

# D&C 14-19

Lesson 4, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 3 Oct 2016

David A. LeFevre

## General Introduction

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were facing growing opposition in Harmony due mainly to the opposition from Emma's extended family. In late May, they left Harmony for Fayette, New York, to live with the Whitmers, as arranged by Oliver from his acquaintance with that family. The work was finished in their small home, and they applied for a copyright for the book.

After the three and eight witnesses saw and testified of the plates, Joseph began to arrange for printing of the book, secured by a note from Martin Harris against his farm. In the midst of local opposition in Palmyra, including Abner Cole's illegally printing excerpts and residents vowing not to buy the book, the Book of Mormon went on sale and began to be used for the first missionary efforts. Finally, on 6 April 1830, Joseph and five other elders officially organized The Church of Christ.

### Summary Chronology

- **Late May/early June 1829** – Lucy Harris, Martin's wife, filed a complaint against Joseph Smith, trying to prove that he never had gold plates.
- **About Mon, 1 Jun 1829** – Joseph and Oliver Cowdery left Harmony for Fayette, New York, to stay at the Peter Whitmer, Sr. home and to finish the translation of the Book of Mormon. Emma joined them later.
- **Early to mid-Jun 1829** – Joseph Smith received D&C 14, 15, and 16, for David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and Peter Whiter, Jr., respectively.
- **About Wed, 10 Jun 1829** – Joseph Smith received D&C 17, for Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris.
- **Thu, 11 Jun 1829** – Richard R. Lansing, clerk of the Northern District Court in Utica, New York, entered Joseph Smith's copyright application, including the title page, for the Book of Mormon, probably filed by Martin Harris.
- **Early to mid-Jun 1829** – Martin Harris, Joseph, and Oliver began to look for a printer for the Book of Mormon, going to several in Palmyra and Rochester. Egbert B. Grandin of Palmyra finally decided to take it on with Harris' land as guarantee.
- **End of Jun 1829** – The three witnesses were shown the plates and had a divine witness to the truth of the Book of Mormon. D&C 18 was received about this same time for Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer.
- **End of Jun 1829** – After the three witnesses, Joseph Smith showed the plates to the eight witnesses near the Smith family log home in Manchester.
- **Fri, 26 Jun 1829** – Egbert B. Grandin published the title page of the Book of Mormon in his newspaper, the *Wayne Sentinel*.
- **About Wed, 1 Jul 1829** – The Book of Mormon translation was completed, according to David Whitmer, and the plates returned to Moroni.
- **Aug 1829** – Joseph Smith received D&C 19, for Martin Harris concerning his contract to print the Book of Mormon.
- **Tue, 25 Aug 1829** – Martin Harris pledged his farm for \$3,000 to provide payment for Grandin to print 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon.
- **Late Aug** – Hyrum Smith delivered the first copied pages to Grandin for printing. Solomon Chamberlain took printed, unbound pages to Canada, telling people about it.
- **Early Sep** – First gathering of the Book of Mormon printed.
- **Sun, 4 Oct 1829** – Joseph returned to Harmony, leaving the printing in the hands of Oliver and Hyrum.
- **Thu, 8 Oct 1829** – Oliver Cowdery purchased a Bible or he and Joseph from Grandin's bookstore for \$3.75; Joseph later wrote this date in the cover. This Bible will be used later for the Joseph Smith Translation work.
- **Late Jan 1830** – Joseph Smith won arbitration against Abner Cole who had copied excerpts from the Book of Mormon he discovered at Grandin's print shop into his own newspaper, *The Reflector*, on 2, 13, and 22 Jan 1830.
- **Early 1830** – Joseph Smith received a revelation agreeing to Hyrum's plan to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon in Canada, in order to raise money to help with the printing. Hiram Page and Oliver

Cowdery go to Kingston with that goal, but return unsuccessful.

- **Mar 1830** – Meetings were reportedly held in Palmyra where people agreed to boycott the sale of the Book of Mormon. Binding of the book began.
- **About Sun, 14 Mar 1830** – Joseph Smith wrote the Preface to the Book of Mormon.
- **Fri, 19 Mar 1830** – Grandin states in *The Wayne Sentinel* that the Book of Mormon will soon be available for sale.
- **Fri, 26 March 1830** – The Book of Mormon is advertised for sale at Grandin’s bookstore in *The Wayne Sentinel*.

- **Late March 1830** – Solomon Chamberlain takes 8-10 copies of the Book of Mormon and goes preaching. He sold one copy.
- **Mon, 29 March 1830** – Hyrum and Samuel Smith are suspended from the Presbyterian church in Palmyra for non-attendance.
- **Tue, 6 April 1830** – The Church of Christ is organized in Peter Whitmer, Sr.’s home. D&C 20 is accepted concerning Church organization and government. D&C 21 is received.

## D&C 14

### Setting

The translation of the Book of Mormon began in earnest on 7 April 1829 and continued through May in Harmony. On about 1 April 1829, Joseph and Oliver Cowdery moved to the Peter Whitmer, Sr. home in Fayette, New York, to continue working on the translation. Oliver Cowdery had become friends with David Whitmer while teaching school in Palmyra, and had been writing to him about the translation work, including sending him excerpts. Joseph and his parents knew the Whitmers as well.<sup>1</sup> David Whitmer was the same age as the two men, almost exactly a year older than Joseph.<sup>2</sup> When there were some concerns about the people in Harmony growing opposed to Joseph’s work, and due to their meager circumstances, Oliver asked David if they might come stay there.<sup>3</sup> David needed to get his fields plowed and fertilized first, but woke one morning to find much of the work done, so he went to Harmony in his wagon.<sup>4</sup>

Upon arriving in Harmony and meeting Joseph for the first time, Oliver informed David Whitmer that Joseph had shared with him (Oliver) many details of the trip, which David verified exactly, to David’s astonishment.<sup>5</sup> Whitmer took Joseph and Oliver to Fayette, and there they finished the translation of the Book of Mormon.<sup>6</sup>

During the translation, the men made a trip to nearby Lake Seneca, where Joseph baptized David and Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Oliver baptized Joseph’s brother, Hyrum. Other people in the area were receptive as well, and many opened their homes “for the purpose of instruction, and explanation.”<sup>7</sup> and several came forward for baptism under Joseph and Oliver’s hands, now both holding the Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>8</sup>

Sections 14, 15, and 16 were given in this period of time, to the three Whitmer brothers, David, John, and Peter, through the “Urim and Thummim”<sup>9</sup> (probably Joseph’s seer stone), near the beginning of June 1829.

### Documents and Publication

This revelation was first published as Chapter 12 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, which is the oldest known version since the pages that recorded it in Revelation Book 1 are lost, and Section 39 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>10</sup>

### Outline

1. Salvation for laborers (1-6)
2. The gift of eternal life (7-8)
3. Christ the creator (9-11)

<sup>1</sup> Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Whitmer was born 7 Jan 1805 (*JSP*, D1:487), Joseph on 23 Dec 1805 (*JS-H* 1:3), and Oliver Cowdery 3 Oct 1806 (*JSP*, D1:470), making him the youngest of the three.

<sup>3</sup> *JSP*, D1:66-67.

<sup>4</sup> Marsh, *Eyewitness History*, 172; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 124-125.

<sup>5</sup> Marsh, *Eyewitness History*, 172.

<sup>6</sup> Emma came to Fayette shortly after Joseph and Oliver, because she was present during the final part of the translation of the Book of Mormon (MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 145), but I was not able to find a reference as to when or how she arrived.

<sup>7</sup> *JSP*, H1:312.

<sup>8</sup> *JSP*, H1:313.

<sup>9</sup> *JSP*, D1:67.

<sup>10</sup> *JSP*, D1:66; Cook, *The Revelations*, 24.

## Commentary

---

David Whitmer's revelation was very meaningful for him. A great work was happening and he was called to be part of it. He was promised that if he asked, God would answer and if he endured to the end, eternal life was his gift.

### Salvation for laborers (1-6)

1-6 These verses are basically identical to D&C 6:1-6 to Oliver Cowdery, D&C 11:1-6 to Hyrum Smith (verse 6 is the only that is somewhat different, though the message is the same); and D&C 12:1-6 to Joseph Knight, Sr.; see the commentary for those sections.

### The gift of eternal life (7-8)

**7 *endure to the end.*** This counsel proved to be too difficult for David Whitmer, who joined a group of men in 1837 who thought Joseph had abandoned the true faith and drifted into error and blindness, being obsessed with power and station. He was excommunicated on 13 April 1838 and never returned to the Church.<sup>11</sup> Throughout his life, he spoke out strongly against Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints, including Brigham Young later, except when it came to the Book of Mormon, to which he bore fervent testimony to his dying day. David settled in Richmond, Missouri, and lived there for fifty years. He was considered a leading citizen and an honest and upright man.<sup>12</sup>

**7 *the greatest of all the gifts of God.*** This phrase was used before, in D&C 6:13 to Oliver Cowdery. There the greatest gift was to “be saved in the kingdom of God”; here it is “eternal life.” It’s also used in the Book of Mormon, in 1 Nephi 15:36, where the greatest gift is the fruit of “that tree of life” (it’s unclear if at this time in early June the brethren had translated the Book of Mormon passage yet).

**8 *stand as a witness...you shall both hear and see.*** David became one of the three witnesses (D&C 17), thus hearing and seeing great things.

**8 *declare repentance unto this generation.*** In these early revelations, the Lord consistently focused on the message of repentance. Since there was no church yet, they cannot preach the doctrines of baptism, confirmation, or other principles that only come later. But repentance is a preparatory doctrine that brings humility and opportunity for the Spirit to teach.

### Christ the creator (9-11)

**9 *I am Jesus Christ.*** The declaration of who was speaking the words Joseph Smith was dictating to his scribe must

have been powerful. The voice of the Lord was heard again, speaking to man through a prophet of God.

**9 *who created the heavens and the earth.*** Going to Genesis 1:1 (and 3 Nephi 9:15), Jesus identified himself as the one who was the creator of all things.

**9 *a light which cannot be hid in darkness.*** Though Jesus is called the “light” in several scriptures, this is the only time in scripture that this particular phrase is used. See also D&C 6:21.

**10 *the fulness of my gospel.*** This phrase is not found in the Bible but several times in the Book of Mormon. This is the first chronological use of it in the Doctrine and Covenants, though it is used many other times subsequently.

**10 *from the Gentiles unto the house of Israel.*** In Jesus’ time, the gospel went first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. In our dispensation, that is reversed, with the Gentiles carrying the gospel to the house of Israel.

**11 *thou art David.*** Calling David by his name made the revelation more personal and represents God’s intimate knowledge of our lives.

**11 *thou art called to assist.*** David Whitmer’s calling was one of supporting Oliver and Joseph so they could finish the translation. He will have a greater role shortly (see D&C 17).

**11 *blessed both spiritually and temporally.*** David had already experienced such blessings and thus this was very personal. He had been miraculously assisted in both plowing and fertilizing his fields prior to going to get Joseph, Oliver, and Emma.

## Results

---

David Whitmer was probably baptized just before this revelation was received.<sup>13</sup> Now he was promised the support of the Holy Ghost and the opportunity to assist in the work, including declaring repentance and being a witness. He did become one of the three witnesses (D&C 17), helped select the members of the first Quorum of the Twelve, was among the founding six members of the Church, and served in several positions, including President of the Church in Missouri (similar to a stake president today). Sadly, as mentioned above, he did not endure to the end, and was excommunicated on 13 April 1838 after joining forces with those opposed to Joseph Smith. He was true to his testimony of the Book of Mormon, sharing his testimony of it at least fifty times, including on his death bed.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Black, *Who’s Who*, 329.

<sup>12</sup> Black, *Who’s Who*, 330.

<sup>13</sup> JSP, D1:67 n219.

<sup>14</sup> Black, *Who’s Who*, 329-330.

# D&C 15-16

---

## Setting

---

See Setting for D&C 14 above. D&C 15 was for John Whitmer and 16 for Peter Whitmer. Like D&C 14 for their brother David, both were received through the “Urim and Thummim,” likely Joseph’s seer stone.<sup>15</sup>

## Documents and Publication

---

D&C 14 and 15 were first published as Chapters 13 and 14 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, which are the oldest extant copies (the relevant pages from Revelation Book 1 are missing), and Sections 40 and 41 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants, respectively.

D&C 15 and 16 are identical except for the name of the recipient and one word in verse 5 (“unto” is added in D&C 16), though the latter change is not in the 1833, 1835, or 1844 versions, where all read the same for that verse.

## Outline (for both)

---

1. The Lord’s arm (1-2)
2. Preach the gospel (3-6)

## Commentary (for both)

---

John and Peter Whitmer both had great, zealous desires to serve the Lord in this new, exciting work, and the Lord recognized their willingness, promising great blessings as they opened their mouths to preach and gave their energies to work in the future Church.

It was the voice of the Lord to them personally, speaking straight to their hearts, and though the revelations were identical, both considered them intensely individual and matching their desires perfectly.

### The Lord’s arm (1-2)

**1 listen to the words of Jesus Christ.** These revelations came first as aural communications, spoken by Joseph Smith but conveying the words of the Savior, then were written down by scribes (probably Oliver Cowdery in this case) for the benefit of the person and others who would also read it.

**2 I speak unto you with sharpness and with power.** Other revelations (D&C 6:2; 11:2; 12:2; 14:2) speak of the

Lord’s word as being “powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword.” This phrase carries the same connotation but without the sword metaphor.

### Preach the gospel (3-6)

**3 no man knoweth.** Both John and Peter had sought to know God’s will for them. The Lord shared that he knew their innermost thoughts. Though the message is the same to both, it is likely because they both had the same desire but had not shared it with each other. The Lord’s messages to these brothers that no one else knew changed over the course of their lives as they each found their own path to service.

**5 for speaking my words which I have given you.** The words of the Book of Mormon, the translation nearly completed, and the words of personal revelation, such as these just received in these sections.

**6 bring souls unto me.** A task which is of the greatest worth then as it is today. This also foreshadows a more in-depth discussion of this principle in Section 19.

## Results

---

John Whitmer played a key role in the early history of the Church, being one of the eight witnesses, Joseph’s scribe for many activities, including some of the Book of Mormon, much of the Joseph Smith Translation, and copies of Joseph’s revelations. He also served as Church historian for several years, writing the first detailed history of Church events (D&C 47:1). He was editor of the *Messenger and Advocate*, participated in the dedication of the Kirtland temple, and was a Church leader in Missouri. In a dispute over the handling of funds to purchase lands, he was excommunicated on 10 March 1838. He lived and prospered in Missouri until his death in 1878.<sup>16</sup>

Peter Whitmer, Jr. was also one of the eight witnesses. He went on a mission to the Lamanites with Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt, resulting in many conversions in Kirtland, Ohio. He was an early leader in the Church, and worked as a tailor in Ohio and Missouri, having the opportunity to make the suit that Lilburn W. Boggs wore at his inauguration as lieutenant governor. Peter contracted and died from tuberculosis on 22 September 1836, just ten months after his brother, Christian, had also died.

---

<sup>15</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 59.

<sup>16</sup> Black, *Who’s Who*, 331-333.

## Setting

Through a revelation in March 1829, Joseph Smith knew that the Lord would provide three witnesses to support Joseph's story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon (D&C 5:11-15). Then while translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph and Oliver recorded two passages that discussed the same topic (Ether 5:2-4 and 2 Nephi 11:3 are mentioned in *History of the Church*, though 2 Nephi 27:12 was likely also influential). The Lord had already told three men that they could be witnesses: Martin Harris (D&C 5:11-13, 24-28), Oliver Cowdery (D&C 6:25-28), and David Whitmer (D&C 14:8).

Because of this, Joseph recorded that “it <almost immediately> occurred to, Oliver Cowdery David Whitmer and the aforementioned Martin Harris who had come to see us, and make enquiry how we got along with our work--<of translation;> that they would have me enquire of the Lord, to know if they might not obtain of him to be allowed to be the three witnesses and ~~at length~~ <finally> they became so very solicitous, and teased me so much almost without intermission for some time, that I at length complied.”<sup>17</sup> Joseph asked through the “Urim and Thummim” (probably the seer stone) toward the end of June, and the result is Section 17.

## Documents and Publication

The oldest version is the copy in Revelation Book 2. It was first published in the *Messenger and Advocate* (Sep 1835). It was not included in the Book of Commandments but was Section 42 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

## Outline

1. Three witnesses will see the plates (1-4)
2. The Book of Mormon is of God (5-9)

## Commentary

This short section was extremely important to Joseph Smith and the three men who became witnesses to the Book of Mormon. Joseph would no longer be the only one to bear testimony to the world about the work he was bringing forth—he would be supported by others charged

with that responsibility and armed with equivalent spiritual experiences to validate and strengthen their testimonies.

### Three witnesses will see the plates (1-4)

1 *you shall have a view of the plates*. Why have witnesses at all? In fact, given the accounts of how the plates were translated (Joseph didn't look at them but only at the seer stone/Nephite interpreters, virtually ignoring the plates themselves), why have plates at all? Why go to all the trouble of preserving the plates if Joseph didn't even do much except leave them sitting on the table?

The answer is in the witness the physical plates provide to believers and the world. With no plates, there could not be other people who saw the plates and who could testify to the truth of the work. Without the plates, it would truly be Joseph alone, because the witnesses would not have seen anything.<sup>18</sup> With the plates and witnesses, there is tangible evidence of the reality of Joseph's story, and thus his authority and authorization to speak and act as he had been doing—and will yet do.

1 *the breastplate, the sword of Laban*. Being mentioned in the Book of Mormon and then produced for the witnesses, these physical objects speak to the truth of the translation. Even if Joseph had real plates, the story he produced could have been totally fabricated. But the story included these objects, and seeing them was additional confirmation to the truth of that story to the witnesses.<sup>19</sup>

1 *Urim and Thummim*. This section was not published in the 1833 Book of Commandments and the original manuscript is not extant, but like Section 10, this reference to the “Urim and Thummim” was probably added for the 1835 printing. See notes in Section 10, verse 1.

1 *given to the brother of Jared*. This is the only reference to the brother of Jared in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is also apparently where we learn that the stones, or the Nephite interpreters that Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon, came from that ancient source (see also Ether 3:23-28).

1 *miraculous directors*. We typically call this the Liahona today, after the name given in Alma 37:38. However, the “directors” (plural) refer specifically to the two “spindles” within the “round ball of curious workmanship.” One of the spindles “pointed the way whither we should go” (1

been provided to Joseph Smith in that manner, what could others testify to?

<sup>19</sup> McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 127-128; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:99.

<sup>17</sup> JSP, H1:314.

<sup>18</sup> Consider D&C 7, which was a translation of a manuscript that may or may not still exist. If the entire Book of Mormon had

Nephi 16:10) but the function of the second one is unstated. Perhaps more detail was provided in the Book of Lehi that Martin Harris lost, but from the broken bow incident, it appeared to have writing that was the voice of the Lord to them (1 Nephi 16:26-29), much like Joseph received the word of the Lord through the Nephite interpreters and his seer stones.

**2 that faith which was had by the prophets of old.** The faith that the witnesses needed to exhibit was the same that Biblical prophets exercised to see and experience what they did. Martin Harris was lacking such faith, and so the blessing did not come at first to him (see Results below), but he continued to exercise his faith, and with Joseph's help was able to bring it up to the level needed to fulfill his calling as a witness. It is no different with us in our callings today. We must work to grow our faith to receive the grace of God to be able to fulfill our own callings, no matter how simple or complex they might be.

**3 testify of them.** The witnesses told this charge seriously, especially after the divine voice told them again to do so. Not only did they write their testimony and have it included with the Book of Mormon itself, but even though they all three later left the Church and even developed a very contentious spirit against Joseph Smith, they still bore testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon at every opportunity, even on their death beds. For example, Martin Harris was challenged in 1869 about his testimony—did he still believe it? His response “was electric. A changed old man stood before me,” said William H. Homer. “‘Young man,’ answered Martin Harris with impressiveness, ‘Do I believe it! Do I see the sun shining! Just as surely as the sun is shining on us and gives us light. . . just as surely as the breath of life sustains us, so surely do I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, chose of God to open the last dispensation of the fulness of times; so surely do I know that the Book of Mormon was divinely translated. I saw the plates; I saw an Angel; I heard the voice of God. I know that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith was a true Prophet of God. I might as well doubt my own existence as to doubt the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon or the divine calling of Joseph Smith.’”<sup>20</sup>

**4 that my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., may not be destroyed.** One of the Lord's reasons for having the three witnesses was so that Joseph could avoid destruction. This was first the destruction of his testimony and work. Many have attacked Joseph's testimony alone, but when Joseph is supported by the witnesses—the three and the eight—he is stronger and impossible to refute. But the three witnesses

also played critical roles in keeping Joseph from being physically destroyed.

Martin Harris provided financial support when no one else did or could, including the incredible sacrifice of getting the Book of Mormon published. John Gilbert, the typesetter for the Book of Mormon, recalled, “Martin was the main spoke in the wheel of Mormonism in its start in Palmyra, and I may say, the only spoke.”<sup>21</sup> Without Martin's support in those critical early years, Joseph would have failed.

Oliver came at the right time and boosted the work in an amazing way. For months, Joseph had produced essentially nothing. After Oliver arrived, the entire book was finished in just over two months. Oliver kept the work and Joseph from being destroyed at this important time.

Finally, David Whitmer arrived and took Joseph and Oliver to a safe location to complete the work and get the publication going, just a persecution was beginning to rear up in Harmony. His faith and commitment made all the difference to getting the book done and off to the press.<sup>22</sup>

## The Book of Mormon is of God (5-9)

**5 it is by my power that he has seen them.** The witnesses were promised to see the Book of Mormon plates by the same power Joseph Smith experienced to see them. It was only because God allowed Joseph to see and hold the plates that he was able to do so, and it would be the same with the witnesses.

**6 as your Lord and your God liveth it is true.** Not many books have the testimony of God affixed to it, but the Book of Mormon is declared true by an ancient oath made by the Lord himself.

**7 the same power, and the same faith, and the same gift.** The witnesses would be blessed with a testimony like Joseph's, a combination of direct evidence and a divine witness, which they should consider a gift of God.

**8 the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.** This phrase is used in the New Testament (Matthew 16:18), the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 4:32; 3 Nephi 11:39-40; 18:13), and the Doctrine and Covenants (17:8; 18:5; 21:6; 98:22; 128:10). Gates work to prevent movement either in or out of a place. In some cases, the gates of hell are open, ready to receive the sinner (3 Nephi 11:40; 18:13) but other times they are continually shut so that we are prevented from entering (2 Nephi 4:32). In this case, it appears that the phrase means that if the witnesses are put into hell, that the gates will not be able to hold them in, if they keep the commandments to testify of what they will see. In other words,

<sup>20</sup> McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 132-133.

<sup>21</sup> Keith J. Wilson, “The Three Witnesses,” in Black and Skinner, *Joseph*, 98-99).

<sup>22</sup> Keith J. Wilson, “The Three Witnesses,” in Black and Skinner, *Joseph*, 95-106.

as we all sin, we put ourselves in hell and under Satan's power. Through the Atonement of Christ, we will be able to walk out of that miserable place and nothing can hold us there as we repent and strive to align our will to God's.

## Results

A few days after receiving this revelation, Joseph called family and friends together one morning for singing and prayer. After getting up from his knees, he turned to Martin Harris and said, "*You* have got to be humble yourself before God this day and obtain, if possible, a forgiveness of your sins. If you will do this, it is God's will that you and Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer should look upon the plates."<sup>23</sup>

David Whitmer recounted, "I was plowing in the field one morning, and Joseph and Oliver came along with a revelation stating that I was to be one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. I got over the fence and we went out into the woods, near by, and sat down on a log and talked awhile. We then kneeled down and prayed."<sup>24</sup>

Whitmer doesn't mention it but Joseph wrote that Martin Harris was also with them at the beginning. They took turns praying, starting with Joseph, then the others. After two rounds of such prayers, nothing had happened and Martin proclaimed that it was surely on his account, so he left. The other three prayed again and soon Moroni appeared with the plates in his hands, which he slowly showed to the three, one page at a time.<sup>25</sup> He also showed them the Liahona, the Brass Plates, other (unnamed) plates, and the sword of Laban; some of this was displayed on a table.<sup>26</sup> They then heard a voice from heaven proclaiming that it was true and that they were to bear record of what they had seen and heard.<sup>27</sup>

Joseph next went and found Martin, and together they prayed and had a similar experience. As a result, Martin cried, "'tis enough. 'tis enough mine eyes have beheld, mine eyes have beheld."<sup>28</sup>

Oliver Cowdery later said:

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 thummin, 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. Sidney Rigdon did not write it, Mr Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the Lips of the prophet.<sup>29</sup>

In 1869, Martin Harris declared:

Just as surely as the sun is shining on us by day, just as surely as the breath of life sustains us, so surely do I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God; so surely do I know that the Book of Mormon was divinely translated. I saw the plates, I saw the angel. I heard the voice of God. I know that the Book of Mormon is true.<sup>30</sup>

David Whitmer's testimony was recorded in 1881 as follows:

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. 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...the voice of God spoke out of heaven saying that the Book was true and the translation correct.<sup>31</sup>

This experience lifted a huge burden from Joseph's shoulders. As Lucy Smith recorded, they were visiting Joseph in Fayette when this happened, and Joseph came in the room and said:

Father! Mother! You do not know how happy I am. The Lord has now caused the plates to be shown to three more besides me. They have also seen an angel and will have to testify to the truth of what I have said, for they know for themselves that I do not go about to deceive the people. I do feel as though I was relieved of a dreadful burden which was almost too much for me to endure. But they will now have to bear a part, and it does rejoice my soul that I am not any longer to be entirely alone in the world.<sup>32</sup>

The three witnesses had their marvelous experience about the end of June 1829. A few days later, Joseph and Oliver were in Manchester at his parents' home to negotiate in Palmyra about the printing of the book. Several of the Whitmers had accompanied him. Joseph invited the Whitmers—Christian, Jacob, Peter, and John—their brother-in-law, Hiram Page, his own father, Joseph, Sr., and his two brothers, Hyrum and Samuel, to go "to a grove where the family were in the habit of offering up their secret devotions to God."<sup>33</sup> There "one of the ancient Nephites" met them and brought the plates. The eight men were able to hold them and look at the pages, then wrote

<sup>23</sup> Proctor and Proctor, *History of Joseph Smith*, 199.

<sup>24</sup> Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:91.

<sup>25</sup> *JSP*, H1:318.

<sup>26</sup> Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:91.

<sup>27</sup> *JSP*, H1:319-320.

<sup>28</sup> *JSP*, H1:320.

<sup>29</sup> Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:494.

<sup>30</sup> Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:316.

<sup>31</sup> Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:91.

<sup>32</sup> Proctor and Proctor, *History of Joseph Smith*, 199.

<sup>33</sup> Proctor and Proctor, *History of Joseph Smith*, 202; this could have been the same grove where the First Vision took place.

their own testimony of the experience, also included in every edition of the Book of Mormon.<sup>34</sup>

One of the most interesting witnesses to the plates never had her testimony printed in the book. She was, in fact, the first witness to the plates after Joseph himself. Mary Whitmer began hosting Joseph, Emma, and Oliver on 1 June. Then the Smith parents also came. She already had a houseful with her own family, and now their little log cabin was bursting with guests. She was very busy caring for all of these people. This was early June 1829. As Mary went

out into the yard to milk the cows one morning, an old man was there with a large knapsack. She was afraid at first, but he told her about what was happening in her house, and she calmed. He then said, “You have been very faithful and diligent in your labors, but you are tired because of the increase of your toil; it is proper therefore that you should receive a witness that your faith may be strengthened.” He then showed her the plates, turning the pages over one at a time and showing her the engravings. The experience completely removed her feelings of fatigue and she was able to bear the increased burdens with cheerfulness.<sup>35</sup>

## D&C 18

---

### Setting

---

Chronologically speaking, D&C 18 is likely out of order in the book, being received shortly after Joseph and Oliver arrived in Fayette in early June 1829. Thus it appears to stand in time between D&C 13 (the reception of the Aaronic Priesthood on 15 May) and D&C 14-17 (revelations to the Whitmer brothers and the call for the three witnesses later in the month).<sup>36</sup>

This date of early June is confirmed by a letter from Oliver Cowdery to Hyrum Smith, dated 14 June 1829, which quoted parts of this section, including: “remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God behold the Lord Your God suffered death upon the cross after the manner of the flesh wherefore he suffered the pains of all men that all men might repent and come unto him.”<sup>37</sup>

Related chronologically, Joseph’s history said in relation to this period of time that they were in the Whitmer home,

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, ~~accordin~~ 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 untill, 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.<sup>38</sup>

This is apparently the revelation referred to in D&C 128:21 where “the voice of God in the chamber of old Father

Whitmer” declared many things to them. This included the sacrament, ordaining others to the priesthood, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>39</sup> Though this revelation in Fayette was not recorded, many of its principles ended up as inspired direction in Section 20 later. Shortly after this unrecorded revelation, D&C 18 was received.

### Documents and Publication

---

This was first published as Chapter 15 of the 1833 Book of Commandments, which is the oldest extant version (it was in Revelation Book 1 but those pages are now missing). It was Section 43 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

### Outline

---

1. Rely upon the Book of Mormon (1-9)
2. The worth of souls (10-16)
3. The name of Christ (17-25)
4. The mission of the Twelve (26-32)
5. The words of Christ (33-36)
6. Search out the Twelve (37-39)
7. Keep my commandments (40-47)

### Commentary

---

This revelation taught Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer about the great worth of souls to the Lord and more about taking his name upon them. They were commissioned to call Twelve Disciples, using the Book of Mormon term, which later became Twelve Apostles. The important thing for them was to keep God’s commandments so they could continue in their callings to bring the kingdom to the world.

---

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, *Investigating*, 16-17.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *Investigating*, 30-32.

<sup>36</sup> *JSP*, D1:69.

<sup>37</sup> Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:403.

<sup>38</sup> *JSP*, H1:326.

<sup>39</sup> *JSP*, H1:326.

## Rely upon the Book of Mormon (1-9)

With the Book of Mormon translation mostly done, the Lord began to teach Oliver how the book would be used. More than just a proof of Joseph's prophetic calling, Oliver was to look through it to find important doctrinal and administrative guidance to help establish the new Church that was soon to be organized.

**1 *the thing which you, my servant Oliver Cowdery, have desired to know.*** The question Oliver asked was not given in the text, but given the context of just having received the Melchizedek Priesthood, starting to baptize others, and examining the answers the Lord gave, the question was probably, 'Now that we have the authority, how shall we run the Church?'

**2 *by my Spirit in many instances.*** This was before Oliver's experience as one of the three witnesses, so his testimony of "the things which you have written," meaning the Book of Mormon translation, was based on many confirmations of the Holy Spirit, but not yet on a personal manifestation.

**3 *rely upon the things which are written.*** Oliver was called to rely on the Book of Mormon for direction on running the fledgling Church. See the introduction to D&C 20 for more details.

### 4 *text note:*

1833 concerning \_\_\_\_\_ my church, my gospel, and my rock

1835 concerning the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my rock

The 1835 change emphasized the early nature of the church here, since it was not yet officially organized until the next spring.

**4 *my church, my gospel, and my rock.*** The Book of Mormon contains essential information about how the Church of Christ should function, the basic principles of the gospel, the principle of revelation, and especially the doctrine of the Atonement.

### 5 *text note:*

1833 build up my church, \_\_\_\_\_ and my gospel, and my rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail

1835 build up my church upon the foundation of my gospel and my rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail

When the revelation was given, of course, there was yet no church, but this prepared them for that task. Like the change in v. 4, this edit in the 1835 edition (retained today) made it clear that it was the Church that was built up, not all three items, and that the Church is built on the foundation of the good news of the gospel of Christ and the rock of revelation.

**7 *thou hast been baptized by the hands of my servant Joseph Smith.*** Oliver and Joseph baptized each other less than one month previous.

**8 *I have called him unto mine own purpose.*** Oliver struggled during this time (and again in Kirtland) with humility next to Joseph. Being there for the foundational events, he considered himself an equal to Joseph Smith. The Lord was trying to teach him here (again) that Joseph's calling was different from his own, with a special purpose.

**9 *Oliver Cowdery, I speak unto you, and also unto David Whitmer.*** The first eight verses were directed at Oliver alone; now the rest of the revelation is to both men.

**9 *even as unto Paul mine apostle.*** Oliver's and David's callings were compared to Paul's, the apostle to the Gentiles. Several meanings are possible. First, they were to take the gospel to the Gentiles, as did Paul. Second, they were called as special witnesses of Christ, to bear testimony of him and his work throughout the world. And third, this alludes to their future role as "apostles," using the meaning of that term as one sent with authority; these two men were never part of the Quorum of the Twelve but had authority over that initial group (see below).

## The worth of souls (10-16)

How great a value does the Lord place on one soul? How does the repentance of a single person impact him? These verses explain.

**10 *the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.*** Perhaps the most significant theological point of this revelation is in this verse. "There is no means of measurement that can adequately place a value on a human soul. As created by God they are immortal; as redeemed by the blood of Christ they can become as God is. That which is eternal denies measurement."<sup>40</sup>

### 11 *text note:*

1833 behold the Lord your God \_\_\_\_\_ suffered death

1835 behold the Lord your Redeemer suffered death  
While both titles are correct, the change to "Redeemer" in 1835 fits the context perfectly, because his suffering, death, and resurrection are the ultimate act of redemption.

**11 *your Redeemer suffered death.*** The Lord stated that "the worth of souls is great" to him (verse 10), then he explained just how great. First he "suffered death" for them. Next, he suffered "the pain of all men," meaning every pain and suffering ever experienced in life, an allusion to the expansion of the Atonement to include experiences in Gethsemane *and* on the cross. Third, "he hath risen again from the dead" (verse 12) and triumphed over death and hell. This he did "that all men might repent and come unto him."

**13 *how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!*** God finds no joy in punishing us for our sins but finds great and eternal joy when we repent and let the Atonement work in

<sup>40</sup> McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 138.

our lives to change us toward our eternal potential. “No doubt we underestimate the price the Lord paid to make repentance possible, and we similarly underestimate the joy he feels when we take advantage of his sacrifice and do repent.”<sup>41</sup>

14 ***cry repentance unto this people***. Because repentance is the first step toward any hope of salvation, Oliver and David were admonished to make it their cry to the world.

15 ***labor all your days...and bring, save it be one soul***. Several have pointed out that the one soul we must first bring to God is our own, and that is true enough. But the challenge to these early brethren was to bring others to God, to teach change of life, and then their joy would be great with that convert in God’s kingdom. Jesus paid the ultimate price for our souls; in return, he expects us to share that message with others and help them do the same.

15 ***how great shall be your joy with him***. Just as God rejoices over a single repentant soul, so we will rejoice together with any role that we have in bringing another soul to that repentant experience.

16 ***bring many souls unto me***. The Lord invited these two brethren to imagine the infinite joy of the Lord they could experience with a single soul brought to God, then imagine how that joy would feel with “many souls” who might respond to their cry of repentance.

## The name of Christ (17-25)

Many scriptures speak of the power of the name of Christ or the need to take his name upon us. These verses offer details about the significance of those phrases.

17 ***you have my gospel before you***. A reminder to study the Book of Mormon because of the fulness of the gospel that it contains.

18 ***the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things***. Book of Mormon language permeates the Doctrine and Covenants at this time—no surprise given how Joseph had been immersed in it for the last few weeks and so the Lord used that language to teach. In a number of scriptures they had translated in the previous two months, the Holy Ghost manifested heavenly things to mortal man (e.g., Jacob 7:12; 3 Nephi 16:4; Moroni 8:9; Moroni 10:4). Here the promise was that with faith and prayer, “all things which are expedient” would be made known.

19 ***faith, hope, and charity***. These three attributes are combined in 1 Corinthians 13, Alma 7, Ether 12, and Moroni 7, 8, and 10. D&C 4 and 12 both mentioned them together as well; this reference is the last mention of them together in the Doctrine and Covenants. The order is important: we

begin with the gift of faith, which gives us hope for a better life, salvation, resurrection, and more, then we exercise charity as we turn our faith and hope outward to others.<sup>42</sup>

20 ***Contend against no church***. This basic attitude was advocated early by the Lord—even before there was a Church—and remains the general practice of Latter-day Saints today.

20 ***save it be the church of the devil***. Much is said about this “church” in 1 Nephi 13-14, chapters that Joseph and Oliver would have recorded toward the end of their translation experience. The Book of Mormon teaches that this church is not a religious organization or denomination but rather any group that fights against God. “This is instruction to us to contend against all evil, that which is opposed to righteousness and truth.”<sup>43</sup>

21 ***Take upon you the name of Christ***. This is another prominent Book of Mormon theme, where we learn that we must be called by his name to enjoy salvation (Mosiah 5:8-10); that it involves making covenants (Mosiah 6:2; also verse 23 here) and repentance (Alma 34:38); that it is a manifestation of church membership (Mosiah 25:23; Alma 1:19; 46:14); and that it is by his name that we are called at the last day, the day of judgment (3 Nephi 27:5; see also verse 24 in this section). Taking his name means being adopted into Christ’s family and thus receiving all the blessings of that association, including favor and inheritance.

22 ***baptized in my name***. D&C 18 is the first time baptism is given as a commandment in the Doctrine and Covenants. References are in verses 7, 22, 29, 41, and 42, though of course the word is used over one hundred times in the Book of Mormon and nearly the same number in the New Testament.

23 ***Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father***. Because Jesus accomplished the Atonement, the Father has us act and do all things in his name.

24 ***in that name shall they be called at the last day***. Mosiah 5:7-12 explains this concept well. We take upon ourselves his name and that becomes the name by which we are called, perhaps something like a team name or organization name (the church of Christ, perhaps). Benjamin taught that if we are not called by Christ’s name, then we are not on the right hand of God, but are instead called by some other name (‘Satan’?) and are found on the left hand of God. We have to retain Christ’s name by repenting and staying free from sin, then we can “hear and know the voice by which [we] shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call [us]” (Mosiah 5:12).

<sup>41</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:106.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:106.

<sup>43</sup> McConkie and Garrett, *Revelations*, 139, quoting Joseph Fielding Smith.

25 **know not the name by which they are called.** Imagine going your whole life not knowing your own name. People would call out to you and you would have no idea they were talking to you. So it will be at the judgment if we make covenants and are thus called by the name of Christ, but then we do not endure to the end (v. 22). If that is our fate, when we are called at the last day, we will have lost our association with Christ's name, and will not recognize that we are being called, thereby forfeiting our place in God's kingdom. To keep our association with his name, we must remain faithful to our covenants. The alternative is to hear the Lord say, "Ye never knew me; depart from me ye that work iniquity" (JST Matthew 7:23).

### The mission of the Twelve (26-32)

Joseph and Oliver and David were aware of the Twelve Apostles in the New Testament, and after the translation of the Book of Mormon, they were newly aware of the Twelve Disciples in 3 Nephi, called by the resurrected Jesus. The Lord explained that this would also be the pattern in our dispensation, and moreover, Oliver and David (and later Martin Harris) would be the ones that will call the Twelve. Interestingly, this won't happen for about six years, but when it does, they cite this revelation as their authority and as the starting point for the new Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

26 **there are others who are called.** The Lord already knew these men that would serve in this position, and like Jeremiah 1:5, had already called them, even though they didn't know it yet.

27 **the Twelve shall be my disciples.** It's 1829 and there is yet no Church, no published Book of Mormon, and only a basic understanding of the priesthood. Yet the Lord gave direction to a group of men that will not even be called for six more years—the Quorum of the Twelve—so they would understand their calling when it came.

27 **take upon them my name will full purpose of heart.** Another phrase that appears and is explained by the Book of Mormon is taking on Christ's name with "full purpose of heart." To do this is to have no hypocrisy but to sincerely repent (2 Nephi 31:13; 3 Nephi 12:24) and cleave unto God (Jacob 6:5). It means to serve him with all diligence, according to his will and not ours (Mosiah 7:33). This is the first qualification of a member of the Twelve, which then qualifies them to preach the gospel (v. 28) and be ordained with authority to baptize (v. 29).

30 **that which is written before you.** Referring to the Book of Mormon, which is now written and available to read and study, at least to a few, until it is printed. The Twelve are to know and use the Book of Mormon in their ministry.

31 **my grace is sufficient for you.** See 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ether 12:26-27; and especially Moroni 10:32. Grace is an

important doctrine of the latter-day gospel, the gift of God that makes all work in the kingdom possible. It is both sufficient to help us, and sufficient to satisfy us and meet our needs.

### The words of Christ (33-36)

It was important to emphasize the source of the revelation; it did not come from a mortal man, though a mortal man spoke the words and another mortal man wrote them down. It was the voice of Christ, heard again on the earth through his authorized servants.

33 **I, Jesus Christ...have spoken it.** As with other revelations, this is being received with Joseph looking into his seer stone in his hat. Miraculous as that is, the brethren still hear Joseph's voice dictating the words to them. So the Lord reassures them that the words Joseph dictates are not from him, but are of divine origin.

34 **you shall testify they are of me.** Because they have received this witness, Oliver and David are to testify that the words are from God, not man.

35 **given by my Spirit unto you.** The power that is used is not magic or mysterious, but the Spirit of God speaking through God's prophet.

35 **text note:**

1833

For they

are given by my Spirit unto you

1835 for it is my voice which speaketh them unto you: for they are given by my Spirit unto you

The clarification that it is God's voice and not Joseph's was added in the 1835 edition.

35 **by my power you can read them one to another.** It is clear that the Lord wanted these revelations written down, copied, and eventually printed, because they were to be read together—in groups, meetings, classes, and families. How blessed we are to have the scriptures that let us hear the voice of God directly through the printed page and through the Holy Ghost that comes to us as a result of reading them individually and together.

36 **testify that you have heard my voice.** By the power of the Spirit, they have received and together read the words, which allows them to testify to the world that they are of the Lord. Later, the Lord will tell the young Church, "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

### Search out the Twelve (37-39)

Returning to the topic of the Twelve, Oliver and David were given more instructions about this critical task that is one of the most important steps in the organization of the Church in our day.

37 **search out the Twelve.** Oliver and David (and later Martin Harris also) were given the charge by the Lord to

find the Twelve apostles. This would not happen until 1835, after Zion’s Camp, but then these brethren kept that assignment, and called and ordained the original twelve apostles.

**38 *by their desires and works you shall know them.*** Imagine being tasked with finding Twelve modern apostles to shoulder the burden of the Church in the last days? The guidelines the Lord gave are simple yet profound—you’ll know the Twelve both by the desires of their hearts and their commitment to serve in the kingdom, which is a manifestation of their inward desires.

**39 *show these things unto them.*** Once found, this revelation would serve as a witness that the Lord had planned ahead for their call and prepared them for service.

### Keep my commandments (40-47)

**40 *you shall fall down and worship the Father.*** Though Christ is speaking to them, he always turns their attention to the Father, the true direction of our worship. When we realize how personal and intimate God’s plan of salvation is for each of us, we are compelled to fall down in humility and show our gratitude to him in perfect humility. Likewise, he declares that this will be the reaction of the Twelve when they are called by the Lord. Only men of great humility could successfully serve.

**41 *You must repent and be baptized.*** The core mission of the Twelve is to declare repentance the necessity of baptism to a fallen world.

**42 *not only men, but women, and children.*** Even before the Church was organized, it was a family organization, with women and children right there with the men.

**43 *keep my commandments in all things.*** The other responsibility of the Twelve is to be obedient to everything God asks of them. They cannot just be good preachers or

good administrators; they must be true disciples of Christ to be his witnesses.

**44 *unto the convincing of many of their sins.*** Repentance is constantly the theme, and the Twelve, along with all of us, have the responsibility to preach the truth such that the Holy Spirit can teach people of their own sins and the need to repent.

**45 *blessings...above all things.*** These high expectations carry with them high blessings; “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

**46 *after that you have received this.*** With knowledge and blessings come responsibility—this revealed information must motivate us to greater obedience or we risk our own salvation.

**47 *your Redeemer.*** The revelation closes with the declaration that brings all readers back to the Atonement and the author of our salvation, Jesus himself.

---

## Results

There wasn’t even a church organized when the Lord set in motion the call to the Twelve Apostles. Their critical role was explained well—teach repentance and baptism, the Atonement of Christ, the great worth of souls.

Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris became the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon and kept this assignment to call the first Quorum of the Twelve in 1835. They then ordained these men by the authority they had received from the Lord as apostles themselves, though they were never members of the Quorum. Many, many people today have received their priesthood through a line that includes one of these first Twelve and the Three Witnesses ordaining them.

---

## D&C 19

---

### Setting

For years, this revelation was dated to “March 1830,” based on dates put in the 1833 Book of Commandments and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. The oldest copy is from Revelation Book 1, but the first part is missing, having been torn from the book, so the date is not listed. It appears that when it was published in the Book of Commandments, they were not certain of the date but picked March 1830 based on available information. Later, this was supported by a story told by Lucy Smith in her history about Martin needing a “commandment” to complete the transac-

tion of his property to Grandin to pay for the Book of Mormon, or Grandin would halt the printing. Joseph Knight, Sr., later picked up on this date and story in telling his own account of this period, apparently getting the whole story from the printed Doctrine and Covenants and not from any personal account. In addition, Joseph Smith’s own history copied the date from the Doctrine and Covenants as well, being assembled by scribes who were not witnesses to the event. Interestingly, however, they placed it in an 1829

context, likely either realizing the date was incorrect or being told so by Joseph Smith. The incongruence remains in his history today.<sup>44</sup>

New Joseph Smith Papers evidence shows that the date in the 2013 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, summer 1829, is the correct one (in fact, we can narrow it to mid- to late-August 1829; see discussion below). Regarding the 1833 Book of Commandments and 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, in both cases, the date was put in parentheses, indicating that it was not certain. In later editions, the parentheses were removed, fixing the date at March 1830. When he copied it into Revelation Book 1, John Whitmer included it with other 1829 revelations and listed it in the index in that year. The context also fits summer 1829, once we better understand the Book of Mormon publishing activities happening that summer, and do not fit events of March 1830.<sup>45</sup>

Martin Harris had agreed to help fund the publication of the Book of Mormon as early as mid-1828, and renewed that commitment after his experience as one of the Three Witnesses in June 1829. Even before Joseph and Oliver moved to Fayette at the beginning of June, Martin was apparently looking into the process for securing the copyright and talking to printers about the project. The title page and copyright form was submitted in Utica, New York on 11 June 1829. Given travel time and the fact that the printed title page already conformed to the requirements (including putting the title “Author and Proprietor” under Joseph’s name), Martin Harris had to have researched it early. The details of how the copyright title page was printed and who delivered it to Utica are unknown.

When Joseph arrived in the Palmyra area, the search for a printer began earnestly, starting with one in Palmyra, Egbert B. Grandin, who printed the *Wayne Sentinel* newspaper and other items. Grandin said the cost to print 5,000 copies of the book would be \$3,000, a sum that may have surprised Martin and Joseph. For Joseph Smith, that was more than he could typically earn in ten years doing the kind of labor he was accustomed to.

Even after agreeing to his terms, Grandin declined the project and even attempted to have friends and neighbors talk Martin out of it. Martin was determined, so the men were forced to look elsewhere.

The other printer in town was Jonathan A. Hadley, a twenty-year-old new business owner who printed the *Palmyra Freeman* paper, an anti-Masonic publication. Nothing is known of their conversations, but Hadley’s later negative

press against the book indicate that their talks were extensive (he knew great details about the project) and yet he not only declined but thought it was great foolishness. Still, Hadley appears to have referred Joseph and Martin to his former employer in Rochester, which is where the men next went.

In Rochester, the men first met with Thurlow Weed. He had served in state politics and, like Hadley, published an anti-Masonic paper. Weed also declined to publish the book, explaining later that he did not have the facility for such a project, nor the inclination to do it, considering Joseph Smith a fraud, even after Joseph apparently gave him a demonstration of how he had translated the record.

Going directly across the street, the men had better luck with Elihu Marshall, the printer of the *Rochester Album* paper. Marshall was an experienced book publisher and seller. Marshall was also very open-minded religiously, publicly supporting those who lived good lives but believed different than he. After discussing the terms, Marshall accepted the job. Now, however, Joseph hesitated, due to the distance and cost involved, because someone would have to board in Rochester to bring the daily pages in for printing and protect the manuscript. No contract was signed, but with Marshall’s agreement in hand, the men returned to Grandin in Palmyra.

Telling Grandin that Marshall was prepared to print the book, the men were able to persuade him to take on the job after all. His terms were payment of \$3,000 up front instead of the more usual method of splitting the proceeds from the book sales. Calculations show that this was a \$1,000 profit for Grandin, a very inflated price. But Grandin knew he would have to buy 800 pounds of pica type to set the book, thousands of pages of paper, and pay workers for several months, all without any income during the printing—and he expected none after. So getting all the money at the start was his only option. Joseph and Martin accepted the terms. The date of the final agreement is not known, but by 11 August 1829, the news reached Rochester that the deal was done.

Martin now needed to do his part and mortgage his farm to get Grandin the money. His wife, Lucy, was absolutely against it, and he had been told by multiple people that it was a fools’ errand. He hesitated, and the project was delayed getting started as a result. Martin knew he faced certain ruin if the book would not sell. At the same time, his wife Lucy was gathering testimony from neighbors that Joseph was duping Martin out of his money, and took Joseph

---

<sup>44</sup> For commentaries that follow this line of thinking, see Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:110-112; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 143-144; even the fairly recent Harper, *Making Sense*, 68-69 places it in March 1830.

<sup>45</sup> This whole setting section is based on *JSP*, D1:85-88 and McKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 163-197.

to court. Martin boldly testified in Joseph's behalf but still was not ready to close on the mortgage.

It was at this time that D&C 19 was given to Martin, instructing him in the strongest terms to pay the debt so the book could be printed. The exact date is not known, but on 25 August 1829, Martin complied, so it was before that date and after the agreement with Grandin was reached, which was sometime in early August. Grandin was thus paid in full on 25 August and Martin's role was done on that date, showing that D&C 19 could not have been in March 1830 but in August 1829.

## Documents and Publication

---

The oldest copy is a partial one (starting at v. 14 to the end) in Revelation Book 1, the previous two pages being missing from the book. D&C 19 was first published as Chapter 16 of the 1833 Book of Commandments and as Section 44 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

## Outline

---

1. God's judgments (1-12)
2. Christ suffered for all (13-19)
3. Commandments to Martin (20-41)

## Commentary

---

### God's judgments (1-12)

**1 *I am Alpha and Omega, Christ the Lord.*** The revelation boldly proclaimed whose voice was speaking in the first verse. This is a powerful revelation in the first person, the most significant and personal account of Jesus' Atonement that we have in scripture.

**2 *having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father.*** Jesus taught that those who loved him did the will of the Father (Matthew 12:50). In his own life, he obeyed the Father perfectly, in all things, to the very end, allowing him to declare here that he "accomplished and finished" the Father's will.

**3 *even to the destroying of Satan and his works.*** Having done the complete will of the Father and overcome the world, Jesus has all power over Satan and all men, giving him authority to pass judgment on all.

**4 *repent or suffer, for I, God, am endless.*** This verse introduces a key theme and teaching of Section 19, which went against everything taught in Joseph's day by other churches. They taught that God's punishment was eternal—meaning never-ending. The Lord revealed here the true meaning of that term, which instead shows his amazing and infinite mercy.

**6-7 *it is written endless torment...eternal damnation.*** The Lord explained that these terms are used to motivate us to repent, but that they do not mean that there is no end to torment. Even though these words were taught by other churches, the words 'endless torment' are not found in the Bible. They are, however, in the Book of Mormon seven times. In other words, the Lord is actually building on a Book of Mormon teaching, where it is clearly taught that people are delivered from endless torment by the Savior's Atonement.

'Eternal damnation' is found only once in the Bible, in Mark 3:29, and not in the Book of Mormon. In Mark, it is the potential fate of those who "blaspheme against the Holy Ghost."

**8 *I will explain unto you this mystery.*** A mystery is something that can only be learned by revelation, which was exactly what the Lord was offering here to Martin Harris.

**10 *Endless is my name.*** God has many names in scripture, 'Endless' being one of them, something we learn here.

**11 *God's punishment.*** Because Eternal and Endless are his names, eternal or endless punishment simply means his punishment.

### Christ suffered for all (13-19)

**13 *I command you to repent.*** Martin Harris is called upon to repent again, or suffer the endless and eternal punishment just described in the previous section.

**14 *keep the commandments which you have received.*** The early Saints, and especially Martin, often called a revelation a "commandment." Martin was thus told to stay true to the revelations the Lord had given him already.

**15 *how sore you know not.*** We do not want to sin without repenting, because there will be eternal consequences and suffering, which we cannot begin to comprehend now.

**16 *I, God, have suffered these things for all.*** Christ has amazingly suffered completely voluntarily for every person that has ever lived or will ever live. He did this so that we would not have to suffer (as much) if we would repent. But if we do not bring ourselves to repent, we are left to suffer as he did (v. 17).

**18 *bleed at every pore.*** Some New Testament scholars contend that the account in Luke 22:44 is a late addition and not part of the original text because some of the oldest texts do not include it. But some of the most ancient manuscripts do include this verse, so there is controversy. Section 19 resolves the issue, because we get the Savior himself explaining what his experience was.

**19 *I partook and finished my preparations.*** He had prepared for his Atonement from the earliest time of his pre-mortal existence, from the great council where he stood

and declared his willingness to do the will of the Father. After eons of preparation, he finished those preparations in Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary. In turn, those events were preparations for his Second Coming when he will transform the earth into a terrestrial kingdom with peace and prosperity under his divine rule, leading to the eventual exaltation of the Father's children.

### Commandments to Martin (20-41)

**20 *you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit.*** After the loss of the first Book of Lehi manuscript, Martin suffered a great deal in his spirit, losing the support of the Lord and going through a painful repentance process. Reminding him of that, the Lord counseled for continued and deeper repentance now, lest he suffer that, and worse.

**21 *show not these things unto the world.*** Meaning this revelation and these truths.

**22 *they cannot bear meat now, but milk.*** The world would definitely struggle with this doctrine—today as in Martin's day. Though the revelation is freely available to anyone who wants to read it, we do not pull out D&C 19 in the missionary discussions, for example, and start teaching from it. It is meat that is best understood when weaned from the milk of gospel basics.

**23 *Learn of me, and listen to my words.*** Elder David A. Bednar taught that knowing Jesus is a critical part of our salvation, which comes as we exercise faith in him, follow his commandments, serve him and others, and believe his words and become what he wants us to become.<sup>46</sup>

**25 *thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.*** There is no evidence that Martin had any adulterous designs. But Martin was in a bad marriage and surely sometimes looked at other marriages and wished his might be like that. But the Lord counseled him against such thinking.

**26 *thou shalt not covet thine own property.*** We usually think of coveting as something we do toward another's property or situation (in a Ten Commandments type of approach). But the Lord here commanded Martin not to covet or desire even his own property, but to give it up that the Book of Mormon might be printed.

**26 *impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon.*** As explained above, this was a very hard commandment for Martin, and understandably so. He knew he was giving up basically everything he owned to get the book printed. In the end, he made the sacrifice, which is how we should remember him.

**27 *my word to the Gentile, that soon it may go to the Jew.*** The Book of Mormon is to a worldwide audience, both Gentile and Jew (which included the Lamanites in this verse). So Moroni said on the title page, which Joseph Smith had just printed and used for the copyright: "Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile."

**28 *pray vocally as well as in thy heart.*** Private prayers uttered in silence are good communication with the Lord. But here he counseled Martin and us to also offer vocal prayers, which can have a certain power as we organize our thinking and petition out loud for the things we desire for ourselves and others.

**29 *declare glad tidings, yea, publish it upon the mountains.*** Martin's role focused on the good news of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, especially as one of the Three Witnesses; he was to declare it to the world, metaphorically upon high mountains to all could hear.

**30 *with all humility, trusting in me, reviling not against revilers.*** Harris had many revilers, including his own wife and the man that held his mortgage, Egbert Grandin. The Lord promised that if he stayed humble and exhibited faith (another word for trust), he would be supported.

**31 *of tenets thou shalt not talk.*** When teaching the gospel, it is best to stick to the core messages of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

**32 *this shall suffice for thy daily walk.*** Martin had a tendency toward the fantastic and got excited about manifestations that went beyond the everyday experience of a faithful Saint. The Lord's counsel was to keep his faith and preaching simple on a daily basis.

**33 *misery thou shalt receive if thou wilt slight these.*** Not a threat but a statement of consequence, which Harris experienced when he left the church for a while.

**34 *Impart a portion of thy property, yea, even part of thy lands.*** Martin Harris did obey the revelation. At great personal cost to himself, he mortgaged about half of his farm (151 acres at about \$20/acre) to pay the cost of printing the Book of Mormon. He struggled with some things, but he also strived to be obedient to the Lord's commands through his young Prophet.

**35 *Pay the debt thou hast contracted.*** The debt is Martin's, not Joseph's, not even the Lord's. He is the one in bondage, coveting his own land. Selling the land will cost him personally but will release him from that bondage and free him up to serve the Lord.

---

<sup>46</sup> David A. Bednar, October 2016 General Conference, [https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2016/10/media/session\\_5\\_talk\\_3/5152032337001?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2016/10/media/session_5_talk_3/5152032337001?lang=eng).

36 **Leave thy house and home.** As a witness, Martin was expected to travel and bear testimony to his experiences and the Book of Mormon.

37 **preach, exhort, declare the truth.** Martin was not a preacher but as time went on, he did grow bolder in his telling of the truth.

38 **Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you.** What a great promise! As the brother of Jared was chastised for not praying regularly (Ether 2:14), Martin was counseled to make prayer part of his daily walk, resulting in an abundance of the Spirit in his life.

39 **canst thou read this without rejoicing.** The Lord’s perspective is fascinating. Martin was commanded sternly to repent or suffer, was told to sell off his property, and was called to sacrifice for God. Then this question—doesn’t this revelation bring you joy and gladness? The gospel presents many paradoxes to us, such as when we submit ourselves to God and ‘sacrifice’ much, we discover that it is cause for rejoicing, sometimes much to our surprise.

40 **canst thou run about longer as a blind guide?** Jesus condemned some in his day as “blind guides” (Matthew 23:16, 24), meaning those who stressed over small issues of the Law of Moses but overlooked the truly critical issues relating to salvation and exaltation. Martin had been worried about his position in society, his wealth, and his place of residence. These were important, to be sure, but the Lord was asking him to trust and quit worrying about small

matters when truly great and marvelous works were happening all around him.

41 **come unto me thy Savior.** His mercy is continual, and no matter our decisions and choices, Christ continues to call us to come to him, repent, leave our sins behind, and be his children.

---

## Results

On 25 August 1829, Martin Harris mortgaged all his remaining available property to Egbert B. Grandin for \$3,000. It was an 18-month note, meaning Martin could stay until the note was due, and retain ownership of the land if the note was paid in full before the due date. Grandin was also allowed to sell the mortgage for cash to speculators, who then took possession of it (today called assigning a loan and still commonly done). Grandin held the note until October 1830, then sold it to Thomas Roger II for \$2,000. Rogers ended up taking possession of the property and sold it to Thomas Lakey for \$3,000 in April 1831, who then sold it two years later for \$3,300. Everyone profited from the transaction—except Martin Harris, who simply lost his farm.

With Harris’ note in hand, Grandin started printing the Book of Mormon in September 1829, after purchasing type and paper in New York. The work continued through the fall and winter into early 1830, monitored closely by Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, and Martin Harris, while Joseph returned to his farm in Harmony, Pennsylvania.

---

## Works Referenced

For text notes:

RB1 – Revelation Book 1, from *JSP*, MRB:8-405.

Dx – Various early manuscripts of revelations in the *JSP* documents series books.

EMS – The Evening and the Morning Star, June 1832-May 1833, from *JSP*, R2:202-299.

1833 – Book of Commandments, printed in 1833, from *JSP*, R2:13-193.

1835 – Doctrine and Covenants, printed in 1835, from *JSP*, R2:311-635.

Allen, James B. and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976.

Anderson, Richard Lloyd, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981.

Black, Susan Easton, *Who's Who in the Doctrine & Covenants*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997.

Black, Susan Easton and Andrew C. Skinner, eds., *Joseph: Exploring the Life and Ministry of the Prophet*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005.

Blumell, Lincoln H., Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges, eds., *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 2015.

Brewster, Hoyt W., Jr., *Doctrine & Covenants Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988.

Bushman, Richard L., *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984.

- Cannon, Donald Q., and Lyndon W. Cook, *Far West Record*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1983.
- Cook, Lyndon W., *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Provo, UT: Seventy's Mission Bookstore, 1981.
- Davidson, Karen Lynn, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds. *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*. Vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012. Hereafter *JSP*, H1.
- Draper, Richard D., Kent S. Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005.
- Garr, Arnold K., Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000.
- Godfrey, Matthew C., Mark Ashurst-McGee, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds. *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831-January 1833*. Volume 2 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013. Hereafter *JSP*, D2.
- Harper, Steven C., *Making Sense of the Doctrine & Covenants*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008.
- Hedges, Andrew H., Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds. *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841-April 1843*. Vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011. Hereafter *JSP*, J2.
- Jensen, Robin Scott, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds. *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition. First volume of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009. Hereafter *JSP*, MRB.
- Jensen, Robin Scott, Richard E. Turley, Jr., and Riley M. Lorimer, eds. *Revelations and Translations, Volume 2: Published Revelations*. Vol. 2 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011. Hereafter *JSP*, R2.
- Jessee, Dean C., Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds. *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*. Vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008. Hereafter *JSP*, J1.
- Jessee, Dean C., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002.
- Jessee, Dean C., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (2 vols.). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989, 1992.
- MacKay, Michael Hubbard and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light: Joseph Smith's Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon*. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015.
- MacKay, Michael Hubbard, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds. *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828-June 1831*. Volume 1 of the Documents Series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013. Hereafter *JSP*, D1.
- MacKay, Michael Hubbard and Nicholas J. Frederick, *Joseph Smith's Seer Stones*. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2016.
- Marsh, W. Jeffrey, with Jennifer Johnson and Celeste Pittman, *The Eyewitness History of the Church: Volume 1, The Restoration, 1800-1833*. Springville, UT: CFI, 2005.
- McConkie, Joseph Fielding, Craig J. Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000.
- Millet, Robert L. and Kent P. Jackson, *Studies in Scripture: The Doctrine and Covenants*. Sandy, UT: Randall Book Company, 1984.
- Proctor, Scot Facer and Maurine Jensen Proctor, eds., *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996.
- Robinson, Stephen E., and H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants* (4 vols.). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005.

Skousen, Royal, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2004-2009.

Smith, Joseph, *History of the Church*. Edited by B. H. Roberts (7 vols.). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980. Hereafter HC.

Vogel, Dan, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (5 vols.). Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996-2003.

Wood, Wilford C., *Joseph Smith Begins His Work* (2 vols.). Salt Lake City: Wilford C. Wood, 1962.