joseph. In this isolated little community, obscure to most of the world, the reminder is given that Joseph Smith as one of the weak things of the earth has been raised up to show forth the wisdom of God. The Lord earlier revealed that Joseph Smith and his associates though “unlearned and despised” would, through the restoration of the fulness of the gospel, “break down the mighty and strong ones” of this world and “thrash the nations by the power of [his] Spirit” (D&C 1:17-19; 35:12-14).

verses 2-14 In these verses, Joseph is called to write a proclamation to all the world—to kings, queens, presidents, rulers, and governors, announcing that the gospel is upon the earth and warning them to “give heed to the light and glory in Zion.”

Robert B. Thompson is called in verse 12 to help write this proclamation. He died only seven months after this revelation was received and did not ever work on this proclamation. John C. Bennett, who was called to assist in the promulgation of the gospel, fell into apostasy. Joseph was burdened by many responsibilities and problems in Nauvoo and also never had a chance to write this letter. The Prophet worried over his failure to complete this project until the time of his death. At one point, W. W. Phelps was asked to write the proclamation. He finished twenty-two pages and took them to Joseph for approval. Joseph said in effect, “Not bad, but continue to work on it.” We still have these twenty-two pages in the church historian’s office. Joseph never saw the fulfillment of this commandment.

A year after Joseph’s martyrdom, Parley P. Pratt was directed by the Twelve to compose such a proclamation which was published in New York on April 6, 1845. That this Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles was published in fulfillment of the revelation is made clear by Wilford Woodruff in the *Millennial Star* of October 15, 1845. On October 3, 1975, Elder Ezra Taft Benson, then president of the Quorum of the Twelve, referred to this proclamation and read portions of it in a general conference address. At the 150th annual general conference of the Church, in April 1980, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley read another such proclamation from the reconstructed Peter Whitmer, Sr., farm house—the site of the organization of the Church.

2 Your prayers are acceptable before me; and in answer to them I say unto you, that you are now called immediately to make a solemn proclamation of my gospel, and of this stake which I have planted to be a cornerstone of Zion, which shall be polished with the refinement which is after the similitude of a palace.

3 This proclamation shall be made to all the kings of the world, to the four corners thereof, to the honorable president-elect, and the high-minded governors of the nation in which you live, and to all the nations of the earth scattered abroad.

4 Let it be written in the spirit of meekness and by the power of the Holy Ghost, which shall be in you at the time of the writing of the same;

5 For it shall be given you by the Holy Ghost to know my will concerning those kings and authorities, even what shall befall them in a time to come.

verse 5 “what shall befall them in a time to come” Throughout biblical history, the prophets of God were told what would happen to the nations that they served. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and others prophesied warnings concerning the downfall of the nations if they did not return to the God of Israel. Latter-day prophets have the same authority and mandate. The Lord informs Joseph in verse 7 not to fear the rulers of the world, for they were as grass and flowers before the Lord. If they did not respond to the proclamation, they would soon fall.

6 For, behold, I am about to call upon them to give heed to the light and glory of Zion, for the set time has come to favor her.

verse 6 “for the set time has come to favor her” The antecedent of the pronoun *her* seems to be Zion in verse 2 and in this verse. In D&C 64:32, the Lord declared “all things must come to pass in their time.” Elder Dallin H. Oaks declared: “During his lifetime the Lord instructed the Twelve Apostles not to preach to the Gentiles but ‘rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (Matthew 10:5-6; see also 15:22-26). Then, at the appropriate time, this instruction was reversed in a great revelation to the apostle Peter. Only then, at the precise time dictated by the Lord, was the gospel taken to the Gentiles (see Acts 10). Elder Oaks continued:

As this example shows, continuing revelation is the means by which the Lord administers his timing. We need that revelatory direction. For example, many of us or our descendants will doubtless participate in the fulfillment of prophecies about the building of the city of New Jerusalem (see D&C 84:2-4). But in this matter the timing is the Lord’s, not ours. We will not be approved or blessed in clearing the ground or pouring the footings for that great project until the Lord has said that it is time. In this, as in so many other things, the Lord will proceed in his own time and in his own way” (“Timing,” Devotional Address delivered at BYU January 29, 2002, 2).

7 Call ye, therefore, upon them with loud proclamation, and with your testimony, fearing them not, for they are as grass, and all their glory as the flower thereof which soon falleth, that they may be left also without excuse—

8 And that I may visit them in the day of visitation, when I shall unveil the face of my covering, to appoint the portion of the oppressor among hypocrites, where

there is gnashing of teeth, if they reject my servants and my testimony which I have revealed unto them.

9 And again, I will visit and soften their hearts, many of them for your good, that ye may find grace in their eyes, that they may come to the light of truth, and the Gentiles to the exaltation or lifting up of Zion.

verse 9 “I will visit and soften their hearts, many of them for your good”

The Quorum of the Twelve was establishing the Church in the British Isles at the time this revelation was received. The time would soon come when the gospel message would be taken to the nations of Europe and elsewhere. Many from these nations would flow into Nauvoo and later the Utah Territory to strengthen and build up the Church in fulfillment of this promise.

10 For the day of my visitation cometh speedily, in an hour when ye think not of; and where shall be the safety of my people, and refuge for those who shall be left of them?

11 Awake, O kings of the earth! Come ye, O, come ye, with your gold and your silver, to the help of my people, to the house of the daughters of Zion.

12 And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant Robert B. Thompson help you to write this proclamation, for I am well pleased with him, and that he should be with you;

verse 12 “Robert B. Thompson” As mentioned in the introductory comments for this section, Brother Thompson’s death in August 1841 prevented his assisting in preparing the proclamation.

13 Let him, therefore, hearken to your counsel, and I will bless him with a multiplicity of blessings; let him be faithful and true in all things from henceforth, and he shall be great in mine eyes;

14 But let him remember that his stewardship will I require at his hands.

15 And again, verily I say unto you, blessed is my servant Hyrum Smith; for I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me, saith the Lord.

verse 15 “Hyrum Smith” Here was a man whom the Lord loved. Once he came to know that his brother, Joseph, was a prophet of God, he did not waver in his support. He was with Joseph throughout the trials in Kirtland, Missouri, Illinois, and Carthage. He truly stood as the second witness of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. President Heber J. Grant made this observation of Hyrum’s qualities: “No mortal man who ever lived in this Church desired more to do good than did Hyrum Smith, the patriarch. I have it from the lips of my own sainted mother that of all the men she was acquainted with in her girlhood days in Nauvoo, she admired Hyrum Smith

most for his absolute integrity and devotion to God, and loyalty to the prophet Joseph” (CR, October 1920, 84).

16 Again, let my servant John C. Bennett help you in your labor in sending my word to the kings and people of the earth, and stand by you, even you my servant Joseph Smith, in the hour of affliction; and his reward shall not fail if he receive counsel.

17 And for his love he shall be great, for he shall be mine if he do this, saith the Lord. I have seen the work which he hath done, which I accept if he continue, and will crown him with blessings and great glory.

verses 16-17 “John C. Bennett” John C. Bennett is promised blessings from the Lord. Many have been critical of Joseph and his ready acceptance of Bennett into the leadership of the Church. Wouldn't we expect Joseph to have been more discerning? With the Lord's inspiration, shouldn't Joseph have been able to recognize that Bennett was a fraud and a scoundrel?

Apparently the Lord and Joseph did recognize genuine potential in him. Note that the promise of blessings was contingent upon the “ifs” in verses 16 and 17: “if he receive counsel” and “if he continue.” He did neither, and his blessings were lost.

18 And again, I say unto you that it is my will that my servant Lyman Wight should continue in preaching for Zion, in the spirit of meekness, confessing me before the world; and I will bear him up as on eagles' wings; and he shall beget glory and honor to himself and unto my name.

verse 18 “Lyman Wight” Similarly, Lyman Wight, who is promised a great blessing in this verse, was faithful for a time and was even called to the apostleship. He later rejected the leadership of the Twelve and published a pamphlet in 1848 repudiating their authority. He was excommunicated in December 1848.

19 That when he shall finish his work I may receive him unto myself, even as I did my servant David Patten, who is with me at this time, and also my servant Edward Partridge, and also my aged servant Joseph Smith, Sen., who sitteth with Abraham at his right hand, and blessed and holy is he, for he is mine.

verse 19 “David Patten . . . Edward Partridge . . . Joseph Smith, Sen.” All of the brethren mentioned here are deceased. David Patten died on October 25, 1838, at Crooked River, Missouri, Bishop Edward Partridge died in Nauvoo on December 27, 1840, and Father Smith died in Nauvoo on September 14, 1840. This verse implies that each has had his “calling and election made sure.”

20 And again, verily I say unto you, my servant George Miller is without guile; he may be trusted because of the integrity of his heart; and for the love which he has to my testimony I, the Lord, love him.

verse 20 “George Miller” Here the Lord describes George Miller as a man “without guile,” one who could be trusted because of his integrity. Later, however, George Miller changed. He became an important figure in Nauvoo, serving as trustee-in-trust for the Church and a bishop, “like unto” Bishop Partridge (verse 21). He also supervised the obtaining of timber from Wisconsin for the building of the temple in Nauvoo. He served with the saints after the death of Joseph and Hyrum and traveled with them to Winter Quarters. There he rejected the leadership of Brigham Young in 1847 and was excommunicated from the Church on December 3, 1848. He journeyed to Texas and joined with Lyman Wight and other apostates. He soon became dissatisfied with Wight and moved to Michigan, joining with James J. Strang. He served several missions for the Strangite movement, including a mission to Texas in a failed effort to reclaim Wight for the Strangites. After Strang’s death, Miller proceeded toward California but died en route, in Meringo, Illinois, in 1856.

21 I therefore say unto you, I seal upon his head the office of a bishopric, like unto my servant Edward Partridge, that he may receive the consecrations of mine house, that he may administer blessings upon the heads of the poor of my people, saith the Lord. Let no man despise my servant George, for he shall honor me.

verse 21 George Miller is called to be bishop of the Church.

22 Let my servant George, and my servant Lyman, and my servant John Snider, and others, build a house unto my name, such a one as my servant Joseph shall show unto them, upon the place which he shall show unto them also.

23 And it shall be for a house for boarding, a house that strangers may come from afar to lodge therein; therefore let it be a good house, worthy of all acceptation, that the weary traveler may find health and safety while he shall contemplate the word of the Lord; and the corner-stone I have appointed for Zion.

24 This house shall be a healthful habitation if it be built unto my name, and if the governor which shall be appointed unto it shall not suffer any pollution to come upon it. It shall be holy, or the Lord your God will not dwell therein.

verses 22-24, 56-83, 111-122 “build a house unto my name” A major item in section 124 is the instruction given for building the “Nauvoo House”—a hotel or boarding house in Nauvoo. Isn’t it odd that something as mundane as the plans for a hotel would be received by revelation? It may be better understood once one realizes the important role this hotel was intended to play in the Lord’s work. The sacred nature of the Nauvoo House is made clear as one reads these verses. Note: “Build a house

unto my name,” “my boarding house,” and “Let my name be upon it.” Finally, “It shall be holy, or the Lord your God will not dwell therein.”

The purpose of the hotel is made clear as we recall the command given to Joseph to make a proclamation of the restored gospel to kings and rulers the world over (verses 2-14). The Lord indicated that the hearts of many of them would be softened. The Lord challenged them in verse 11: “Awake, O kings of the earth! Come ye, O, come ye, with your gold and your silver, to the help of my people, to the house of the daughters of Zion.” A place had to be provided to receive such visitors: “And let it be a delightful habitation for man, and a resting place for the weary traveler, that he may contemplate the glory of Zion, and the glory of this, the cornerstone thereof.” With its position on a bend in the Mississippi River, the Nauvoo House would be a place where “strangers” from afar could lodge and where the “weary traveler may find health and safety while he shall contemplate the word of the Lord” (verse 23).

To pay for the cost of the house, plans were made to sell shares of stock to finance the construction of the building. Joseph Smith donated the land on which the house was to be built, and in return he and his descendants were to receive rooms in the hotel for their use.

The house was also to serve as a place where visitors to the city might receive counsel from those whom the Lord designated as “plants of renown” and as “watchmen upon her walls.” The Nauvoo House was an integral part of the long range plan for the gathering place of the Church. Joseph continually urged the saints to complete construction of the Nauvoo House. Verses 60-82 command several brethren to purchase stock in this house. The building was started in the fall of 1841, but progress was slow, and the house, as originally planned, was never completed. The labors of the saints focused on the temple, and at first, funding was not available for the house. After the Prophet’s death, the deed of the Nauvoo House was transferred to Emma Smith. By 1846 the walls reached the level of the second floor. After Emma married Lewis Bidamon, he used part of the uncompleted building to build a two-story home, known as the Riverside Mansion, on the southwest corner of the lot. The home built and lived in by Lewis Bidamon and Emma Smith Bidamon still stands and is owned by the Community of Christ Church (formerly Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).

Joseph Smith put a copy of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in 1841. It was recovered by Lewis Bidamon, who gave pages of this manuscript to visitors in Nauvoo. The bodies of Joseph and Hyrum were buried under the Nauvoo House when they were brought from Carthage. They were later removed and buried in what is now the family cemetery across the street.

verses 25-48, 55 The Kirtland Temple had never been intended as a place for the performance of endowment ceremonies or for the performance of ordinances for the

dead. In the Kirtland Temple were given only the introductory or initiatory ordinances preparatory to the endowment. These verses contain instructions for building the temple in Nauvoo. It was in the Nauvoo Temple that the endowment ordinance and the ordinances for the dead were to be performed.

The temple was started in February 1841. On April 6, 1841, the cornerstone was laid. Work continued on the different levels of the temple. After the baptismal font was completed, the first baptisms for the dead were performed on November 21, 1841. As other areas of the temple were completed, initiatory and endowment work was performed. Perhaps sensing that he would not live to see the completion of the Nauvoo Temple, Joseph began on May 4, 1842, to administer and teach the endowment and other ordinances that had been revealed to him. These were administered in the upper part of Joseph's red brick store. After the Prophet's death on June 27, 1844, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles continued to direct the work on the temple until it was completed.

Even before section 124 was received, the First Presidency had sent word to the saints the world over, declaring that the time had come to gather to Nauvoo to make the necessary sacrifices to build a temple (*HC*, 4:186). In 1843 Joseph taught the meaning of the principle of "gathering" as follows: What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world? . . . the main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby he could reveal unto his people the ordinances of his house" (*HC*, 5:423). The Lord intended to gather a chosen people at Nauvoo and make them a covenant people through the ordinances of the temple.

After a brief lull following the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, pressure intensified upon the saints to leave Nauvoo. The pressure drove Brigham Young to give the temple construction top priority. He was anxious to see the saints strengthened spiritually by the temple ordinances. Despite preparations to leave the city, the saints redoubled their work on the temple. On December 10, 1845, the first endowment ordinances were begun in the attic story, and during the next eight weeks, before the temple closed on February 8, 1846, nearly 5,600 members received their endowments (Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 250).

A crew of workers remained behind in Nauvoo to complete the construction of the temple after the other saints had left. Orson Hyde, representing the Twelve, was left to oversee the work. Finally on April 30, 1846, the work was finished, and Wilford Woodruff and Orson Hyde and several other elders, during a small private service (to avoid possible mob violence) met and dedicated the temple. It was later dedicated publicly on May 1-3, 1846.

Their offering was acceptable to God, and the workmen joined the remainder of the saints in Iowa.

George A. Smith tersely summarized the Nauvoo Temple experience as follows: “We went to work in Nauvoo and finished the temple, and had no sooner got it done but we had to leave it to be burned by our enemies” (*HC*, 4:454).

After the saints fled from Nauvoo, the temple was desecrated by mobs and set on fire on November 18, 1848. All that remained were the walls, three of which fell or were weakened by a tornado on May 27, 1850. It had served its purpose—that of introducing sacred temple work for the dead as well as for the living. A new temple was dedicated in June 2002 on the very spot where the original once stood overlooking the Mississippi River. It stands as a monument to the great faith and sacrifice of the early saints.

25 And again, verily I say unto you, let all my saints come from afar.

verse 25 “let all my saints come from afar” This was a command for the saints to move to Nauvoo. It was the intent of the Lord that the Saints build not only a city but also a temple, and the gathering was critical for that purpose.

26 And send ye swift messengers, yea, chosen messengers, and say unto them: Come ye, with all your gold, and your silver, and your precious stones, and with all your antiquities; and with all who have knowledge of antiquities, that will come, may come, and bring the box-tree, and the fir-tree, and the pine-tree, together with all the precious trees of the earth;

27 And with iron, with copper, and with brass, and with zinc, and with all your precious things of the earth; and build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein.

verse 27 “build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein” This statement was a command to build a temple in Nauvoo, the fifth of the temples the Lord had commanded to be built. Kirtland, Independence, Far West, and Adam-ondi-Ahman were the sites of the other temples, but only the Kirtland Temple had been completed. In verses 26-48 the saints were commanded to transport wood and metal to Nauvoo to be used as building materials for the temple (see verses 26-27). This commandment was fulfilled when the Prophet sent men up the Mississippi River to Wisconsin for timber. Stone was quarried at Nauvoo. Many of the workers on the temple were craftsmen who had immigrated to Nauvoo from the East and from Great Britain.

28 For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood.

verse 28 “not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost” The highest ordinances of the priesthood are only

performed in temples. Thus the saints may have the benefit of the “fulness of the priesthood” only when a temple is functioning. The Lord also states in this verse that the temple is necessary so that he will have a place in which to restore “that which was lost.” Since the priesthood and its keys had been restored already, the “fulness of the priesthood” can only result from the endowment, celestial marriage, and the sealing of families.

29 For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead—

verse 29 “baptismal font” This is the first mention of baptism for the dead in the Doctrine and Covenants. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

So important did the Lord consider baptisms for the dead that he authorized the saints to be baptized for their dead in the Mississippi River, until a place could be provided in his house for this purpose. He further said he would give them sufficient time to build such a house, and while they were doing so, their baptisms for their dead would be acceptable to him if performed in the river, but after a place was prepared, then all baptisms for the dead in the river must cease, for this ordinance as well as other ordinances for the dead properly belongs to the house of the Lord. This revelation was given January 19, 1841, and from that time until the October conference of the Church in 1841, the baptisms in the river were accepted. At the conference in October, the Prophet announced that the time had come to discontinue that practice, and from that time forth baptisms for the dead must be performed in the temple. Though the temple was not finished at that time, it had in the six months progressed far enough so that the basement could be enclosed, and in the basement a font had been build and dedicated, so that early in November, 1841, under the direction of the Prophet Joseph, baptisms for the dead commenced in the house of the Lord (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 4:8).

30 For this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me, only in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me.

31 But I command you, all ye my saints, to build a house unto me; and I grant unto you a sufficient time to build a house unto me; and during this time your baptisms shall be acceptable unto me.

32 But behold, at the end of this appointment your baptisms for your dead shall not be acceptable unto me; and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God.

verse 32 The Community of Christ Church (formerly the RLDS Church) uses verse 32 to justify their failure to do baptisms for the dead. They claim that the temple

was never finished in time, and that the Lord has rejected the ordinance of baptism for the dead.

33 For verily I say unto you, that after you have had sufficient time to build a house to me, wherein the ordinance of baptizing for the dead belongeth, and for which the same was instituted from before the foundation of the world, your baptisms for your dead cannot be acceptable unto me;

34 For therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory.

verse 34 The Lord indicated that one of the reasons for building the temple was to have a place where he could restore the “fulness of the priesthood” (see verse 28). He promised that he would show Joseph Smith all things pertaining to the priesthood (see verse 42). In the temple are used the keys of the holy priesthood, which bring honor and glory to the saints in the Father’s kingdom.

35 And after this time, your baptisms for the dead, by those who are scattered abroad, are not acceptable unto me, saith the Lord.

36 For it is ordained that in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead.

verse 36 The wording of this verse is very intriguing. First, it informs the saints that the Nauvoo Temple would not be the only one built. Others would be built in the stakes of Zion. Today, that prophecy is being fulfilled as temples are being built throughout the world. Second, Jerusalem is identified as a place where there will eventually be built a temple of the Lord. Doesn’t it seem a bit far fetched that the Church will some day be able to build a temple in Jerusalem? Would the Jews there, who espouse their own cause of Zionism, ever allow that? As to who exactly will build this temple and by what authority they will do so, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

By what power and under whose authorization shall the work be done? There is only one place under the whole heaven where the keys of temple building are found. There is only one people who know how to build temples and what to do in them when they are completed. That people is the Latter-day Saints. The temple in Jerusalem will not be built by Jews who have assembled there for political purposes as at present. It will not be built by a people who know nothing whatsoever about the sealing ordinances and their application to the living and the dead. It will not be built by those who know nothing about Christ and his laws and the mysteries reserved for the saints. But it will be built by Jews who have come unto Christ, who once again are in the true fold of their ancient Shepherd, and who have learned anew about temples because they know that Elijah did come, not to sit in a vacant chair at some Jewish feast of the Passover, but to the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836, to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The temple

in Jerusalem will be built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (*The Millennial Messiah*, 279-80).

37 And again, verily I say unto you, how shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name?

38 For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was.

verse 38 The purposes of Moses' tabernacle were apparently generally the same as those of a temple. However, we do not fully understand the extent of the ordinances practiced by the Israelites during the time of Moses. Moses initially taught the children of Israel what was needed to prepare them to behold the face of God, which would have included the higher ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood and the temple. Nevertheless, the Israelites "hardened their hearts. . . . Therefore, [the Lord] took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also; and the lesser priesthood continued" (D&C 84:24-26). Thus, the ordinances generally available to the Israelites in the tabernacle in the wilderness would have been those pertaining to the lesser priesthood—the Aaronic Priesthood.

The endowment ordinance has been known to the saints since Adam's time. It has only been "hid" from the world.

39 Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name.

verse 39 "which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name" The command to build temples is not new to this dispensation, and the effect of the temples on society is immeasurable. Elder John A. Widtsoe observed: "When the history of human thought shall be written from the point of view of temple worship, it may well be found that temples and the work done in them have been the dominating influence in shaping human thought from the beginning of the race. "Even today," he continued, "political controversies are as nothing in determining the temper of a people, as compared with religious sentiments and convictions, especially as practiced in the temples of the people" ("Temple Worship," 52).

40 And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people;

verses 39-40 “your anointings, and your washings” On Wednesday, May 4, 1842, in the upper story of his Red Brick Store in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph met with seven brethren—Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards (members of the Quorum of the Twelve and the future First Presidency) and James Adams, Hyrum Smith, Newel K. Whitney, and George Miller—“instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments, and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood” (*HC*, 5:2). This was the first time the temple endowment, as we know it, was administered in this dispensation.

41 For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times.

42 And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof, and the place whereon it shall be built.

verses 41-42 “I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world” The word “deign” here implies that the Lord feels he shouldn’t have had to reveal the full ordinances of the temple only to those of this final dispensation. They were available from “before the foundation of the world” and apparently “have been kept hid” only because the people of earth have not been adequately prepared. The Lord is now willing to show the Prophet and the saints all things that pertain to the temple and the priesthood. “It was the design of the councils of heaven before the world was, that the principles and laws of the priesthood should be predicated upon the gathering of the people in every age of the world. . . . Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same Principles” (*HC*, 5:423-24). All of these things will be made known during the dispensation headed by Joseph Smith, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

43 And ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build it.

44 If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy.

45 And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place.

46 But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest, because they pollute mine holy grounds, and mine holy ordinances, and charters, and my holy words which I give unto them.

47 And it shall come to pass that if you build a house unto my name, and do not do the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfil the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord.

48 For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies, and by all your abominations, which you practise before me, saith the Lord.

verses 45-48 “if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants” The key to real success in this mortal life is to follow the counsel of God. Whether it comes through revealed word, the Spirit, or authorized servants of the Lord, it is the same (see D&C 1:38). If individuals think they know more than God does, they will lose and in the process pollute the ground upon which they stand and violate the ordinances and covenants into which they have entered (see verse 46). As in the case of the parable of the Lord and the choice piece of land (see D&C 101:43-62), if the saints in Nauvoo would not take seriously the command to build a temple, they would lose the spiritual blessings in store for them and would bring upon themselves the cursings and judgments of God.

We, too, are faced with the choice to follow the counsels of living prophets and apostles. There are always others we can follow and give heed to. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught: “Some of the greatest heresies that have crept into the Christian religion came in through a very few men who held no real official position, mostly, but who spent their time and their talents, and they were great, in trying to rationalize the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is some evidence—these were called ‘schoolmen,’ and the results of their work ‘scholasticism,’—and I am persuaded that we have some tendency in that direction as among ourselves, and I hope that the people will not listen to the rationalizing of men who undertake to make God’s plan conform to what they think it should be in their weak and ineffective reasonings” (*CR*, April, 1952, 95).

Author’s note: President Clark refers to “scholasticism” and “schoolmen.” *Scholasticism* is a form of Christian philosophy and theology developed by scholars who came to be called *schoolmen*. It flourished during the medieval period of European history. The system attempted to synthesize ideas expressed in classical Roman and Greek writings and in Christian Scripture, the writings of the patristic fathers, and other Christian writings preceding the medieval period. Aristotle’s views helped give scholasticism a systematic structure, but Platonism also played a large part in the enterprise.

49 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings.

verse 49 Here is a vital principle. When a man receives a commandment of the Lord, if he should go with all his might to accomplish it, but is prevented from doing so by factors beyond his control, then the Lord will accept their sacrifice.

Now, wait a moment! I thought that we believed what Nephi taught in 1 Nephi 3:7, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”

Is there any contradiction between 1 Nephi 3:7 and D&C 124:49? There is a little. We must regard Nephi’s teaching as a truth, but an incomplete truth. D&C 124:49 gives us the complete truth on the matter. Beware of other incomplete truths in the Church. Can you think of any? How about: “Keep the Word of Wisdom, and you will enjoy good health.” “Pay your tithing, and you will become prosperous.” “Train up a child in the way he should go, and later in life he will not depart from it.”

50 And the iniquity and transgression of my holy laws and commandments I will visit upon the heads of those who hindered my work, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord God.

51 Therefore, for this cause have I accepted the offerings of those whom I commanded to build up a city and a house unto my name, in Jackson county, Missouri, and were hindered by their enemies, saith the Lord your God.

52 And I will answer judgment, wrath, and indignation, wailing, and anguish, and gnashing of teeth upon their heads, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord your God.

53 And this I make an example unto you, for your consolation concerning all those who have been commanded to do a work and have been hindered by the hands of their enemies, and by oppression, saith the Lord your God.

54 For I am the Lord your God, and will save all those of your brethren who have been pure in heart, and have been slain in the land of Missouri, saith the Lord.

55 And again, verily I say unto you, I command you again to build a house to my name, even in this place, that you may prove yourselves unto me that ye are faithful in all things whatsoever I command you, that I may bless you, and crown you with honor, immortality, and eternal life.

56 And now I say unto you, as pertaining to my boarding house which I have commanded you to build for the boarding of strangers, let it be built unto my

name, and let my name be named upon it, and let my servant Joseph and his house have place therein, from generation to generation.

57 For this anointing have I put upon his head, that his blessing shall also be put upon the head of his posterity after him.

58 And as I said unto Abraham concerning the kindreds of the earth, even so I say unto my servant Joseph: In thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth be blessed.

59 Therefore, let my servant Joseph and his seed after him have place in that house, from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord.

verses 56-59 “let my servant Joseph and his house have place therein, from generation to generation” The prophet Joseph and his children were to have stock in the Nauvoo House and were to have rights to the rooms for their housing from generation to generation. This applies only to the boarding house and has no application to the succession of the Presidency of the Church, as it is supposed by some. The anointing mentioned in verse 57 must be taken in context with verses 55 and 56, which refer to the building of the temple and the Nauvoo House.

verses 60-85 In these verses the Lord sets the parameters within which the building of the Nauvoo House was to be accomplished. Individuals are instructed to buy stock in the house and will, if possible, receive dividends in return. This gives the stockholders and their descendants rights to the stock through generations. For a discussion of the lives of the individuals mentioned in these verses, see Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*.

60 And let the name of that house be called Nauvoo House; and let it be a delightful habitation for man, and a resting-place for the weary traveler, that he may contemplate the glory of Zion, and the glory of this, the corner-stone thereof;
61 That he may receive also the counsel from those whom I have set to be as plants of renown, and as watchmen upon her walls.

62 Behold, verily I say unto you, let my servant George Miller, and my servant Lyman Wight, and my servant John Snider, and my servant Peter Haws, organize themselves, and appoint one of them to be a president over their quorum for the purpose of building that house.

63 And they shall form a constitution, whereby they may receive stock for the building of that house.

64 And they shall not receive less than fifty dollars for a share of stock in that house, and they shall be permitted to receive fifteen thousand dollars from any one man for stock in that house.

65 But they shall not be permitted to receive over fifteen thousand dollars stock from any one man.

66 And they shall not be permitted to receive under fifty dollars for a share of stock from any one man in that house.

67 And they shall not be permitted to receive any man, as a stockholder in this house, except the same shall pay his stock into their hands at the time he receives stock;

68 And in proportion to the amount of stock he pays into their hands he shall receive stock in that house; but if he pays nothing into their hands he shall not receive any stock in that house.

69 And if any pay stock into their hands it shall be for stock in that house, for himself, and for his generation after him, from generation to generation, so long as he and his heirs shall hold that stock, and do not sell or convey the stock away out of their hands by their own free will and act, if you will do my will, saith the Lord your God.

70 And again, verily I say unto you, if my servant George Miller, and my servant Lyman Wight, and my servant John Snider, and my servant Peter Haws, receive any stock into their hands, in moneys, or in properties wherein they receive the real value of moneys, they shall not appropriate any portion of that stock to any other purpose, only in that house.

71 And if they do appropriate any portion of that stock anywhere else, only in that house, without the consent of the stockholder, and do not repay fourfold for the stock which they appropriate anywhere else, only in that house, they shall be accursed, and shall be moved out of their place, saith the Lord God; for I, the Lord, am God, and cannot be mocked in any of these things.

72 Verily I say unto you, let my servant Joseph pay stock into their hands for the building of that house, as seemeth him good; but my servant Joseph cannot pay over fifteen thousand dollars stock in that house, nor under fifty dollars; neither can any other man, saith the Lord.

73 And there are others also who wish to know my will concerning them, for they have asked it at my hands.

74 Therefore, I say unto you concerning my servant Vinson Knight, if he will do my will let him put stock into that house for himself, and for his generation after him, from generation to generation.

75 And let him lift up his voice long and loud, in the midst of the people, to plead the cause of the poor and the needy; and let him not fail, neither let his heart faint; and I will accept of his offerings, for they shall not be unto me as the offerings of Cain, for he shall be mine, saith the Lord.

76 Let his family rejoice and turn away their hearts from affliction; for I have chosen him and anointed him, and he shall be honored in the midst of his house, for I will forgive all his sins, saith the Lord. Amen.

77 Verily I say unto you, let my servant Hyrum put stock into that house as seemeth him good, for himself and his generation after him, from generation to generation.

78 Let my servant Isaac Galland put stock into that house; for I, the Lord, love him for the work he hath done, and will forgive all his sins; therefore, let him be remembered for an interest in that house from generation to generation.

79 Let my servant Isaac Galland be appointed among you, and be ordained by my servant William Marks, and be blessed of him, to go with my servant Hyrum to accomplish the work that my servant Joseph shall point out to them, and they shall be greatly blessed.

80 Let my servant William Marks pay stock into that house, as seemeth him good, for himself and his generation, from generation to generation.

81 Let my servant Henry G. Sherwood pay stock into that house, as seemeth him good, for himself and his seed after him, from generation to generation.

82 Let my servant William Law pay stock into that house, for himself and his seed after him, from generation to generation.

83 If he will do my will let him not take his family unto the eastern lands, even unto Kirtland; nevertheless, I, the Lord, will build up Kirtland, but I, the Lord, have a scourge prepared for the inhabitants thereof.

verse 83 “I, the Lord, have a scourge prepared for the inhabitants thereof”

The people, both nonmembers and apostates, drove the saints from the land of Kirtland. Therefore, a scourge was placed upon that land. A scourge is a thing that results in punishment. It is also a cause of affliction or calamity. It is difficult to tell exactly what the scourge was, but when the body of the saints fled from Kirtland, the gospel, along with the prophets, priesthood keys, and their attendant blessings went with them. Hyrum Smith, writing from Nauvoo as the Patriarch of the Church, told the saints that while they had been driven out of their houses and lands at Kirtland, “Yet your children may possess them, but not until many years shall pass away” (as quoted in Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland*, 242-54). Kirtland declined in population and wealth until by 1890 only 909 individuals lived there. In 1979 Ezra Taft Benson, president of the Quorum of the Twelve, presided over the groundbreaking for a new chapel in Kirtland. During his address, he removed the scourge that had been placed on Kirtland. Since that time a stake has been organized, and the Church has returned to the area in greater force.

84 And with my servant Almon Babbitt, there are many things with which I am not pleased; behold, he aspireth to establish his counsel instead of the counsel which I have ordained, even that of the Presidency of my Church; and he setteth up a golden calf for the worship of my people.

85 Let no man go from this place who has come here essaying to keep my commandments.

86 If they live here let them live unto me; and if they die let them die unto me; for they shall rest from all their labors here, and shall continue their works.

verses 84-86 “with my servant Almon Babbitt, there are many things with which I am not pleased” Almon Babbitt was a member of Zion’s Camp and a member of the original Quorum of Seventy organized in February 1835. At the time section 124 was received, he was serving as president of the Kirtland Stake. It appears that the problems he was having at that time centered on his desire to build Kirtland again. He advised the emigrating saints to stay in Kirtland instead of moving to Nauvoo as the Lord commanded. He also attempted to persuade members living in Nauvoo to move to Kirtland. Part of his motivation was to rebuild Kirtland, but another part of his motivation was to gain financially from the influx of saints back into the Kirtland area. He was disfellowshipped from the Church for this action but moved to Nauvoo in 1842, where he was returned to full fellowship. He remained a member of the Church and served in various callings until his death. He was killed by Indians at Ash Hollow, Nebraska, in September 1856 as he was returning from Washington, D.C. He had been buying supplies for a new statehouse in Salt Lake City.

“he setteth up a golden calf for the worship of my people” Just as the children of Israel began to worship the golden calf that Aaron built, so members of the Church worship false gods then they stray from the God of Israel and his servants. In this case, following the counsel of Almon Babbitt instead of Joseph Smith was worshipping a golden calf. In our lives, the golden calf could be education, social life, political life, sports, or material wealth—in short, anything that takes us away from our covenants and obedience to God. Speaking of this “golden calf,” Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote: “It would include both tangible and less tangible things, and everything which entices a person away from duty, loyalty, and love for and service to God” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 40).

87 Therefore, let my servant William put his trust in me, and cease to fear concerning his family, because of the sickness of the land. If ye love me, keep my commandments; and the sickness of the land shall redound to your glory.

88 Let my servant William go and proclaim my everlasting gospel with a loud voice, and with great joy, as he shall be moved upon by my Spirit, unto the inhabitants of Warsaw, and also unto the inhabitants of Carthage, and also unto the inhabitants of Burlington, and also unto the inhabitants of Madison, and await patiently and diligently for further instructions at my general conference, saith the Lord.

verses 87-88 “William” This passage refers to William Law (see verses 82-83). He was concerned for his children, who were exposed to the diseases from which the

saints were suffering and from which many had died. The Lord reassured him that if he kept the commandments, his family would be well. He is commanded to preach the gospel in Warsaw and Carthage, areas of strong anti-Mormon sentiment. Burlington and Madison were across the river from Nauvoo in Iowa.

89 If he will do my will let him from henceforth hearken to the counsel of my servant Joseph, and with his interest support the cause of the poor, and publish the new translation of my holy word unto the inhabitants of the earth.

verse 89 “publish the new translation of my holy word unto the inhabitants of the earth” This phrase has reference to the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, which the Prophet and his scribes had been working on since June of 1830. He had largely suspended work on this project in July 1833. It was Joseph’s desire, along with the Lord’s, that the work be finished and published as soon as possible. That goal was not achieved in the Prophet’s lifetime, however. The inspired translation was eventually published in 1867 by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ). William Law was to use his talents and interest, or material goods, to care for the poor and to assist in the publishing of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible. He was to be appointed as a counselor in the First Presidency, replacing Hyrum Smith.

90 And if he will do this I will bless him with a multiplicity of blessings, that he shall not be forsaken, nor his seed be found begging bread.

91 And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant William be appointed, ordained, and anointed, as counselor unto my servant Joseph, in the room of my servant Hyrum, that my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch, which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also by right;

92 That from henceforth he shall hold the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people,

93 That whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

94 And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph;

verses 91-94 “Hyrum” On September 14, 1840, the Patriarch to the Church, Joseph Smith Sr., died in Nauvoo. By the command of the Lord, Hyrum was released as a counselor in the First Presidency and called as patriarch to the Church to replace his father. The office of patriarch came to Hyrum by blessing but also by right, meaning that as the eldest son, he had inherited rights to this office. Throughout the history of the Church, the office of Patriarch to the Church has been held by descendants of the

Smith family. Today, however, because of the growth of the stakes of Zion in all parts of the world, the need for a church patriarch has diminished, and no one has been called to serve in that office since 1979. As Assistant President of the Church, Hyrum held all the keys of the priesthood and was appointed “a prophet, and a seer, and a revelatory” unto the Church, “as well as my servant Joseph.”

95 That he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph; and that he shall receive counsel from my servant Joseph, who shall show unto him the keys whereby he may ask and receive, and be crowned with the same blessing, and glory, and honor, and priesthood, and gifts of the priesthood, that once were put upon him that was my servant Oliver Cowdery;

verse 95 “Oliver Cowdery” Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated on April 12, 1838, in Far West, Missouri, for apostasy. Hyrum was called to serve as the Assistant President of the Church in place of Oliver. In that position, he stood as a second witness of the events and doctrines of the Restoration. Thus, Hyrum was to bear record of the things which the Lord would show him, and his name would be remembered in generations to come. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith made this observation: “I am firmly of the opinion that had Oliver Cowdery remained true to his covenants and obligations as a witness with Joseph Smith, and retained his authority and place, he, and not Hyrum Smith, would have gone with Joseph Smith as a prisoner and to martyrdom at Carthage” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:219). As Assistant President, Oliver had held all the keys of the priesthood and had been sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator.

96 That my servant Hyrum may bear record of the things which I shall show unto him, that his name may be had in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever.

verses 91-96 Hyrum Smith is given all the keys that were previously held by Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith, Sr., combined. He is made a Patriarch of the Church, Assistant President of the Church, and possessor of the keys of the priesthood. Joseph Fielding Smith taught that Hyrum’s receiving all these keys qualified him to die in Carthage jail and thus help seal this dispensation by the blood of two witnesses.

Since Hyrum’s death, we’ve never had another Assistant President of the Church.

97 Let my servant William Law also receive the keys by which he may ask and receive blessings; let him be humble before me, and be without guile, and he shall receive of my Spirit, even the Comforter, which shall manifest unto him the truth of all things, and shall give him, in the very hour, what he shall say.

98 And these signs shall follow him—he shall heal the sick, he shall cast out devils, and shall be delivered from those who would administer unto him deadly poison;

99 And he shall be led in paths where the poisonous serpent cannot lay hold upon his heel, and he shall mount up in the imagination of his thoughts as upon eagles' wings.

100 And what if I will that he should raise the dead, let him not withhold his voice.

101 Therefore, let my servant William cry aloud and spare not, with joy and rejoicing, and with hosannas to him that sitteth upon the throne forever and ever, saith the Lord your God.

102 Behold, I say unto you, I have a mission in store for my servant William, and my servant Hyrum, and for them alone; and let my servant Joseph tarry at home, for he is needed. The remainder I will show unto you hereafter. Even so. Amen.

verses 97-102 “Let my servant William Law also receive the keys” William Law is appointed to the First Presidency and given a blessing contingent upon his continued faithfulness. He was an Irish immigrant to the United States and was converted to the Church in Canada in 1836. He led a company of saints from northern Canada to Nauvoo in 1839, arriving in November. He had a firm testimony of the gospel and of Joseph Smith as a Prophet, yet within a few years he would leave the Church to become a literal “Judas,” betraying the Prophet in a vitally harmful way. In the summer of 1843, he openly opposed the revelation on plural marriage (D&C 132) and the Prophet’s practice of polygamy. This eventually resulted in his apostasy and excommunication in April 1844. Law was accused of complicity with some Missourians, in the spring of 1844, who were trying to kidnap and harm the Prophet. After his excommunication, Law and others declared Joseph a “fallen prophet” and tried unsuccessfully to organize a new church. On June 7, 1844, Law and some of his colleagues printed one issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. This paper charged the Prophet with malfeasance and immorality and other misdeeds. The people of Nauvoo were incensed, and the city council directed the city marshal to destroy the press, which he did on June 10th. This episode was instrumental in the cascade of events that culminated in Joseph’s martyrdom.

103 And again, verily I say unto you, if my servant Sidney will serve me and be counselor unto my servant Joseph, let him arise and come up and stand in the office of his calling, and humble himself before me.

104 And if he will offer unto me an acceptable offering, and acknowledgments, and remain with my people, behold, I, the Lord your God, will heal him that he shall be healed; and he shall lift up his voice again on the mountains, and be a spokesman before my face.

105 Let him come and locate his family in the neighborhood in which my servant Joseph resides.

106 And in all his journeyings let him lift up his voice as with the sound of a trump, and warn the inhabitants of the earth to flee the wrath to come.

107 Let him assist my servant Joseph, and also let my servant William Law assist my servant Joseph, in making a solemn proclamation unto the kings of the earth, even as I have before said unto you.

108 If my servant Sidney will do my will, let him not remove his family unto the eastern lands, but let him change their habitation, even as I have said.

109 Behold, it is not my will that he shall seek to find safety and refuge out of the city which I have appointed unto you, even the city of Nauvoo.

110 Verily I say unto you, even now, if he will hearken unto my voice, it shall be well with him. Even so. Amen.

verses 103-110 “Sidney” This passage refers to Sidney Rigdon, the first counselor in the First Presidency. The Nauvoo period was very difficult for Sidney. He held various public and political positions as well as serving in the First Presidency. He was sickly, however, and the record is fairly quiet concerning his involvement in the work of the Church. At times he was accused of being in league with the enemies of Joseph Smith, especially John C. Bennett, although he denied those charges. Joseph Smith requested that he be removed from the First Presidency, but Hyrum spoke in Rigdon’s behalf and no action was taken. Rigdon moved his family from Nauvoo in the spring of 1844 and was living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at the time of the Prophet’s death.

verses 111-122 The Lord calls on others to buy stock in the Nauvoo House (see the commentary on D&C 124:22-24).

111 And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant Amos Davies pay stock into the hands of those whom I have appointed to build a house for boarding, even the Nauvoo House.

112 This let him do if he will have an interest; and let him hearken unto the counsel of my servant Joseph, and labor with his own hands that he may obtain the confidence of men.

113 And when he shall prove himself faithful in all things that shall be entrusted unto his care, yea, even a few things, he shall be made ruler over many;

114 Let him therefore abase himself that he may be exalted. Even so. Amen.

115 And again, verily I say unto you, if my servant Robert D. Foster will obey my voice, let him build a house for my servant Joseph, according to the contract which he has made with him, as the door shall be open to him from time to time.

116 And let him repent of all his folly, and clothe himself with charity; and cease to do evil, and lay aside all his hard speeches;

117 And pay stock also into the hands of the quorum of the Nauvoo House, for himself and for his generation after him, from generation to generation;

118 And hearken unto the counsel of my servants Joseph, and Hyrum, and William Law, and unto the authorities which I have called to lay the foundation of Zion; and it shall be well with him forever and ever. Even so. Amen.

119 And again, verily I say unto you, let no man pay stock to the quorum of the Nauvoo House unless he shall be a believer in the Book of Mormon, and the revelations I have given unto you, saith the Lord your God;

120 For that which is more or less than this cometh of evil, and shall be attended with cursings and not blessings, saith the Lord your God. Even so. Amen.

121 And again, verily I say unto you, let the quorum of the Nauvoo House have a just recompense of wages for all their labors which they do in building the Nauvoo House; and let their wages be as shall be agreed among themselves, as pertaining to the price thereof.

122 And let every man who pays stock bear his proportion of their wages, if it must needs be, for their support, saith the Lord; otherwise, their labors shall be accounted unto them for stock in that house. Even so. Amen.

verses 123-145 These verses complete section 124 and list and give instructions the priesthood officers of the Church. Note particularly the call of Hyrum Smith to serve as Patriarch in place of his deceased father. Hyrum was also still serving as the Assistant President of the Church. The First Presidency was to consist of Joseph, Sidney, and William Law, with Brother Law filling the vacancy left by the calling of Hyrum Smith to be the Patriarch. Brigham Young is officially appointed President of the Twelve. The vacancy in the Twelve, resulting from the death of David Patten, had not been filled.

123 Verily I say unto you, I now give unto you the officers belonging to my Priesthood, that ye may hold the keys thereof, even the Priesthood which is after the order of Melchizedek, which is after the order of mine Only Begotten Son.

124 First, I give unto you Hyrum Smith to be a patriarch unto you, to hold the sealing blessings of my church, even the Holy Spirit of promise, whereby ye are sealed up unto the day of redemption, that ye may not fall notwithstanding the hour of temptation that may come upon you.

verse 124 “patriarch unto you, to hold the sealing blessings of my church” In verse 93, the Lord had indicated that the patriarch had the power to bless and to curse and whatsoever he bound on earth would be bound in heaven. We know that he had this power under the keys held by the President of the Church, for D&C 132:7

states that only one person at a time holds the keys to this sealing power. It must also be remembered that this verse was given to Hyrum Smith, who was also serving as the Assistant President of the Church.

125 I give unto you my servant Joseph to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be a translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet.

126 I give unto him for counselors my servant Sidney Rigdon and my servant William Law, that these may constitute a quorum and First Presidency, to receive the oracles for the whole church.

verses 125-126 “to receive the oracles for the whole church” The First Presidency of the Church will receive revelations and commandments (“oracles”) of God for the entire Church. No others have the keys or authority to do so.

127 I give unto you my servant Brigham Young to be a president over the Twelve traveling council;

verse 127 “Brigham Young” Thomas B. Marsh apostatized and was excommunicated from the Church in March 1839. He was replaced as the president of the Quorum of the Twelve by Brigham Young.

128 Which Twelve hold the keys to open up the authority of my kingdom upon the four corners of the earth, and after that to send my word to every creature.

verse 128 “open up the authority of my kingdom upon the four corners of the earth” One of the principle responsibilities of the Quorum of the Twelve is to supervise the taking of the gospel to the whole world. All of the missionary efforts of the Church are carried out under the direction of the Twelve.

129 They are Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, William Smith, John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, George A. Smith;

130 David Patten I have taken unto myself; behold, his priesthood no man taketh from him; but, verily I say unto you, another may be appointed unto the same calling.

verses 131-142 Listed here are the members of the high council, presidencies of the high priests, seventies, elders, bishoprics, priests, teachers, and deacons, along with the duties and responsibilities of their office and calling.

131 And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a high council, for the corner-stone of Zion—

132 Namely, Samuel Bent, Henry G. Sherwood, George W. Harris, Charles C. Rich, Thomas Grover, Newel Knight, David Dort, Dunbar Wilson—Seymour Brunson I have taken unto myself; no man taketh his priesthood, but another may be appointed unto the same priesthood in his stead; and verily I say unto you, let my servant Aaron Johnson be ordained unto this calling in his stead—David Fullmer, Alpheus Cutler, William Huntington.

verses 130, 132 “no man taketh from him” David Patten and Seymour Brunson had both died faithful in their callings. These verses indicate that the priesthood they held on earth was not removed from them by death, but rather continued with them into the spirit world. President Harold B. Lee commented on this idea when he declared: “I believe that every President of this Church, every apostle of this Church, every bishop, every stake president, every presiding position will have a bearing on what one is called to do when he leaves this earth” (*Ensign*, January 1973, 107).

133 And again, I give unto you Don C. Smith to be a president over a quorum of high priests;

134 Which ordinance is instituted for the purpose of qualifying those who shall be appointed standing presidents or servants over different stakes scattered abroad;

135 And they may travel also if they choose, but rather be ordained for standing presidents; this is the office of their calling, saith the Lord your God.

136 I give unto him Amasa Lyman and Noah Packard for counselors, that they may preside over the quorum of high priests of my church, saith the Lord.

137 And again, I say unto you, I give unto you John A. Hicks, Samuel Williams, and Jesse Baker, which priesthood is to preside over the quorum of elders, which quorum is instituted for standing ministers; nevertheless they may travel, yet they are ordained to be standing ministers to my church, saith the Lord.

138 And again, I give unto you Joseph Young, Josiah Butterfield, Daniel Miles, Henry Herriman, Zera Pulsipher, Levi Hancock, James Foster, to preside over the quorum of seventies;

139 Which quorum is instituted for traveling elders to bear record of my name in all the world, wherever the traveling high council, mine apostles, shall send them to prepare a way before my face.

140 The difference between this quorum and the quorum of elders is that one is to travel continually, and the other is to preside over the churches from time to time; the one has the responsibility of presiding from time to time, and the other has no responsibility of presiding, saith the Lord your God.

141 And again, I say unto you, I give unto you Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith, and Shadrach Roundy, if he will receive it, to preside over the bishopric; a

knowledge of said bishopric is given unto you in the book of Doctrine and Covenants.

142 And again, I say unto you, Samuel Rolfe and his counselors for priests, and the president of the teachers and his counselors, and also the president of the deacons and his counselors, and also the president of the stake and his counselors.

143 The above offices I have given unto you, and the keys thereof, for helps and for governments, for the work of the ministry and the perfecting of my saints.

144 And a commandment I give unto you, that you should fill all these offices and approve of those names which I have mentioned, or else disapprove of them at my general conference;

verse 144 “approve of those names which I have mentioned, or else disapprove of them at my general conference” Even though the Lord has called these individuals to serve in the offices of the priesthood, he does not impose his will upon the members of the Church. He gives them an opportunity through common consent (sustaining vote) to accept or reject the individuals called. It is important to note that the members cannot nominate or select the person to serve, for the Lord does that through his servants. The members may only accept or reject.

145 And that ye should prepare rooms for all these offices in my house when you build it unto my name, saith the Lord your God. Even so. Amen.

Character Vignette

William B. Smith

He was the younger brother of the Prophet Joseph by six years. He was baptized into the Church in June 1830 and worked faithfully in the Church. He was a member of Zion’s Camp in 1834 and was ordained an apostle in February 1835. He stayed faithful in the Church until October 1845 when he was excommunicated for apostasy, and he preached against President Brigham Young. After associating with several apostate factions, he returned briefly to the Church in 1860. He soon left the Church again, however, and joined the Reorganized LDS Church.

Character Vignette

George A. Smith

He was Joseph Smith’s cousin. After his baptism in 1832, he moved to Kirtland. He was ordained an apostle in 1839 and served a mission in England with other members of the Twelve. He would later serve as Brigham Young’s counselor in the First Presidency in Salt Lake City. In Utah he became recognized as the father of the southern Utah settlements. The chief settlement, St. George, was named in his honor.

Section 125 Iowa Saints

As saints from all over the United States, Canada, and the British Isles gathered to Nauvoo, some of them settled across the Mississippi River in the Iowa territory where land was inexpensive. Towns sprang up such as Montrose, Zarahemla, Ambrosia, Augusta, Nashville, and Keokuk. Two stakes were organized, the first in October 1839 in Zarahemla, with President John Smith, the Prophet's uncle, as president. With the increasing emphasis on Nauvoo as a gathering place, however, the question was raised as to whether or not the Iowa saints should move across the river into Nauvoo. Perhaps this question was brought to a head because of D&C 124:25 which was the Lord's command for all the saints to gather in Nauvoo to build the temple.

In March 1841, Joseph inquired of the Lord as to his will concerning the Iowa saints. Should they move across the river to join the rest of the saints, or should they stay in Iowa?

The Lord's answer was that the saints should remain in Iowa and build up the stakes there. Within a few months, however, some legal problems arose concerning ownership of the lands in Iowa, and Joseph recommended that the Iowa saints move across the river to Nauvoo. Many did so, but some chose to stay in Iowa where they had built their homes. The stake organizations were dissolved in Iowa, and the saints remaining there were organized into branches.

1 What is the will of the Lord concerning the saints in the Territory of Iowa?

2 Verily, thus saith the Lord, I say unto you, if those who call themselves by my name and are essaying to be my saints, if they will do my will and keep my commandments concerning them, let them gather themselves together unto the places which I shall appoint unto them by my servant Joseph, and build up cities unto my name, that they may be prepared for that which is in store for a time to come.

verse 2 "are essaying to be my saints" *Websters 1828 Dictionary* defines *essaying* as "trying, making an effort, attempting."

"gather . . . unto the places which I shall appoint unto them by my servant Joseph" The Lord reminds the saints of the importance of following his prophet even in practical secular matters as where they should settle ("gather").

3 Let them build up a city unto my name upon the land opposite the city of Nauvoo, and let the name of Zarahemla be named upon it.

verse 3 "let the name of Zarahemla be named upon it" Actually the settlement called Zarahemla had been founded in 1839, and the prophet Joseph had recommended the name. Here the Lord merely gives his approval of the name.

4 And let all those who come from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south, that have desires to dwell therein, take up their inheritance in the same, as well as in the city of Nashville, or in the city of Nauvoo, and in all the stakes which I have appointed, saith the Lord.

verse 4 “Nashville” The village of Nashville was located in Iowa, across the river from Nauvoo, and a little south of Zarahemla. Nashville and Zarahemla were used as gathering places for the saints as they fled from Nauvoo and as stopping points for the members as they gathered to Winter Quarters and then traveled on to Salt Lake City.

Brief Historical Setting

1841 April

In April 1841, Joseph, who enjoyed ceremony and celebration, directed a day of enthusiastic display with many non-Mormon guests from surrounding towns looking on. The fourteen companies of the Nauvoo Legion drilled and paraded with Joseph commanding in his splendid lieutenant-general's uniform. The cornerstone of the Nauvoo Temple was laid. One observer, Thomas C. Sharp, the editor of the *Warsaw (Illinois) Signal* saw something ominous in the marshal display, and he returned home to open a determined campaign against the Mormon presence in Illinois.

1841 July

In July 1841, Brigham Young arrived home from his mission in England. He had served several missions for the Church since his conversion in 1832. In a personal revelation received by Joseph, Brigham Young was told to remain home and assist the First Presidency [**D&C 126 - Brigham Young**].

By the late summer of 1842, Nauvoo was beginning to prosper, and its fame was spreading throughout the country. Nauvoo's population, by this time, was between eight and nine thousand, and except for Chicago it was the largest town in the state of Illinois.

Section 126 Brigham Young

Section 126 is a revelation given to Joseph regarding Brigham Young. It was received in Brigham's house on July 9, 1841.

Brigham was recognized as being a great man from practically the moment of his conversion in 1832. That same year, Joseph said of Brigham: "A time will come when Brother Brigham will preside over this Church" (Whitney, *History of Utah*, volume 1, 112). Please review the Character Vignette on Brigham Young located between sections 112 and 113.

Brigham was called on a mission in 1832 to Canada. He served from December 1832 to February 1833. He completed a second mission in Canada between April and August of 1833. In the summer of 1833 he traveled to Kirtland with several of his Canadian converts, where he heard Joseph Smith teach about the gathering, emphasizing that building the kingdom of God required more than just preaching. Thus instructed, Brigham returned to New York and, with the Heber C. Kimballs, moved his household to Kirtland so he could participate in building a new society.

Among those whom Brigham met in Kirtland was Mary Ann Angell, a native of Seneca, Ontario County, New York, who had worked in a factory in Providence, Rhode Island, until her conversion to the Church and move to Kirtland. Brigham married her on February 18, 1834. She looked after Brigham's two daughters by Miriam and subsequently had six children of her own.

In 1834 Brigham responded to the call to join Zion's Camp. In February 1835 he was called to be a member of the church's first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He fulfilled a mission in the eastern states in the summer of 1835. In 1837 he served two separate missions to the eastern states. He traveled to Great Britain in September 1839 to preach the gospel. He returned on July 1, 1841, with Heber C. Kimball and John Taylor, and he received this revelation some eight days later.

Almost all Brigham Young had done since he joined the Church was serve one mission after another. He had been away from his home almost the entire nine years he had been in the Church. He had served faithfully and well.

In 1836 Joseph had beheld in vision the sacrifices and privations that Brigham and the other apostles would suffer in their missionary experiences. Joseph wrote:

I saw the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb, who are now upon the earth, who hold the keys of this last ministry, in foreign lands, standing together in a circle, much fatigued, with their clothes tattered and feet swollen, with their eyes cast downward, and Jesus standing in their midst, and they did not behold him. The Savior looked upon them and wept. . . . Also, I saw Elder Brigham Young standing in a strange land, in the far south and west, in a desert place, upon a rock in the midst of about a dozen men of color, who appeared hostile. He was preaching to them in their own tongue, and the

angel of God was standing above his head, with a drawn sword in his hand, protecting him, but he did not see it (*HC*, 2:381).

The Lord told Brigham in section 126 that he would not be required to leave his family again. The Lord had seen and accepted his offering. He had paid the price. Henceforth, Brigham will “send” rather than “take” the Lord’s word abroad. Brigham never filled another proselyting mission after this revelation. He did, however, travel for the Church in other capacities.

The real significance of the Lord’s command for Brigham to remain at Nauvoo was made clear the following month at a general conference of the Church. Since the organization of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1835, they had served primarily as a traveling council. At that conference on August 16, 1841, Joseph announced “that the time had come when the Twelve should be called upon to ‘stand in their place’ [rather than travel] next to the First Presidency” and direct the church’s affairs from home so they would “have an opportunity of providing something for themselves and [their] families” (*HC*, 4:403). By keeping them “in their place next to the First Presidency,” the Prophet was preparing the way for the Twelve, with Brigham as President, to preside over the Church at the time of Joseph’s death.

Brigham Young was obviously a “man for his time” and a “lion of the Lord,” and he was groomed by the Lord for what he later did in the Church.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 126 Brigham Young

1 Dear and well-beloved brother, Brigham Young, verily thus saith the Lord unto you: My servant Brigham, it is no more required at your hand to leave your family as in times past, for your offering is acceptable to me.

verse 1 “it is no more required at your hand to leave your family as in times past” Although Brigham served two short missions after the reception of this revelation (July to September 1843 to the Eastern States to solicit funds for the Nauvoo Temple and May to July 1844 in connection with Joseph Smith’s candidacy for president of the United States), this was the last time Brigham Young would be required by the Lord to travel extensively on missions. He was to remain at home, close to Joseph Smith, to be trained and prepared for his future role as the leader of the Church. Less than two years later, Joseph and Hyrum Smith will be killed and the mantle of leadership will fall upon the president of the Quorum of the Twelve, Brigham Young. This period of nearly three years, July 1841 to June 1844, was very important in the training and understanding that would come to the future church president.

2 I have seen your labor and toil in journeyings for my name.

3 I therefore command you to send my word abroad, and take especial care of your family from this time, henceforth and forever. Amen.

verse 3 “send my word abroad” Brigham became president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles after Thomas B. March apostatized in 1838 and was excommunicated in March 1839. As such, it was President Young’s responsibility to direct the work of the Quorum, which centered on being special witnesses of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, and to hold the keys (under the direction of the First Presidency of the Church) “to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ” to the world (D&C 107:35).

Brief Historical Setting

1842 March

During the winter of 1841-42, Joseph completed his “translation” of the The Book of Abraham utilizing an Egyptian papyrus which he had obtained in 1835 when a man named Michael Chandler appeared in Kirtland to exhibit some Egyptian mummies. Chandler’s traveling display included not only four mummies, but some two or more rolls of papyrus covered with hieroglyphics. Joseph’s reputation as one who might be able to translate ancient Egyptian documents led to Chandler’s approaching Joseph. Chandler, who was from Philadelphia, had somehow obtained these ancient artifacts after they had been discovered by an Italian explorer named Antonio Lebolo. The Church purchased the mummies and papyri from Mr. Chandler for twenty-four hundred dollars. Using these papyri Joseph was able to write an account of Abraham written while Abraham was in Egypt. From time to time, Joseph worked on this “translation.” It was finally completed in March 1842 and published in the *Times and Seasons* under the title of “The Book of Abraham.”

In the spring of 1842, the editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, a man named John Wentworth, requested that Joseph write a statement of the history and doctrine of the Church. This statement was requested on behalf of a friend of Wentworth’s who was writing a history of the state of New Hampshire. Responding to this request, Joseph wrote a letter which we have come to call the “Wentworth Letter.” Beginning with his own birth in 1805, it traces the development of the restored Church and then briefly summarizes the doctrine of the Church in thirteen simple statements. These thirteen statements have now been extracted from the Wentworth Letter, separated, numbered, given the title “Articles of Faith,” and canonized as scripture in our Pearl of Great Price.

1842 May

On May 4, 1842, Joseph gathered some of the brethren in the upper story of his red brick store and taught them some of the temple ordinances including the endowment. In addition to its use as an endowment house, Joseph’s red brick store was also the meeting place for the Nauvoo Lodge of Free Masons. Here also, Joseph

had his private office where he translated most of the book of Abraham, where he received revelations, and where the revelation on “celestial marriage” was committed to writing.

An attempt was made in Missouri to assassinate the ex-Governor Lilburn W. Boggs on May 6, 1842. On that particular evening, Boggs was seated in his home. The would-be assassin fired a pistol filled with buckshot through a window, dropped the pistol outside the window, left his footprints in the dirt, and fled. The ex-Governor sustained non-fatal wounds to his head. The Mormons were accused of the crime. Specifically, it was suggested that Joseph Smith had ordered Orrin Porter Rockwell to make the attempt on Boggs’ life. When he had recovered, Boggs asked the Governor of Missouri, Thomas Reynolds, to request the extradition of the suspects. Governor Carlin of Illinois, now an enemy of the saints, issued a warrant for the arrest of Rockwell as principle and Joseph as accessory before the fact. Accordingly, on August 8, 1842, an officer from Adams County arrested the two. They were then left in the custody of the Nauvoo city marshal and allowed to go about their business while the state officer returned to Adams County. Before he returned to take possession of the prisoners, it was decided that because the tide of public opinion was decidedly against the Mormons, that the two could never receive a fair trial in Missouri. Thus, they went into seclusion. They crossed the river to the Iowa side and returned to Nauvoo some days later. When the arresting officer returned to Nauvoo, Joseph and Porter “could not be located.”

1842 September

There was much fear, among the saints, that the Prophet may be kidnapped and taken back to Missouri. The Prophet thus felt it unwise to appear in public. Joseph remained in seclusion during the remainder of 1842. He lived quietly with various of the saints in Nauvoo, and the saints cooperated in keeping his place of abode a secret as he moved from home to home. From his place of concealment, he was able to administer the affairs of the Church, and he even appeared in public on several occasions.

In September 1842, pressures were becoming so intense that Joseph had decided to leave Nauvoo for a brief time to allow them to subside. Before leaving, he wrote two letters to the Church during the first week in September on the subject of baptism for the dead. These letters have been preserved for us in the Doctrine and Covenants [**D&C 127 and 128 - Baptism for the Dead**].

During Joseph’s period of seclusion in the fall of 1842, several attempts were made by the law officers from Missouri to take him into custody, but all to no avail.

1842 December

Finally, feeling secure that he had a firm defense against the charges of attempted murder, Joseph allowed himself to be arrested and he arrived in Springfield, Illinois, on December 30, 1842, for his trial. The charges against him were dismissed, and he was welcomed back in Nauvoo as a free man and a conquering hero.

Sections 127 and 128 Baptism for the Dead

The doctrine of baptism for the dead in this dispensation actually had its origin in August of 1840. An elder in the Church named Seymour Brunson died, and Joseph was asked to preach his funeral sermon. In that sermon, Joseph introduced to the Church the principle of baptism for the dead. He said that he had received a revelation from the Lord on the topic, and then he preached for an hour on the principle of vicarious work for the dead. Wilford Woodruff, in his journal, corroborated the existence of this revelation when he mentioned that he had actually read it. Brother Woodruff also declared that he had never read a revelation more magnificent and sublime. Wouldn't it be thrilling to read that revelation? Unfortunately, it has never been published, and it may even be lost to the Church.

The first baptism for the dead in this dispensation was performed on Sunday, September 14, 1840. On that day Joseph preached another sermon on baptism for the dead. In this sermon, he said that it would be the privilege of a mother in the congregation who had lost her only child to be baptized for him. Sister Jane Nyman knew that Joseph was speaking about her, and so on that same day she persuaded Brother Harvey Olmstead to baptize her in the Mississippi River on behalf of her deceased child.

Some time later Joseph himself went out into the Mississippi River and was baptized a hundred times for dead persons. Several of the other brethren were also baptized for a hundred souls each. The following Sunday on the Montrose, Iowa, side, several of the saints went out into the river and were baptized for all the dead ancestors they could call to mind. Not one of these baptisms was recorded. No records were kept. The saints were so excited about the new principle that they just jumped right into the practice of the principle and into the river without much forethought. Men were baptized for both men and women. In many instances full names were not known.

You will recall that in section 124 received in January 1841, the Lord agreed to recognize the baptisms performed in the river for deceased persons only until such time as the temple font was completed (D&C 124:32). On October 30, 1841, Joseph declared that all baptisms for the dead in the river would cease, and that they would wait for the font in the temple to be completed (*HC*, 4:426). On November 8, the font and temple basement were dedicated, and baptisms were commenced there two weeks later.

In September 1842, Joseph was in hiding living at various homes of the saints in Nauvoo and on an island in the Mississippi River. In spite of his nearly constant concern and fear over being found and taken into captivity, Joseph's mind was imbued with the principle of vicarious ordinance work for the dead. Before leaving Nauvoo, and while living at the home of James Taylor, the father of John Taylor, future president of

the Church, he wrote two letters to the Church during the first week in September concerning the need for eyewitnesses and recorders of the baptisms for the dead, so that they could be performed on earth and sealed in heaven. In an address to the Relief Society on August 31, 1842, he had briefly mentioned the need to record the baptisms and addressed that need in the letters recorded in sections 127 and 128. These letters have become sections 127 (written on September 1) and 128 (written on September 6). Keep in mind that while these revelations are concerned with the ordinance of baptism for the dead, neither of them is the original revelation received by Joseph on the subject which he referred to in a funeral sermon of August 1840.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 127-128 Baptism for the Dead

Section 127

1 Forasmuch as the Lord has revealed unto me that my enemies, both in Missouri and this State, were again in the pursuit of me; and inasmuch as they pursue me without a cause, and have not the least shadow or coloring of justice or right on their side in the getting up of their prosecutions against me; and inasmuch as their pretensions are all founded in falsehood of the blackest dye, I have thought it expedient and wisdom in me to leave the place for a short season, for my own safety and the safety of this people. I would say to all those with whom I have business, that I have left my affairs with agents and clerks who will transact all business in a prompt and proper manner, and will see that all my debts are canceled in due time, by turning out property, or otherwise, as the case may require, or as the circumstances may admit of. When I learn that the storm is fully blown over, then I will return to you again.

verse 1 “the Lord has revealed unto me that my enemies, both in Missouri and this State, were in pursuit of me” This verse explains that the prophet Joseph was in hiding because the Lord had warned him of the dangers threatening him. Thus, his going into hiding was not simply from fear, as some have supposed. Much was going on in Nauvoo and in the Prophet’s personal life that demanded he be available in Nauvoo. Joseph’s father was very ill and on his deathbed. The building of the temple was in full swing. Missionaries were coming and going. And an influx of converts was gathering in Nauvoo. In these busy times, Joseph had to retire from actively directing the affairs of the Church and community due to the pressures put on him by the demands of politicians, law officers, and mob members from Missouri.

2 And as for the perils which I am called to pass through, they seem but a small thing to me, as the envy and wrath of man have been my common lot all the days of my life; and for what cause it seems mysterious, unless I was ordained from

before the foundation of the world for some good end, or bad, as you may choose to call it. Judge ye for yourselves. God knoweth all these things, whether it be good or bad. But nevertheless, deep water is what I am wont to swim in. It all has become a second nature to me; and I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation; for to this day has the God of my fathers delivered me out of them all, and will deliver me from henceforth; for behold, and lo, I shall triumph over all my enemies, for the Lord God hath spoken it.

verse 2 “as for the perils which I am called to pass through” The prophet Joseph Smith was under threat of persecution most of his life. From the day he walked out of the grove of trees and declared that he had seen the Father and the Son to the day he was murdered in Carthage Jail, enemies both inside and outside the Church had made charges against him. There were relatively few days in which he and Emma and their family could enjoy peace and quiet. Perils had indeed become second nature to him, and being fully aware of their cause, he was accepting of them.

“unless I was ordained from before the foundation of the world for some good end” About a year and a half after this letter was written to the saints, Joseph taught: “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in the Grand Council” (*HC*, 6:364). It was inevitable that if Joseph were to live up to that foreordination, he would experience all of the blessings and challenges of that office. Throughout his life, he passed through troubled times.

“deep water is what I am wont to swim in” The word *wont* means “to be accustomed to or used to.” Joseph was well acquainted with troubled times in his life. Elder Carlos E. Asay observed: “I assure you that the waters in which we are wont to swim are but little puddles when compared with the deep rivers of opposition in which the Prophet Joseph and others swam” (*CR*, October 1981, 94).

“I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation” To “glory” in something is to proudly rejoice or exult with triumph over it. Paul’s life was one of great trials and afflictions. He was generally maligned, imprisoned, beaten, stoned, and finally martyred. Yet he declared, “Most gladly . . . will I . . . glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

3 Let all the saints rejoice, therefore, and be exceedingly glad; for Israel’s God is their God, and he will mete out a just recompense of reward upon the heads of all their oppressors.

verse 3 “Let all the saints rejoice” Joseph, in spite of all his experiences, was an optimistic individual. His understanding of his own worth and mission allowed him to deal with the death of children and other loved ones, the persecution of the saints, and the daily struggles of life without the darkness of fear and despair enveloping him. He

knew that the God of Israel was in charge and the saints could rejoice, for God would in the end bless them and protect them from their enemies. He had been informed much earlier that he would face trials and tribulations from the Lord (see D&C 24:8). He knew that the Lord was watching over him and the saints.

4 And again, verily thus saith the Lord: Let the work of my temple, and all the works which I have appointed unto you, be continued on and not cease; and let your diligence, and your perseverance, and patience, and your works be redoubled, and you shall in nowise lose your reward, saith the Lord of Hosts. And if they persecute you, so persecuted they the prophets and righteous men that were before you. For all this there is a reward in heaven.

5 And again, I give unto you a word in relation to the baptism for your dead.

6 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you concerning your dead: When any of you are baptized for your dead, let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms; let him hear with his ears, that he may testify of a truth, saith the Lord;

verse 6 “let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms” On January 19, 1841, the Prophet received section 124 in which the Lord instructed the saints to do work for their kindred dead by being baptized for them. This doctrine was first preached publicly by the prophet Joseph at the funeral of Seymour Brunson, a member of the Nauvoo high council. Joseph later wrote a letter to the Quorum of the Twelve laboring in Great Britain, dated October 19, 1840, in which he informed them of the principle of baptism for the dead, stating: “The saints have the privilege of being baptized for those of their relatives who are dead, whom they believe would have embraced the gospel, had they been privileged with hearing it, and who have received the gospel in the spirit, through the instrumentality of those who have been commissioned to preach to them while in prison” (*HC*, 4:231). In the revelation to the Prophet (see D&C 124), the Lord informed the saints that the practice of performing baptisms for the dead belongs to his temple, but an exception was granted to them while they built the temple so that baptisms for the dead could be performed in the Mississippi River. The saints immediately began the work of baptism for their kindred dead. That work, however, was done in a random and disorganized manner. President Wilford Woodruff remembered going into the Mississippi River, along with Joseph Smith and others, and baptizing hundreds for their dead but without any recorders present to make record of the actions. “But the Lord told Joseph that he must have recorders present at these baptisms—men who could see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and record these things. Of course, we had to do the work over again. Nevertheless, that does not say the work was not of God” (*Millennial Star* [June 29, 1891]: 405).

As Wilford Woodruff observed, the saints did not understand that a record needed to be kept of all ordinances performed and that there had to be witnesses to the

performing of the ordinances. Here the Prophet instructed the saints that in order for things to be recorded in heaven, they must be recorded on earth. The record should be kept in the temple for generations thereafter to have access to. Joseph, at another time, taught the Relief Society: “I have one remark to make respecting the baptism for the dead to suffice for the time being, until I have opportunity to discuss the subject at greater length—all persons baptized for the dead must have a recorder present, that he may be an eyewitness to record and testify of the truth and validity of his record. It will be necessary, in the Grand Council, that these things be testified to by competent witnesses. Therefore let the recording and witnessing of baptisms for the dead be carefully attended to from this time forth” (*HC*, 5:141).

7 That in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven; whatsoever you bind on earth, may be bound in heaven; whatsoever you loose on earth, may be loosed in heaven;

verse 7 “whatsoever you bind on earth, may be bound in heaven” Here is a reference to the sealing power restored to the earth by Elijah (see D&C 110 and its commentary).

8 For I am about to restore many things to the earth, pertaining to the priesthood, saith the Lord of Hosts.

verse 8 Baptisms for the dead were just the beginning of temple work for the dead. The whole of the temple ceremony with its attendant ordinances and covenants became available to the saints generally, both the living and the dead, as temples were built and began functioning.

9 And again, let all the records be had in order, that they may be put in the archives of my holy temple, to be held in remembrance from generation to generation, saith the Lord of Hosts.

10 I will say to all the saints, that I desired, with exceedingly great desire, to have addressed them from the stand on the subject of baptism for the dead, on the following Sabbath. But inasmuch as it is out of my power to do so, I will write the word of the Lord from time to time, on that subject, and send it to you by mail, as well as many other things.

verse 10 Joseph says, in effect, to the saints “I’ll keep in touch.”

11 I now close my letter for the present, for the want of more time; for the enemy is on the alert, and as the Savior said, the prince of this world cometh, but he hath nothing in me.

verse 11 “the prince of this world cometh” The Savior warns all who would try to follow him, “the prince of this world cometh,” who is Satan, the prince of darkness.

“he hath nothing in me” There was not a chord—not a string in Jesus’s nature—which the tempter could bring into vibration.

12 Behold, my prayer to God is that you all may be saved. And I subscribe myself your servant in the Lord, prophet and seer of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
JOSEPH SMITH.

One interesting point to consider is that no other single world religion performs the ordinance of baptism for the dead. This includes the various religious groups that have broken off from the church, including even the Reorganized LDS Church (the Community of Christ). The Reorganites have even placed sections 127 and 128 in their Doctrine and Covenants, although they have been relegated to the appendix of their book. They explain this incongruity by emphasizing that the sections are letters written by the Prophet, not revelations. A couple of difficult arguments for them to answer are: (1) Even though section 127 is a letter, in three verses (4, 6, and 8) the Prophet pronounces “thus saith the Lord.” Also, in verse 2 of section 128: “I wrote a few words of revelation to you . . .” (2) The Pauline letters in the New Testament are simply “letters,” yet are inspired scripture just the same.

Perhaps the best answer as to why no other church performs this ordinance is that they do not have the keys for the ordinance (see D&C 128:11), and they do not comprehend the necessity of it.

Section 128

Scripture Mastery

D&C 128:1 I now resume the subject of the baptism for the dead, as that subject seems to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings the strongest, since I have been pursued by my enemies.

1 As I stated to you in my letter before I left my place, that I would write to you from time to time and give you information in relation to many subjects, I now resume the subject of the baptism for the dead, as that subject seems to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings the strongest, since I have been pursued by my enemies.

verse 1 “that subject [baptism for the dead] seems to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings” While the Prophet was in hiding, he had time to think about things that were of supernal importance in developing the work. He was beginning to sense that his time was short, and there was much work yet to be done.

The completion of the temple and the attendant ordinances for the living and the dead had to be paramount in his thinking.

2 I wrote a few words of revelation to you concerning a recorder. I have had a few additional views in relation to this matter, which I now certify. That is, it was declared in my former letter that there should be a recorder, who should be eye-witness, and also to hear with his ears, that he might make a record of a truth before the Lord.

verse 2 “I wrote a few words of revelation to you” Even though sections 127 and 128 were distributed to the saints in the form of letters, the Prophet viewed them as revelations.

3 Now, in relation to this matter, it would be very difficult for one recorder to be present at all times, and to do all the business. To obviate this difficulty, there can be a recorder appointed in each ward of the city, who is well qualified for taking accurate minutes; and let him be very particular and precise in taking the whole proceedings, certifying in his record that he saw with his eyes, and heard with his ears, giving the date, and names, and so forth, and the history of the whole transaction; naming also some three individuals that are present, if there be any present, who can at any time when called upon certify to the same, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

verse 3 “ward” Although stakes are mentioned often in the Doctrine and Covenants, this is the first and only reference in the Doctrine and Covenants to the “ward” as a key church unit. As early as 1839, Nauvoo was divided into three geographic areas called “wards,” each of which was presided over by a bishop. This division served both ecclesiastical and political purposes. Wards were primarily created to assist the bishops in identifying and meeting the needs of the poor. They also made it easier to conduct the recruiting of individuals to work on the temple and to collect tithing. Additional wards were later organized in Nauvoo, and that pattern continued when the Church was established in Salt Lake City.

Although these instructions are directed specifically to recorders selected to keep records of the ordinance of baptism for the dead, they might appropriately be applied to any records kept by “ward clerks.”

4 Then, let there be a general recorder, to whom these other records can be handed, being attended with certificates over their own signatures, certifying that the record they have made is true. Then the general church recorder can enter the record on the general church book, with the certificates and all the attending witnesses, with his own statement that he verily believes the above statement and records to be true, from his knowledge of the general character and

appointment of those men by the church. And when this is done on the general church book, the record shall be just as holy, and shall answer the ordinance just the same as if he had seen with his eyes and heard with his ears, and made a record of the same on the general church book.

verse 4 “let there be a general recorder” Provisions are made for a “general church recorder.” With today’s modern technology, this office had been superseded by the genealogical, historical, membership, and other departments at church headquarters.

5 You may think this order of things to be very particular; but let me tell you that it is only to answer the will of God, by conforming to the ordinance and preparation that the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel.

verse 5 “before the foundation of the world” The plan of salvation was prepared before this world was created. Included in that plan were provisions for the salvation and exaltation of those who lived on the earth at times when the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ was not available. These individuals will still need the ordinances of the gospel, which can only be performed on this earth.

“salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel”
See the commentary for D&C 137:5-9.

6 And further, I want you to remember that John the Revelator was contemplating this very subject in relation to the dead, when he declared, as you will find recorded in Revelation 20:12—And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

verse 6 The doctrines and principles taught in section 127 and 128 concerning the work for the dead and the eternal nature of the ordinances of the priesthood are not new to this dispensation but were practiced in New Testament times. Joseph cites a few New Testament scriptural passages that refer to these ordinances for the dead (see also verses 10, 14, 16, 17).

7 You will discover in this quotation that the books were opened; and another book was opened, which was the book of life; but the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; consequently, the books spoken of must be the books which contained the record of their works, and refer to the records which are kept on the earth. And the book which was the book of life is the record which is kept in heaven; the

principle agreeing precisely with the doctrine which is commanded you in the revelation contained in the letter which I wrote to you previous to my leaving my place—that in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven.

verses 6-7 “the books spoken of must be the books . . . which are kept on the earth” The Prophet teaches us that the “books” out of which we will be judged are “the records which are kept on the earth.” Elder Bruce R. McConkie expanded this definition of “books” to include “the Book of Life”—“figuratively . . . our own life . . . the record of our acts transcribed in our souls, an account of our obedience or disobedience written in our bodies, literally, it is the record kept in heaven of the names and righteous deeds of the faithful” (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:578).

8 Now, the nature of this ordinance consists in the power of the priesthood, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, wherein it is granted that whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Or, in other words, taking a different view of the translation, whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven, and whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged, according to their own works, whether they themselves have attended to the ordinances in their own propria persona, or by the means of their own agents, according to the ordinance which God has prepared for their salvation from before the foundation of the world, according to the records which they have kept concerning their dead.

verse 8 Elder Ruder Clawson taught in general conference: “Truly it is a great and marvelous work, and not the least important thing about it is that these ordinances are all carefully recorded in the books and are filed away in the archives of the temple, to be brought forth in due time. From these records the people who have gone to that house will be judged. Nothing that is done in that temple will be accepted of the Lord, except it is properly witnessed and recorded” (*CR*, April 1900, 44).

“in their own propria persona, or by means of their own agents” The expression *propria persona* means “in person.” The expression “by means of their own agents” means “by proxy.” The Lord indicates that the ordinances are acceptable whether done in person or by proxy—so long as they conform to the requirements that he lays down.

9 It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk of—a power which records or binds on earth and binds in heaven. Nevertheless, in all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation, or any set of men, this power has always been given. Hence, whatsoever those men did in authority, in the name of the Lord, and did it truly and faithfully, and kept a proper and faithful record of the same, it became a law

on earth and in heaven, and could not be annulled, according to the decrees of the great Jehovah. This is a faithful saying. Who can hear it?

verse 9 “this power has always been given” The power to seal is not new to this dispensation. In fact, it has always been available whenever the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood have been on the earth. Joseph Smith received the keys of sealing from the Old Testament prophet Elijah. They included the power to seal both the wicked and the righteous. Elijah had the power to seal the heavens as well as the power to call down fire upon the wicked (see 1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2). The sealing power was first used on the earth in the Garden of Eden when God sealed Adam and Eve as husband and wife. However, in Old Testament times it was used only in behalf of the living.

In this verse four requirements are outlined in order that an ordinance performed on earth become binding in heaven:

1. It must be performed by one “in authority”—one holding the proper priesthood commission.
2. It must be done “in the name of the Lord” Jesus Christ.
3. It must be performed “truly and faithfully”—precisely as the Lord has instructed.
4. A “proper and faithful record of the same” must be kept.

10 And again, for the precedent, Matthew 16:18, 19: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

11 Now the great and grand secret of the whole matter, and the summum bonum of the whole subject that is lying before us, consists in obtaining the powers of the Holy Priesthood. For him to whom these keys are given there is no difficulty in obtaining a knowledge of facts in relation to the salvation of the children of men, both as well for the dead as for the living.

verse 11 “the summum bonum of the whole subject” The expression “summum bonum” means “the highest good.” An expanded meaning is “that in which all goods are included or from which they are all derived” (*Webster’s Third International Dictionary*, s.v. “summum bonum”). In other words, through the power of the priesthood and the one who holds the keys to the priesthood will come all the knowledge needed for salvation.

“obtaining the powers of the holy priesthood” There is no other way to obtain salvation except through the priesthood of God based on the atonement of Jesus Christ. It is through the ordinances of that priesthood that one qualifies for exaltation. It is also through the priesthood and the ones who hold the keys to the priesthood that

revelation and the will of God are obtained. Thus, prophets, seers, and revelators will receive the knowledge necessary for the children of God on this earth as well as the dead to obtain exaltation (see also D&C 84:19-21).

12 Herein is glory and honor, and immortality and eternal life—The ordinance of baptism by water, to be immersed therein in order to answer to the likeness of the dead, that one principle might accord with the other; to be immersed in the water and come forth out of the water is in the likeness of the resurrection of the dead in coming forth out of their graves; hence, this ordinance was instituted to form a relationship with the ordinance of baptism for the dead, being in likeness of the dead.

13 Consequently, the baptismal font was instituted as a similitude of the grave, and was commanded to be in a place underneath where the living are wont to assemble, to show forth the living and the dead, and that all things may have their likeness, and that they may accord one with another—that which is earthly conforming to that which is heavenly, as Paul hath declared, 1 Corinthians 15:46, 47, and 48:

verses 12-13 “a similitude of the grave” The Prophet reminds the saints that baptism by immersion is a representation of death and burial and then a coming forth from the grave as a resurrected personage into a new life. The baptismal font thus symbolizes the grave, and it should be located “underneath where the living are wont to assemble.” In our temples the font is found in the lower part of the building. Even in small one-story temples, the font is situated in a step-down area.

14 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as are the records on the earth in relation to your dead, which are truly made out, so also are the records in heaven. This, therefore, is the sealing and binding power, and, in one sense of the word, the keys of the kingdom, which consist in the key of knowledge.

verse 14 In this passage, the apostle Paul is writing of Adam who, after being thrust out of the garden, was a mortal or “natural” soul. Then later he became “spiritual”—that is not to say a spirit but a spiritual or resurrected body. So the natural or mortal state of Adam came first, then the spiritual or resurrected state. The first state of Adam was earthly (“earthy”) and the second state of Adam (“the second man”) was spiritual—he was “the Lord from heaven.” The mortal souls are corruptible or mortal (“such are they . . . that are earthy”). The resurrected souls are eternal and incorruptible (“such are they also that are heavenly”).

“as are the records on the earth . . . so also are the records in heaven” In a figurative manner, the earthly records of the dead (especially those which are carefully and accurately kept—“truly made out”) become heavenly or eternal—binding in heaven for eternity. This is an important manifestation of the sealing power.

“the keys of the kingdom, which consist in the key of knowledge” We have spoken previously about the “mysteries of the kingdom” (see the commentary for D&C 6:7; 8:11). They are spiritual facts and concepts that cannot be understood by the carnal mind. They can only be truly understood and appreciated by the man whose mind is connected with and responsive to the influence of the Holy Ghost. There is a certain subgroup of human beings here on earth who have an advantage in learning the mysteries of the kingdom—they have a “leg up” in obtaining and keeping the influence of the Holy Ghost. These are the men who hold the higher priesthood and are righteously administering the affairs of the Lord’s earthly kingdom. For these there is more two-way communication between heaven and earth—the figurative gaps or openings in the veil which separates heaven from earth are larger and filled, in one direction, with the petitions of the Lord’s righteous servants on behalf of those members of the kingdom whom these servants are serving; and filled in the other direction with the blessings of heaven to those servants (see *Priesthood in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 12). On one level, therefore, we may say that righteous holders of the Melchizedek have an advantage in learning, by the Spirit of God, the mysteries of the kingdom. The Lord promised those who exercise their priesthood in righteousness that “the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45). Joseph Smith taught that the priesthood is the “channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven” (*HC*, 4:207; *TPJS*, 166-67). One of the great blessings of the Lord to mortals who are consistently striving to obey his commands, is that he will reveal himself to the man through the influence of the Holy Spirit by the process of personal revelation (see D&C 93:1). We also learn here from this verse that the holders of the Melchizedek have an advantage in coming to truly know God (John 17:3). Again, the two-way communication between heaven and earth is more open for those who hold and honor their higher priesthood.

On another level, when the higher priesthood is on the earth, so are the keys of that priesthood, which keys include the authority to administer in the area of the spiritual gifts of the Spirit which are granted to those who have the Lord’s priesthood.

15 And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers—that they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.

verse 15 “neither can we without our dead be made perfect” In Hebrews 11:40, the apostle Paul teaches that without us our ancestors cannot be made perfect. This is presumably because they need vicarious ordinances for the dead performed on their behalf, and without us these would not be completed. Here in this verse, the prophet Joseph gives additional insights into Paul’s teaching. Here the Prophet declares that we cannot be made perfect without our ancestors, and that this is a principle that cannot be taken lightly. Why is that? In what way are we dependent upon our ancestors for our salvation? Joseph Smith taught: “Those Saints who neglect it [the vicarious ordinance work] in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation” (*HC*, 4:426, October 2, 1841). In other words, we are materially helped in working for our own salvation by attending to the vicarious ordinance work for those who have gone before us.

16 And now, in relation to the baptism for the dead, I will give you another quotation of Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:29: Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?

17 And again, in connection with this quotation I will give you a quotation from one of the prophets, who had his eye fixed on the restoration of the priesthood, the glories to be revealed in the last days, and in an especial manner this most glorious of all subjects belonging to the everlasting gospel, namely, the baptism for the dead; for Malachi says, last chapter, verses 5th and 6th: Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

verse 17 “he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” On the face of it, this scriptural phrase seems to teach that if an individual’s sympathies for his ancestors and for his descendants are increased then that will prevent the Lord from smiting the earth with a curse. Joseph taught that a mere increase in sympathy is not the intent of this phrase. Rather, he taught that “turn the heart” means to “bind” or to “seal.” Again, we see evidence of the importance of vicarious ordinance work for the dead.

We will read in verse 18 the Lord’s decree that each of us must make a concerted effort in helping to forge a welding link or a complete and perfect union which will bind all of God’s children together from Adam to the present time. No one of us can be exalted without doing our part to form this union and becoming a part of the union ourselves. This welding link is formed as we in families are sealed to one another, as we seek out the names of our dead ancestors, and as we do proxy endowments, baptismal work, and sealing ordinances for them. To man’s frail intuition it is not obvious why this union must be formed, but there is no mistaking the Lord’s intent

regarding this work. It is obviously of central and supreme importance. Without this welding link, the earth would fail to fill the measure of its creation, and the Lord would smite the earth with a sore curse.

18 I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other—and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also; for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

verse 18 “a welding link of some kind” See the commentary for verse 17. The Prophet again emphasizes here the essential role of doing vicarious ordinances for the dead. He speaks here only of baptism for the dead. What of the other ordinances which are now performed vicariously for the dead? In September 1842, baptisms were the only ordinances being performed for the dead. Vicarious endowments were not inaugurated until 1877 in Salt Lake City. What Joseph says here about baptism might well be applied to other necessary ordinances, however, such as sealings.

19 Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring glad tidings of good things, and that say unto Zion: Behold, thy God reigneth! As the dews of Carmel, so shall the knowledge of God descend upon them!

verse 19-21 “what do we hear?” In the following two verses, the Prophet reviews some of the visits of heavenly beings to himself and others. Most of these accounts are well known to the saints. For instance, the visits of Moroni and Peter, James and John are widely known and are recorded in the *History of the Church*. The voice of God in the chamber of Father Whitmer instructing Joseph to ordain Oliver Cowdery an elder and that he should be ordained an elder by Oliver when the Church

was organized (see the commentary for D&C 13:1) is another example of events that were recorded in the *History of the Church* (1:60-61). There is, however, no record of the voice of Michael detecting Satan on the banks of the Susquehanna River, nor of the visits of Gabriel and Raphael, nor the many “divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time.”

Yet this review of the various visitors from the presence of God to the Prophet and the saints gives witness to the restoration of the keys of the priesthood and the keys of past dispensations to Joseph Smith, who stands at the head of the dispensation of the fulness of times. The priesthood and its keys, together with knowledge and instruction, were not given all at once but rather were given line upon line during the Prophet’s lifetime, and the instruction continues to this day.

20 And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!

verse 20 The experiences mentioned in this verse include Joseph’s visit from Moroni on the night of September 21, 1823; possibly his receiving of section 17 of our present-day Doctrine and Covenants; and the experience Joseph and Oliver Cowdery had on the banks of the Susquehanna River as they received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John. In an intriguing way, Joseph refers to an otherwise unexplained participation of Adam in Joseph and Oliver’s experience having the Melchizedek Priesthood restored to them by Peter, James, and John.

This verse provides information that had never been given previously. For example, we learn that Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood between the towns of Colesville, New York, and Harmony, Pennsylvania, on the Susquehanna River. Also, other than these verses, there is no other record of the incident, which also occurred on the Susquehanna River, wherein Michael or Adam detected the devil when he appeared as an angel of light. It is certainly possible that this experience occurred at the same time as the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

21 And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And the

voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!

verse 21 Michael is Adam. Gabriel is Noah. And Elder Bruce R. McConkie supposed that Raphael is Enoch (*Ensign*, April 1980, 23).

22 Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free.

verse 22 “Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!” As you read the history of our Church, particularly of the myriad heartbreaks, betrayals, discouragements, disappointments, and loneliness suffered by Joseph Smith, you will likely note a tendency to feel an empathetic sense of discouragement for him. You may wonder why Joseph was not inclined to despair and quit. You may even admit to yourself, “After all, I would have been so tempted to ‘throw in the towel.’” What enabled Joseph to go on in spite of all his difficulties, you may wonder? The answer is really quite simple. He simply knew, without question or doubt, that what he was doing was the personally communicated bidding of God. He had been instructed in person by the Father and the Son and by several other angelic personages. How could he possibly quit? He obviously never even considered it. It was not a negotiable point. He just knew, and he wanted others to know just as he did.

23 Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever! And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers!

24 Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand; and who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall

purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance.

verse 24 “he shall purify the sons of Lehi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” See the commentary for Alma 34:10; 3 Nephi 24:3; and D&C 13:1.

25 Brethren, I have many things to say to you on the subject; but shall now close for the present, and continue the subject another time. I am, as ever, your humble servant and never deviating friend,
JOSEPH SMITH

Brief Historical Setting

1843 February

The late winter of 1842 and spring of 1843 brought Joseph a brief respite from persecution and harassment. In February Parley P. Pratt returned from his mission to England. He could not wait to visit with Joseph and be instructed by him. Joseph did instruct him on, among other things, the way in which one might discern a false from a true spirit [**D&C 129 - Discernment of False Spirits**].

1843 April-May

Joseph also took advantage of these peaceful months to visit and instruct the saints in small settlements surrounding Nauvoo [**D&C 130 - Items of Instruction by Joseph Smith**] [**D&C 131 - Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom**].

Section 129 Discernment of False Spirits

In our tour through the Doctrine and Covenants, we have encountered different types of revelation. For example, we have studied revelations that are descriptions of visions (sections 76, 110, 137), prayers (sections 65, 109), letters (sections 121, 122, 123, 127, 128), a translation of an ancient parchment (section 7), inspired helps in interpreting the scriptures (sections 74, 77, 113), and even the minutes of a meeting (section 102). We now encounter yet another type of revelation. Sections 129, 130 and 131 might appropriately be termed “inspired instructions.” They resulted from Joseph’s instructing either individuals or groups on significant points of doctrine. On each of these occasions, Joseph’s scribe, William Clayton, was present and recorded the instructions. Be assured, however, that these sections are indeed, in the strictest sense, revelations. All three were preserved in the *History of the Church*, Joseph’s official history, and in 1876 Orson Pratt included them in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Section 129 is actually the scribe’s transcription of instructions given to Parley P. Pratt and others on February 9, 1843. Just two days earlier, Parley had returned from his mission in Great Britain. He had remained over a year and one-half longer than the rest of the Twelve to preside over the Church there and to serve as editor of the *Millennial Star*. Among other things, Parley was eager to learn more about how he might discern angels. Specifically, he wished to know how to distinguish divinely dispatched messengers from those on Satan’s errand.

You will recall that in D&C 128:20 we read a mere mention of an experience Joseph had with Adam. The year must have been 1829 since Joseph never returned to the Susquehanna River after that year. The devil appeared to Joseph as an angel of light and would have deceived Joseph into thinking he was sent by the Lord, except that Adam intervened and helped Joseph to identify Satan. It seems likely that Joseph began at that time to learn more about discerning heavenly messengers from evil ones. Joseph taught the “grand keys” of discerning false spirits earlier, but they were not formally written down until February 9, 1843. For example, Wilford Woodruff, in his journal (volume 1:341), reported that Joseph taught the “grand keys” to the Twelve prior to their departing for their mission to England in the spring of 1839. Another version of this information was recorded by Willard Richards in his “Pocket Companion,” sometime before August 8, 1839, when he likely heard it from others of the Twelve who had arrived in England. In December 1840, William Clayton copied an extract of it in his *Private Book*. An anonymous pamphlet published in Nauvoo in 1841 entitled *Revelations* also contained a version of section 129, which appears to be a copy of William Clayton’s December 1840 extract. Thus, the information recorded in section 129 had been revealed to the Prophet long before February 9, 1843, the date assigned

to it in the headnote of section 129. Section 129 is simply another, somewhat abbreviated version, of the revelation of this same material which appeared in Joseph Smith's diary in the handwriting of Willard Richards under the date February 9, 1843, when Joseph again revealed this information to Parley P. Pratt and also to others who had not been present to hear it earlier. On this last occasion, February 9, 1843, William Clayton was also present and, as Joseph's scribe, wrote in his journal the substance of Joseph's teachings to Parley and the others. That copy by William Clayton, which was later incorporated into the draft "Manuscript History of the Church," provided the official text of section 129, which was first included in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants under the direction of President Brigham Young.

Beyond these several written versions, in remarks made to the Relief Society on April 28, 1842 and to the general membership of the Church three days later, May 1, 1842, Joseph also made allusions to the doctrine of detecting false spirits. From these public remarks, it seems clear that the prophet Joseph connected the substance of section 129 with the ordinances of the temple and believed that the information in this revelation held increased significance for those who had been endowed. Concerning his May 1, 1842 sermon, Joseph recorded in the *History of the Church*: "I preached in the grove, on the keys of the kingdom, charity, &c. The keys are certain signs and words by which false spirits and personages may be detected from true, which cannot be revealed to the Elders till the Temple is completed" (*HC*, 4:608).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 129 Discernment of False Spirits

D&C 129:4-8 When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God.

1 There are two kinds of beings in heaven, namely: Angels, who are resurrected personages, having bodies of flesh and bones—

verse 1 "two kinds of beings in heaven" It would seem that Joseph is using the term "beings" here to mean human beings, because there are a number of other beings near the throne of God (D&C 77:1-2; Revelation 4:6-9; 5:13; HC, 5:324). Moreover, the term "heaven" seems to be used here broadly as equivalent to "the other side of the veil," because such translated beings as Enoch, John the Beloved, or the three Nephites, who have not yet passed through the veil of resurrection but might otherwise be considered angels, are not included here.

"Angels" What is an "angel?" The Hebrew word *malak* and the Greek word *angelos*, which are both translated as "angel" in the Bible, mean "a messenger." A satisfactory definition seems to be: a messenger sent by God or Satan to minister or teach. Actually there are three types of angels who can appear "in light" or "in glory." They are:

1. Resurrected beings having bodies of flesh and bone. They have celestial bodies and have come forth in the “first resurrection,” since that is the only resurrection that has already commenced. They therefore have earned and received their “celestial glory,” and the only way they can appear is in glory. Because none of the angels described in scripture before the resurrection of Jesus Christ can possibly have been resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23), it is clear that Joseph is defining his terms here from a post-resurrection perspective.

2. The “spirits of just men made perfect.” These are righteous men who have died but have not yet been resurrected. They have been judged worthy of being assigned the state called “paradise” in the spirit world. They have been assured that they will inherit the celestial degree of glory—they have had their “calling and election made sure.” Because of their righteousness, they are allowed to appear in the glory they will possess when they are resurrected.

3. An angel of Satan or Satan himself. He knows how to fake the “light” or the glory of God.

These verses do not actually tell us how many different types of angels there are, but only how many can appear in “light.” There are other types of angels. For example, there are also translated beings and pre-existent spirits who may be assigned to appear on earth as angels.

The important point here is that God might send as messengers either physical beings or spirits. In either case, it is important for us to know how to be sure that they are truly from God.

2 For instance, Jesus said: Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

verse 2 See Luke 24:36-39.

3 Secondly: the spirits of just men made perfect, they who are not resurrected, but inherit the same glory.

verse 3 “Secondly” In verses 1 and 2, Joseph has just described the physical character of angels who are resurrected beings. We would presume that translated beings would share in those same physical characteristics.

“the spirits of just men made perfect” See the commentary for verse 1.

verses 4-8 These are the grand keys by which the nature of ministering angels might be distinguished:

We are instructed to offer to shake hands with the messenger. If he is a resurrected being, he will shake hands, we will feel his hand (Luke 24:39), and then he will deliver his message. If he is the spirit of a just man made perfect, then he will not offer to shake hands, but he will deliver his message. Exactly why he will not offer to

shake hands is not perfectly clear. Apparently the reason centers around the fact that spirit is intangible to human flesh. Is it? Are we sure? I suppose it is, but there is an interesting example in the scripture of a spirit personage interacting in a physical way with a mortal. Consider, for example, the fact that Adam was baptized by the Holy Ghost (Moses 6:64). Anyway, back to the question at hand. If spirit is intangible to mortal flesh, then it would be deceptive and upsetting for a spirit personage to offer to shake hands with someone who does not feel the spirit's hand. Since it is "contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive," he will not offer to shake hands. Finally, if the messenger is of the devil, then he will offer to shake hands, and the person receiving the vision will fan the air.

Now, there is an obvious question that you might be wondering about. Satan is a bright, intelligent individual who certainly knows the scriptures. Why is he foolish enough to stick his hand out, if his intent is to make the mortal believe that he is divine? We don't know the answer to this. Perhaps it is simply contrary to the order of things for him not to offer to shake hands—perhaps he is bound by law. Or, perhaps he cannot help himself. He knows better, but he cannot pass up the opportunity to shock and deceive the man. Perhaps the look on the man's face is worth being detected.

In another account of the "grand keys" published by Joseph in Nauvoo, he added another dimension:

The devil may appear as an angel of light; ask God to reveal it; if it be of the devil he will flee from you, if of God he will manifest himself or make it manifest.

If an angel or spirit appears [we would presume Joseph here speaks of an angel of light], offer him your hand; if he is a spirit from God he will stand still and not offer you his hand; if from the devil, he will either shrink back from you or offer his hand, which if he does you will feel nothing, but be deceived (*Revelations* [Nauvoo, Illinois, 1841], 7-8, emphasis added)

Since the temple ceremony gives other methods by which evil spirits can be detected, some have suggested that the "grand keys" are now out of date.

Joseph was oft visited by ministering angels, and was thus thoroughly familiar with their appearance. On one occasion, a sister from New York reported a vision of a glorious personage who appeared to her dressed in white with sandy-colored hair. Joseph pointed out that it was not an angel of God. For one thing, he had the wrong color hair (*Times and Seasons*, [April 1, 1842] 3:747).

In these same instructions given to Parley on February 9, 1843, but not included in section 129, Joseph related, "A man came to me in Kirtland and told me he had seen an angel and described his dress. I told him he had seen no angel, and that there was no such dress in heaven" (*HC*, 5:267).

4 When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God, offer him your hand and request him to shake hands with you.

5 If he be an angel he will do so, and you will feel his hand.

6 If he be the spirit of a just man made perfect he will come in his glory; for that is the only way he can appear—

verse 6 “for that is the only way he can appear” Apparently the spirit of a just man made perfect (see the commentary for verse 1) cannot hide his glory from the one to whom he appears. It would seem that hiding one’s glory is only a prerogative of resurrected beings (Luke 24:15-16, 31; John 20:14-15; 21:4). Translated beings also appear without surrounding glory, but this is because they have not yet been granted celestial glory.

7 Ask him to shake hands with you, but he will not move, because it is contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive; but he will still deliver his message.

verse 7 “he will not move” The version of these instructions from Joseph written in William Clayton’s “Private Book” in December 1840 specified that a spirit from God would not move either to shake your hand or to shrink back to avoid being touched, whereas an evil spirit would move in either of these ways.

8 If it be the devil as an angel of light, when you ask him to shake hands he will offer you his hand, and you will not feel anything; you may therefore detect him.

verse 8 “the devil as an angel of light” Satan does have the power to deceive the unwary (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The prophet Joseph taught:

It would seem also, that wicked spirits have their bounds, limits, and laws by which they are governed or controlled, and know their future destiny, hence, those that were in the maniac said to our Savior, ‘Art thou come to torment us before the time,’ and when Satan presented himself before the Lord, among the sons of God, he said that he came ‘from going to and fro in the earth, and from wandering up and down in it;’ and he is emphatically called the prince of the power of the air; and, it is very evident that they possess a power that none but those who have the Priesthood can control (*HC*, 4:576).

9 These are three grand keys whereby you may know whether any administration is from God.

verse 9 “three grand keys” These are composed of the test proposed in verse 4, shaking hands, and the three possible outcomes that will occur, depending on whether the messenger is (1) a resurrected being or a translated being from God, (2) the spirit of a just man made perfect or a premortal spirit, also from God, or (3) a deceiving spirit of the devil.

Section 130 Items of Instruction by Joseph Smith

After two years of having to live in seclusion to prevent his being apprehended by his enemies, Joseph finally was blessed with a brief period of peace in the spring of 1843. During those few months, he directed much of his energy and attention to visiting several outlying settlements where many members of the Church had settled. The most frequently visited village was Ramus, Illinois, located twenty miles east of Nauvoo.

The town of Ramus was founded by Joel H. Johnson, an early friend of the Prophet's when they both lived in Kirtland. The town was called Ramus because *ramus* is the Latin word for "branch." and there was a branch there as soon as the Church was organized. In 1839 nearly all of its eventual five hundred inhabitants were Mormons. By 1840 a stake was organized, and Joel Johnson was called as stake president. Soon Ramus became the largest and most prosperous of the several outlying settlements outside Nauvoo.

Harmony prevailed in Ramus for two years, but then some of the church members—even some of the leaders of the stake—formed a secret clan and sought to retaliate against the enemies of the Church in Ramus by stealing from them. This destroyed the unity of the stake. Eventually the stake was dissolved, the members of the secret clan excommunicated and punished by the law, and Ramus was demoted back to the status of merely being a branch of the Church.

In March 1843, Brigham Young wrote to the Ramus branch and requested contributions of provisions for Joseph Smith's family to allow Joseph more time to work on spiritual matters. He promised those saints abundant blessings if they complied. The Ramus saints responded immediately and generously with five teams loaded with provisions and grain.

Brigham's promise that these Ramus saints would be blessed spiritually for their generosity was realized in ample measure during the next two months, as they "sat at the Prophet's feet" and received the sacred items of instruction contained in sections 130 and 131.

Benjamin F. Johnson, the younger brother of the town's founder Joel Johnson, lived in Ramus. He was twenty-four years old in 1843 and was a close friend of the Prophet. Whenever Joseph visited Ramus, he stayed at the "Bennie" Johnson home. Joseph delivered many of his now famous instructions found in sections 130 and 131 in the Johnson home.

On Saturday, April 1, 1843—the day before the date assigned to Section 130—Joseph, his scribe William Clayton, and Orson Hyde of the Twelve, arrived in Ramus. Early the next morning, Joseph took Bennie Johnson for a walk in the nearby woods so that they might have a private talk. Joseph introduced Benjamin to the principle of plural marriage which he had received earlier by revelation. Joseph then shocked

Benjamin by asking if he might help convince his sister Almira Johnson to become one of Joseph's plural wives. Seeing that Bennie was upset, Joseph reassured his young friend and prophesied that he would soon receive a testimony of the principle (Johnson, *My Life's Review*, 85- 93).

The next morning, a public meeting was held, and Elder Orson Hyde was the speaker. He used as his text John 14:23 wherein the Savior promised that if a man will live the gospel, then the Father and the Son "will come unto him, and make [their] abode with him." Elder Hyde interpreted this verse thus: "It is our privilege to have the Father and the Son dwelling in our hearts" (*HC*, 5:323). The Prophet discerned this as false doctrine, and at lunch Joseph told Orson that he would like to offer some corrections to Orson's speech when Joseph spoke that afternoon. Joseph wrote: "We dined with my sister Sophronia McCleary, when I told Elder Hyde that I was going to offer some corrections to his sermon this morning. He replied, 'They shall be thankfully received'" (*HC*, 5:323).

Joseph did preach in the afternoon and evening meetings. His words were recorded by his scribe. In time, the records of these two sermons were recorded in the *History of the Church*. The first seventeen verses of section 130 are Joseph's corrections of Orson Hyde's sermon. If we had the complete text of Brother Hyde's sermon, we might better understand the reasons for Joseph's replies. Verses 18 through 23 form a synopsis of both Joseph's sermons. In 1876 portions of those speeches were extracted from the *History of the Church* by Orson Pratt and included in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Section 130 is a miscellany or potpourri of different subjects. It contains a variety of short answers to short questions. As we go through the verse commentary, we will postulate the questions that were asked. Most of the answers are self-explanatory and are understandable without comment. Those verses that are most notable will be particularly mentioned to help you, the reader, familiarize yourself with their locations.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 130 Items of Instruction by Joseph Smith

D&C 130:2 And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there.

D&C 130:18-19 Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

D&C 130:20-21 There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven . . . upon which all blessings are predicated.

D&C 130:22-23 The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's.

1 When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves.

verse 1 Question: What is the Lord going to look like when he comes?

Orson Hyde had taught in his morning sermon on April 2, 1843, based on Revelation 19:11-12, 1 John 3:2, and John 14:23, that the Savior “will appear on a white horse as a warrior, and maybe we shall have some of the same spirit. Our God is a warrior (John 14:23). It is our privilege to have the Father and Son dwelling in our hearts” (*HC*, 5:323). Obviously Joseph perceived some ambiguity in this statement of Orson Hyde’s which he wanted to correct.

In this verse the Prophet confirms the veracity of New Testament statements regarding the Lord’s appearance at his second coming—see 1 John 3:2 and Acts 1:11. We learn that at the Lord’s second coming he will appear as a being like ourselves. Together with the information Joseph received in the First Vision, this verse clarifies that God and humans are the same species of being at different stages of progression, the Father and the Son having been glorified while we have not. This is the doctrine of deification, which holds that human beings may, through the grace of God, grow to be like God by being glorified with his glory and being made “partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

2 And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy.

verse 2 Question: What will our social order be like when the Lord comes and lives among us?

Sociality is the way in which human beings relate to each other. The same social relationships we experience here in mortality will continue in the eternities. “Sociality” is not a word normally used to describe relationships between beings of different species. When Christ comes again, we will not be his pets or his creatures. We will be his friends and family, for friendship and family relations are the highest and greatest expressions of sociality (see Mosiah 5:7; Ether 3:14-16; Romans 8:14-17).

Moreover, life in the resurrection will be much like righteous living is here and now, with similar types of activities and relationships. Our existence then will still be recognizable as a glorified extension of the best of human life as we know it in mortality. Orson Pratt taught that “a saint, who is one in deed and in truth, does not look for an immaterial heaven, but he expects a heaven with lands, houses, cities, vegetation, rivers, and animals; with thrones, temples, palaces, kings, princes, priests, and angels; with food, raiment, musical instruments, etc; all of which are material. Indeed, the saints’ heaven is a redeemed, glorified, celestial, material creation, inhabited by glorified material beings, male and female, organized into families, embracing all the relationships of husbands and wives, parents and children, where sorrow, crying, pain, and death will be known no more” (*Millennial Star* 28 [17 November 1866]: 722).

“only it will be coupled with eternal glory” Conditions after the second coming of Christ will include the best aspects of life as we now know it, but it will also

include some measure—either celestial or terrestrial—of eternal glory. The reception of eternal glory in the resurrection of the just will make us even more like the Savior himself and, therefore, further increase the quality of sociality possible among us. This glory is likely the “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” which Paul looked forward to receiving in the resurrection in addition to the reunion of his spirit and body (2 Corinthians 5:1-4).

3 John 14:23—The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false.

verse 3 Question: Can the Father and the Son really get into our hearts and live with us?

“The appearing of the Father and the Son . . . is a personal appearance” It is apparent from the historical record that Orson Hyde had interpreted John 14:23 to mean that the Father and the Son can actually personally dwell in the heart of an individual. But since the Father and the Son have physical bodies (verse 22), this is clearly impossible. Only a spirit can enter into and dwell within a physical body. Joseph here clarifies, as he knew from his own personal experience, that the Father and the Son can and do under certain circumstances appear to human beings.

Joseph further taught that the coming of the Father and the Son referred to in John 14:23 is associated with a person’s receiving the Second Comforter (Cannon and Dahl, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 97). In his instructions to the Twelve given four years earlier, Joseph had taught concerning the text of John 14:23, “Now what is this other Comforter? It is not more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even he will manifest the Father unto him” (*Ibid.*, 619).

“an old sectarian notion” “Sectarian” here means pertaining to one or more of the various divisions into which traditional Christianity had become divided. The word usually has a negative connotation describing a schismatic or heretical departure from the mainstream. In this case it refers to the beliefs of the various non-LDS denominations that resulted from the apostasy of the primitive Christian Church.

4 In answer to the question—Is not the reckoning of God’s time, angel’s time, prophet’s time, and man’s time, according to the planet on which they reside?

verse 4 In this particular verse, the prophet Joseph asks (or reiterates) the question. This question was asked by William Clayton, perhaps during lunch at the home of the Prophet’s sister Sophronia, which took place between the ten and one o’clock meetings in Ramus (see Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 169; *HC*,

5:323-24). Clayton asked whether time is reckoned differently depending on the sphere whereupon a man dwells.

“God’s time, angel’s time, prophet’s time, and man’s time” Brother Clayton’s question also has other implications. For example, the question makes the assumption that God lives on a planet, and it seeks for Joseph’s confirmation of this fact. It also suggests that angels may come from other, perhaps various, planets. The implication of “prophet’s time” is uncertain. “Man’s time” refers to the time as reckoned on earth.

Joseph answers the question in verse 4 with the first three words of verse 5.

5 I answer, Yes. But there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it.

verse 5 Question: Are all “angels” individuals from our earth, or do some come from other worlds?

“I answer, Yes.” We may assume from Joseph’s answer that time is reckoned according to the planet on which a man presides. That is, a year is the time it takes for the particular planet to revolve around its sun. A day is the time it takes for the planet to rotate once on its axis. Because of the subtle implications of Brother Clayton’s question in verse 4, we may also assume from Joseph’s answer that God does live on a planet. Abraham 3:2-4 suggests that the sphere on which God lives rotates on its axis once every one thousand earth years (see also Facsimile 2, Figures 1-5; 2 Peter 3:8).

Also we are taught that all the resurrected beings, translated beings, premortal spirits, or spirits in paradise who have ministered to this earth as heavenly messengers or “angels” were once mortal beings on this earth or will yet take a body and live on this earth. The Prophet also taught that persons from this world who are translated may be sent during the time between their translation and their resurrection “to be ministering angels unto many planets” (Cannon and Dahl, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 674).

6 The angels do not reside on a planet like this earth;

verse 6 We would presume that the word *angels* in this verse refers to resurrected celestial beings (see also verse 7). It may also refer to translated beings and premortal spirit beings. Post mortal paradisiacal spirits do live on this earth in the spirit realm. Translated beings appear to live on a terrestrial sphere somewhere and are dispatched to come to earth as they are needed. Premortal spirits apparently live on the celestial planet where God is. Resurrected celestial beings also live on a celestial planet.

7 But they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord.

verse 7 Question: Where do angels live? Obviously the angels here described live on a celestialized sphere. Presumably Joseph is speaking here of those resurrected beings who act as angels or perhaps to premortal spirits who function as angels. We would not expect post mortal spirits or translated beings to live on a celestial sphere.

“on a globe like a sea of glass and fire” This terminology describes a celestial sphere that has already passed through a process of change similar to death and resurrection and has been glorified in the same way that the earth will eventually be glorified. At least part of the process of this change involves “fervent heat” (see 2 Peter 3:12). Just as sand becomes glass when heated and purified, so the earth, when glorified, will be a new, celestial globe “sanctified and immortal” (verse 9) like that upon which God now dwells.

According to Brigham Young, “This earth, when it becomes purified and sanctified, or celestialized, will become like a sea of glass; and a person, by looking into it, can know things past, present, and to come; though none but celestialized beings can enjoy this privilege. They will look into the earth, and the things they desire to know will be exhibited to them, the same as the face is seen by looking into a mirror” (JD, 9:87). Certainly this description of the celestial earth raises several questions for which we have no answers presently. It is difficult to understand, for example, the implications of a crystalline earth which functions as a Urim and Thummim (see verse 8) which allows the inhabitants to know all things.

“all things . . . past, present, and future . . . are continually before the Lord” We know from verse 4 that God lives in a realm where one of the variables is time. Time is a factor on God’s planet and in his life. How then is he able to continually know the past, present, and future. It seems less likely that he is able to actually see into the future, than that he is able to accurately predict the future in intimate detail because of his perfect perception of his creations through his perfect ability to read their light.

8 The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim.

verse 8 Question: What is God’s dwelling place like?

“a great Urim and Thummim” This quality of God’s celestial planet is difficult for us, intuitively, to understand, but it is probably best explained in Brigham’s quotation in the commentary for verse 7. As that quotation claims, for the inhabitants of God’s celestial planet, “the things they desire to know will be exhibited to them.”

9 This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ’s.

verse 9 Question: Joseph, tell us more about what the earth will be like after it is celestialized.

“will be made like unto crystal” Brigham Young described the change that will occur when the earth is celestialized in these terms: “When it becomes celestialized, [the earth] will be like the sun, and be prepared for the habitation of the saints, and be brought back into the presence of the Father and the Son. It will not then be an opaque body as it now is, but it will be like the stars of the firmament, full of light and glory: it will be a body of light” (*JD*, 7:163). Statements like this have raised the question of whether or not, those who inherit celestial glory will actually live on a star. Furthermore, one wonders whether the somewhat ambiguous description of the great governing star Kolob, described in Abraham 3:2-4, is in fact a star *near* unto the celestial planet or whether it *is* the celestial planet.

“all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order” It is tempting, to interpret these “kingdoms of a lower order” as the terrestrial and celestial kingdoms. However, if that is what it means, then what could “a higher order of kingdoms” mean in the next verse? Are there kingdoms higher than the celestial?

Perhaps an appropriate explanation of “kingdoms of a lower order” or “kingdoms of a higher order” would be that there are many levels of progression within the celestial kingdom—stages of progression of glory. After all, we do read in the gospel of John “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). This idea seems to be supported by remarks of Joseph Smith in the King Follett discourse: “When I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children” (Cannon and Dahl, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 296).

“this earth will be Christ’s” Though Jesus Christ is the creator of many worlds, he lived his mortal life upon this earth and performed his infinite, atoning sacrifice here. Thus, this earth is his “home world” and his very own in a broader sense than are the many other worlds he has created. The celestial earth may even be peculiarly “his” in the same way that Kolob or the planet nearest Kolob is said to be the Father’s.

verses 10-11 Question: What of the white stone and the new name mentioned in Revelation 2:17 and Isaiah 62:2?

10 Then the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17, will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known;

11 And a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word.

verses 10-11 “white stone” Everyone who inherits the celestial kingdom will receive “a white stone,” which will be for them a personal or private Urim and Thummim—perhaps a personal computer terminal. They will also have access to the earth itself which will become a public Urim and Thummim common to all who dwell upon it. Information concerning lower kingdoms will be available to all through the public Urim and Thummim—the celestialized earth itself—while information concerning higher kingdoms will be revealed privately through the white stone according to each individual’s readiness for further light and knowledge.

“new name” In the ancient world, gemstones engraved with secret names were considered talismans of personal power (see Fitzmyer Brown and Jerome Murphy, *Biblical Commentary*, 2:473-74). The apostle Peter was thought of as a celestial gatekeeper in early Christianity because he held all the keys of the kingdom and, therefore, had the power to open or shut its gates (Matthew 16:13-19). Similarly, the white stone engraved with the correct word or name symbolizes one’s personal, private key that not only reveals things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms but is also the key or “key word” that allows one to pass the gatekeeper at the portal and enter into the celestial kingdom (see D&C 132:19).

With tongue in cheek, we may suggest that the “new name . . . which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it” sounds a lot like a password that we so frequently use today to access our various sources of information.

verses 12-13 Question: Are you certain, Joseph, there will be a war between the states as prophesied in section 87?

12 I prophesy, in the name of the Lord God, that the commencement of the difficulties which will cause much bloodshed previous to the coming of the Son of Man will be in South Carolina.

13 It may probably arise through the slave question. This a voice declared to me, while I was praying earnestly on the subject, December 25th, 1832.

verses 12-13 See the commentary for D&C 87:1-4 for a discussion of this prophecy.

verses 14-17 Question: Joseph, when will the Lord come? Please tell us, Joseph!

14 I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice repeat the following:

verse 14 “the time of the coming of the Son of Man” Joseph’s teaching here, regarding the time of the Lord’s second coming, was helpful to the saints. During the Nauvoo period, speculation was rife concerning the date of the Lord’s advent. Many millennial prophecies were in the air. Much national attention was being paid to one William Miller who had predicted Christ’s coming on April 3, 1843, just one day after Joseph gave these instructions contained in Section 130. Thus, the Latter-day Saints were intensely interested in the question of the date of the Savior’s appearance. Joseph also was caught up in the question and often referred to William Miller in his conversations. Thus Joseph’s instructions in verses 14 through 17 were timely.

Joseph was convinced that the Savior would not come again prior to 1890—the year when Joseph would have been 85. This prophecy was welcomed by the saints and served as effective counterpoint to the false views of William Miller. On the following day, April 3, Joseph remarked, “Miller’s day of judgment has arrived, but it is too pleasant for false prophets” (*HC*, 5:326).

Joseph was unsure of how to understand the “eighty-five years” in verse 15, while others in the early Church rashly concluded that the second coming would occur by 1890, when Joseph would have turned eighty-five. However, Joseph Smith was martyred in Carthage at the age of thirty-eight. Therefore, since the condition in verse 15 was not met (that Joseph live to be eighty-five), neither could the conditional consequence be assumed to follow.

“I heard a voice repeat the following” This verse and the following three verses refer to a revelation Joseph received at some unknown time before section 130 was received. We may speculate that Joseph Smith’s prayers “troubling” the Lord on this topic (verse 15), occurred sometime before March 1831, the date of section 49, the revelation that finally settled the matter. At a later time, the prophet Joseph firmly stated that “Jesus Christ never did reveal to any man the precise time that he would come” (Cannon and Dahl, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 625).

15 Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; therefore let this suffice, and trouble me no more on this matter.

16 I was left thus, without being able to decide whether this coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing, or whether I should die and thus see his face.

17 I believe the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time.

verses 14-17 For us today it suffices to know that no man knows the day or the hour when the Savior will return (Matthew 24:36; D&C 49:7).

verses 18-19 Question: If we study diligently and learn as you do, Joseph, will it help us in the next life? Also, if we obey the Lord’s commandments diligently and

receive the commensurate gifts of the Spirit (spiritual growth), will those godlike characteristics remain with us in the life following our resurrection?

18 Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

verse 18 “Whatever principle of intelligence” Intelligence is not the same as I.Q. or even the secular knowledge we obtain through study. Intelligence is the amount of spiritual growth, the light and knowledge, the increments of the attributes of God which an individual has received due to his “diligence and obedience” relative to the commandments of God. Secular knowledge of truths, of course, is not entirely separate from spiritual knowledge (intelligence), since we know that to the Lord all things have spiritual implications (D&C 29:34-35).

We have concluded previously that at our death there are just two things we take with us our spiritual growth and our relationships with man and God. We may add a third—those memories we formed here on earth.

19 And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

verse 19 “he will have so much the advantage in the world to come” It may be that though all of the elect will be exalted and inherit “all things,” they may not all necessarily come to enjoy their full inheritance at the same time or at the same rate of speed (D&C 88:28-29). Indeed, the individual white stones, or Urim and Thummim, would seem to imply individual rates of progress even in eternity. Joseph Smith taught that exaltation “is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment: he must have been instructed in the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees, until his mind is capable in some measure of comprehending the propriety, justice, equality, and consistency of the same” (*HC*, 2:8). He also taught that “when you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave” (Cannon and Dahl, *The Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 519). Doctrine and Covenants 78:18 similarly tells us that even though the riches of eternity are ours, “ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along.” And in the process, those who are more intelligent through their “diligence and obedience” will have an advantage.

verses 20-21 Question: How do we grow spiritually; how do we earn the increments of the attributes of God that we need to grow spiritually?

20 There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

verse 20 The blessings spoken of in this verse are the gifts of the Spirit, the increments of spiritual growth, the portions of the attributes of God that a man may receive in response to his obedience of the commandments. We learn that for each of those gifts there is a specific set of commandments which must be obeyed. See a detailed discussion of the process of spiritual growth in *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit* and *The Blessings of Spiritual Gifts in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapters 7 and 8.

21 And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

verse 21 “it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” It is important to acknowledge that even though a man must “earn” these blessings through his obedience, they remain gifts mercifully given by the Lord. The gifts or blessings far exceed that which is actually earned.

verses 22-23 Question: What are the men in the Godhead really like physically?

22 The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.

verse 22 “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s” The Father and Son are resurrected beings whose spirit and flesh are “inseparably connected” (D&C 93:33) “never to be divided” (Alma 11:45). Their bodies consist of flesh and bones, but they lack blood, the element associated with mortal life (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11, 14; Deuteronomy 12:23). Joseph Smith had taught earlier in Nauvoo that resurrected bodies had “spirit” or even “the spirit of God” in their bodies rather than blood (*HC*, 6:366; Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 270; *Wilford Woodruff Journal*, 20 March 1842, 17).

Many modern Christian denominations have abandoned the physical resurrection of the Son, or the idea that he still has a permanent, corporeal body in spite of Romans 6:9 which avers, “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” “Latter-day Saints perceive the Father as an exalted Man in the most literal, anthropomorphic terms. They do not view the language of

Genesis as allegorical; human beings are created in the form and image of a God who has a physical form and image (Genesis 1:26)” (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:548).

“the Holy Ghost . . . is a personage of Spirit” Millions of people now living on the earth have been confirmed and given the gift of the Holy Ghost by proper priesthood authority. It should be noted that it is not the man, the individual whom we know as the Holy Ghost, who attends all these persons simultaneously but rather his power or influence (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 61). However, there are apparently certain occasions when the Holy Spirit may actually “dwell in us.” Since the Father and the Son are corporeal beings, and two physical objects apparently cannot occupy the same space, it is necessary for one member of the Godhead to be a spirit, the Holy Spirit, in order to “dwell in us.” Unlike another body, a spirit, whether holy or unholy, may, when conditions are right, enter into our physical bodies and dwell for a time “in us” (see also Mark 9:25-29). The wording of this entry in the William Clayton and Joseph Smith diaries also states additionally that the Holy Ghost cannot be specifically contained in our hearts, thus affirming that none of the Godhead “dwell[s] in a man’s heart” according to the “sectarian doctrine” (verse 3).

The Holy Ghost is a spirit man, a spirit child of our Father in heaven, who has not yet received a physical body but remains in the premortal state. Thus, verse 22 returns to the point of verses 1-3, that all three persons of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—are beings like ourselves, though with different degrees of glory and at different stages of eternal progress.

23 A man may receive the Holy Ghost, and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him.

verse 23 Even though an individual may have received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands and may be personally faithful and worthy, it is not always up to us when we shall enjoy the influence, presence, or gifts of the Spirit. That is up to the Spirit himself. A saint “may often be left to his own spirit and judgment” when it suits the will of God (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 60-61). On occasion, God may want us to learn to make decisions on our own or to undergo a time of testing and trial. Even the Savior, in order to fulfill his Father’s will, was denied the presence and support of the Comforter at a certain point during his suffering on Calvary (Matthew 27:46; D&C 88:106).

verses 22-23 Why has Joseph waited until 1843 to give us this doctrine? Didn’t he learn that God and Christ had flesh and bone bodies when he saw them in vision in 1820 in the sacred grove? It would appear that his knowledge of the Godhead evolved slowly over a period of months and years and that he did not, in fact, have a clear idea as to the nature of the Godhead when he emerged from the sacred grove in 1820.

Brother Hugh Nibley, commenting on the plain and precious doctrines that were lost during the Great Apostasy, said:

The first casualty was literalism. The most learned of the Christian fathers acknowledged that the literal sense is repugnant for every principle of faith as well as reason. You must never take anything literally in the Bible. They deem themselves secure and invulnerable behind the ample veil of allegory. You say a thing one way, you mean it another way. Allegory is different meanings. The classic example from the scriptures is where they speak of God's coming and going. It can't possibly mean that. It is given another interpretation. It doesn't mean that he has eyes; it just means there is an awareness there. He can't be like us in any sense. When it says we are in his image, they would say that's allegorical. The very first of the fathers that started this were men like Origen and Irenaeus. Their favorite term was the 'visible image of the invisible God.' He is in the image of man, but he is invisible. Of course, an image is something that you can see, but an invisible image is what God is, they claimed. It's like saying soundless music or odorless perfume. It's a contradiction in terms to say an invisible image. Behind the veil of allegory is where they have lived ever since. Joseph Smith came along and gave us a very different story. He says he really saw the angel and gives us a clinical account, how he looked, where he stood, etc. (*Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price*, a FARMS publication, lecture two).

Shortly before Joseph Smith's martyrdom, he stated, "It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another" (*TPJS*, 345). Elsewhere in the scripture we learn that only those who come to know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ" whom the Father sent will inherit eternal life (see John 17:3). The student of the gospel may ask, "It is interesting to know that God is a man with a physical body, but why is this fact so overridingly important?" Is it really so harmful to one's spiritual progress to fail to know the physical characteristics of God and the other members of the Godhead? It is the essence of true religion to know our true identity as literal spirit offspring of God in whose express image we exist. Given this knowledge, then what we are commanded to do is strive to be just like him and come home to him. We are of his very species and we share a rich, personal, and loving paternal relationship with him. Indeed, we seek a divine unity with him. Without knowing his character, we cannot ever realize the fundamental fact that we have entered into a binding and eternal covenant with him. In doing so, we pledge to replicate within our own characters and life those attributes and principles he personifies. This is why the resurrected Savior asked his Nephite disciples the rhetorical question: "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27). In his intercessory prayer, Jesus prayed that all who believed on his name "may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21). This divine unity is the grand objective of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. For while men may, of themselves, achieve a measure of goodness as the world defines the term, no one can achieve holiness in any other way than by lawfully taking upon himself the redeeming name of Christ in the only

Church on Earth authorized by him to act in his behalf (see D&C 1:30; 23:7). Those who do so will inherit a mansion in the celestial kingdom. For they have become sanctified through “the law of Christ” (D&C 88:21). Becoming holy, they are prepared to dwell with the “Man of holiness” forever. Is it important to know the true character of God? Indeed it is!

Section 131 Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom

On Tuesday, May 16, 1843, Joseph and his scribe William Clayton paid another visit to Ramus. The text of section 131, like that of section 130, was originally recorded in the personal diary of William Clayton. This section consists of the following selections:

Verses 1-4: In the evening, Joseph taught Benjamin Johnson and his wife, Melissa, the principle of eternal marriage. Brother Johnson later recalled, “In the evening he called me and my wife to come and sit down, for he wished to marry us according to the Law of the Lord. I thought it was a joke, and said, I should not marry my wife again, unless she courted me, for I did it all the first time. He chided my levity. . . .” Joseph then sealed them for time and eternity. That evening, Joseph instructed the Johnsons and William Clayton further regarding the three degrees in the celestial kingdom and the necessity of participating in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in order to gain entrance into the highest degree (D&C 131:1-4).

Verses 5-6: The next morning, Wednesday, May 17, Joseph preached in a public meeting on the first chapter of 2 Peter. One subject he treated was the “more sure word of prophecy” (D&C 131:5-6).

Verses 7-8: That evening the residents of Ramus had another interesting experience. In their evening meeting, a Methodist preacher, Samuel Prior, who was visiting Ramus, was called upon to speak. He was surprised, as he expected no such religious tolerance among the Mormons. After he spoke, Joseph politely asked if he might comment on Prior’s speech. Reverend Prior wrote of that experience: “Elder Smith, who had attended, arose and begged leave to differ from me in some few points of doctrine, and this he did mildly, politely, and affectingly; like one who was more desirous to disseminate truth and expose error, than to love the malicious triumph of debate over me. I was truly edified by his remarks, and felt less prejudiced against the Mormons than ever” (*Times and Seasons* 4 [15 May 1843]: 198). The text of D&C 131:7-8 was excerpted from the remarks Joseph made in responding to Mr. Prior.

The contents of section 131 were first published in the edition of the *Deseret News* dated September 24, 1856, and were included in the 1876 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* as edited by Orson Pratt at the direction of President Brigham Young. They were also included in *Joseph Smith’s History of the Church* (5:392-93), beginning in 1909.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 131 Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom

D&C 131:1-4 In order to obtain the highest [degree in the celestial kingdom], a man must be sealed.

D&C 131:5-6 It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.

D&C 131:7-8 There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter.

1 In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

verse 1 Eleven years earlier, the Lord had revealed to the Church in section 76, “The Vision,” that “heaven,” the dwelling place of the saved, consists of three broad degrees of glory (celestial, terrestrial, and telestial) and that of these three, the presence of the Father could only be enjoyed in the highest, or celestial, glory. Now the Lord reveals that the celestial glory itself is further divided into three degrees. Other than the information in verse 2, the Lord has revealed nothing about the conditions or requirements for those who are qualified to enter these three degrees.

2 And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

verse 2 The last part of verse 2 (in brackets) was added by Orson Pratt in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

3 And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

verses 2-3 “in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood” There is no mention in section 131 of plural marriage, and therefore no one can argue that verse 2 imposes an obligation upon the saints to live that principle.

Orson Pratt’s addition to verse 2, however (see the commentary for verse 2), does cause some potential confusion among some people. The term “new and everlasting covenant,” in its fullest sense, is the complete gospel of Jesus Christ (see D&C 66:2 and commentary) with all of its principles and ordinances. Hence, one might be inclined to include the term “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage” to include not only eternal marriage, but also plural marriage. However, there is no strong evidence to support this inclination. There is a strong feeling among scholarly scriptural students in the Church that Orson Pratt intended to refer to eternal marriage generally and not specifically plural marriage.

Within the gospel, “the new and everlasting covenant” consists of many covenants, one of which is the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. It is *new* because it is newly revealed to this dispensation. It is *everlasting* because it was ordained from the beginning and was part of the plan of salvation that was introduced in the premortal spirit world. It has been part of the gospel of Jesus Christ from the very first dispensation of Adam. Another example of a “new and everlasting covenant” is the covenant of baptism.

“this order of the priesthood” Some confusion may be caused by the “new and everlasting covenant of marriage” being referred to here as “this order of the

priesthood.” This reference can be understood with a bit of background. Joseph Smith delivered a sermon on Hebrews 7 (*HC*, 5:554-56) in which he spoke of three orders of the priesthood. These three orders were (1) the Aaronic Priesthood, (2) the Patriarchal Priesthood, and (3) the Melchizedek Priesthood (the fulness of the priesthood). The Patriarchal Priesthood is generally thought to be that priesthood that gives a man the right to preside over his family and which is passed on by blood lineage. That is, the eldest son of the patriarch is entitled to this priesthood. This “order” of the priesthood is usually identified with the prophet Abraham, who was entitled to this priesthood because of his lineage, and included the “new and everlasting covenant of marriage.” Thus a couple sealed by this order of the priesthood—in the “new and everlasting covenant of marriage”—has the right to preside over their family. In his sermon, the prophet Joseph is reported to have said: “Paul is here treating of three different priesthoods, namely, the priesthood of Aaron, Abraham, and Melchizedek. Abraham’s priesthood was of greater power than Levi’s [Aaron’s], and Melchizedek’s was of greater power than that of Abraham. Thus the Melchizedek Priesthood is the highest order and includes the other two orders of the priesthood.

It would thus seem that this verse, then, refers to the Patriarchal Order of the priesthood and teaches that that order is necessary for a man (actually a couple) to inherit the highest level in the celestial kingdom. A Melchizedek Priesthood holder already holds the Patriarchal Priesthood and more.

4 He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.

verse 4 “He may enter into the other” This verse teaches that in the eternities, there will be some individuals who are content to be exalted but do not wish to continue on to godhood. They choose to remain single in the eternities, and certainly this choice is within the prerogatives of all who are exalted. He or she, then, may enter one of the lesser two degrees of the celestial kingdom but may not be exalted in the highest degree. One consequence of this choice would be an inability to have increase, or spirit children. Without the ability to become heavenly parents ourselves, we cannot continue following in the path of our own Heavenly Parents.

Joseph Smith taught on another occasion: “Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection” (*HC*, 5:391; see also *D&C* 132:16-17, 19-21). It would be illogical assume that the term “this probation” refers to this earth life alone, as certainly there are those among us that are worthy of exaltation and never married during this life because they did not have the opportunity. They would have married if they had had the chance. Surely these will have the opportunity to be sealed to a companion following this life, if they so choose. No one will be

excluded from celestial resurrection and eventual exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial heaven merely because they failed to marry in their sojourn here on earth.

5 (May 17th, 1843.) The more sure word of prophecy means a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood.

verse 5 "May 17th, 1843" This date applies to verses 5 and 6 and is the date on William Clayton's journal when he recorded the material regarding the more sure word of prophecy.

"The more sure word of prophecy" This term is found in 2 Peter and means the same as "having one's calling and election made sure," "being sealed up unto eternal life," "to receiving the other (or second) Comforter," and having one's life "hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

It would seem that there are four ways in which an individual might receive "the more sure word of prophecy." The first is that they can be notified by a living prophet of God. The second is that they can receive word by personal revelation. The third is by a personal visit from the Lord Jesus Christ (the Second Comforter). The fourth is at death when one is granted, in the partial judgment, the blessing of being in a state of paradise. For further discussion of having one's calling and election made sure, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 16, *Calling and Election Made Sure*.

6 It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.

verse 6 This verse, when taken in context, has reference to the "more sure word of prophecy," and not simply to the acquisition of any intellectual knowledge. In other words, no man will be exalted in ignorance of prior confirmatory knowledge that he has made it into the celestial kingdom.

Verse 6, however, is commonly used alone and taken out of context and applied to all knowledge, including secular knowledge. This is probably defensible in the context of referring to knowledge of the things of God, as the Prophet Joseph taught, "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth" (*HC*, 4:588).

7 There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes;

8 We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter.

verses 7-8 These verses teach the simple truth that spirit matter is real material matter, though it is matter that cannot be perceived by the mortal senses. About a year

after this revelation was received, Joseph taught in Nauvoo: “The body is supposed to be organized matter, and the spirit, by many is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ, and state that spirit is a substance; that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic, and refined matter than the [mortal] body; that it existed before the body, can exist in the body; and will exist separate from the body, when the body will be mouldering in the dust; and will in the resurrection, be again united with it” (*Times and Seasons*, 3 [1 April 1842]: 745; see also Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 415).

It is also important to remember that the unseen world is greater than that which we can now behold. The time will come when our spiritual eyes will be opened, and then a whole new aspect of our universe will become a reality to us.

It is interesting to note that for thousands of years, and certainly as early as the time of Plato in the West and Buddha in the East, religious teachers have divided the universe into two parts—the material world and the spiritual world. Virtually all of these teachers agreed that the material world had a beginning (due to wickedness) and would have an end, and that eternally there is an unbridgeable gulf between the realms of spirit and matter. Spirit, these secularists taught, is eternal and righteous and material is wicked and corrupt.

In the last months of his life, Joseph, possibly sensing that his days on the earth were limited, literally poured out his knowledge upon the saints. He had such a vast knowledge of spiritual matters, but apparently was allowed to give us but a part of that knowledge. What he stated about himself and his knowledge has intrigued us to this day: “I can only tell you a hundredth part of what I know. If I told you what I know, you would accuse me of blasphemy, and some would want to take my life” (*Life of Heber C. Kimball*, Orson F. Whitney, 322). And finally, he tantalized us even more with: “No man knows my history” (*TPJS*, 36).

Brief Historical Setting

1843 Summer

In June of 1843, charges against the Prophet were revived and the harassment began anew, largely as a result of the malicious writings and speeches of John C. Bennett. An extradition order was sought by the state of Missouri and granted by the now-Governor Ford of Illinois. Joseph was arrested by officers of Missouri, but won the right to be tried in Nauvoo and was promptly acquitted of all charges.

In the summer of 1843, the population of Nauvoo was about fifteen thousand and was growing rapidly. Nauvoo was divided into ten wards, and a bishop was appointed to preside over each. The work of building the temple and the Nauvoo House were proceeding. The prospects for Nauvoo’s becoming the major center of commerce in Illinois looked promising. Indeed, Nauvoo was approaching the height of its elegance and industry. However, the next several months would bring a total reversal of this

hopeful trend.

The problems for the saints in Nauvoo arose on several fronts:

1. First, just as had occurred in 1838 in Missouri, there arose resentment over the potential political clout of the saints. The Whig and Democratic parties were so divided in Illinois that the citizens of Nauvoo potentially held the balance of political power in Hancock County and perhaps even in the entire state. As a political aside, it should be noted that when none of the presidential candidates in the election of 1844 seemed sympathetic to the saints' cause, Joseph allowed his name to be placed on the ballot as a token candidate for President of the United States.

2. A second cause of persecution resulted from the liberal city charter granted by the Illinois legislature. It guaranteed a good deal of independence for the new city and its rapidly growing military body, the Nauvoo Legion. The Legion excited fear that the Mormons, if they wished, could control by force the remainder of the state. There even arose the fear that Mormonism might engulf broad areas of the nation. This fear was further aggravated by Joseph's organizing the Council of Fifty in March of 1844. This council was composed of a select group of the Prophet's most trusted friends, including the Twelve. This semi-secret organization included high church officials, civic leaders, and prominent businessmen who met together to regulate the temporal affairs of the kingdom. This group was decried as an example of the Church's temporal ambitions which were repugnant to many outside the Church. This was particularly so since it was generally known that Mormon doctrine included the concept that eventually the temporal or political kingdom of God would govern the earth from the center stake of Zion. Some feared that Joseph aspired to take over the earth beginning in 1844!

3. Another contributing factor in the growing feeling against the Church was the fact that a Masonic Lodge was established in Nauvoo, and Joseph and several of the brethren became active in Masonry. This resulted in a rather wide spread prejudice, that existed against the Masons, being transferred to the Mormons. Ironically, the Mormon Masons, because of their rapid growth and the success of their lodge, produced jealousy even among their fellow Masons, and some Masons were further angered by Joseph's purported use of parts of the Masonic ceremony in the temple ordinances.

4. An additional element contributing to the saints' problems in Illinois was the rumor of plural marriage that began to circulate in Nauvoo. By 1843, a controlled form of plural marriage was practiced among a tightly closed circle of high church officials. The revelation on celestial and plural marriage, which was originally received in 1831, was finally recorded in July of 1843 [**D&C 132 - Celestial Marriage**] and circulated to only a very few of the brethren. The rumors of the practice became a scandal to non-Mormons in the state and was horrifying even to some of the saints in Nauvoo.

Section 132 Celestial Marriage

It seems likely that the ordinance of eternal or celestial marriage is even more important to our eternal life than we suspect or can even understand at this point in our development. Read the following quote from President Brigham Young:

The whole subject of the marriage relation is not in my reach, nor in any other man's reach on this earth. It is without beginning of days or end of years: it is a hard matter to reach. We can tell some things with regard to it: it lays the foundation for worlds, for angels, and for the Gods; for intelligent beings to be crowned with glory, immortality and eternal lives. In fact, it is the thread which runs from the beginning to the end of the holy Gospel of Salvation—of the Gospel of the Son of God; it is from eternity to eternity (JD, 2:90).

Celestial or eternal marriage is the ordinance by which couples enter into the “patriarchal order,” that order of priesthood which, when put into effect, will bind ancestry to posterity. In a way we don't understand fully, this sealing of generations to one another prevents the earth from being utterly wasted at the time of the Savior's second coming (D&C 2). We do know one simple fact that is pertinent to this principle. It is that in the celestial heaven, the celestial kingdom, there will be only one family. Each and every person there will be bonded to all others by the principle of eternal sealing—man to woman, parents to children, brothers to sisters, and a family to all other families. We will all be only one grand celestial family, and the Father and the Son are members of this family. It is this sealing ordinance and covenant that somehow leads to the ultimate and consummate blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is notable that at this point in our development, we are not given to understand completely the role of this single celestial family in the lives of each of us.

Section 132 is a revelation dealing with celestial marriage. It also contains information and explanations concerning the practice of plural marriage.

Note the date in the heading of section 132. That date is July 12, 1843. This is not the date when the revelation on celestial marriage was first given to Joseph. Note that the heading states that the revelation was recorded, not received, on that particular date. Joseph learned about plural marriage by revelation as early as 1831. He received this revelation in connection with his work on his inspired revision of the King James Bible. He started work on the Bible revision in June 1830 and began with the book of Genesis. When he came to the great patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon—who had more than one wife, he was provoked to ask of the Lord, “Why, Lord, didst thou justify thy servants in having many wives and concubines?” (see verse 1 of this section).

It certainly makes sense that if plural marriage is a part of the Lord's eternal plan, then that principle should be taught to those of this last dispensation, which we

understand to be the dispensation of the fulness of times, that is, that dispensation in which all of the gospel principles will be restored to the earth.

Joseph did inquire of the Lord and received a revelation in 1831. It may have been written down in that year, but today we have no such written record, and Joseph was instructed not to teach it to anyone until the time was right. It was thus kept very quiet. In 1841, after the saints had settled in Nauvoo, Joseph began to teach the principle of plural marriage to a few of his intimate friends and associates among the Church's leaders. The principle was practiced by Joseph and some others whom he authorized. There was also some unauthorized practicing of the principle. Oliver Cowdery, for example, became a polygamist without Joseph's approval, and this is one of the central reasons for his excommunication in 1838. We have already learned, in the background material for section 124, of John C. Bennett's abuses of the principle.

As one might suppose, the doctrine of plural marriage was a difficult pill for the saints to swallow. President John Taylor said, "When this system [polygamy] was first introduced among this people, it was one of the greatest crosses that was ever taken up by any set of men [and women, of course] since the world stood" (*JD*, 11:221).

One of those for whom the principle was particularly difficult was Emma Smith. Emma and Joseph apparently had serious problems over the principle. He confided some of these problems to his trusted brother Hyrum. Hyrum felt that he could convince Emma of the divine origin of the principle if only Joseph would write down the revelation on the subject and allow Hyrum to take it to Emma. A quote from the Prophet's scribe, William Clayton picks up the story:

On the morning of the 12th of July, 1843, Joseph and Hyrum Smith came into the office of the upper story of the "Brick-Store," on the bank of the Mississippi River. They were talking of the subject of plural marriage, [and] Hyrum said to Joseph, "If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take and read it to Emma, and I believe I can convince her of its truth, and you will hereafter have peace." Joseph smiled and remarked, "You do not know Emma as well as I do." Hyrum repeated his opinion, and further remarked, "The doctrine is so plain, I can convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity, and heavenly origin," or words to that effect. . . . Joseph and Hyrum then sat down, and Joseph commenced to dictate the revelation on Celestial Marriage, and I wrote it, sentence by sentence, as he dictated. [When he was about to dictate it to William Clayton, Hyrum asked Joseph to use his seerstone, but Joseph declined saying that he had the revelation perfectly memorized.] After the whole was written, Joseph asked me to read it through slowly and carefully, which I did, and he pronounced it correct (*Smith and Sjodahl, D&C Commentary, 820-21*).

Hyrum took the written revelation and went to Emma. She gave Hyrum what he referred to as a "severe talking to" (*HC*, 5:32-33). The tradition in the Church is that some time later she either burned it or persuaded Joseph to burn it, and she rejected the principle and Hyrum's attempt to convince her. Fortunately, a copy of the revelation

had been made before destruction of the original. One of the brethren who was particularly interested in obtaining a copy was Bishop Newell K. Whitney, as his daughter was already one of the plural wives of Joseph. Hence, William Clayton had allowed one Joseph Kingsbury to make a copy of the revelation to give to Bishop Whitney. This copy made by Joseph Kingsbury remained with the Church and was taken to Utah by Brigham Young. Until 1852 the principle was kept a secret from the public and even from most of the saints. In that year official announcement was made to the world of the practice of plural marriage in a special conference in August 1852. Elder Orson Pratt read the revelation to the congregation. Emma was opposed to the principle to her death and even denied publicly that her husband was involved in the practice of polygamy, claiming that Brigham Young was responsible for the doctrine. Even today, the Reorganized LDS Church denies that Joseph ever practiced polygamy. Please see the supplemental article "Joseph Smith's Polygamy."

After Joseph's death many sisters were sealed to him, but during his lifetime, the polygamy that was practiced was not just "paper polygamy." Polygamy was practiced secretly from 1841 to 1852, including the period of travel across the plains and the early period in Salt Lake City. Only those who had individual directions from the president of the Church practiced it.

Only an estimated two hundred of the saints knew of the principle and of section 132 until 1852, when the principle was announced to the public as church policy. At that time the revelation was made available for all of those who were interested to read it. It was first published in the *Deseret News* in August 1852. Orson Pratt included it in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876. Section 132 is not the original revelation received by Joseph in 1831, though undoubtedly parts of the 1831 revelation are contained in this important section.

While the practice of polygamy drew severe criticism from ministers of various religious denominations and from others, it was not until 1862 that it was held to be illegal. The first anti-bigamy law was passed by congress in 1862, but preoccupation with the Civil War and its aftermath delayed enforcement for over a decade.

In 1874, a member of the Church was arrested, tried before a jury, found guilty, sentenced to pay a fine of five hundred dollars, and jailed for two years at hard labor. This decision was upheld when appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. Brigham Young died in August 1877, and John Taylor was sustained as President of the Church in 1880. During the period of the presidency of John Taylor, 1880 to 1887, there was progressively intense persecution and prosecution of men living polygamy. In 1882 the Edmunds Law broadened the definition of punishable offenses. Not only was polygamy illegal, but men could now be arrested for "unlawful cohabitation."

By the 1880s it is estimated that about fifteen percent of all church members belonged to plural marriage families. Although there certainly were some abuses which

attracted wide spread notoriety, many enjoyed rich spiritual blessings if they were willing to put forth the effort required to successfully live this unique order of marriage.

In 1887 congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act which contained provisions specifying that the Church be disincorporated, the Perpetual Emigration Fund Company dissolved, and all property belonging to the Church, with the exception of buildings used exclusively for religious worship, be confiscated by the Federal Government. Hundreds of men practicing polygamy were heavily fined and imprisoned. This harsh law was also upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States in May 1890.

It became obvious that the only way to preserve the Church was to prohibit the practice of polygamy. Under these circumstances, Wilford Woodruff on September 24, 1890, issued his Official Declaration or “Manifesto” prohibiting the practice of polygamy. The Manifesto was approved by the Church in general conference on October 6, 1890.

In December 1891, one year after the Official Declaration, a petition signed by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve was prepared and forwarded to the president of the United States, asking that amnesty be granted to all violators of the federal law which prohibited the practice of plural marriage. The request on the petition was approved by the president.

Notwithstanding the Manifesto (“Official Declaration – 1,” as it is now called), over the years a few misguided members of the Church have secretly associated themselves together for the purpose of perpetuating the practice of plural marriage. They do this in obvious defiance of the pledge made to the United States government that we, as a Church, will no longer practice polygamy. These individuals have been promptly excommunicated from the Church, and the result has been the formation of several “fundamentalist” groups which continue to insist that plural marriage is still an essential doctrine of the Church.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 132 Celestial Marriage

D&C 132:7 All covenants, contracts, [etc.] not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise . . . are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead.

D&C 132:49 The Lord to Joseph Smith: I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—

verse 1 Here is the verse that provides us an explanation of the question in Joseph's mind that led to his receiving of a revelation on plural marriage some time in 1831.

“concubines” A concubine was “a wife of inferior legal status, such as a war captive or a domestic servant. Her situation might be limited because of her legal standing, but in general her relationship with her husband differed little from that of a regular wife” (Largey, *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 212).

verses 2-33 Revelation on eternal law and its application to celestial marriage.

2 Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

3 Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

verse 3 “obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you” The “instructions” which the Lord is about to give to Joseph include: (1) “the law” requiring that all covenants be entered into by proper authority to be valid; (2) the application of the law to the marriage of “a man” and “a wife” (verse 26); and (3) the practice of plural marriage.

4 For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.

verse 4 Keep in mind the distinction between “a” new and everlasting covenant and “the” new and everlasting covenant. “A” new and everlasting covenant spoken of in this verse is the covenant of celestial/plural marriage. “The” new and everlasting covenant is the gospel in its entirety with all its ordinances. The gospel consists of several other specific “new and everlasting covenants” such as baptism, sacrament, and priesthood. This verse seems to refer to the “new and everlasting covenant of marriage.” As with any covenant, if a person rejects a covenant or enters into a covenant and does not keep it, damnation follows. It does not matter whether it is the covenant of baptism or marriage, it is the same

“if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned” “Damned,” in the Church, has come to mean “stopped” or “limited in one’s spiritual progress.” But it more appropriately implies divine censure and penalty. Those of us who have received the highest ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood have an obligation to live the law or be damned. “For of him unto whom much is given, much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:3).

5 For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world.

verse 5 “all who will have a blessing at my hands” Compare this verse to D&C 130:20-21. See also the commentary for these latter two verses.

6 And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.

verse 6 Again, “*the new and everlasting covenant*” refers to the gospel which was, as the verse says, instituted so that man may receive “the fulness of my glory” or all that the Father hath. Another reason why the gospel has been restored is that the Father and Son are somehow glorified when a man is exalted. Thus, the gospel was restored for “the fulness of my [the Lord’s] glory.”

The term “new and everlasting covenant” is, in a way a rather contradictory term. All of the principles of the gospel are old and have been on the earth intermittently since the time of Adam. They have even been on other worlds. They are eternal and everlasting. Why “new” then? They are new in the sense that they are restored in a new dispensation—after a period of darkness.

“he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned” Again, the Lord repeats the idea that if an individual enters into the covenants of “the new and everlasting covenant” and then fails to live up to those covenants, then he will be damned and cannot receive of his fulness which is exaltation.

7 And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.

verse 7 This verse is an unusually important verse of scripture, although its full meaning may not be apparent with the first reading.

Everything we do in the Church has potential eternal consequences. In the last analysis, probably all of the commandments or the things we are asked to do for the Lord are spiritual rather than simply temporal in their nature (D&C 29:34-35). For

example, going to meetings, saying “amen” after prayers, home teaching, taking the sacrament, singing hymns, praying, teaching a class, going to the temple, participating in ordinances—all of these things may produce spiritual benefit or spiritual growth in us, but only if they are participated in with the proper motives and attitudes—for the right reasons. If we do participate with proper motives and for the right reasons, then the action will be ratified, sanctified, or given a stamp of approval by the Lord. Now, the Lord has designated one of the Godhead to actually carry out this ratifying function. This is the Holy Ghost. In this function, the Holy Ghost is spoken of as the “Holy Spirit of promise” or the “sealer.” To be sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise is to be made eternally binding. In this capacity, the Spirit searches the heart, and he may ratify an action when an individual is sincere and properly motivated. He may also withhold his ratification if an individual does “the right thing for the wrong reason.” Ultimately, it is his prerogative to seal a man up unto eternal life. This is referred to as being “sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.” Thus we learn that the Holy Ghost, in addition to the Second Comforter (Christ), can seal a man up to eternal life or make his “calling and election sure.”

Perfect righteousness is the state where all our righteous actions are in perfect harmony with pure motives—doing all the right things for the right reasons. There may, however, be quite a gap between the outward action, the outward sign, the outward ordinance, and the true inward feeling or motivation. For example, we may partake of the sacrament (the outward ordinance), but we may not receive a remission of our sins and a renewal of our baptism unless the ordinance is ratified by the Holy Spirit of promise. It will not be ratified unless we are truly repentant and partake of the sacrament with the proper spirit and attitude. Other poignant examples might include temple attendance, paying of tithes and other contributions, home teaching and visiting teaching, etc. Each of us is imperfect and may do many of the right things for the wrong reasons. We can fool many people—even ourselves, but “the Comforter knoweth all things” (D&C 42:17). It is not possible to lie to the Holy Ghost and thereby gain an undeserved blessing.

“of him who is anointed” No ordinance can be made eternally binding lest that ordinance is performed under the authority of the one who holds the sealing power. There is only one person at a time who holds the keys of the sealing power—the president of the Church.

“no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection” “Efficacy” means to have the power to produce results. “Virtue” also means having the power to produce results. “Force” means to compel validity. By using these three words together, the Lord declares without reservation that there is no way one can receive the eternal promises unless covenants are made by proper authority and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. There are no private agreements, no back doors, no climbing over side fences, no sneaking in behind someone else. Agreements and obligations can only be

completed through the power of the priesthood and the sealing power of the Holy Spirit of promise. No one else, or anything else, has the power to produce the eternal conditions or effects.

verses 8-12 These verses reiterate a well-known concept—that the Lord’s house is a house of order. There is only one way back to heaven or to any level of salvation. It is by the Lord’s command. There are absolutely no exceptions, no corners which may be cut, no deviations. Justice will be done, and the exceptions made by the Savior according to the law of mercy are made by strict criteria.

8 Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.

9 Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name?

10 Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?

11 And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?

12 I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord.

13 And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God.

14 For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed.

verses 13-14 When the dust finally settles, following the resurrection of all mankind, the only things which will remain from this mortal world are our spirits and memories, the spiritual gifts we have been given through our obedience to law, and those relationships we have made with one another, including and especially with those in our families. The institution of the family will certainly endure past the resurrection.

15 Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

verse 15 In this verse the marriage “in the world” is that marriage involving unbelievers—those married outside the scope of the gospel and the eternal marriage covenant—whose marriages are performed without priesthood authority. These

marriages last “until death do you part.” Each one of these marriage contracts is, therefore, at the same time, a divorce decree—which takes effect at the death of either partner. While both partners are alive, however, the Lord does recognize the marriage.

16 Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

verse 16 “when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage” Again, this statement applies to those unbelievers who have rejected the gospel and also the eternal marriage covenant. These will never have the opportunity to marry following this earth life.

The context of this verse explains the meaning of the confusing New Testament scripture found in Matthew 22:23-33: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:29-30). Interestingly, these verses in Matthew are often cited today as scriptural evidence against the doctrine of eternal marriage. How do we explain Jesus’s statement to the Sadducees of his day? The standard answer given by church members today is that marriage is an ordinance which can only be performed on the earth prior to the resurrection. “Whether that will be the case or not, we have no way of knowing. We should remember, however, that the first resurrection precedes the millennial era, when it is supposed that such matters [eternal marriages] will be attended to. This passage [Matthew 22:30] does not say that there cannot be marriage in the Millennium or at some subsequent time. It simply states that unbelievers, ‘Sadducees,’ be they ancient or modern, cannot be sealed for time and eternity” (*Studies in Scripture, Volume Five, The Gospels*, Joseph F. McConkie, 390. See also Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Life Beyond*, 98-100). It is clear that it is the unbelievers—those who rejected the gospel and the eternal marriage covenant and are not married by proper priesthood authority—who “when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage.”

“appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants” This phrase has caused some confusion in the Church. It seems to imply one of two possible things: (1) that those unbelievers who reject the gospel and the eternal covenant of marriage will somehow have an opportunity to be a ministering angel “in heaven,” presumably the celestial kingdom. (2) or that those faithful saints who have accepted the gospel, who do not happen to marry during this mortal life, will be excluded from ever enjoying the blessings of an eternal marital relationship. We know that neither is true. In order to gain entrance to the celestial heaven, a man must be worthy of his exaltation whether or not he has married on this earth. And, it will surely be the right of each celestial person to decide whether or not he or she wishes to go on

to become creator gods. This is a decision each celestial individual will be able to make freely. Some may choose simply to become ministering angels. This verse cannot imply that individuals who do not marry on earth for a variety of reasons will be automatically excluded from an eternal marital relationship simply because they failed to marry by the proper priesthood authority. Each of us is acquainted with worthy celestial individuals, who would like to have married in this life but it simply did not happen. Surely these will have ample opportunity to be bound in an eternal marital relationship following this earth life. President Lorenzo Snow taught: “There is no latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive” (Snow, *Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, 138).

There are doubtless some celestial individuals who will choose, for reasons of their own, to live eternally without a marriage partner. They will deliberately choose not to become gods. This phrase of scripture does apply to them. These will be appointed to serve those celestial “priests and kings” (D&C 76:56) who have chosen eternal marriage. This particular phrase may also refer to those saved to a lesser degree of glory—a lesser heaven—where they will not have an opportunity to have an eternal spouse or eternal progeny. Joseph Smith taught: “Gods have an ascendancy over the angels who are ministering servants. In the resurrection, some are raised to be angels, others are raised to become Gods” (*TPJS*, 312).

17 For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever.

verse 17 “these angels did not abide my law” While those who become ministering angels in the celestial realm choose not to be bound in an eternal marital relationship—they “did not abide my law”—the reference here may be more to those who do not inherit celestial glory.

“they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly” They will not have eternal progeny.

“without exaltation” The word *exaltation* in the Church has come to have two separate meanings. All those who inherit celestial glory may be said to be exalted. In a narrower definition, only those who receive the highest degree within the celestial kingdom may be said to be exalted (see section 131 and its commentary).

18 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there, because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore, inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God.

verse 18 Verse 15 has described one type of marriage—that performed “until death do you part.” This verse describes a second type of marriage, the “counterfeit eternal marriage.” It is marriage performed for time and all eternity by someone who lacks the proper authority. It, of course, will not be binding for eternity.

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

verse 19 This verse describes a third type of marriage—celestial or eternal marriage performed by proper authority. The verse describes the consummate eternal, spiritual opportunity. It says simply that if a man enters into the covenant of eternal marriage, honors all the covenants of the gospel, and does not commit murder—shed innocent blood—then he will come forth in the first resurrection, inherit all that the Father has and is, and have an eternal continuation of spirit progeny. His calling and election will be made sure—he will be sealed up to eternal life by the Holy Spirit of promise.

One note of caution. This verse has been interpreted by some to mean that if a couple is sealed by proper authority in the temple, then their calling and election is made sure with the only other requirement being that they not commit murder (see also verse 26). This, of course, is illogical and untrue. The Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit of

promise, knows the hearts of all people and will seal or ratify eternally only those relationships which are worthy for such ratification. This will occur only if both keep all of their gospel covenants. If one or both members of the partnership fail to live up to their covenants, then the Spirit will withdraw the seal, and the eternal relationship is null and void.

“if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection” Please review the sequence of resurrections in the commentary for 2 Nephi 9:15. Those who are exalted will come forth from the grave in the morning of the first resurrection, meaning the celestial resurrection. The “next resurrection” in this verse seems to refer to celestial resurrection rather than terrestrial or telesial resurrection. Hence, the statement “in the next resurrection” has caused some confusion. There are two possible explanations. First it could be that those who came forth from the grave with Christ in the meridian of time would be classified in this verse as those coming forth in the “first resurrection,” and all others who come forth later in the morning of the first resurrection would be classified as coming forth in the “next resurrection.” Another possibility could be that those who live on the earth during the millennial reign, when a person will die and be resurrected in a twinkling of an eye, are part of “the next resurrection.”

“continuation of the seeds” This phrase means to have a continual increase of spirit children. The reader should make note of other words that refer to the having of eternal progeny in section 132. These include “enlarged,” “they have no end,” “they continue,” “continuation of the lives,” and “eternal lives.” The Lord uses all of these phrases for the continuation of the family unit. Perhaps the celestial ministering angel is involved in an eternal family unit, but he does not participate in perpetuating an eternal family throughout the eternities.

20 Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

verse 20 “they have no end” “they continue” They have eternal progeny.

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

verse 21 “except ye abide my law” Unless you are sealed in marriage.

22 For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

verse 22 “strait is the gate” The word “strait,” of course, does not mean “straight”, rather it means “narrow,” “restricted,” “difficult,” “exacting.” See the supplemental article in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon, Strait and Straight in the Book of Mormon*.

“continuation of the lives” This phrase refers to having eternal progeny.

23 But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

24 This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law.

verse 24 “eternal lives” This phrase refers to the having of eternal progeny.

25 Broad is the gate, and wide the way that leadeth to the deaths; and many there are that go in thereat, because they receive me not, neither do they abide in my law.

verse 25 “leadeth to the deaths” “The deaths” does not mean that some individuals will fail to live forever. Rather, it means “no more seed,” the dissolution of the family unit beyond the grave.

26 Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man marry a wife according to my word, and they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, according to mine appointment, and he or she shall commit any sin or transgression of the new and everlasting covenant whatever, and all manner of blasphemies, and if they commit no murder wherein they shed innocent blood, yet they shall come forth in the first resurrection, and enter into their exaltation; but they shall be destroyed in the flesh, and shall be delivered unto the buffetings of Satan unto the day of redemption, saith the Lord God.

verse 26 This verse has been a source of considerable confusion. It seems to say that if a man and a woman are sealed together appropriately in the temple, and the Holy Spirit of promise ratifies the sealing, then the couple may subsequently commit all manner of sins, except for murder, and still be guaranteed their exaltation. Could this be true? No, of course not. There is no such thing in the gospel as an absolute guarantee of exaltation, as man always maintains his agency and never sheds the responsibility for his actions and thoughts. Even a man who has had his “calling and election made sure” can still fall. There are three concepts contained in the verse that we often miss with a first reading. These two concepts are: (1) The couple, after they are sealed to one another for eternity, has also been sealed up to eternal life. (2) Following the couple’s being sealed up to eternal life, they commit all manner of sin and blasphemies. (3) They qualify for a celestial resurrection only after they are destroyed in the flesh and are turned over to the buffetings of Satan.

Let us attempt a clarification. There is apparently a certain level of “light” or spiritual progress an individual may reach in this life that imposes an exceedingly solemn obligation upon him or her. The individual who has reached this lofty level of spiritual development has entered into and fulfilled all the covenants of the gospel including celestial marriage, and he has been sealed up to eternal life by the Holy Spirit of promise—he has had his calling and election made sure. Almost invariably, the man who has attained this spiritual plateau will continue on to his exaltation. However, if he should fall, then the consequences are especially grave. “For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:3). If he were to lose, for example, the Spirit and become an enemy to the Church, coming out in open rebellion against the Church, then he has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, the unpardonable sin, and will never achieve exaltation. He is guilty of “shedding innocent blood,” the innocent blood of Christ, and assenting unto the Savior’s death. He crucifies the Son of God afresh. There is no redemption possible for this man. He will become forever a son of perdition, consigned forever to outer darkness. If on the other hand, that same individual loses the Spirit and commits serious sin but does not become an enemy of the Church, he is still in very serious trouble, and it is most unlikely that he will ever be exalted. It is possible, however, for him to achieve exaltation through a very difficult and hazardous procedure. By falling from his lofty state, he has rejected and forsaken Christ’s atonement, and therefore, he must pay the penalty himself. This is done by being destroyed in the flesh and being turned over to “the buffetings of Satan” until the second coming of the Savior. This is the basis of the so-called “blood atonement doctrine.” Does this mean that such a person should be put to death by the Church by the shedding of his blood? Certainly that meaning is implied, and perhaps that would be done if a righteous theocracy governed the earth. Today, however, the Church does not have legal authority for such actions, and it is not the doctrine of the Church that such persons should be executed. We simply leave the remote possibility of their exaltation to the Lord. Can you imagine how awful and frightening it must be to be turned over to the “buffetings of Satan?!” The important point to emphasize is that through the process of being destroyed in the flesh and being turned over to Satan, the individual may only be exalted if he successfully and completely repents of his sins and does so under very difficult and trying circumstances. It is most unlikely that he will be successful.

“if a man marry a wife according to my word” The couple has been sealed eternally together by the ordinance of celestial marriage.

“they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” This phrase refers to their being sealed up to eternal life and does not only refer to their being sealed together in marriage. The ultimate manifestation of the Holy Spirit of promise is in connection with having one’s calling and election made sure—that is, receiving “the more sure word of

prophecy” testifying that an individual is sealed up to eternal life (D&C 131:5). The Holy Spirit of promise validates this blessing or seals it upon the person. Referring to the Holy Spirit of promise the Lord says, “This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the Celestial Kingdom” (D&C 88:4; cf. *Mormon Doctrine*, 361-62) (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, volume 2, “Holy Spirit of Promise”).

“he or she shall commit any sin or transgression of the new and everlasting covenant whatever, and all manner of blasphemies” This couple has committed significant sin subsequent to their being sealed up to eternal life. As we read this verse, we are initially inclined to interpret this particular phrase as a hypothetical, “what if . . .” phrase. It is not. It declares that the sealed couple commits serious sins after their calling and election is made sure. It is now easy to see why verse 26 has caused confusion. When one reads the verse it is easy to miss the fact that the couple has been married according to the Lord’s word *and* been sealed up to eternal life. They then fell from their position of being sealed up to eternal life through their losing of the Spirit and forsaking the choicest earthly blessing the Lord can bestow. They have broken the seal.

“yet they shall come forth in the first resurrection, and enter into their exaltation; but they shall be destroyed in the flesh, and shall be delivered unto the buffetings of Satan unto the day of redemption” This phrase teaches they theoretically can achieve exaltation, but only if they repent under extremely difficult circumstances. As mentioned, it is unlikely they will be able to withstand the conditions of that repentance. It is a theoretical possibility only. As we first read this phrase, we are initially inclined to think it means they will be exalted regardless of their sin. That is clearly not the case.

Perhaps an additional word of explanation on the doctrine of blood atonement is appropriate. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has provided us a clear explanation:

From the days of Joseph Smith to the present, wicked and evilly-disposed persons have fabricated false and slanderous stories to the effect that the Church, in the early days of this dispensation, engaged in a practice of blood atonement whereunder the blood of apostates and others was shed by the Church as an atonement for their sins. These claims are false and were known by their originators to be false. There is not one historical instance of so-called blood atonement in this dispensation, nor has there been one event or occurrence whatever, of any nature, from which the slightest inference arises that any such practice either existed or was taught.

There are, however, in the sermons of some of the early church leaders some statements about the true doctrine of blood atonement and of its practice in past dispensations, for instance, in the days of Moses. By taking one sentence on one page and another from a succeeding page and even by taking a part of a sentence on one page and a part of another found several pages away—all wholly torn from context—

dishonest persons have attempted to make it appear that Brigham Young and others taught things just the opposite of what they really believed and taught.

Raising the curtain of truth on this false and slanderous bluster of enemies of the Church who have thus wilfully chosen to fight the truth with outright lies of the basest sort, the true doctrine of blood atonement is simply this:

1. Jesus Christ worked out the infinite and eternal atonement by the shedding of his own blood. He came into the world for the purpose of dying on the cross for the sins of the world. By virtue of that atoning sacrifice immortality came as a free gift to all men, and all who would believe and obey his laws would in addition be cleansed from sin through his blood (Mosiah 3:16-19; 3 Ne. 27:19-21; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 5:9-10).

2. But under certain circumstances there are some serious sins for which the cleansing of Christ does not operate, and the law of God is that men must then have their own blood shed to atone for their sins. Murder, for instance, is one of these sins; hence we find the Lord commanding capital punishment. Thus, also, if a person has so progressed in righteousness that his calling and election has been made sure, if he has come to that position where he knows “by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood” that he is sealed up unto eternal life (D&C 131:5), then if he [is to gain] forgiveness for certain grievous sins, he must “be destroyed in the flesh,” and “delivered unto the buffetings of Satan unto the day of redemption, saith the Lord God” (D&C 132:19-27).

President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: “Man may commit certain grievous sins—according to his light and knowledge—that will place him beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ. If then he would be saved, he must make sacrifice of his own life to atone—so far as in his power lies—for that sin, for the blood of Christ alone under certain circumstances will not avail. . . . Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent. Therefore their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, volume 1, 133-38). This doctrine can only be practiced in its fulness in a day when the civil and ecclesiastical laws are administered in the same hands. It was, for instance, practiced in the days of Moses, but it was not and could not be practiced in this dispensation, except that persons who understood its provisions could and did use their influence to get a form of capital punishment written into the laws of the various states of the union so that the blood of murderers could be shed (Bruce R. McConkie, “Blood Atonement Doctrine,” *Mormon Doctrine*, 92).

27 The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven in the world nor out of the world, is in that ye commit murder wherein ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death, after ye have received my new and everlasting

covenant, saith the Lord God; and he that abideth not this law can in nowise enter into my glory, but shall be damned, saith the Lord.

verse 27 “The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost” This verse contains an explanation of the unpardonable sin, but again the verse is incomplete! The person in question has not only participated in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, but he has also lived the kind of life that has enabled him to achieve the blessing of being sealed up to eternal life by the Holy Spirit of Promise. In other words he has had his calling and election made sure.

“ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death” This phrase does not really describe a literal murder. Rather this wording refers to the forsaking of Christ by one who has had his calling and election made sure. He has become an enemy of Christ and of his Church.

28 I am the Lord thy God, and will give unto thee the law of my Holy Priesthood, as was ordained by me and my Father before the world was.

verse 28 “law of my Holy Priesthood” The law of the priesthood is the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the oath and covenant of that priesthood, and all of its attending ordinances and covenants. These constitute the law of the priesthood.

verses 29-33 Those who enter into celestial marriage are promised the “blessings given to Abraham”—that is, their posterity will be as numerous as stars in heavens and the particles of sand on the seashore. Who was it that returned the keys of the “dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” to the earth? For the answer—or at least for a discussion of the possible answers—see the commentary for section 110:12.

29 Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne.

verse 29 “Abraham received all things” Eternal marriage and the promise of eternal increase is not a new law given for the first time in this dispensation. Rather, it has been given to each dispensation starting with Adam and Eve. They were married in the Garden of Eden by God himself (*HC*, 2:320).

“sitteth upon his throne” Abraham has been resurrected with a celestial body and has been exalted.

30 Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph—which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue; both in the world and out of the world should they

continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them.

verse 30 “Abraham received promises concerning his seed” For of the review of the Abrahamic covenant, see the commentary for 1 Nephi 14:8. The Lord is teaching Joseph Smith that all of the tenets of the Abrahamic covenant apply to him.

31 This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself.

verse 31 “This promise is yours also” Here the Lord seems to be directing his instructions directly to Joseph Smith (see verse 30) but we may apply them to the saints in general.

“by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father” Here the Lord refers to the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Some have even suggested that the Lord is referring even to that aspect having to do with plural marriage.

32 Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.

verse 32 “enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved” Is this a direct command for Joseph to practice plural marriage? Perhaps it is only a command for Joseph and the saints to enter into the law of eternal celestial marriage.

33 But if ye enter not into my law ye cannot receive the promise of my Father, which he made unto Abraham.

verses 34-48 Revelation concerning the principle of plural marriage.

verses 34-39 In these verses the Lord applies the law to plural marriage and answers the question Joseph Smith asked concerning the early prophets who had plural wives (verse 1). The Lord simply states that he had given them the law of eternal marriage and then commanded them to take more than one wife by that covenant. Because they obeyed this law in righteousness, “they entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones and are not angels but are gods” (verse 37).

It appears that the Lord’s command to Abraham concerning plural marriage is an exception to the law of marriage that a man should have one wife (D&C 49:16; Jacob 2:27-30). A scriptural example of the Lord’s giving a law and then sometimes making an exception to it is found in his command “thou shalt not kill,” and yet the Lord commanded Nephi to kill Laban (1 Nephi 4). Likewise, the Lord commanded Abraham to offer Isaac upon the altar. The Prophet Joseph taught: “God said, ‘thou shalt not kill’; at another time he said, ‘Thou shalt utterly destroy.’ This is the principle on which the

government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire” (*HC*, 5:135).

Abraham obeyed all things that the Lord commanded him to do. In referring to Abraham’s righteousness, the prophet Joseph observed: “Abraham was guided in all his family affairs by the Lord; was conversed with by angels and by the Lord; was told where to go, and when to stop; and prospered exceedingly in all that he put his hand unto; it was because he and his family obeyed the counsel of the Lord” (*HC*, 5:64).

34 God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises.

35 Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it.

36 Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac; nevertheless, it was written: Thou shalt not kill. Abraham, however, did not refuse, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness.

37 Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law; as Isaac also and Jacob did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.

38 David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

verse 38 “save in those things which they received not of me” Solomon was given multiple wives by the Lord through the prophet Nathan, who held the keys of the priesthood, but later in life Solomon chose to marry many “strange women” of different countries that God did not give him. In fact, he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. “And his wives turned away his heart” (1 Kings 11:3) from the Lord. For this he was condemned by the Lord (1 Kings 11:9-13).

39 David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his

portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord.

verse 39 David also was directed by the Lord to take additional wives, and he enjoyed the approbation of the heavens so long as he stayed within the bounds the Lord had set. David, however, had an illicit relationship with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. After she conceived, David plotted to hide the affair by having Uriah killed in battle and then marrying Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12). However, God knows all things and understands the hearts of all men. God judged David guilty not only of adultery but also of murder, by which he lost his exaltation. Just where David will be in eternity is not stated, but Joseph Smith gave us this insight to David's eternal condition: "No murderer hath eternal life. Even David must wait for those times of refreshing, before he can come forth and his sins be blotted out. . . . Now, we read that many bodies of the saints arose at Christ's resurrection, probably all the saints, but it seems that David did not. Why? Because he had been a murderer" (*HC*, 4:359). At another time the Prophet taught: "A murderer, for instance, one that sheds innocent blood, cannot have forgiveness. David sought repentance at the hand of God carefully with tears, for the murder of Uriah; but he could only get it through hell: he got a promise that his soul should not be left in hell" (*HC*, 6:253). David will have to pay the price of the broken law before he could be resurrected and enter into a kingdom of God. His righteous wives were taken from him and given to another because he was not worthy of a more exalted glory.

Jacob, in the Book of Mormon, warned his people: "Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me saith the Lord" (Jacob 2:24). When both scriptural passages are read together (Jacob 2 and D&C 132), it becomes clear that the Lord was condemning unauthorized plural marriages and not the principle of plural marriage per se.

40 I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, and restore all things. Ask what ye will, and it shall be given unto you according to my word.

verse 40 "I . . . the Lord . . . restore all things" The question is often asked: Why did the Lord require the early saints to live plural marriage? We will have to wait for a full answer to this question, but two considerations seem reasonable and in harmony with the scriptures. First, in Jacob 2:30 and D&C 132:63, the Lord declares that plural marriage is for the purpose of raising up seed unto him. From the practice of plural marriage came a large and faithful descendancy that gave strength to the Church. Second, as the Lord declares in this verse, restoring plural marriage is included in the restoration of all things. Joseph Smith declared: "All the ordinances and duties that ever have been required by the priesthood, under the directions and commandments of the Almighty in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last dispensation,

therefore all things had under the authority of the priesthood at any former period, shall be had again, bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets" (*HC*, 4:210-211). This apparently included the practice of plural marriage.

verses 41-44 The Lord's answer to a question of Joseph's concerning the committing of adultery.

It is apparent from these verses that Joseph Smith asked the Lord about adultery in connection with plural marriage. Adultery is committed whenever a married person enters a sexual relationship outside the bonds of marriage. The Lord informs the saints that adultery in plural marriage would be committed if anyone entered a sexual relationship without being married by one of God's anointed (verse 41). If the marriage was not contracted by his authority and under the direction of his anointed, it was wrong, and therefore sin was committed. This applies to both the husband (verse 43) and the wife (verse 41). The Lord also teaches in verses 44 that a sinning spouse cannot hold back a righteous spouse from receiving exaltation. At some time during eternity, all righteous individuals will have the sealing powers of marriage exercised in their behalf. In this case, the righteous spouse of a sinning spouse will be sealed to one who is faithful and worthy of the blessings of exaltation (verse 44).

41 And as ye have asked concerning adultery, verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man receiveth a wife in the new and everlasting covenant, and if she be with another man, and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing, she hath committed adultery and shall be destroyed.

42 If she be not in the new and everlasting covenant, and she be with another man, she has committed adultery.

43 And if her husband be with another woman, and he was under a vow, he hath broken his vow and hath committed adultery.

44 And if she hath not committed adultery, but is innocent and hath not broken her vow, and she knoweth it, and I reveal it unto you, my servant Joseph, then shall you have power, by the power of my Holy Priesthood, to take her and give her unto him that hath not committed adultery but hath been faithful; for he shall be made ruler over many.

verses 45-50 The Lord teaches about the use of priesthood keys in the sealing of couples. Who restored the keys of the sealing power to the earth? Look in section 110:13-16 for this answer also.

45 For I have conferred upon you the keys and power of the priesthood, wherein I restore all things, and make known unto you all things in due time.

verse 45 “I have conferred upon you the keys and the power of the priesthood” Peter, James, and John restored the powers of the priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Elias and Elijah restored the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham and the keys of the sealing powers of the priesthood (D&C 11). These are the same keys that were granted to Peter (Matthew 16:19). It is through these keys that the power to marry for time and eternity on earth and having it sealed in heaven becomes a reality.

verses 46-48 These verses contain a reiteration of the power of the keys of the sealing power of the priesthood held by the prophet president of the Church in these latter days. Whatsoever is bound or loosed on earth, will be bound or loosed in heaven.

46 And verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven.

47 And again, verily I say, whomsoever you bless I will bless, and whomsoever you curse I will curse, saith the Lord; for I, the Lord, am thy God.

48 And again, verily I say unto you, my servant Joseph, that whatsoever you give on earth, and to whomsoever you give any one on earth, by my word and according to my law, it shall be visited with blessings and not cursings, and with my power, saith the Lord, and shall be without condemnation on earth and in heaven.

verses 49-66 Revelation concerning the practice of marriage by Joseph and Emma.

49 For I am the Lord thy God, and will be with thee even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity; for verily I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father.

verse 49 “I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father” Joseph’s calling and election is made sure!

50 Behold, I have seen your sacrifices, and will forgive all your sins; I have seen your sacrifices in obedience to that which I have told you. Go, therefore, and I make a way for your escape, as I accepted the offering of Abraham of his son Isaac.

verse 50 “I make a way for your escape, as I accepted the offering of Abraham of his son Isaac” The meaning of this intriguing verse is not entirely clear.

Abraham was commanded by the Lord to do something very difficult, even something that Abraham had formerly thought was a violation of the commandments. Before Abraham could accomplish this sacrifice of his son Isaac, the Lord “made a way for [his] escape,” that is, he stayed Abraham’s hand and reassured him that his willingness to do the hard thing was sufficient. The Lord had witnessed Joseph’s willingness to sacrifice in many different ways and on many occasions. It is difficult, however, to see how the Lord made for Joseph “a way for your escape” unless the Lord is referring to Joseph’s martyrdom which will occur in just less than a year. Also it could be that the Lord had given Joseph some challenging commands that he eventually did not require of him. See the commentary for verse 51.

verses 51-66 These verses contain the Lord’s stern counsel to Emma Smith. She is encouraged to submit to the will of the Lord pertaining to her husband—to yield her heart to the mind of God regarding the matter of plural marriage. Note how the wording indicates that Joseph is already practicing plural marriage.

When section 132 was recorded, in July of 1843, it was not intended for distribution to the entire Church. Rather, it was recorded in a specific effort to encourage Emma Smith to accept the doctrine of plural marriage. President Joseph F. Smith indicated that these specific verses to Emma might not have been included in section 132 if the July 12, 1843 revelation had been intended for consumption by the whole Church as binding doctrine:

When the revelation was written in 1843, it was for a special purpose, by the request of the Patriarch Hyrum Smith, and was not then designated to go forth to the church or to the world. It is most probable that had it been then written with a view to its going out as doctrine of the Church, it would have been presented in a somewhat different form. There are personalities contained in a part of it [section 132] which are not relevant to the principle itself, but rather to the circumstances which necessitated its being written at that time. Joseph Smith, on the day it was written, expressly declared that there was a great deal more connected with the doctrine which would be revealed in due time, but this was sufficient for the occasion, and was made to suffice for the time (JD, 20:29).

51 Verily, I say unto you: A commandment I give unto mine handmaid, Emma Smith, your wife, whom I have given unto you, that she stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her; for I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice.

verse 51 Here is another enigmatic, but most intriguing verse. It obviously contains instructions about things that were known only to God, Joseph, and Emma. Evidently, the Lord was putting Joseph and Emma through an Abraham-type test of

faithfulness. And, as it was with Abraham, there was, so to speak, a “ram in the thicket” for them both. Both were spared having to actually perform some challenging commands which are not clarified in the revelation. In the following verses, the Lord makes it clear that he is willing to forgive both Joseph and Emma for failing to do this most difficult thing.

As is well known, Emma Smith later chose not to follow Brigham Young and the Quorum of Twelve in the exodus of the saints to the Great Basin. Further, she encouraged the April 1860 appointment of her son Joseph Smith III as president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Obviously the judgment of Emma must remain with the Son of God. He knows her heart and knows that she stood solidly by her husband as a strong supporter for many years.

52 And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God.

verse 52 This verse makes it clear that Joseph was already practicing the principle of plural marriage at the time of the recording of this revelation.

53 For I am the Lord thy God, and ye shall obey my voice; and I give unto my servant Joseph that he shall be made ruler over many things; for he hath been faithful over a few things, and from henceforth I will strengthen him.

54 And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.

verse 54 “if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed” What does the word *destroyed* actually mean in this context? Often we use the word destroyed to mean “killed” or “to suffer death in the flesh.” However, the word is also used in scripture to mean “cast out.” Peter quoted Moses when he said that the Lord would raise up a prophet like unto Moses and every person who will not hear the words of that prophet will be destroyed from among the people (Acts 3:22-23). When this prophecy is discussed in the Book of Mormon, however, the warning is that the people would be cut off or removed from among the people (1 Nephi 22:20). In the Doctrine and Covenants, the term used is “cast out” (see D&C 42:75, for example). Today the word used is *excommunication*.

55 But if she will not abide this commandment, then shall my servant Joseph do all things for her, even as he hath said; and I will bless him and multiply him and give unto him an hundredfold in this world, of fathers and mothers, brothers and

sisters, houses and lands, wives and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds.

56 And again, verily I say, let mine handmaid forgive my servant Joseph his trespasses; and then shall she be forgiven her trespasses, wherein she has trespassed against me; and I, the Lord thy God, will bless her, and multiply her, and make her heart to rejoice.

57 And again, I say, let not my servant Joseph put his property out of his hands, lest an enemy come and destroy him; for Satan seeketh to destroy; for I am the Lord thy God, and he is my servant; and behold, and lo, I am with him, as I was with Abraham, thy father, even unto his exaltation and glory.

verse 57 “let not my servant Joseph put his property out of his hands” It is not clear in the history of the Church what property is referred to here or what the circumstances were that surround this command. Could it be that the Lord is referring to his plural wives? See the phrase “with that that belongeth unto him” in verse 61 and “they belongeth to him” in verse 62.

58 Now, as touching the law of the priesthood, there are many things pertaining thereunto.

verse 58 “the law of the priesthood” See the commentary for verse 28.

59 Verily, if a man be called of my Father, as was Aaron, by mine own voice, and by the voice of him that sent me, and I have endowed him with the keys of the power of this priesthood, if he do anything in my name, and according to my law and by my word, he will not commit sin, and I will justify him.

verse 59 The Lord makes it clear that Joseph is justified in his practicing of plural marriage.

60 Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph; for I will justify him; for he shall do the sacrifice which I require at his hands for his transgressions, saith the Lord your God.

verse 60 “Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph” Exactly what is the implication of the verb *set* or *set on* in this phrase? There are a few definitions for the word *set* taken from *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* that might be applicable here. They include “to oppose;” “to cause to stop or to obstruct;” and “to reject, as in set aside.”

verses 61-65 These verses reveal the proper course of action between a husband and wife as they entered into the practice of plural marriage. The “law of Sarah” is that when a husband has been commanded to take a second wife, he must consult the first wife, and she must give her consent. If he does not consult the first wife, then he has broken the law of Sarah. If the first wife should chose not to accept

the practice of plural marriage after the husband had been commanded to live it and the wife had been taught properly, the husband then was exempt from the law of Sarah, and his wife became the transgressor. The husband could then proceed as commanded by the Lord. This law is named after Sarah, as Abraham and Sarah were the ideal example of the proper course of action when the Lord commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife (verse 65). The husband is not to act alone, but the wife also must be obedient to the law of the Lord. If she refuses consent, then she has broken the law of Sarah. As with any command of God, if a person obeys the command, blessings and promises will be the result. If the person disobeys, cursings and punishments will result.

61 And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

62 And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.

63 But if one or either of the ten virgins, after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed; for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified.

verses 61-63 It is interesting to note these verses inserted into the middle of those verses that sternly counsel Emma regarding her serious misgiving over the practice of polygamy. It seems likely that Emma accepted eternity-only sealing months before she accepted time-and-eternity sealings.

A plausible reason that these verses are inserted here, is that they particularly address directly the aspect of polygamy with which Emma struggled the most.

64 And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her; for I will magnify my name upon all those who receive and abide in my law.

verse 64 “if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power” The first wife holds “the keys” to the law of Sarah. She must be consulted and give her

consent prior to her husband's taking another wife. She will only hold these keys if she supports the practice of plural marriage. We will learn in the following verse that if the wife refuses to support the law of plural marriage, then she forfeits her right to the keys, and her husband is exempt from the law of Sarah.

65 Therefore, it shall be lawful in me, if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things whatsoever I, the Lord his God, will give unto him, because she did not believe and administer unto him according to my word; and she then becomes the transgressor; and he is exempt from the law of Sarah, who administered unto Abraham according to the law when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife.

66 And now, as pertaining to this law, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will reveal more unto you, hereafter; therefore, let this suffice for the present. Behold, I am Alpha and Omega. Amen.

Section 133 The Appendix

Section 133 was received on November 3, 1831, and is thus obviously placed in the Doctrine and Covenants out of temporal sequence. It was received during the memorable series of short conferences of the elders of the Church held between November 1 and 12, 1831, at the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Ohio. It was during these conferences that it was first decided to print and distribute a collection of Joseph's revelations. Additional material about this conference, or series of conferences, may be found in the supplemental article entitled *A Brief History of the Evolution of Our Present-day Doctrine and Covenants* and in the commentary for section 67.

Joseph described the circumstances of his receiving this revelation as follows:

It had been decided by the conference that Elder Oliver Cowdery should carry the commandments and revelations to Independence, Missouri, for printing, and that I should arrange and get them in readiness by the time that he left, which was to be by—or, if possible, before—the 15th of the month [November]. At this time there were many things which the elders desired to know relative to preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants of the earth, and concerning the gathering; and in order to walk by the true light, and be instructed from on high, on the 3rd of November, 1831, I inquired of the Lord and received the following important revelation, which has since been added to the book of Doctrine and Covenants, and called the Appendix (*HC*, 1:229).

This section, which serves as the appendix to the Doctrine and Covenants, was received two days after section 1 which serves as the preface to the Book of Commandments. It is placed in the Doctrine and Covenants at the end of those revelations received by Joseph. Those revelations which follow section 133 (except section 137) were received by someone else.

This revelation has appeared in all editions of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Section 133 deals largely with doctrines of the end of the world—the doctrines of “last things.” It continues the same sub-themes found in section 1. These are “Prepare ye,” “Flee out of Babylon,” “The Lord is surely going to come,” and “Go out, ye elders, and prepare the people for what is to come.”

An interesting way to place into perspective the themes that are sounded in sections 1 and 133 is this: The Lord has restored his Church to the earth in this dispensation and has given it three major functions or missions to perform. These are: (1) Teach the gospel—missionary responsibilities; (2) Perfect the saints; and (3) Perform ordinances of salvation for the dead. In sections 1 and 133, the Lord gives emphasis to the first two.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 133 The Appendix of the Doctrine and Covenants

1 Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the Lord your God, and hear the word of the Lord concerning you—

verse 1 “Hearken, O ye people of my church” There are parallels between sections 1 and 133. For example these words which begin section 1 also begin section 133. Other parallels include 133:4-5 and 1:12, 16; 133:3 and 1:14; and 133:8 and 1:1.

2 The Lord who shall suddenly come to his temple; the Lord who shall come down upon the world with a curse to judgment; yea, upon all the nations that forget God, and upon all the ungodly among you.

verse 2 “The Lord who shall suddenly come to his temple” The allusion here is to Malachi 3:1. This verse is among the Lord’s last words and warnings to his people Israel in the Old Testament dispensation. The prophecy here does not deal with Jesus’s mortal life and his mortal visits to the Jerusalem Temple, but rather to the sudden and unexpected coming of the resurrected Lord in his power on the occasion of his second coming (see also D&C 36:8; 42:36; Malachi 3:1). We are left to wonder to which temple this phrase has reference. It could be the Zion temple (D&C 84:2), any of the latter-day temples, or perhaps even the earth as a symbolic temple where the purposes of the temple are accomplished.

“and upon all the ungodly among you” This is a sobering phrase. While it is true that the Lord will pour out justice upon the wicked telestial elements of the earth who have rejected or forgotten him, he will also judge the “ungodly” among the saints. To be godly is to be like God. Included in being “ungodly” is to know the character of the Savior and yet refuse to become like him.

3 For he shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of their God.

verse 3 “he shall make bare his holy arm” This phrase means that he will show his power at the time of his second coming.

4 Wherefore, prepare ye, prepare ye, O my people; sanctify yourselves; gather ye together, O ye people of my church, upon the land of Zion, all you that have not been commanded to tarry.

verse 4 “sanctify yourselves” A person is sanctified as they receive gifts of the Spirit—increments of the attributes of Christ—through their obedience to law. To be sanctified is to receive these spiritual gifts. A second element to sanctification is to have increments of one’s natural self removed—the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. This process is intimately associated with spiritual growth. How do we best prepare for the Lord’s second coming? It is simply to establish a pattern in our lives of continuous spiritual growth—receiving these incremental attributes of Christ through constantly

striving to be obedient—and then to continue that pattern unrelentingly. There should be no thought of making special preparations for his coming. Rather, we must be ready constantly, through constant striving to obey the commandments, as is made clear in the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).

5 Go ye out from Babylon. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

verse 5 “Go ye out from Babylon” This phrase is an allusion to the return of the Jews from their Babylonian captivity beginning in 539 BC, when the Persian king Cyrus defeated the Babylonians. By New Testament times, Babylon had become a symbolic term for the fallen world, for the kingdom of Satan established illegitimately in opposition to the kingdom of God (see Revelation 17:5; 18:4). Further, just as those who carried the sacred vessels of Solomon’s Temple out of Babylon to reestablish Judah (Ezra 1:7) were required to be clean and worthy—“Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord—so all those who bear the responsibility of establishing Zion are required to depart from the world and bear worthily the holy things of God just as he commanded the priests of the Jerusalem Temple to be clean (Isaiah 52:11). The commandment to leave Babylon, or the world, behind us is repeated in this section three times (verses 5, 7, 14). In times past, the members of the Church left their homes in foreign lands and gathered to Zion in the United States. Today, the saints are required to remove themselves spiritually from Babylon, the wickedness of the world around us (verse 14), and to make their present homes, wards, and stakes the spiritual Zion that is made up of “the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21), free from the influences of modern Babylon.

6 Call your solemn assemblies, and speak often one to another. And let every man call upon the name of the Lord.

verse 6 “Call your solemn assemblies” A solemn assembly is a special gathering of the Church, or a representative body thereof, for extraordinary sacred worship, blessing, or instruction (Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1380-81). These are usually held in the temples of the Church. Inasmuch as there were no temples as yet constructed in the latter days for this purpose, this commandment also implies a preliminary obligation to build temples at Kirtland and Independence.

7 Yea, verily I say unto you again, the time has come when the voice of the Lord is unto you: Go ye out of Babylon; gather ye out from among the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

verse 7 “from the four winds” From the four quarters of the earth—from all directions and from all parts of the earth.

“from one end of heaven to the other” The word *heaven* in this verse, which verse speaks of the latter-day gathering, might refer to the gathering of the city of

Enoch, the city of Melchizedek, etc. There are some who wonder if it might not also refer to the gathering of the lost tribes. For example, Wilford Woodruff made an entry in his record that indicates Brigham Young believed the lost tribes of Israel were [not] of the earth and thus would be gathered from the heavens. He wrote: “The leaders on their return from Provo made a visit to Logan. Here, President Young is quoted as saying that the ten tribes of Israel are on a portion of the earth—a portion separated from the main land” (Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 448). This view is also expressed in one of the . . . hymns written by Eliza R. Snow: “And when the Lord saw fit to hide, The ten lost tribes away, Thou, earth, was severed to provide, The orb on which they stay” (*Ibid.*).

8 Send forth the elders of my church unto the nations which are afar off; unto the islands of the sea; send forth unto foreign lands; call upon all nations, first upon the Gentiles, and then upon the Jews.

verse 8 “unto the islands of the sea” The phrase “the islands of the sea” is a scriptural phrase that usually refers to scattered Israel. The origin of the expression “islands of the sea” is particularly interesting. This expression can mean any place to which one journeys by water (see Isaiah 20:6; 60:9; 2 Nephi 10:20-21), and so this phrase includes what we call continents as well as true islands.

“first upon the Gentiles, and then upon the Jews” As we have discussed previously, the order of gathering in this final dispensation is first the Gentiles and then the Jews (see the commentary for D&C 45:25).

9 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, that the borders of my people may be enlarged, and that her stakes may be strengthened, and that Zion may go forth unto the regions round about.

verse 9 “that Zion may go forth unto the regions round about” As more and more people are gathered to Zion, the size of Zion increases. And soon people don’t need to be gathered to Zion—there will be stakes in all the earth—eventually Zion comes to them.

10 Yea, let the cry go forth among all people: Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom; behold and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord.

verse 10 “behold and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” These words are from the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). They declare to the worldly that their time is up, and the second coming of Christ is at hand. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of scripture, and the faithful Church is his bride. These words announce that the Savior has arrived to take possession of that which is his. As in the

New Testament parable, the saints are expected to be prepared for this sudden event before it occurs, for there will be no time to find oil for our lamps once he arrives. The First Presidency has expanded upon the parable of the ten virgins, saying, “Let the Church, therefore, prepare as a bride to receive her bridegroom; let the saints have on their wedding garments, and have their lamps well supplied with oil, trimmed and burning; let all things be made ready for the reception of our Savior and Redeemer, even our Lord the Christ. Let all the saints throughout the world live their religion, that they may be worthy to enjoy his presence” (*Millennial Star* 19 [April 1857]: 253).

11 Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.

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

13 And let them who be of Judah flee unto Jerusalem, unto the mountains of the Lord’s house.

verse 13 “the mountains of the Lord’s house” Since mountains are raised up from the world and represent the place where heaven and earth come together, in scriptural terms a mountain has often symbolized the Lord’s house, or his temple. On some occasions, mountains have actually served as temples, when no such structure was available to the saints, as, for example, Mount Sinai or the Mount of Transfiguration. The plural here probably refers to temples both in the Old and New Jerusalem built by and for the gathering Jews and Gentiles, respectively (Ether 13:2-12) (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:73).

14 Go ye out from among the nations, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon.

verses 11-14 Because no one knows when the Savior will return (Matthew 24:36; D&C 49:7) and because all men are commanded to repent and prepare for his coming by leaving spiritual Babylon, the Gentiles who hear the Lord’s word are to gather to Zion (the New Jerusalem) and the Jews are to gather to Jerusalem. Currently, the Gentiles who join the Church throughout the world are not commanded to physically gather to Zion, as a location. They are expected to leave spiritual Babylon and gather to a spiritual Zion—to be “pure in heart” and build up the Church in their own lands.

15 But verily, thus saith the Lord, let not your flight be in haste, but let all things be prepared before you; and he that goeth, let him not look back lest sudden destruction shall come upon him.

verse 15 “let not your flight be in haste, but let all things be prepared before you” When the events of the end take place and the Bridegroom comes, there will be no time to scramble to get things done that should have been prepared beforehand. Those for whom the Lord’s coming will represent a signal to begin getting

their lives in order are already too late—they are the foolish virgins found without sufficient oil in their lamps.

“let him not look back” Here the Lord cautions those who are fleeing Babylon, heading for Zion, “not to look back.” True conversion means change of heart and interest as well as behavior. Longing for the “flesh pots of Egypt” (Exodus 16:1-3) or the pleasures and comforts of Sodom is spiritually destructive. The Lord’s directive to “remember Lot’s wife” is an appropriate reminder for all (Genesis 19:17-26; Luke 17:26-30).

16 Hearken and hear, O ye inhabitants of the earth. Listen, ye elders of my church together, and hear the voice of the Lord; for he calleth upon all men, and he commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

verse 16 “he commandeth all men everywhere to repent” “Repent” is likely used here to mean that all are to obey the first principles of the gospel.

17 For behold, the Lord God hath sent forth the angel crying through the midst of heaven, saying: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight, for the hour of his coming is nigh—

verse 17 “the Lord God hath sent forth the angel crying through the midst of heaven” The message of the angel flying through the midst of heaven is to prepare the way of the Lord (see D&C 88:92).

This is probably the same as the “great sign” described in D&C 88:92-93: “And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying: Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come. Behold, and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. And immediately there shall appear a great sign in heaven, and all people shall see it together.” This sign occurs at the time of the Lord’s coming in glory.

The wording of verse 17 and the use of the term “the angel” might make it seem that only one angel is associated with these events. In the modern Church, some have identified this one angel as the angel Moroni. Moroni may have been the first such angel, but the parallel passages in Revelation 14:6 and D&C 88:92 make it clear that these events associated with the end of the world will be announced and accompanied by the ministration of many angels, all declaring the same message in one way or another—prepare ye, prepare ye (D&C 128:20).

Concerning this revelation, an important interpretive key to these verses is sometimes overlooked. Section 133 is the “appendix” and was intended to come at or near the end of the Doctrine and Covenants in much the same way that the book of Revelation comes at the end of the New Testament. Further, both section 133 and the book of Revelation describe events associated with the end of the world, and they often use the same or similar language and imagery to do so. Therefore, it is possible, and

perhaps even likely, that the parts of section 133 that are most like the book of Revelation are written as apocalyptic revelation with apocalyptic images and symbols as the book of Revelation itself is (see a discussion of apocalyptic literature in the introductory commentary for section 77).

Just as the Prophet Joseph generally did not interpret apocalyptic imagery from the book of Revelation literally, but symbolically, so it is possible that parts of section 133 are meant to be interpreted symbolically rather than literally. Further, since the angel described in Revelation 14:6 is at least in part the same angel described in D&C 133:17, it is likely that where the proclamations are similar in both passages, they should both be understood and interpreted apocalyptically rather than literally. Apocalyptic prophecy or imagery in scriptures dealing with the end warns us against interpreting them too narrowly or literally.

18 When the Lamb shall stand upon Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads.

verse 18 **“When the Lamb shall stand upon Mount Zion”** As we might expect from a revelation about the end of the world, section 133 contains many references and allusions to the Book of Revelation. This verse is almost identical to Revelation 14:1, and both passages describe the Savior's future appearance on Mount Zion. The term “Mount Zion” is used in scripture to describe both the Old and the New Jerusalem. It is sometimes used in reference to temples generally, as in Obadiah 1:21, and it is used in D&C 76:66 as a symbol for the celestial kingdom itself.

There will be more than one appearance of the Lord associated with the end of the world, and the following verses enumerate some of those appearances, including appearances on more than one “Mount Zion.” However, since the order of these events is not the same in all scriptural accounts—and may not be intended to be listed chronologically—it would be unwise to attempt to construct a very rigid time line or sequence, based on present prophecies, for the events of the end. They will all be fulfilled, but in the Lord's own time and in his own way. The Lord has not revealed all the information necessary to create a reliable chronology of the end of the world and the second coming. This was certainly the case with Jesus's first coming, when the Jews failed to recognize the Messiah because he did not fit a preconceived picture based on their Old Testament prophecies.

“a hundred and forty-four thousand” We have been taught in the book of Revelation (7:4-8) and by modern prophets that there are one hundred forty-four thousand high priests who will do a special work in these last days, but who are they and what will they be called to do?

First, perhaps the number, one hundred forty-four thousand, need not be taken literally. The Doctrine and Covenants states “that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for

they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn” (D&C 77:11). Note that this scripture does not specify a number. Instead, it notes that the group is composed of high priests who have a special calling “to administer the everlasting gospel” and “to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.”

So, this group consists of a large number of high priests who will assist with the great final gathering of Israel in the latter days. It also seems clear that they will be sealed up to eternal life and will assist with the gathering of Israel before the earth is “hurt”—that is, before the great final cleansing of the earth begins. But, again, who are these high priests, however many there may be, who have been sealed up to eternal life and who will help with the great final work of gathering? We are told nothing further concerning their identity. We may speculate, but it is only speculation. Could they be the body of men who comprise the leaders or “general authorities” of the Lord’s latter day kingdom? Perhaps so. One statement of President Joseph Fielding Smith’s suggests that it is a great honor to be included in this group, and he even suggests that they may include those called to tarry as translated beings until the Lord’s coming:

This certainly is a great honor to be one of the one hundred forty-four thousand who are specially called by the power of “the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth” [D&C 77:11] to bring souls unto Christ. John the Apostle, had the great desire to bring souls to Christ. The Three Nephite Disciples likewise sought this great honor and it was granted to them. It is one of the noblest desires that a man can have. It will be a wonderful blessing to those who are called in this great group (*Church History and Modern Revelation, volume 2, 71*).

It is difficult to say when the actual calling of these men will take place. Some prophets have spoken as though it would be after the return of the ten tribes or during the council of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Perhaps some of them have already been called. The question of when they are selected or called is an interesting, but not critical, one.

We know that these one hundred forty-four thousand will assist with the latter-day gathering of the Lord’s people. We are also taught that they will have the blessed opportunity to be “caught up” to meet the Savior at his second coming in glory. Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “The one hundred forty-four thousand mentioned in Revelation 7:4-8 represent special groups from the tribes of Israel, twelve thousand from each tribe, who will be caught up to meet Christ at his coming” (*Answers to Gospel Questions, 5 volumes, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-1966], 3: 185*).

Joseph Smith associated them with the temple (*HC, 6:365*). The symbolic meaning of the number supports this association. Twelve represents the priesthood. Biblical people squared a number to amplify its symbolic meaning. Thus, 144 suggests a fulness of priesthood authority. But John is not satisfied with that. He gives the image a superlative quality by multiplying by 1,000, representing completeness. In this way he

shows the strength and breadth of the priesthood in the latter days, in this dispensation that is, indeed, the dispensation of the fulness of times. During this period that complete priesthood authority will operate. The attachment to the temple fits perfectly since only there can one receive the fulness of the priesthood (D&C 124:25-30).

19 Wherefore, prepare ye for the coming of the Bridegroom; go ye, go ye out to meet him.

20 For behold, he shall stand upon the mount of Olivet, and upon the mighty ocean, even the great deep, and upon the islands of the sea, and upon the land of Zion.

verse 20 “he shall stand upon the mount of Olivet” Historically, this is the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. This appearance of Jesus will fulfill the prophecy of D&C 45:48-53.

verses 21-25 The imagery in these verses seems to be symbolic. The thunders and lightnings may indicate that all nature is in an uproar as a result of the judgments poured forth at the Lord’s second coming. The voice, which is heard by all people, may be God’s proclamations of judgment and command where he prepares the earth to return to its paradisiacal glory. See the commentary on Revelation 4:5; see also Revelation 8:5; 11:19.

21 And he shall utter his voice out of Zion, and he shall speak from Jerusalem, and his voice shall be heard among all people;

verse 21 “Zion . . . Jerusalem” At the coming of the Lord, two administrative centers from which the kingdom will be governed will be established upon the earth. One will be in the Jerusalem of old in the Holy Land. The other will be the New Jerusalem in Independence, Missouri, on the American continent (see Ether 13:2-6; D&C 57:1-3).

verses 20-21 These verses contain a list of the places in which the Lord will make appearances prior to his second coming in glory with the angels of heaven. Symbolically, he will appear to all the earth.

22 And it shall be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found.

23 He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land;

24 And the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.

25 And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh.

verses 26-34 One of the ways in which section 133 is different from Section 1 is that 133 contains information about the return of the ten lost tribes of Israel. They were taken north by the Assyrians (see 2 Kings 17). The Lord has promised that these tribes of Israel will return and be reunited with the two remaining tribes (Judah and Dan) in the latter days. Members of these tribes of Israel are even now “returning” from the “north countries” (from wherever they were scattered after being taken north from the Holy Land by the Assyrians). They are returning individually and as families as they hear the gospel and join the Church in a multitude of countries around the world. We know of no large, identifiable groups of Israelites under the direction of prophets who might literally fulfill the expectations given in these verses.

Perhaps an appeal to apocalyptic or symbolic interpretation may be helpful here. Are the prophets referred to true prophets with priesthood and keys, as we know prophets, or are they social or political leaders to whom people look for direction? Are the “ice” and “rocks” physical ice and rocks, or a representation of communication barriers which must be broken down to facilitate the understanding and acceptance of the gospel? Is the highway a literal road, or a highway designated by the prophet Isaiah as “the way of holiness,” a path the “unclean shall not pass over” but on which “the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy” (Isaiah 35:8-10; 51:10-11)? After the continents have been reassembled into one land mass (verse 23), what will “north” mean, the original north or the new north created by the rearrangement of the earth? On the other hand, because north was the direction associated symbolically with apostasy and evil in biblical times, the language here may be symbolic, describing the return of the tribes from being “scattered” among the Gentiles. This interpretation would seem to be supported by 1 Nephi 22:3-4, 12. But the truth is, we don’t have enough reliable information currently to clarify the true meaning of all these verses. As we strive to understand these prophecies, we must remain open to receiving further light and knowledge that may come from the Lord through his authorized servants or from the unfolding of the events themselves.

26 And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence.

27 And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep.

28 Their enemies shall become a prey unto them,

29 And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land.

verse 29 “in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water” The geological upheavals associated with the Lord’s second coming will literally create a new earth with a new geography and a new ecology.

30 And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants.

verse 30 When the descendants of Israel who have been scattered among the nations accept the gospel and turn to the Lord, they will be the best (most celestially-inclined individuals) from their respective nations. When they gather, they will come with their power and treasures to the Lord, and they will also receive the blessings of a spiritually elite. Just as Israel left Babylon with the wealth of those nations, so will the descendants of scattered Israel bring with them to the kingdom all that is good and useful from the Gentile world.

31 And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence.

32 And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim.

verse 32 The expression “the children of Ephraim” means the Church in this final dispensation. The ten tribes will come to America and contribute wealth and treasures to help build the kingdom of the Lord in Zion.

33 And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy.

34 Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows.

verse 34 “the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows” In this generation, Ephraim holds the birthright in the house of Israel. Hence, Ephraim must be gathered first to prepare the way and establish the Church and the priesthood. The large majority of those coming into the Church today are of the tribe of Ephraim. Today Ephraim holds the keys of the priesthood. It is with Ephraim that the Lord has made covenant, and through Ephraim has he restored his gospel in its fulness. Ephraim is building temples and performing the ordinances in them for the living and the dead.

35 And they also of the tribe of Judah, after their pain, shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord, to dwell in his presence day and night, forever and ever.

verse 35 “Judah, after their pain” Both the Lord and Joseph Smith knew that the collective suffering of the Jews was not yet at an end. Even today, after the Holocaust, hatred of the Jews continues and seemingly will increase until the Lord returns in his glory to save them from their united enemies (D&C 45:48-53). However, their ultimate fate, collectively, is to dwell in the presence of God “day and night, forever

and ever.” As Brigham Young observed: “When the Savior visits Jerusalem, and the Jews look upon him, and see the wounds in his hands and in his side and in his feet, they will then know that they have persecuted and put to death the true Messiah, and then they will acknowledge him, but not till then. They have confused his first and second comings—expecting his first coming to be as a mighty prince instead of as a servant” (*JD*, 11:279).

verses 36-45 Again, note the parallels in the proclamation of the angel in these verses with that of the angel in Revelation 14:6-7.

36 And now, verily saith the Lord, that these things might be known among you, O inhabitants of the earth, I have sent forth mine angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, who hath appeared unto some and hath committed it unto man, who shall appear unto many that dwell on the earth.

verse 36 “mine angel flying through the midst of heaven” See the commentary for verse 17.

37 And this gospel shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

38 And the servants of God shall go forth, saying with a loud voice: Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come;

39 And worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters—

40 Calling upon the name of the Lord day and night, saying: O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.

41 And it shall be answered upon their heads; for the presence of the Lord shall be as the melting fire that burneth, and as the fire which causeth the waters to boil.

42 O Lord, thou shalt come down to make thy name known to thine adversaries, and all nations shall tremble at thy presence—

43 When thou doest terrible things, things they look not for;

44 Yea, when thou comest down, and the mountains flow down at thy presence, thou shalt meet him who rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, who remembereth thee in thy ways.

45 For since the beginning of the world have not men heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath any eye seen, O God, besides thee, how great things thou hast prepared for him that waiteth for thee.

46 And it shall be said: Who is this that cometh down from God in heaven with dyed garments; yea, from the regions which are not known, clothed in his glorious apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?

verse 46 “Who is this that cometh down from God in heaven with dyed garments” Probably because of the descriptions of the risen Lord in the New Testament and Book of Mormon, Latter-day Saints usually picture Christ wearing white robes at his second coming (see 3 Nephi 11:8). However, the verses that follow make it clear that he will be dressed in red. This fact conveys wonderful symbolic meaning on the appearance of the Savior at the great and dreadful day of the Lord, the day of his second coming. For the wicked, the redness of Christ’s apparel at his second coming indicates that he comes as a judge and as a conqueror, to slay the wicked with the sword of his mouth. Christ the conqueror will symbolically be drenched in the blood of the wicked, which the great judge exacts from them as a just penalty for their crimes and iniquities. For the wicked, the day of the Lord will be “dreadful,” and the blood with which Christ is symbolically covered will be their blood, spilled as he tramples his enemies underfoot in the great day of his vengeance.

On the other hand, for the saints, the redness of Jesus’s robe at his second coming will symbolize his own blood, shed by him at every pore in Gethsemane and upon Calvary. The redness of his robe will be symbolic of his redeeming blood and atoning sacrifice. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell observed: “Having bled at every pore, how red his raiment must have been in Gethsemane, how crimson that cloak! No wonder, when Christ comes in power and glory, he will come in red attire (see D&C 133:48), signifying not only the winepress or wrath, but also to bring to our remembrance how he suffered for each of us in Gethsemane and on Calvary!” (*CR*, April 1987, 89-90).

Taken in this sense, the redness of his apparel is a positively glorious sign to those who also have been washed in his blood. He has performed for us the horrible task of treading the wine-vat, or of meeting the demands of justice by suffering infinite agony, and the robe stained red with his own blood will testify of his atonement and his power to save. Thus, the sight of Jesus coming in his red apparel will be a terrifying encounter with justice for the wicked, and it will comfort the righteous with the promise of the atonement.

47 And he shall say: I am he who spake in righteousness, mighty to save.

48 And the Lord shall be red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine-vat.

verse 48 Jesus will look like someone who has been stomping grapes in a wine-vat, totally covered with the red juice squeezed from the grapes and thoroughly stained or dyed.

49 And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places.

verse 49 So great shall be the glory of his presence that it will outshine the sun.

One of the signs of the coming of the Son of Man is that the sun will be darkened and the moon turned to blood. One explanation of this phenomenon is that the destruction prior to the second coming will cause sufficient air pollution to produce this phenomenon. Perhaps verse 49 refers to this pollution-related effect, or perhaps this verse refers to another occasion when these two orbs will be darkened for a different reason.

50 And his voice shall be heard: I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me;

51 And I have trampled them in my fury, and I did tread upon them in mine anger, and their blood have I sprinkled upon my garments, and stained all my raiment; for this was the day of vengeance which was in my heart.

verses 48-51 Some have raised a question as to the literality of Christ's red attire at his second coming. The problem of a literal versus figurative interpretation of the scripture is sometimes difficult. Some verses of scripture are not a problem. For example, most of us would agree that when the scripture states that God took a rib from the man Adam and made a woman (Genesis 2:21-22), this description of Eve's creation is simply figurative. But when the scripture states that it rained forty days and forty nights, are we to take this literally or otherwise? How are we to know?

Those who feel that the red attire may be figurative only have suggested that we look at these verses in context. Verse 51 tells us how the Savior's garments became red. He squashed the wicked in the wine-vat and their blood got all over his clothes! It seems likely, they feel, that this scene is being described symbolically, and that we should not be surprised if the Savior is dressed in white robes at his second coming.

52 And now the year of my redeemed is come; and they shall mention the loving kindness of their Lord, and all that he has bestowed upon them according to his goodness, and according to his loving kindness, forever and ever.

53 In all their afflictions he was afflicted. And the angel of his presence saved them; and in his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them, and bore them, and carried them all the days of old;

verse 53 "In all their afflictions he was afflicted" See Alma 7:11-12 and the commentary for those verses (see also Hebrews 2:18; 5:8-9).

"the angel of his presence" This delightful phrase refers to the literal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Perhaps it refers to his incomprehensible grace and

mercy which give us the opportunity to be rescued from this mortal trial (see Isaiah 63:9; Abraham 1:15).

54 Yea, and Enoch also, and they who were with him; the prophets who were before him; and Noah also, and they who were before him; and Moses also, and they who were before him;

55 And from Moses to Elijah, and from Elijah to John, who were with Christ in his resurrection, and the holy apostles, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, shall be in the presence of the Lamb.

verses 54-55 Here is a list of the prophets who were resurrected with the Savior.

56 And the graves of the saints shall be opened; and they shall come forth and stand on the right hand of the Lamb, when he shall stand upon Mount Zion, and upon the holy city, the New Jerusalem; and they shall sing the song of the Lamb, day and night forever and ever.

verse 56 When the Lord returns and the Millennium begins, the earth will be populated with mortals who will have been found worthy to remain—those who have earned “celestial” or “terrestrial” status. Joining them perhaps will be some righteous saints who have lived and died on the earth since the ascension of Christ, who have earned celestial status. These will be resurrected with celestial bodies at his coming (we might regard this as the end of the “morning of the first resurrection”). Also those who have lived and died on the earth since the ascension of Christ who have earned the terrestrial degree of glory will come forth in the first resurrection (in the “afternoon” of the first resurrection—during the millennial thousand years), following the resurrection of those who come forth with celestial bodies. These might also be assigned to live on the earth. Actually we don’t know which of the resurrected personages will make their abode on the terrestrial millennial earth.

57 And for this cause, that men might be made partakers of the glories which were to be revealed, the Lord sent forth the fulness of his gospel, his everlasting covenant, reasoning in plainness and simplicity—

58 To prepare the weak for those things which are coming on the earth, and for the Lord’s errand in the day when the weak shall confound the wise, and the little one become a strong nation, and two shall put their tens of thousands to flight.

59 And by the weak things of the earth the Lord shall thrash the nations by the power of his Spirit.

60 And for this cause these commandments were given; they were commanded to be kept from the world in the day that they were given, but now are to go forth unto all flesh—

verses 57-60 “for this cause these commandments were given” The phrase “these commandments” refers to the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. And why were they given? That the “weak things of the earth,” the Lord’s messengers or missionaries might be prepared to accomplish their mission in the latter days that men may return to their celestial home.

61 And this according to the mind and will of the Lord, who ruleth over all flesh.

62 And unto him that repenteth and sanctifieth himself before the Lord shall be given eternal life.

verse 62 The essence of exaltation is that a man constantly progresses spiritually. The process of spiritual growth is the sanctification of the individual.

verses 63-74 Having described the blessed state of his saints in the previous verses, he now ends this revelation with a warning concerning the fate of those who reject him and his gospel.

The woes enumerated here can be understood on two levels. First, those who reject the light of the gospel will suffer hell until they repent and are finally redeemed in a kingdom of glory. On another level, it can refer to those who refuse to repent even after experiencing hell. These are the sons of perdition, whose who “remain filthy still” (D&C 88:35) who will never be redeemed.

63 And upon them that hearken not to the voice of the Lord shall be fulfilled that which was written by the prophet Moses, that they should be cut off from among the people.

verse 63 This verse refers to Deuteronomy 18:15-22 and Acts 3:22-23.

64 And also that which was written by the prophet Malachi: For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

verse 64 “that which was written by the prophet Malachi” Note that just as section 133 parallels and expands upon information from the book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, so the Doctrine and Covenants ends with the warning of the book of Malachi (4:2), the last book of the Old Testament.

“neither root nor branch” This expression implies that wicked and indifferent individuals who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ will have no eternal family inheritance or patriarchal lineage—they will not belong to an eternal family. They will have neither root (ancestors or progenitors) nor branch (children or posterity).

65 Wherefore, this shall be the answer of the Lord unto them:

66 In that day when I came unto mine own, no man among you received me, and you were driven out.

67 When I called again there was none of you to answer; yet my arm was not shortened at all that I could not redeem, neither my power to deliver.

verse 67 “when I called again there was none of you to answer” When the Lord came to Israel willing to redeem her from captivity, no one requested his help, and they even rejected him. They separated from him because of their sins. Again, this statement might apply to any time period. In almost every generation there are few or even none to receive the Lord. It does fit nicely with the period of the Lord’s mortal ministry, though it also applies to the latter day gathering of Israel.

“yet my arm was not shortened at all that I could not redeem, neither my power to deliver” The hand and arm of the Lord are symbols of his power. He who has a “shortened hand” is weak and powerless. The Lord is declaring, “I am not so weak that I cannot redeem Israel.” The opposite of the shortened hand is the Lord’s stretching out or extending his hand or arm to deliver his people. His hand is indeed stretched out and not shortened.

68 Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea. I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink, and die for thirst.

verse 68 “Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea. I make their rivers a wilderness; their fish stink, and die for thirst” The Lord then confirms that he does, of course, have sufficient power, and he illustrates this power by recalling the miracles the Lord performed at the time of the exodus from Egypt: he dried up the sea with his command (Exodus 7:21; 14:26-31), turned the rivers into a desert so that the fish in them died for lack of water, and (in verse 3) darkened the sky as if it were mourning for the dead (Exodus 10:21).

69 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering.

verse 69 The dark sky heralds the coming judgments, as well as Christ’s second coming. The Lord said in Matthew 24:29-30: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then . . . they shall see the son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie gave another interpretation:

I clothe the heavens with blackness” (Isaiah 50:3), and there is no more revelation. . . . Thus saith our God. Such is his promise, spoken prophetically of our day. And here, given in modern times, is his announcement that as he spake, so has it come to pass: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross

darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face (D&C 112:23) (*Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man*, 39).

“Sackcloth” is the clothing of mourning. Perhaps this symbolizes the mourning of the wicked at the second coming of Christ. Or it may symbolize the mourning of the righteous over the wickedness of the earth.

70 And this shall ye have of my hand—ye shall lie down in sorrow.

verse 70 “ye shall lie down in sorrow” To “lie down” probably means to die. You shall die in spiritual misery.

71 Behold, and lo, there are none to deliver you; for ye obeyed not my voice when I called to you out of the heavens; ye believed not my servants, and when they were sent unto you ye received them not.

72 Wherefore, they sealed up the testimony and bound up the law, and ye were delivered over unto darkness.

verse 72 “they sealed up the testimony and bound up the law” The Lord’s servants tie up with a strip of leather or a cord, and seal their manuscript with wax (“bind up” and “seal”). This manuscript contains their testimony against those who rejected their ministrations. Thus, the testimonies of the Lord’s servants may stand (with the testimonies of the other prophets—the combination forming “the law”) as a permanent witness against the people.

A divine sequence is illustrated here. The Lord’s people must first receive the law by covenant. Then they warn the world’s inhabitants of God’s coming judgments. After they have testified to and warned the nations, they will figuratively “bind,” “tie up,” or “shut up” their testimonies and “affix a seal” to the law of God. Finally the judgments of God will come (see D&C 88:84; 109:38, 46; 133:72) (*TPJS*, 92).

73 These shall go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

verse 73 “outer darkness” We are not given to know the exact condition or place described by the term “outer darkness,” but we do know that it will be devoid of all spiritual light.

74 Behold the Lord your God hath spoken it. Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

The saints in Nauvoo had several avowed enemies of influence. Among them was Thomas C. Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw (Illinois) Signal*, a viciously anti-Mormon newspaper. Another was John C. Bennett, the ex-Mormon, who attacked the Church

both in print and by his oratory. Particularly did Bennett delight in accusing the Church of practicing a licentious form of polygamy.

Some of the doctrines of the Church that were pronounced and promulgated by Joseph in 1843 were criticized as heretical and resulted in emotional attacks upon the Church by ministers of other churches. The doctrines that were particularly criticized included the concept of the plurality of Gods and the doctrine that man's consummate potential destiny is to become as God is.

1844 June

In the spring of 1844, a small group of Mormon dissidents began preparations to publish the *Nauvoo Expositor* (an "expositor" is one who expounds or explains). They published only one issue, on June 7, which contained inflammatory allegations about the sex lives of Mormon leaders, branding Joseph as a base seducer, a liar, and a murderer. The Nauvoo city council, led by Joseph who was mayor and his brother Hyrum who was vice-mayor, declared the newspaper libelous and a public nuisance endangering civil order. The city marshal was dispatched to destroy that issue and the Expositor's printing press. No single action could have provided better ammunition for the anti-Mormons in Illinois, who by now had already organized into vigilante groups dedicated to the destruction of Mormonism. The anti-Mormons quickly raised the issue of freedom of the press, and they cried out in the press for the utter extermination of the "wicked" Mormon leaders. Some of the Mormon dissidents went to the county seat at Carthage, about fifteen miles east of Nauvoo, and filed charges of inciting a riot against Joseph and other church leaders. A constable was dispatched to arrest Joseph and Hyrum.

Realizing full well the fatal consequences of going to Carthage, Joseph and Hyrum, by some legal maneuvering, managed to be tried and acquitted by a court in Nauvoo. When the constable returned to Carthage without Joseph, the fury among the Church's enemies exploded. Governor Ford was petitioned, and demands were made that he mobilize the state militia and end Joseph's "defiance" of the law.

Joseph responded by declaring a state of martial law, and the Nauvoo Legion was mobilized. He also wrote to the traveling apostles and other church leaders asking them to return home. Governor Ford arrived in Carthage on June 21, 1844, and, reviewing the evidence against Joseph, he declared the destruction of the *Expositor* illegal and demanded that the Smiths come to Carthage and submit to the charges made against them. If they refused, the Governor threatened to employ the state militia to destroy Nauvoo.

Joseph realized that the circle was narrowing, and that his options were becoming limited. In a letter written to the Governor on June 22, he expressed his willingness to be tried, but he made it clear to the Governor that he dared not come to Carthage. That same day Joseph met with trusted associates including Hyrum Smith,

Willard Richards, John Taylor, and John M. Bernhisel in an upper room of the Mansion House to consider Joseph's options. Reportedly three hundred armed guards stood watch outside the Mansion House while they met. A remarkable insight into the Prophet's character and presence of mind during these tense times is provided by a letter written by a visitor to Nauvoo on June 22 who managed an audience with Joseph. The visitor was John C. Calhoun, Jr., a son of a prominent United States senator at the time who was passing through Nauvoo on a steamboat with his brother. Calhoun reported that Joseph preached the gospel to them and testified of his prophetic calling, a remarkable thing in view of Joseph's desperate circumstances (Clyde N. Wilson, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, 21 volumes, [Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1959] 19:397-99).

Joseph knew that if he and Hyrum were taken into custody, they would be massacred. Thus he bade an emotional farewell to his family, and at midnight on June 22 Porter Rockwell rowed him and Hyrum and Apostle Willard Richards across the Mississippi River. From there, Joseph apparently intended to travel east to Washington, D.C., to lay his cause directly before President John Tyler.

The next morning a posse arrived in Nauvoo to arrest the brothers but left empty handed after threatening to occupy the city until the Smiths were arrested. That afternoon Emma sent messengers with a letter to Joseph and Hyrum. The letter likely informed Joseph of Governor Ford's promise of protection and a fair trial. The messengers told Joseph of the posse's threats on the city, reminding him that if mobs destroyed their property, they would all be homeless. The messengers even accused Joseph of cowardice. These were cutting words. Joseph replied, "If my life is of no value to my friends, it is of none to myself" (*HC*, 6:549).

After consulting with Hyrum and Porter Rockwell, Joseph agreed to return to Nauvoo, and he did so later on June 23. From that moment on, Joseph had a strong premonition of his death. He spent the night with his family in Nauvoo and then traveled the next day, the 24th, to Carthage. As he was passing through Nauvoo he was overheard to say, "I am going as a lamb to the slaughter" (*HC*, 6:555).

After spending the night in a hotel in Carthage, the next day, the 25th, the prisoners were shown to the troops of militia who were lined up for review. The local militia, known as the Carthage Greys, was difficult to control and almost mutinied, threatening to lynch the prisoners. The prisoners were arraigned, and a high bail was set. The bail was met by friends of the Prophet, and the prisoners would have gone free, but that night they were arrested for treason on the grounds of having declared martial law in Nauvoo. The two prisoners, Joseph and Hyrum, along with eight of their friends, were placed in the unbarred debtors' room, on the second floor of the small two-story jail on the edge of town.

The next day, June 26, the prisoners were walked through town to the courthouse. Joseph expected to be massacred by the mob in the streets. Nevertheless,

he walked boldly along, and as a gesture of defiance even locked arms with the worst mobocrat he could find, and Hyrum in turn locked arms with Joseph.

The next morning, June 27, the Governor broke his promise not to leave Carthage without taking the prisoners along. The Governor had promised protection for the prisoners and knew full well the critical dangers that awaited them. His leaving Carthage may then be regarded as an act of at least tacit complicity. He left the Carthage Greys guarding the jail. In a hasty note written to Emma, Joseph betrayed his fear, "Dear Emma, I am very much resigned to my lot, knowing I am justified and have done the best that could be done. Give my love to the children and all my friends" (*HC*, 6:605). By that afternoon, all of the Smiths' friends had been forced to leave except the apostles Willard Richards and John Taylor. A pistol had been smuggled in to Joseph by a visitor. As the hot and sultry day wore on, the prisoners sat silent and depressed. Joseph asked John Taylor to sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

At about five o'clock, a mob of one hundred fifty to two hundred men surrounded the jail. They were fired upon by the Carthage Greys who were guarding the jail. The guards, however, were part of the conspiracy and used blanks. Shortly thereafter, a group of attackers stormed up the stairs. Hyrum was killed immediately. As Hyrum tried to hold the door closed, one of the attackers shot through the door, and Hyrum was struck directly in the face. Joseph fired three times down the stairs wounding three men. He then leaped from the jail window, but as he did so he was struck fatally. As he fell to the ground, he cried, "Oh Lord, my God." John Taylor was wounded by four separate bullets, and only Willard Richards escaped injury. The attackers then dispersed.

Some weeks later, John Taylor penned a report of the martyrdom that was included in the next addition of the Doctrine and Covenants [**D&C 135 - The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum**].

Feeling that the Mormons would retaliate, the people of Carthage evacuated their town by nightfall. Samuel Smith carried his brothers' bodies by wagon back to Nauvoo on June 28. In Nauvoo, thousands of mourners filed by their coffins. After making a show of burying them publicly, the bodies were hidden and guarded in fear that they would be exhumed and desecrated.

Section 135 The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum

Section 135 is not exactly a revelation, but rather an inspired eulogy of Joseph and Hyrum written by John Taylor. Elder Taylor was, of course, uniquely qualified to write this eulogy. Not only was he a capable writer and journalist, but he was there in the room when Joseph and Hyrum were murdered. Elder Taylor was himself seriously wounded with four balls, one of which, near his left knee, was never removed. The only other person in the room was Apostle Willard Richards who was, miraculously, not wounded.

A new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was promised for the end of June 1844. John Taylor was the man in charge of printing the book. And since he was wounded at Carthage, the book was delayed. He was not able to finish it until he had recovered, and it was finally ready for sale in October 1844. Because of his unique qualifications and because he was an apostle and the man in charge of publishing the new edition, he added this section to that edition before it was published.

Section 135 contains a rather graphic description of those agonizing moments of the martyrdom. One poignant incident not mentioned in John Taylor's description was that after Hyrum had fallen to the floor, Joseph bent over the body of his lifeless brother and sobbed, "Oh dear, brother Hyrum!" (*HC*, 6:618).

Willard Richards' ". . . escape was miraculous; he being a very large man, and in the midst of a shower of balls, yet he stood unscathed, with the exception of a ball which grazed the tip end of the lower part of his left ear. His escape fulfilled literally a prophecy which Joseph made over a year previously, that the time would come that the balls would fly around him like hail, and he should see his friends fall on the right and on the left, but that there should not be a hole in his garment" (*HC*, 6:619).

Scripture Mastery

D&C 135 The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum

D&C 135:3 Joseph Smith, the Prophet . . . has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.

1 To seal the testimony of this book and the Book of Mormon, we announce the martyrdom of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith the Patriarch. They were shot in Carthage jail, on the 27th of June, 1844, about five o'clock p.m., by an armed mob—painted black—of from 150 to 200 persons. Hyrum was shot first and fell calmly, exclaiming: I am a dead man! Joseph leaped from the window, and was shot dead in the attempt, exclaiming: O Lord my God! They were both shot after they were dead, in a brutal manner, and both received four balls.

verse 1 Through the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum, a firm seal and a witness was placed on the divinity, not only of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon, but also on the Lord's work of restoration in this final dispensation. Their deaths were a fulfillment of the divine law of witnesses (see commentary for D&C 5:11). This pronouncement puts the reader of these two books on notice that they are not ordinary books, but have cost the blood of witnesses to declare the truthfulness of both. The following statement by Joseph Fielding Smith is helpful in trying to understand the law of witnesses:

Every time keys were restored, two men received them. Why? Because it was necessary according to the divine law of witnesses for Joseph Smith to have a companion holding those keys; otherwise, it would not have happened. So, as Oliver Cowdery states, when John the Baptist came, he and Joseph Smith received the Aaronic Priesthood under his hands; and when Peter, James, and John came, he was with Joseph Smith.

It was Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith who received the keys in the Kirtland Temple on the 3rd of April 1836, when Christ appeared, when Moses appeared, when Elias appeared, when Elijah appeared. And every time when the keys of a dispensation were bestowed it was to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery—not Joseph Smith alone. Why? Just because of what the Savior said: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (John 5:31).

If Joseph Smith had said, "I testify, and I testify alone," his testimony would not be true. There had to be two, that the testimony might be valid.

Oliver Cowdery stood as assistant president of [the] Church. Now let me call your attention to this. In the Kirtland Temple in 1836, when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were behind the pulpit and received keys from heavenly messengers, there was a First Presidency of the Church and the Prophet had counselors, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams. But Sidney Rigdon and Frederick Williams did not go behind the veil, or the curtain, when it was drawn; they were not asked to kneel there behind the pulpit. It was Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Why? Because that was Oliver Cowdery's place.

Now I am going to call your attention to something that is not, I regret to say, generally known. Oliver Cowdery was called to be what? The "Second Elder" of the Church, the "Second President" of the Church. We leave him out in our list of presidents of the Church, we do not include Oliver Cowdery; but he was an assistant president. Oliver Cowdery's standing in the beginning was as the "Second Elder" of the Church, holding the keys jointly with the prophet Joseph Smith. He preceded the counselors in the First Presidency in authority, standing next to the prophet Joseph Smith. December 5, 1834, Oliver Cowdery was ordained by Joseph Smith, by the command of the Lord, an assistant president of the High Priesthood, to hold the keys of presidency jointly with the Prophet in the ministry . . .

The office of assistant president [was] to assist in presiding over the whole Church, and to officiate in the absence of the President, according to his rank and appointment.

So Oliver Cowdery, through that place as the “Second President,” preceded the counselors in the Presidency—naturally so. Why shouldn’t he? He had the same authority, had received the same keys with the prophet Joseph Smith every time the heavens were opened, and he was an assistant president of the Church and second witness of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which is the greatest of all dispensations, for it was necessary that there be two presidents, two witnesses standing at the head of this dispensation . . .

Unfortunately—at least unfortunately for Oliver Cowdery, who was called to this wonderful and responsible position, jointly associated with Joseph Smith holding all the authority and presidency in this dispensation—Oliver, in a spirit of rebellion and darkness, turned away. He lost his fellowship in the Church, the power of the priesthood was taken from him, and for a season he stood excommunicated from the Church. Fortunately he eventually overcame this spirit of darkness, but never again was he privileged to receive the keys of power and authority which were once placed upon him.

That this testimony of witnesses might be continued and made complete, the Lord chose another to take the place of Oliver Cowdery, and that other witness was the Patriarch Hyrum Smith. By revelation through Joseph Smith, Hyrum was called and ordained to the priesthood and standing once held by Oliver Cowdery. . . . [See the Commentary for D&C 124:91-96.]

Hyrum Smith became a president of the Church with Joseph Smith, which place Oliver Cowdery might have held had he not wavered and fallen from his exalted station. I am firmly of the opinion that had Oliver Cowdery remained true to his covenants and obligations as a witness with Joseph Smith, and retained his authority and place, he, and not Hyrum Smith, would have gone with Joseph Smith as a prisoner and to martyrdom at Carthage.

The sealing of the testimony through the shedding of blood would not have been complete in the death of the prophet Joseph Smith alone; it required the death of Hyrum Smith who jointly held the keys of this dispensation. It was needful that these martyrs seal their testimony with their blood, that they might be honored and the wicked might be condemned [D&C 136:39]. . . .

But here is another point. He had to die. Why? Because we read in the scriptures that the testimony is not of force without the death of the testator—that is, in his particular case, and in the case of Christ. It was just as necessary that Hyrum Smith lay down his life a martyr for this cause as a witness for God as it was for Joseph Smith, so the Lord permitted them both to be taken in that way and both sealed their testimony with their blood. Both of them held the keys to the dispensation of the fulness of times

jointly, and they will through all the ages of eternity. Then naturally the Council of the Twelve came into its place, and by right Brigham Young became president of the Church (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 211-21).

2 John Taylor and Willard Richards, two of the Twelve, were the only persons in the room at the time; the former was wounded in a savage manner with four balls, but has since recovered; the latter, through the providence of God, escaped, without even a hole in his robe.

3 Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient time, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!

verse 3 “Joseph Smith . . . has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.” This first sentence of this verse is apparently not sound doctrine, and the prophet Joseph would probably have been a bit embarrassed about it. Joseph himself taught repeatedly that there was a prophet who stood in the line of authority next to Christ. He holds the keys of salvation for every man on this earth. He holds the keys of this dispensation. Under his direction all of those keys were given to the prophet Joseph. He will stand with Christ and judge all mankind. Who is this great prophet? He is Adam. Eulogistically, this first sentence is nice, but theologically it is incorrect. On the other hand, remember that it took Adam 930 years to accomplish all he did on this earth.

Joseph died in his thirty-ninth year! We may certainly say that no prophet ever did so much for mankind in so short a period of time. Also, vicarious work for the dead was saved for this dispensation, and in that sense Joseph has contributed uniquely to all other dispensations. Also, through the prophet Joseph, more of our Heavenly Father's children have had and will have an opportunity for salvation than at any other time in the history of the world. This is true because of the various roles of the Prophet. He was the legal administrator of the Lord on this earth and head of the dispensation of the fulness of times. Also, under Joseph's direction the gospel will be preached to

every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Temples have been and yet will be built in which the work for the living and the dead has been and yet will be available. No other prophet has brought forth more scripture than has Joseph Smith. Through him, the Lord revealed to the world the Book of Mormon; the writings of Moses, Enoch, and Abraham, as found in the Pearl of Great Price; the Doctrine and Covenants; the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible; and many other inspired and revealed statements among his recorded sermons and personal history. As John Taylor observed at a later time:

He understood things that were past, and comprehended the various dispensations and the designs of those dispensations. He not only had the principles developed, but he was conversant with the parties who officiated as the leading men of those dispensations, and from a number of them he received authority and keys and priesthood and power for the carrying out of the great purposes of the Lord in the last days, who were sent and commissioned specially by the Almighty to confer upon him those keys and this authority, and hence he introduced what was spoken of by all the prophets since the world was; the dispensation in which we live, which differs from all other dispensations in that it is the dispensation of the fulness of times, embracing all other dispensations, all other powers, all other keys and all other privileges and immunities that ever existed upon the face of the earth (*JD*, 20:174-75).

Christ supersedes them all, however, in that he accomplished his work in only three years!

By some of those outside the Church, we have been accused of worshipping Joseph Smith. We do not. But we do testify solemnly of the divine calling of this vital prophet of God!

A hymn composed by John Taylor labels these two fallen prophets as “two of the best of Adam’s race” (“Oh Give Me Back My Prophet Dear,” Hymns 1948, number 137, volume 1). John Taylor paid apt tribute to the two martyrs. Of Hyrum he said, “If ever there was an exemplary, honest, and virtuous man, an embodiment of all that is noble in the human form, Hyrum Smith was its representative” (B.H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor*, 42).

The devastating loss felt by the saints at the death of Joseph was expressed by John Taylor when he wrote, “I felt a dull, lonely, sickening sensation . . . when I reflected that our noble chieftain, the prophet of the living God, had fallen, and that I had seen him and his brother in the cold embrace of death, it seemed as though there was void in the great field of human existence to me, and a dark gloomy chasm in the kingdom, and that we were left alone. Oh, how lonely was that feeling!” (Daniel Tyler, *A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War, 1846-1847*, 51-52).

“sealed his mission and his works with his own blood, and so has his brother Hyrum” Sealing their works and missions by giving their lives removed all responsibility from Joseph and Hyrum, putting the responsibility for judgment on the hearer of that testimony and observer of those works. This was a needful act for

Joseph Smith. President Brigham Young observed: “He sealed his testimony with his blood; consequently we can, with impunity, believe on him a little better than if he were living. When he was living, his testimony was not in force upon the people as it is now” (*JD*, 18:242). Elder Joseph Fielding Smith also taught the principle of binding testimony through the shedding of the Prophet’s blood: “The shedding of their blood . . . bound that testimony upon an unbelieving world and this testimony will stand at the judgment seat as a witness against all men who have rejected their words of eternal life” (*Improvement Era*, June 1944, 364). This truth is reflected in the revelation given through President Brigham Young: “Many have marveled because of his death; but it is needful that he should seal his testimony with his blood, that he might be honored and the wicked might be condemned” (D&C 136:39).

“Hyrum Smith” The role of Hyrum at Carthage was not only that of a brother but also of the Assistant President of the Church and a second witness to the testimony of the Restoration. Oliver Cowdery had been chosen as the Assistant President of the Church, but when he apostatized, Hyrum was called to replace him. In all the principal events of the Restoration—the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; the restoration of the priesthood by John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John; the restoration of the keys in the Kirtland Temple—Oliver Cowdery was present with Joseph Smith. Had he not left the Church, he would have been at Carthage to seal his testimony along with the Prophet; however, he did not remain faithful to his testimony, and Hyrum was called to stand in his place to give his life as a second witness (see D&C 124:91-96).

4 When Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up to the pretended requirements of the law, two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I SHALL DIE INNOCENT, AND IT SHALL YET BE SAID OF ME—HE WAS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD.”—The same morning, after Hyrum had made ready to go—shall it be said to the slaughter? yes, for so it was—he read the following paragraph, near the close of the twelfth chapter of Ether, in the Book of Mormon, and turned down the leaf upon it:

5 And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity. And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness, thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father. And now I . . . bid farewell unto the Gentiles; yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my

garments are not spotted with your blood. The testators are now dead, and their testament is in force.

verse 5 The quotation in this verse, which was read by Hyrum, probably aloud to Joseph, on the morning he departed for Carthage, is from Ether 12:36-38. This quotation deals with the rejection of the Book of Mormon by the Gentiles. It reminded Joseph and Hyrum, as it had Moroni, that they had done all they could, that the blood of the people was not upon them, the prophets, and that they would stand as judges of the people.

“The testators are now dead, and their testament is in force.” This final sentence in this verse is not part of that quotation.

6 Hyrum Smith was forty-four years old in February, 1844, and Joseph Smith was thirty-eight in December, 1843; and henceforward their names will be classed among the martyrs of religion; and the reader in every nation will be reminded that the Book of Mormon, and this book of Doctrine and Covenants of the church, cost the best blood of the nineteenth century to bring them forth for the salvation of a ruined world; and that if the fire can scathe a green tree for the glory of God, how easy it will burn up the dry trees to purify the vineyard of corruption. They lived for glory; they died for glory; and glory is their eternal reward. From age to age shall their names go down to posterity as gems for the sanctified.

verse 6 **“best blood of the nineteenth century . . . From age to age shall their names go down to posterity as gems for the sanctified”** When the angel Moroni first appeared to Joseph Smith on September 21, 1823, he informed the Prophet that his name would be had for good and evil among all nations (JS-H 1:33). Because Joseph and Hyrum lived righteous lives and fulfilled the mission given to them by the Lord, it was in very deed righteous blood that was spilt in Carthage Jail. Joseph and Hyrum take their place among other prophets and apostles who have sealed their testimonies with their blood. They truly became “gems for the sanctified” and others to look upon and honor “from age to age.”

7 They were innocent of any crime, as they had often been proved before, and were only confined in jail by the conspiracy of traitors and wicked men; and their innocent blood on the floor of Carthage jail is a broad seal affixed to “Mormonism” that cannot be rejected by any court on earth, and their innocent blood on the escutcheon of the State of Illinois, with the broken faith of the State as pledged by the governor, is a witness to the truth of the everlasting gospel that all the world cannot impeach; and their innocent blood on the banner of liberty, and on the magna charta of the United States, is an ambassador for the religion of Jesus Christ, that will touch the hearts of honest men among all nations; and their innocent blood, with the innocent blood of all the martyrs under the altar

that John saw, will cry unto the Lord of Hosts till he avenges that blood on the earth. Amen.

verse 7 “their innocent blood on the banner of liberty, and on the magna charta of the United States” For a discussion of why the innocent blood of Joseph and Hyrum is on the two objects representing freedom, see the commentary for D&C 136:34-36.

Brief Historical Setting

1844 August

Brigham Young and the other traveling apostles did not learn of the assassinations until July 16 and were not able to reach Nauvoo until August 6. They found the saints subdued, shattered, and confused by the loss of their leaders. Though they needed desperately to find another leader, the method of orderly succession to the Presidency had not yet been clearly established. Sidney Rigdon offered himself to become the Church’s “guardian,” asserting that no one could take Joseph’s place. Brigham Young contended that the Twelve held all the keys necessary for church leadership, and that as President of the Twelve, he was the rightful heir of the Presidency. At a dramatic meeting on August 8, where both men spoke, the saints voted overwhelmingly to sustain Brigham and the Twelve as leaders of the Church.

There was opposition to Brigham’s leadership, and splinter groups formed under the leadership of individuals who claimed the Presidency for themselves. The most significant of these included the Church of Christ headed by Sidney Rigdon, the Strangites led by James J. Strang, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints organized in 1851 by Jason Briggs. The leadership of the Reorganites was eventually assumed by the Prophet’s son, Joseph Smith III who had remained in Nauvoo with his mother Emma. This group rejected the doctrines revealed through Joseph during the Nauvoo period, including polygamy, plurality of Gods, baptism for the dead, temple ordinances, the literal gathering of the saints, and the establishment of an earthly kingdom.

After the murders of Joseph and Hyrum, there followed a short respite from persecution and harassment lasting until about September of 1845. During this period, Brigham Young gave major emphasis to the missionary program both in the eastern states and in the British Isles. He also stepped up the construction work on the temple so that as many saints as possible could share in those sacred ordinances before the saints had to begin their trek west.

1845 January

The enemies of the Church had assumed that the destruction of Joseph would be fatal for the Church’s existence. When it became apparent that the Church showed promise of surviving, the hostility toward and harassment of the saints began afresh.

Strong prejudice against the Church in the Illinois legislature resulted in a repeal of the Nauvoo city charter in January 1845.

1845 May

The capstone was laid on the temple, and its construction was finished in May 1845.

1846 February

Brigham knew from the moment he assumed the leadership of the Church that the saints would be leaving Nauvoo. In response to the renewed harassment of the saints, they agreed in the fall of 1845 to leave Illinois. The agreement was that the saints would leave in the spring—when the “water runs” and the “grass grows”—but tensions increased so that they had to leave earlier than planned. The first wagon crossed the Mississippi River on February 4, 1846. President Young crossed on February 15. Brigham intended that he would lead an advance party ahead to find a settling place and plant crops for the saints who would follow later. However, a steady stream of Nauvoo saints began to follow him out of the city. The saints had been forced to sell homes and property for a pittance. By September 1846, Nauvoo, or, as Brigham had renamed it, “The City of Joseph,” stood almost empty.

1846 Spring

After camping briefly at the Sugar Creek Camp, nine miles west of the Mississippi, an aggregate of the twelve thousand saints in about twenty-five hundred wagons, and thirty to fifty thousand head of stock pushed on across Iowa. By late spring or early summer they were settled temporarily on the eastern shore of the Missouri River at Kaneshville (later Council Bluffs) and in Winter Quarters, across the river. Winter Quarters is now Florence, Nebraska, a suburb of Omaha.

In the spring of 1846, the Church appealed to the president of the United States, James K. Polk, for any financial assistance that might be available to the saints for their intended migration to the west. This request by the Church coincided with the United States’ declaring war on Mexico. An army was needed to march to California to take possession of that area. Apparently as an act of good faith, President Polk saw an opportunity to help the saints and help fulfill a national need as well. The United States Army agreed to accept a volunteer force of about 500 young Mormon men who would serve for one year and march the 2,000 miles from Council Bluffs to California. For this service, each man would be paid \$42, amounting to a total payroll of about \$21,000. The Church accepted the army’s offer, not only because of the money which would obviously prove helpful, but because they wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to their country.

At the expense of much personal and community sacrifice, this force of volunteers was raised. In July the Mormon Battalion left Council Bluffs for Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. After being outfitted, they embarked on the colorful expedition. They arrived in San Diego in January 1847. Part of their pay was sent back to their families to be used for the trek west. After their period of service, in July 1847, they were disbanded. A few re-enlisted, some remained in California to take advantage of the gold rush, but most returned to their families in the Great Basin of Utah.

1846 Winter

Brigham Young had fully planned to be in the Great Basin by the summer of 1846, but the wet and muddy roads through Iowa and the lack of preparation by the saints so delayed them in their journey that they decided to remain in Winter Quarters and continue on the next spring.

1847 January

Finally on January 14, 1847, the Lord spoke through Brigham Young concerning the "Camp of Israel" [**D&C 136 - Word and Will of the Lord for the Camp of Israel**].

Life for the saints in the winter of 1846-47 was difficult because of the weather and the meager provisions available to them. As many as one in thirty died.

Section 136 The Word and Will of the Lord for the Camp of Israel

This section was received by Brigham Young in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, on January 14, 1847. In April of 1847, some of the saints would leave Winter Quarters and travel to the Great Basin, or the Salt Lake Valley. But, wait a moment. Let's back up a little in time to get a feel for the events leading up to Brigham's receiving this revelation.

Actually a move to the west and to the Rocky Mountains was foreseen several years prior to 1847. As early as 1834 in Kirtland, the Prophet told the saints, "This people will go into the Rocky Mountains. They will raise up a posterity there, and the Latter-day Saints who dwell in these mountains will stand in the flesh until the coming of the Son of Man. The Son of Man will come to them while in the Rocky Mountains" (*CR*, Wilford Woodruff, April 1897, 57).

In Nauvoo, as antagonism against the saints was mounting, Joseph began to make preparations for the move west. In February 1844 he "instructed the twelve apostles to send out a delegation and investigate the locations of California and Oregon, and hunt out a good location where we can remove to after the temple is completed" (*HC*, 6:222).

In March 1844, a council was organized to take care of the temporal needs of the saints. This council has been variously referred to as the "Special Council," the "General Council," or the "Council of Fifty." The latter name derived from the approximate number of men which composed its ranks. This council was composed of most, if not all, of the Church's leadership and some other non-members. One of the assigned duties of this body was to plan and carry out the westward trek.

By the winter of 1846-47, literally thousands of saints were scattered along the trail across Iowa between Nauvoo and Winter Quarters with the majority camped at Winter Quarters. It was obvious that before the saints could successfully make the arduous trek west to the Great Basin, many preparations would have to be completed. While they waited for favorable weather conditions that would permit them to travel, several planning meetings were held among the brethren. There was a pressing need for a formal organization for the companies of saints that would make the trek.

Finally on January 14, 1847, after a meeting with a number of the brethren, during which they discussed the best methods for organizing the companies of saints—the "Camp of Israel," the plan crystallized in the mind of Brigham Young. The minutes of that meeting are of interest and provide insight into the historical setting at the time:

At 12:30 PM President Young met with Elders Kimball, Richards, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, Ezra T. Benson, and Captain Hosea Stout in council at Elder Kimball's. President Young proposed that a letter be written to instruct the brethren how to organize companies for emigration, and that Ezra T. Benson and Erastus Snow form an Emigration company, Number three, appoint a presidency of

three, and captains of hundreds, fifties, and tens, a clerk, and oversee them. Also that Orson Pratt and Wilford Woodruff organize another company, Number four, and that Amasa Lyman and George A. Smith organize Company Number five.

President Young commenced to give the Word and Will of God concerning the emigration of the saints and those who journey with them. At 4:30 PM the council adjourned.

At seven, the Twelve met at Elder Benson's. President Young continued to dictate the word and will of the Lord. Council adjourned at ten PM, when President Young returned with Dr. Richards to the Octagon [Willard Richards' house at Winter Quarters] and finished writing the same which is here inserted [D&C 136] (*Journal History of the Church*, 14 January 1847, as quoted in Woodford, "Historical Development," 1803).

Section 136 may be divided into two general parts. The first deals with the make-up and responsibilities of the companies which were to be created for the travel west. The second deals with the social and spiritual requirements of those individuals who would compose the companies.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 136 The Word and Will of the Lord for the Camp of Israel

D&C 136:36-38 For they killed the prophets, and them that were sent unto them; and they have shed innocent blood, which crieth from the ground against them. Therefore, marvel not at these things, for ye are not yet pure; ye can not yet bear my glory; but ye shall behold it if ye are faithful in keeping all my words that I have given you, from the days of Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Jesus and his apostles, and from Jesus and his apostles to Joseph Smith, whom I did call upon by mine angels, my ministering servants, and by mine own voice out of the heavens, to bring forth my work; Which foundation he did lay, and was faithful; and I took him to myself.

1 The Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel in their journeyings to the West:

verse 1 "The Word and Will of the Lord" It is obvious that revelation did not end with the death of Joseph Smith.

verses 2-16 These verses instructed the saints to organize companies of hundreds, fifties, and tens for the trip across the plains to the Rocky Mountains. Except for Erastus Snow, who will be ordained an apostle two years later, the men named in these verses were members of the Quorum of the Twelve and had the responsibility to ensure that the saints arrived safely at their destination. They were given ecclesiastical authority over their companies of the wagon train, as President Young exercised

authority over the whole of the saints. Brigham Young learned much from watching the prophet Joseph organize and preside over Zion's Camp on the march from Kirtland toward Jackson County in 1834. Some of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve named in these verses were also in Zion's Camp and had experienced the challenges of moving a group of people over difficult terrain.

2 Let all the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and those who journey with them, be organized into companies, with a covenant and promise to keep all the commandments and statutes of the Lord our God.

verses 2, 4 “with a covenant and promise to keep all the commandments and statutes of the Lord our God” See the commentary for verse 4.

3 Let the companies be organized with captains of hundreds, captains of fifties, and captains of tens, with a president and his two counselors at their head, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles.

verse 3 The organization of the company is outlined. A company consisted of about one hundred families. The highest ranking captain over this group was called the “captain of one hundred.” A presidency (president and two counselors) presided over the company and its captains.

Remember that this revelation was given to a specific group of people who lived at a specific time and had a specific task ahead of them. Though there are timeless elements in it, its application was largely there and then. We thus learn that the Lord not only directs affairs with eternal consequences but also those on a more practical and mundane level.

4 And this shall be our covenant—that we will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord.

verse 4 “And this shall be our covenant” As with ancient Israel, with whom God established his covenant and then led them into the Promised Land, the saints were expected by the Lord to bind themselves by making a covenant to live the gospel in order to ensure themselves blessings both spiritual and temporal as they traveled west (see D&C 130:20-21 and D&C 132:5).

Eight and one-half years earlier, when the saint were driven from Missouri and crossed the Mississippi River to settle in and around Quincy Illinois, Brigham Young, who as the presiding apostle was responsible for the safe exodus of the saints, drew up what is referred to as the “Missouri Covenant.” This document proposed that the members do everything possible never to desert the righteous poor and to give all that they had to help them to Illinois (*HC*, 3:250-54). During a general conference in Nauvoo on October 6, 1845, the saints covenanted to “take all the saints with us, to the extent of our ability, that is, our influence and property” (*HC*, 7:465). That covenant may have

been considered part of the covenant to “walk in all the ordinances of the Lord.” The “Nauvoo Covenant” became the binding responsibility of the saints on the trek west.

5 Let each company provide themselves with all the teams, wagons, provisions, clothing, and other necessaries for the journey, that they can.

6 When the companies are organized let them go to with their might, to prepare for those who are to tarry.

7 Let each company, with their captains and presidents, decide how many can go next spring; then choose out a sufficient number of able-bodied and expert men, to take teams, seeds, and farming utensils, to go as pioneers to prepare for putting in spring crops.

verse 7 This verse is the Lord’s commission to the original pioneer company to make a quick dash to the Great Basin in order to get the crops planted and make a road. This was the company led by Brigham Young which consisted of 143 men, three women, and two children. They traveled in seventy-three wagons. They departed Israel Winter Quarters early in April and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley July 24, 1847.

8 Let each company bear an equal proportion, according to the dividend of their property, in taking the poor, the widows, the fatherless, and the families of those who have gone into the army, that the cries of the widow and the fatherless come not up into the ears of the Lord against this people.

verse 8 Those among the saints who were poor, widowed, or fatherless (including families of those who had joined the Mormon Battalion) were divided equally among the various companies so that all might be provided for.

9 Let each company prepare houses, and fields for raising grain, for those who are to remain behind this season; and this is the will of the Lord concerning his people.

verse 9 Not all members of the Church living in the Winter Quarters area traveled in the first company of saints to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Those who, for one reason or another, had to be left behind for a time were to be provided with houses and crops by the total effort of their company (their own efforts not excluded, of course). Many converts had joined the saints driven from Nauvoo.

Houses were built and crops were planted by those who remained in the Midwest for quite another reason. These were to be used by those saints traveling across Iowa heading for Winter Quarters and eventually to the west. For this purpose, the saints established settlements at Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah, Iowa, and at other locations between Nauvoo and Winter Quarters.

10 Let every man use all his influence and property to remove this people to the place where the Lord shall locate a stake of Zion.

verse 10 “Let every man use all his influence and property” Even though the saints were organized into companies, each saint had an individual responsibility to make the whole venture succeed.

11 And if ye do this with a pure heart, in all faithfulness, ye shall be blessed; you shall be blessed in your flocks, and in your herds, and in your fields, and in your houses, and in your families.

verse 11 In the Lord’s eyes, there is no separation between spiritual and temporal (D&C 29:34-35).. By faithfully following the Lord’s temporal commands, the saints would receive both temporal and spiritual blessings.

12 Let my servants Ezra T. Benson and Erastus Snow organize a company.

verse 12 On July 16, 1846, Ezra T. Benson, the first apostle called after the death of the prophet Joseph, replaced Joseph’s brother William, who had been dropped from the Quorum of the Twelve and excommunicated from the Church in October 1845. Elder Benson was the great-grandfather of Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth President of the Church.

13 And let my servants Orson Pratt and Wilford Woodruff organize a company.

14 Also, let my servants Amasa Lyman and George A. Smith organize a company.

15 And appoint presidents, and captains of hundreds, and of fifties, and of tens.

verses 12-14 The Lord instructs Brigham in the formation of the traveling companies 3, 4, and 5 (see the introductory commentary for this section).

16 And let my servants that have been appointed go and teach this, my will, to the saints, that they may be ready to go to a land of peace.

verse 16 “let my servants . . . go and teach this, my will, to the saints” On the day after this section was received, messengers were dispatched with copies of the revelation to travel to the various camps of saints and read it to them. There was obvious urgency to get the word out. The weather conditions were miserable with sub zero temperatures, yet the messengers left promptly. Within a few days these messenger-riders had read the revelation to each camp of saints stretched clear across Iowa, and each of the saints had had a chance to sustain the action.

17 Go thy way and do as I have told you, and fear not thine enemies; for they shall not have power to stop my work.

18 Zion shall be redeemed in mine own due time.

verses 17-18 What, Lord? We're going west to the Rocky Mountains? Wait a minute! What about establishing Zion in Missouri? As the saints began their trek west, they left behind the hope of soon returning to the place the Lord had designated as the "center place of Zion," Jackson County, Missouri (see D&C 57:1-3). Some were concerned that they were abandoning Zion. The Lord indicated that they were not, in fact, abandoning Zion. Rather, the building of Zion would continue, and in his "own due time" all that had been promised concerning Zion would be realized.

verses 19-30 Specific counsel is given to the saints regarding their department on the trek. We tend to think that the early pioneers were a sanctified bunch who were above sin. These verses remind us that they were humans and certainly not above reproach. Theirs was not an ordinary wagon train but rather a wagon train of Zion. Therefore, they were to live the principles of Zion. The Lord told them not to seek to build themselves up nor obtain power (see verses 19) but rather to assist each other. They were to live by their word (see verse 20), refrain from taking the Lord's name in vain (see verse 21), and deal justly with each other (see verses 25-27). If they were merry, they were to praise the Lord in song, but if they were sorrowful, they were to call on him in supplication that their souls might be joyful (see verses 28-29).

19 And if any man shall seek to build up himself, and seeketh not my counsel, he shall have no power, and his folly shall be made manifest.

verse 19 "if any man shall seek to build up himself" It is natural for an individual to be more concerned for himself or herself than for the welfare of another. However, those who are spiritually inclined will overcome that natural tendency and put the welfare of others on a par with or ahead of their own. Anyone in this group of saints who would seek to build up himself, and not seek the Lord's counsel, "shall have no power, and his folly shall be made manifest"—others would see him for what he really was.

20 Seek ye; and keep all your pledges one with another; and covet not that which is thy brother's.

verse 20 "keep all your pledges one with another" The Lord appeals to the saints to let their word be binding and completely trustworthy. The Lord gives this same advice in Matthew 5:37: "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

21 Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain, for I am the Lord your God, even the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

verse 21 “Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain”

For a discussion of this command, see the commentary on D&C 63:61-62.

22 I am he who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and my arm is stretched out in the last days, to save my people Israel.

verse 22 “my arm is stretched out in the last days” The Lord’s hand and arm are the symbols of his power. Here, he promises to utilize his power on behalf of his people.

23 Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one of another.

24 Cease drunkenness; and let your words tend to edifying one another.

verse 24 “Cease drunkenness” Although they had been given the Word of Wisdom in February 1833, which prohibited the use of strong drinks, the saints still used some alcoholic drinks. Not until the late 1800s and early 1900s did the Lord enforce the injunction against the use of strong drinks.

25 If thou borrowest of thy neighbor, thou shalt restore that which thou hast borrowed; and if thou canst not repay then go straightway and tell thy neighbor, lest he condemn thee.

26 If thou shalt find that which thy neighbor has lost, thou shalt make diligent search till thou shalt deliver it to him again.

27 Thou shalt be diligent in preserving what thou hast, that thou mayest be a wise steward; for it is the free gift of the Lord thy God, and thou art his steward.

verse 27 “Thou shalt be diligent in preserving what thou hast” Although many were leaving Nauvoo with few material possessions, if they cared for what they had, they would be watched over by the Lord. The Lord reminded them that whatever they had was his and they were stewards over it and should care for it. Whatever we have is a “free gift of the Lord” (see D&C 72:3-4; D&C 104:12-14).

28 If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

verse 28 “praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing” At a time when singing and dancing were viewed (and still are, by some) as contrary to the commandments of God, this revelation was given to encourage the worship of God in song and dance. Elder David O. McKay observed: “The ‘Mormon Church’ has always encouraged legitimate amusements. . . . In Nauvoo we find the drama introduced by the Prophet Joseph. . . . Even on the plains, after a day’s march, the wagons were drawn up in a circle, a man with the violin would take his place by the campfire, and there on the prairie the sturdy Pioneers would join hands in a dance, opening it by prayer, and participate in amusement that fostered the spirit of the gospel. . . .”

President Brigham Young . . . once said, in substance: ‘The atmosphere of the dance should be such that if any elder be called from the party to go to administer to a sick person, he could leave with the same spirit that he would go from his elders’ quorum meeting’” (CR, April 1920, 117).

29 If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful.

30 Fear not thine enemies, for they are in mine hands and I will do my pleasure with them.

31 My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom.

verse 31 “My people must be tried in all things” See the commentary for D&C 101:4. See also *Adversity and Suffering* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 1.

32 Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear;

33 For my Spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite, and to the condemnation of the ungodly.

verses 32-33 “Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom” Ignorance is a lack of knowledge, most often due to lack of effort or interest. In this case, the Lord is warning the saints not to be ignorant of the gospel and other information available to them as they make the trip west. The Spirit of the Lord is an educator. It is sent forth to teach the humble and the contrite. If individuals want to learn the things of God, through humility their eyes will be opened to spiritual things and their ears will be opened to hear spiritual things. Ignorance, in this sense, is truly a sin.

34 Thy brethren have rejected you and your testimony, even the nation that has driven you out;

verse 34 “the nation that has driven you out” We often discuss the unbelief of ancient Israel and the fact that they rejected and killed the prophets sent from God. We do not as often think of the actions of the citizens and government of the United States in driving the saints from its borders and killing the prophet Joseph and Hyrum Smith as being similar. Thus, the condemnation that was placed upon ancient Israel could also apply to the United States.

35 And now cometh the day of their calamity, even the days of sorrow, like a woman that is taken in travail; and their sorrow shall be great unless they speedily repent, yea, very speedily.

36 For they killed the prophets, and them that were sent unto them; and they have shed innocent blood, which crieth from the ground against them.

verses 34-36 “now cometh the day of their calamity” The “day of their calamity, even the days of sorrow” would come upon the United States if there was not repentance. It would appear that it is a serious thing to reject the message and testimony of the Lord’s servants. Some have suggested that the Civil War dealt retribution to some who rejected the testimony of the Lord’s messengers, and that this war could have been at least a partial fulfillment of this warning. For example, in a talk given in October 1865, shortly after the end of the Civil War, Elder George A. Smith observed: “There is a great deal said about the origin of the trouble between the North and the South . . . but the fact is, the people did not respect the Constitution of our country; for the Latter-day Saints were driven in violation thereof from Jackson County to Clay, and from Clay to Caldwell and Daviess Counties, and then from the State of Missouri to Illinois, and from Illinois to the Rocky Mountains, robbed and plundered of their property, their women ravished, their leaders murdered, and there was not a solitary man arose to enforce the law or the Constitution in our defence” (*JD*, 11:179-80).

verses 37-39 Here the Lord bears his testimony of the mission and faithfulness of the prophet Joseph Smith.

37 Therefore, marvel not at these things, for ye are not yet pure; ye can not yet bear my glory; but ye shall behold it if ye are faithful in keeping all my words that I have given you, from the days of Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Jesus and his apostles, and from Jesus and his apostles to Joseph Smith, whom I did call upon by mine angels, my ministering servants, and by mine own voice out of the heavens, to bring forth my work;

verses 36-37 These verses divide the history of the world into four historical periods: Adam to Abraham, Abraham to Moses, Moses to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to this final dispensation. In these verses, which form the very foundation for the present-day first missionary discussion, the Lord summarizes the series of restorations and apostasies which have occurred since the time of Adam.

38 Which foundation he did lay, and was faithful; and I took him to myself.

verse 38 The Lord reassures the saints of the fact of the Prophet Joseph’s exaltation.

39 Many have marveled because of his death; but it was needful that he should seal his testimony with his blood, that he might be honored and the wicked might be condemned.

verse 39 “Many have marveled because of his death” To *marvel* is to wonder. Why was it that the Prophet of the restoration needed to die? President Wilford Woodruff was one of those—even though he was close to the Prophet and understood his mission—who wondered why. He indicated that he had “peculiar feelings” about the way that the Prophet’s death had come about and wondered if it had not been possible for Joseph to escape to the Rocky Mountains to continue to lead the Church. However, he stated, “Since then I have been fully reconciled to the fact that it was according to the programme, that it was required of him as the head of this dispensation, that he should seal his testimony with his blood, and go hence to the spirit world, holding the keys of this dispensation, to open up the mission that is now being performed by way of preaching the Gospel to the “spirits in prison”” (*JD*, 24:54).

“seal his testimony with his blood” The prophet Joseph Smith and the patriarch Hyrum Smith joined the ranks of ancient prophets and apostles who had given their lives for the gospel of Jesus Christ by the shedding of their blood. The testimonies of Joseph and Hyrum are not ordinary testimonies. They are binding upon the inhabitants of the world. They are sealed with innocent blood. To accept them is to begin the journey to exaltation. To reject them is to risk the condemnation of the Almighty God who called them and bore his own testimony of them. Prophets do not give their lives casually. Those who are called upon to do so leave a witness to all generations that their work is true.

40 Have I not delivered you from your enemies, only in that I have left a witness of my name?

verse 40 “I have left a witness of my name” Many of the enemies of the Church thought that if Joseph Smith were killed, the Church would fall apart and the “scourge” of Mormonism would be erased from the earth. That the Church continued after the death of Joseph Smith and the saints’ move to the Rocky Mountains is a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the Restoration. In very deed, the Lord has left a witness of his name. It is being carried forth throughout the world by those who have the restored authority to declare his name to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

41 Now, therefore, hearken, O ye people of my church; and ye elders listen together; you have received my kingdom.

42 Be diligent in keeping all my commandments, lest judgments come upon you, and your faith fail you, and your enemies triumph over you. So no more at present. Amen and Amen.

Brief Historical Setting

1847 April

Early in April, Brigham led an advanced party of just under one hundred and fifty saints the one thousand miles to the Salt Lake Valley, arriving on July 24, 1847.

Section 138 The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead

Much of the following material on Section 138 is taken from Robert L. Millet's helpful essay entitled "Salvation Beyond the Grave" found in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, pages 554-62. Some material will be quoted and some will be adapted for our use.

During the last six months of his life (May through November 1918), President Joseph F. Smith was eighty years old and was seriously ill and incapacitated, and he spent much of his time in his personal study in the Beehive House. Current events weighed heavily on the mind of President Smith. World War I, the supposed war to end all wars, was ending with many fatalities. An influenza epidemic was spreading throughout the world, resulting in the death of millions. Perhaps the most challenging event personally for the aging prophet was the unexpected death of his eldest son Hyrum Mack Smith, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and a close advisor. On January 20, 1918, Hyrum Mack Smith was taken to the hospital with a sudden acute illness, and the physicians diagnosed a ruptured appendix. Despite constant medical attention and repeated prayers, Hyrum Mack—then only 45 years of age and at the time with a pregnant wife—died on the night of January 23. This was a particularly traumatic affliction for the President. Hyrum had been called to the Quorum of the Twelve at the same conference wherein his father had been sustained as the Church's sixth President (October 1901). Hyrum Mack was a man of depth and wisdom beyond his years, and his powerful sermons evidenced his unusual insight into gospel principles. "His mind was quick and bright and correct," remarked President Smith. "His judgment was not excelled, and he saw and comprehended things in their true light and meaning. When he spoke, men listened and felt the weight of his thoughts and words." Finally, the Prophet observed: "He has thrilled my soul by his power of speech, as no other man ever did. Perhaps this was because he was my son, and he was filled with the fire of the Holy Ghost" (*Ibid.*, 474). Already in a weakened physical condition due to age, the prophet's sudden sense of loss caused him "one of the most severe blows that he was ever called upon to endure" (*Ibid.*).

President Smith did manage to garner enough strength to attend the general conference of the Church in October 1918. At the opening session of the conference of the Church on Friday, October 4, he arose to welcome and address the saints, and with a voice filled with emotion he spoke the following:

As most of you, I suppose, are aware, I have been undergoing a siege of very serious illness for the last five months. It would be impossible for me, on this occasion, to occupy sufficient time to express the desire of my heart and my feelings, as I would desire to express them to you. . . .

I will not, I dare not, attempt to enter upon many things that are resting upon my mind this morning, and I shall postpone until some future time, the Lord being willing, my attempt to tell you some of the things that are in my mind, and that dwell in my heart. I have not lived alone these last five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously (Joseph F. Smith, *CR*, October 1918, 2).

According to the President's son, Joseph Fielding Smith, his father was here expressing the fact that during the previous six months he had been the recipient of numerous manifestations, some of which he had shared with his son. One of these, the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead, had been received just the day before on October 3. It was recorded by Joseph Fielding Smith as his father dictated it following the close of the conference (Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 466).

The account of this vision was presented to the First Presidency, Twelve, and Patriarch in a council meeting on Thursday, October 31, 1918. Because of his weakened condition, the President was not able to be in attendance but asked Joseph Fielding Smith to read the revelation to the gathered General Authorities. These brethren unanimously endorsed the revelation as the word of the Lord.

The text of the vision first appeared in the November 30, 1918, edition of the *Deseret News* and in the 1976 edition of the Pearl of Great Price. It did not appear in the Doctrine and Covenants until the 1981 edition when it was included as section 138.

The aged prophet's attention was drawn to the world beyond mortality by his frequent confrontation with death. His parents, Hyrum and Mary Fielding Smith, both died while he was a young man. Joseph F. was born in 1838 at Far West, Missouri. His father, of course, died with the Prophet in Carthage Jail. His mother died in 1852. Among the great trials of his life, none was more devastating than the passing of many of his children in death. President Smith was possessed of an almost infinite capacity to love, and thus the sudden departure of dear ones brought extreme anguish and sorrow. Joseph Fielding Smith later wrote: "When death invaded his home, as frequently as it did, and his little ones were taken from him, he grieved with a broken heart and mourned, not as those who mourn without hope, but for the loss of his 'precious jewels' dearer to him than life itself" (*Ibid.*, 455).

Even though, as mentioned, the final half year of his life was particularly productive in terms of revealed material, he actually began in April 1916 to give to the Church the benefit of his inspired and inspiring insights. At the April 1916 general conference, President Smith delivered a remarkable address, the thrust of which established a theme for the next thirty months of his life and, most importantly for this discussion, laid the foundation for his final doctrinal contribution—the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead. In his opening sermon entitled: "In the Presence of the Divine," Joseph F. spoke of the nearness of the world of spirits, and of the interest and concern for us and our labors exercised by those who have passed beyond the veil. He

stressed that those who labored so diligently in their mortal estate to establish the cause of Zion would not be denied the privilege of “looking down upon the results of their own labors” from their post-mortal estate. In fact, the President insisted, “they are as deeply interested in our welfare today, if not with greater capacity, with far more interest, behind the veil, than they were in the flesh.” Perhaps the keynote statement of the prophet in this sermon was the following: “Sometimes the Lord expands our vision from this point of view and this side of the veil, so that we feel and seem to realize that we can look beyond the veil which separates us from the other sphere” (*CR*, April 1916, 1-8).

One of the most significant fruits of this segment of time was a talk delivered by President Smith at a temple fast meeting in February of 1918 entitled “The Status of Children in the Resurrection.” In this address we gain not only an insight into the power and prophetic stature of one schooled and prepared in doctrine; in addition, we are allowed a brief glimpse into the heart of a noble father who—having lost little ones in death and having mourned their absence—rejoices in the sure knowledge that: (1) mortal children are immortal beings, spirits who continue to live and progress beyond the veil; and (2) as taught by the prophet Joseph Smith, children will come forth from the grave as they lie down—as children—and such persons will thereafter be nurtured and reared to physical maturity by worthy parents. Having lost eleven children in childhood, President Smith exclaimed: “O how I have been blessed with these children,” exulted President Joseph F. Smith, “and how happy I shall be to meet them on the other side!” (*Improvement Era*, May 1918, 467-74).

As finite man stands in the twilight of life, he is occasionally able to view existence with divine perspective and is thus capable of opening himself to the things of eternity. “If we live our holy religion,” President Brigham Young taught in 1862, “and let the Spirit reign,” the mind of man “will not become dull and stupid, but as the body approaches dissolution, the spirit takes a firmer hold on the enduring substance behind the veil, drawing from the depths of that eternal Fountain of Light sparkling gems of intelligence which surround the frail and sinking tabernacle with a halo of immortal wisdom” (*JD*, 9:288). This poignant principle was demonstrated beautifully in the life of President Joseph F. Smith.

About one and one-half months after receiving section 138, President Smith contracted a severe case of pneumonia that led to his death on November 19, 1918. Because of the influenza epidemic, no public funeral was held to honor him. Thus ended the mortal life of the last President of the Church whose life actually intersected that of the prophet Joseph. Here was a man who met death and sorrow and persecution with a quiet dignity, and thus through participating in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings was made acquainted with the things of God.

verses 1-11 On Thursday, October 3, 1918, President Smith, largely confined to his room because of illness, sat meditating over matters of substance. On this day the prophet specifically began to read and ponder upon the universal nature of the atonement and the Apostle Peter's allusions to Christ's post-mortal ministry in the third and fourth chapters of 1 Peter. The stage was set. The preparation of a lifetime and the preparation of the moment were complemented by a heavenly endowment—the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead.

Scripture Mastery

D&C 138 Vision of the Redemption of the Dead

D&C 138:18-20 The Son of God appeared in the spirit world declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful, but unto the wicked he did not go.

1 On the third of October, in the year nineteen hundred and eighteen, I sat in my room pondering over the scriptures;

2 And reflecting upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God, for the redemption of the world;

verses 1-2 “pondering over the scriptures” “reflecting upon the great atoning sacrifice” We have made the point previously that the prime source of gospel learning is the scriptures. But a casual reading and re-reading of the scriptures often does not result in effective learning through the scriptures. Important tips for scripture study might include: (1) Develop a systematic plan for scripture study rather than a casual and haphazard approach. (2) Commit a set amount of time daily for scripture study rather than setting a certain number of pages to read. Sometimes the consideration of a single verse of scripture will consume the entire time allotted for scripture study. (3) Do not pass right on by the verses or phrases you do not understand. In fact look for words, phrases, and verses you do not fully grasp, and then commit yourself to find an answer to your questions before you continue on. For a further discussion of the topic of effective scripture study, *An Approach to Studying the Scriptures*, in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, Appendix A.

3 And the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world;

verse 3 “the great and wonderful love” The love God has for his children is charity (Ether 12:34). Charity has been defined as follows: When a man yearns for the temporal and spiritual welfare of another individual as much or more than he yearns for his own, then the man has charity. In the atoning sacrifice, this charity was plainly made manifest by both the Father and the Son. The Father for allowing his Firstborn to be cruelly sacrificed, and the Son for voluntarily submitting himself to the unimaginable suffering which he knew the atonement would entail.

4 That through his atonement, and by obedience to the principles of the gospel, mankind might be saved.

verse 4 This verse aptly summarizes the essence of salvation: our obedience (our works) and the Savior's atonement. Nephi summarized this essence as follows: "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

5 While I was thus engaged, my mind reverted to the writings of the apostle Peter, to the primitive saints scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and other parts of Asia, where the gospel had been preached after the crucifixion of the Lord.

verse 5 "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia" These areas are all part of Asia Minor, those areas directly south of the Black Sea. Pontus was a region in northeastern Asia Minor on the south shore of the Black Sea. Galatia was a region in north central Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Cappadocia was a mountainous region in east central Asia Minor. The gospel was preached to these people after the crucifixion of the Savior, and Peter, as the presiding officer of the Church, wrote to them concerning the practices and doctrines of the Church.

6 I opened the Bible and read the third and fourth chapters of the first epistle of Peter, and as I read I was greatly impressed, more than I had ever been before, with the following passages:

verse 6 "greatly impressed, more than I had ever been before" President Smith had read these verses many times before. This time, however, his mind and heart had been prepared to receive greater knowledge and understanding, not only for himself but for the Church and the world.

7 "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

verse 7 "the just for the unjust" Christ was the only one without sin, the only one who could satisfy the demands of justice. He was the only truly just person to live upon this earth. All others are classified as the unjust, guilty of violating one or more of the laws of God.

"that he might bring us to God" The atoning sacrifice required an unblemished lamb, an individual who had never broken the law.

"being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" This phrase refers to the time between the death of Jesus and his resurrection. Although his body had died, his spirit lived on. The word quickened means "made alive, revived."

8 "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

verse 8 “the spirits in prison” Prison here refers to the post mortal spirit world which is known to be located on this very earth. Aren't these righteous dead in paradise rather than prison? The whole of the spirit world is considered a prison, but there appears to be a separation of the righteous and the wicked. This separation may be less a physical separation than a separation of blessings and responsibilities experienced by each group. For a thorough discussion of the post mortal spirit world, see *The Spirit World*, volume 2, chapter 13 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

Why would even those post mortal spirits who were blessed to receive the blessings of paradise consider themselves to be in prison? It is because they “looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (see also D&C 45:17). Even the righteous sought “deliverance” when the Master came to declare “liberty to the captives who had been faithful.” Joseph Smith taught: “Hades, Sheol, paradise, spirits in prison, are all one; it is a world of spirits” (*HC*, 5:425). Elder Bruce R. McConkie added “it is clearly set forth that the whole spirit world, and not only that portion designated as hell, is considered to be a spirit prison” (*Ensign*, August 1976, 11).

9 “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” (1 Peter 3:18-20.)

verse 9 This verses refers to a particular group of spirits in the spirit world. These are the spirits of those who lived in Noah's day who were taught the gospel during their mortal probation (Moses 8:19-24). Their opportunity to believe and obey the truths of salvation came while they yet dwelt in mortality. Hence, even though they may accept the gospel in the spirit world, the highest inheritance available to them is the terrestrial kingdom. They are forever barred from eternal life, or life in the celestial heaven. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “This limitation on the doctrine of salvation for the dead was revealed to Joseph Smith in the vision of the degrees of glory. Speaking of the terrestrial world, the Lord said: These are ‘they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it’ (D&C 76:73-74). Thus: ‘There is no such thing as a second chance to gain salvation by accepting the gospel in the spirit world after spurning, declining, or refusing to accept it in this life. It is true that there may be a second chance to hear and accept the gospel, but those who have thus procrastinated their acceptance of the saving truths will not gain salvation in the celestial kingdom of God’ (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:313).

“few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” This does not refer to the baptism of anyone. These eight were saved temporally in that they did not drown with the rest of the inhabitants of the earth.

10 “For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” (1 Peter 4:6.)

verse 10 This verse refers to the preaching that began following Christ’s post crucifixion visit to the world of spirits. Those in a state of paradise were dispatched to preach the gospel to those who had not achieved a state of paradise. Though these latter are spirits (they “live according to God in the spirit”), they will be judged by the same standards by which they would have been judged had they received the gospel while they were still on earth (they will be “judged according to men in the flesh”).

11 As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great.

verse 1 “the eyes of my understanding were opened” President Smith began to understand through this vision things which he had not understood previously. For example, he had previously taught that Christ himself had gone to the wicked in the spirit world and had personally taught them—that they had heard the gospel from the Savior’s own mouth. This great vision instructed the prophet, and through him all the members of the Church, that Christ did not personally visit the wicked spirits. Thus, this vision expanded our understanding of the nature of the spirit world.

“I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great” The terms *small* and *great* here refer to mortal rank, the rank that is acquired by socioeconomic and political factors here on earth. The gospel is and will continue to be carried to all people on the earth and in the postmortal spirit world, no matter the wealth or rank acquired in this lifetime. All kings and rulers of this world as well as all the poor beggars on the streets must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether or not they accept and embrace the gospel, eventually “every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess to God” that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Romans 14:11).

verses 12-18, 23-24, 50 President Smith saw in vision “an innumerable company of the spirits of the just,” the righteous dead who had lived on the earth from the days of Adam to the time of Christ. These all were anxiously awaiting the advent of Christ and were exuberant in their anticipation of their imminent resurrection. These spirits rejoiced at Christ’s coming since they knew the implications of his visit. They would soon be released from their captivity.

12 And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality;

verse 12 “the spirits of the just” Note that the word *just* is used differently in this verse from the way it is used in verse 7. Verse 7 applies to the Savior only as perfectly just. Verse 12 applies more broadly. The Lord defines “the just” as those imperfect beings “who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality,” had been obedient to the law of sacrifice, and had suffered the tribulations in the name of Christ (see verse 13). This verse makes an important contribution to our understanding of what at least some of those in Old Testament times knew and understood concerning the Savior, Jesus Christ. People from Adam’s time to Christ’s time knew of Christ, worshiped him, and offered sacrifices in his name (see Moses 5:4-7).

13 And who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer’s name.

verse 13 “suffered tribulation in their Redeemer’s name” It is one thing to suffer on account of the challenges of mortality and another to suffer the same challenges in the name of the Redeemer. He suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” and therefore knew how to “succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11-12). When a person understands and has faith in the powers of the atonement and mission of the Savior, life becomes a more peaceful journey (D&C 19:23; 59:23). To suffer for Christ means to suffer in his defense. To suffer in his name means to deal with the challenges of life with faith in and devotion to the Savior and his mission.

14 All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

15 I beheld that they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand.

verse 15 “the day of their deliverance was at hand” Remember, only when the body and spirit are inseparably connected can an individual have a fulness of joy (see D&C 93:33-34), and this is true even for those in a state of paradise in the spirit world. These paradisiacal souls were about to receive that great blessing. The Savior would soon be resurrected and graves would open, and the bodies of many saints who had slept would arise (see Matthew 27:52). The righteous viewed their “long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (verse 50; D&C 45:17).

16 They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death.

verse 16 “redemption from the bands of death” In this verse, *redemption* refers to the resurrection from the dead. It is the reuniting of the spirit with the body,

never again to be separated (see Alma 11:45; D&C 93:33; Romans 6:9). All who have lived on this earth will be granted that blessing unconditionally through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The word redemption is also used in scriptures to apply to overcoming the effects of the fall of Adam (the unconditional redemption from the spiritual death caused by Adam's sin) and the effects of every man's sin based on repentance (the conditional redemption from the spiritual death of each individual due to the sins of that individual).

17 Their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy.

verse 17 “Their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame”

The language here is figurative only. The celestial eternal bodies that these paradisiacal saints in the spirit world were awaiting will contain no mortal elements, but will be of celestial eternal matter.

18 While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful;

verse 18 “vast multitude” Recall that all of the individuals in the spirit world had received, at death, the “partial judgment” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 448), and they had been separated into the righteous in paradise and the wicked in prison. We will learn that Jesus Christ visited only the righteous in paradise. It is encouraging indeed that a large or “vast” number of souls were designated “righteous.” The Lord taught these righteous spirits concerning the fall, repentance, the atonement, and resurrection (see verse 19). These teachings brought to them great hope and peace (see verse 22).

It is notable also that at the day of Christ's visit to the spirit world, the saints in paradise were physically separated from those individuals in spirit prison, and there was no direct interaction between the two groups. Since the day of Christ's visit, however, that physical gulf has been bridged and today there is no physical separation between the spirits in paradise and those in a state of “prison.”

“liberty to the captives” Liberty to these spirit world saints in paradise will soon arrive in the form of resurrection.

19 And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance.

verses 19, 51 While in the world of spirits, Christ taught the gospel to those who had been righteous, or those who lived in the state we refer to as “paradise.” After

teaching them he gave to them an invitation and the power to be resurrected and inherit the celestial kingdom following his resurrection.

verses 20-22, 25-29 Did Christ go among the unrighteous spirits in prison as Peter implied (1 Peter 3:18-20)? It was while pondering the question of how the Savior could have taught the gospel to so many in the spirit world in so short a time (the time intervening between his death on Friday and his rise from the tomb on Sunday morning) that President Smith received what may well be the most significant doctrinal insight of the entire vision. He learned that the Lord did not go among those who had been unrighteous—those in “prison” or “hell.” This certainly modifies our interpretation of D&C 76:73 (see the commentary for that verse).

20 But unto the wicked he did not go, and among the ungodly and the unrepentant who had defiled themselves while in the flesh, his voice was not raised;

21 Neither did the rebellious who rejected the testimonies and the warnings of the ancient prophets behold his presence, nor look upon his face.

verses 20-21 “ungodly and . . . unrepentant” “the rebellious” It is interesting that here the Lord divides the spirits in spirit prison into two separate groups, the ungodly and the rebellious. The ungodly are those who had defiled themselves by giving in to their natural man selves. The rebellious are those who rejected the testimonies and warnings of the ancient prophets. These two groups are actually not as different as they may initially seem, since both suffer from worldly pride.

22 Where these were, darkness reigned, but among the righteous there was peace;

verse 22 “darkness . . . peace” Those in prison suffered in relative spiritual darkness (relative absence of the light of Christ), while those in paradise enjoyed the spiritual peace that was there.

23 And the saints rejoiced in their redemption, and bowed the knee and acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliverer from death and the chains of hell.

24 Their countenances shone, and the radiance from the presence of the Lord rested upon them, and they sang praises unto his holy name.

verse 24 “Their countenances shone” Because of their faithfulness and obedience, the people visited by the Savior in the spirit world reflected the light and peace of the gospel and the glory of the Lord (see D&C 88:67). Conversely, darkness reigns among the wicked, and their unlighted countenances “doth witness against them” (Isaiah 3:9).

25 I marveled, for I understood that the Savior spent about three years in his ministry among the Jews and those of the house of Israel, endeavoring to teach them the everlasting gospel and call them unto repentance;

26 And yet, notwithstanding his mighty works, and miracles, and proclamation of the truth, in great power and authority, there were but few who hearkened to his voice, and rejoiced in his presence, and received salvation at his hands.

27 But his ministry among those who were dead was limited to the brief time intervening between the crucifixion and his resurrection;

verses 25-27 President Smith wondered how much success the Savior could enjoy in less than two days in the spirit prison, given the limited success of the three years of his mortal ministry among the Jews. It was in response to this wondering that he received the revelation that the Savior did not actually go to the spirits in prison during his visit.

28 And I wondered at the words of Peter—wherein he said that the Son of God preached unto the spirits in prison, who sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah—and how it was possible for him to preach to those spirits and perform the necessary labor among them in so short a time.

verse 28 “in the days of Noah” The apostle Peter referred to the Savior’s preaching in the spirit world to those who were disobedient “in the days of Noah.” Those who occupied the spirit world in the days of Noah were those who had lived during Adam’s dispensation and in Noah’s dispensation prior to the Flood. What about those who lived after the Flood? Were there features of the pre-Flood and post-Flood groups that rendered them somehow unique and distinctly different from one another? As it turns out, there were. Prior to the Flood all who lived on the earth had ample opportunity to hear the gospel preached to them and to either accept or reject the gospel—the days of Adam and his children were “prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh” and “their time was lengthened” (2 Nephi 2:21). The use of the word “prolonged” here is a curiosity since the time a man spends on this earth is certainly a relative thing. In other words, the days of the children of men were “prolonged” compared to what or to whom? The same concept is restated later in 2 Nephi 2:21—“their time was lengthened.” This same phraseology is used elsewhere several times in the scriptures (Deuteronomy 4:40; 5:16,30; 6:2; 11:9; 30:18; 32:47; Isaiah 13:22; 53:10; Helaman 15:4,10; 2 Nephi 23:22; Alma 9:18). A study of these references suggests that the verb “prolonged” might also be interpreted as “given sufficient time.”

Apparently, the lives of Adam and his children before the Flood were lengthened so that no one died during Adam’s dispensation without first having had the opportunity

to accept or reject the gospel (see D&C 29:42). Thus, no one, prior to the Flood, died in ignorance of the gospel. Further, it would seem that in that dispensation the Lord was particularly inclined to send to the earth angels to preach his gospel (Moses 5:58; 7:27). Thus, through the preaching of Adam, Enoch, Noah, angels from heaven, and even God himself (see Moses 5:58), no one who died before the Flood died in ignorance. Nevertheless, many of Adam's children "believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God" (Moses 5:13). This longevity changed with the Flood (see Genesis 6:3), and it then became possible for people to die in ignorance.

Preaching the gospel to spirits in prison is described by Peter as beginning with those "which sometime were disobedient [not ignorant], when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah" (1 Peter 3:20). Was it among this group of disobedient antediluvian souls that the preaching in the spirit world started? That is the implication of Peter's writing in 1 Peter 3:20. Yet, Elder James E. Talmage has explained:

The disobedient who had lived on earth in the Noachian [pre-Flood] period are especially mentioned as beneficiaries of the Lord's ministry in the spirit world. They had been guilty of gross offenses, and had wantonly rejected the teachings and admonitions of Noah. . . . We are not to assume from Peter's illustrative mention of the disobedient antediluvians that they alone were included in the blessed opportunities offered through Christ's ministry in the spirit realm; on the contrary, we conclude in reason and consistency that all whose wickedness in the flesh had brought their spirits into the prison house were sharers in the possibilities of expiation, repentance, and release" (*Jesus the Christ*, 672-73).

verses 29-31 One important contribution of section 138 to our knowledge of the postmortal spirit world is the fact that the Savior, himself, did not associate with the wicked and teach them directly but rather he organized the righteous and sent them to teach the wicked and rebellious. Note that he gave to the righteous power and authority and commissioned them to preach to the wicked (see verse 30). This action implies an organization, perhaps similar to what we have on earth, designed to preach the gospel under priesthood keys and authority. This truth was new to the saints when this revelation was received and is an example of the Lord's adding line upon line to the knowledge of the leaders and members of the Church. For example, before President Smith had this vision, Elder James E. Talmage wrote in his great work on the life and mission of Jesus the Christ: "While divested of his body Christ ministered among the departed, both in paradise and in the prison realm where dwelt in a state of duration the spirits of the disobedient" (*Jesus the Christ*, 672). This vision adds information that Elder Talmage did not understand at the time of his writing. As Elder Orson F. Whitney stated in February 1919: "President Smith's pronouncement is a modification of the view commonly taken, that the Savior's personal ministry was to both classes of spirits" (*Millennial Star* 81 [20 February 1919]: 116).

29 And as I wondered, my eyes were opened, and my understanding quickened, and I perceived that the Lord went not in person among the wicked and the disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them;

30 But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead.

verses 30 “even to all the spirits of men” According to the great plan of salvation, every child of our Father in Heaven will be given a full opportunity to have the gospel of Jesus Christ preached to him or her in the spirit world. No one will be passed over in this process, not even those who “died in their sins . . . in transgression, having rejected the prophets” (verse 32).

“he organized his forces and appointed messengers” President Heber C. Kimball related the following conversation with President Jedediah M. Grant in 1856:

He said to me, brother Heber, I have been into the spirit world two nights in succession, and, of all the dreads that ever came across me, the worst was to have to again return to my body, though I had to do it. But O, says he, the order and government that were there! When in the spirit world, I saw the order of righteous men and women; beheld them organized in their several grades, and there appeared to be no obstruction to my vision . . . I looked to see whether there was any disorder there, but there was none; neither could I see any death nor any darkness, disorder or confusion. He said that the people he there saw were organized in family capacities; and when he looked at them he saw grade after grade, and all were organized and in perfect harmony, . . . Why it is just as brother Brigham says it is, it is just as he has told us many a time” (Young, *JD*, 4:135-36, as quoted in Maxwell, *Promise of Discipleship*, 107-08).

31 And the chosen messengers went forth to declare the acceptable day of the Lord and proclaim liberty to the captives who were bound, even unto all who would repent of their sins and receive the gospel.

verses 31, 34 Not only did the Savior organize the missionary effort, but he sent them forth. These spirit missionaries carried the gospel message (“declare[d] the acceptable day of the Lord”) to those spirits in prison that they might be judged and rewarded by the same divine standards as those who inhabit the world of mortals.

“the acceptable day of the Lord” The acceptable year or the acceptable day of the Lord is the moment, the point in time, when salvation is offered to the souls of men (see also Luke 4:19; D&C 93:51).

32 Thus was the gospel preached to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets.

verse 32 Two groups in the spirit prison are mentioned in this verse—those who have sinned without the knowledge of the truth and those who have transgressed by rejecting the prophets. Both must repent in order to receive the blessing of a resurrection into a kingdom of glory.

Whether or not any individual in spirit prison will be resurrected with a celestial eternal body and be exalted is uncertain. There are two schools of thought in the Church. The first one claims that all who have died without hearing the gospel, including those who would have accepted it had they heard it, will be relegated at death to the spirit prison. The other school suggests that only terrestrial, telestial, and perdition bound souls end up in the spirit prison, since all those who would have accepted the gospel and endured in it will be placed in paradise at their death (D&C 137:5-9). See a more thorough discussion of this question in “Precisely Who Will Be Found Worthy of Paradise?” in *The Spirit World* in chapter 13, volume 2 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

33 These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands,

verse 33 This verse suggests that inhabitants of the postmortal spirit prison may repent and inherit the celestial degree of glory, since the pathway to exaltation is outlined here: faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The baptism, of course, must be performed vicariously on earth since it is an earthly ordinance.

It is important to note that although baptism was instituted from the time of Adam, vicarious baptism for the dead was not instituted until after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Joseph Fielding Smith observed: “There was no baptism for the dead before the days of the Son of God and until after he had risen from the dead, because he was the first who declared the gospel unto the dead. No one else preached unto the dead until Christ went to them and opened the doors, and from that time forth the elders of Israel, who have passed away, have had the privilege of going to the spirit world and declaring the message of salvation” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:116).

34 And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

35 And so it was made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the faithful, that redemption had been wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross.

verse 35 All in the spirit world heard the announcement that redemption from death had been accomplished through Christ’s death on the cross. The righteous in

“paradise” heard the announcement from the Savior himself. Those in “prison” heard the news from the spirit missionaries whom Christ dispatched.

36 Thus was it made known that our Redeemer spent his time during his sojourn in the world of spirits, instructing and preparing the faithful spirits of the prophets who had testified of him in the flesh;

verse 36 “the prophets who had testified of him in the flesh” The gospel of Jesus Christ has been on this earth since the beginning. Every prophet who held keys and priesthood authority has testified of the Savior and his mission. When the Savior visited the spirit world, he organized and prepared those prophets to continue the work of preaching and testifying.

37 That they might carry the message of redemption unto all the dead, unto whom he could not go personally, because of their rebellion and transgression, that they through the ministration of his servants might also hear his words.

verse 37 “he could not go personally, because of their rebellion and transgression” Just how is it that the Savior was prevented from ministering personally among those in spirit prison? After all, did he not minister among publicans and sinners here on earth? The logical answer is that they did not deserve a personal visit from the Savior. The law of justice, or the law of fairness, would likely preclude him from ministering among those in prison because those in prison were not worthy of such a visit and his visit would have given them an unfair advantage in coming to believe in the Savior and his gospel.

verses 38-52 By the power of the Holy Ghost, President Smith perceived the identity of many of the noble and great from the beginning of time. He recognized Mother Eve and many of her faithful daughters. He also identified prophets and dispensation heads as being among those who were called to preach in the spirit world.

38 Among the great and mighty ones who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous were Father Adam, the Ancient of Days and father of all,

39 And our glorious Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God.

verse 39 “Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters” This verse emphasizes the importance of the role of the daughters of God in the work of the salvation of mankind. As in this life, so in the world of spirits—their work and responsibility continues. Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke of the role of women in the plan of our Father in Heaven when he declared:

We know so little, brothers and sisters, about the reasons for the division of duties between womanhood and manhood as well as between motherhood and

priesthood. These were divinely determined in another time and another place. We are accustomed to focusing on the men of God because theirs is the priesthood and leadership line. But paralleling that authority line is a stream of righteous influence reflecting the remarkable women of God who have existed in all ages and dispensations, including our own. Greatness is not measured by coverage in column inches, either in newspapers or in the scriptures. The story of the women of God, therefore, is, for now, an untold drama within a drama (*CR*, April 1978, 13).

President Joseph F. Smith, at an earlier time, made this observation:

Now, among all these millions of spirits that have lived on the earth, and have passed away, from generation to generation, since the beginning of the world, without the knowledge of the gospel—among them you may count that at least one-half are women. Who is going to preach the gospel to the women? Who is going to carry that testimony of Jesus Christ to the hearts of the women who have passed away without a knowledge of the gospel? Well, to my mind, it is a simple thing. These good sisters who have been set apart, ordained to the work, called to it, authorized by the authority of the holy Priesthood to minister for their sex, in the House of God for the living and for the dead, will be fully authorized and empowered to preach the gospel and minister to the women while the elders and prophets are preaching it to the men. The things we experience here are typical of the things of God and the life beyond us (*Gospel Doctrine*, 461).

40 Abel, the first martyr, was there, and his brother Seth, one of the mighty ones, who was in the express image of his father, Adam.

verse 40 “Seth, one of the mighty ones” The Doctrine and Covenants teaches us some interesting truths about Seth. He was a “perfect man” who was so similar to his father, Adam, in “all things,” that they could only be distinguished by age (D&C 107:43). He was with Adam and his righteous posterity in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman when Adam bestowed his last blessing upon the saints (D&C 107:53). He was ordained by Adam at the age of sixty-nine with the promise that his posterity would be “the chosen of the Lord, and that they should be preserved unto the end of the earth” (D&C 107:42).

41 Noah, who gave warning of the flood; Shem, the great high priest; Abraham, the father of the faithful; Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, the great law-giver of Israel;

verse 41 “Shem, the great high priest” Shem was the son of Noah and father of the Semitic race through whom the promises and birthright blessings of the priesthood would be shared with the world. He was a forefather of Joseph, the husband of Mary (see Luke 3:36) and is designated in this verse as “the great high priest” (see also the LDS Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Shem”).

42 And Isaiah, who declared by prophecy that the Redeemer was anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, were also there.

43 Moreover, Ezekiel, who was shown in vision the great valley of dry bones, which were to be clothed upon with flesh, to come forth again in the resurrection of the dead, living souls;

44 Daniel, who foresaw and foretold the establishment of the kingdom of God in the latter days, never again to be destroyed nor given to other people;

45 Elias, who was with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration;

verse 45 “Elias” There’s that confusing name again—Elias! Just who is this Elias who appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration. Before considering Elias’s identity, let us review the three possible definitions of Elias: (1) There is a specific person named Elias—the prophet Noah. His name is Elias in the same sense that Adam’s name is Michael. This knowledge comes from a sermon Joseph gave to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1839 (*HC*, 3:386). In this sermon he taught that Gabriel is Noah. In D&C 27:7 we learn that Elias is the messenger who visited Zacharias to announce that his wife, Elisabeth, would bear a son. Hence, Elias is Gabriel is Noah. (2) The name Elias may be used as a title. The Prophet Noah accomplished one of the most important feats of restoration in the history of the earth following the Flood. Noah was thus given the keys of restoration or of preparing the way for the Savior and for the gospel. Hence when anyone does restorative or preparative kinds of work, he is really doing the work of Noah and may be called an Elias. An example is John the Baptist whose major role was in preparing the way for Christ and in setting the stage for the restoration of the gospel. Thus he is accorded the title—an Elias. Other examples of Eliases in this final dispensation include Moroni, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah, Raphael, and Michael (D&C 13; 110; 128:19-21). (3) The Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Elijah is Elias. Generally, in the New Testament when the name Elias is used it refers to the prophet Elijah.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has postulated even a fourth possible explanation for the name “Elias” in his book *Mormon Doctrine*. He suggested that there might have been a prophet in the days of Abraham whose name was “Elias.” Elder McConkie admitted that we know nothing else about such a prophet.

In this verse, Elias refers to Elijah who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses. The Elias who appeared in the Kirtland Temple with Moses and Elijah to commit the gospel of Abraham to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (D&C 110:12) is an otherwise unidentified person of Old Testament times (see the *LDS Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Elias”).

46 And Malachi, the prophet who testified of the coming of Elijah – of whom also Moroni spake to the Prophet Joseph Smith, declaring that he should come before the ushering in of the great and dreadful day of the Lord – were also there.

47 The Prophet Elijah was to plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to their fathers,

verse 47 “plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to their fathers” See the commentary for D&C 2:2.

48 Foreshadowing the great work to be done in the temples of the Lord in the dispensation of the fulness of times, for the redemption of the dead, and the sealing of the children to their parents, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse and utterly wasted at his coming.

verse 48 “lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse and utterly wasted at his coming” See the commentary for D&C 2:3.

49 All these and many more, even the prophets who dwelt among the Nephites and testified of the coming of the Son of God, mingled in the vast assembly and waited for their deliverance,

verse 49 “even the prophets who dwelt among the Nephites” We must not forget the great Book of Mormon prophets many of which sacrificed much to testify of Christ—for example, the prophet Abinadi (Mosiah 11-17).

50 For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage.

verse 50 See the commentary for D&C 45:17.

51 These the Lord taught, and gave them power to come forth, after his resurrection from the dead, to enter into his Father’s kingdom, there to be crowned with immortality and eternal life,

verse 51 “These the Lord taught” Again, this phrase refers only to the spirits in paradise and not those in spirit prison.

52 And continue thenceforth their labor as had been promised by the Lord, and be partakers of all blessings which were held in reserve for them that love him.

verses 53-56 It appears that the scene of the vision shifts from the first century after Christ to the time and personalities of the dispensation of the fulness of times. President Smith saw the leaders of this dispensation, after leaving this mortal sphere, also preaching the gospel in the spirit world. The keys they held on earth in this

dispensation were also active in the spirit world, and they continued their work after death, acting under the keys held by the Prophet Joseph Smith (see D&C 90:3).

53 The Prophet Joseph Smith, and my father, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice spirits who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work,

verse 53 You the reader should be reminded that you also were “reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part” in this great latter-day work.”

54 Including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein for the redemption of the dead, were also in the spirit world.

verse 54 This verses completes the sentence begun in verse 53.

“Including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein” This phrase highlights the vital central role of the temple both in the restoration of the gospel and in the redemption of the dead.

55 I observed that they were also among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God.

56 Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.

verse 56 “world of spirits” This phrase refers to the premortal world of spirits.

This interesting verse indicates that those “noble and great ones” in the premortal world who were foreordained to come forth in this final dispensation were schooled on their future responsibilities while still in their premortal state.

57 I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead.

verse 57 “the faithful elders of this dispensation” What are we going to be doing during our sojourn in the spirit world while we await our own resurrection? It is not just the leaders of the Church in this dispensation who will be involved in preaching repentance to the spirits in prison after this life, but all faithful elders and sisters (see verse 39). President Smith’s vision confirms another doctrine that had been taught by Joseph Smith: the faithful in this life continue to teach and labor in the world of spirits in behalf of those who know not God. Joseph F. Smith had taught this doctrine on a number of occasions, and here he became an eyewitness of the same.

58 The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

verse 58 “through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God”

Brigham Young stated: “It is supposed by this people that we have all the ordinances in our possession for life and salvation, and exaltation, and that we are administering in those ordinances. This is not the case. We are in possession of all the ordinances that can be [administered] in the flesh; but there are other ordinances and administrations that must be administered beyond this world. I know you would like to ask what they are. I will mention one. We have not, neither can we receive here, the ordinances and the keys of resurrection” (*JD*, 15:137, as quoted in Kimball, *CR*, April 1977, 69).

59 And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.

verses 58-59 “shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation” Salvation does not necessarily mean the same as exaltation, although it is often used in that context. D&C 76:43-44 affirms that the Lord “saves” all except the sons of perdition, and D&C 76:88 specifically refers to those in the telestial kingdom as “heirs of salvation.” In a broad sense, salvation means to be saved from death, hell, and the devil and to be placed in the telestial, terrestrial, or celestial kingdom. In a more narrow sense, salvation means to be exalted. All those in the spirit prison who confess Christ and repent will be saved. Doubtless most will inherit terrestrial or telestial glory. Whether any will earn celestial glory, we will just have to wait and see (D&C 137:5-9).

60 Thus was the vision of the redemption of the dead revealed to me, and I bear record, and I know that this record is true, through the blessing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, even so. Amen.

verse 60 Having laid before us his remarkable vision, President Smith climaxed his contribution with his testimony.

President Smith’s physical condition worsened during the first weeks of November 1918. He died on November 19, 1918. At the next general conference in April 1919, Elder James E. Talmage paid an appropriate tribute to the President:

Well where is he now? He was permitted shortly before his passing to have a glimpse into the hereafter and to learn where he would soon be at work. He was a preacher of righteousness on earth, he is a preacher of righteousness today. He was a missionary from his boyhood up, and he is a missionary today amongst those who have not yet heard the gospel, though they have passed from mortality into the spirit world. I

cannot conceive of him as otherwise than busily engaged in the work of the Master (*CR*, April 1919, 60).

Official Declaration – 1

The two “Official Declarations” in our Doctrine and Covenants are not numbered sections in the book because they are not revelations. Rather they are inspired announcements that revelations had been received.

To fully appreciate the significance of the “Manifesto,” as Official Declaration 1 (OD–1) is popularly known, one must have some knowledge of the history of the doctrine of plural marriage in the Church and the problems that doctrine created. Please review the commentary for section 132.

The United States made Utah a territory in 1850, and therefore the Congress could regulate activities in the territory. Laws were passed by Congress against plural marriage as early as 1862 with follow-up laws in 1874, 1882, and 1887. Each law became more restrictive on the saints and exerted more control over the properties and funds of the Church.

The Church regarded the laws passed against plural marriage as unconstitutional infringements on their right to freedom of religion, and convictions based on these laws were appealed to higher courts. These laws began to be upheld by the United States Supreme Court, and their enforcement by appointed governors and sheriffs of the territory led to the imprisonment of hundreds of saints and many of their leaders. At times some of the leaders, including members of the First Presidency, had to go into hiding to stay out of jail. In 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker Act repealed the right of LDS women to vote and directed federal authorities to confiscate all properties owned by the Church over the value of fifty thousand dollars. The properties included the temples of the Lord. It became apparent to President Wilford Woodruff in 1889 that the anti-polygamy laws enacted by congress would continue to be upheld as being constitutional by the Supreme Court of the land, and in fact the Edmunds-Tucker Act was declared constitutional by the Supreme Court in May 1890.

Thus President Woodruff was faced with a difficult dilemma: should the saints continue to practice the divine principle of plural marriage (section 132) or should they follow the Lord’s counsel to obey the law of the land (D&C 98:5)? The Lord showed him in vision what would take place if the practice of plural marriage were not stopped (see Excerpts From Three Addresses by President Wilford Woodruff Regarding the Manifesto in the Doctrine and Covenants following OD-1). He foresaw that the temples would be lost; ordinance work for the living and dead would cease; the church leadership and many heads of families would be imprisoned; and in general the Church would be destroyed. President Woodruff was willing that all these consequences should befall the Church if it were the Lord’s will that plural marriage should continue. It was only after the Lord’s will became known to him by revelation that he wrote the

“Manifesto.” Interestingly, in his journal he said he received the “following revelation,” and then he left the rest of the page blank. Why he didn’t write it is not clear.

The solution and the Lord’s will was clear, and in 1889 under his direction, the First Presidency withdrew authorization for further plural marriages. Actually shutting down the practice, however, was not simple. In November 1889 President Woodruff learned that unauthorized plural marriages were being performed in the Endowment House. This was a building erected on Temple Square wherein sacred ordinances could be performed until the Salt Lake Temple was completed. The President thus ordered the building torn down.

The continuation of the practice of plural marriage even after authorization was withdrawn in 1889 was pointed out by those critical of the Church. The Church was accused of secretly sanctioning the practice though publicly denouncing it. Thus, just before October conference 1890, on September 26, President Woodruff issued the “Manifesto” in which he declared his intention to submit to the laws of the land and committed himself to use all the influence of his office to persuade the saints to refrain from practicing plural marriage. He declared that the Church had stopped the practice of plural marriage and that from that time forward anyone who contracted a plural marriage would be excommunicated.

This declaration was presented to the general conference of the Church on October 6, 1890. As President of the Quorum of the Twelve, President Lorenzo Snow made the motion in general conference that the Manifesto be accepted as binding on the Church. The vote of the conference was unanimous.

An agreement was reached between the Church and the federal government that all existing polygamous marriages would be allowed to continue without fear of persecution.

The polygamy obstacle out of the way, Utah was admitted as one of the United States in 1896.

For a time the Church allowed plural marriages to be performed outside of the United States—particularly in the Mormon colonies of northern Mexico. In 1904, however, President Joseph F. Smith issued a second Manifesto and effectively withdrew the Church’s sanction of the practice of plural marriage anywhere in the world. Two members of the Quorum of the Twelve, John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley, were asked to resign in 1905 when they openly disagreed with the prohibition against polygamous marriages. Under Joseph F. Smith’s direction, the Manifesto was included in the 1908 printing of the Doctrine and Covenants and has been found in every edition since that time. It was renamed Official Declaration 1 in the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Also in that edition were placed excerpts from talks given by President Woodruff regarding the Manifesto. These statements inform us of the challenges faced by the Church and the results that would have taken place had the decision not been made to discontinue the practice of plural marriage. In these excerpts, President

Woodruff testifies that he issued the Manifesto under the direction of the Lord and that he wrote what the Lord told him to write. He also taught the important principle that the Lord will never permit the President of the Church to lead the saints astray.

Scripture Mastery

Official Declaration 1 The Wilford Woodruff Manifesto

To Whom It May Concern:

Press dispatches having been sent for political purposes, from Salt Lake City, which have been widely published, to the effect that the Utah Commission, in their recent report to the Secretary of the Interior, allege that plural marriages are still being solemnized and that forty or more such marriages have been contracted in Utah since last June or during the past year, also that in public discourses the leaders of the Church have taught, encouraged and urged the continuance of the practice of polygamy—

“Press dispatches” Even though the Quorum of the Twelve had instructed that the doctrine of plural marriage was no longer to be preached and President Woodruff had had the Endowment House torn down as an indication that the performing of plural marriages had been discontinued, local and national newspapers and individuals did not cease to accuse the Church of continuing to sanction and practice plural marriage. The Manifesto was issued to correct and combat these concerns. It is true that some members of the Church, including a few leaders, had difficulty accepting the decision to discontinue plural marriage.

I, therefore, as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, do hereby, in the most solemn manner, declare that these charges are false. We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice, and I deny that either forty or any other number of plural marriages have during that period been solemnized in our Temples or in any other place in the Territory.

One case has been reported, in which the parties allege that the marriage was performed in the Endowment House, in Salt Lake City, in the Spring of 1889, but I have not been able to learn who performed the ceremony; whatever was done in this matter was without my knowledge. In consequence of this alleged occurrence the Endowment House was, by my instructions, taken down without delay.

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my

influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.

“Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress” The United States Congress had passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act (1887), which, among other things, provided for the disincorporation of the Church and the taking over of the properties of the Church except for burial grounds and those used exclusively for religious services. This law was challenged in the courts all the way up to the Supreme Court, which declared it constitutional. The Church was required to pay rent on its own property, including a high rent for the use of the Salt Lake Temple block.

There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy; and when any Elder of the Church has used language which appeared to convey any such teaching, he has been promptly reproofed. And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.

WILFORD WOODRUFF

President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Lorenzo Snow offered the following:

"I move that, recognizing Wilford Woodruff as the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the only man on the earth at the present time who holds the keys of the sealing ordinances, we consider him fully authorized by virtue of his position to issue the Manifesto which has been read in our hearing, and which is dated September 24th, 1890, and that as a Church in General Conference assembled, we accept his declaration concerning plural marriages as authoritative and binding."

The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous.

Salt Lake City, Utah, October 6, 1890.

**EXCERPTS FROM THREE ADDRESSES
BY PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF
REGARDING THE MANIFESTO**

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty. (Sixty-first Semiannual General Conference of the Church, Monday, October 6, 1890, Salt Lake City, Utah. Reported in Deseret Evening News, October 11, 1890, p. 2.)

It matters not who lives or who dies, or who is called to lead this Church, they have got to lead it by the inspiration of Almighty God. If they do not do it that way, they cannot do it at all. . . .

I have had some revelations of late, and very important ones to me, and I will tell you what the Lord has said to me. Let me bring your minds to what is termed the manifesto. . . .

The Lord has told me to ask the Latter-day Saints a question, and He also told me that if they would listen to what I said to them and answer the question put to them, by the Spirit and power of God, they would all answer alike, and they would all believe alike with regard to this matter.

The question is this: Which is the wisest course for the Latter-day Saints to pursue—to continue to attempt to practice plural marriage, with the laws of the nation against it and the opposition of sixty millions of people, and at the cost of the confiscation and loss of all the Temples, and the stopping of all the ordinances therein, both for the living and the dead, and the imprisonment of the First Presidency and Twelve and the heads of families in the Church, and the confiscation of personal property of the people (all of which of themselves would stop the practice); or, after doing and suffering what we have through our adherence to this principle to cease the practice and submit to the law, and through doing so leave the Prophets, Apostles and fathers at home, so that they can instruct the people and attend to the duties of the Church, and also leave the Temples in the hands of the Saints, so that they can attend to the ordinances of the Gospel, both for the living and the dead?

The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would take place if we did not stop this practice. If we had not stopped it, you would have had no use for . . . any of the men in this temple at Logan; for all ordinances would be stopped throughout the land of Zion. Confusion would reign throughout Israel, and many men would be made prisoners. This trouble would have come upon the whole Church, and we should have been compelled to stop the practice. Now, the question is, whether it should be stopped in this manner, or in the way the Lord has manifested to us, and leave our Prophets and Apostles and fathers free men, and the temples in the hands of the people, so that the dead may be redeemed. A large number has already been delivered from the prison house in the spirit world by this people, and shall the work go on or stop? This is the question I lay before the Latter-day Saints. You have to judge for yourselves. I want you to answer it for yourselves. I shall not answer it; but I say to you that that is exactly the condition we as a people would have been in had we not taken the course we have.

. . . I saw exactly what would come to pass if there was not something done. I have had this spirit upon me for a long time. But I want to say this: I

should have let all the temples go out of our hands; I should have gone to prison myself, and let every other man go there, had not the God of heaven commanded me to do what I did do; and when the hour came that I was commanded to do that, it was all clear to me. I went before the Lord, and I wrote what the Lord told me to write. . . .

I leave this with you, for you to contemplate and consider. The Lord is at work with us. (Cache Stake Conference, Logan, Utah, Sunday, November 1, 1891. Reported in *Deseret Weekly*, November 14, 1891.)

Now I will tell you what was manifested to me and what the Son of God performed in this thing. . . . All these things would have come to pass, as God Almighty lives, had not that Manifesto been given. Therefore, the Son of God felt disposed to have that thing presented to the Church and to the world for purposes in his own mind. The Lord had decreed the establishment of Zion. He had decreed the finishing of this temple. He had decreed that the salvation of the living and the dead should be given in these valleys of the mountains. And Almighty God decreed that the Devil should not thwart it. If you can understand that, that is a key to it. (From a discourse at the sixth session of the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple, April 1893. Typescript of Dedicatory Services, Archives, Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.)

In 1998 President Gordon B. Hinckley declared once again the position of the Church on the practice of plural marriage: “More than a century ago God clearly revealed unto his prophet Wilford Woodruff that the practice of plural marriage should be discontinued, which means that it is now against the law of God. Even in countries where civil or religious law allows polygamy, the Church teaches that marriage must be monogamous and does not accept into its membership those practicing plural marriage” (*CR*, October 1998, 92).

Official Declaration – 2

Since the organization of the Church, blacks have been free to join the Church and participate in its activities, but they have not been allowed to receive the priesthood. We do not know the reasons for this restriction. We have neither official statements nor statements from the historical records of Joseph Smith that offer commentary or doctrinal explanations for this denial. The scriptures do teach that blood lineage plays a role in the granting or denying of the priesthood (see Abraham 1:21-27; D&C 86:8-10; 113:1-6). For example, in Moses's time the Aaronic Priesthood was conferred only upon worthy male descendants of the tribe of Levi, and the firstborn sons of Aaron have rights to certain offices in this priesthood because of their lineage (see Exodus 28:1-3; D&C 68:14-21; 84:26-27; 107:13-17). At times the gospel has gone only to the house of Israel and at other times to the Gentiles (see Acts 10).

Leaders of the Church have always taught that granting the priesthood is a matter of revelation and not a result of political or social thought. It depends upon the timetable of God. He who knows all things and sees the end from the beginning decides, based on what is best for the individual or for groups of people. We know this much: God loves all of his children, "black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile" (2 Nephi 26:33). We, with our limited knowledge and understanding, might not always know his ways or his timetable. But in faith we can follow his commandments with the assurance that all will turn to our good and the good of our brothers and sisters in this world.

A statement issued by the First Presidency in 1949 stated that the restriction was not a policy but a direct command from God. In 1963 another statement by the First Presidency indicated that the restriction had nothing to do with civil rights but was a directive from the Lord. A similar statement was issued in 1969. This policy has been the object of criticism and attack over the years, particularly during the 1960s when our country saw widespread agitation for civil rights. Pressures were applied to the prophet from both without and within the Church to change this policy. Yet the heavens were silent. No revelation came.

In the mid 1970s the issue began to smolder in the mind of President Spencer W. Kimball. By early 1978 under President Kimball's direction, the General Authorities began to discuss the possibility of extending the priesthood blessings to the black man. President Kimball also made special visits to the temple, where he could be alone, to pray in that sacred place. He explained:

I remember very vividly that day after day I walked to the temple and ascended to the fourth floor where we have our solemn assemblies, and where we have our meetings of the Twelve and the First Presidency. After everybody had gone out of the

temple, I knelt and prayed. I prayed with much fervency. I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and put them in place. Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness to the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. I wanted to do what he wanted. I talked to him about it and said, “Lord, I want only what is right We want only the thing thou dost want, and we want it when you want it and not until” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 450-51).

On June 1, 1978, after the regular temple meeting, President Kimball invited his counselors and ten the Twelve to remain while the other General Authorities were excused (One apostle, Elder Mark E. Peterson, was out of town, and another, Elder Delbert L. Stapley, was in the hospital). The matter of extending the blessings of the priesthood was raised.

Elder David B. Haight recalled: “As each responded, we witnessed an outpouring of the Spirit which bonded our souls together in perfect unity—a glorious experience.” He further indicated that President Kimball suggested that they pray at the altar. “Usually he asked one of us to lead in prayer; however, on this day he asked, ‘Would you mind if I be voice at the altar today?’ . . . The prophet of God poured out his heart, pleading eloquently for the Lord to make his mind and will known to his servant, Spencer W. Kimball. The prophet pleaded that he would be given the necessary direction which could expand the Church throughout the world by offering the fulness of the everlasting gospel to all men, based solely upon their personal worthiness without reference to race or color” (Tate, *David B. Haight*, 279-80).

President Kimball later recalled:

I told the Lord if it wasn't right, if he didn't want this change to come in the Church that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I'd fight the world . . . if that's what He wanted I had a great deal to fight, myself largely, because I had grown up with this thought that Negroes should not have the priesthood, and I was prepared to go all the rest of my life till my death and fight for it and defend it as it was. But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it (*Church News*, 6 January 1979, 4).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie added his description of the occasion:

It was during this prayer that the revelation came. The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon us all; we felt something akin to what happened on the day of Pentecost and at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. From the midst of eternity, the voice of God, conveyed by the power of the Spirit, spoke to his prophet. . . . And we all heard the same voice, received the same message, and became personal witnesses that the word received was the mind and will and voice of the Lord (*The New Revelation on Priesthood*, 128).

Reflecting later on this experience, President Spencer W. Kimball and President Ezra Taft Benson and others of the Twelve concurred that none “had ever experienced anything of such spiritual magnitude and power as was poured out upon the Presidency and the Twelve that day in the upper room in the house of the Lord” (McConkie, *The New Revelation on Priesthood*, 128).

President Gordon B. Hinckley, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, described the experience as follows: “There was a hallowed and sanctified atmosphere in the room. For me, it felt as if a conduit opened between the heavenly throne and the kneeling, pleading prophet of God who was joined by his Brethren. . . . It was a quiet and sublime occasion” (*Ensign*, October 1988, 70).

One interesting anecdote seems worth telling. In 1836 in Kirtland a black member of the Church, Elijah Abel, was ordained an elder and later a seventy. He received the ordinances of washing and anointing in the Kirtland Temple. After he came west he was refused the opportunity of receiving his endowment in the Salt Lake Temple because he was black. He remained a faithful member of the Church to his death. Anti-Mormons have had a lot to say about the Church’s handling of Brother Abel. Brother Abel’s temple work was completed Thursday, March 27, 1986. Thankfully, he is one of us in the fullest sense of the word.

There is no published account of the text of the revelation. The First Presidency announced to the Church in a letter to all general authorities and local priesthood authorities and, in a press release, to the world that the Lord “has now made known his will” that all worthy male members of the Church could be ordained to the priesthood. At the following general conference, on September 30, 1978, the letter that had been sent to all church leaders was read, and a proposal was made by President N. Eldon Tanner, first counselor in the First Presidency, that the revelation received by the prophet be accepted as the word and will of God. This motion was sustained unanimously by the congregation. The statement that was read by President Tanner to the conference was added to the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants as Official Declaration–2.

Scripture Mastery

Official Declaration 2 1978 Revelation on the Priesthood

To Whom It May Concern:

On September 30, 1978, at the 148th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the following was presented by President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church:

In early June of this year, the First Presidency announced that a revelation had been received by President Spencer W. Kimball extending priesthood and temple blessings to all worthy male members of the Church. President Kimball

has asked that I advise the conference that after he had received this revelation, which came to him after extended meditation and prayer in the sacred rooms of the holy temple, he presented it to his counselors, who accepted it and approved it. It was then presented to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who unanimously approved it, and was subsequently presented to all other General Authorities, who likewise approved it unanimously.

President Kimball has asked that I now read this letter:

June 8, 1978

To all general and local priesthood officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world:

Dear Brethren:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God's eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known his will for the blessing of all his children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of his authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel.

Sincerely yours,
SPENCER W. KIMBALL

**N. ELDON TANNER
MARION G. ROMNEY
The First Presidency**

Recognizing Spencer W. Kimball as the prophet, seer, and revelator, and president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is proposed that we as a constituent assembly accept this revelation as the word and will of the Lord. All in favor please signify by raising your right hand. Any opposed by the same sign.

***The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous in the affirmative.
Salt Lake City, Utah, September 30, 1978.***

The revelation granting the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church has a profound effect on both sides of the veil. It allows the full teaching of the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people and for the building of temples in all the lands of the earth. Within those temples all worthy members can receive the full ordinances of the gospel and do the necessary work for their kindred dead. In the dispensation of the fulness of times, all the promises made to the children of our Father in Heaven will become a reality.

A Brief History of the Evolution of Our Present-day Doctrine and Covenants

It is not known just when the Prophet began writing down the major revelations he received, but his personal history indicates that early in 1829 he was regularly doing so, and that on April 6, 1830, while in the process of organizing the Church, he received a revelation commanding the Church to keep a record of its activities (D&C 21:1, 4-6). The earliest collections of Joseph Smith's revelations were made informally by individual members of the Church. Often these were saints to whom copies of the revelations had been given because they concerned those particular individuals. People then began to gather others by making copies and trading back and forth, and more and more saints sought their own collections of these precious messages from the Lord. Joseph kept his own collection, but even that was quite informal. It fell to his scribes to keep Joseph's collection intact and current.

In 1831 the Church sent William W. Phelps, a newspaper journalist even before joining the Church, to Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, to open a printing shop. His first assignment was to begin printing the Church's first newspaper, *The Evening and Morning Star*. Some twenty-seven of Joseph's revelations were printed in this periodical. This, however, did not satisfy the need of church members to have their own collections of the revelations, especially since Independence was about one thousand miles from Kirtland, and it was difficult to efficiently distribute this publication from Independence to all the church membership.

Between November 1 and 12, 1831, in Hiram, Ohio, a pertinent series of special conferences of the elders of the Church was held. These conferences were held at the home of John Johnson, where Joseph and Emma were living at the time. During these meetings, the elders of the Church resolved that a collection of Joseph's revelations be printed and distributed to all members of the Church. Joseph agreed to make such a collection, and he selected those to be included out of the many he had received. One note of interest is that the Church has in its possession today several of Joseph's revelations which have never been published in the Doctrine and Covenants and have never yet been accepted by the Church as canonized scripture. Some have never been published in any book or collection. On the first day of the conference (November 1), in a revelation, the Lord gave his endorsement to the proposed collection and named it the "Book of Commandments." This revelation is now Section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants and is referred to as the "Lord's Preface" to the collection.

After receiving the "Lord's Preface," Joseph read it to the elders assembled. One of them, William E. McLellin, who was held by some to be one of the more learned and "intellectual" early members of the Church, challenged the divine authenticity of the revelation, suggesting that perhaps Joseph himself wrote it. He criticized the language

and vocabulary as being inferior. He saw too much of Joseph's vocabulary and manner of expression. Some of the other elders who were present agreed with Brother McLellin. Joseph thus inquired of the Lord as to how to handle these objections. The Lord then gave the present Section 67 in reply, in which he said, paraphrasing, "If any of you doubt that I am the one giving these revelations, then I challenge you to write a revelation yourself equal to even the least of those given through Joseph Smith. If you are able to do so, then you are entitled to your doubts." Of this experience Joseph Smith wrote in his journal: "William E. McLellin, as the wisest man in his own estimation, having more learning than sense, endeavored to write [a revelation] but failed. . . . The elders and all present, that witnessed this vain attempt of a man to imitate the language of Jesus Christ, renewed their faith in the revelations the Lord had given to the church through my instrumentality" (*HC*, 1:226).

As William E. McLellin confessed his failure, he wept and bore testimony to the elders assembled as to the authenticity of the revelations. The Spirit also visited the other elders present, and each in the group was blessed with a testimony. They all perceived that even though the words were Joseph Smith's, the messages were from God. The elders signed a document or statement of testimony which was to be published in the front of the Book of Commandments. Since the printing of the Book of Commandments was never completed, their testimony was not printed.

During the remainder of the conferences, Joseph received four additional revelations, including Section 133 which is the "appendix" of our current Doctrine and Covenants. The conference resolved that Joseph should review and correct any errors in the revelations to be printed in the new Book of Commandments. Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer were instructed to take the collection of revelations and sufficient moneys to Missouri for printing and distribution to church members. At the end of the conference, it was decided to print 10,000 copies of the revelations, but this number was later reduced to three thousand in April 1832.

Shortly after this conference, the Literary Firm was organized as the publishing arm of the Church. The proceeds from the printing were to compensate Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, John Whitmer, and Martin Harris all of whom were members of the Literary Firm. The Lord indicated that the appointed stewards over the literary concerns of the Church had claim upon the Church for assistance with their temporal needs so "that the revelations may be published, and go forth unto the ends of the earth; that they also may obtain funds which shall benefit the church in all things" (D&C 72:20-21). The Firm was to publish not only the Book of Commandments but also the New Translation of the Bible, the church hymnal, children's literature, a church almanac, and newspapers.

Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer left Kirtland about November 20, 1831 and arrived in Independence around January 5, 1832. On March 1, 1832, the Prophet Joseph received a revelation instructing the saints to organize a branch of the Firm in

Independence. Joseph and a party of men journeyed to Missouri in the spring of 1832 to establish the Firm (*HC*, 1:265). Joseph left Independence on May 6, 1832, to return to Kirtland, leaving the job of printing in the hands of Phelps, Whitmer, and Cowdery. By December 1832, the Book of Commandments was in press.

A copyright for the Book of Commandments was secured by W.W. Phelps on February 13, 1833. The printing of the book proceeded very slowly with many delays. These delays proved quite costly to the saints.

Meanwhile, the saints in Independence were beginning to suffer increasing persecution from the Missourians who regarded the influx of Mormons as a threat to their way of life. In July 1832, W. W. Phelps printed an editorial in *The Evening and Morning Star* entitled "Free Men of Color," a pro-abolitionist article. This editorial caused much controversy since Missouri's economy was built upon the system of slavery. In spite of the newspaper's later printing a retraction of the editorial, a storm of hatred against the Mormons blew up in Jackson County. By July of 1833, after the Missourians had watched many additional Mormons move into their state and begin to buy up lands, violence erupted. A mob broke into the printing shop of W. W. Phelps, burned the building, and dumped the printing press into the Missouri River. The mob also tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge.

As the mob approached to destroy Brother Phelps's press, some workers in the shop gathered up some of the unbound and uncollected pages, which had been printed, and carried them out the back door. Some additional pages of the unfinished book were salvaged from the wreckage of the office, and some were collected as they blew about the streets of Independence. These unbound pages were later distributed among the church members who had to make their own covers and bind their own collections. Today, several original copies of the Book of Commandments have been located. The Church has a few in its possession. These copies contain sixty-five revelations, but it is speculated that several more might have been intended to be included.

This printing did not satisfy the hunger of the church members to own their own collection of Joseph's revelations. The center for printing the Book of Commandments was now changed to Kirtland. On September 11, 1833, a meeting of the Literary Firm in Kirtland decided that the press should be reestablished under the auspices of the F.G. Williams Co. to continue publishing *The Evening and the Morning Star* as well as starting a new publication to be called *The Latter-Day Saint Messenger and Advocate*. An overriding purpose of the two newspapers was to make available to the members the revelations being prepared for publication in book form. By December 18, 1833, the printing of *The Evening and the Morning Star* was resumed in Kirtland.

In September 1834 in Kirtland, the high council decided to form a committee to begin work on a new collection of revelations for publication. This time Joseph took the same sixty-five which had been published in the Book of Commandments and added thirty-eight more, bringing the total to 103 sections. Joseph also included in this edition

his “Lectures on Faith” which were seven lectures that had been delivered in the School of the Prophets at Kirtland in 1835. Joseph did not suggest that these lectures were revelation, but rather he included them “in consequence of their embracing the important doctrine of salvation.” The Lectures on Faith were included in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants until 1921. They were then removed and printed separately because some of the members of the Church were coming to regard them as canonical scripture, and they were never intended to be regarded as such. This new edition was printed in 1835 in Kirtland and was called the “Doctrine and Covenants.” This name for the book derived from the fact that the Lectures on Faith were presented as the “doctrine of the Church of the Latter-day Saints,” and the revelations were referred to as the “covenants and commandments of the Lord.” Thus, this 1835 collection became the first edition of our current Doctrine and Covenants. Bound copies of this book were available from the second week of September and were distributed by the missionaries to some of the branches of the Church at a cost of one dollar per copy. It is interesting to note that most historical texts state that this edition contained 102 revelations. This mis-impression occurred because the last section in that edition was numbered 102. Close scrutiny, however, reveals that two sections in the book are numbered “66.” It may also be noted that in reprinting the sixty-five sections that had been printed in the Book of Commandments, Joseph edited and altered each of the sections to clarify and amplify their meaning. We thus see an example of the ongoing process of revelation. In the two years that had intervened since their first printing, the Prophet had grown in spiritual knowledge and understanding so that he was better able to present the sacred thoughts contained in those original sixty-five revelations.

The publication of the Doctrine and Covenants affected the doctrinal understanding of members of the Church. A review of the history and the journals of that time shows that the Doctrine and Covenants became the standard by which the teachings and beliefs of the people were measured. Generally the Doctrine and Covenants took its place beside the Bible and the Book of Mormon as the doctrinal standard for the Church.

In 1844, shortly after the death of the Prophet Joseph (on June 27, 1844), the second American edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was published. Eight additional sections were incorporated into this edition, including one written by John Taylor regarding the martyrdom of the Prophet (Section 135 in our current edition). This brought the total of sections up to 111.

In 1845 the third American edition was published, which was a duplicate of the 1844 edition.

In 1846 the fourth American edition was printed and again was identical to the 1844 edition. All subsequent editions were published in England until the greatly expanded and revised edition of 1876.

In 1845 enemies of the Church, led by the then-apostate Sidney Rigdon, planned to obtain a copyright for the Doctrine and Covenants in England to prevent the Church from publishing it in that country. Fortunately, Wilford Woodruff uncovered the plot and quickly obtained the copyright in his name. In 1845 three thousand copies were printed in England, making this the first European edition.

The second through sixth European editions were all published in England in 1849, 1852, 1854, 1866, and 1869. Remember that between 1846 and 1876 no editions were published in America, thus some of those printed in England were shipped to America to fill the needs for the book there.

In 1876 in Salt Lake City, Orson Pratt was asked by Brigham Young to prepare a new edition. He omitted Section 101, a statement on marriage written by Oliver Cowdery, and added twenty-six additional sections, bringing the total to 136. The statement on marriage was replaced by Section 132, a revelation on celestial marriage. He also divided the sections into verses. This was the first edition published in the United States since the 1846 Nauvoo edition.

In 1879 Orson Pratt added the footnotes and cross-references. These were included in a new edition published in England in 1879 and in Utah in 1880.

Between 1882 and 1920 no less than twenty-eight printings of the Doctrine and Covenants were made. Some were made into double or triple combinations with other standard works. A “vest pocket” size was printed, and some of the later editions printed in Salt Lake City had a concordance added. In 1908 the Official Declaration or “Manifesto,” written by Wilford Woodruff in 1890, which ended the Church’s practice of polygamy, was added. Also added was a motion by Lorenzo Snow, made in October 1890 conference, that the Church support the declaration.

In 1921 an important new edition was printed under the direction of the First Presidency. A committee headed by George F. Richards was given the responsibility. James E. Talmage, Joseph Fielding Smith, and others worked on the project. This edition became known as the “primary edition” and included double-column pages, brief headings for each section, and the Lectures on Faith were omitted. Elder Talmage also revised the footnote references. Thus, both Orson Pratt and James E. Talmage are responsible for the footnote references. This edition was used by the Church until 1981.

As the missionary work of the Church expanded, the need arose for copies of the Doctrine and Covenants in languages other than English. The early non-English editions of the Doctrine and Covenants are as follows: 1851–Welsh, 1852–Danish, 1876–German, 1888–Swedish, 1908–Dutch, 1914–Hawaiian, 1919–Maori, and 1933–Spanish.

At the time of this writing, the Doctrine and Covenants is published in some twenty-three languages. Studies by the translation department of the Church show that if the Church would print the scriptures in 193 languages, then ninety percent of the world’s population could read them in their own tongue. There are plans to publish the

Book of Mormon in all these languages and to publish the Doctrine and Covenants in at least some of them.

The 1981 edition included two new sections. Section 137 is a vision of the celestial kingdom given to the prophet Joseph Smith in 1836, and section 138 is a revelation on the redemption of the dead received by Joseph F. Smith in 1918. The Wilford Woodruff Manifesto was given the title “Official Declaration – 1” and was followed by some statements by Wilford Woodruff about the Manifesto. The 1981 edition also included the “Official Declaration – 2” announcing that all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard to race or color. There were also improved footnotes, cross-references, section headings, and maps.

The following summarizes the revelations and the prophets by which each was written or received:

Joseph Smith	sections 1 through 133 and 137
Oliver Cowdery	section 134
John Taylor	section 135
Brigham Young	section 136
Joseph F. Smith	section 138
Wilford Woodruff	Official Declaration - 1
Spencer W. Kimball	Official Declaration - 2

The Two-Hour History of the Church

1805

Joseph Smith, Jr., was born in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, December 23, 1805, the fourth son and fifth child of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith. His eldest brother had died during childbirth, but he had two living older brothers, Alvin and Hyrum, and an older sister, Sophronia. He would yet have four more brothers and two sisters. His younger brothers were Samuel Harrison, Ephraim, William, and Don Carlos. Little Ephraim died shortly after his birth. His younger sisters were Catherine and Lucy.

Joseph was born into a family of modest means. His father had lost a considerable sum of money some years prior on an investment that turned sour. The family did not lack industry, but were relegated by their lack of funds to becoming tenant farmers and were forced to move frequently during Joseph's childhood in order to find sufficient work and earn an adequate living.

1812

In 1812 when Joseph was six years old, a typhoid fever epidemic swept through Lebanon, New Hampshire, the area where the Smiths were then living, and all of the Smith children fell ill. Joseph developed, as a result of the infection, a large abscess under his arm which was drained of a quart of pus. He later developed a serious osteomyelitis, or bone infection, involving his left shin. In those days, when no antibiotics were available, the only hope of cure was either amputation of the affected extremity or surgical removal of the infected bone. Both young Joseph and his mother, Lucy, refused to consider amputation, and it was decided to proceed with excision of the diseased bone. Joseph refused wine or brandy to dull the pain and assured the doctors that tying him down was unnecessary. Thus, with Joseph held in the arms of his father, but having the benefit of no anesthetic, the doctors proceeded to bore holes in his leg bone and chip away pieces of that diseased bone. Afterward, Joseph lay on the bed "pale as a corpse, and large drops of sweat were rolling down his face, whilst upon every feature was depicted the utmost agony" (Lucy Smith, *Biographic Sketches*, 65).

After three months of constant pain, Joseph had passed the crisis, and the leg bone began to mend. The disease and pain so wasted his body that his mother and his brother Hyrum easily carried him about in their arms. Convalescence dragged on for three years. Until the family moved to New York in 1816, he hobbled about on crutches. To the end of his life, he limped slightly, as the trauma had stunted the growth of the affected leg.

1816

The medical bills incident to the typhoid epidemic and Joseph's illness left the Smith family close to destitution. After unsuccessfully trying farming back in Vermont, they finally moved to the more fertile land of New York in 1816. They settled first in the village of Palmyra. Within two years, they had raised enough money to begin purchasing a one hundred-acre farm two miles south of the center of Palmyra in the township of Manchester, near the town line between Palmyra and Manchester townships. Before moving from the village of Palmyra, the Smiths built a small four-room log cabin on this farm, and in 1818 all ten members of the Smith family—eight children and two parents—moved into this snug log house.

1820

In western New York, the years from 1799 to 1820 were marked by a series of religious revivals among the Protestant churches in the area. These included the Baptists, the Methodists, the Society of Friends, and particularly the Presbyterians. The ministers were rallying to halt the "infidelity," or unbelief, that they perceived was rampant in the area. All of the ministers pressed for new members. Because of the ministers' enthusiastic preaching, the question "What must I do to be saved?" was on everyone's mind. The Smith family was caught up in the spirit of revivalism. Joseph was later to remark that there was an unusual excitement of the subject of religion. Mother Lucy, Hyrum, Sophronia, and Samuel Harrison joined the Presbyterian Church. Joseph, Sr., and all the other sons held back. Joseph, Jr., was partial to the Methodists but could not overcome his reservations. Between ages twelve and fifteen, he seriously studied the scriptures, but he was confused by the disparities between his interpretation of the scriptures and the teachings of the churches in the area. He wondered, "Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them shall be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" (*HC*, 1:3-4).

In this state of mind, he came across the Bible verse, James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally . . . and it shall be given him." "Never did any passage of scripture," he later recalled, "come with more power to the heart of man than this did . . . to mine . . . if any person needed wisdom from God, I did . . ." "At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is ask of God" (*HC*, 1:34).

Accordingly, in the early spring of 1820, Joseph went to a place in the woods near the family cabin and prayed out his dilemma. After wrestling with satanic power, he was favored to converse personally with God the Father and Jesus Christ. He asked which of all the churches he should join, and he was instructed to join none of them.

Meanwhile, this vision did not interrupt the necessity of daily back-breaking work on the farm by all able members of the Smith family, including Joseph. The work, however, did not deter him from what seemed to be a normal childhood and teenage

upbringing, including “light-minded pleasure with his friends,” “all kinds of temptations,” “mingling with all kinds of society,” “many foolish errors,” “weaknesses of youth,” “the foibles of human nature,” and “levity and [associating] with . . . jovial company.” He was doubtless “guilty” of only the normal frivolity of youth, but he did not measure up to his own perceptions of “that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been” (*HC*, 1:9-10).

1823

His remorse came to a head in the fall of 1823. On September 21, after the other family members had fallen asleep in the crowded little cabin, Joseph remained awake to pray “for forgiveness of all of my sins and follies” (*HC*, 1:11). While praying, he noticed the room growing brighter than broad daylight. A heavenly messenger named Moroni appeared to him and taught him of the vital mission and responsibilities that lay ahead. Moroni informed him of a book written on gold plates that gave an account of the former inhabitants of the American continent and contained the fulness of the everlasting gospel. These plates were buried in a hill, later named Cumorah, three miles from the Smith farm. The site where the plates were buried was shown to Joseph in vision. Moroni also paraphrased the Old Testament quotation of Malachi which predicted the coming of the Prophet Elijah [**D&C 2 – Elijah the Prophet**]. Eventually the vision ended but recurred twice more the same night.

It is instructive to note that Joseph experienced these visits from Moroni in the crowded family cabin without disturbing his sleeping family. Perhaps the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon them, or perhaps this type of heavenly vision is a private experience discerned only by the person for whom it is intended.

The same vision was repeated a fourth time on the following day when Joseph, who found that he had insufficient strength to work in the fields after his experience of the previous night, fainted as he was returning to the family cabin. His father had noticed his obvious distress and sent him home. As Joseph lay upon the ground, Moroni commanded him to return to the fields and inform his father of the visions. Joseph, Sr., expressed no skepticism but counseled his son to do exactly as the angel had instructed. Moroni had commanded that Joseph go to the place where the plates were deposited, and later that day Joseph went to the site he had seen in vision. He uncovered and pried the lid off the stone box which contained the plates, and he beheld the plates and also two stones in silver bows fastened to a breast plate. These stones, known as the Urim and Thummim, were “seers” in ancient times which God had prepared for the purpose of translating the plates. As Joseph touched the plates, Moroni again appeared and informed him that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived. Joseph was then commanded to return to this site yearly, on September 22, to receive instructions.

Joseph and his family drew great comfort from the fact that the Lord, by sending the messenger Moroni, had manifest his continued acceptance of Joseph as the instrument through which the gospel would be restored. This feeling of peaceful tranquility, however, was soon to end. On November 1, 1823, Alvin, Joseph's oldest brother, became seriously ill. He died less than three weeks later of what was thought to be an intestinal obstruction resulting from a large dose of "calomel." The loss of Alvin was a terrible blow to the Smith family. Not only had he been a stabilizing influence to all of them, but his industry and consistent hard work were great assets to the family's finances. Without Alvin, the one hundred-dollar annual contract payment for the farm became increasingly burdensome. The responsibility fell to Hyrum and Joseph to roam the countryside looking for work.

It was in this setting that Joseph went to work for Josiah Stowell of South Bainbridge, New York, and Joseph Knight of Colesville, New York. Josiah Stowell believed he had located the site of an ancient Spanish mine. When his hired hands failed to find it, he hired the Smiths—Joseph and his father—to help. Apparently, Joseph, Jr., had a reputation for being able to discern the unknown using a "seer stone" he had found in 1822. After less than a month of working in "the dig," Joseph prevailed upon Stowell to give up his vain pursuit.

1826

Not only did the Smiths have to make payments on the farm, but in 1822, before Alvin died, they had started construction of a larger frame home which was completed in late 1825 or early 1826. The carpenter who did the work on this home began pressing them for his money. Indeed, he had designs on the Smith farm. His plan was to force them into foreclosure and buy the land for himself. In spite of the Smith's best efforts they did lose the farm. However, it was purchased by a friendly party who allowed them to rent the farm and continue to live on it until 1829 when the parents and five children moved in with Hyrum and his wife.

1827

During the "treasure-hunting" expedition working for Josiah Stowell, Joseph and his father boarded at the Isaac Hale home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. While there, Joseph met Isaac's daughter, Miss Emma Hale. The relationship between Joseph and Emma flourished, and, in spite of stiff opposition from Emma's father, the couple was married in South Bainbridge on January 18, 1827, at the home of Josiah Stowell.

1827 September

Joseph's fifth annual visit to Cumorah was on September 22, 1827. Instead of going during the day as had become his annual custom, he arrived there just after midnight of September 21, in the first hours of September 22. This was done to throw

off meddlers who knew of the date. On this visit he was given possession of the plates, the breastplate, and the Urim and Thummim. Rather than taking the plates home immediately, he concealed them in the woods in a hollow birch log. When he finally did pick them up the following day, he quickly learned that it was necessary to maintain a constant vigil in order to keep the plates safe, since many evil and conspiring men sought almost continually to wrest the plates from him.

Joseph soon realized that he would never find peace in the Palmyra area, so he sent word to Alva Hale, Emma's brother, to come up from Harmony with a wagon to transport them and their belongings back to Harmony. With some financial help from his wealthy neighbor, Martin Harris, Joseph was able to pay his debts and travel to Harmony in the late fall of 1827. During the trip the plates were hidden in a barrel of beans. Joseph and Emma moved into a small two-room house on Isaac Hale's land, about 150 yards from the main house. Here the translation of the plates could begin, and here the two of them lived for the next two and one-half years. Joseph would later purchase this house and thirteen acres of land for two hundred dollars.

1828

Joseph spent the first two months in Harmony simply copying characters and translating a few of them. In February 1828 Martin Harris arrived in Harmony. With Joseph's permission Martin carried some of the characters and their translation to a few Middle East experts for confirmation of their authenticity. The most important encounter was with Dr. Charles Anthon, professor of classical studies at Columbia College. After presenting the characters and Joseph's translation, Martin came away satisfied that Dr. Anthon had confirmed their authenticity. Dr. Anthon later, however, denied that he had confirmed their validity and called them a hoax.

1828 April

Martin Harris returned to his home in Palmyra. In April 1828, he traveled again to Harmony, and he and Joseph began the translation of the book. Martin functioned as scribe. Between April 12 and June 14, 1828, they completed enough translation to fill 116 pages of foolscap paper. In spite of Martin's personal involvement with the translation project, he still had nagging doubts. Was this the Lord's work or was Joseph making a fool of him? His wife and friends in Palmyra believed the latter. Martin wanted more evidence to set his own mind at ease and quiet the doubters at home. Couldn't he just take home the 116 pages of manuscript and show them to his wife and friends? After much importuning, he was eventually allowed to do so.

The day after Martin left for Palmyra with the manuscript, Emma delivered the couple's first child, a boy, Alvin, named after Joseph's older brother. The baby died on the day of his birth. The exhausting labor and the tragic loss of her baby were almost

too much for Emma, and for a while she seemed close to death. Joseph attended her night and day for two weeks, and Emma finally began to improve.

Joseph then turned his attention to the manuscript. Where was it? Where was Martin? Joseph traveled by stagecoach to Palmyra where he learned that Martin had lost the manuscript! Thus began a black period in Joseph's life.

1828 July

For the indiscretion of allowing Martin Harris to borrow the manuscript, the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from Joseph. In July 1828, Moroni returned the Urim and Thummim to Joseph briefly, only to allow him to receive a revelation which was a scathing rebuke leveled at both Joseph and Martin for their roles in the fiasco [**D&C 3 – The Lost Manuscript**].

1828 September

Joseph was humbly repentant and received the interpreters again on September 22, 1828. He and Emma did a little translating over the next few months, but most of Joseph's time was spent preparing for winter and gathering a living for Emma and himself.

In October 1828, it occurred to Joseph, Sr., and Lucy Smith that they had heard nothing from their son since his departure from Palmyra in July 1828, under such devastating circumstances. They were concerned about him, so they traveled to Harmony to make sure Joseph and Emma were well. They remained in Harmony three months and returned home in January 1829, but Joseph, Sr., did not stay home long.

1829

Late in January 1829, Joseph, Sr., and Samuel Smith traveled again to Harmony. On this visit, Joseph, Sr., requested that his son inquire of the Lord as to Joseph, Sr.'s, place in the work. Joseph did so and received a revelation for his father [**D&C 4 – Joseph Smith Senior's Call to Labor**].

The translation work proceeded slowly with Emma and her brother Reuben Hale acting as scribes. In March 1829 the persistent Martin Harris again traveled to Harmony, still trying to reassure himself of the existence of the plates. While there, he received a revelation that included a promise. If he would repent and humble himself, he would one day be allowed to view the plates and even one day become a special witness of the Book of Mormon [**D&C 5 – Martin Harris—Witness of the Book of Mormon**].

1829 April

On April 5, 1829, Samuel Smith arrived in Harmony accompanied by a stranger by the name of Oliver Cowdery, a school teacher in Manchester, New York, who had

been boarding with the Smith family. While living with the Smiths, he had heard of the “gold plates.” He had also learned something of the plates from a friend whom he had met in Palmyra, a man from Fayette, New York, David Whitmer. Oliver had prayed for and was granted a witness of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. He was also inspired to know that there was an essential role for him in this work. Oliver received a revelation from the Lord **[D&C 6 – Confirmation of Oliver Cowdery’s Testimony]**, and by April 7, he and Joseph were engaged full time in the translation process. From April 7, the translation proceeded steadily until early July 1829, when it was completed. This period of translation was a colorful and important period in our church history as the following paragraphs will summarize.

As Joseph and Oliver translated, they came to references to “translated” beings such as Alma and Moses in the book of Alma and the three Nephites in 3 Nephi. The Apostle John was also mentioned. A discussion ensued as to whether John the Apostle died or was translated. The Lord answered their question **[D&C 7 – Translation of the Parchment of John]**.

Not long after Joseph and Oliver started translating the Book of Mormon, Oliver began to yearn for the opportunity to translate, and he asked Joseph to inquire of the Lord to see if he might be permitted to try his hand. Joseph did inquire, and Oliver was allowed to try **[D&C 8 – Oliver Cowdery Given Permission to Translate]**. Oliver failed in his attempt to translate because he had not properly prepared himself and, in his disappointment, he was offered some counsel by the Lord **[D&C 9 – Why Oliver Cowdery Failed to Translate]**.

1829 May

By May 1829 Joseph and Oliver were nearing completion of the translation of the Plates of Mormon. See the supplemental article *Those Confusing Book of Mormon Plates*. Joseph had to decide what to do to fill in the gap left by the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript. In May he received a revelation telling him not to re-translate the first part of the Plates of Mormon but rather to translate in its place the small plates of Nephi **[D&C 10 – Fate of the 116 Pages]**.

By mid-May, Joseph and Oliver had reached, in their translating, the book of 3 Nephi, and they came upon the concept of baptism. Their interest was piqued. They recognized that the proper authority for performing this ordinance was not upon the earth. The question was sufficiently important that they broke off the translation and went down to the Susquehannah River on May 15 so they might be alone. There they prayed for guidance. They were visited by the resurrected John the Baptist who conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood **[D&C 13 – Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood]**. The Baptist also promised them that in due time they would receive the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood. Accordingly, some time later, on an uncertain date, Peter, James, and John, the Lord’s ancient Apostles, came to Joseph and Oliver on the

banks of the Susquehannah River and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood.

During the latter part of May, Joseph and Oliver were visited by Hyrum Smith, Joseph's brother, and by Joseph's former employer, Joseph Knight, Sr. The latter made more than one trip from Colesville to Harmony to bring food and other provisions which enabled Joseph and Oliver to spend their full time translating rather than having to worry about temporal things. While in Harmony, both Hyrum Smith and Joseph Knight, Sr., were given revelations from the Lord [**D&C 11 – Hyrum Smith's Call to Labor**] [**D&C 12 – Joseph Knight's Call to Labor**].

As the translation process continued, some neighbors in Harmony were taking notice and beginning to murmur and threaten Joseph and Oliver. By this time Isaac Hale had been won over to the point of feeling that the two should at least have the right to translate without being bothered or molested by the neighbors. Thus, for a time, he used his influence to protect them. In the latter part of May, however, his protection crumbled. In fact he turned against the two translators. Joseph and Oliver were thus brought under increasing pressure. They had to find a safer place where they might finish the translation.

Oliver wrote to his friend David Whitmer in Fayette, New York, asking if he and Joseph might come to Fayette and live and work in the house of David Whitmer's father, Peter Whitmer, Sr. The Whitmer farm lay between Seneca Lake and Lake Cayuga. Oliver had met David Whitmer in Palmyra in 1828 when the two were just beginning to learn about the gold plates. Oliver had stopped off at the Whitmer farm on the way from Manchester to Harmony earlier in the spring. He later had written to David Whitmer from Harmony telling him that he was sure that Joseph had the plates. The Whitmers extended an invitation for Joseph and Oliver to come to their home and finish the translating.

1829 June

Oliver wrote again to ask David to come to Harmony with his wagon to carry them back to Fayette. This request came at a difficult time, as the Whitmers were in the middle of spring plowing, and David Whitmer couldn't really spare the five or six days required for that round trip. He was able to take the time, however, because of what seemed to be miraculous intervention. Plowing that should have taken two days was accomplished in one. Three unknown strangers prepared and plowed the Whitmer land without the Whitmers' requesting any help. Joseph and Oliver were brought from Harmony to Fayette, while the plates were transported by the Lord. Joseph received them when he arrived in Fayette.

The Whitmers had seven children. Three were married and lived close by (Christian, Jacob, and Catherine). Four still lived at home (Peter, Jr.,—age 19, David—age 24, John—age 26, and 14-year-old Elizabeth Ann). The entire Whitmer family

became involved in the translation. David, John, and Peter, Jr., each received a private revelation [**D&C 14, 15, 16 – Counsel to the Whitmers**]. Oliver still did most of the transcribing, but he was relieved on occasion by Emma or one of the Whitmers—Christian or John.

In June 1829, as the Book of Mormon translation was nearing completion, Joseph learned, from the text of the Book of Mormon itself, that there were to be three special witnesses of the Book of Mormon who would be allowed to see the plates. David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris repeatedly petitioned Joseph to see if they might become the witnesses. As a result of their importuning, Joseph inquired of the Lord and was given a revelation which named the three as the witnesses [**D&C 17 – Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon**].

Shortly thereafter, the Book of Mormon witnesses received a revelation charging them with the responsibility of choosing, when the appropriate time arrived, those who would comprise the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation [**D&C 18 – Book of Mormon Witnesses to Choose Twelve Apostles**]. Martin Harris was excluded from this calling initially, but by 1835, when the time came to choose the Twelve, Martin had repented, and he participated in making those callings.

1829 July

One morning in July 1829, the three witnesses and Joseph entered the woods near the Whitmer farm. They took turns praying, not once but twice, and nothing happened. Before making a third attempt, Martin Harris withdrew, perceiving that he was the obstacle. The remaining three prayed again, and this time they were granted the glorious experience of having an angel appear and show them the plates, the breastplate, the Liahona, and the sword of Laban. Joseph then went searching for Martin who had wandered deeper into the woods. Joseph and Martin prayed together, and at length, Martin was favored with the same experience. Joseph was greatly relieved that the Lord had allowed others to see the plates so they might now share with him the responsibility of bearing witness to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon record. Shortly thereafter, back in Manchester, New York, eight additional witnesses were allowed to see and handle the plates. These included four Whitmer brothers (Christian, Jacob, John, and Peter, Jr.), their brother-in-law, Hiram Page, Hyrum and Samuel Smith, and Joseph Smith, Sr.

While Joseph was in the Palmyra area he sought to make arrangements to have the now completed Book of Mormon printed. An agreement was reached with E. B. Grandin, a Palmyra bookseller, printer, and publisher of *The Wayne Sentinel*, to print the Book of Mormon. Martin Harris mortgaged his farm and put up three thousand dollars as security for five thousand copies. Joseph returned to Harmony, and Oliver

Cowdery remained in Palmyra to oversee the printing operation. Printing actually began in mid-August 1829.

Joseph had to return to Palmyra twice during the printing—once in the late fall of 1829 to prevent a man named Abner Cole from violating the copyright laws by publishing parts of the Book of Mormon in his weekly periodical, *The Reflector*.

1830

Again in January 1830, Joseph returned to Palmyra to reassure E. B. Grandin, who had stopped the printing process because of fears that he would not be paid, that their financial arrangement was secure.

1830 March

Finally, on March 26, 1830, the Book of Mormon was finished and offered for sale. To Martin Harris's dismay, initial sales of the book were slow, as the Palmyra residents had boycotted it. Martin was consequently worried about the security of his investment. When Joseph came up from Harmony shortly after the publication, Martin was dejected and declared that he "must have a commandment." After asking Joseph several times for a commandment (revelation), Joseph finally received a revelation on Martin's behalf [**D&C 19 – Eternal and Endless Punishment—Atonement**].

1830 April

Now that the Book of Mormon, which had a fundamental and vital role in the restored gospel, was published, the time was right for organization of the Church. Some time between April 1 and early June 1830, Joseph received a revelation which has functioned as the "constitution" of our Church [**D&C 20 – Constitution of the Church**].

The Lord had commanded that the Church be organized on April 6, 1830, and the "Church of Christ" was accordingly organized at the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York. The six official organizers, for legal purposes, were Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Samuel H. Smith, and David Whitmer. Later that day the Lord gave additional instructions to the infant Church [**D&C 21 – The Prophet Is the Mouthpiece of God**]. On the following Sunday, April 11, 1830, Oliver Cowdery preached the first sermon.

Later in April, someone applied for membership in the Church who had already been baptized by immersion in the Baptist Church. They did not want to be rebaptized. The Lord made it clear by revelation that even those who had been previously baptized into other churches needed to be baptized again by proper authority [**D&C 22 – Rebaptism**]. He also gave instructions to specific members of the Church [**D&C 23 – Counsel to Five Individuals**].

In the summer of 1830, Joseph and Emma continued to live in the cabin in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Joseph, however, shuttled among the various clusters of believers who formed the nucleus of the Church: the Smiths in Manchester, the Whitmers in Fayette, and Joseph Knight and his son Newel and their families in Colesville, New York. Most of the early converts were other family members and friends of these families.

The first quarterly conference of the Church was held on June 9, 1830.

The formal organization of the Church seemed to inflame persecution of the fledgling Church and its Prophet. In June 1830 Joseph was arrested and harassed when he traveled to Colesville to baptize new converts. In July the Lord comforted Joseph with a revelation [**D&C 24 – Be Patient in Persecution**]. Emma, too, had suffered the hardships of persecution and was also similarly favored of the Lord [**D&C 25 – An Elect Lady—Emma Smith**].

Also in July 1830, the Lord revealed an important principle of church government [**D&C 26 – Common Consent**].

1830 August

The Knights, Sally and Newel, who had become close friends of Joseph and Emma, visited the Smiths in Harmony in early August 1830. The four held a “confirmation service” for the purpose of confirming Sally and Emma. Both had been baptized in Colesville but not confirmed. Joseph went out to purchase wine for the sacrament to be administered at that service. As he did so he was met by an angel representing the Lord who instructed him concerning the sacrament [**D&C 27 – The Sacrament Emblems**].

1830 September

In early September 1830, Joseph and Emma were forced to leave Harmony by the growing animosity among the neighbors. Even Isaac Hale was persuaded to turn against them. They again moved to the Peter Whitmer farm in Fayette. On arriving in Fayette, they found some trouble brewing. Oliver Cowdery was beginning to assume too much authority for himself and was even exercising some prerogatives belonging only to Joseph. Also, Hiram Page, the husband of Catherine Whitmer, was using a “seer stone” he had found to receive “revelations,” including one which declared the location of the City of Zion or the New Jerusalem. The other Whitmers had been won over by Oliver and Hiram.

Joseph solved the crisis, but only after much anguish and by exercising an almost godly wisdom beyond his twenty-four years. He persuaded the Whitmers and Oliver of their errors, and he received a revelation which reprimanded Oliver and Hiram [**D&C 28 – Only the Prophet Receives Revelation for the Church**]. The same revelation also called Oliver to lead a group of missionaries to preach to the Lamanites

in the Missouri area. Oliver was also given the mandate by Joseph to find the site for the temple to be erected in the New Jerusalem while he was out on the frontier.

1830 September

Oliver was asked not to depart on his mission to the Lamanites until after an important conference of the elders of the Church to be held on September 26, 1830. At this conference, Joseph was appointed by the voice of the conference as the only one authorized to receive revelations for the Church. Also, Joseph presented at this conference another important revelation concerning the Lord's second coming and calamities to occur at his advent **[D&C 29 – The Millennium]**.

Following the conference, another revelation was given to the Whitmer brothers, David, John, and Peter, Jr. **[D&C 30 – More Counsel to the Whitmers]**. Peter, Jr., was called to accompany Oliver on his mission to the Lamanites. A new convert, Thomas B. Marsh, also received a revelation **[D&C 31 – Thomas B. Marsh]**, and two additional missionaries were added to Oliver's missionary group, Ziba Peterson and Parley P. Pratt **[D&C 32 – Mission to the Lamanites]**.

1830 October

In October 1830 the four missionaries called to preach to the Lamanites, set out for the West and Indian territory. On the way to Missouri, they stopped near Kirtland, Ohio, and taught the restored gospel to Sidney Rigdon, a Campbellite minister and former religious mentor of Parley P. Pratt. Sidney and more than one hundred of his congregation believed the missionaries' message and were baptized. Although this preaching to Sydney Rigdon and his followers may seem today like a diversion from the primary objective of this mission to the Indians, it resulted in one of the missionaries' most significant accomplishments—the conversion of “Reverend” Rigdon and many of his flock.

The missionaries had been called, after all, to go to the Indian territory, and winter was coming. So about November 1, they left the congenial Kirtland area, and, joined by a fifth companion, a new Campbellite convert, Dr. Frederick G. Williams, they continued westward. Dr. Williams was a physician in the Kirtland area who unhesitatingly gave up his profession on hearing the restored gospel and asked if he might join the missionaries.

On the way, they proselyted and left copies of the Book of Mormon here and there. Then the severe winter of 1830-31 descended upon them. The Mississippi River was frozen over, and the usual carriage and horse-back travel were impossible. But despite the weather, withstanding great suffering, they walked through snow and ice for 300 miles to the frontier village of Independence, Missouri.

Initially they appeared to be enjoying success as they testified concerning the Book of Mormon to the Delaware Indians living just across the frontier in what is now

the state of Kansas. Their hopes were dashed, however, when they were denied access to the Indians by the Indian agent, who had agreed to deny them after being pressured by antagonistic Protestant missionaries.

In October of 1830, the Lord gave a revelation to two little-known members of the Church, Ezra Thayer and Northrop Sweet, in which he emphasized the imminence of his coming [**D&C 33 – The Eleventh Hour**].

1830 November – December

In the late fall of 1830, a few important new converts to the Church and an investigator traveled to Fayette to meet Joseph. These men were given personal revelations. They included Orson Pratt, who had been converted by his older brother Parley P. Pratt [**D&C 34 – Orson Pratt**], Sidney Rigdon [**D&C 35 – Sidney Rigdon Called as Scribe**], and a former follower of Sidney Rigdon's, a successful hatter from Kirtland named Edward Partridge [**D&C 36 – Edward Partridge**]. Sidney Rigdon had already been baptized in Kirtland, but Edward Partridge waited until he met Joseph and then was baptized by him.

Meanwhile, turning our attention back to the missionaries in Missouri, since they had little access to the Indians, they preached loud and long to the Missouri settlers. At this point, Parley P. Pratt was selected to return east to get a new supply of copies of the Book of Mormon and to report to Joseph Smith the progress of the mission.

In order to support themselves in Missouri, the missionaries did such work as was available. They set up a tailor shop in Independence, and some of their patrons later became defenders of the Mormons when persecution raged. One of their customers, however, would later become an infamous enemy of the Church. This was Lilburn W. Boggs. Tradition has it that Peter Whitmer, Jr., made a suit for him on the occasion of his inauguration as Lieutenant Governor of Missouri.

What had this mission to the Lamanites actually accomplished? Although probably no Indians had been baptized, the work of preaching to the Lamanites had nevertheless begun. A large number of converts had been made, including such future leaders as Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge. The missionaries had also provided the first contact with the Kirtland area and had laid the foundation of the future Zion in Independence, Missouri. Both Kirtland and Independence were to become important centers in the later history of the Church.

When Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge traveled to Fayette to meet with Joseph, they tried to convince him that he ought to visit the new church converts in Ohio. They got more than they hoped for when in December 1830 the Lord commanded all saints in New York to move to Ohio, largely because of the persecution of the saints in New York [**D&C 37 – Commandment to Move to Ohio**].

1831 January

Before the saints left New York, Joseph received three more revelations. In the first, the Lord explained to the saints other reasons why they were to leave New York **[D&C 38 – Reasons for the Removal of the Church to Ohio]**. The other two were given to James Covill, a former Baptist minister who was converted and baptized into the “Church of Christ” but left the Church shortly thereafter **[D&C 39 – Revelation to James Covill]** **[D&C 40 – Judge Not]**.

Late in January, Joseph, Emma, and others traveled the 300 miles from Fayette to Kirtland by sleigh, arriving in Kirtland on February 1, 1831. Joseph and Emma were invited to live with the Newell K. Whitney’s, which they did for five months. Newell Whitney was a co-owner of the Gilbert and Whitney store in Kirtland along with A. Sidney Gilbert. Shortly after his arrival in Kirtland, Joseph received a revelation calling Edward Partridge to serve as the first bishop of the Church in this dispensation **[D&C 41 – Edward Partridge Called as First Bishop]**. Less than one week later, Joseph received a doctrinally important revelation introducing the law of consecration and other “laws” important to the conduct of church members in their everyday lives **[D&C 42 – The Law]**.

On arrival in Kirtland, Joseph found a few members of the Church presuming to receive “revelations” and consequently teaching false doctrines. The Lord warned in a revelation against these counterfeit claims and false teachings **[D&C 43 – Spurious Revelations]**.

Also in February, the Lord announced that an important conference of the elders of the Church should be held. The date for this conference was set for June 1831 **[D&C 44 – Conference of June 1831]**. This conference turned out to be a great convocation of the elders at which the office of high priest was revealed to the Church.

1831 March

In March 1831, as Joseph was working on the inspired revision of the Bible, he came to Matthew 24, Jesus’ great discourse given on the Mount of Olives after his disciples asked him about his second coming and the “end of the world.” It seems likely that Joseph’s pondering these verses was the trigger for receiving a revelation in March about events to transpire in the future **[D&C 45 – The Second Coming of the Lord]**.

Also in March, the Lord revealed guidance to Joseph and the Church regarding the question of whether nonmembers should be allowed to attend sacrament meetings. The Lord also taught the saints how to discern valid gifts of the Spirit from manifestations of evil spirits **[D&C 46 – Gifts of the Spirit]**.

John Whitmer was named church historian in March 1831 **[D&C 47 – John Whitmer Named Church Historian]**.

During the spring of 1831, the spirit of gathering in Ohio was evident, and the New York saints continued to arrive in the Ohio territory. The concerns of those already

in Ohio were, “Where will we put them? Where will we find sufficient land for them?” The Lord gave counsel [**D&C 48 – Land for Gathering in Ohio**]. The Colesville saints arrived from New York in the spring, and a recent convert, a former Shaker named Lemman Copley, allowed them to move onto his land in Thompson, Ohio, about twenty miles outside of Kirtland. The Lord commanded the Colesville saints while in Thompson, Ohio, to begin to live the law of consecration [**D&C 51 – Law of Consecration**].

1831 May

The infamous “Shaker” affair occurred in May 1831. At the urging of a new convert to the Church, the former Shaker Lemman Copley, the best missionaries in the Church, Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt, were dispatched by the Lord to visit the Shaker settlement. These two missionaries, accompanied by Brother Copley, took with them a revelation given by the Lord specifically for the Shakers [**D&C 49 – The Shakers**]. This missionary experience ended negatively when the missionaries, after delivering their message, were summarily rejected by the Shakers. Further, the Shakers were angered when Parley P. Pratt, following the Shakers’ rejection of his message, “shook the dust off his garments” as a testimony against them. Lemman Copley was also angered by Parley’s undiplomatic gesture, so much so that he left the Church and evicted the Colesville saints from his land.

The peculiar spiritual manifestations in the Kirtland area in the spring of 1831 did not disappear with one rebuke. Again, in May it was necessary for the Lord to speak to Joseph on the matter [**D&C 50 – Teaching by the Spirit**].

1831 June

June 3, 1831, was the day appointed for the special conference of elders (D&C 44). The conference was to last through June 6. At this conference, several were ordained to the office of high priest. On the last day of the conference, or on the day following, the Lord favored the elders there gathered with a revelation [**D&C 52 – Location of Zion**] in which he named Missouri as the specific location where Zion would be built, and he called twenty-eight missionaries to leave their homes in Kirtland to travel to Missouri to proclaim the gospel.

Keep in mind that the Colesville branch of the Church, directed by branch president Newel Knight, had been uprooted when Lemman Copley asked them to leave his land. They had experienced further troubles in trying to live the law of consecration, apparently in large part due to selfishness of several of their number, especially one Ezra Thayer. Brother Thayer had been one of the missionaries called to Missouri, but he was having serious misgivings about this missionary call and even about his church membership. Thus, the missionary assignments recorded in section 52 were altered to exclude Ezra Thayer [**D&C 56 – Change in Missionary Assignments**].

The Lord commanded the Colesville saints to travel as a group to Missouri to establish themselves there **[D&C 54 – Colesville Saints Sent to Zion]**.

About the middle of June 1831, Joseph was planning his trip to Missouri, having been commanded to go there as a missionary with Sidney Rigdon as his companion. Bishop Edward Partridge was called to go also. Once in Missouri, Bishop Partridge would remain in Missouri as bishop over the Church in Zion. A. Sidney Gilbert, the partner of Newell K. Whitney in the Gilbert and Whitney store, was commanded to go along with Joseph in the “presidential party” **[D&C 53 – Algernon Sidney Gilbert]**. He too would remain in Missouri to function as keeper of the bishop’s storehouse and the church’s land agent in Missouri.

A new arrival in Kirtland, a former journalist and newspaper editor, William W. Phelps also received a revelation **[D&C 55 – William Wines Phelps]**. He was commanded to join the Church and then travel to Missouri with Joseph and the others. Phelps would also remain in Missouri to run the Church’s printing press and to edit the Church’s monthly magazine, *The Evening and Morning Star*.

Joseph and those assigned in the revelations to travel with him departed Kirtland for Missouri on June 19.

In Missouri, Joseph received instructions from the Lord concerning Zion, including the location of the temple site or the center place of Zion **[D&C 57 – Independence Is Center Place of Zion]** and a warning that Zion would be established only after much tribulation **[D&C 58 – Instructions Concerning Zion]**.

1831 August

In Missouri the Lord also gave counsel to Joseph on Sabbath day observance shortly after he had attended the funeral of Sister Polly Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight **[D&C 59 – Law of the Sabbath]**.

As the time drew near for the missionaries to return to Kirtland, some of them inquired of Joseph, who in turn inquired of the Lord. The Lord gave counsel concerning their journey home **[D&C 60 – Journey Back to Kirtland]**. On the way back to Kirtland, the Lord specifically warned the travelers of the dangers of traveling by water **[D&C 61 – Danger Upon the Waters]**. On the way home they met up with some missionaries who were still on their way to Independence. After joyful salutations the Lord gave instructions and encouragement to the missionaries **[D&C 62 – Testimony]**.

When Joseph arrived back in Kirtland, he found the saints there ripe for a rebuke from the Lord for some folly and wickedness that had crept in among them. The Lord revealed the appropriate rebuke **[D&C 63 – Sign Seeking and Immorality]**. The Lord also counseled the saints on another area of weakness **[D&C 64 – Forgiveness]**.

1831 September

Because of interferences in Kirtland, and because he wanted a quieter place to work, the Prophet, on September 12, 1831, moved to Hiram, Ohio, thirty miles southeast of Kirtland, into the home of Brother John Johnson. Sidney Rigdon moved with him and probably lived in a log cabin near the Johnson home. Joseph would live in Hiram some six months, through March 1832. These six months would be a rich period in our Church's history.

In October Joseph received an important revelation in the form of a prayer giving important information about the concept of the "Kingdom of God" [**D&C 65 – Joseph Smith's Prayer**].

1831 November

During the first twelve days of November 1831, four short conferences of the elders of the Church were held at the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Ohio. It was resolved during these conferences that a collection of Joseph's revelations should be printed and distributed to the membership of the Church. Joseph selected those revelations to be included. On the first day of the conference, the Lord gave his endorsement to the planned publication and named the collection the Book of Commandments [**D&C 1 – The Lord's Preface—The Voice of Warning**]. When asked to sign a written testimony which would be attached to this book, a few of the brethren attending the conference evidenced their imperfect testimonies of the divine origin of the revelations. They wondered if perhaps Joseph hadn't written them, as they saw too much of his vocabulary and language in the revelations. After a prayer, in which he pleaded for wisdom, Joseph received a revelation wherein the Lord challenged anyone present to write a revelation equal to "even the least" of the revelations Joseph had received [**D&C 67 – The Challenge**]. If anyone succeeded, they would then be entitled to their reluctance to bear testimony of the divine authenticity of the revelations. If they failed, however, they would then be under heavenly condemnation if they refused to bear witness of them. Only one elder accepted the challenge. He was William E. McLellin, a well-educated former school teacher who had just recently received his own revelation and blessing from the Lord [**D&C 66 – William E. McLellin**]. He accepted the challenge and retired to another room to make the attempt. He failed utterly, and all present, including McLellin, were blessed, as the Spirit bore witness to each of them that the revelations, even though written in Joseph's imperfect language, were indeed from God.

Four more revelations would yet be received during the first twelve days of November 1831. One contained information on the following subjects: the office of bishop, teaching our children the gospel, and a new definition of scripture [**D&C 68 – Bishops. Teach. Scripture**]. Another gave instructions on transporting the manuscripts of the revelations to Independence, Missouri, where they would be printed

on William W. Phelps's printing press. Yet another created the so-called "Literary Firm" which was a mini-United Order composed of a group of brethren assigned to take care of the scriptures of the Church as their stewardship **[D&C 69 and 70 – Book of Commandments]**. The final revelation given during this conference was to serve as the "appendix" to the Book of Commandments **[D&C 133 – The Appendix]**.

1831 December

By December 1831, anti-Mormon feelings in Ohio were warming to a boil, and the Lord recommended a surprising solution. He counseled Joseph and Sidney to leave on a brief mission to the surrounding townships, and while there challenge the Church's detractors to open debate **[D&C 71 and 73 – Debate the Enemy]**. This seemed to temporarily sooth the feelings building against the Church.

Since Bishop Edward Partridge was now in Missouri, it became necessary to call a second bishop to preside over the United Order in Kirtland. This was done by revelation in December 1831 **[D&C 72 – Newell K. Whitney Called as Second Bishop]**.

1832 January

While living in the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Ohio, Joseph and Sidney spent much of their time working on the inspired revision of the King James Bible in a corner room of the Johnson home. As they "translated" they came to a passage in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The Lord assisted them with the interpretation of the verse **[D&C 74 – 1 Corinthians 7:14]**.

In January 1832, an important conference was held at Amherst, Ohio, during which Joseph was sustained as "President of the High Priesthood" of the Church, and several missionary pairs were called to serve missions in the eastern states **[D&C 75 – Missionaries Called to the Eastern States]**. Two months later, Sidney Rigdon and Jesse Gause were called and ordained as Joseph's counselors. Brother Gause received a revelation calling him to the First Presidency **[D&C 81 – Counselor in the First Presidency]**. Brother Gause's name was removed from the revelation some time later (after he had left the Church in December 1832), and it was replaced by that of Frederick G. Williams who replaced him in the First Presidency in March of 1833 **[D&C 90 – Reorganization of the First Presidency]**.

More missionaries were dispatched in the spring and summer of 1832 **[D&C 79 and 80 – The Call to Preach]**.

1832 February

Shortly after returning to Hiram after the conference of January 1832, Joseph and Sidney, upon resuming their revision of the Bible, came to John 5:28-29, and a discussion arose between the two of them regarding the nature of the resurrection. Are

there only two rewards for those who are resurrected? Or are there more than two degrees of goodness and badness?

With a few elders looking on (who came to the Johnson home to simply watch the interesting process of Joseph and Sidney's working on the inspired revision), Joseph and Sidney received a glorious vision and revelation concerning the three degrees of glory **[D&C 76 – The Vision]**.

About a month later, the Lord also gave some helps in understanding the final book in the New Testament **[D&C 77 – Book of Revelation]**.

1832 March

By March of 1832, separate United Orders were organized under the leadership of Bishops Edward Partridge in Missouri and Newell K. Whitney in Kirtland. The leading brethren of the Church were, by revelation, organized together into yet a third United Order—indeed a mini-United Order—called the “United Firm” **[D&C 78, 82, and 92 – The United Firm]**, which was charged with the responsibility of caring for the poor. Initially the “Firm” owned property jointly, but later the properties were divided among its members **[D&C 104 – Reorganization of the United Order and United Firm]**.

The “Hiram Ohio period” came to a violent and traumatic end on March 24, 1832, when an angry mob of about fifty men dragged both Sidney and Joseph from their homes. Sidney was dragged along the hard frozen ground by his heels into a field, then tarred and feathered. Joseph was choked to unconsciousness, stripped, scratched with nails, and an attempt was made to force a vial of poison between his clenched teeth. The result was a chipped tooth. He was then tarred and feathered. Joseph recovered sufficiently to preach a Sunday sermon the next day, but Sidney was delirious for several days before eventually recovering.

Because of continued threats on their lives, Joseph and Sidney were forced to leave Hiram within the week. Sidney returned to Kirtland, and Joseph traveled to Missouri for another visit with the saints there.

1832 April

While in Missouri, Joseph was also sustained as “President of the High Priesthood” by a conference of the elders in that area. He then visited the Colesville saints who lived in Kaw Township. In Missouri, the Lord gave Joseph a revelation regarding the care of widows and orphans by the Church **[D&C 83 – Widows and Orphans]**.

1832 August

In August John Murdock was called to a specific mission in the “eastern countries” **[D&C 99 – The Call to Preach]**. He was one of those who received the

gospel in the Kirtland area when Oliver Cowdery and his companions passed through on their way to preach to the Lamanites in October of 1830.

1832 September

By September 1832, the missionaries who had been called nine months previously (at the conference in Amherst, Ohio, in January) began returning to Kirtland. They besought Joseph for a message from the Lord. In answer to their request, Joseph received a revelation on priesthood [**D&C 84 – The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood**].

In November Bishop Partridge erred in administering the law of consecration in Zion. Joseph found it necessary to reprimand him in a letter [**D&C 85 – One Mighty and Strong**].

In December, as Joseph continued working on his inspired revision of the Bible, he received a revelation which shed some light on Jesus' parable of the wheat and tares found in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 [**D&C 86 – Parable of the Wheat and Tares**].

1832 December

By the fall and winter of 1832, an explosive political situation was smoldering in the United States. Tensions were rife between the northern and southern states. On Christmas day the Lord warned, in a revelation, that a devastating civil war between the states would eventually occur [**D&C 87 – A Prophecy on War**]. As we now know, that war did begin in April 1861, some twenty-eight years later.

1833 January

In contrast to the dire prophecy of Christmas day, a few days later the Lord revealed a great message of peace to the earth which is replete with important doctrines [**D&C 88 – The Olive Leaf**]. This revelation, section 88, included a commandment to start building a temple in Kirtland, but this particular commandment went largely unheeded by the saints.

In January a seminary for missionaries and church leaders was organized in Kirtland. This school, the "School of the Prophets," was later called the "School of the Elders." Although religious topics received the main emphasis in this school, a variety of other subjects was also studied. The school was initially held in Bishop Whitney's store in a small room which measured fifteen by fifteen feet.

1833 February

As the brethren assembled in the School of the Prophets and discussed things of the Kingdom, they also smoked their pipes, chewed their tobacco, and spat all over the floor. Joseph and Emma lived in the same building, and it was Emma's responsibility to clean the filthy floor each evening after the school had adjourned. Emma doubtless

wondered aloud in Joseph's presence about the appropriateness of so vile a habit as smoking and chewing tobacco. Perhaps partly as a result of Emma's encouragement, Joseph inquired of the Lord and was given a health law for the good of the saints [**D&C 89 – The Word of Wisdom**].

Meanwhile, Joseph continued with the revision of the Bible. In March of 1833 he finished with the Old Testament, and then he wondered if he should revise the Old Testament apocryphal books—those fourteen books of questionable authenticity which were found in all Bible versions prior to the early 1800s, including the King James Bible. The Lord told him not to include them in his revision [**D&C 91 – The Apocrypha**].

1833 May

One of the most important doctrinal revelations given in this generation was received in May 1833. It dealt with the great plan of salvation and the origin, nature, and destiny of man [**D&C 93 – The Origin and Destiny of Man**].

In the late spring of 1833, the interest of the saints was turned by the Lord to building. The saints barely had sufficient funds to maintain themselves, yet they were commanded to begin an active building program. The Lord commanded them to build a church office building and a church printing office [**D&C 94 – Church Building Program**], and he also rebuked the saints for ignoring the commandment which he gave in section 88 to build a temple in Kirtland. He told them to get to work on it immediately [**D&C 95 – Building the Kirtland Temple**]. The saints took the Lord's chastisement seriously and set to work within a few days of receiving section 95.

The saints contended with almost overwhelming problems and deficiencies as they built the temple. They had no land, money, or architectural plans. Yet they did not lack for faith and enthusiasm. They solicited contributions from members in and out of Kirtland, and with the Lord's help they found a suitable plot of land for the temple site [**D&C 96 – Peter French Farm**].

1833 July

By July 1833, the saints had been in Jackson County, Missouri, for about two years. Their presence and their beliefs had proved an increasing irritant to the Missourians, and on July 20 the Missourians' smoldering anger exploded into overt rage. On that day a mob of three to five hundred Missourians destroyed the printing press of W. W. Phelps and tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge in the public square. They forced the Church's leaders in Missouri to sign an agreement to leave Jackson County, and they persecuted the saints without mercy.

1833 August

Some two weeks after this mob scene in Independence on August 2, Joseph received a revelation concerning Zion. He was unaware of the acute crisis in Missouri,

though Oliver Cowdery was en route from Independence to Kirtland by horseback to inform him. The revelation is generally optimistic in its tone, and it reflects the fact that the Lord had not revealed to Joseph the devastating state of affairs in Zion [**D&C 97 – Zion**].

As soon as Oliver arrived with the news of the disastrous happenings in Independence, Joseph received another revelation in which the Lord spoke calmly and sensibly to the angry and frightened saints [**D&C 98 – Laws of Retribution, War, and Forgiveness**]. This revelation and other messages of comfort were carried back to the Missouri saints.

Even though the Missourians, by signed contract, had agreed to allow the saints to remain in Jackson County until January 1, 1834, the spirit of persecution knew no such patience. Houses were burned, men were beaten, and many saints were left homeless and forced to flee across the Missouri River and out of Jackson County.

1833 October

As if to teach us that the work must go forward in spite of adversity, Joseph and others left for a one-month mission to Canada in early October. Joseph received a revelation while on this mission [**D&C 100 – Brief Mission to Canada**].

1833 December

From the time he received word from Oliver Cowdery of the desperate plight of the twenty-five hundred saints in Zion, Joseph had pondered the grave situation there. Particularly had he wondered why the Lord had allowed this trial to come upon the saints; and if Zion were to be redeemed, when would it be redeemed? He prayed for answers in December, and he received them by revelation [**D&C 101 – Zion: Why Persecuted, When Redeemed**]. Joseph learned that the Lord allowed the persecutions to come upon the saints because of their transgressions, and Zion will be redeemed only when enough hearts have given themselves over to the Savior.

1834 February

By February 1834, the workload placed upon the First Presidency was more than they could handle. They needed help in administering the affairs of the Church. At a meeting of church leaders in February 1834, Joseph formed a “Church Council,” later called the “High Council,” to assist in the administrative duties of the Church. It consisted of the First Presidency and twelve high priests, and its jurisdiction included the entire Church. The minutes of this meeting are preserved for us in the Doctrine and Covenants [**D&C 102 – The High Council**]. In July of 1834, the Prophet organized a second high council in Missouri.

Shortly after the high council was organized in Kirtland, two delegates arrived in Kirtland representing the exiled saints in Missouri. They petitioned the high council in

Kirtland as to how and by what means Zion was going to be rescued or redeemed. It was apparent to the high council that in spite of three months of using legal channels in Missouri, no progress had been made in securing protection for the saints sufficient to allow them to return to their lands in Jackson County. They concluded that direct assistance must be given to their afflicted brethren. Prior to this meeting of the high council, Joseph had prayed and received an answer to the question of what must be done for the saints in Zion **[D&C 103 – Zion’s Camp]**. With Joseph’s inspired prompting, the high council reached a decision that an army must be gathered to go “up to Zion” and redeem the exiles. This army would be called “Zion’s Camp.” For two and one-half months there was a pause in the temple building project in Kirtland as the Church recruited men and contributions of money and goods to help the destitute members in Missouri.

1834 May

During the first week in May, an army of just over one hundred men marched from Kirtland led by the Prophet Joseph. As they marched, they experienced great hardships. They recruited men to join them as they traveled, and by the time they reached Missouri, they numbered just over two hundred men. The men in Zion’s Camp believed that once they joined the exiled saints, they had only inform the Governor of Missouri that they were prepared to return to their lands in Jackson County and he would provide them the necessary assistance. The Governor had previously promised Joseph by letter his full support in assisting the exiles to win back their lands. It was expected that the Governor would call out the Missouri militia to protect them as they returned to their homes. While camped at Salt River in Missouri, the army learned, however, that the Missouri Governor not only refused to call out the militia, but he also put another impediment in their path by announcing on June 6 that Mormons had “no right to march to Jackson County in arms.” The prospects for reclaiming their lands was suddenly hopeless. Even more devastating was the realization that armed Missourians were waiting to destroy any Mormon who dared return to Jackson County. Hopes of ever seeing their exiled brethren return to their homes were dashed! Angered and frustrated, the men of Zion’s Camp resumed their march.

While camped at Fishing River on June 22, 1834, Joseph received a revelation **[D&C 105 – Zion’s Camp Disbanded]** in which the Lord told the men that he had accepted their sacrifice, and they would not have to fight in Missouri. They were, in effect, disbanded. They had marched a thousand miles through all manner of trial and privation to rescue their beleaguered brethren in Missouri, and now they were disbanded thirty miles before they reached their destination!

As a cruel denouement to this experience, a tragedy struck Zion’s Camp about this time. A cholera epidemic broke out among the members of the Camp and within two weeks, thirteen members of the Camp had died.

1834 July

Joseph arrived back in Kirtland in July. Although in some ways Zion's Camp was a failure, in other ways it was a success. It had provided excellent leadership training for some of the participants and a stern trial of their faith. The leading councils of the Church, including the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the First Council of Seventy, would be selected largely from among the participants of Zion's Camp.

During the month of November, Oliver Cowdery's older brother, Warren, was called by revelation to be branch president of the small branch where he lived in Freedom, New York [**D&C 106 – Warren A. Cowdery**].

1835 February

The first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation was chosen by the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon on February 14, 1835. The First Quorum of Seventy was also called.

1835 March

When they were first called, the Quorum of the Twelve scarcely knew what an apostle was supposed to do, and Joseph met with them often to instruct them. In late March at such a meeting, it was decided that the Twelve should leave for a mission through the eastern states to the Atlantic coast. In anticipation of this mission, the Twelve presented a letter to Joseph requesting that he inquire of the Lord on their behalf, so that they might have a special message of comfort to take with them on their missionary journey. Joseph did inquire and received an important revelation on priesthood and church government [**D&C 107 – Priesthood and Church Government**].

1835 May

On May 4, 1835 the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, ordained the previous February, departed on their first mission.

1835 July

On July 3, 1835, Mr. Michael Chandler arrived in Kirtland with his Egyptian mummies and the two papyrus scrolls from which Joseph would later translate the book of Abraham.

1835 August

In the summer of 1835, Joseph and Frederick G. Williams left Kirtland and traveled to Michigan to preach the gospel. While they were gone, preparations were completed for printing a new collection of the revelations in a book to be entitled the "Doctrine and Covenants." An assembly of the Church was convened in Kirtland for the

purpose of canonizing this book of scripture. The saints accepted all the revelations in the collection and also voted to include two other documents written by Oliver Cowdery. One was a statement on marriage, and the other dealt with the Church's views on the relationship between secular government and religious groups. The statement on marriage was removed in 1876 and replaced with the revelation on celestial marriage (section 132). The statement on government remains in the Doctrine and Covenants today [**D&C 134 – Relationship Between Church and Secular Government**].

1835 September

The first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants is published in mid-September.

1835 November

A second term of the School of the Elders is begun on November 3, 1835. It will be moved to the third floor of the temple in January and continue to meet there until the temple dedication.

1835 December

By Christmas of 1835, work on the Kirtland Temple is nearing completion. It will be dedicated in another three months.

On the day after Christmas, Brother Lyman Sherman, who was a member of Zion's Camp and who had been called to the First Quorum of Seventy in February 1835 came to Joseph asking for a blessing [**D&C 108 – Strengthen the Brethren**]. Brother Sherman was one of the seven presidents of Seventy.

1836 January

Since the spring of 1833, work on the Kirtland Temple had progressed almost continuously—having been interrupted only in the spring and early summer of 1834 in order to raise funds and gather recruits for the Zion's Camp project. The temple was sufficiently completed so that it could be dedicated on March 27, 1836.

Prior to the dedication of the temple and for some time after, the Lord poured out his power, and the saints were favored with a great many extraordinary spiritual experiences. This remarkable period was ushered in on the night of January 21, 1836, when a group of brethren gathered in the nearly completed temple to receive instructions and participate in the ordinance of "anointings." During the activities of this evening, Joseph had unfolded to him one of the great visions of the ages [**D&C 137 – Vision of the Celestial Kingdom**].

1836 March

The temple dedicatory service itself on March 27, 1836, lasted seven hours, and we have accounts of remarkable spiritual manifestations that occurred during that

convocation. Sidney Rigdon conducted, and Joseph read the dedicatory prayer which had been revealed to him the previous day [**D&C 109 – Kirtland Temple Dedicatory Prayer**].

1836 April

Seven days after the dedication on Sunday, April 3, an important revelation was received. After a large priesthood meeting, which included instruction and administration of the sacrament, Joseph and Oliver retired near one of the pulpits behind a curtained partition to kneel in prayer. As they did so, a glorious vision was granted to them. They were visited not only by three messengers who restored vital priesthood keys, but also by the Lord Jesus Christ himself who stood upon the breastwork of the pulpit [**D&C 110 – Restoration of Keys of the Priesthood**].

1836 June

When the saints fled Jackson County, Missouri, in the fall of 1833 and the winter of 1833-34, many of them crossed the Missouri River into Clay County. The people of Clay County generally warmly welcomed the saints into their midst. It was understood, however, that the saints' stay in Clay County would be temporary. When it became evident that the exiles would not be able to return to Jackson County very soon, if at all, the people of Clay County became uneasy. Particularly were the "old settlers" concerned because some of the saints began buying land and building homes, and they gave the appearance of settling permanently.

Finally, on June 29, 1836, a mass meeting was held at the court house in Liberty, Missouri, and a resolution was passed calling upon the saints to withdraw from the county. In delivering the resolution to the saints, a committee of Missourians verbally offered to assist the saints in finding another suitable location if they would agree to move.

Two days later, the saints held a meeting of their own and adopted a reply to the Missourians' resolution. Essentially they agreed to move in order to keep the peace.

At this time, northern Missouri was sparsely settled and was suggested to the Church as a suitable site where they might live alone—unmolested and in peace. In the fall of 1836, a number of families began moving to Far West, then located in Ray County. The Missourians seemed satisfied and even expressed the idea that if the Mormons were willing to settle that prairie country, "let them have it and welcome." The northern part of Ray Country was even divided into two additional counties to accommodate the saints. One of these, Caldwell, would be "especially for Mormons." The other, Daviess, was considered "the Missourians'." A representative to the state legislature from Clay County, Alexander W. Doniphan, was helpful to the saints and played a major role in the creation of Caldwell and Daviess Counties. Doniphan would

later establish himself as a genuine friend of the saints, and would even intervene at a critical moment and become instrumental in saving the life of Joseph Smith.

An agreement was reached that the Mormons would live only in Caldwell County and that they would not settle in other counties without consent of the settlers already there. This was, of necessity, only a verbal agreement since any such agreement in writing was obviously an unconstitutional restraint for any free citizen.

The saints rapidly left Clay County and moved north. They did make agreements with the citizens of Dewitt in Carroll County and those of Daviess County to allow some Mormon settlements in those areas. These concessions were made by the Missourians in exchange for money.

Caldwell County in 1836 was a wilderness. By the spring of 1838, however, the population was more than 5,000. In Far West, by that time, there were “one hundred and fifty houses, four dry goods stores, three family groceries, half a dozen blacksmith shops, a printing establishment, and two hotels. A large and comfortable school house had been built in 1836 and served also as a church and courthouse” (B. H. Roberts 1:425).

1836 August

Building the Kirtland Temple was a monumental task and it left the Church significantly in debt. In the summer of 1836, Joseph heard about a wealthy widow, a member of the Church, who had lived in Salem, Massachusetts, but was now deceased. It was reported that she had expressed her intention, before her death, to leave her estate to the Church. All of her earthly possessions were contained in a treasure chest in her basement. This chest allegedly contained gold, silver, jewels, and other precious things. So, Joseph and others traveled to Salem in order to find this treasure and to preach the gospel. They never found the treasure chest and were mildly chastised by the Lord for trying to find it [**D&C 111 – The Salem Experience**].

The spiritual high of the completion and dedication of the Kirtland Temple was followed by one of the lowest periods of our Church’s history. The year following the temple dedication saw a spirit of apostasy sweep through the Church.

1837 January

Initially, following the dedication of the temple, there was optimism. The saints sought to improve their standard of living by acquiring larger plots of farm land. In order to finance these purchases they needed to borrow, but cash was scarce. Church leaders, therefore, sought a means to transform some of the saints’ assets into cash. They decided to establish a bank in Kirtland, the Kirtland Safety Society Bank. When the Ohio legislature refused to grant them a charter for a state bank, they decided to create instead a private banking company. They were not fully aware that there were laws against the formation of such unauthorized banking companies. On January 2,

1837, the Kirtland Safety Society opened its doors for business and began printing currency. For several reasons the bank utterly failed, and many of those who had invested in the bank were ruined financially. Resentment, disillusionment, bitterness, criticism, and even hatred resulted. The spirit of the Lord departed from some, and a major apostasy resulted. Almost one-third of the “General Authorities” left the Church. Even some members of the Twelve were involved in the apostasy.

1837 July

In July 1837, the Lord warned Thomas B. Marsh that, as President of the Twelve, he should bring his quorum back into line **[D&C 112 – Thomas B. Marsh and the Quorum of Twelve]**.

Some of the apostates became bitter enemies of the Church and joined forces with other nonmembers to expel the saints from Kirtland. Persecution of the saints was ruthless and intense.

1837 December

Between December 1837 and July 1838, more than sixteen hundred members of the Kirtland branch abandoned their homes and moved west, many settling in Far West, Missouri. Joseph and Sidney were forced to flee from Kirtland in January 1838. Brigham Young had fled almost three weeks earlier. These brethren also settled in Far West.

1838 March

Shortly after arriving in Far West, Joseph received a revelation answering some questions that had arisen relative to certain verses in the book of Isaiah **[D&C 113 – Book of Isaiah]**.

1838 April

In the spring of 1838, while many, including several General Authorities, were leaving the Church, a stabilizing influence was provided by the three senior members of the Quorum of the Twelve—Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, and Brigham Young. In April 1838 Brother Patten received his own personal revelation **[D&C 114 – David W. Patten]**. He was a man of great physical and spiritual strength, and he possessed boundless courage. He was tragically killed by Missourians at the Battle of Crooked River a few months later in October 1838.

A few months of peace followed the saints’ settling in Far West. The Lord instructed them to establish themselves there and build a temple. The Lord also decreed that Far West would be the new “gathering place” **[D&C 115 – Far West]**.

1838 July

Some of the saints were reluctant to leave Kirtland to gather in Far West. They were rebuked by the Lord [**D&C 117 – Far West Is the Gathering Place**]. This rebuke was received on July 8, 1838, following a memorable Independence Day celebration in Far West during which the cornerstones of the temple at Far West were laid. Also at this commemoration, Sidney Rigdon delivered a forceful speech in which he warned, under penalty of death, the Missourians and others to leave the saints alone, as the Mormons would not tolerate any further harassment. This speech had unfortunate consequences, as it proved to inflame prejudice against the Church.

Three other revelations, now found in the Doctrine and Covenants, were received on July 8, 1838. On that date, Joseph also inquired of the Lord as to his will concerning the Twelve. In response, the Lord called them to go to Great Britain to preach the gospel. This call to serve was unusually specific, as it not only designated the date they were to depart, April 26, 1839, but it also specified their point of departure—the temple site at Far West [**D&C 118 – The Twelve Called to Preach in England**]. The Twelve later followed the Lord’s instructions to the letter, even though by April 1839 the saints had been expelled from Missouri and had been warned not to try to return.

The Twelve’s mission to England in 1839 and other missions to Great Britain that followed were extravagantly successful. More than five thousand converts resulted, and many of them migrated to America to join the saints between 1840 and 1850. These proved to be a vitally important infusion of strength to the Church.

Also on July 8, 1838, the Lord gave a new law concerning financial contributions to the Church [**D&C 119 and 120 – The Law of Tithing**].

By the summer of 1838, a spirit of peace and optimism prevailed in Far West. As many as twelve thousand saints had gathered in Missouri. Not all of them had gathered in Far West, Caldwell County. Others had settled in Adam-ondi-Ahman, Daviess County on the north, and Dewitt, Carroll County, on the east.

Most of the saints fleeing Kirtland had come west in small groups, but one group of more than five hundred persons traveled together in a body called “Kirtland Camp.” They arrived in Far West in October 1838, but at Joseph’s request they continued their journey twenty-two miles to the north to a place on the Grand River called Spring Hill where they settled. The Lord had previously changed the name of Spring Hill to “Adam-ondi-Ahman” [**D&C 116 – Adam-ondi-Ahman**].

1838 August

During the next three months, that spirit of peace and optimism among the saints was shattered. On October 27, 1838, the Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued an order to his state militia to kill or drive out of the state by force every Mormon! Why? What happened? How could conditions change so drastically—from peace in July of 1838 to an “extermination order” in October?

For one thing, the Missourians began to fear the potential political clout of the Mormons, since the saints were a cohesive, single-minded group that were likely to vote as a block. During an election in early August 1838, a fight occurred between a mob of more than a hundred Missourians and twelve unarmed Mormons who had traveled to the Daviess County seat, Gallatin, to vote.

The press exaggerated the significance of this fight, adding further to the growing fears and suspicions of the Missourians. Governor Boggs thus dispatched the state militia to “put down the insurrection.” The Gallatin affair, coupled with the pre-existing strong anti-Mormon prejudices, ignited the fuse of mobocracy, and an explosion ensued. During the next three months, all-out war occurred between the Mormons on one side and the Missouri militia combined with an unruly, raging, Missouri mob on the other.

1838 October

Shortly after the evil “extermination order” of October 27, a cruel massacre of innocent saints occurred at Haun’s Mill, located about ten miles east of Far West. Here dwelt recently arrived immigrants from Kirtland who were awaiting an improvement in the war-like conditions before continuing on to a more permanent settlement. On October 30, a company of two hundred forty Missourians fell upon the little settlement and butchered in cold blood, without warning or provocation, seventeen men and boys. Shortly thereafter Far West was surrounded by an overpowering force of Missourians. Joseph and other church leaders were betrayed by one of their own military leaders, Colonel George M. Hinkle, and delivered as prisoners into the hands of the Missourians. The Missouri mob was turned loose on Far West, and a horrible scene of pillaging, rape, and murder resulted. Joseph was sentenced to death by a hastily convened “kangaroo court.” His life was spared when one of the Missouri generals, Alexander Doniphan, denounced the decision to execute Joseph as “cold-blooded murder.”

1838 November

After being paraded before the people of Independence, Missouri, the Mormon prisoners were held at Richmond, Missouri, for three weeks. Then on December 1, 1838, Joseph, Hyrum, Sidney, and three others were placed in the jail at Liberty, Missouri. Sidney was soon released because of ill health, but the others remained in that jail for just over four months under near desperate conditions of poor food, freezing temperatures, inadequate light and ventilation, and continual ridicule and humiliation by their Missourian captors.

During the winter of 1838-39, while Joseph and Hyrum were incarcerated, the leadership of the Church fell to Brigham Young, the senior member of the Twelve. Under his leadership, over twelve thousand saints migrated eastward, back across the Mississippi River to Illinois, many settling in Quincy on the eastern bank of the

Mississippi. In Quincy the saints were extended a kindly reception by most of the people there.

1839 March

On March 20, 1839, from Liberty Jail, Joseph dictated two letters to the Church providing them with inspired counsel. Portions of the two letters were later published in the Doctrine and Covenants in three separate sections [**D&C 121 – The Spirit of the Priesthood**] [**D&C 122 – Why the Lord Allows Adversity**] [**D&C 123 – Committee on Persecution**].

In early April 1839, the prisoners were transferred to Daviess County for trial. At that time the Missourians, realizing the fruitlessness of obtaining a legal conviction for Joseph, allowed the prisoners to escape. They made their way to Quincy, Illinois, arriving April 22, 1839.

The saints soon purchased land in Commerce, Illinois, a swampy, mosquito-infested settlement fifty miles north of Quincy. They also acquired some property on the eastern shore of the Mississippi River in the Iowa Territory.

Commerce was renamed “Nauvoo” by Joseph, and during the spring and summer of 1839, the saints began to gather and build. Many hardships, including a malaria epidemic, were endured by the saints as they began to build the city.

1839 October

In the fall of 1839, Joseph, Sidney, and others traveled to Washington, D.C., to appeal to President Martin Van Buren seeking redress for wrongs done to the saints in Missouri. They were summarily dismissed by President Van Buren who told them, “Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you. If I take up for you, I shall lose the vote of Missouri.” Joseph remained in Washington for a time and made appeals to senate committees, but all to no avail. He returned to Nauvoo in March of 1840.

1840 April

In April 1840, two Apostles, Orson Hyde and John E. Page, were dispatched on a mission to the Jews of Europe and the Middle East. Elder Page quit the mission, but Orson Hyde completed the task, culminating his mission by standing on the Mount of Olives and dedicating the land of Palestine for the return of the Jews.

In the summer of 1840, the state of Missouri renewed its persecution of Joseph, and the Prophet found it necessary to periodically go into hiding when law enforcement officers from Missouri came to Nauvoo to arrest him. He was determined never to allow himself to be taken back to Missouri, as he knew that would mean certain death for him.

A charter was granted to the city of Nauvoo by the Illinois legislature in December 1840.

1841 January

In January 1841, the Lord gave a revelation containing instructions concerning the new city of Nauvoo [**D&C 124 – Nauvoo**]. In this revelation the Lord commanded the saints to build a temple in Nauvoo and a large hotel for nonmember dignitaries visiting the city—the Nauvoo House.

1841 February

In February 1841, a charismatic and handsome new member of the Church, John C. Bennett, was elected first mayor of Nauvoo. The same month an independent military body was organized in Nauvoo, called the Nauvoo Legion. Joseph was the commanding officer and John C. Bennett was the second officer. The Legion soon became the best military body in the state of Illinois, and it excited not only the jealousy and envy of the other militia in the state, but also fear that the saints might be preparing for rebellion.

In March 1841, Joseph inquired of the Lord regarding the Iowa saints. Should they move across the river to join the rest of the saints, or should they stay in Iowa? The Lord advised them to stay in Iowa for the time being [**D&C 125 – Iowa Saints**].

1841 April

In April 1841, Joseph, who enjoyed ceremony and celebration, directed a day of enthusiastic display with many non-Mormons guests from surrounding towns looking on. The fourteen companies of the Nauvoo Legion drilled and paraded with Joseph commanding in his splendid lieutenant-general's uniform. The cornerstone of the Nauvoo Temple was laid. One observer, Thomas C. Sharp, the editor of the *Warsaw (Illinois) Signal* saw something ominous in the marshal display, and he returned home to open a determined campaign against the Mormon presence in Illinois.

1841 July

In July 1841, Brigham Young arrived home from his mission in England. He had served several missions for the Church since his conversion in 1832. In a personal revelation received by Joseph, Brigham Young was told to remain home and assist the First Presidency [**D&C 126 – Brigham Young**].

Also in the summer of 1841, the true character of John C. Bennett began to emerge. It was learned that this self-proclaimed bachelor had an estranged wife and children in Ohio. When confronted with this information, he made a great show of contrition and was allowed to maintain his church membership. He had learned something of the doctrine of plural marriage, then being taught by Joseph to a few of his intimate friends. Over the next several months, he used his position, his reputation, and his personal magnetism to proposition and seduce several women in Nauvoo, both married and unmarried, under the guise of practicing the new marriage covenant. He

had received no authorization from Joseph, however, and he was discovered and excommunicated in May of 1842. He became an instant enemy of the Church, and his determined and articulate opposition to the Church, both in print and in lectures throughout the country, helped eventually to bring about the destruction of Nauvoo and the prophet Joseph.

By the late summer of 1842, Nauvoo was beginning to prosper, and its fame was spreading throughout the country. Nauvoo's population, by this time, was between eight and nine thousand, and except for Chicago it was the largest town in the state of Illinois.

1842 March

During the winter of 1841-42, Joseph completed the inspired "translation" of an Egyptian papyrus which he had obtained in 1835 when a man named Michael Chandler appeared in Kirtland to exhibit some Egyptian mummies. Chandler's traveling display had included not only four mummies, but some two or more rolls of papyrus covered with hieroglyphics. Joseph's reputation as one who might be able to translate ancient Egyptian documents led to Chandler's approaching Joseph. Chandler, who was from Philadelphia, had somehow obtained these ancient artifacts after they had been discovered by an Italian explorer named Antonio Lebolo. The Church purchased the mummies and papyri from Mr. Chandler for twenty-four hundred dollars. Joseph found the papyri to contain the writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt. From time to time, Joseph worked on the translation of this ancient papyrus. It was finally completed in March 1842 and published in the *Times and Seasons* under the title of "The Book of Abraham."

In the spring of 1842, the editor of the Chicago Democrat, a man named John Wentworth, requested that Joseph write a statement of the history and doctrine of the Church. This statement was requested on behalf of a friend of Wentworth's who was writing a history of the state of New Hampshire. Responding to this request, Joseph wrote a letter which we have come to call the "Wentworth Letter." Beginning with his own birth in 1805, it traced the development of the restored Church and then briefly summarized the doctrine of the Church in thirteen simple statements. These thirteen statements have now been extracted from the Wentworth Letter, separated, numbered, given the title "Articles of Faith," and canonized as scripture in our Pearl of Great Price.

1842 May

On May 4, 1842, Joseph gathered some of the brethren in the upper story of his red brick store and taught them some of the temple ordinances, including the endowment. In addition to its use as an endowment house, Joseph's red brick store was also the meeting place for the Nauvoo Lodge of Free Masons. Here also, Joseph

had his private office where he translated most of the book of Abraham, received revelations, and committed to writing the revelation on “celestial marriage.”

An attempt was made in Missouri to assassinate the ex-Governor Lilburn W. Boggs on May 6, 1842. Boggs was seated in a room in his home in the evening. The would-be assassin fired a pistol filled with buckshot through a window, dropped the pistol outside the window, left his footprints in the dirt, and fled. Boggs sustained non-fatal wounds to his head. The Mormons were accused of the crime. Specifically, it was suggested that Joseph Smith had ordered Orrin Porter Rockwell to make the attempt on the ex-governor’s life. When he had recovered, Boggs asked the Governor of Missouri to request the extradition of the suspects. Governor Carlin of Illinois, by now an enemy of the saints, issued a warrant for the arrest of Rockwell as principle and Joseph as accessory before the fact. Accordingly, on August 8, 1842, an officer from Adams County arrested the two. They were then left in the custody of the Nauvoo city marshal and allowed to go about their business while the state officer returned to Adams County. Before he returned to take possession of the prisoners, it was decided that because the tide of public opinion was decidedly against the Mormons, the two could never receive a fair trial in Missouri. Thus they went into seclusion. They crossed the river to the Iowa side and returned to Nauvoo some days later. When the arresting officer returned to Nauvoo, Joseph and Porter “could not be located.”

1842 September

Joseph remained in seclusion during the remainder of 1842. He lived quietly with several of the saints in Nauvoo, and the saints cooperated in keeping his place of abode a secret as he moved from home to home. From his place of concealment, he was able to administer the affairs of the Church, and he even appeared in public on several occasions.

In September 1842, pressures were becoming so intense that Joseph had decided to leave Nauvoo for a brief time to allow them to subside. Before leaving, he wrote two letters to the Church, during the first week in September, on the subject of baptism for the dead. These letters have been preserved for us in the Doctrine and Covenants [**D&C 127 and 128 – Baptism for the Dead**].

During Joseph’s period of seclusion in the fall of 1842, several attempts were made by the law officers from Missouri to take him into custody, but all to no avail.

1842 December

Finally, feeling secure that he had a firm defense against the charges of attempted murder, Joseph allowed himself to be arrested and he arrived in Springfield, Illinois, on December 30, 1842, for his trial. The charges against him were dismissed, and he was welcomed back in Nauvoo as a free man and a conquering hero.

1843 February

The late winter of 1842 and spring of 1843 brought Joseph a brief respite from persecution and harassment. In February Parley P. Pratt returned from his mission to England. He could not wait to visit with Joseph and be instructed by him. Joseph did instruct him on, among other things, the way in which one might discern a false from a true spirit **[D&C 129 – Discernment of False Spirits]**.

1843 April-May

Joseph also took advantage of these peaceful months to visit and instruct the saints living in small settlements surrounding Nauvoo **[D&C 130 – Items of Instruction by Joseph Smith]** **[D&C 131 – Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom]**.

1843 Summer

In June of 1843, charges against the Prophet were revived and the harassment began anew, largely as a result of the malicious writings and speeches of John C. Bennett. An extradition order was sought by the state of Missouri and granted by the now-Governor Ford of Illinois. Joseph was arrested by officers of Missouri, but won the right to be tried in Nauvoo and was promptly acquitted of all charges.

In the summer of 1843, the population of Nauvoo was about fifteen thousand and was growing rapidly. Nauvoo was divided into ten “wards” for both religious and political purposes. A bishop was appointed to preside over each ward. The work of building the temple and the Nauvoo House meanwhile continued. The prospects for Nauvoo’s becoming the major center of commerce in Illinois looked promising. Indeed, Nauvoo was approaching the height of its elegance and industry. However, the next several months would bring a total reversal of this hopeful trend.

The problems for the saints in Nauvoo arose on several fronts. First, just as had occurred in 1838 in Missouri, there arose resentment over the potential political clout of the saints. The Whig and Democratic parties were so divided in Illinois that the citizens of Nauvoo potentially held the balance of political power in Hancock County and perhaps even in the entire state. As a political aside, it should be noted that when none of the presidential candidates in the election of 1844 seemed sympathetic to the saints’ cause, Joseph allowed his name to be placed on the ballot as a token candidate for President of the United States.

A second cause of persecution resulted from the liberal city charter granted by the Illinois legislature. It guaranteed a good deal of independence for the new city and its rapidly growing military body, the Nauvoo Legion. The Legion excited fear that the Mormons, if they wished, could control by force the remainder of the state. There even arose the fear that Mormonism might engulf broad areas of the nation. This fear was further aggravated by Joseph’s organizing the “Council of Fifty” in March of 1844. This council was composed of a select group of the Prophet’s most trusted friends, including

the Twelve. This semi-secret body included high church officials, civic leaders, and prominent businessmen who met together to regulate the temporal affairs of the kingdom. This group was decried as an example of the Church's temporal ambitions which were repugnant to many outside the Church, particularly since Mormon doctrine included the concept that the day would arrive when the temporal or political kingdom of God would govern the earth from the center stake of Zion. Some feared that Joseph aspired to take over the earth beginning in 1844!

Another contributing factor in the growing feeling against the Church was the fact that a Masonic Lodge was established in Nauvoo, and Joseph and several of the brethren became active in Masonry. This resulted in a rather wide-spread prejudice, that existed against the Masons, being transferred to the Mormons. Ironically, the Mormon Masons, because of their rapid growth and the success of their lodge, produced jealousy even among their fellow Masons, and some Masons were further angered by Joseph's purported use of parts of the Masonic ceremony in the temple ordinances.

An additional element contributing to the saints' problems in Illinois was the rumor of plural marriage that began to circulate in Nauvoo. By 1843, a controlled form of plural marriage was practiced among a tightly closed circle of high church officials. The revelation on celestial and plural marriage, which was originally received in 1831, was finally recorded in July of 1843 [**D&C 132 – Celestial Marriage**] and circulated to only a very few of the brethren. The rumor of the practice was deemed a scandal to non-Mormons in the state and was horrifying even to some of the saints in Nauvoo.

The saints in Nauvoo had several avowed enemies of influence. Among them was Thomas C. Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw (Illinois) Signal*, a viciously anti-Mormon newspaper. Another was John C. Bennett, the ex-Mormon, who attacked the Church both in print and by his oratory. Particularly did Bennett delight in accusing the Church of practicing a licentious form of polygamy.

Some of the doctrines of the Church which were pronounced and promulgated by Joseph in 1843 were criticized as heretical and resulted in emotional attacks upon the Church by ministers of other Churches. Those doctrines which were especially criticized included the concept of the plurality of Gods and the doctrine that man's consummate potential destiny is to become as God is.

1844 June

In the spring of 1844, a small group of Mormon dissidents began preparations to publish the *Nauvoo Expositor*. They published only one issue, on June 7, which contained inflammatory allegations about the sex lives of Mormon leaders, branding Joseph a base seducer, a liar, and a murderer. The Nauvoo city council, led by Joseph who was mayor and his brother Hyrum who was vice-mayor, declared the newspaper libelous and a public nuisance endangering civil order. The city marshal was

dispatched to destroy that issue and the Expositor's printing press. No single action could have provided better ammunition for the anti-Mormons in Illinois, who by now had already organized into vigilante groups dedicated to the destruction of Mormonism. The anti-Mormons quickly raised the issue of freedom of the press, and they cried out in the press for the utter extermination of the "wicked" Mormon leaders. Some of the Mormon dissidents went to the county seat at Carthage, about fifteen miles east of Nauvoo, and filed charges of inciting a riot against Joseph and other church leaders. A constable was dispatched to arrest Joseph and Hyrum.

Realizing full well the fatal consequences of going to Carthage, Joseph and Hyrum, by some legal maneuvering, managed to be tried and acquitted by a court in Nauvoo. When the constable returned to Carthage without Joseph, the fury among the Church's enemies exploded. Governor Ford was petitioned, and demands were made that he mobilize the state militia and end Joseph's "defiance" of the law.

Joseph responded by declaring a state of martial law, and the Nauvoo Legion was mobilized. He also wrote to the traveling apostles and other church leaders asking them to return home. Governor Ford arrived in Carthage on June 21, 1844, and, reviewing the evidence against Joseph, he declared the destruction of the *Expositor* illegal and demanded that the Smiths come to Carthage and submit to the charges made against them. If they refused, the Governor threatened to employ the state militia to destroy Nauvoo.

Joseph realized that the circle was narrowing, and that his options were becoming limited. In a letter written to the Governor on June 22, he expressed his willingness to be tried, but he made it clear to the Governor that he dared not come to Carthage. Joseph knew that if he and Hyrum were taken into custody, they would be massacred. Thus he bade an emotional farewell to his family, and at midnight on June 22, Porter Rockwell rowed him and Hyrum and Apostle Willard Richards across the Mississippi River. From there, Joseph apparently intended to travel east to Washington, D.C., to lay his cause directly before President John Tyler.

The next morning a posse arrived in Nauvoo to arrest the brothers but left empty handed after threatening to occupy the city until the Smiths were arrested. That afternoon Emma sent messengers with a letter to Joseph and Hyrum. The letter likely related to Joseph Governor Ford's promise of protection and a fair trial. The messengers told Joseph of the posse's threats on the city, reminding him that if mobs destroyed their property, they would all be homeless. The messengers even accused Joseph of cowardice. These were cutting words, and Joseph replied, "If my life is of no value to my friends, it is of none to myself" (*HC*, 6:549).

After consulting with Hyrum and Porter Rockwell, Joseph agreed to return. From that moment on, Joseph had a strong premonition of his death. After spending the night with his family in Nauvoo, he traveled the next day, the 24th, to Carthage. As he was

passing through Nauvoo he was overheard to say, "I am going as a lamb to the slaughter" (*HC*, 6:555).

After spending the night in a hotel in Carthage, the next day, the 25th, the prisoners were shown to the troops of militia who were lined up for review. The local militia, known as the Carthage Greys, were difficult to control and almost mutinied, threatening to lynch the prisoners. The prisoners were arraigned, and a high bail was set. The bail was met by friends of the Prophet, and the prisoners might have gone free, but that night they were arrested for treason on the grounds of having declared martial law in Nauvoo. The two prisoners, Joseph and Hyrum, along with eight of their friends, were placed in the unbarred debtors' room, on the second floor of the small two-story jail on the edge of town.

The next day, the 26th, the prisoners were walked through town to the courthouse. Joseph expected to be massacred by the mob in the streets. Nevertheless, he walked boldly along, and as a gesture of defiance even locked arms with the worst mobocrat he could find. Hyrum also locked arms with Joseph.

The next morning, the 27th, the Governor broke his promise not to leave Carthage without taking the prisoners along. The Governor had promised protection for the prisoners and knew full well the critical dangers that awaited them. His leaving Carthage may then be regarded as an act of at least tacit complicity. He left the Carthage Greys guarding the jail. In a hasty note written to Emma, Joseph betrayed his fear, "Dear Emma, I am very much resigned to my lot, knowing I am justified and have done the best that could be done. Give my love to the children and all my friends" (*HC*, 6:605). By that afternoon, all of the Smiths' friends had been forced to leave except the Apostles Willard Richards and John Taylor. A pistol had been smuggled in to Joseph by a visitor. As the hot and sultry day wore on, the prisoners sat silent and depressed. Joseph asked John Taylor to sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

At about five o'clock, a mob of one hundred fifty to two hundred men surrounded the jail. They were fired upon by the Carthage Greys who were guarding the jail. The guards, however, were part of the conspiracy and used blanks. Shortly thereafter, a group of attackers stormed up the stairs. Hyrum was killed immediately. Joseph fired three times down the stairs wounding three men. He then leaped from the jail window, but as he did so he was struck fatally from the back. As he fell to the ground, he cried, "Oh Lord, my God." John Taylor was wounded by four separate bullets, and only Willard Richards escaped injury. The attackers then dispersed.

Feeling that the Mormons would retaliate, the people of Carthage evacuated their town by nightfall. Samuel Smith carried his brothers' bodies by wagon back to Nauvoo on June 28. In Nauvoo, thousands of mourners filed by their coffins. After making a show of burying them publicly, the bodies were hidden and guarded in fear that they would be exhumed and desecrated.

Some weeks later, John Taylor penned a report of the martyrdom which was included in the next addition of the Doctrine and Covenants [**D&C 135 – The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum**].

1844 August

Brigham Young and the other traveling Apostles did not learn of the assassinations until July 16, and were not able to reach Nauvoo until August 6. They found the saints subdued, shattered, and confused by the loss of their leaders. Though they needed desperately to find another leader, the method of orderly succession to the Presidency had not yet been clearly established. Sidney Rigdon offered himself to become the Church's "guardian," asserting that no one could take Joseph's place. Brigham Young contended that the Twelve held all the keys necessary for church leadership, and that as President of the Twelve, he was the rightful heir of the Presidency. At a dramatic meeting on August 8, where both Sidney and Brigham spoke, the saints voted overwhelmingly to sustain Brigham and the Twelve as leaders of the Church.

There was opposition to Brigham's leadership, and splinter groups formed under the leadership of individuals who claimed the Presidency for themselves. The most significant of these included the Church of Christ headed by Sidney Rigdon, the "Strangites" led by James J. Strang, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints organized in 1851 by Jason Briggs. The leadership of the "Reorganites" was eventually assumed by the Prophet's son, Joseph Smith III who remained in Nauvoo with his mother, Emma. This group rejected the doctrines revealed through Joseph during the Nauvoo period, including polygamy, plurality of Gods, baptism for the dead, temple ordinances, the literal gathering of the saints, and the establishment of an earthly kingdom.

After the murders of Joseph and Hyrum, there followed a short respite from persecution and harassment lasting until about September of 1845. During this period, Brigham Young gave major emphasis to the missionary program both in the eastern states and in the British Isles. He also stepped up the construction work on the temple so that as many saints as possible could share in those sacred ordinances before the saints had to begin their trek west.

1845 January

The enemies of the Church had assumed that the destruction of Joseph would be fatal for the Church's existence. When it became apparent that the Church showed promise of surviving, the hostility toward and harassment of the saints began afresh. Strong prejudice against the Church in the Illinois legislature resulted in a repeal of the Nauvoo city charter in January 1845.

1845 May

The capstone was laid on the temple, and its construction was finished in May 1845.

1846 February

Brigham knew from the moment he assumed the leadership of the Church that the saints would be leaving Nauvoo. Joseph had predicted as early as 1834 in Kirtland that “This people will go into the Rocky Mountains; they will raise up a posterity there and the Latter-day Saints who dwell in these mountains will stand in the flesh until the coming of the Son of Man” (Wilford Woodruff, *CR*, 1897, 57). In response to the renewed harassment, the saints agreed in the fall of 1845 to leave Illinois. The agreement was that the saints would leave in the spring—when the “water runs” and the “grass grows”—but tensions increased so that they had to leave earlier than planned. The first wagon crossed the Mississippi River on February 4, 1846. President Young crossed on February 15. Brigham intended that he would lead an advance party ahead to find a settling place and plant crops for the saints who would follow later. However, a steady stream of Nauvoo saints began to follow him out of the city. The saints had been forced to sell homes and property for a pittance. By September 1846, Nauvoo, or, as Brigham had renamed it, the “City of Joseph,” stood almost empty.

1846 Spring

After camping briefly at the Sugar Creek Camp, nine miles west of the Mississippi, an aggregate of the twelve thousand saints in about twenty-five hundred wagons, and thirty to fifty thousand head of stock pushed on across Iowa. By late spring or early summer they were settled temporarily on the eastern shore of the Missouri River at Kaneshville (later Council Bluffs) and in Winter Quarters, across the river. Winter Quarters is now Florence, Nebraska, a suburb of Omaha.

In the spring of 1846, the Church appealed to the president of the United States, James K. Polk, for any available financial assistance for the saints’ intended migration to the west. This request coincided with the United States’ declaring war on Mexico. An army was needed to march to California to take possession of that area. Apparently as an act of good faith, President Polk saw an opportunity to help the saints and also fulfill a national need as well. The United States Army agreed to accept a volunteer force of about 500 young Mormon men who would serve for one year and march the two thousand miles from Council Bluffs to California. For this service, each man would be paid \$42, amounting to a total payroll of about \$21,000. The Church accepted the army’s offer, not only because of the money which would obviously prove helpful, but because they wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to their country.

At the expense of much personal and community sacrifice, this force of volunteers was raised. In July the “Mormon Battalion” left Council Bluffs for Fort

Leavenworth, Kansas. After being outfitted, they embarked on the colorful expedition. They arrived in San Diego in January 1847. Part of their pay was sent back to their families to be used for the trek west. After their period of service, in July 1847, they were disbanded. A few re-enlisted, some remained in California to take advantage of the gold rush, but most returned to their families in the Great Basin of Utah.

1846 Winter

Brigham Young had fully planned to be in the Great Basin by the summer of 1846, but the wet and muddy roads through Iowa and the lack of preparation by the saints so delayed them in their journey that they decided to remain in Winter Quarters, on the west bank of the Missouri River near Council Bluffs, Iowa, and continue on the next spring.

Something had to be done in order for the saints to travel more expeditiously, and so several council meetings were held that winter by the Twelve to plan the trek.

1847 January

Finally on January 14, 1847, the Lord spoke through Brigham Young concerning the “Camp of Israel.” Final instructions were given by the Lord for the expedition to the west [**D&C 136 – Word and Will of the Lord for the Camp of Israel**].

Life for the saints in the winter of 1846-47 was difficult because of the weather and the meager provisions available to them. As many as one in thirty died.

1847 April

Early in April, Brigham led an advance party of just under one hundred and fifty saints the one thousand miles to the Salt Lake Valley, arriving on July 24, 1847.

Joseph Smith and the Gospel Dispensation

These few thoughts on the phenomenon of the “gospel dispensation” have been drawn in part from the writings of Elder Bruce R. McConkie (“This Generation Shall Have My Word Through You” in *Sperry Symposium Classics, The Doctrine and Covenants*, 36-37). We all know that salvation comes only in and through the Savior. He is the “Firstborn of the Father”—that is he was the first spirit born to our heavenly Parents in the premortal world. Of all the intelligences, he was most like unto God. He became, under the direction and authority of the Father, the Creator of all things. We look to him. Our faith centers in him, and in the Father through him.

Second to Christ stands Michael, who led the armies and hosts of heaven during the rebellion and war in premortality. He, being foreordained so to do, came to earth as the first man of all men. He became the presiding high priest over all the earth. The next person in this hierarchy is Gabriel, who came into this life as Noah. After that, we have insufficient information about the order of priority. The Doctrine and Covenants does make mention of the angel Raphael (D&C 128:19-21) who appeared to Joseph Smith to declare his dispensation and to present his priesthood keys. Elder Bruce R. McConkie supposed that Raphael is Enoch (*Ensign*, April 1980, 23), and it has even been speculated that he brought to Joseph the keys of resurrection. Next in the line of priesthood priority come other men singled out from among the hosts of heaven who were foreordained to be the heads of dispensations.

Dispensations are those periods of time when the plan of salvation, the eternal word of God is “dispensed” to men on earth. How many there have been we do not know. Perhaps there have been ten. But maybe there have been twenty or even more. These do not include those periods of time sometimes referred to as dispensations in the sense that John the Baptist and Paul and some of the other prophets had special appointments. Rather the gospel dispensations are great eras or periods of the earth’s history when the Lord, through one man, gives his word to the whole world and makes all the prophets, apostles, seers, and administrators of that period subject to, and testifiers of what came through that one individual. Elder McConkie refers to these other prophets as “supplemental prophets to echo the message and proclaim the truth and get as much into the hearts of men as they are able to receive.” This means that the head of a gospel dispensation stands as one of the ten or twenty greatest spirits who have so far been born on earth.

It seems likely that the Lord has singled out certain men, who had special spiritual qualifications and capabilities in the premortal world, to come to earth in periods of turmoil, wickedness, rebellion, and evil, to be lights and guides to the world. This gives us a little perspective of what was involved in the life, status, and calling of the prophet Joseph Smith.

We may thus summarize this earth's priesthood line of authority. The Lord Jesus Christ presides. Then follow Adam and Noah. Thereafter, the dispensation heads. Each of these is the primary revealer of Christ for his day. Under the dispensation leader comes the other prophets, apostles, and general leaders of the Lord's kingdom. All these lead the elders of Israel—the wise, good, and sagacious men who have the spirit of light and understanding.

Each and every prophet is a special witness of Christ. Every prophet or apostle who is not head of a dispensation is a reflection, an echo, an advocate, and a supporter of the dispensation leader.

As we view the prophet Joseph in this perspective, we stand in awe of him. He was selected by the Lord to lead perhaps one of the very most challenging dispensations. This great and final dispensation that will never end or be taken away until the Lord's second coming in glory.

In our dispensation, Joseph Smith has given three great truths to the world that, it might be argued, take precedence over all things restored during this final dispensation. They have more of an influence on the salvation of men than any others, and without the knowledge of them, men cannot be saved.

1. The first great truth is the true nature of God and the Godhead. A knowledge of God is the greatest truth in all eternity. God is an eternal Man. He has a body of flesh and bone. We are his literal children. We are of his species. We have the capacity to grow to become like him and he expects it of us. But there must needs be an opposition in all things (2 Nephi 2:11), and the opposite of the knowledge of God that has come through Joseph Smith is the greatest heresy in the sectarian world—that God is a spirit nothingness that fills the immensity of space. In truth, Joseph Smith came to reveal God in a period of almost total spiritual darkness, in a day when men no longer knew the nature and kind of being whom they should worship.

2. The second great truth is that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. His grace, mercy, and eventual salvation come only to this who obey the laws and ordinances of the everlasting gospel. Having first discovered who God our Father is and how we relate to him, it is then most important to know about Christ and the salvation that is in him. The heresy and perversion of this truth is the common sectarian concept that people are saved by grace or confession alone. "Works" or obedience to the Lord's commands are of secondary importance.

3. The third most important thing in all eternity is to know about the gift of the Holy Ghost, and also to know about the nature and reality of ongoing revelation. The Holy Spirit of God is a revealer or revelator who reveals spiritual truths. He is the justifier and sanctifier who forgives, cleanses, and perfects human souls. It is through him that the gifts of the Spirit are available to the faithful, so that they can have in their lives what apostles and prophets and great men of all ages have had in theirs. The

heresy that exists in the sectarian world in this area is that the heavens are sealed, that there is no revelation, that there are no miracles, and that there are no gifts of the Spirit.

Joseph Smith's History of the Church

The seven-volume *History of The Church* begins with Joseph Smith's birth in Vermont in 1805 and ends in 1848. It might have been more aptly titled the "History of Joseph Smith," and, in fact, was originally so titled. Today it is referred to variously as the *Documentary History of the Church*, the *Joseph Smith History of the Church*, or, perhaps most appropriately, the *History of the Church*. It is the official history of the church's founding generation and is still in print and still widely used.

The motivation for compiling this early history was at least threefold:

1. Joseph sought to obey a commandment of the Lord. On the day the Church was organized, the Lord, by revelation, told the Prophet, "There shall be a record kept among you" (D&C 21:1). From that time, Joseph Smith sought to write a faithful history of his life and of the Church. The Lord's commandment to Joseph followed the ancient pattern. From the very beginning of human history, God stressed the importance of keeping an accurate record of his dealings with his children (see Moses 6:4-6; D&C 47:1).

2. Joseph's second purpose in creating a history of the Church was "to disabuse the public mind" (JS-H 1:1). To *disabuse* is to correct deception and error. As many anti-Mormon writers had published scurrilous and false information about Joseph, his family, and the Church, the Prophet sought to set the record straight and publish the truth to all sincere seekers after truth.

3. Joseph apparently desired also to leave for the saints a record of their roots and beginnings to edify and strengthen them.

Joseph Smith was always the prime motivator of the project of creating a history, but because of his lack of formal education, he depended on others to do most of the actual writing. Though he had a readable hand, he felt slow and awkward using the pen. He preferred to dictate his words to trusted clerks. On July 5, 1839 Joseph recorded, "I was dictating history. I say dictating, for I seldom use the pen myself. I always dictate all my communications, but employ a scribe to write them" (*HC*, 4:1). In 1844, Joseph wrote, "For the last three years I have a record of all my acts and proceedings, for I have kept several good, faithful, and efficient clerks in constant employ: they have each accompanied me everywhere, and carefully kept my history, and they have written down what I have done, where I have been, and what I have said" (*HC*, 6:409). Joseph selected able men, gave them regular encouragement and instruction, and provided space for them in his home or store. In all, Joseph Smith appointed seventeen men as church historians (see Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 [Summer 1971], 439-71).

Early on, the progress made by Joseph and his scribes was stuttering and slow. On at least three occasions prior to 1839 Joseph had begun writing his history. (1) The

earliest of these is a six-page account recorded on three leaves of a ledger book, written between the summer of 1831 and November 1832. An analysis of the handwriting shows that the narrative was penned by Frederick G. Williams, scribe to the Prophet and counselor in the First Presidency. (2) A "letter book" which began in November 1832. In this book were recorded important historical church documents. (3) Also in November 1832, Joseph started a daily journal. On November 27, 1832, he records having purchased a book for the purpose of keeping "a minute account of all things that come under my observation." All three of these records provided important sources for the later writing of Joseph's official history.

One of the frustrations Joseph faced early in his ministry was the lack of faithful church historians. Oliver Cowdery had barely started the task when the Lord called him to labor in Missouri. Joseph, through revelation, next appointed John Whitmer. He was a reluctant scribe but did manage to keep at least a partial record over the next seven years. Unfortunately, his ardor for the Church cooled, and by 1838 he was released. In bitterness, Whitmer refused to hand his records over. Though this history was later recovered, his actions forced Joseph to appoint others to reproduce the history as best they could and then continue keeping the records.

About two and a half years before his death, Joseph expressed some frustration over his repeated attempts to complete his history:

Since I have been engaged in laying the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints I have been prevented in various ways from continuing my journal and the History, in a manner satisfactory to myself, or in justice to the cause. Long imprisonments, vexatious and long continued law suits, the treachery of some of my clerks; the death of others; and the poverty of myself and brethren from continued plunder and driving, have prevented my handing down to posterity a connected memorandum of events desirable to all lovers of truth; yet I have continued to keep up a journal in the best manner my circumstances would allow, and dictate for my history from time to time, as I have had opportunity so that the labors and suffering of the first Elders and Saints of this last kingdom might not wholly be lost to the world (*HC*, 4, 470).

It is not possible to question the prophet Joseph's devotion to the cause of creating a history of the Church. In June of 1840 he requested that the Nauvoo High Council "relieve him from the anxiety and trouble necessarily attendant on business transactions" and requested funds "for a clerk or clerks . . . to aid him in his important work" (*HC*, 4:136-37). The council responded favorably, and Joseph was able to hire two clerks, Willard Richards and William W. Phelps. An incident reported by one of his scribes underscores the seriousness with which Joseph took the recording of the history. One day his two scribes went to Joseph complaining that they were being distracted "in the progress of writing the history" because of excessive noise generated by children in a nearby school. Immediately, the Prophet went to the caretaker of the school, Mr. Cole, and requested that he "look for another place [for the school] as the

history must continue and not be disturbed.” The Prophet stressed to his scribes that there were “few subjects that I have felt a greater anxiety about than my history which has been a very difficult task” (*HC*, 6:66). Some time earlier, he had told William Phelps that “the history must go ahead . . . before anything else” (*HC*, 5:394).

After several early attempts, Joseph Smith and his clerk, James Mulholland, less than two months after Joseph’s arrival in Illinois from confinement in Liberty Jail, began his official history at Commerce, Illinois, on June 10, 1839 (*HC*, 3:375-77). They used as primary resources the records the scribes had produced through Joseph’s repeated efforts. The history began with a first-person account of Joseph Smith’s early visions which had been written in the spring of 1838 (*HC*, 3:25-26). By October 1839, when Joseph left Nauvoo for Washington, D.C. to present the Church’s Missouri grievances before the federal government, only fifty-nine pages of the history had been written, covering the period from Joseph’s birth to September 1830 (Dean C. Jessee, “The Writing of Joseph Smith’s History,” *BYU Studies* 11, No. 4 [Summer 1971], 464 and H. Donl Peterson, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987], 59). Six days after Joseph’s departure for Washinton, James Mulholland died. When Joseph returned to Nauvoo in March 1840, he lamented the passing of his “faithful scribe,” and expressed disappointment that an adequate record of his Washington trip had not been kept. Robert B. Thompson was appointed general church clerk on October 3, 1840, continued writing the history where Mulholland left off. However, at the time of his untimely death on August 27, 1841, only sixteen pages had been added to the manuscript. William W. Phelps wrote the next eighty-two pages.

It was not until Willard Richards was appointed private secretary and historian on December 21, 1842, that any really significant progress was made on the written history. By the time he was appointed, a mere 157 pages of history had been written. Eventually the history would total more than two thousand pages. Brother Richards compiled the large part of the history, more than half of it after the Joseph martyrdom on June 27, 1844. With the assistance of his adopted son and clerk, Thomas Bullock, Richards completed the narrative to March 1, 1843, before his own death in 1854. His successor as church Historian, George A. Smith then compiled the history of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, expanded the notes of the Prophet’s sermons, and continued the narrative into August 1844, when Brigham Young was sustained to lead the Church.

Although little of the history subsequent to Joseph’s visions was dictated or written by the Prophet himself, writers used his diaries, and the writers retained the first-person narrative style throughout.

The Church published this history serially in its periodicals, first in the *Times and Seasons* at Nauvoo and then in Salt Lake City’s *Deseret News* from 1852 to 1857. The seven-volume version published by the Church today is a product of the editing of B. H. Roberts of the Seventy, who worked intermittently on the project from 1902 to 1932.

Because it quotes extensively from letters, minutes, and diaries of the day, the *History of the Church* has often been referred to as the *Documentary History of the Church*, or the DHC.

The history exhibits characteristics and flaws commonly found in the histories and biographies of its day including unacknowledged ghostwriting, edited sources, and narrative distortions. The most frequent distortion is the changing of a contemporary's third-person description of Joseph Smith's words and actions to a first-person account attributed to Joseph Smith, thereby conveying a false sense that he wrote it. Nonetheless, based as it is on extensive documents from the period and compiled by persons who were eyewitnesses to the events, the factual content of the history has proven reliable.

Joseph Smith's Inspired Revision of the Bible—The JST

During his translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph learned that the theological darkness and spiritual stumblings of the Christian world in the latter days were due in large measure to a wilful tampering with some of the earliest Bible texts—that “many plain and precious things” had been “taken away” or “kept back” by designing individuals in the periods incident to and following the original compilations of the Old and New Testaments (1 Nephi 13:23-34). “From what we can draw from the scriptures relative to the teaching of heaven,” Joseph observed in 1834, “we are induced to think that much instruction has been given to man since the beginning which we do not possess now” (*HC*, 2:18). More specifically, “From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of men, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled” (*HC*, 1:245).

Though we do not have in our possession a specific revelation instructing Joseph Smith to begin a careful study of the Bible, yet we do have numerous statements by the Prophet Joseph and the Lord indicating its value and overall import. Joseph and his scribes acknowledged that this specific assignment was a sacred mission appointed unto him (see D&C 76:15). Joseph was obviously receptive when the Lord commanded him to begin to “translate” or revise the Bible, by revelation (see D&C 37:1; 41:7; 45:60-61; 73:3; and 93:53).

At the time of Joseph Smith, Bible revisions were “in the air.” Religious revivalism reached a peak in the New York area in the early nineteenth century, and with it came a heightened awareness of the need for the Bible as a divine standard for living. In fact, New England was not the only section of the country that manifested an intense interest at this time in a study and scrutiny of the Bible. From 1777 to 1833 more than 500 separate editions of the Bible (or parts thereof) were published in America (see Margaret T. Hills, *The English Bible in America* [New York: The American Bible Society, 1961]; cited in Robert J. Matthews, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, A History and Commentary* [Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1975], 9. Brother Matthews's work is the definitive treatment of the background and significance of the JST). Many of these represented new or “modern” translations, often with an attempt to prepare paraphrased editions or alternate readings based upon comparisons with Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

One example of these new translations was one by Alexander Campbell, the founder of the “Campbellites” or “Disciples of Christ.” He wrote his own revised version of the Bible. Alexander Campbell was the spiritual mentor of Sydney Rigdon who became a Campbellite minister. These facts led to speculation among some of those critical of the Church that perhaps Sidney Rigdon, not Joseph Smith, was primarily responsible for the creation of the inspired revision of the Bible. We know this is not

true. For one thing, Joseph started work on the revision in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in June 1830, some six months before Joseph even met Sidney Rigdon. Sidney wasn't converted until November 1830 and didn't come to Fayette to meet the Prophet until as late as December 1830. By the time Sidney arrived in Fayette, Joseph had already translated all of the material that would one day become the Book of Moses.

Joseph Smith's translation of the scriptures was highly unusual, however. Joseph had no background or training in ancient languages until later in life, when he did study Hebrew with a number of the leaders of the Church. Nor did he work with manuscripts written in the biblical languages in undertaking his study. What, then, was the nature of his "translation," and how was it accomplished? Apparently the prophet Joseph began a careful reading and study of the King James Bible in June of 1830. He acted under divine direction according to his appointment as "a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church" (D&C 107:92). He sought to harmonize himself with the Spirit of God, as well as the mind and will of the ancient writers, so as to convey (as nearly as possible) not only that which was written, but also that which was *intended*.

The reader should understand clearly that Joseph Smith and the Lord himself viewed this "branch of his [Joseph's] calling"—his work as Bible translator—as a key element in the grand restoration of the gospel. The translation of the Bible was not a gospel hobby, a parlor game, or a prophetic whim. Joseph's work with the Bible was undertaken and received as a labor and a product of profound gravity. In the words of the Lord, Joseph was called "to do a great work and hath need that he may do the work of translation for the salvation of souls" (from a revelation to Frederick G. Williams, January 5, 1834 in Joseph Smith Collection, Letters, 1834, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City).

One day in 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery entered E. B. Grandin's Book Store in Palmyra, and Joseph purchased a large pulpit-style edition of the Bible, a King James Version, weighing about five pounds for \$3.75. This is the Bible he used for the "translation" process.

Neither the Prophet nor his scribes left a record explaining the details of the revision process. However, a reasonable reconstruction of the process seems to be that Joseph sat at a table with his large Bible in front of him, and a scribe sat opposite him ready to take dictation on sheets of paper. After prayer was offered, the Prophet read from his Bible and dictated the revisions while the scribes recorded what he said. The record which the scribes thus created became a "manuscript." What exactly did the scribes include in their manuscript? Did they record only Joseph's corrections, or did they include uncorrected materials as well? At times the scribes would write all of the verses in a chapter, including those Joseph didn't revise. For example, the biblical text is written out in full (longhand) on the manuscripts for Genesis 1-24 and Matthew 1 through John 5. At other times, the scribes wrote only those verses or phrases that

were revised. On some occasions, when Joseph read a verse or a chapter he did not feel to revise, he would simply announce, “correct,” and the scribe would enter that in his manuscript. At a later date, some of the materials initially pronounced “correct” were altered—either in the manuscript in written form or in some of his sermons over the pulpit. Some of these latter verbal corrections never made it to the manuscripts.

In his Bible, Joseph sometimes made marks (a check or an “X” or some other symbol) before and after those phrases or verses he corrected. Rarely did he write any of the changes in his Bible, but additional marks in the Bible (e.g., dots, slanted lines, circled words, or line-out words) were discovered to be essential (in conjunction with the manuscripts) in discerning exactly what Joseph intended about particular passages. Therefore, in order to publish a completed, corrected version of the Bible, one would have to have access to both Joseph’s Bible and the scribes’ manuscripts.

Joseph was assisted with his translation during the three-year period by a number of persons, but three men in particular were of greatest service as his amanuenses. John Whitmer, one the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates, assisted Joseph early in the translation. The Lord explained to Joseph: “Behold, it is expedient in me that my servant John should write and keep a regular history, and assist you, until he is called to further duties” (D&C 47:1). Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, had served faithfully as the scribe for Joseph in the translation of the Book of Mormon. The Lord explained to Oliver in a revelation given in April of 1829 that following the completion of the Book of Mormon translation, further labors lay ahead: “Behold, other records have I, that I will give unto you power that you may assist to translate” (D&C 9:2). Both John Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery were given new assignments after assisting the prophet Joseph for a short while, and the bulk of the scribal activity was accomplished by Sidney Rigdon. Sidney joined the Church in Ohio and joined Joseph Smith and the saints in New York in December of 1830. Brother Rigdon became involved immediately in the work with the Bible and labored consistently until the formal work of translation ceased in July of 1833.

As mentioned, Joseph started work on the revision in June 1830, and he worked on it intermittently until July of 1833. The work of revision took place in Harmony, Pennsylvania, Fayette, New York, Kirtland, Ohio, and Hiram, Ohio. By July 1833, 3,410 verses in the printed JST differ in textual construction from the King James Bible. This comprises roughly 12.5% of all the verses in the King James Bible. Of this number 25 verses compose the visions of Moses (Moses 1), 1,289 changes are in the Old Testament, and 2,096 in the New Testament. Of the books in the Old Testament, all received revision except Ruth, Ezra, Esther, Lamentations, Haggai, Malachi, and The Song of Solomon. It is interesting to note that at the bottom of one of the Old Testament manuscript pages is the following: “The Song of Solomon are not Inspired Writings.” Hence, the Song of Solomon is not contained in the printed edition of the JST. Of the books of the New Testament, only the second and third epistles of John

received no revisions. In glancing over the Bible as a whole, some of the books that received more revisions than others were (the number indicates the number of verses which differ from the King James text):

Old Testament		New Testament	
Genesis	662	Matthew	483
Exodus	66	Mark	349
Psalms	188	Luke	563
Isaiah	178	John	159
		Romans	118
		1 Corinthians	68
		Hebrews	47
		Revelation	75

After July 1833, Joseph set the revision aside and apparently always intended to get back to it and do more. However, he never found the time to do much more revision work before his death in June 1844. He did, however, spend some time reviewing and revising the manuscripts—seeking to find appropriate words to convey what he had come to know by revelation.

The saints were commanded to provide temporal support to Joseph and his family so that he could complete work on the JST (D&C 43:12-14). Though they partially complied with this commandment of the Lord, sufficient assistance was not provided him. Despite several attempts by church leaders to get members to contribute to Joseph Smith's temporal needs so that he could work on the translation of the Bible, financial difficulty hampered the progress of the work (see *HC*, 4:136-37, 164, 187, 493, 517). The process of translation was slowed, and efforts to prepare a manuscript for press were delayed because Joseph constantly had to lay aside his work on the manuscript to provide food and clothing for himself and his family. As a result the prophet was unable to finish his translation, even though the Lord had instructed that it be published (see D&C 94:10; 104:58-59; 124:89). The neglect of the early saints of this counsel was costly in knowledge and spiritual blessings.

Joseph commenced his revision with the book of Genesis from chapter 1 through chapter 19 verse 35—June 1830 through March 7, 1831. On this latter date, Joseph received a revelation in which he was instructed to begin a translation of the New Testament (D&C 45:60-62). Then for about a month he worked simultaneously on Matthew chapters 1 through 9 and Genesis 19 verse 36 through Genesis 24 verse 42. He then, in early April, turned his attention exclusively to the New Testament, and between April 7, 1831, and February 2, 1833, he completed the book of Matthew and the rest of the New Testament. After completing the New Testament, he went back to the Old Testament and revised Genesis 24 verse 43 through Malachi between February

2, 1833, and July 2, 1833. While he was in the process of translating the Old Testament, on March 9, 1833, Joseph inquired of the Lord concerning the Aprocryphal books which were found in his Bible. The Lords answer was received in D&C 91.

Although in some of the books of the Old and New Testaments he made no changes, he did give consideration to every book from Genesis to the book of Revelation.

On occasion, after finding a phrase he felt strongly about changing, he went through the Bible text and corrected all the places where the same offending phrase was used. An example of such a phrase is, “an evil spirit from God” (1 Samuel 16:14, 15, 16, 23) which Joseph changed to “an evil spirit which is not of God.”

In a few instances, Joseph received revealed knowledge that had no corresponding material in the King James Version. Examples include the “visions of Moses” (Moses 1), some material on Adam after he was cast out of the garden (Moses 5:1-15), and the “visions and prophecies of Enoch” (Moses 6:26 through Moses 7:68).

Some time after an initial “manuscript” was written, Joseph sat down with the scribe again and studied the manuscript and made further changes. He then dictated a “corrected” version of the manuscript. Then, in that same corrected manuscript, he continued on to revise additional Bible texts. Thus, a new manuscript was created. By this process we have three Old Testament (OT) manuscripts and two New Testament (NT) manuscripts. These are referred to as OT1, OT2, OT3, NT1, and NT2. One example illustrates the nature of these manuscripts. OT2 includes the revision of Genesis through Genesis 24:42. Beginning in 1831, the prophet went over this material again, making additional revisions, and he produced another manuscript separate and apart from the first. This later manuscript is now identified as OT3. It repeats the material of OT- 2 with additional revision and also extends to the end of the Old Testament. Subsequently the prophet edited the same material (OT3) yet again, making many additional revisions in the margins, between the lines, and also by pinning on scraps of paper containing notes and revisions. No new manuscript was, however, created. Thus, these early chapters of Genesis were repeatedly revised and added to by the prophet Joseph Smith.

This process provides insight into what is meant by the term “translation.” When Joseph Smith translated the Bible, he was not limited to what was found on the working page in front of him, whether that page was a page from the King James Version or a handwritten draft of his own early revision. The text seemed have been only a “starting point,” but the Spirit of revelation was always an additional source of information. In the case of the Bible translation, the manuscript source was the King James Version. This suggested certain ideas, but the Spirit apparently suggested many enlargements, backgrounds, alternate readings, prophetic commentaries, clarifications, corrections of the original, and additional concepts not found on the page. Thus, the term “translation,” when referring to Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible, differs somewhat

from that normally used when one thinks of translating languages. To a prophet, a revelation is a more vital and dependable source than a written text. This progressive, open-ended process that was used in translating the Bible may give us a more instructive clue in understanding Joseph Smith's "translation" of the Egyptian papyrus from whence came the Book of Abraham. It may not have been a literal translation at all, and the Book of Abraham may go far beyond what was actually written on the papyrus.

Non-LDS people often mistakenly think that the JST is the LDS version of the Bible. The King James Version is and always has been our version of the Bible. The existence of the JST does not imply that we believe the Bible to be incorrect. We do believe, however, that what he wrote was true and was what the Church needs in these latter days. We believe further that the JST is true in all of its doctrinal particulars. We consult the JST as a supplement to our canonical scriptures. Believing what is written in the JST does not nullify our belief in the KJV Old or New Testaments their power in our lives.

Portions of the Genesis translation were published in the early church documents, such as *The Evening and Morning Star* (1832-33) in Independence, Missouri, in the *Lectures on Faith* in 1835, and in the *Times and Seasons* (1843) in Nauvoo. These excerpts were all taken from the early drafts (OT2), and thus the early periodicals do not reflect the complete revisions eventually made by the prophet. The JST was never published in full during Joseph's lifetime.

The completed manuscripts and the Bible were kept hidden in Joseph's home in Nauvoo. After the death of Joseph, Brigham Young sent Willard Richards to Emma to try and obtain these materials. Emma refused to part with them, and the Mormons went west without them.

A partial copy (less than half) of the original manuscripts OT3 and NT2 was made privately by Dr. John M. Bernhisel in Nauvoo in the spring of 1845. This "Bernhisel Manuscript" was brought to Salt Lake City in 1848 and is now in the archives of the Church Historical Department. Its value stems from its early date, but unfortunately it consists only of excerpts of the original manuscripts, and it was not used as a source for any of the materials in the Pearl of Great Price.

Elder Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Twelve and president of the British Mission, published for the British saints in 1851 certain excerpts of the JST in a pamphlet which he titled *The Pearl of Great Price*. At that time he did not have access to the original manuscripts. He therefore used the excerpts from *The Evening and Mormon Star* and the *Times and Seasons*. He also had access to a handwritten copy of the manuscript containing some portions of the translation that had not been printed in the church periodicals. By use of these sources, he was able to include some materials from the JST in his printing of the Pearl of Great Price.

All of the original manuscripts and Joseph's Bible came into the hands of the Reorganized Church in 1866 who published a completely revised Bible containing most of Joseph's revisions in 1867 under the title, "Holy Scriptures." The manuscripts used to complete this work were OT3 and NT2 with a small amount of material taken from OT2. Thus, this RLDS publication was taken from manuscripts that contained the prophet's final and most complete revisions. In fact this publication represented a better and more complete text than did the corresponding material in the Pearl of Great Price that had been published sixteen years earlier in 1851.

The published revision was for many years called the "Inspired Version," but is now more properly called the Joseph Smith Translation (abbreviated JST). In the past it has been known by several names including the "New Translation," the "Inspired Revision," or the "Inspired Translation."

Was the JST ever really completed? In a letter written by Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams to the brethren in Zion and dated July 2, 1833, the Prophet said, "We this day finished the translating of the Scriptures, for which we returned gratitude to our Heavenly Father." To this Sidney added, "Having finished the translation of the Bible, a few hours since, and needing some recreation, we know of one way we can spend our time more to divine acceptance than in endeavoring to build up His Zion" (*HC*, 1:368-69). It is likely the word "finished" meant they had made the changes appropriate at that time. Certainly Joseph Smith did not consider 1833 the end of needed changes in the biblical text. We know that Joseph still "worked diligently on it [the JST] during the closing years of his life," and it is clear, at least to Robert J. Matthews, that "the work was not perfected" by that time ("Joseph Smith's Efforts to Publish His Bible Translation," 64). Further, "before his death" Joseph had spoken with Brigham Young "about going through the translation of the scriptures again and perfecting it upon points of doctrine which the Lord had restrained him from giving in plainness and fulness at the time of which we write," which was February 2, 1833 (*Cannon, Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 148).

After its publication, copies were sent west to all of the Utah Church's General Authorities. It was variously received. Orson Pratt was in ecstasy and allegedly stayed up nights reading it. He even preached conference sermons from it. Brigham Young, on the other hand, felt that little good could come from the "Josephites" as he called those who did not come west (the Mormons in Utah were the "Brighamites"), and he called upon all members of the Utah Church, who had copies, to burn them. Brigham further counseled Orson Pratt never to quote from it again. Thus, in the days of Brigham Young it was an anathema to even own a copy of Joseph's Bible.

Orson Pratt outlived Brigham Young, who died in 1877, and in 1878 the new church President, John Taylor, asked Orson Pratt to ready a new edition of the Pearl of Great Price. Orson included, in this new edition, Genesis 1 verse 1 through chapter 6 verse 13 quoted verbatim from the Reorganites' publication, and these writings were

entitled, “Selections from the Book of Moses.” This title clearly implies that Moses wrote more than is contained therein. Also included in this 1878 edition of the Pearl of Great Price were the revised Matthew 23 verse 39 through Matthew 24 which we now refer to as the “JS-M.”

Since the time of Brigham Young, Joseph’s inspired revision has gradually increased in favor with the Church. Our present new edition of the Bible published in 1979 contains about 690 of the 3,410 corrected verses in the footnotes and in the appendix. We now refer to these revised materials as the “JST,” or the Joseph Smith Translation. That part of the JST now regarded as canonized scripture includes Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 6:13, Matthew 23:39 through Matthew 24, and those 690 verses contained in our 1979 edition of the Bible.

We believe that the JST is inspired, but we do not believe that it restores the original texts of the biblical books.

Some have suggested that Joseph was simply “Mormonizing” the Bible in his work with the JST. In other words, some have suggested that he was simply making his way through the Bible and changing verses so as to make them agree with Mormon doctrine. Certainly the work with the Bible was not begun in an intellectual vacuum. The Prophet had gained a significant amount of knowledge and doctrinal insight from his experiences with the Book of Mormon. In addition, there can be no doubt but that Joseph had learned by personal revelation many things prior to his commencing the revision of the Bible in June 1830, the details of which he may never have disclosed to the saints. But it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that as Joseph prayerfully studied the Bible between June 1830 and July 1833, he received new specific revelation from the Lord regarding the passages therein. In short, “through the experience of translating the Bible Joseph Smith was to come into possession of knowledge he did not previously have. . . . The labor was to be its own reward and would result in the spiritual education of the Prophet” (Matthews, *A Plainer Translation*, 53).

There is an important and intimate relationship between Joseph’s Bible revision and the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants. Robert J. Matthews explained: “Many of the revelations that compose the Doctrine and Covenants have a direct relationship to the translation of the Bible which the Prophet Joseph was making at the time the revelations were received” (*Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible*, 255). There are two types of relationships between the JST and the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants: First, some of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants are actually instructions given by the Lord to Joseph regarding Joseph’s work on the revision. The second type of relationship involves the fact that some of the doctrinal revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants were given to Joseph while he was engaged in the “translation” process and were doubtless inspired by the materials he was revising. Examples of these two types or categories include the following (again, quoting from Robert J. Matthews):

In the first category, examples include:

1. the appointment of scribes (D&C 25:6, D&C 35:20, and D&C 47:1)
2. to cease translating while moving from New York to Ohio (D&C 37:1)
3. to begin the translation of the New Testament (D&C 45:60-61)
4. to hasten to complete the translation (D&C 93:53)
5. not to translate the Apocrypha (D&C 91:1-6)
6. to establish a house for printing the translation (D&C 41:7, D&C 94:10, D&C 104:58, and D&C 124:89)
7. other related instructions (D&C 26:1, D&C 42:56-61, and D&C 90:13)

In the second category are revelations on doctrinal subjects that grew out of, or came as a result of, the translation but are more or less self-contained and can be understood quite well apart from their historical context. In other words, it is not essential for one to know that these revelations were given during the translation in order to understand their basic message. In this category we find such examples as:

1. The vision of the degrees of glory, section 76, was received by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on February 16, 1832 as a result of prayerful pondering of John 5:29.

2. Section 77 is a question and answer session with the Lord, wherein Joseph learned valuable insights as he was revising the book of Revelation.

3. Section 91 (as already mentioned) is a set of instructions regarding the collection of noncanonical records known today as the Old Testament Apocrypha.

4. Section 132 is a revelation on eternal (including plural) marriage. Though it does not seem to have been recorded finally in its present form until July of 1843, there is evidence to suggest that it was received as early as 1831, at the time Joseph was translating the Old Testament.

5. Other sections with strong ties to biblical passages include section 7 (John 21:20-25); section 29 (early chapters of Genesis); section 46 on gifts of the Spirit (any relationship to 1 Corinthians 12?); section 74 (1 Corinthians 7:14); section 84 which has a number of themes (oath and covenant of the priesthood, the rest of God, etc) similar to themes found in the book of Hebrews; section 86 parable of wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43); sections 88 and 93 both of which have language and concepts found in the book of John; sections 102 and 107, and section 113 (book of Isaiah).

6. There is perhaps an indirect relationship between the book of Enoch material (Moses 6-7)—the JST of Genesis (November - December of 1830)—and the revelations in early 1831 which deal with the establishment of Zion. The Lord identified himself to Joseph Smith in a revelation given January 2, 1831 in an interesting manner: “I am the same which have taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom” (D&C 38:4). In February of 1831 the Lord revealed the “Law of the Church” (D&C 42), in which particular details of the law of consecration and stewardship—the economic pattern by

which the saints were able to be “of one heart and one mind,” and by which there would be “no poor among them” (Moses 7:18)—were made known.

7. The significant doctrinal statement concerning the age of accountability of children (D&C 68:25-26) was given by revelation in November of 1831. This, however, was not the first time in our dispensation where such information was made known. While translating Genesis 17 (sometime between February and April 1831), Joseph Smith recorded the following regarding the Abrahamic covenant and the token of circumcision: “And I will establish a covenant of circumcision with thee, and it shall be my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations; that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old” (JST, Genesis 17:11).

Thus we see that the concept of an age of accountability of children was known by the prophet Joseph through his work of Bible translation some six to nine months before section 68 was received.

The Prophet was actively engaged in making the translation of the Bible from June 1830 until July 1833. Examination of the chronological table in the forepart of the Doctrine and Covenants will quickly show that most (over 50%) of the doctrinal revelations were received during this period. I believe this is not a coincidence but rather a consequence. It was Joseph Smith’s study and translation of the Bible that set the stage for the reception of many revelations on the doctrines of the gospel. There is an inseparable connection between the new translation of the Bible and many of the revelations that constitute the book of Doctrine and Covenants” (*Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible*, 255-56).

There is, in this relationship between Joseph’s study of the Bible and the revelations he received, an important living lesson for each of us regarding the way that each of us might receive personal revelation. As we study the scriptures and inquire of the Lord as to the meaning of them, surely personal revelation to each of us will come. In this way, the doctrines of the kingdom will “distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45). The JST is a bold demonstration of the fact that revelation comes through a careful study of the scriptures.

Those Confusing Book of Mormon Plates

“There’s nothing difficult about that question,” I said to myself as I raised my hand. The teacher in our Sunday School class had just asked, “As Joseph Smith bent down to retrieve the Book of Mormon plates from their hiding place near the top of the hill Cumorah on that night in September 1827, specifically what plates did he hold in his hands?” I answered, “Mormon’s abridgement of the Book of Mormon plates.”

Someone near me tried to come to my rescue, “No, I think it was the large plates and the small plates.”

“Not exactly,” said the teacher as she tried to let us both down easy. “I think most of us in the Church find the story of the plates to be confusing.”

And so we do. Test yourself briefly against the following questions: What specifically did Martin Harris lose? What part of our present-day Book of Mormon was translated first? Which part was translated last? Did the prophet Mormon abridge the entire Book of Mormon? What parts did he not abridge? Was Mormon the only prophet who abridged Book of Mormon materials? Who wrote the title page, and where did Joseph Smith find it? How much of the entire record was sealed, and what was contained on the sealed portion?

The Large Plates of Nephi and the Small Plates of Nephi

Actually the story of the plates is well worth reviewing and not really all that complicated. Let us begin.

Shortly after the arrival in the Western Hemisphere of Lehi and his extended family and about ten years after they had left Jerusalem, Lehi’s son Nephi was commanded to make a set of metal plates and engrave onto them an account of their activities from the time they left Jerusalem (1 Nephi 19:1-2). This set of plates was known at the time as the plates of Nephi. The first segment of this record was actually authored by father Lehi himself (doubtless taken from a non-metal journal kept by Lehi) and subsequently has been referred to as the book of Lehi. The book of Lehi was engraved onto the plates of Nephi by Nephi himself.

Almost twenty years later, the Lord commanded Nephi to start a second record or set of plates covering the same period of time—beginning with the departure of Lehi’s family from Jerusalem. The history contained in this second record was to have more of a spiritual emphasis than Nephi’s first record. This second record also was referred to as the plates of Nephi. Keep in mind that this set of plates was made after the death of Lehi, after Nephi had separated from his brothers Laman and Lemuel, and after Nephi had left the “land of their first inheritance” and moved inland to the land of Nephi.

In order to differentiate between the initial secular record of Nephi and this second more spiritual record, the former came to be called the “larger plates” of Nephi

(Jacob 3:13) or simply the “large plates of Nephi,” and the latter, the “small plates” of Nephi (Jacob 1:1). “Large” and “small” refer to the number of plates in the record and not to the plates’ dimensions. As the Book of Mormon story unfolded, the large plates of Nephi eventually became an extensive, indeed a “large” set or collection of plates. Brigham Young described this collection as being a library of plates—“many wagon loads” (*JD*, 19:38). The small plates remained just that, a “small” single set of plates.

As we read the book of First Nephi, we tend to regard it as a daily journal, but we should keep in mind that the writings by Nephi on the small plates of Nephi were begun in retrospect, some thirty years after the events actually happened.

Both the small plates of Nephi and the large plates of Nephi were passed along after Nephi’s death. The small plates were passed from prophet to prophet, and important spiritual happenings were entered. The large plates were passed down from king to king, and an ongoing secular history was kept.

In the year 210 B.C. there occurred a major migration of Nephites from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla. This migration was led by the Nephite king Mosiah. Presumably Mosiah took with him the large plates of Nephi. He was the secular king of the Nephites before this migration took place and was thus entitled to have the large plates of Nephi in his possession. The prophet Amaleki went along on this migration and had with him the small plates of Nephi.

In the year 130 B.C. Amaleki made his final entry onto the small plates, and they were subsequently retired because they were “full” (*Omni* 1:30). In that same year, Amaleki delivered the small plates of Nephi to King Benjamin, Mosiah’s son and successor to the throne. Benjamin already possessed the large plates of Nephi, having received them from his father Mosiah. Benjamin thus came to possess both the large and small plates of Nephi. The two records remained together throughout the rest of the Book of Mormon story. No further entries could be made onto the small plates of Nephi, but the record keeping continued on the other, ever-expanding collection of plates—the large plates of Nephi. After 130 BC the record on the large plates of Nephi served a dual purpose, containing items of both secular and spiritual significance.

Benjamin passed both sets of plates on to his son, also named Mosiah. They were next placed under the care of Alma the younger, the high priest of the people. He was also the first chief judge of the Nephites. Subsequently they remained in the hands of the Nephite spiritual leader—usually the high priest or prophet. Each keeper of the plates in turn made his own entry onto the large plates of Nephi.

Eventually all of the plates, including the collection referred to as the large plates of Nephi and the small plates of Nephi, came into the hands of the twenty-four year old prophet Mormon in AD 335. Initially, Mormon was instructed to write the record of his own people onto the large plates of Nephi (*Mormon* 1:2-4). Later, probably about AD 380, Mormon took the entire collection of the large plates of Nephi and wrote an abridgement of that record beginning with the book of Lehi, the initial “book” on the large

plates and ending with an abridgment of his own writings (Mormon 1-5). He recorded his abridgement onto a separate set of plates which he had made with his own hands (3 Nephi 5:11). We refer to this latter set as the plates of Mormon.

It is clear that some of the materials which Mormon included on the plates of Mormon were quoted directly from the large plates of Nephi rather than being abridged. Some of these include the Isaiah materials taken from the plates of brass, King Benjamin's speech (Mosiah 2-5), the epistles of Helaman, Pahoran, and Moroni (Alma 56-58, 60-61), and the account of Christ's visit to the Nephites in Bountiful (3 Nephi 11-28).

As mentioned, Mormon's account of his own history comprises Mormon chapters 1 through 5. It seems clear that Mormon originally wrote this account of his own history onto the large plates of Nephi and then later abridged that record and wrote a shorter version onto the plates of Mormon (see Mormon 1:4; 2:18). Mormon 6 and 7 which describe the fateful battle at Cumorah, were written by Mormon directly onto the plates of Mormon after the large plates of Nephi were buried (Mormon 6:6), and are therefore an unabridged account.

Mormon also wrote an editorial comment we have come to call the Words of Mormon. In this comment, he tells of finding, among the collection of plates in his possession, the small plates of Nephi. He also tells of being inspired to keep these small plates together with his abridgement, the plates of Mormon. His editorial comments, the Words of Mormon, were apparently originally entered onto the end of the small plates of Nephi (which were obviously not entirely "full," after all).

Mormon delivered these two sets of plates, the plates of Mormon and the small plates of Nephi, to his son Moroni. Moroni engraved onto the plates of Mormon some of his own writings, Mormon 8-9. He then entered onto them the book of Ether, which is Moroni's abridgement of the twenty-four gold plates found in the land Desolation by Nephites about 120 B.C. which told the story of the great Jaredite nation. Moroni probably re-translated the twenty-four Jaredite plates, though it is possible that he might have simply abridged king Mosiah's translation of those same plates. Moroni concluded this set of plates we call the plates of Mormon with more of his own writings, the book of Moroni. Finally he engraved onto the last leaf of the plates of Mormon the words which have become the title page for the Book of Mormon.

The Set of Plates Delivered by Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith

On September 22, 1827, Moroni delivered to Joseph Smith a single set of plates which we have come to refer to as the "Book of Mormon plates." Let us analyze exactly what those plates included. Simply stated they included the plates of Mormon and the unabridged small plates of Nephi. Presumably the small plates of Nephi did not exist as a separately bound set, rather they were appended to and bound at the back of the plates of Mormon. Apparently the individual plates of the set of plates we call the small

plates of Nephi were identical in size to the individual plates of the set we call the plates of Mormon.

The plates of Mormon, in summary, contained:

1. Mormon's abridgment of the large plates of Nephi (The book of Lehi through 3 Nephi);
2. the writings of the prophet Mormon, part of which is apparently an abridgment of his more extensive writings taken from the large plates of Nephi (Mormon 1-5) and part of which is his unabridged writings (Mormon 6-7);
3. Moroni's abridgment of the record of the Jaredites (book of Ether);
4. the writings of Moroni (Mormon 8-9 and the book of Moroni);
5. the title page of the Book of Mormon, written by Moroni directly onto the plates of Mormon; and
6. a sealed portion that was not translated by Joseph Smith.

As Moroni abridged the record of the Jaredites, he wrote in some detail the visions and teachings of the brother of Jared. Moroni said of the content of this material: "There never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared. . . . And he commanded me that I should seal them up" (Ether 4:4-5). It is Moroni's account of these visions and teachings that comprise the sealed portion of the plates of Mormon. We do not know how large a portion of the plates was sealed. Orson Pratt stated that two-thirds of the plates were sealed. This figure has been widely accepted because of the popularity of Elder Pratt's writings (*JD*, 3:347). David Whitmer, one of the three special witnesses who actually saw the plates is reported to have said that "about the half of the book was sealed" (P. Wilhelm Poulsen, *Deseret Evening News* [16 August 1878] 11:2). On another occasion Whitmer indicated, "one-third appeared to be loose," and he said the sealed portion appeared "as solid to my view as wood." (Cook, Lyndon W., ed. *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, [Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991], 20-21, 75). Elder George Q. Cannon wrote that one-third of the plates were sealed ("The Latter-day Prophet: History of Joseph Smith," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1900). Joseph Smith simply said, "The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed" (*HC*, 4:537). Speculations, then, have ranged from one-third to two-thirds. Whatever the portion, Moroni's sealed writings were extensive and supremely important. Won't it be exciting to one day be able to read this material? We should pray that the Lord will one day favor us with that opportunity!

The Physical Characteristics of the Plates

Although no single comprehensive description of the Book of Mormon plates has been preserved, the prophet Joseph Smith and several people closely associated with him made various statements that include partial descriptions of the plates. When we

consider all the sources together, quite a detailed picture emerges of the physical characteristics of the plates. We will summarize that picture here.

The individual pages had “the appearance of gold” (Joseph Smith, Eight Witnesses). David Whitmer described them as “golden plates.” William Smith described them as “a mixture of gold and copper.”

The individual plates were described as being “of the thickness of plates of tin” (Martin Harris); “thin leaves of gold” (Martin Harris); “about as thick as parchment” (David Whitmer); “not quite as thick as common tin” (Orson Pratt); and “They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book” (Emma Smith). It should be noted that Orson Pratt never saw the plates, but owing to his intimacy with the Prophet and the witnesses, his word has great weight.

The dimensions of a single plate was described as being six inches wide and eight inches long by Joseph Smith, and seven inches wide and eight inches long by Martin Harris, David Whitmer, and Orson Pratt.

The thickness of the volume was described as being six inches by Orson Pratt and Joseph Smith and four inches by Martin Harris.

William Smith, a brother of the Prophet Joseph, in an interview with J. W. Peterson, later recalled an experience with the plates that occurred under wholly non-visionary circumstances: “I handled them and hefted them while [they were] wrapped in a tow frock and judged them to have weighed about sixty pounds. I could tell they were plates of some kind, and that they were fastened together by rings running through the back” (Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 24). Martin Harris, not yet invited to be one of the Three Witnesses, once lifted the box in which he had been told that the plates were concealed, to see what he could determine. He knew from the weight of the box that it had to contain something as dense and heavy as either gold or lead, he later recalled, “and I knew that Joseph had not credit enough to buy so much lead” (Cited in *Ibid.*, 107-08).

David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Orson Pratt all described the binding of the set of plates to consist of three rings. David Whitmer added that the rings were not round but shaped like a capital “D” with the straight edge of the D passing through the plates. Martin Harris said that the rings were made of silver.

According to Joseph Smith the characters on the plates were read from right to left.

Other pertinent statements that bear upon the physical characteristics of the plates include the following: “[The plates] were filled with . . . Egyptian characters. . . . The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction and much skill in the art of engraving” (Joseph Smith, Orson Pratt). “There were fine engravings on both sides” (John Whitmer). “We also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance

of ancient work, and of curious workmanship” (Eight Witnesses). “The characters . . . were cut into the plates with some sharp instrument” (William Smith). “Upon each side of the leaves of these plates there were fine engravings, which were stained with a black, hard stain, so as to make the letters more legible and easier to be read” (Orson Pratt).

Of what material were the Book of Mormon plates composed? Were they pure gold, or were they made from an alloy that looked like gold? A most helpful contributor to this question was Reed H. Putnam of Evanston, Wyoming, a blacksmith and metallurgist (“Were the Plates of Mormon of Tumbaga?” *Improvement Era*, September 1966, 788-89, 828-31). Working first from the general dimensions of the set of plates as reported by eyewitnesses, he calculated that a block of pure gold of that size would have weighed a little over 200 pounds. Most witnesses, however, put the weight of the set at about 60 pounds. The discrepancy can be partly accounted for by the fact that the leaves must have been handcrafted, presumably by hammering, and irregularities in flatness would have left air space between the plates. This led Putnam to surmise that the entire set of plates would have weighed probably less than 50 percent of the weight of a solid block of the metal.

Because the weight of a metal depends on its purity, we must also consider whether the plates were of pure gold. The Nephites were aware of purity distinctions and alloys. We know, for example, that the “brass” plates were of an alloy, quite surely bronze, a copper-tin mixture (see John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 283-84), and that the plates of Ether were specifically distinguished as being of “pure” gold (Mosiah 8:9). Furthermore, Nephi taught his associate “to work in all manner of” metals and “precious ores” (2 Nephi 5:15). Yet nowhere does the text say that the Nephite plates were of pure gold.

Joseph Smith’s brother William specifically said that the material of the plates was “a mixture of gold and copper” (William Smith interview, *The Saints’ Herald*, 4 October 1884, 644). Someone must have provided an objective basis for that statement, for the natural assumption would have been that the plates were pure gold. The cautious statements by other witnesses, including Joseph Smith himself, who spoke of the plates as having “the appearance of gold,” suggest that the metal may have been an alloy (Joseph Smith, Jr., “Church History,” *Times and Seasons*, 1 March 1842).

Brother Putnam observed that the only two colored metals from antiquity were gold and copper. An alloy of those two elements was called “tumbaga” by the Spaniards and was in common use in ancient tropical America for manufacturing precious objects. Putnam put forward the reasonable hypothesis that metal plates made in Mormon’s day were of that material. The earliest Mesoamerican archaeological specimen of tumbaga, made from a hammered metal sheet, dates to the same century, the fifth century AD, when Moroni hid up the plates he had in his

possession (David M. Pendergast, “Tumbaga Object from the Early Classic Period,” *Science* 168, 3 April 1970, 117). If Mormon’s Book of Mormon plates were made of tumbaga, their weight would have been much less than had they been made of pure gold. Putnam made that point in mathematical detail and concluded that the total weight of the plates in Joseph Smith’s charge would have been near the 60-pound figure reported by several witnesses.

It is of interest that tumbaga was commonly gilded by applying citric acid to the surface. The resulting chemical reaction eliminated copper atoms from the outer .0006 inch of the surface, leaving a microscopic layer of 23-carat gold that made the object look like it was wholly gold. Plates having “the appearance of gold,” then, are exactly what we would expect if they were made of tumbaga.

The Sequence of Translation of the Book of Mormon

When Joseph Smith and Martin Harris began translating in April 1828, they started at the beginning of the plates of Mormon—beginning with the book of Lehi. By June 1828 they had written 116 pages of manuscript and had translated from the beginning of the record to the reign of King Benjamin. Martin Harris borrowed and lost the manuscript, and consequently the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken away from Joseph. They were returned to Joseph on September 22, 1828.

In April 1829 Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery recommenced the translation starting with the remainder of the plates of Mormon. They began where Joseph and Martin Harris had left off in June 1828—at the beginning of the book of Mosiah. By June 1829 they had completed the translation of the plates of Mormon. Joseph then petitioned the Lord as to what he should translate next. Should he re-translate the first part of the plates of Mormon, or should he translate instead the small plates of Nephi which covered the same time period? The Lord’s answer was given in D&C 10—he should replace the lost portion with a translation of the small plates of Nephi.

Joseph found Mormon’s editorial comment, the Words of Mormon, at the end of the small plates of Nephi. He inserted it between the book of Omni and the book of Mosiah. Thus it is located between that part of the book translated from the small plates of Nephi and the portion translated from the plates of Mormon. Hence, the first part of our present Book of Mormon to be translated was the book of Mosiah, and the last part translated was the book of Omni and the Words of Mormon.

When Joseph completed the translation of the Book of Mormon, he returned all the plates to Moroni (JS-H 1:60).

Joseph Smith's Personal Practice of Plural Marriage

This discussion of Joseph's personal practice of plural marriage will not be a look at this fascinating chapter of Church history from Michael Preece's perspective. I simply don't have the background and have not paid the price to qualify for having my own perspective. Dr. Brian Hales has, and I have used his materials exclusively. I have stayed true to those materials and his conclusions. We owe Dr. Hales a great debt for his contribution to this topic. He and those who helped him have literally uncovered every known available document regarding Joseph's own practice of polygamy between 1835 and 1843. It is apparent that no one has access to any credible sources he has not reviewed. He has published an exhaustive, three-volume work on the topic which includes some 1200 pages. He also has published in 2015 a 200 page summary of the topic.

Dr Hales is deeply and firmly committed to the truth of the Church and the gospel. Here are his own words. Speaking of himself and his wife Laura, he said, "Our examination of the historical record has reinforced our convictions that Joseph was a virtuous man and a true prophet of the living God."

My goal is to try to bring to all of us students of the history of the Church a "comfortable closure" on the topic. By "comfortable closure" I mean that I would like all of you students to be privy to a reasonably comprehensive account of Joseph's practice of polygamy with nothing hidden. I would like each of you to be more accurately and more thoroughly informed than any of the anti-Mormon critics and writers who write about the topic in newspapers, magazines, or on the internet. I would also like to accomplish this in the setting where all of us can sincerely acknowledge Joseph Smith as a true prophet of God. And I also think it's important that we also acknowledge that Joseph was a real human being with some of the frailties "enjoyed" by all the rest of us.

I will make the point later on that the Lord revealed the principle of plural marriage repeatedly to Joseph, but the Lord did not micromanage the implementation of that plural marriage. He left that to Joseph, and Joseph's humanness resulted in some awkward, and even contentious, situations during those eight years. I have come to wonder whether there might well be a few things that Joseph might have wanted to rethink and redo. Before we conclude our discussion we'll review a bit of speculation by Dr. Hales on that very topic.

In this discussion, I'm going to speak very plainly and try to tell it just like it was.

My plan for this discussion is to provide you with answers to what I feel are fourteen important questions about Joseph's practice of polygamy. I even hope they might turn out to be the fourteen *most* vital questions. And, I'd like to provide the answers to these in a form you can have on the tip of your tongue for the rest of your life.

I've prepared a one-page summary of Joseph's practice of plural marriage which you may find in another supplemental article titled "Summary of Joseph Smith's Plural Sealings." Please note that some of the material in this summary is not thoroughly understood and even today remains unclear. The reason is that Brian Hales sometimes had to suffer through a fog of indirect historical information and sometimes even conflicting information. The reason for this was a general paucity of primary historical documents and a dependence on secondary documents. A primary historical document is one written by the individual involved. The secondary documents are written by someone else about the individual involved. And sometimes these secondary documents were written years after the described incidents.

Definition of Terms

First let us briefly define a few terms. The word "polygamy" actually means a man or woman having more than one spouse. Two forms of polygamy exist. "Polygyny" is one man with more than one wife. In common usage today, as you know, we mostly refer to polygyny as "polygamy" or "plural marriage." "Polyandry" is one woman having more than one husband.

We will learn and discuss the fact that Joseph Smith taught that true polygyny—that is polygyny that includes a sexual relationship between husband and wife—has been authorized by God in certain instances during the history of our earth. In contrast, Joseph taught that "true" or sexual polyandry inevitably constitutes the sin of adultery (D&C 132:63) and has never been divinely authorized.

Let us begin with the first question. I'm going to start you off fast. We will begin with one of the most colorful and even controversial events in the entire saga.

1. What is the real story of the Fanny Alger episode—Joseph's first plural wife?

Joseph Smith's first plural marriage was to a young woman named Fanny Alger. This took place in Kirtland, probably in 1835, a full six or seven years prior to Joseph's taking his second plural wife in Nauvoo. Understanding the details of this polygamous union is difficult because those directly involved—Joseph, Emma, and Fanny Alger—left no written account on the matter. We therefore have no primary historical documents. Twenty historical documents have been located that refer to the incident, but many of them are historically problematic, second-hand, and recorded late. The earliest was written at least two years after the relationship ended, with sixteen of the reports penned at least three decades afterward.

Though I will later mention an earlier revelatory experience, apparently, the first time Joseph was *directly* commanded to marry an additional wife was in July of 1834. Again, this was in Kirtland, Ohio. The commandment for Joseph to begin the practice of polygamy was delivered by an angel. This was the first visit of the angel. This same

angel would eventually come on two additional occasions. You will see those three visits listed on your handout in temporal sequence. On this first visit the angel had no sword and did not threaten Joseph, but Joseph was told to immediately enter into a polygamous marriage. We will learn that on the third visit, the angel reportedly did carry a sword and did threaten him because of his inaction. More about that later.

Though there is uncertainty regarding the date, it is most likely that in 1835, Joseph approached his friend Levi Hancock, taught him of plural marriage, and instructed him to approach Fanny Alger's father to ask for his permission for Joseph to take her as a second wife. Levi apparently spoke to Fanny's father, her mother, and to Fanny herself, and all agreed. Fanny was 18 or 19 at the time and was working as a housekeeper at the Smith home in Kirtland. Unfortunately, we have no details about the event but we do know that Levi Hancock married them using the words that Joseph provided for him. Levi did hold the Melchizedek priesthood, but this marriage likely occurred prior to the April 3, 1836, appearance of Elijah to Joseph in the Kirtland Temple wherein Elijah restored the sealing power. Hence, Joseph's marriage to Fanny should be understood to end at death. It was not a sealing for time and eternity.

Joseph did not inform Emma about his relationship with Fanny. At some point, either weeks or months after the ceremony, one account reported that "one night she [Emma] missed Joseph and Fanny. She went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!" (William McLellin, letter to Joseph Smith III dated July 1872, Community of Christ archives). We don't know exactly what Emma saw, but she responded hysterically and could not be consoled. In desperation, Joseph summoned Oliver Cowdery in hopes that Oliver might help calm her. Apparently after speaking with Emma, Oliver was as angry as Emma and became convinced that Joseph had committed adultery. Some months later, Oliver would refer to the business with Fanny as a "dirty, nasty, filthy scrape," and he and some other Church leaders regarded the Joseph Smith–Fanny Alger affair to be illicit. Several others, like Benjamin R. Johnson, Levi Hancock, and Eliza R. Snow disagreed, later referring to the association as a legitimate plural marriage. The fact that Fanny's parents remained faithful to Joseph Smith and the Church throughout their lifetimes validates their confidence in its legitimacy.

As a consequence of the discovery, Emma immediately "turned Fanny out of the house." Fanny lived with friends in the area and later returned to live with her family. One account suggests that Fanny may have been pregnant during the episode, but there is no record of Fanny's giving birth to any children for several years after the incident. Thus, significant doubt is cast onto the story of her pregnancy. She later married Solomon Custer, from Indiana, and reportedly "became the mother of a large family." Fanny never actually disavowed the Church and never maligned Joseph in any way. She did, however, later in life, join a church called the Universalists. As

mentioned, Joseph would not marry again until the early 1840s in Nauvoo—some six or seven years later.

2. What prompted Joseph to inquire of the Lord regarding the practice of plural marriage?

Two specific events likely prompted Joseph to prayerfully inquire regarding a plurality of wives. The first occurred while Joseph was working on his inspired versions or his “translation” of the Old Testament in February and March of 1831. He came across the account of ancient patriarchs who practiced polygamy. The second was in a revelation received by Joseph later in 1831 revelation given to him as he and others sought to preach the gospel to the Native Americans living on the western borders of the United States. Let us consider further each of these.

Joseph’s work on the JST of the Old Testament. Joseph was working on Genesis in February and March of 1831 where he would have come across accounts of polygamous patriarchs like Abraham and Jacob. Nauvoo polygamist Joseph B. Noble recalled in 1883: “The Prophet Joseph told him that the doctrine of celestial marriage was revealed to him while he was engaged on the work of translation of the scriptures, but when the communication was first made the Lord stated that the time for the practice of that principle had not arrived (Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken O Ye People*, 232-33). Joseph first learned that plural marriage had at times been a divinely-sanctioned practice. Whether he also learned initially that it would someday be practiced in the Church is unclear.

The 1831 revelation. This is an interesting and little known episode. In June of 1831 Joseph started on his missionary journey to preach to the Native Americans on the western borders of the United States. On June 19, 1831, Joseph, W. W. Phelps, Martin Harris, Sidney Rigdon, and several others traveled to Jackson County, Missouri, arriving a few weeks later. While there, Joseph receive a revelation indicating that men should take wives from among the Lamanites.

In 1861, thirty years after the revelation was reportedly given, W. W. Phelps wrote a letter to Brigham Young clarifying the experience. Phelps wrote the “substance” of the revelation which included the statement, “For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites that their posterity may become white, delightsome, and just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.” Phelps then identified it as from “Joseph Smith Jun. given over the boundary, west of Jackson Co. Missouri, on Sunday morning, July 17, 1831.” He then ended his letter to President Young as follows: “About three years after this was given, I asked brother Joseph privately, how ‘we,’ that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives from the ‘natives’—as we were all married men? He replied instantly, ‘In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah, and Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah,

and Zilpah: by revelation—the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelation.” (H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary*, 374).

Despite the directive, no marriages to Native American women, monogamous or polygamous, occurred at that time or at any time prior to the Joseph's death in 1844.

Beginning in 1831, the Church began to be accused of practicing polygamy. This may have resulted from leaks and rumors, but also it did begin while the saints in Kirtland were attempting to practice the law of consecration and were trying to have “all things in common.” It began to be noised about by the press that were some frontier LDS groups that were sharing all things, including marital partners. In the April 1833 *Evening and Morning Star* the Church made it clear that no members of the Church were involved in the practice of plural marriage. These accusations never gained traction, likely because there was no evidence to support them.

3. Why did the Lord command Joseph to introduce the practice of polygamy to the Church?

The thoughtful student will quickly recognize that asking why the Lord commanded Joseph to practice plural marriage is not an entirely appropriate question. We do avow most assuredly that the Lord did command Joseph, but the Lord does not really owe us an explanation. It's presumptuous to inquire why he so commanded it. But the Lord is generally merciful and does not lead us blindly, so we do have some information on this question.

It's amusing to see that many well-meaning church leaders and members have tried to justify the practice. One good example is the idea that there were more women in the Church in Nauvoo and in Utah. Demographic studies do not support this conclusion and this reason was never mentioned by Joseph Smith as a reason for polygamy.

Doctrine and Covenants section 132 is the only first hand document written by Joseph Smith that addresses the topic of polygamy. From that document we may draw four reasons. As I mention these four, it is not necessary for you to have to choose one most likely. It seems probably that all of these four had a role in explaining why the practice of plural marriage was introduced to the saints.

1. Polygamy was part of the “restitution of all things” prophesied in Acts 3:19-21. That passage reads, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the *times of restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (emphasis added; see also D&C 132:40, 45).

2. To provide a customized trial for the saints at that time and place. By the time section 132 was written down in July 1843, Joseph already had multiple wives. In

section 132, the Lord's implies, in verse 51, that he revealed the principle to Joseph and expected Emma to adjust to the practice "to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice." In verse 60 of section 132, the Lord seems to be referring to Joseph's practice of polygamy. The Lord said, "Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph; for I will justify him; for he shall do the sacrifice which I require at his hands for his transgressions, saith the Lord your God."

3. To "multiply and replenish the earth" (D&C 132:63). Presumably for the benefit and future of the Church, the Lord needed a channel through which "noble and great" premortal spirits could be born into the Church for the good of the Church. Brigham Young explained, "This revelation [authorizing plural marriage], which God gave to Joseph, was for the express purpose of providing a channel for the organization of tabernacles, for those spirits to occupy who have been reserved to come forth in the kingdom of God, and that they might not be obliged to take tabernacles outside of the kingdom of God" (*JD* 3:265).

4. The fourth reason is certainly the most compelling and obvious. Although it's not overtly stated in the 132nd section, it is powerfully implied there. Have you ever wondered why—when Joseph inquired of the Lord about plural marriage—the Lord gave, instead, the revelation on eternal marriage? In verses 1 and 2, the Lord states clearly that he revealed section 132 to Joseph after Joseph had inquired about plural marriage being practiced in the Old Testament. Yet section 132 is not really about plural marriage. It is about eternal marriage. Why this relationship?

It is obvious. It is simple arithmetic. There is going to be a final judgment and many will be judged worthy to enter the celestial heaven. Unless there is numerical gender equality at the final judgment, either a plurality of wives or a plurality of husbands will be needed to alleviate the possibility of worthy men or women missing out on exaltation due to no fault of their own.

We know that the Lord has not provided for a majority of husbands. An excess of men in the celestial resurrection will not be a problem. Polyandry will not be needed in heaven. There is an observable greater receptiveness of women than men to the gospel message. Brigham Young taught: "The fact is, let the pure principles of the kingdom of God be taught to men and women, and far more of the latter than the former will receive and obey them" (*JD* 18:249).

We do not believe it is plurality of marriage itself that is necessary for exaltation. Rather, it is eternal marriage between a man and a woman. Plurality simply allows *all* worthy women to access it.

We all know of worthy and committed women that do not marry here on earth, but some of them would like to have been married and to have help "multiply and replenish the earth." If they are found worthy of a celestial resurrection and elect the highest third of that kingdom, they must be sealed to a man for eternity. During those times when the Lord has not approved earthly plural marriage, they must wait. It is

obvious, then, that working out the numbers will require that some polygamy will exist in the celestial kingdom. But it would seem it will not be practiced by all.

4. We know of instances in the Old Testament when the Lord has *allowed* plural marriage, particularly among the Lord's leaders and prophets. Do we know of anyone other than Joseph Smith who was actually *commanded* to enter into plural marriage? When and where was Joseph's commandment—actually commandments—received by Joseph?

First, we should emphasize that there has never been a doctrinal basis for tying the practice of plural marriage to exaltation. Nowhere, for example, in section 132 is there a commandment to practice polygamy in order to earn exaltation.

Aside from Joseph's being commanded, there has only been one time when we know the Lord commanded the practice. This was when Abraham took Hagar to wife at Sarah's bidding (Genesis 16:1-3). The Doctrine and Covenants adds the clarification of its being done by God's command: "God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife" (D&C 132:34).

A valid question for discussion is whether or not the members of the Church were "commanded" to practice polygamy between the 1840s and 1890. One might make the case that they were commanded, particularly this was the case for a few of the Church's leaders when polygamy was still not widely known by the Church. Joseph, in Nauvoo, met with a few of the leaders, told them of the principle, and strongly encouraged them to begin practicing it. It is also apparent that many among the Church membership regarded the counsel to practice polygamy as a commandment. If they had not, it seems that only a few would have practiced it. As mentioned previously, it seems likely that the Lord saw polygamy as a way the saints could expand the membership of the Church. And, indeed, the Church membership expanded faster between the 1840s and 1890 than monogamy would have allowed.

Joseph told the story to several among the Church leadership of three visits by an angel commanding him—on the third visit with a drawn sword—to practice polygamy. It should be noted that there are other scriptural accounts of angels with drawn swords communicating God's will to reluctant mortals. For example, in Numbers 22:23, 31, the prophet Balaam was so visited. On another occasion, David was afraid of an angel with a drawn sword (1 Chronicles 21:30). See also Isaiah 37:36 and Acts 12:21-23.

The first angelic command was made to Joseph in 1834. This prompted Joseph's marriage to Fanny Alger, but that relationship, as we've already seen, turned into a bit of a debacle. Sometime during the next seven years the angel appeared again, but Joseph apparently demurred. He did get started, but seemed reluctant. Look at wives 2 through 5 on your handout. Apparently, the third visit occurred in February 1842, and this time the angel was obviously not satisfied and was impatient.

He threatened Joseph with a drawn sword. He would be removed from office unless he complied. Your handout illustrates what happened after that.

5. Why has the practice of polygamy come and gone among the people in the Lord's kingdom since the family of man began to be placed on the earth?

While God is an unchanging God, it is notable that the needs of his earthly Church and his children do change. This seems to be the basis of why the Lord has regulated the marital practices of his followers differently at different times. At times, plural marriage is not permitted as is the case in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 3:5), though the possibility of the Lord's commanding the practice under particular circumstances is acknowledged there (Jacob 2:30). Polygamy was also not permitted in the early Christian Church in New Testament time.

At other times the practice has been permitted but the "command" to practice it has not been binding on each follower of the prophets. This was the case in the Old Testament where, at times, polygamy was permitted but not required.

6. If polygamy is a divine principle, why was the initial period of polygamy characterized by so much intrigue, disappointment, disillusionment, and anger? There was much of social and legal opposition then that made the practice complicated and messy. One example is the account of Fanny Alger that we've already considered.

It is essential to know, and I mentioned this previously, that though the Lord commanded the practice, he did not micromanage its execution. Joseph did not receive detailed guidelines on how to introduce and live plural marriage. As a result, Joseph did not always weather the polygamy-related storms well in the 1840s nor is his legacy consistently weathering them well now, almost two hundred years after his death. Simply trusting that God commanded Joseph and the Church to practice polygamy seems to still be a test of faith for some saints today.

7. We hear of different types of plural marriage sealings done in the early Church. What were they? And which of these types did Joseph's sealings include?

There were three types of sealings:

1. Time-only sealings. These were more akin to traditional marriages that were for mortality only—differing, of course only in their polygamous nature. These were generally performed between men and widows who needed someone to take care of their material needs, and presumably these women were intended to remain the eternal spouses of their deceased legal husbands to whom they were eternally sealed. These time-only sealings may have included sexuality. If we exclude Fanny Alger, only two and possibly a third and fourth of Joseph's plural marriages were of the time-only type.

2. Time-and-eternity sealings. These were most common. These time-and-eternity sealings were of two variants. The first was to women who had not previously married. The second was to women who had previously been married but the legal marriage had been “done away.”

It is true that some of these women had not been legally divorced. One might naturally wonder why these women would not seek a legal divorce before their sealing to Joseph Smith for time and eternity. It is important to note that legal divorces in that day were very difficult and impractical to obtain. While justices of the peace could legally marry a couple, divorce required a circuit court or even the state legislature to grant a divorce. This was not generally done. Hence, practically speaking, it was left to the churches to decide who was divorced. It was apparently felt that a sealing for time and eternity done by the proper priesthood caused the secular legal marriage to be “done away” (see D&C 22:1-3).

In all of these cases there is nothing to indicate that Joseph Smith approached a male follower and asked for his wife except for one deliberate and colorful exception which I will mention in a few moments. Accusations of Joseph’s demanding and marrying a man’s wife, or sending men on missions, so he could soon marry their wives, have no historical basis. Apparently, however, there were three sealings to Joseph that engendered this rumor. Unfortunately the level of detail we would desire about these marriages is scant, making them easily misunderstood or misrepresented by those who are willing to fill in the documentary gaps with speculations.

3. Eternity-only sealings. These were marital ceremonies that bound a man and woman only the next life. During mortality they would not have been considered married, and sexual intimacy between them would have constituted adultery.

While a few “eternity only” marriages were performed during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, evidence indicates the practice of sealing a living male to a living female for “eternity only” was discontinued after Joseph’s death. After Joseph’s death, however, proxy sealings to Joseph and perhaps others did continue for a time.

These eternity-only sealings were of two types:

1. Those to women with non-LDS husbands. Since they could not be sealed to their husbands for eternity and receive exaltation. They desired to be sealed for eternity only. Hence, Joseph offered himself as their eternal husband for eternity only to make them eligible for exaltation.

2. Those to women with active LDS husbands. Apparently when plural marriage was first introduced to the Church, the married women were free to choose to whom they would be sealed for eternity, as if they had not been married. These sealings generate two questions that we unfortunately cannot completely answer. Why would the women choose Joseph over their worthy legal husbands? And, why did the prophet Joseph allow these sealings? Joseph himself would be the best resource for information regarding his decision to engage in this practice, but, unfortunately, there is

nothing from him explaining his decision to allow these sealings. There is evidence that some of the legal marriages were not happy ones, but we do not have information for all of the cases.

One note of importance. There is no historical evidence of Joseph's ever having been involved in a polyandrous relationship, though the opposite is claimed by some anti-Mormon authors.

8. Is it possible to construct a simple time-line for Joseph's plural marriages in Nauvoo? And what of these marriages? With how many did Joseph likely have conjugal relations?

The answer to these questions is included on the handout. It would seem that the second angelic visit occurred between 1836 and 1840 and it prompted Joseph to revisit the principle of plural marriage and begin to secretly discuss it with trusted friends in 1840 and 1841, largely with members of the Quorum of Twelve. At that time, he was sealed for time and eternity to Louisa Beaman in 1841. Joseph had imparted the sealing power to the man who married them, Joseph Noble.

Joseph then seems to have felt he had satisfied the angel messenger and he entered into a few eternity only marriages. These women were already civilly married, but they were unhappily married, and some of the husbands had left the Church. Perhaps Joseph felt he had satisfied the angel.

Then, apparently the angel messenger visited again in February, 1842, this time with a drawn sword. He threatened Joseph and demanded that he do more to practice real polygamy. Joseph then entered a period when, for the next 22 months, most of his plural marriages were for time and eternity. The final marriage was in November, 1843, some 8 or 9 months before Joseph's death. The messenger angel did not appear again.

9. What does the evidence indicate concerning Joseph's conjugal relations with his plural wives? Was there any evidence he was significantly motivated to take a plural wife by the promise of sexual relations with her? Just how interested was he in this aspect of the practice?

Joseph clearly taught that sexual relations were justified and expected in polygamous unions in order "to multiply and replenish the earth" (D&C 132:63). Of Joseph's thirty-five wives, it would appear that he either had sexual relations or was at least authorized to have sexual relations with 20. This number is actually 18, as I will explain in a moment.

Of special interest is that the list of Joseph's plural wives includes ten under the age of twenty at the time they were sealed to him. They included: Helen Mar Kimball who was 14. Nancy Winchester was 14 or possibly 15. Flora Ann Woodworth was 16. Three were 17, including Sarah Ann Whitney, Sarah Lawrence, and Lucy Walker. Four

were 19, including Fanny Alger, Emily Dow Partridge, Maria Lawrence, and Malissa Lott.

Of particular concern is Joseph's relationships with the two youngest on this list, Helen Mar Kimball and Nancy Winchester. Critics have, of course, usually assumed that since they were sealed to Joseph as plural wives, they were also having sexual relations with him.

The question is often raised as to whether or not Joseph, were he to have maintained a sexual relationship with a 14 or 15 year old, would be guilty of statutory rape. Statutory rape occurs when any adult, male or female, has sexual relations with a child who has not yet reached the age of consent or the age of "majority." During the nineteenth century, early English law set the age of consent at ten, and, indeed, in the 1800s most states had set the age at 10. This age was gradually raised over the years. A few states began by using twelve as the cutoff. The minimum age for consent in Illinois at that time was ten (Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995, 14). Available research shows that in Joseph Smith's day, marriages to fourteen year-old girls were legal, but rare. The Nauvoo City Council passed an ordinance specifying the minimum ages for marriage which recited Illinois State law verbatim: "All male persons over the age of seventeen years, and females over the age of fourteen years, may contract and be joined in marriage, provided, in all cases where either party is a minor, the consent of parents or guardians be first had" ("Nauvoo Records," "An Ordinance Concerning Marriages passed February 17, 1842," MS 16800, Church History Library).

Having said all that, Dr. Hales has confirmed that there is no evidence Joseph maintained any type of sexual relationship with his two youngest wives. During the polygamy years in the Church, there was a strong feeling that 14 and 15 year olds were simply too immature and physically small to be able to safely bear children, and such unions were consistently warned against.

Now, back to the question of sexual relations between Joseph and his other time-and-eternity or time-only wives. Frankly, it does not appear that conjugal relations were a common occurrence in the Prophet's life in Nauvoo. Opportunities for Joseph to spend intimate time with his plural wives would have been limited by many factors including his parenting responsibilities, his duties as church president, his obligations as mayor and chief judge of the Nauvoo Municipal Court, his role as Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion, the scrutiny of dissenters and unbelievers, and Emma's vigilant and mostly intolerant eyes.

That sexual relations were uncommon is evidenced by the observation that only two (and possibly three) pregnancies have been documented with any degree of reliability. It is obvious that the Prophet was virile, having fathered nine children with Emma despite their long periods of time apart and challenging schedules. Also, the

wives with whom sex was authorized were all younger than Joseph and smack in the middle of child bearing years.

One child was born to Sylvia Sessions in 1844. She lived out her life as Josephine Lyon in Bountiful, Utah. By the way, Gary and Suzanne are descendents of Sylvia Sessions. The second child was born to Olive Frost and did not live long or may have miscarried. The identity of a third child remains unknown, if in fact a third baby was born to one of Joseph's plural wives.

There is no evidence, of course, that Joseph had sexual relations with women to whom he was sealed for the next life only—that is, “eternity only” sealings. Though writers antagonistic to the Church claim otherwise, there is no evidence that Joseph ever committed adultery with women to whom he was not married or in situations that would have resulted in polyandry.

Evidence supports that he and Emma lived a largely monogamous lifestyle, especially during the last eight months of his life during which he entered into no new plural relationships.

10. Number 10 is not really a question. Rather it consists of three memorable and instructive stories of which you shouldn't miss being aware.

Heber C. Kimball's test. Heber C. Kimball was apparently the first man other than Joseph to marry a plural wife. However, prior to sanctioning a plural marriage for Heber, Joseph put him through a severe test of dedication that almost sounds overly severe and even mean spirited. Orson R. Whitney, Heber C. Kimball's grandson-biographer, described the ordeal:

Before he [Joseph Smith] would trust even Heber with the full secret of plural marriage, he put him to a test which few men would have been able to bear. It was no less than an ostensibly revealed requirement for him to surrender his wife, his beloved Vilate, and give her to Joseph in marriage. The astounding announcement well-nigh paralyzed him [Heber]. He could hardly believe he had heard correctly. Yet Joseph was solemnly in earnest. Heber's next impulse was to spurn the proposition and perhaps at that terrible moment a vague suspicion of doubt regarding of the Prophet's motive and the divinity of the revelation, shot like a poisoned arrow through his soul. His heart-string might be torn, his feelings crucified and sawn asunder, but so long as his faith in God and the Priesthood remained, heaven helping him he would try and do as he was told. Such, was his superhuman resolve.

Three days he fasted, wept, and prayed. Then, with a broken and a bleeding heart, but with a soul self-mastered for the sacrifice, he led his darling wife to the Prophet's house and presented her to Joseph. It was enough. The heavens accepted the sacrifice. The will for the deed was taken, and "accounted unto him for righteousness." Joseph wept at this proof of devotion, and embracing Heber, told his that was all that the Lord required. He had proved him. The Prophet joined the hands of the heroic and devoted pair, and then and there, by virtue of the sealing power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, Heber and Vilate Kimball were made husband and wife for all eternity.

Sarah Ann Whitney. Sarah Ann Whitney, the daughter of Newell K. Whitney, was sealed to Joseph on July 27, 1842. Sometime in early 1843, suspicions arose concerning their plural marriage. If the plural union between Joseph and Sarah Ann were exposed, it might have provoked persecution and legal prosecution of the Prophet. Divorcing Sarah Ann was a possibility, yet Joseph may have sought an alternate solution because he planned to take the Latter-day Saints to the West within a few years where he believed plural marriage could be openly practiced.

Presumably to assuage the perceived danger, the Prophet requested that a Church member Joseph C. Kingbury pretend to marry Sarah Ann Whitney. Kingsbury later related: "On the 29th of April 1843, I according to President Joseph Smith's council and others agreed to stand by Sarah Ann Whitney as supposing to be her husband and had a pretended marriage for the purpose of bringing about the purposes of God in the

last days.” Thereafter, Kingsbury served as a front or pretend husband, living in the same house with Sarah Ann but in a platonic manner without conjugal relations.

As an almost comical aside, on November 23, 1880, Joseph C. Kingsbury asked President John Taylor that an \$8,000 debt “be remitted in consideration of services he had rendered in Nauvoo, and after leaving there, to the Prophet Joseph, in keeping one of his wives, Sarah Whitney.” It is unknown whether President Taylor honored the claim.

Sylvia Sessions Lyons. In the past two decades, several authors have asserted that the plural marriage between Joseph Smith and Sylvia Sessions (again, Gary and Suzanne’s relative), who was legally married to Windsor Lyon, was sexually polyandrous. The apparent popularity of this interpretation justifies a little deeper dive into the historical record.

Sylvia’s daughter, Josephine, was most likely fathered by Joseph Smith. In 1915, Josephine signed a statement corroborating that conclusion. She said:

Just prior to my mother’s death in 1882 she called me to her bedside and told me that her days on earth were about numbered and before she passed away from mortality she desired to tell me something which she had kept as an entire secret from me and from others but which she now desired to communicate to me. She then told me that I was the daughter of the Prophet Joseph Smith, she having been sealed to the Prophet at the time that her husband Mr. Lyon was out of fellowship with the Church. She also told me that she was sealed to the Prophet about the same time that Zina D. Huntington and Eliza R. Snow were thus sealed. In conclusion mother told me not to make her statement to me too public, as it might cause trouble and arouse unpleasant curiosity. I have followed her advice, and I am relating the facts today practically the first time, responding to the request or desire of one of the assistant Church Historians.

Advocates of Joseph’s sexual polyandry suggest that Sylvia was sealed to Joseph in February 1842, when she was still living with her husband Windsor Lyons. There is a document that seems to indicate that date. Another version of the same document gives the date of 1843 for the sealing, a year later than the other document. A more clearly documentable timeline indicates that Windsor Lyons was excommunicated from the Church on November 2, 1842 for opposing Stake President William Marks in a business dealing. Several manuscripts indicate that Sylvia and Windsor separated in the equivalence of a Church divorce after that date, which ended any cohabitation between the two. Josephine was born in February 1844 indicating that the time of her conception was about May of 1843. Yet another document written by an Andrew Jenson and dated 1887 referred to Sylvia as “formerly the wife of Windsor Lyons.” When he left the Church she was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith” (Andrew Jenson Papers, MS,box 49, folder 16). After Joseph’s martyrdom, some time prior to February 1846, Sylvia reunited with Windsor Lyon who was on his way back into the Church.

11. Is it possible to summarize fairly Emma's experience with Joseph's Nauvoo polygamy?

Keep in mind that Joseph's first plural marriage in Nauvoo was on April 5, 1841, and his final sealing was on November 3, 1843. As mentioned, he entered into no new marriage relationships for about eight months prior to his death.

One factor that seems to have made Joseph's plural marriages particularly painful for Emma was that for a significant period of time after April 1841, Joseph kept his plural marriage relationships a secret even from Emma. Exactly when Emma did finally learn of Joseph's marriages is a difficult historical question and is not known for certain. It may have been as late as February 1843. It is also possible that she learned about the eternity only marriages prior to learning about the time and eternity ones. The only solid dates for when Emma undeniably knew of plural marriage are March and May of 1843. During those months she facilitated Joseph's marriages to four plural brides: Eliza and Emily Partridge and Sarah and Maria Lawrence by being present, and giving her consent thereto. It is certainly possible that this decision by Joseph to delay informing Emma was a mistake.

We are again reminded of the fact that the Lord revealed the principle to Joseph, but the Lord did not micromanage the carrying out of the principle. Why did Joseph wait so long to tell Emma? It is possible—and it even seems likely—that he sensed how Emma might react, and he wanted to protect her from having to deal with the knowledge.

This sequence, including Joseph's secret marriages and Emma's delayed learning of them, created a particularly painful situation for Emma when she did finally learn of them. We may well compare her experience to that of a woman who just learned that her husband had been cheating on her. Sentiments of betrayal and distrust may have initially engulfed her.

It is apparent that Emma eventually came to know that plural marriage was a true principle from God. Leonora Taylor, the wife of Apostle John Taylor recalled that Emma told her that "she had received a testimony of the truthfulness of plural marriage" ("Leonora Cannon Taylor," *Young Woman's Journal* 19 [1908]: 347). But Emma did have a significant propensity for jealousy and tended to wax and wane in her feelings toward the principle. There were times when she was in the house in her bedroom while Joseph and a plural wife shared another bedroom. This dynamic of polygamy—sharing a spouse sexually—is probably the most difficult aspect for the first wife to face. She developed what seems to have been an intense and emotional ambivalence about Joseph's polygamy. She varied from grudgingly accepting the new wives to fighting vigorously against the principle.

You are all familiar with the story of the happenings of July 12, 1843 when Joseph and Hyrum were meeting together. Hyrum said to Joseph, "The doctrine is so plain. If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take and read it to

Emma, and I believe I can convince her of its truth, and you will hereafter have peace.” Joseph smiled and said, “You do not know Emma as I do.” Joseph did dictate section 132 to Hyrum, and Hyrum then took the revelation to read to Emma. Joseph remained in his office until Hyrum returned. When he came back, Joseph asked him how he had succeeded. Hyrum replied that he had never received a more severe talking to in his life, that Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger. Within two days a copy of the revelation was made. Creating a copy was fortunate because just days later, at Emma’s insistence, Joseph allowed the original to be burned.

It is very apparent that Emma never did lose her position in Joseph’s life as a cherished companion upon whom he relied. Although Joseph had several plural wives, it appears that he remained devoted to Emma, and she to him throughout his life. In the days leading up to his death, Joseph seems to have desired the companionship and advice from Emma more than anyone else. While hiding from Governor Ford on June 23, 1844, the Prophet was encouraged by the governor to turn himself in. Ford had guaranteed his protection, but Joseph was leery of his promises. He looked to Emma for advice: “Emma sent messengers over the river to Joseph and urged him to give himself up inasmuch as the Governor had offered him protection. The next day as he prepared to leave Nauvoo, Joseph requested that Emma accompany him. Because of the needs of their children, she was unable to comply. Joseph journeyed to Carthage and wrote two letters to Emma while incarcerated. One was written on June 25, 1844, and the other on the day of Joseph’s death, June 27.

Immediately after Joseph’s death, a family friend John P. Greene saw Emma “weeping and wailing bitterly, in a loud and unrestrained voice, her face covered with her hands.” He remarked to her, “This affliction will be to you a crown of life.” She quickly replied: “My husband was my crown” (*Deseret News Weekly*, December 8, 1875, 11s).

One story we probably ought to mention because it is so well known. I mention it mainly to make the point that it probably inaccurate at best and frankly false at worst.

Charles C. Rich called at the Mansion House, Nauvoo, to go with the prophet Joseph on some appointment they had together. As he waited in the main lobby or parlor, he said he saw the Prophet and Emma come out of a room upstairs and walk together toward the stairway which apparently came down at the center of the parlor. Almost at the same time, a door opposite opened and dainty, little, dark-haired Eliza R. Snow (she was “heavy with child” according to the story) came out and walked toward the center stairway. When Joseph saw her, he turned and kissed Eliza and then came on down stairs toward Brother Rich. Just as he reached the bottom step, there was a commotion on the stairway, and both Joseph and Brother Rich turned quickly to see Eliza come tumbling down the stairs. Emma had pushed her, in a fit of rage and jealousy. Emma stood at the top of the stairs, glowering, her countenance a picture of hell. Joseph quickly picked up the little lass, and with her in his arms, he turned and

looked up at Emma, who then burst into tears and ran to her room. Joseph carried the hurt and bruised Eliza up the stairs and to her room. "Her hip was injured and that is why she always afterward favored that leg," said Charles Rich. "She lost the unborn babe" ("Emma and Eliza and the Stairs," *BYU Studies* 22 [winter]: 90).

There are several reasons suggesting this story is frankly untrue: The historical source is forth-hand and the result of one hundred years of story telling. There is no evidence Eliza was ever pregnant. There is also no evidence Eliza ever lived in or stayed overnight in the Nauvoo Mansion. Brother Rich did not learn of polygamy until May of 1844, some time after the date of this story. In other words, Rich had not become a polygamy insider prior to that date, so it seems unlikely he could have viewed such a scene. Finally the described configuration of the stairway in either the Homestead or the Mansion House did not permit someone to stand at the bottom of the stairs and see the top landing.

There are two other colorful stories that apparently are true:

After Joseph married Flora Ann Woodworth in the spring of 1843, Joseph presented her with a gold watch. In August of 1843 Emma called on Flora Ann and demanded the return of that watch. When Flora Ann gave her back the watch, Emma destroyed it by stamping on it. Flora reacted dramatically to the confrontation and declared that her plural marriage to Joseph was finished. The following day she married Carlos Gove, a member of the Church. Later in August, Joseph met with Flora Ann and her mother, and likely met with them more than once. Undoubtedly Joseph met with them to discuss the status of Flora Ann's sealing to Joseph and possibly also to discuss possible disciplinary action because Flora Ann's actions violated the plural marriage since women could not have more than one husband. Ultimately, it appears Joseph dissolved the plural marriage at least for time. Some forty years later, it was recorded that Flora Ann regretted her marriage to Carlos Gove, as he turned out to be an unbeliever. She intended to cling to the Prophet for eternity. Though it was probably not necessary, under the direction of President Lorenzo Snow, a proxy ceremony was performed between Flora and Joseph Smith in the Salt Lake Temple in 1899.

Another true story: In March of 1843, Joseph was sealed for time and eternity to the Partridge sisters, Emily and Eliza. Though Emma was present at the sealing of both, she apparently resisted this association from the beginning. Some time after August 31, 1843, Emma decided she would prevent Joseph from further associating with the two. She sent for them to come to the Mansion House. In the presence of the dejected Prophet, Emma declared that they would not see Joseph again. Joseph later came to them and shook their hands and declared that his hands were tied and that all was finished between them. The two Partridge sisters were sick with disappointment. Apparently they did not see him again until just before he left for Carthage.

Emma was plagued by feelings of opposition to the principle to her death and, after Joseph's martyrdom, even denied publicly that her husband was involved in the

practice, claiming that Brigham Young was responsible for the doctrine. Even today, the Reorganized LDS Church (now the Community of Christ) denies that Joseph ever practiced polygamy.

12. What is the tragic and far reaching story of William Law?

William Law was called to be a counselor in the First Presidency in Nauvoo on January 19, 1841. He was among the first group of men to receive their temple endowments in May 1842. After being taught the principle of plural marriage the following year by Joseph and Hyrum, William and Jane Law were allowed to take home a copy of the revelation on celestial and plural marriage. They (especially William) were not convinced of its divine origin, however, and soon became antagonistic against Joseph and the Church.

The conflict between Joseph and William Law expanded to include more than just a disagreement on the correctness of polygamy. William's wife Jane became an important participant in the conflict, but her interactions with Joseph are difficult to precisely reconstruct. This conflict would eventually lead to the death of Joseph.

Law's distaste for polygamy quickly hardened into a belief that Joseph had to be stopped in order to save the Church. He wrote in 1871: "I begged of Joseph, and pled with him, as a man might plead for the life of his best friend, to stop all these evils, and save the Church from ruin, but he seemed determined to rush on to utter destruction, and carry all with him that he could; and thus he met his doom" (William Law letter quoted in Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, 199).

One possibility for which there is reasonable documentation might have accounted for the escalating rancor between William Law and the Prophet. Apparently Law was found to be guilty of adultery, and there is evidence that Jane Law and Joseph at one point discussed the possibility of Jane's being sealed eternally to Joseph—probably an eternity only sealing. Any hint of this happening could certainly have caused a dramatic deterioration in the relationship of Law and Joseph.

On June 8, 1844 Hyrum Smith testified before the Nauvoo City Council: "William Law confessed to him that he had been 'guilty of adultery,' and 'was not fit to live,' and had 'sinned against his own soul,' etc. (*Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 19, 1844). William Clayton wrote on June 12, 1844: "Law wanted to be sealed to his wife Jane, and Joseph told him he was forbidden which began the hard feelings" (*The Journals of William Clayton*, 133). Church member Alexander Neibaur provided additional information in a diary entry for May 24, 1844. This entry is written in clipped sentences: "Told about William Law—wished to be married to his wife [Jane Law] for eternity. Mr. Joseph Smith would inquire of the Lord, answered no because Law was an adulterous person. Mrs. Law wanted to know why she could not be married to Mr. Law. Joseph Smith said he would not wound her feelings by telling her. Mrs. Law stood in the door [of her house], beckoned to [Joseph] . . . Joseph went across to inquire. . . . No one but her in

the house. She, drawing her arms around him, said, if you won't seal me to my husband seal, myself unto you. He said, stand away and pushing her gently aside giving her a denial and going out. When Mr. Law came home, he inquired who had been there in his absence. She said no one but Brother Joseph. He then demanded to know what had passed. Mrs. Law then told "Joseph wanted her to marry him."

Likewise Bathsheba Smith testified in 1892 that she believed that Jane Law "was sealed to him [Joseph Smith] for eternity" (Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, respondent's testimony, part 3, page 318, questions 564-77). If William was unworthy, then it is certainly plausible that Jane might have sought to be eternally sealed to the Prophet after Joseph's death.

Regardless of the intensity of their estrangement, Joseph sought in vain for reconciliation. Hyrum Smith contacted Law in March as did Almon W. Babbit the following month, seeking a resolution. Once again, on May 13, 1844, the Prophet sent Sidney Rigdon to seek peace, but he was rebuffed.

Weeks later, William Law opened a printing press in Nauvoo where he planned to expose the teachings he could not accept. The June 7 copy of the *Nauvoo Expositor*—the first and only printed edition—included plain accusations against the Prophet, including his practice of polygamy. In response Mayor Joseph Smith, who obviously did not want his secret practice of polygamy to be exposed, called together the city council and ordered an inquiry of the *Expositor*. The city councilors ultimately decided the paper to be a civic nuisance and dispatched a portion of the Nauvoo Legion to destroy the press. They burned every issue, destroyed the press, and disassembled the office.

Law was visiting Carthage at the time the *Expositor* was destroyed. Later that night he returned to Nauvoo: "We went home and when we came to Nauvoo we rode over our type, that was scattered in the street, and over our broken office furniture. The work of Joseph's agents had been very complete. It had been done by a mob of about 200. The building, a new, pretty brick structure, had been perfectly gutted, not a bit had been left of anything" (Law, interview).

Despite the Prophet's temporary success in foiling Law's plan to expose Joseph's secret plural marriage practices, the destruction of the *Expositor* started the proceedings that would culminate in the martyrdom. Joseph soon realized that he had given his enemies a moral issue beyond plural marriage with which to whip the Saints. He wrote a long letter to Illinois Governor Ford defending the decision to destroy the press and later offered to pay for a replacement if the Governor felt its destruction as unjustified. Ford, unsympathetic to the Prophet's position, ordered him to Carthage to stand trial. There he was killed on June 27. Even though William Law was not a member of the party of ruffians who stormed the jail, his actions set the stage for the firestorm of bullets that cause Joseph's death.

13. What happened following Joseph's martyrdom?

Despite the death of the Prophet, plural marriage continued among the Latter-day Saints. Joseph's secret plural wives were now secret widows. Fortunately, the apostles and other pluralists assured their material needs were met, usually by marrying them for time only. The extreme secrecy that had accompanied plural sealings during Joseph's lifetime gradually relaxed. The secret circle of "polygamy insiders" continued to expand among Church members until Brigham Young publicly announced the practice in 1852, and polygamy was openly practiced in the West. This secrecy led to several incorrect assumptions in later years, including that plural marriage was actually instituted by Brigham Young or that Joseph Smith had introduced the practice but planned to abandon it.

One of the truly problematic documents was written in 1853 by William Marks (remember, this is not William Law, but William Marks), who had served as the President of the Nauvoo Stake in 1843. I wanted you to hear about this in the spirit of inoculation. In 1953 Marks wrote:

When the doctrine of polygamy was introduced into the church as a principle of exaltation, I took a decided stand against it; which stand rendered me quite unpopular with many of the leading ones of the church. . . . Joseph, however, became convinced before his death that he had done wrong; for he said to me, "Brother Marks . . . We are a ruined people." I asked, how so? He said: "This doctrine of polygamy, or Spiritual-wife system, that has been taught and practiced among us, will prove our destruction and overthrow. I have been deceived," said he, "in reference to its practice; it is wrong; it is a curse to mankind, and we shall have to leave the United States soon, unless it can be put down and its practice stopped in the church. Now," said he, "Brother Marks, you have not received this doctrine, and how glad I am. I want you to go into the high council and I will have charges preferred against all who practice this doctrine, and I want you to try them by the laws of the church, and cut them off, if they will not repent and cease the practice of this doctrine" (*"Epistle."* *Zion's Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ* 3 [July 1853]; 52-54).

If, in fact, Marks wrote this epistle, it seems clear he lied on several points. The evidence is as follows: Joseph had secretly authorized all plural marriages, and he knew well who was involved, obviating the need to dispatch stake leaders on a witch hunt. Eleven out of thirteen of the polygamous men held higher office in the Church than Marks. Neither Marks nor the high council was authorized to sever these polygamists from the Church. Available documents show that the Prophet continued to authorize new plural marriages through April and into May of 1843. The last recorded plural union in Nauvoo occurred on May 8 between Brigham Young and Clarissa Caroline Decker. During this time Joseph also continued to privately teach plural marriage. For example, Apostle George A. Smith recalled in 1869: "My last conversation with him [Joseph Smith] on this subject [plural marriage] occurred just

previous to my departure from Nauvoo [May 9, 1844]. In this last conversation, he administered a little chastisement to me for not stepping forward as he had indicated in patriarchal marriage.” George had yet to marry a plural wife. These facts support the idea that Joseph’s feelings regarding polygamy did not change prior to June 1844. William Marks related that Joseph’s conversation denouncing plural marriage occurred “three weeks before his death” or around June 6. It seems most unlikely that Joseph had such a change of heart during the first week of June. Brigham Young remembered that with respect to plural marriage: “Joseph was worn out with it,” but added: “I never knew that he denied the doctrine of polygamy. Some have said that he did, but I do not believe he ever did” (Watson, *Brigham Young addresses*, 5:52 [October 8, 1866]).

14. What happened to Joseph’s wives after he was martyred?

Of Joseph’s 35 plural wives, three passed away in Nauvoo before the Saints left for the Rocky Mountains, remaining true to their convictions. Twenty-four made the trek to the Salt Lake Valley and apparently maintained a belief in Joseph Smith’s mission throughout the remainder of their lives. Regarding the remaining eight who died outside of Utah, nothing is known concerning Lucinda Pendleton’s religious convictions at her 1856 demise. Agnes Coolbrith did not identify herself with the Latter-day Saints but remained friendly to Church members who visited her. Flora Woodworth held to her beliefs. In addition, three joined other churches: Fanny Alger united with the Universalists, Elizabeth Davis joined the RLDS late in life, and Sarah Kingsley was baptized into a protestant denomination just months before her death. Only Sarah Lawrence became antagonistic. She was the only wife who lost her belief in the Church and in Joseph as a prophet. Late in life she actually denied vehemently that she had ever been sealed to Joseph.

Despite their varied lives after Nauvoo, it seems striking that none of Joseph’s plural wives ever accused him of abuse or deception, including the eight who did not gather to Utah with the main body of the Church. Sarah Lawrence simply denied that it ever happened. Decades after their feelings had matured and their youthful perspectives had expanded by additional experiences with marriage and sexual relations, none of them claimed they were victimized or beguiled by the Prophet. None came forth to write an expose to tell the world he was a seducing imposter. None wrote that Joseph’s polygamy was a sham or a cover-up for illicit sexual relations. Had any of his polygamous wives eventually decided that he had debauched them, their subsequent scorn might have easily motivated them to expose him through the pages of the anti-Mormon presses located across the expanding United States. Numerous publishers would have been eager to print their allegations.

Conclusion

In conclusion let me provide you with a quick overview of Joseph's polygamy. Obviously we are able to do this today with the advantage of historical hindsight. We stated previously that although the Lord revealed the principle of polygamy to Joseph, the Lord did not micromanage the implementation and practice of it. While Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God, he was also a man who was susceptible to error. It is difficult for us today to judge and conclude that he made actual mistakes in his practice of the principle of polygamy, but there were some things he did that seem to have unnecessarily resulted in controversy and criticism. Observing his practice of polygamy does give us an understanding of the real Joseph and the almost too great challenge of implementing the principle of polygamy and keeping it secret. It is possible that the perspective of all his struggles during this period will give encouragement to each of us individually as we too face earthly trials. Apostle Lorenzo Snow recalled: "When I saw the weaknesses and imperfections in him [Joseph] . . . I knew I myself had weakness and I thought there was a chance for me" (Lorenzo Snow as quoted in George Q. Cannon Journal, [January 7, 1889] 29).

If it were possible to return to Joseph's day and offer him some advice, thoughtful observers, with the benefit of hindsight, might offer at least five recommendations. These recommendations have been made by Dr. Brian Hales:

1. Consider not marrying Fanny Alger without first telling Emma. If possible, convince the angel that Emma needed to be involved from the start. This recommendation to include Emma also applies to all of the Nauvoo sealings.
2. Consider not being sealed to fourteen-year-old plural wives even if the marriages are not consummated knowing that deed would generate accusations of pedophilia a hundred years later.
3. Consider not being sealed to wives for eternity only. Rather encourage those women to be sealed to their legal husbands if they were worthy.
4. Consider not marrying so many wives. Even though Old Testament patriarchs had dozens of plural wives, limiting the number might have been more easily understood by onlookers years later.
5. Consider limiting your involvement in politics. Letting someone else be the mayor of Nauvoo may have insulated you from liability in dealing with the *Nauvoo Expositor*.

While these suggestions may not have eliminated the debate, they would have diminished the most prevalent criticisms.

Although Joseph may not have been a perfect decision maker, his mistakes did not include immorality or hypocrisy. He understood perfectly the sin of adultery, and there is no evidence he ever committed that sin. As mentioned, it also seems likely he never consummated his marriages to the 14 and 15 year old brides for obvious reasons.

I will conclude with a memorable recollection of Brigham Young. In 1863 Brigham quoted Joseph's words regarding plural marriage: "If ever there was a truth revealed from heaven through him, it was revealed when the revelation [on Celestial and plural marriage] was given, and if I have to die for any revelation God has given through me I would as readily die for this one as any other. And I sometimes think that I shall have to die for it. It may be that I shall have to forfeit my life to it and if this has to be so, amen" (Watson, *Brigham Young Addresses*, 4:26 [October 7, 1863, SLC Bowery]).

Summary of Joseph Smith's Plural Sealings

Plural Wife (birth year)	Sealing Date	Type of Sealing	Legal Husband	Involved Sexually	Notes
First visit of the angel—July 1834					
1. Fanny Alger (1816)	1835	TO		Yes	
Second visit of the angel—Between 1836-1840					
2. Louisa Beaman (1815)	April 5, 1841	TAE		Yes	First Nauvoo sealing
3. Zina Huntington (1821)	October 1841	?EO	?* Henry Jacobs	?No	Third General president of R.S.
4. Presendia Huntington (1810)	December 11, 1841	EO	Normal Buell	No	Sister of Zina Huntington
5. Agnes Coolbrith (1808)	January 6, 1841	TO	Widow	No	Don Carlos Smith's widow
Third visit of the angel (with drawn sword)—February 1842					
6. Mary Elizabeth Rollins (1818)	February 1842	EO	Adam Lightner	No	
7. Patty Bartlett (1795)	March 9, 1842	EO	David Sessions	No	
8. Marinda Johnson (1815)	April 1842 / May 1843	EO	Orson Hyde	No	
9. Delcena Johnson (1806)	Before July 1842	TO		No	A widow and Almera's elder sister
10. Eliza R. Snow (1804)	June 29, 1842	TAE		Yes	Future general RS president
11. Sarah Ann Whitney (1825)	July 27, 1842	TAE	* Joseph C. Kingsbury	Yes	Newel K. Whitney's daughter
12. Martha McBride (1805)	August 1842	?TO		No	A widow
13. Sylvia Sessions (1818)	February 1843	TAE		Yes	Had daughter by JS—Josephine Lyons
14. Ruth Vose (1808)	February 1843	EO	Edward Sayers	No	Allegedly sought to be sealed to JS
15. Flora Ann Woodworth (1826)	spring 1843	TAE		Yes	Gold watch episode
16. Emily Dow Partridge (1824)	March 4 & 11, 1843	TAE		Yes	Eliza's younger sister. She and
17. Eliza Maria Partridge (1821)	March 8 & 11, 1843	TAE		Yes	Eliza evicted from Mansion House
18. Almera Johnson (1812)	April 1843	TAE		Yes	
19. Lucy Walker (1826)	May 1, 1843	TAE		Yes	Had confirmatory angelic visit
20. Maria Lawrence (1823)	May 1843	TAE		Yes	Elder sister of Sarah
21. Sarah Lawrence (1826)	May 1843	TAE		Yes	Later denied being sealed to Joseph
22. Helen Mar Kimball (1828)	May 1843	TAE		No	Sealed at 14 @ father's request
23. Hannah Ells (1813)	Mid year 1843	TAE		Yes	
24. Elvira Annie Cowles (1813)	June 1, 1843	EO	Jonathan Holmes	No	
25. Rhoda Richards (1784)	June 12, 1843	EO		No	Oldest plural wife
26. Desdemona Fullmer (1809)	July 1843	TAE		Yes	
27. Olive G. Frost (1816)	Summer 1843	TAE		Yes	Had a child by Joseph that died
28. Malissa Lott (1824)	September 20, 1843	TAE		Yes	
29. Fanny Young (1787)	November 2, 1843	EO		No	Brigham's sister
30. Lucinda Pendleton (1801)	Unknown	EO	George Harris	No	
31. Nancy Winchester (1828)	Unknown	TAE		Yes	Evidence for sealing is soft, age 14/15
32. Elizabeth Davis (1791)	Unknown	EO	Jabez Durfee	No	
33. Sarah Kingsley (1788)	Unknown	EO	John Cleveland	No	
34. Esther Dutcher (1811)	Unknown	EO	Albert Smith	No	
35. Mary Heron (1804)	Unknown	??	John Snyder	?Possible	

Key TO – Time Only TAE – Time and Eternity EO – Eternity Only * “pretend” husband ?* possibly a “pretend husband”

Doctrine and Covenants Section Titles

The titles given here to each section of the Doctrine and Covenants are not official and are not included in the Doctrine and Covenants. Rather they are provided by the author as a mechanism by which our learning the meaning of each section is facilitated.

Section	Title
1	The Lord's Preface—The Voice of Warning
2	Elijah the Prophet
3	The Lost Manuscript
4	Joseph Smith Senior's Call to Labor
5	Martin Harris—Witness of the Book of Mormon
6	Confirmation of Oliver Cowdery's Testimony
7	Translation of the Parchment of John
8	Oliver Cowdery Given Permission To Translate
9	Why Oliver Cowdery Failed To Translate
10	Fate of the 116 Pages
11	Hyrum Smith's Call to Labor
12	Joseph Knight's Call to Labor
13	Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood
14, 15, 16	Counsel to the Whitmers
17	Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon
18	Book of Mormon Witnesses to Choose Twelve Apostles
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34	Orson Pratt
35	Sidney Rigdon Called As Scribe
36	Edward Partridge
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38	Reasons For Removal of the Church to Ohio
39	Revelation to James Covill
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41	Edward Partridge Called As First Bishop
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44	Conference of June 1831
45	The Second Coming of the Lord
46	Gifts of the Spirit
47	John Whitmer Named Church Historian
48	Land for Gathering In Ohio
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50	Teaching By the Spirit
51	Law of Consecration
52	Location of Zion
53	Algernon Sidney Gilbert
54	Colesville Saints Sent To Zion
55	William Wines Phelps
56	Change in Missionary Assignments
57	Independence Is Center Place of Zion
58	Instructions Concerning Zion
59	Law of the Sabbath
60	Journey Back To Kirtland
61	Danger Upon the Waters
62	Testimony
63	Sign Seeking and Immorality
64	Forgiveness
65	Joseph Smith's Prayer
66	William E. McLellin
67	The Challenge
68	Bishops. Teach. Scripture
69, 70	Book of Commandments
71, 73	Debate the Enemy
72	Newell K. Whitney Called As Second Bishop
74	1 Corinthians 7:14
75	Missionaries Called To the Eastern States

76	The Vision
77	Book of Revelation
78, 82	The United Firm
79, 80	The Call to Preach
81	Counselor in the First Presidency
83	Widows and Orphans
84	The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood
85	One Mighty and Strong
86	Parable of the Wheat and Tares
87	A Prophecy on War
88	The Olive Leaf
89	The Word of Wisdom
90	Reorganization of the First Presidency
91	The Apocrypha
92	The United Firm
93	The Origin and Destiny of Man
94	Church Building Program
95	Building the Kirtland Temple
96	Peter French Farm
97	Zion
98	Laws of Retribution, War, and Forgiveness
99	John Murdock Called To Preach
100	Brief Mission to Canada
101	Zion: Why Persecuted, When Redeemed?
102	The High Council
103	Zion's Camp
104	Reorganization of the United Firm
105	Zion's Camp Disbanded
106	Warren A. Cowdery
107	Priesthood and Church Government
108	Strengthen the Brethren
109	Kirtland Temple Dedicatory Prayer
110	Restoration of the Keys of the Priesthood
111	The Salem Experience
112	Thomas B. Marsh and the Quorum of Twelve
113	Book of Isaiah
114	David W. Patten
115	Far West
116	Adam-Ondi-Ahman
117	Far West Is Gathering Place

118	The Twelve Called To Preach In England
119, 120	The Law of Tithing
121	The Spirit of the Priesthood
122	Why the Lord Allows Adversity
123	Committee on Persecution
124	Nauvoo
125	Iowa Saints
126	Brigham Young
127, 128	Baptism for the Dead
129	Discernment of False Spirits
130	Items of Instruction by Joseph Smith
131	Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom
132	Celestial Marriage
133	The Appendix
134	Relationship between Church and Secular Government
135	The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum
136	The Word and Will of the Lord for the Camp of Israel
137	Vision of the Celestial Kingdom
138	Vision of the Redemption of the Dead

Doctrine and Covenants Scripture Mastery List

D&C 1 The Lord's Preface—the Voice of Warning

D&C 1:24 Scriptures given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language.

D&C 1:30 The Lord bears testimony of Church.

D&C 1:31-33 For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.

D&C 1:37 The Lord bears testimony of D&C.

D&C 1:38 Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

D&C 2 The words of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith: Behold, I will reveal unto you the priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet.

D&C 3:2 Joseph rebuked for losing 116 pages of manuscript—For God doth not walk in crooked paths.

D&C 4 Joseph Smith Senior's call to labor

D&C 6 Confirmation of Oliver Cowdery's Testimony

D&C 6:7 Seek not for riches but for wisdom.

D&C 6:16 Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart.

D&C 6:22-23 Oliver Cowdery's secret prayer.

D&C 6:33 The law of the harvest: Fear not to do good, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward.

D&C 6:34, 36 Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

D&C 6:37 Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.

D&C 7 Translation of the parchment of John

D&C 8 Oliver Cowdery Given Permission to Translate

D&C 8:2-3 I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost.

D&C 9 Why Oliver Cowdery Failed to Translate

D&C 9:7-9 Study it out in your mind, and I will cause your bosom to burn within you.

D&C 10:5 Pray always, that you may come off conqueror.

D&C 11 Hyrum Smith's Call to Labor

D&C 11:12 Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously.

D&C 11:21 Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word.

D&C 13 Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist

D&C 14, 15, and 16 Counsel to the Whitmers

D&C 14:7 Eternal life . . . is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

D&C 15:6 (also 16:6) The thing which be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people

D&C 17 The Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon

D&C 17:6 The Lord's swears an oath that the Book of Mormon is true—As your Lord and your God liveth it is true.

D&C 18 Book of Mormon Witnesses to Choose Twelve Apostles

D&C 18:10 The worth of souls is great in the sight of God.

D&C 18:15-16 And if . . . you should labor all your days and bring save it be one soul unto me.

D&C 18:23 There is none other name given whereby man can be saved.

D&C 19 Eternal and Endless Punishment B Atonement

D&C 19:10-12 Eternal punishment is God's punishment, endless punishment is God's punishment.

D&C 19:15-19 I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent. Which suffering caused myself . . . to bleed at every pore.

D&C 19:21-22 Milk and meat.

D&C 19:23 Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.

D&C 19:28 Pray vocally as well as in thy heart, before the world as well as in secret.

D&C 20 Constitution of the Church

D&C 20:22 He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.

D&C 20:37 Requirements for membership in Church—All those who humble themselves and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits.

D&C 20:73 Baptismal prayer.

D&C 20:77, 79 Sacramental prayers.

D&C 24 Be patient in persecution

D&C 24:8 Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many.

D&C 24:12 At all times and in all places he shall open his mouth . . . and I will give unto him strength such as is not known among men.

D&C 25 An Elect Lady—Emma Smith

D&C 25:12 My soul delighteth in the song of the heart; the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me.

D&C 26 Common Consent

D&C 26:2 All things shall be done by common consent in the church.

D&C 27 The Sacrament Emblems

D&C 27:15-18 The full armor of God.

D&C 29 The Millennium

D&C 29:7-9 Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect.

D&C 29:12 Mine apostles who were with me in Jerusalem will judge Israel.

D&C 29:22-24 End of millennium . . . new heaven and new earth.

D&C 29:27-29 Fate of the sons of perdition—where I am they cannot come, for they have no power.

D&C 29:34-35 All thing unto me are spiritual—not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal.

D&C 29:36-37 The devil rebelled against God, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency; and they were thrust down, and thus came the devil and his angels.

D&C 29:46-47 Little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world—for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children.

D&C 38 Reasons for the removal of the Church to Ohio

D&C 38:27 I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

D&C 38:30 If ye are prepared ye shall not fear.

D&C 40 Judge Not

D&C 40:3 It remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good.

D&C 42 The Law

D&C 42:6-7 Lifting up your voices . . . like unto angels of God.

D&C 42:14 If ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.

D&C 42:17 The Comforter knoweth all things and beareth record of the Father and the Son.

D&C 42:22-25 Thou shalt love thy wife and cleave unto her and none else; thou shalt not commit adultery.

D&C 42:45-47 The law of mourning: Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection. And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them; And they that die not in me, wo unto them, for their death is bitter.

D&C 42:48 He that have faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed.

D&C 42:61 If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.

D&C 43:15-16 Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach.

D&C 45 The Second Coming of the Lord

D&C 45:3-5 Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.

D&C 45:36-39 Parable of the fig tree.

D&C 45:51-53 These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

D&C 46 Gifts of the Spirit

D&C 46:11-12 Free gifts—to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

D&C 46:30 He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh.

D&C 49 The Shakers

D&C 49:7 The hour and the day no man knoweth, nor shall they know until he come.

D&C 49:20 It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin.

D&C 50 Teaching By the Spirit

D&C 50:13-15 Unto what were ye ordained? To preach my gospel. And then received ye spirits which ye could not understand, and received them to be of God; and in this are ye justified?

D&C 50:17-22 He that preacheth and he that receiveth . . . are edified and rejoice together.

D&C 50:23-24 That which is of God is light, and the light groweth brighter until the perfect day.

D&C 53:2 I give unto you a commandment that you shall forsake the world.

D&C 56 Change in Missionary Assignments

D&C 56:4 I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good.

D&C 57:1-3 The place which is now called Independence is the center place of Zion.

D&C 58 Instructions Concerning Zion

D&C 58:26-29 It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant. Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause.

D&C 58:42-43 If a man repenteth of his sins . . . he will confess them and forsake them.

D&C 58:64-65 The gospel must be preached unto every creature, and behold the Son of Man cometh.

D&C 59 The Law of the Sabbath

D&C 59:8 Thou shalt offer a sacrifice . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

D&C 59:9-12 On this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High.

D&C 59:21 And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things.

D&C 59:23 But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come.

D&C 60:2 With some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, because of the fear of man.

D&C 62 Testimony

D&C 62:3 The testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon.

D&C 63 Sign Seeking and Immorality

D&C 63:7-12 I . . . am not pleased with those . . . who have sought after signs.

D&C 63:59 I am from above, and my power lieth beneath.

D&C 64 Forgiveness

D&C 64:9-11 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

D&C 64:23 He that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.

D&C 64:32-34 Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work.

D&C 67 The Challenge

D&C 67:11-12 No man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God.

D&C 68:3-4 And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

D&C 68:25 Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion and teach them not . . . the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

D&C 72:3-4 It is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity. For he who is faithful and wise in time is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for him of my Father.

D&C 74 The Lord's explanation of 1 Corinthians 7:14

D&C 76 The Vision

D&C 76:22-24 After the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

D&C 76:41-46 The fate of the sons of perdition—the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows.

D&C 76:50-70 Vision of the souls in the celestial kingdom

D&C 76:71-80 Vision of the souls in the terrestrial kingdom

D&C 76:81-90 Vision of the souls in the telestial kingdom

D&C 76:107 I have trodden the wine-press alone, even the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

D&C 77 The Book of Revelation

D&C 78:17-18 Ye are little children . . . and ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer.

D&C 81:5-6 Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. And if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality, and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father.

D&C 82:3 Of him unto whom much is given much is required.

D&C 82:7 Unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return.

D&C 82:8-9 I give unto you a new commandment that you may understand my will concerning you.

D&C 82:10 I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.

D&C 84 The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

D&C 88:18-21 The purpose of the earth is to become the celestial kingdom, and they who are not sanctified through the law . . . must inherit another kingdom.

D&C 88:22-24 For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory.

D&C 88:34-35 That which is governed by law is also preserved by law, and perfected and sanctified by the same.

D&C 88:36-38 All kingdoms have a law given, for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom.

D&C 88:51-61 The parable of the multitude of kingdoms

D&C 88:77-78 And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

D&C 88:81-82 Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor.

D&C 88:118 Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning, even by study and also by faith.

D&C 88:123-124 See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires. Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to sleep longer than is needful; cease to find fault one with another.

D&C 89 The Word of Wisdom

D&C 89:18-21 All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings . . . shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones. And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures.

D&C 90:11 Every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue.

D&C 90:24 Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another.

D&C 91 The Lord gives instructions on the Apocrypha

D&C 93 The Origin and Destiny of Man

D&C 93:1 Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name . . . and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.

D&C 93:2 I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

D&C 93:12-13 He received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness.

D&C 93:24 Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.

D&C 101:80 For this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose.

D&C 102 The High Council—Instructions for Church Disciplinary Councils

D&C 103 Zion's Camp

D&C 104:12-14 That every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him. For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine.

D&C 104:17 The earth is full, and there is enough and to spare.

D&C 104:18 If any man shall . . . impart not his portion, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

D&C 105 Zion's Camp Disbanded

D&C 105:5 And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.

D&C 107 Priesthood and Church Government

D&C 107:99-100 Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand.

D&C 108:7 Strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings.

D&C 109 Kirtland Temple Dedicatory Prayer

D&C 109:8 Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.

D&C 110 Restoration of the Keys of the Priesthood

D&C 110:1-4 We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow.

D&C 112 Thomas B. Marsh and the Quorum of Twelve

D&C 112:10 Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.

D&C 113 The Book of Isaiah

D&C 115 Far West

D&C 116 Adam-Ondi-Ahman

D&C 118 The twelve called to preach in England

D&C 119-120 The Law of Tithing

D&C 121 The Spirit of the Priesthood

D&C 121:7-10 Thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment. Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee.

D&C 121:18-22 Wo unto them . . . who swear falsely against my servants. They have offended my little ones.

D&C 121:33 What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven.

D&C 121:34-37 Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven.

D&C 121:39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men.

D&C 121:41-43 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion and long suffering.

D&C 121:45-46 Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.

D&C 122:7-8 The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?

D&C 123:12 There are many . . . who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.

D&C 124 Nauvoo

D&C 124:49 It behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men.

D&C 126 Brigham Young

D&C 127-128 Baptism for the Dead

D&C 128:1 I now resume the subject of the baptism for the dead, as that subject seems to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings the strongest, since I have been pursued by my enemies.

D&C 129 Discernment of False Spirits

D&C 129:4-8 When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God.

D&C 130 Items of Instruction by Joseph Smith

D&C 130:2 And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there.

D&C 130:18-19 Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

D&C 130:20-21 There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven . . . upon which all blessings are predicated.

D&C 130:22-23 The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's.

D&C 131 Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom

D&C 131:1-4 In order to obtain the highest [degree in the celestial kingdom], a man must be sealed.

D&C 131:5-6 It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.

D&C 131:7-8 There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter.

D&C 132 Celestial Marriage

D&C 132:7 All covenants, contracts, [etc.] not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise . . . are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead.

D&C 132:49 The Lord to Joseph Smith: I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father.

D&C 133 The Appendix of the Doctrine and Covenants

D&C 134 The relationship between the Church and secular Government

D&C 135 The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum

D&C 135:3 Joseph Smith, the Prophet . . . has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.

D&C 136 The Word and Will of the Lord for the Camp of Israel

D&C 136:36-38 For they killed the prophets, and them that were sent unto them; and they have shed innocent blood, which crieth from the ground against them. Therefore, marvel not at these things, for ye are not yet pure; ye can not yet bear my glory; but ye shall behold it if ye are faithful in keeping all my words that I have given you, from the days of Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Jesus and his apostles, and from Jesus and his apostles to Joseph Smith, whom I did call upon by mine angels, my ministering servants, and by mine own voice out of the heavens, to bring forth my work; Which foundation he did lay, and was faithful; and I took him to myself.

D&C 137 Vision of the Celestial Kingdom

D&C 137:1-4 I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof.

D&C 137:5-9 All who would have received the gospel if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom. . . . For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.

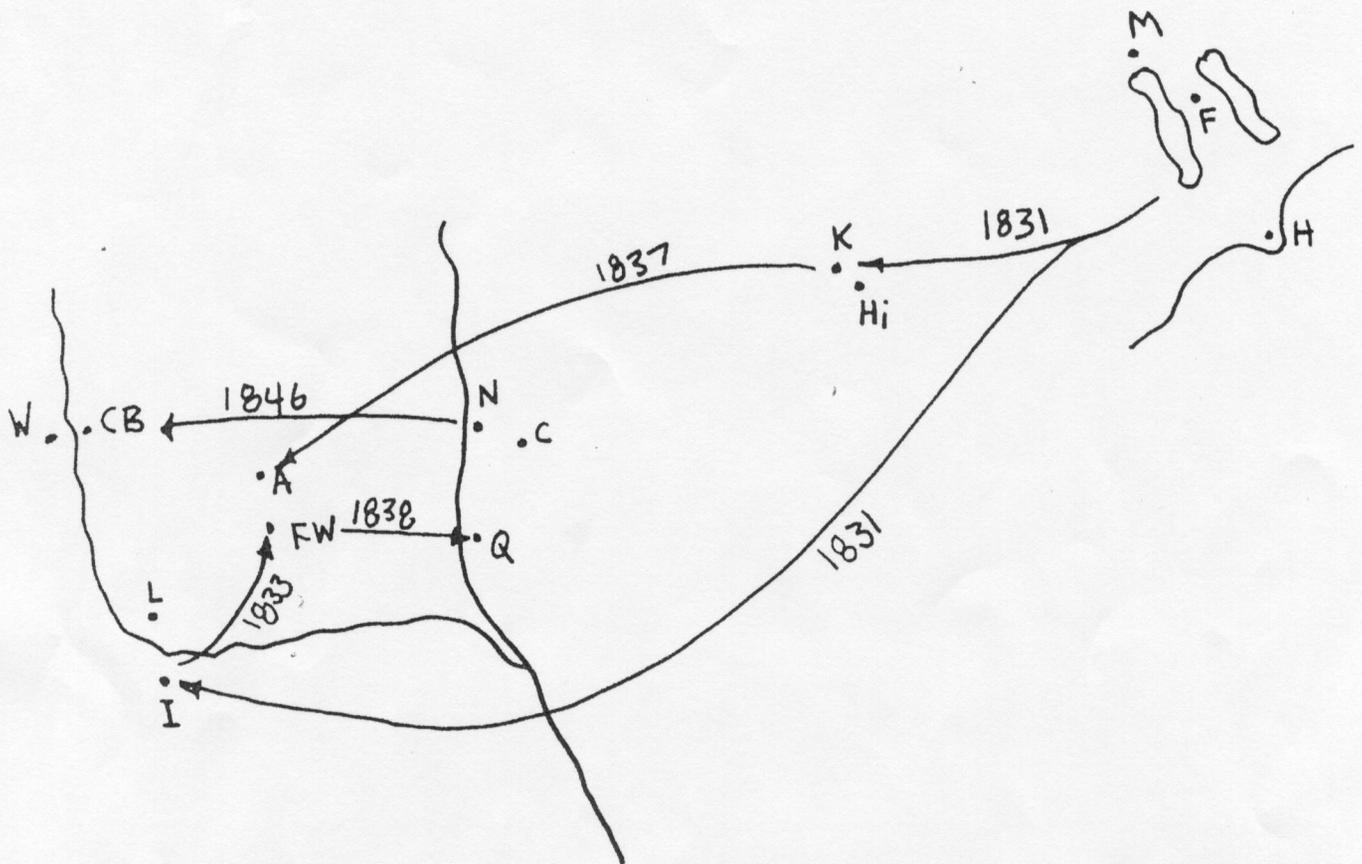
D&C 137:10 All children . . . who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven.

D&C 138 Vision of the Redemption of the Dead

D&C 138:18-20 The Son of God appeared in the spirit world declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful, but unto the wicked he did not go.

Six-Minute History of the Church

Michael J. Preece



- 1820 First Vision (M)
- 1823 Moroni's Initial Visit (M)
- 1827 Plates Delivered to Joseph (M)
- 1829 BOM Translated (H,F)
- 1830 Church Organized (F)
- 1831 Saints to Kirtland and Missouri
- 1833 Expelled Jackson County (I)
- 1836 Kirtland Temple Dedication
- 1837 Kirtland Apostasy
- 1838 Extermination Order (FW)
- Joseph to Liberty Jail (L)
- Brigham led Saints to Illinois (Q)
- 1839 Nauvoo Founded
- 1844 Martyrdom of the Prophet (C)
- 1846 To Winter Quarters
- 1847 Arrival in Great Basin

- A Adam Ondi Ahman, Missouri
- FW Far West, Missouri
- F Fayette, New York
- W Winter Quarters, Nebraska
- CB Council Bluffs, Iowa
- L Liberty, Missouri
- I Independence, Missouri
- K Kirtland, Ohio
- Hi Hiram, Ohio
- M Manchester, New York
- Q Quincy, Illinois
- C Carthage, Illinois
- N Nauvoo, Illinois
- H Harmony, Pennsylvania