

D&C 27-32

Lesson 6, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 17 Oct 2016

David A. LeFevre

General Introduction

September 1830 was a busy month for Joseph Smith. He and Emma left Harmony, Pennsylvania and Emma's family forever; he continued to minister to the churches in Colesville, Fayette, and Manchester; he saw several new members come into the Church that would have a lasting impact on its future; he conducted the second conference of the young Church; he settled a concern about revelations coming from other Church members; the first missionary to the Lamanites was called; and he received several revelations to keep the work moving forward and to bless the lives of the Saints with increased scripture and doctrinal understanding. This lesson focuses on those events and the revelations that came through the Prophet as a result of questions and needs in late August to early October 1830.

Summary Chronology

- **Wed, 25 Aug 1830** – Joseph and Emma completed the purchase of the farm from Emma's father, Isaac Hale (the contract was signed by some on 25 Aug and others on 26 Aug).
- **Aug-Sep 1830** – Hiram Page received revelations through his own seer stone, convincing Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmers, his brothers-in-law, of the truth of his writings.
- **Near the end of Aug 1830** – In Harmony, Joseph went to buy wine for the sacrament for Emma and Newel Knight's wife's confirmations and was met by an angel who gave him D&C 27. The first four verses were written immediately but the rest not until September.
- **Tue, 31 Aug 1830** – Having read the Book of Mormon and anxious to meet the prophet, Parley P. Pratt arrived in Fayette with Hyrum Smith.
- **Wed, 1 Sep 1830** – Parley P. Pratt was baptized by Oliver Cowdery.
- **Probably Fri, 3 Sep 1830** - Joseph and Emma left Harmony, PA, for a trip to Colesville but as a stop to moving to live with the Whitmers in Fayette, NY. They never returned to Harmony nor saw Emma's family again.
- **Sat, 4 Sep 1830** – Joseph, Hyrum Smith, and David and John Whitmer arrived in Colesville to meet with members there, per a promise in a letter from Joseph to Newel Knight dated 28 August 1830.
- **Sun, 19 Sep 1830** – On his nineteenth birthday, Orson Pratt was baptized by his brother, Parley.
- **About Mon, 20 Sep 1830** – Joseph Smith received D&C 28, for Oliver Cowdery about Hiram Page.
- **Sun-Tue, 26-28 Sep 1830** – Joseph Smith conducted the second conference of the Church at the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr., in Fayette, NY, with sixty-two in attendance.
- **Probably Sun, 26 Sep 1830** – Joseph Smith received D&C 29 in the presence of six elders.
- **Probably Tue, 28 Sep 1830** – Toward the end of the conference, Joseph Smith received D&C 30 for the Whitmer brothers—David, Peter, and John.
- **Probably Tue, 28 Sep 1830** – Joseph Smith received D&C 31 for Thomas Marsh, immediately after D&C 30.
- **About Fri, 8 Oct 1830** – Joseph Smith received D&C 32 for Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson, calling them to go with Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer.
- **Before the end of Oct 1830** – The four missionaries to the Lamanites left on their mission, teaching in New York, Ohio, and Missouri, traveling hundreds of miles over at least five months.

D&C 27 – The Sacrament and the Armor of God

Setting

Newel K. Whitney and his wife, Sally, came to visit Joseph and Emma Smith in Harmony, at the end of August 1830.

On 28 June, Emma and Sally had been baptized, and Newel had been confirmed, but neither his wife nor Emma had been confirmed nor received the sacrament for the first time, because of the disruption of their meetings by a local mob. Joseph's history recorded:

and as neither his wife nor mine had been as yet confirmed, ~~and~~ it was proposed that we should confirm them, and partake together of the sacrament, before he and his wife should leave us.—

In order to prepare for this; I set out to go to procure some wine for the occasion, but had gone but <only> a short distance when I was met by a heavenly messenger, and received the following revelation.¹

proposed that they do this before the Whitney's returned to Colesville, and set out to purchase some wine for that purpose. He did not go far before he was met by a heavenly messenger who gave him a revelation.

Joseph's history notes that the "first four paragraphs" were recorded that day, while the remainder was recorded later in September.² Newel Knight added in his own account that the only message on this day was the first part, and that most of verses 5-18 were received after the Prophet moved to Fayette.³ When it was first published (see note below), it only included the smaller version. It wasn't until 1835 that the Prophet expanded the revelation to include the additional verses, which are not included in his Revelation Book.⁴

The earliest version was at first essentially the same as verses 1-4 in our current version. The remainder was as below, with parts of what are now verses 5, 14, 15, and 18 (present verse numbers indicated below for reference). It was published similarly in the two newspapers and the 1833 Book of Commandments.

[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 [14] & with ~~you~~ all those whom my father hath given me out of the world [15a] Wherefore lift up your hearts & rejoice & Gird up your loins [18b] & be ~~faithful~~ faithful untill I come even so amen.⁵

Documents and Publication

This revelation was first published in the *Painseville Telegraph* (19 April 1831), then in *The Evening and Morning Star* (March 1833). It was Chapter 28 in the 1833 Book of Commandments. It was published in its final form as Section 50 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

¹ *JSP*, H1:428 (Draft 2).

² *JSP*, H1:428 (Draft 2).

³ Harper, *Making Sense*, 92.

⁴ *JSP*, D1:165 explains that the published dates "present challenges." *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the Book of Commandments put the date at 4 September, but Joseph said in

Outline

1. Emblems of the sacrament (1-5a)
2. A great sacrament meeting (5b-14)
3. The armor of God (15-18)

Commentary

Emblems of the sacrament (1-5a)

1 *the voice of Jesus Christ*. Even though it was an angel delivering this message to Joseph, he was speaking in behalf of Christ himself, and using his name in an example of divine investiture.

1 *whose word is quick and powerful*. "Quick" means alive, so God's word is living and powerful.

2 *it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink*. What we eat or drink is not the important factor in the ordinance. What matters is why we are doing it. If we are focused on God's glory as our goal, and if we are remembering Jesus' body and blood shed for our benefit, then we are doing the sacrament correctly. We do not believe in transubstantiation (the emblems actually become Christ's body and blood) or anything like it.

In the spirit of this revelation and with the blessing of priesthood leaders, I have seen crackers of various kinds and many kinds of bread used for the sacrament. One stake requested that everyone use white bread to heighten the feeling of purity in the sacrament, but that was a stake president's preference and neither doctrinal nor historically necessary.

3 *not purchase wine neither strong drink of your enemies*. Purchasing wine from real or potential enemies puts the Church in a position of dependence on enemies for one of very ordinances of salvation, a dangerous place to be.

4 *except it is made new among you*. The revelation doesn't define how to make it except that it be "new." See Results below for how the brethren responded to this command in this specific instance.

5 *marvel not*. As this doctrine is taught, they may well have marveled. It was undoing hundreds of years of Christian tradition that the sacramental emblems had to be bread and wine.

5 *I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you*. During the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples that it was the last time

his history that the first part was in August and the rest of September. The conclusion is probably that the whole revelation was recorded in September, though the encounter with the angel was indeed in August.

⁵ *JSP*, D1:166.

he would drink “of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25). The promise was given here that that day is coming shortly: “for the hour cometh.”

A great sacrament meeting (5b-14)

This section greatly expands two comments in the original revelation about Christ taking the sacrament again (verse 5) with those given to him by the Father (verse 14), explaining the nature of that experience—a great sacrament meeting that Elder Bruce McConkie said would take place at Adam-ondi-Ahman: “The sacrament is to be administered in a future day, on this earth, when the Lord Jesus is present, and when all the righteous of all age are present. This, of course, will be part of the grand council at Adam-ondi-Ahman.”⁶ This means that as we partake of the sacrament, we are both looking back and remembering his sacrifice for us, but also looking ahead to the time when we will again partake of it with him in triumph as king of this earth.⁷

5 Moroni. The final Nephite prophet and mentor to Joseph Smith is mentioned first as those who will attend this amazing meeting.

5 the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim. Referring to Ezekiel 37:21-23, where the two sticks are shown coming together in the Lord’s hands, this mention highlights that the *record* is not the stick itself. The record is the Book of Mormon, but the sticks in Ezekiel represents the descendants of Ephraim and Judah, which come together in the Lord’s hands, bringing their records with them.⁸

6 Elias. Elias has the “keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things.” We learn who Elias is in verse 7—the angel that visited Zacharias and promised him a son. We learn from Luke that his name was Gabriel (Luke 1:19), which means ‘strong man/hero of God.’ Later, Joseph Smith taught that Gabriel is Noah.⁹ So in this case, Elias is Noah, who restored the earth with life after the great flood.

6 the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets. In the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, this phrase was slightly changed as follows (change emphasized):

the restoration of all things, *or the restorer of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets*

This points to the broad role of Elias as a restorer, a title that can be applied to many individuals in the past and future (see Bible Dictionary, “Elias”).

⁶ Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 587; see also 578-579.

⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:180.

7 John, and he should be filled with the spirit of Elias. Continuing the learning for Joseph Smith, it was revealed to him that John the Baptist was also acting as an Elias (see Bible Dictionary, “Elias”).

8 to ordain you unto the first priesthood. The reference is to the appearance of John the Baptist on 15 May 1829 (Section 3) and clarifies which John is being discussed in v. 7.

9 Elijah. Moroni taught Joseph Smith about the future coming of Elijah. It still hadn’t happened yet at this date, but when he comes in 1836 (D&C 110), he will bring those keys that turn hearts to and from fathers and children.

10 Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham. Promises were made to the patriarchs (a Greek word that means ‘first/ruling fathers’) of the book of Genesis that “remain” and are renewed in these last days. Their attendance at that great meeting is a personal reminder of such eternal covenants.

11 Michael, or Adam. This is the first section where this identification is made. Michael means ‘who is like God.’¹⁰ Joseph had been translating the earliest chapters of Genesis during this time and perhaps received that insight during that activity (though admittedly the JST text itself doesn’t teach it).

12 Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you. This is the earliest reference confirming what happened at the end of May 1829, as these ancient apostles appeared and ordained Joseph and Oliver, though we do not have the exact date of the restoration of the second or Melchizedek Priesthood.

12 apostles, and especial witnesses. An apostle is a ‘sent one,’ someone charged with representing the sender and speaking in his voice. Thus they are special witnesses of the sender and have the power to act in his name, holding the keys he has given them to perform acts in his place.

13 a dispensation of the gospel for the last times. A dispensation is a ‘giving out,’ a ‘dispensing’ of important information and authority. We live in the time when the good news of Christ is given out again to prepare the world for the “last times.”

13 I will gather together in one all things. An important purpose of the last dispensation is to bring together all the various activities, keys, and teachings from previous dispensations into a single organization in the “last times,” making them “the fulness of times.”

⁸ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:180-181.

⁹ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 157.

¹⁰ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 203.

14 *with all those whom my Father hath given me*. Not just the prophets listed in the previous verses are invited to participate in this great sacrament meeting—and by extension the fulness of the gospel in this day—but all the righteous and faithful will be gathered together. What an amazing meeting (or set of meetings) it will be. The gathering place is Adam-ondi-Ahman, but it is not hard to imagine just with the technology we have now that the meeting is not limited to that location, but that Saints are gathered all over the world participating in this meeting, as we do with General Conference twice each year.

The armor of God (15-18)

15 *take upon my whole armor*. This is a version of Ephesians 6:13-17 that is customized by the Lord for our day and Joseph Smith’s experiences. The differences are easy to spot (and highlighted) in the side-by-side comparison below.

Ephesians 6	Section 27
13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.	15 Wherefore...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.
14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;	16 Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness,
15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;	and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;
16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.	17 Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;
17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:	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.

15 *that ye may be able to stand*. With the armor of God in place, we can not only withstand evil but continue to stand tall and upright in the face of evil, instead of being knocked down and just barely hanging on.

16 *I have sent mine angels to commit unto you*. Angels are messengers, and Joseph Smith had received many, including Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, and this unnamed angel that met him on the road to buy wine. Many more yet are coming in the Prophet’s future, including Moses, Elijah, and Elias.

18 *Spirit, which I will pour out upon you*. This is a great promise to everyone like Emma and Sally who receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and others who are seeking with sincerity to find the truth. The Spirit of God will continue to be poured out into the earth to all who will receive it.

18 *ye shall be caught up*. Most Protestants have the doctrine of the ‘rapture,’ a word not used in the English scripture but originating from the Latin of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (*harpazō* in Greek becomes ‘caught up’ in English and *rapere* in Latin in the Catholic Vulgate). There are great debates about the timing of rapture. For the record, Mormons believe in a post-tribulation, premillennialist rapture (though you’ll likely never hear that term in General Conference or Gospel Doctrine class). In other words, we believe that the righteous will be caught up to meet Christ at his coming, which is what this verse indicates. A major difference in our view of this event is that it is not to take the righteous away from the earth, but just to remove them temporarily that the earth may be cleansed and prepared for its next state of existence, at which point those caught up return (more on this when we get to D&C 88).

Results

Newel Knight wrote about this day:

In obedience to this revelation we prepared some wine of our own make, and held our meeting, consisting of only five persons namely, Joseph Smith and wife, John Whitmer [who was staying in Harmony with the Smiths doing scribal work for Joseph], and myself and wife. We partook of the sacrament, after which we confirmed the two sisters into the Church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us. We praised the God of Israel and rejoiced exceedingly.¹¹

It wasn’t until July 1906 that the practice of using water in the sacrament was fully instituted.¹²

Most importantly, D&C 27 focuses us on the point of the sacrament—to remember what Jesus sacrificed for us as we

¹¹ Cook, *Revelations*, 38-39; see also Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:178; and Harper, *Making Sense*, 93.

¹² Cook, *Revelations*, 127n1; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:178.

partake of those symbolic emblems, and to have that sacrifice change our lives each week, forever.

Newel Knight returned home, expecting Joseph to follow on Saturday, 28 August. But the Whitmers did not arrive

on time and Joseph had no way to get to Colesville without their wagon. He wrote a letter saying they would come the next Saturday, which they did, meeting with the Colesville Saints on 4 September 1830.

D&C 28 – Hiram Page and Revelation

Setting

On 25 August 1830, Joseph Smith made the final payment on the house and property he had purchased from Isaac and Elizabeth Hale, Emma's parents, in Harmony, Pennsylvania. The final payment of \$86 had been due on 1 May 1830, but Joseph was late, and Isaac Hale agreed to charge him interest and accept the late payment rather than rescind the contract. On 25 and 26 August, a deed from Isaac and Elizabeth Hale was signed, given Joseph and Emma full possession of the property. However, it was only a few days later that they left their house in Harmony, never to return again. They kept the house for three years, but finally sold it to a neighbor, Joseph McKune, Jr., in 1833, for \$300, turning them a decent profit on their \$200 investment (much of which they owed to others who helped them buy the house).¹³

Joseph and Emma Smith left Harmony at the end of August 1830 and moved in with Peter Whitmer, Sr., in Fayette. A conference for the Church was scheduled for 26 September, at the Whitmer home. Hiram Page, a Whitmer brother-in-law (being married to Catherine Whitmer, the oldest daughter in the family, since 10 November 1825), an early believer who had been baptized on 11 April 1830, and one of the eight witnesses, had found a stone that he believed gave him the ability to receive revelations, just as Joseph's stones had done. His 'revelations,' came in August and September and were written down in the same way as Joseph—looking at the stone, dictating words and having them read back and confirmed, and then seeing more words. He wrote so many that they were on "quite a roll of papers."¹⁴ They included the location of the American New Jerusalem and direction about Church government. Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmers were persuaded by Hiram's teachings and began to look to him for direction.¹⁵

Part of the reason that Hiram was persuasive to them may have been that Joseph had given up using his brown seer

stone after the completion of the Book of Mormon, giving it to Oliver Cowdery, and of course had given the Urim and Thummim back to Moroni, so he had no physical object.¹⁶ His revelations now came directly through the Spirit. So when Hiram claimed to have a sacred stone that revealed God's will to them, it was a familiar pattern.

Additionally, there was a perception that the revelation to go to Canada¹⁷ to pursue a copyright was a failure. Hiram and Oliver had both been on that mission to Canada and came back disappointed. David Whitmer later claimed that they learned from that experience that some revelations were of God, others of men, and others of the devil, and he pointed to the Canada one as a revelation of man.¹⁸

Finally, Joseph's mission had initially been so focused on the Book of Mormon and starting the Church that they perhaps saw it as now fulfilled, with the opportunity for someone else to take the lead. Even Joseph seemed to think for a time after April 1830 that his work was done, and he went back to farming in Harmony, giving his seer stone to Oliver Cowdery and telling David Whitmer, "he was through [with] the work that God had given him the gift to perform, except to preach the gospel. He told us that we would all have to depend on the Holy Ghost hereafter to be guided into truth and obtain the will of the Lord."¹⁹ That feeling was surely short-lived as he had more revelations and began to translate the Bible. This revelation and others like it drove him on, giving him new vistas and commissions, and firmly establishing him as a lifetime leader of God's work.²⁰ But he was in Harmony, Pennsylvania, far away from Fayette, and Hiram's revelations were compelling to those in New York.

Prior to the planned Church conference on 26 September 1830, Joseph labored with Oliver and the Whitmers to persuade them that Hiram's revelations were not appropriate or following Church order. He then inquired of the Lord

¹³ *JSP*, D1:167-168.

¹⁴ MacKay and Frederick, *Seer Stones*, 153-154; *JSP*, D1:184.

¹⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 95.

¹⁶ MacKay and Frederick, *Seer Stones*, 69-70. He still apparently had the white seer stone and used it for at least one revelation (D&C 34; see *Seer Stones*, 78-81) but did not use it to receive all his revelations after the Church was organized as he had done before that time.

¹⁷ *JSP*, D1:108-112.

¹⁸ Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:197-198. It's very possible that Whitmer's late recollection of Joseph's words was more related to Hiram Page's use of a seer stone than Joseph's copyright revelation.

¹⁹ Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:199-200.

²⁰ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 122.

(throughout one entire night with little or no sleep) about Hiram Page’s revelations, and the result is D&C 28.²¹

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1. It was first published as Chapter 30 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 51 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

1. Joseph the Prophet, Oliver the teacher (1-7)
2. Mission to the Lamanites (8-10)
3. Settling the Hiram Page affair (11-16)

Commentary

Joseph the Prophet, Oliver the teacher (1-7)

1 heard by the church in all things whatsoever thou shalt teach them. Oliver’s position is reaffirmed, wherein he is a teacher to the Church, following the Spirit and explaining the revelations and commandments the Lord had already given.

2 no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations. Not that no one can receive any revelation, but that only Joseph Smith was to receive revelations that are binding upon the entire Church. Members already knew they were to heed Joseph’s revelations (D&C 21:4-5) but this makes it clear that his were the only ones they were to heed, in terms of the Church overall. This is a new practice among churches of that day, where a top-down structure was typically shunned in favor of a more democratic leadership. But the Lord is clear that his Church would be run differently.²² This lesson will need to be reinforced again in the future (D&C 43:3-7).

3 even as Aaron. Oliver was like Aaron and Joseph like Moses (verse 2), meaning that the Prophet spoke for the Lord and the second elder spoke for the Prophet.

4 to speak or teach. Oliver was free to teach and preach “at all times...thou mayest do it.”

5 not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom. Oliver was to provide wise interpretation, support, advice, and other teachings, but not initiate commandments to the Church.

6 thou shalt not command him who is at thy head. Oliver had strongly insisted Joseph change some wording in the Articles and Covenants (see commentary on D&C 20). The Lord reminded him that was not his role but he was to take counsel from Joseph.

²¹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 95.

7 the mysteries, and the revelations. Joseph was appointed with keys to understand the mysteries of God and reveal them to the Saints.

7 text note:

RB1 has for this verse: “for I have given him the keys of the mysteries of the Revelations which are sealed until I shall appoint unto *him* another in his stead” (emphasis added). The 1833 Book of Commandments and all subsequent publications use the same language as our D&C today. In RB1, the first subtle change ties the keys of the mysteries to the sealed revelations, rather than having be a set of things Joseph possesses. The second change implies here that Joseph would know and appoint his successor as directed by the Lord. Using “them” in the published versions shows the Lord appoints a successor to the Church.

Mission to the Lamanites (8-10)

8 go unto the Lamanites and preach. With that cleared up, the Lord shifted gears dramatically, calling Oliver Cowdery to lead a ground-breaking mission to teach the American Indians. Others would be called to join him (D&C 30 and 32).

Some today draw conclusions from the Lord’s language here and using other comments about “Lamanites” in the Doctrine and Covenants and early Church teachings, about Book of Mormon geography, arguing that the places where these brethren served their missions must be the Lamanite homelands spoken of in the book, but Lamanite blood could easily have spread all over North and South America by this time, making it quite reasonable to call all these people “Lamanites” though they were living far from actual Book of Mormon lands (whose location we do not yet know).

8 cause my church to be established. Oliver’s mission had two goals: First, “cause my church to be established among them,” meaning the Lamanites. Second, help determine “where the city Zion shall be built” (v. 9), already an important topic of conversation among the Saints.

8 text note:

RB1	1833	1835
go unto the Lamanites & Preach my Gospel unto them & cause my Church to be established among them	go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them, and cause my church to be established among them.	go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them; and inasmuch as they received thy teachings, thou shalt cause my church to be established among them

Oliver’s mission was to establish the Church among the native Americans but the message was not well received at the time, and so the Church was not established there in 1830. No one can

²² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:189.

create a church where the message is not received. The 1835 version makes that conditional fulfillment explicit.

9 *it is not revealed, and no man knoweth*. This was a direct reference to Hiram Page's purported revelations about the location of the New Jerusalem. We don't know what location Hiram Page predicted, since his writings were not preserved and no one mentions it.

9 *text note*:

RB1, 1833, and 1835 all read "no man knoweth where the city shall be built," the word "Zion" in our current scriptures missing. This reflects the growing understanding of the term Zion in the early Church. The "city" referred to in these revelations is the New Jerusalem from the Book of Mormon.²³

9 *text note*:

RB1 alone reads "it shall be among the Lamanites," excluding the reference to "the borders." "Among the Lamanites" could be anywhere where native Americans were living, but "on the borders" was a more direct reference to Missouri, as that was the border between the United States and the Indians at that time, so that language made more sense after the location was identified in 1831, allowing it to be added in 1833.

9 *it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites*. This vague reference is the first pointing to a location for Zion, or the New Jerusalem, as promised in Ether 13:3-10 (also Revelation 21:2; 3 Nephi 21:23-24). The phrase "the borders by the Lamanites" was understood to be the area west of Missouri (present-day Kansas) after an 1830 law passed by Congress requiring all Indians to move to that area.

10 *until after the conference*. Referring to the 26 September 1830 conference.

Settling the Hiram Page affair (11-16)

11 *between him and thee alone*. Oliver was instructed to talk to Hiram privately and make things right, before it was discussed and settled publicly at the conference. Though we have no explicit record of this happening, the results at the conference demonstrate that he did it successfully.

11 *not of me and that Satan deceiveth him*. How was Hiram and the other Saints to know the difference between true revelations and Satan's deceptions? When it came to Church-wide revelations, the pattern was clearly established—only Joseph would receive revelations for the Church (v. 2). Therefore, the revelations Hiram claimed to receive had "not been appointed unto him," because they were "contrary to the church covenants" (v. 12, referring to D&C 20, where Joseph Smith is the First Elder).

12 *text note*:

RB1 reads "contrary to the Church Articles and Covenants," referring to the formal name of D&C 20 at the time. In 1833 and after, the phrase was generalized to refer to "church covenants."

13 *all things must be done in order*. "They laid out procedures and leadership structure that inhibited erratic claims, the downfall of other charismatic religious groups...Charisma was to be focused, not left free to run wild."²⁴

14 *assist to settle all these things*. Oliver Cowdery was given the task of working with his friend, Hiram, to settle the issue in Joseph and the Church's behalf, which he did not only before he left on his mission, as the verse suggests, but before the 26 September conference.

15 *it shall be given thee*. Oliver was promised that the Spirit would be with him and guide him in his journeys and teaching. He was certainly entitled to personal revelation that would help him fulfill his own mission and assignments, just as we all are.

Results

The task to correct Hiram Page fell to Oliver Cowdery. This both helped get Oliver back on track and solved the Hiram Page problem. At the 26 September conference, the record says that the first item on the agenda was: "Brother Joseph Smith jr. was appointed by the voice of the Conference to receive and write Revelations & Commandments for this Church,"²⁵ confirming what the Lord had already revealed on the day of the organization of the Church (D&C 21:1-4). All there, including Hiram Page, denounced his previous revelations and sustained Joseph as the only one authorized to speak to the whole Church.

This challenge for the Church was not settled in 1830, but still exists today as people look to sources other than the President of the Church for Church-wide information or movements, or critical doctrines. Whether it be who can hold the priesthood, events of the last days, or important social issues, we need to look to Church leadership first.

Additionally, according to the revelation, Oliver Cowdery began to prepare to serve a mission to the Lamanites, even as he and the Church gained more knowledge about the location of the New Jerusalem in the last days, a topic that Page had addressed in his revelations but which needed to come from the Lord's Prophet to be binding on the Church. Others were subsequently called and the group left for their historic trip in October 1830.

The command to be the one that interpreted Joseph's revelations and commandments was an important part of Oliver's mission. He wrote many articles for Church periodicals that gave extensive details about Joseph's experiences that the Prophet did not record in his own history. He also provided interpretations and application of the revelations, making clear the implications for the lives of the Saints.

²³ JSP, D1:186n361.

²⁴ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 121.

²⁵ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 3.

D&C 29 – The Last Days and the First Days

Setting

Joseph Smith stated that D&C 29 was received “in the presence of six elders.”²⁶ The heading that John Whitmer (who was probably one of the six elders) attached to his copy in Revelation Book 1 said it was “A Revelation to Six Elders of the Church & three members.” It’s always good to know what questions or conversations are behind a revelation, and Whitmer gave two: the nine people gathered together proposed “that the time had come >that> the People of god should see eye to eye” and that there were people “seeing somewhat different upon the death of Adam (that is his transgression).” They made these two items “a subject of prayer” and “thus came the word of the Lord through Joseph the seer.”²⁷

Section 29 is rich in New and Old Testament quotations and references, intermingled with unique Book of Mormon teachings. It is majestic in language and scope, and exceeds anything Joseph Smith had recorded as a revelation so far in terms of theology or eschatology. In some cases, it has language that is only found once in the entire Doctrine and Covenants, making it very unique.²⁸ It is the first of many revelations focused on events and outcomes of the last days, increasing the intensity of the Church as a Millennialist organization, with an urgency to prepare for the great Second Coming of Christ.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1. This was first published in the *Evening and Morning Star* (September 1832), then as Chapter 29 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 10 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- The gathering (1-8)
- Destruction ahead of the Second Coming (9-21)
- The end of the Millennium (22-29)
- Concepts from the Bible Translation (30-50)

²⁶ JSP, H1:440 (Draft 2).

²⁷ JSP, D1:178.

²⁸ Unique phrases are called out below, but include “great and abominable church,” “whore of all the earth,” “not one hair, neither mote,” “Depart from me, ye cursed,” “word of my power,”

Commentary

The gathering (1-8)

1 ***the Great I Am***. This is the first time this phrase is used in the Doctrine and Covenants (the two other occurrences are 38:1 and 39:1). Additionally, while “I Am” is a title used for God in other passages (e.g, Exodus 3:14), appending “Great” to it is only in the Doctrine and Covenants.

1 ***whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins***. To display your arm in the Bible means to show power; in this case, the arm of power becomes one of mercy by which the price for our sins is paid. The phrase “arm of mercy” is not found in the Bible but is in the Book of Mormon six times. It is only found here in the Doctrine and Covenants.

2 ***as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings***. This marvelous metaphor of a hen calling for and pulling her small babies in under her wings and hiding them from danger shows the great love of the Savior for his people. He stands ready to extend this love and kindness; it is the people who refuse to heed the plea by being humble and obedient. They do not call upon him “in mighty prayer,” and thereby they suffer.

This expression is used by the Savior in the New Testament in a tone of melancholy and sadness, his final pronouncement upon Jerusalem—something he *would have* done, if Israel had only been willing. In the one usage of it in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 10:4-6), it reflects his eternal desire—he has done it in the past, he still does it, and he will yet do it. In the first two usages in the Doctrine and Covenants (10:65 and here) it is in the future tense—something he will yet do. The third occasion (43:24) is set at the day of judgment with a tone like in the New Testament—looking back and wishing Israel had only hearkened.

3 ***your sins are forgiven you***. The rest of the revelation, with its judgments and plagues, is easier to hear if listeners know that their sins are forgiven first. The brethren present at the conference were surely grateful to know that this was their standing before God. The counsel, however, is to “sin no more, lest perils shall come upon you.”

4 ***chosen out of the world***. The records report that at this time there were about sixty-two members of the Church.²⁹

“all things unto me are spiritual,” “list to obey,” and “the days of his probation.”

²⁹ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 3; JSP, D1:192.

Yet this handful of people took it as their personal mission to share the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the world! They were indeed chosen and prepared.

5 your advocate with the Father. A title used only once in the New Testament (1 John 2:1), this is the first of five times it is used in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is a dramatic image—Jesus standing before the judgment bar of God, pleading our case before the Father, applying his own atoning blood in our behalf.

6 it is his good will to give you the kingdom. God wants us all to have what he has, to inherit eternal life. His vision for us is not limited, nor is the size of heaven set at a certain capacity.

6 being united in prayer. This certainly has reference to both the need to have a unity in what we seek from the Lord as well as the practice in that day of literally uniting in prayer—saying the same words together. Conference reports from the early Church meetings show that was a regular event at such gatherings.³⁰

7 the gathering of mine elect. This is the first real reference in the Doctrine and Covenants to gathering of the elect. The New Testament references using that phrase are also both couched in eschatological (last days) terms—Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27. The elect are those that truly hear and respond with humility to God’s voice (see v. 2 above), “the portion of church members who are striving with all their hearts to keep the fulness of the gospel law in this life so that they can become inheritors of the fulness of gospel rewards in the life to come.”³¹

8 they shall be gathered in unto one place. This is the first reference to the physical gathering of the Saints into a single location, a doctrine that will drive so much of what Joseph Smith did during his ministry. The reason for gathering is straightforward here: be prepared for the tribulations of the last days which shall be upon the wicked. Other benefits of gathering will be revealed with time, such as having enough people in one place to make a temple viable, as will be the locations of gathering in the early days—Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and finally Utah. Today, of course, we gather to the stakes of Zion all around the world.

Destruction ahead of the Second Coming (9-21)

9 the earth is ripe. From Revelation 14:15, meaning that the harvest needs to happen before it is too late.

9 they that do wickedly shall be as stubble. From Malachi 4:1. After the harvest, the stubble is left in the field. To prepare for the next planting, the farmer can plow it under, or he can burn it, which is much less work and provides good fertilizer for a new crop.

11 dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years. The book of Revelation teaches of the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth after his coming, when Satan is bound and the Saints live in peace and triumph (20:4-7), but it’s not a Book of Mormon doctrine. This is the first time it is presented to the new Church in the Doctrine and Covenants.

12 the Twelve...judge the whole house of Israel. Another New Testament doctrine (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30), reinforced in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 12:9; Mormon 3:18-19), but mentioned only here in the entire Doctrine and Covenants.

13 even as upon Mount Sinai. The trumpet sound is not on Mount Sinai in the last days, but is like something that happened on that mountain. See Exodus 19:16-20, where there was thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, and a trumpet blowing loudly. The presence of the Lord on that mountain brought smoke and earthquake, and “the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder.”

13 a crown of righteousness, and to be clothed upon. In v. 12, the Twelve were given “robes of righteousness, with crowns upon their heads.” Here that same blessing is extended to “the dead which died in me,” with the reward of being like Jesus, with Jesus, and one with Jesus.

14 the sun shall be darkened. The darkening of the sun is a sign of God’s judgment, and is common in scripture, including Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24; Acts 2:20; and Revelation 6:12. Satan’s evil presence darkens the earth: Revelation 8:12; 9:2. The sun was darkened at Jesus’ crucifixion and death: Luke 23:45; 3 Nephi 8:22. This reference is the first of three in the Doctrine and Covenants; the others are: 34:9 and 45:42. Perhaps like the Nephites (3 Nephi 8:22), the darkening of the sun will not be because something happens to the sun itself but something in the earth’s atmosphere blocks it.

14 moon shall be turned into blood. Many but not all of the sun scriptures above also mention the moon turning to blood, including Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20; and Revelation 6:12. D&C 88:87 changes the language so that the moon is “bathed in blood.” Like the sun, this may well be caused by atmospheric conditions on earth, not the moon being literally turned into or covered in blood.

14 text note:

RB1 reads “and some stars shall fall from heaven.” It was changed to “and the stars shall fall from heaven” for 1833 and maintained after that. “Some stars” means not all, whereas “the stars” could imply all, making the sign much more dramatic. It also matches Biblical phrasing in the various scriptures that have similar language, none of which use “some stars.”

³⁰ E.g., JSP, D1:192.

³¹ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 217.

14 **greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath.** Modern man with an understanding of science and nature will likely explain away the changes to the sun, moon, and stars. So greater signs will be provided so there can be no mistake about the message and the source. These signs are outlined in the verses following.

16 a **great hailstorm.** Revelation 8:7 and 16:21 speak of such a hailstorm, mixing hail, fire, and blood, destroying trees and grass with hailstones weighing as much as 130 pounds.

17 **my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not.** The wicked reject Jesus and his atonement, reject his teachings and his prophets. Thus they do not hear him and cannot be forgiven of their sins nor sanctified and made holy. The image is striking—everyone knows blood stains terribly and is very hard to get out. But the atoning blood of Christ is strong enough to be the cleansing agent against the vilest stains of sin and wickedness, thereby cleansing our garments through his sacrifice (see Ether 13:11 and Revelation 7:14).

18 **send forth flies upon the face of the earth.** The signs in the heavens and the destruction by hail and fire won't get the attention of the wicked, so the next step will be flesh-eating flies that lay their eggs in living beings so their maggots eat them up. There is no other scripture reference describing this particular plague, though it is reminiscent of one of the plagues of the Exodus in 8:21.

19 **tongues shall be stayed...flesh shall fall...eyes from their sockets.** Zechariah 14:3, 12 described a similar scene, from which the Indiana Jones writers got a scene at the end of the first movie, with flesh, eyes, and tongues being consumed as the enemies of the righteous stand against the holy city.

20 **beasts...and the fowls...shall devour them.** Isaiah 56:9 speaks of beasts of the field and forest devouring the enemies of Israel, while Jeremiah 12:9 and 15:3 have the birds and beasts playing a similar role. Ezekiel 39:4 has a comparable image. Other stories relate this tragic end or potentially dismal event: Jezebel eaten by wild dogs (2 Kings 9:32-26); Nephi left in the wilderness (1 Nephi 7:16); Abinadi's prophesy against Noah's people (Mosiah 12:2); and the fate of the Amlicites (Alma 2:37-38). Being eaten by wild beasts is a terrible punishment for many reasons, one of which was that they believed the soul remained restless unless properly interred. Being eaten by animals made that impossible, thereby causing eternal punishment. This is the only reference to this in the Doctrine and Covenants.

21 **the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth.** This is Book of Mormon language from 1 Nephi 13-14, 22; 2 Nephi 6, 10, and 28, though it is reflective of Revelation 17. This is the only time this phrase is used in the Doctrine and Covenants. This is not a church

per se, but any organization that fights against God (2 Nephi 10:16).

21 **spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel.** See Ezekiel 38:18 – 39:22.

The end of the Millennium (22-29)

22 **when the thousand years are ended.** The word "Millennium" is not found in the Bible or Book of Mormon, and won't appear in the Doctrine and Covenants until D&C 43. And the concepts of what happens at the end of the thousand-year reign of the Savior is unique to Revelation 20:2-9 in the Bible, where Satan is bound for 1000 years, but "loosed a little season" at the end. The righteous are raised and reign with Christ during the thousand years, but the rest of the dead are not resurrected until the end of that time. Then Satan rallies this troops for one great last battle, that of Gog and Magog, but fire comes from heaven and devours them. In D&C 29 here, "men again begin to deny their God," and the earth is just spared "for a little season." More on this in D&C 88.

23 **a new heaven and a new earth.** This concept comes from four other scriptures: Isaiah 65:17; 66; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:1. The phrase is unique to D&C 29 in the Doctrine and Covenants. It does not mean that the heavens and the earth will be destroyed, but rather transformed—resurrected, in a sense—to be not the home of mortal but of immortal, celestial beings.

24 **all things shall become new.** A similar phrase is found only once in the Bible, in 2 Corinthians 5:17, when Paul declared that a man in Christ is a new creature, and "all things are become new." The Book of Mormon uses this phrase four times, three of which are spoken by the resurrected Christ to the people at Bountiful (3 Nephi 12:47; 15:2-3), and the fourth by Moroni who was certainly familiar with Christ's use of the term (Ether 13:9). So the phrase can apply to an individual working through the Atonement of Christ to the entire world becoming new at the Second Coming.

25 **not one hair, neither mote, shall be lost.** The reference to "hair" and "mote" (another unique reference in this section) draws our attention to the minute care of details God will take during this restoration and exaltation of earth and mankind. Hairs are small, hard to see, and easily lost, but God has kept track of each one. Motes are specks, very hard to even see, but God has control over each one and will restore everything to its proper place. In our day, we might make the point by citing 'protons' and 'electrons,' since those represent super-small items to our understanding, saying that God comprehends and manages every particle in the universe.

26 **Michael, mine archangel.** This phrase is found in Jude 1:9. Joseph Smith had just learned (from D&C 27:11) that

Michael is another name for Adam. He had been translating the earliest chapters of Genesis, about Adam and Eve and the creation (next part below) and was thus being tutored about Adam's role. Here he learned that Michael is an "archangel" or angel of leadership or presiding, who sounds the trump that starts the universal resurrection ("all the dead," not just some)—an appropriate assignment for the one that brought death into the world by his first act of disobedience.

27 gathered on my right hand unto eternal life. The right hand is the hand of blessing, the place of honor. Those gathered around Jesus' right hand go to eternal exaltation and reward. This continues the themes found in Revelation, this time 20:11-15.

27 the wicked on my left hand will I be ashamed to own. By virtue of his Atonement, Jesus bought us all with his own life (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23), but he is ashamed of the wicked, which also has the meaning of being disappointed, wounded, and insulted. They go into "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 28). Joseph Smith will later learn they are called "sons of perdition" (Section 76:36-37).

28 Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. This is a quotation from Matthew 25:41, toward the end of Jesus' eschatological and final discourse in that book. This is another example of a phrase unique to this section in all of the Doctrine and Covenants.

29 never at any time have I declared...that they should return. Some in Joseph Smith's day taught that even Satan and his minions would one day be redeemed by Christ and enjoy a place in heaven. The Lord corrected that error strongly, saying that he had never taught such a thing. They cannot come into the Lord's presence because having rejected his saving authority completely, "they have no power." But lest we be overly dogmatic, with a small caveat he reminds us in v. 30 that "all my judgments are not given unto men."

Concepts from the Bible Translation (30-50)

We don't know for certain where Joseph Smith was in the translation of the Bible at the end of September, but can get very close, because the manuscript is dated 1 Oct 1830 at Genesis 4:18. Further examination of the historical circumstances of Joseph's and Oliver's schedules can narrow the reception of this information to before mid-July 1830.³² In this translation work, Joseph Smith had been learning great doctrines about the earliest days of the earth, the creation, and the fall. Many of those concepts now show up in this revelation. This section thus answers the questions the

³² David A. LeFevre, "The Education of a Prophet," in Craig James Ostler, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and Barbara Morgan Gardner, eds., *Foundations of the Restoration* (Provo, UT:

gathered elders were discussing relating to Adam's mortality.

30 whatsoever I have created by the word of my power.

The phrase "word of my power" is found three times in the Moses material Joseph Smith just translated (Moses 1:32, 35; 2:5), where it is equated with "mine Only Begotten Son" (Moses 1:32). It is related to a phrase used once in the New Testament, "word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). This is the only time this phrase is used in the Doctrine and Covenants.

32 First spiritual, secondly temporal. The juxtaposition of spiritual and temporal (meaning, "time-bound") is a common Book of Mormon characteristic (e.g., 1 Nephi 22:3; Mosiah 18:29; Alma 7:23; Helaman 14:16) and had already surfaced in the early revelations to Joseph Smith (D&C 14:11 and 24:13). But through the JST, Joseph learned to apply the words to the creation of the world: "For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth" (Moses 3:5), "...nevertheless, all things were before created; but spiritually were they created and made according to my word" (Moses 3:7), and "For it was spiritual in the day that I created it; for it remaineth in the sphere in which I, God, created it" (Moses 3:9).

In this section, the Lord expanded on those verses and applied the "first shall be last" concept from Matthew 19:30. Things were created spiritually first, then temporally at the beginning of creation—we were spirit beings first, then given bodies. But that will be reversed at the end, at the judgment, with a temporal work preceding the spiritual—we will be resurrected, saved from temporal death, and we with our new bodies will become 'spiritual' or exalted.

33 that you may naturally understand. The Lord speaks to us in terms that we can understand, even when the concept he is teaching is beyond our capacity to comprehend.

33 because ye have asked it of me and are agreed. Because these elders agreed to ask the Lord together and humbly sought an answer through the Prophet, the Lord was able to reveal his answer to them.

34 all things unto me are spiritual. Outside of the Bible translation, this is a unique message in the scriptures—God gives no purely temporal laws, and never has from the beginning. Even a so-called temporal commandment (such as the Word of Wisdom) has spiritual elements and impacts.

35 I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself. Adam and Eve were granted agency. This is not a con-

Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 2016), 102-103.

cept that comes through the Genesis account, but is powerfully told in the JST version: “nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee” (Moses 3:17).

36 *being tempted of the devil*— The thought starts here about Adam being tempted but is then interrupted with an embedded ‘backstory’ about the devil, which continues to the end of v. 39 (where there is another — and the message about Adam’s temptation continues).

36 *Give me thine honor, which is my power*. Satan’s pre-existent role is here taught, seemingly for the first time— except that Joseph Smith had already learned this from the work on the Bible (and somewhat from 2 Nephi 2:17-18). Satan was with God “from the beginning,” and said “here I am, 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” (Moses 4:1). The comment about God’s power ties ironically back to verse 29, where Satan and his followers are consigned to eternal misery because “they have no power.”

36 *a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away*. This interprets Revelation 12:4, where the dragon draws away a third part of the stars of heaven with his tail. Note that “a third part” doesn’t necessarily mean 33.33%, but it does a large portion, with the other two parts comprising those who did not follow Satan.

36 *because of their agency*. Even in the pre-mortal world, we had full agency to choose. Why these spirits decided to follow Satan is an interesting discussion but ultimately unknown at this time. The Lord’s point is that it was their choice and he allowed it, just as he allows us to exercise agency here on earth.

37 *they were thrust down*. “Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down; And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice” (Moses 4:3-4).

38 *a place prepared for them from the beginning, which place is hell*. This is a very different view of hell than any other religion of the day taught—it is where the rebellious spirits from the pre-mortal world go after they have further exercised their agency to tempt people here on earth.

39 *or they could not be agents unto themselves*. Satan had an eternal role that was required for man’s exaltation. If he was not there to provide temptation, if everything was perfect and without a push to do evil, forcing us to choose, the opportunity to exercise agency would be limited or perhaps

non-existent. This was true in the Garden of Eden and it is true for us today.

39 *if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet*. “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God. And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away” (2 Nephi 2:11–13).

40 *the devil tempted Adam*. In the Genesis and Moses accounts, Satan came to the woman first, who then brought the fruit to Adam. In an expanded understanding of that, D&C 29 teaches that the temptation from the devil came to both of them, and thus Adam ate the forbidden fruit and transgressed God’s command. We gain further understanding through Paul, who taught that Adam was not deceived by Satan (1 Timothy 2:14), thus making the choice with full knowledge of the consequences. From the Book of Moses, we learn that both later rejoiced in their choice, knowing it was necessary for all of mankind’s progression (Moses 5:10-12).

41 *first death...last death*. Verses 33-40 were, in essence, an explanatory pause, to help us understand one of the Lord’s main points in verses 1-32. In this verse, the Lord ties it all together.

The spiritual death or first death came from the Fall, and is of the same nature as the last death at the time of judgment. Both are a separation from the presence of God—one temporary and overcome by the Atonement, the other everlasting and given only after all the massive attempts by God to get us to come to him and repent.

41 *when I shall say: Depart, ye cursed*. The concluding remark, “Depart, ye cursed,” directly closes the loop with v. 28. The concept of first and last deaths are clearly taught in the Book of Mormon (e.g., 2 Nephi 9:11-13; Alma 11:45;

12:16; 42:9; Helaman 14:16), but D&C 29 expands and clarifies those teachings dramatically.

42 *until I, the Lord God should send forth angels.* God gave Adam, Eve, and their family a space to hear the message of salvation before death overcame them. One example of this is in Moses 5:6-8, where an angel visited Adam and taught him why he was commanded to offer sacrifices.

44 *through faith on the name of mine Only Begotten Son.* “Joseph Smith’s Book of Moses fully Christianized the Old Testament. Rather than hinting of the coming Christian truth, the Book of Moses presents the whole Gospel....the Book of Moses gives history a different shape from the Old Testament. There is no sharp drop after the Fall, followed by gradual spiritual enlightenment. Theologically, the ancient patriarchs were the equals of later Christians. The problem of history was to hold on to the Gospel, not to prepare for its coming.”³³ So it is with D&C 29, which continues what the revelations of Moses started, confirming that the knowledge of Christ as the one who provides salvation existed from the beginning.

43 *the days of his probation.* The Book of Mormon taught this doctrine in more than a dozen passages (Alma 12:24 being a good example). In the Doctrine and Covenants, it is uniquely related here in this verse.

43 *by his natural death he might be raise in immortality.* Death, Joseph Smith learned, was not something to be feared, but to be viewed as a step in our eternal progression, the one that sets up for the resurrection. We cannot become eternal beings without first dying.

44 *they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall, because they repent not.* It is not unreasonable to say that everything taught in D&C 29 leads to this one conclusion (also from v. 43): those who repent and believe can receive eternal life, and those who do not are destined for a “spiritual fall” or a second death that forever separates them from God.

45 *they love darkness rather than light.* The juxtaposition of light and darkness comes into play over one hundred times in the scriptures. From the very beginning, God divided the darkness from the light (Genesis 1:4-5). In the end, our affinity with one or the other will determine our proximity to God.

45 *receive their wages of whom they list to obey.* See Mosiah 2:32-33, 37; Alma 3:26-27. To “list” is to lean in a direction (most commonly used with ships), so as we lean toward Satan or toward the Lord, we will receive the reward that comes from that allegiance. This is another unique phrase in D&C 29 out of the entire Doctrine and Covenants.

46 *little children are redeemed.* See Moroni 8:20-22. This doctrine is clearly taught in the Book of Mormon, but the details are still vague as to when people begin to be accountable. That will be clarified by another revelation in the work on the Bible and then confirmed in D&C 68:25-27.

47 *they cannot sin.* “And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins” (Mosiah 3:16).

49 *whoso having knowledge, have I not commanded to repent?* Children cannot repent because they lack knowledge, but with understanding comes the responsibility to hearken to God, lest the judgments of D&C 29 come upon us.

50 *I declare no more unto you at this time.* The stunning theological revelations of D&C 29 needed to be digested and processed before more could be received and understood. The Lord mercifully gave the young Church time to do that.

Results

D&C 29 is a document that could be studied again and again, yielding additional insights. Steve Harper wrote, “The greatest teachers strive to similarly set forth the gospel accessibly without diminishing its depths and vast dimensions.” Harper also sees it as a model for parenting, how we teach, hold children accountable, and allow them to repent and change as they learn. Good parents warn, counsel, and spell out consequences and outcomes of different choices. Good parents grant their children agency, helping them become accountable and hopefully to become increasing obedient. Thus we guide children into becoming like God.³⁴

D&C 30 – Whitmer Brother Missions

³³ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 134-135.

³⁴ Harper, *Making Sense*, 100.

Setting

In conjunction with the 26-28 September 1830 conference of the Church, held in Fayette, New York, several revelations to individuals were received. Three of them were to the Whitmer brothers—David, Peter, Jr., and John. Originally these were three separate revelations, and were published that way in the 1833 Book of Commandments, but were combined by Joseph Smith in 1835 into a single section, even though they were quite different in content (in contrast to D&C 14-16, which remained separate but are similar—and nearly identical in the case of 15-16).

The conference minutes give some insight into the events of these three days. Seven elders were listed as attending (Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, David, John, and Peter Whitmer, Samuel Smith, and the new convert Thomas B. Marsh). The first order was to appoint Joseph Smith “to receive and write Revelations & Commandments for this Church,” a reference to the principles of D&C 28 being accepted. Joseph then read Isaiah 5 and prayed, after which Oliver Cowdery read the Articles and Covenants (D&C 20) and Joseph remarked on them. They noted that thirty-five had been added since the last conference, making Church membership now sixty-two. Priesthood ordinations took place, and everyone prayed together and took turns giving exhortation (talks). The notes don’t cover every detail of the three days but do note that “Singing and prayer [were given] in behalf of Br. Oliver Cowdery & Peter Whitmer jr. who were previously appointed to go to the Lamanites.” At the end, David Whitmer was charged with keeping the Church records, since Oliver (who previously had the task) was leaving soon.³⁵

Spurred on by their reading of the Book of Mormon which said it existed to take the gospel to the remnant of the people in the book, and by D&C 3, the topic of preaching to the Lamanites was a subject of conversation at the conference. Just prior to the conference, Oliver had been called to lead the mission, but all were anxious to know who would go with him. The result was that Peter Whitmer, Jr., was given that task, and David and John were given tasks closer to home.³⁶

Documents and Publication

The oldest copies are found in Revelation Book 1. These were first published as Chapters 31-33 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and combined as Section 52 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

³⁵ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 3; *JSP*, D1:192-193.

³⁶ Harper, *Making Sense*, 101.

Outline

1. David Whitmer chastened (1-4)
2. Peter Whitmer called with Oliver (5-8)
3. John Whitmer, missionary (9-10)

Commentary

1-11 *text note*:

Nearly all of the second-person pronouns in the original use thou, thy, thee, etc. These were changed to the more common you, your, etc., in the 1833 publication and retained since then.

David Whitmer chastened (1-4)

1 *feared man and have not relied on me*. For Joseph Smith, this must have sounded very familiar, reminding him of the Lord’s rebuke to him in Section 3:7.

2 *your mind has been on the things of the earth*. Not the things of the world. The distinction is important in the Doctrine and Covenants, where the “world” is typically bad and the “earth” is good. Here David was likely focused too much on his own farm rather than the things of the Lord. “David is looking down rather than up.”³⁷

2 *to those who were set over you*. Referring to Joseph Smith, who as David knows, was set over him by revelation. David had sustained Joseph and covenanted to support him, but had gone away from that already.

2 *persuaded by those whom I have not commanded*. This refers to Hiram Page’s revelations, which were very persuasive to David Whitmer.

3 *left to inquire for yourself at my hand*. Rejecting the Prophet’s words puts David in a position to have to ask the Lord for help or direction, which would not be forthcoming given that he had rejected the Prophet’s words. The vicious cycle can only be broken by humility and repentance. The opposite is to accept and obey the Prophet’s words leads to an abundance of the Spirit, which leads to greater understanding and joy.

3 *ponder upon the things which you have received*. Lacking the Spirit, David can only turn to past experiences, including his divine witness of the Book of Mormon, to provide him any comfort.

4 *your home shall be at your father’s house*. Meaning, David was not chosen to go on the mission to the Lamanites, but was to remain behind.

4 *you shall attend to the ministry in the church*. In spite of the rebuke in these verses, it is clear that David had already begun the repentance process and was still called to serve in the kingdom. His role was to stay in Fayette, declare the

³⁷ Harper, *Making Sense*, 102.

gospel locally, and strengthen the Church. He was also called to keep the Church records, as mentioned above.

Peter Whitmer called with Oliver (5-8)

5 take your journey with your brother Oliver. Peter is called to accompany Oliver Cowdery on his mission to the Lamanites (D&C 28:8). He is to “open [his] mouth and declare the gospel,” not fearing, and taking direction from Oliver.

6 be you afflicted in all his afflictions. Peter was to struggle and suffer right along with Oliver, which they did. They prayed together for relief and deliverance, and achieved a great mission.

7 none have I appointed...except it is his brother, Joseph Smith. A reminder of the decision of the conference that Joseph Smith was the presiding elder of the Church, with Oliver second in authority.

7 text note:

RB1 and 1833 have different wording (quoting RB1 here): “& none have I appointed to be over him in the Church except it is his Brother Joseph.” The clarification in 1835, adding ‘concerning church matters,’ focuses the point upon the relationship between Oliver and Joseph, with Joseph having the divinely-appointed lead in Church matters.

John Whitmer, missionary (9-10)

9 proclaim my gospel. John was directed to preach the gospel. He had been acting as scribe for Joseph Smith, perhaps copying some of the revelations. After Oliver Cowdery left for his mission to the Lamanites, he became the scribe for the Bible translation work.

10 in that region round about. John was directed to preach in the area around Philip Burroughs’ home, which was in the Seneca Falls area, about five miles north of Fayette. Parley P. Pratt, just baptized on 1 September 1830, had preached there on 5 September, a Sunday, baptizing four heads of families.³⁸ John’s calling was to follow after Parley and build on that initial success.

11 your whole labor shall be in Zion, with all your soul. John was asked to consecrate all this time and effort, for a short period at least, to preaching and building up Zion. In reality, it was a lifetime call, for he was to “every open [his] mouth” in the Lord’s cause.

Results

David Whitmer stayed in Fayette and kept the records of the church until the next conference in January. It’s not known how much he preached in the local area.

Peter Whitmer went with Oliver Cowdery (and others called shortly) first to Ohio, then to Missouri. They walked in winter snow and under great difficulty and had no success preaching to the Lamanites, due to opposition from other preachers and government agents. But their stop in Kirtland, Ohio, yielded a huge number of converts and changed the entire direction of the Church.

John Whitmer went on a mission for about six months, preaching in the Seneca Falls, New York area. There is no known record of the results of his mission, and the historical record is somewhat unclear if the Burroughs family even joined the Church.³⁹ In March 1831, he was called to a new mission as Church historian (D&C 47).⁴⁰

D&C 31 – Thomas B. Marsh

Setting

Immediately following the three revelations that now comprise D&C 30, this revelation was received for Thomas B. Marsh. Thomas, thirty years old at the time of the conference, was a Boscawen area resident (Charlestown, to be specific) in the fall of 1829 when he felt prompted by the Spirit to head west. He went to Lyonstown, New York, where a woman told him about the “Golden Book” and directed him to Palmyra and Martin Harris for more information. When he came to Palmyra, he ended up in Grandin’s print shop. There he met Martin Harris and secured a signature of the first sixteen pages (a single piece of paper with sixteen pages printed front and back). He was

taken to the Smith home where he met Oliver Cowdery and learned “all the information concerning the book I desired.” Thomas read the pages of the Book of Mormon that he had received, shared it with his wife, Elizabeth, and both were converted by it. He subsequently moved his family to Palmyra and joined the Church, being baptized on 3 September 1830 in Cayuga Lake by David Whitmer. He was already an elder by the 26 September conference, having been previously ordained by Oliver Cowdery, when he received this revelation through Joseph Smith.⁴¹

³⁸ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 246.

³⁹ Black, *Who’s Who*, 41-42.

⁴⁰ Harper, *Making Sense*, 102-103 (for all three paragraphs).

⁴¹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 104-105; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:214-215; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 248.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is from Revelation Book 1. It was first published as Chapter 34 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 53 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 *text note:*

The original in RB1 said Thomas was blessed because of “thy faith in my words,” likely referring to the Book of Mormon signature page that converted he and his wife. It was changed to “work” in 1833 and subsequent printings followed that wording.

1 ***blessed are you because of your faith in my work.*** Converted after reading just the first sixteen pages from the Book of Mormon, Thomas showed great faith, moving his family from Massachusetts to Palmyra in order to join the Church.

2 ***many afflictions because of your family.*** Not the family he was leading as a father but the one he ran away from when he was fourteen. As a young man, he had wandered from city to city, trying to support himself. It was many years before he found steady work in a foundry making type for printing presses.⁴²

2 ***they will believe and know the truth.*** Thomas’s children were still young—all under ten years of age—so the Lord confirmed that they would come to know the truth later.

3 ***the hour of your mission is come.*** Early members were anxious to serve and teach, including Thomas. This was great news for the new convert—he could already go out and teach the gospel.

4 ***declare the things which have been revealed to my servant, Joseph.*** This was not a calling to preach his own ideas or even inspirations but to stay within the revelations that had come from the Lord to Joseph Smith, including the Book of Mormon and the revelations being received to individual members, like this one, and the whole Church, like D&C 20.

4 ***white already to be burned.*** The urgency of the message is increased somewhat here. In Section 4 and others, the field was ready to be harvested, but now the burning is near. This is the only scriptural reference to this concept of a field being white and ready to be burned.

5 ***your sins are forgiven you.*** Like Joseph, Oliver, and others, Thomas first sought to know his standing before the Lord. Here the assurance came that sins are forgiven and forgiven souls are called to go to work.

5 ***your family shall live.*** As he was called to serve, so his family would be blessed for his service, as it is today when

missionaries go out and their families recognize the blessings that come from sacrifice.

6 ***only for a little time.*** With a young family, he should teach but not be gone for long. His wife needed his support raising the family as much as the world needed the missionary message.

6 ***I will prepare a place for them.*** The Marshes lived with the Smiths in Manchester when they first arrived in the area. Such care would be extended while Thomas served.

7 ***I will establish a church by your hand.*** Today we would say, a ‘branch of the Church,’ meaning he would have good success and baptize a number of people.

8 ***when they shall be gathered.*** Gathering is not yet a command to the Church but is anticipated here. Thomas’ converts will be gathered at some point, and he can help them prepare.

9 *text note:*

RB1 and 1833 have “be patient in afflictions & sufferings” The “& sufferings” portion was dropped in 1835. Afflictions and suffering are often combined in the language of the Book of Mormon (twenty-six times), but in the Doctrine and Covenants—in fact, if this reference had remained, it would be the only one (the three there now only speak of suffering as a verb).

9 ***Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast.*** How Thomas Marsh governed his house was eventually his downfall. Had he followed the Lord’s instructions here, much pain could have been avoided.

10 ***you shall be a physician unto the church.*** Thomas had evidently experimented in apothecary somewhat during his grocer years, before working in the foundry. But the Lord wasn’t calling him to be a Church doctor. Rather, like the original apostles in the New Testament who were called to be “fishers of men,” Thomas is called to be a spiritual physician to Church members, healing their souls and bringing them truth. Like the apostles who were fishers, the metaphor resonated with Thomas because of his experience.

11 ***it shall be given you by the Comforter.*** Thomas had experience with the Spirit, letting it lead him to Palmyra where he could meet Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery and read part of the Book of Mormon. That same Spirit, now conferred upon him as a gift, would lead him through his missions if he followed the counsel in the verses before and after this one.

12 ***lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward.*** Thomas did lose much when he gave into temptation and followed after pride instead of meekness.

13 ***These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ.*** Joseph spoke the words and a scribe

⁴² Harper, *Making Sense*, 104.

wrote them down, but the Lord confirmed the true source of the revelation.

Results

Thomas Marsh later was president of the Quorum of the Twelve. He was a good leader and someone know to follow the Spirit. He solved problems and answered many

members' questions. In 1838, however, he was upset by a judgment against his wife having to do with the cream from milkings, and was finally excommunicated in 1839 because of his continued resistance to her receiving correction. When Elizabeth died, he came west and rejoined the Church. Had he not left in 1839, he would have been the senior apostle and thus the next prophet after Joseph Smith.⁴³

D&C 32 – Missionaries to the Lamanites

Setting

This revelation was received in response to a request from Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, already called to journey to Missouri together (D&C 28 and 30), wondering if others might be called to accompany them on their journey. D&C 32 calls Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson to join them. The exact date is unknown, but it was between the 26-28 September 1830 conference and 17 October 1830, when all four brethren signed a statement of covenant relating to their labors on that date.

The text of the two covenants is interesting.⁴⁴ Oliver signed the first one alone, promising to proclaim the gospel to the Lamanites and to “rear up a pillar as a witness where the Temple of God shall be built, in the glorious New-Jerusalem.” He agreed to “walk humbly” and be directed by the Spirit, enduring any trials they might experience “with all patience and faith.” The other three covenanted to “accompany” Oliver, “giving heed unto all his words and advice,” to pray for their success, and to bear “bonds, and imprisonments, and whatsoever may come up us with all patience and faith.” The documents were witnessed by Joseph Smith and David Whitmer.

Emma Smith led the sisters to help prepare for these missions, since they had little money to support themselves. She and others made them clothes from scratch (spinning and weaving the cloth), even though Emma was weak at the time from her own pregnancy with twins.⁴⁵

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 2. It was first published as Section 54 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and published with the same number in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 **Parley P. Pratt.** Parley P. Pratt had joined the Church in September 1830 after reading the Book of Mormon in one sitting. Like Thomas Marsh, he was quickly ordained an elder and began to preach, converting several, including his 19-year-old brother, Orson. He had a great interest in the American Indians and had, in fact, planned a self-appointed mission to them in 1826, long before he joined the Church.⁴⁶ He was the only one married among the missionaries.⁴⁷

1 **learn of me, and be meek.** By his own account, Parley was an avid student of the New Testament. But now the Lord counsels him that he has yet more to learn. By being “meek and lowly” he was promised both the ability to proclaim and learn the good news of Jesus. Parley was also a minister who had been on previous missions, so he needed humility to take direction from Oliver during this one.

2 **Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, Jun.** It is hard to imagine two more powerful missionary companions at this time in the Church. Oliver, second only to Joseph and witness to angels, the restoration of priesthood and keys, the scribe for the Book of Mormon, and more, was accompanied by Peter, one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon and an early and constant supporter of Joseph Smith. They would bear such strong testimony that in the words of one observer, “the impulse [to be baptized] was irresistible.”⁴⁸

3 **Ziba Peterson.** Ziba’s real name was apparently Richard; it is not known why he went by Ziba. He was baptized on 18 April 1830 and ordained an elder in June.

4 **give heed to that which is written.** The Bible and the Book of Mormon are the things which are written at this time, though it could also refer to the revelations received through Joseph Smith which were written down and copied by many people for personal use.

⁴³ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:215, 217.

⁴⁴ See JSP, D1:202-205; also Cook, *Revelations*, 44.

⁴⁵ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 219.

⁴⁶ JSP, D1:200.

⁴⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:221.

⁴⁸ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 252.

4 *I may unfold the same to their understanding.* The men were invited to pray for understanding of the scriptures, something that is good counsel for anyone seeking to understand the printed word of God.

Results

On 28 May 1830, Congress had passed the “Indian Removal Bill,” which determined to relocate all native Americans from within the United States to the frontier west of Missouri. By the time of this revelation, they had not all moved, but many had and were thus concentrated in that area, making it a perfect place for a mission to the Laminites. Other tribes still in New York and Ohio were also considered important to visit. Accordingly, the brethren saw the Catteraugus or Seneca Indians in western New York, near Buffalo, leaving the Book of Mormon with them. Moving west through Sandusky, Ohio, they visited the Wyandots. Traveling through deep snow in the winter for hundreds of miles, sometimes without seeing a house for days, the four arrived in “Indian territory” west of Missouri (now Kansas), where they taught the Shawnees and the Delawares, who were much interested in the Book of Mormon. But local ministers didn’t appreciate the Mormon’s influence on the Indians and asked the government agents to get them to leave, which they did. They concluded their mission in Jackson County, preaching to many there. They did not return home until Spring 1831, by which time most of the Church had moved to Kirtland.

The biggest impact of their mission came early on, however. When passing through Ohio, they stopped in Parley Pratt’s former home, Mentor, teaching the congregation of his former minister, Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon had been preaching the need for a restoration of authority and doctrine, and the congregation in and around Kirtland was very

receptive to the message, with 127 souls being baptized in three weeks—more than doubling the size of the young Church. Oliver wrote to Joseph Smith, telling him of their many baptisms, saying, “There is considerable call here for books [meaning the Book of Mormon], and I wish you would send five hundred immediately here, and when they are, <or> a part of them are sold, one of these will fetch the money.”⁴⁹ Many of these converts, including Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams (who joined the four men on their trip to Missouri), Edward Partridge, Isaac Morley, John Murdock, and Lyman Wight, became influential Church leaders.⁵⁰

Parley Pratt later became a member of the Twelve and served the Church all his life. He wrote extensively and powerfully of his experiences in the early days of the Church in a lively Autobiography that is still enjoyed today. His inclusion in this mission was hugely impactful because of his connections to Kirtland, where the missionaries stopped and enjoyed great success.

Ziba Peterson proved to be an effective missionary on this journey, preaching to Indians and settlers alike. He met and converted his wife, Rebecca Hooper, while on his mission in Missouri; they were married on 11 August 1831.⁵¹ He served at least one other mission in 1831. However, in May 1833, he withdrew from the Church and was excommunicated later that year on 25 June. For several years, he remained in Missouri, then emigrated to California to join in the gold rush fever going on there in 1848. He became a sheriff of Dry Diggins, CA, which was renamed “Hangtown” in his honor, after he captured and hung three criminals in October 1848. He died a short time after that incident of unknown causes. His widow became a neighbor of the former Missouri governor, Lilburn W. Boggs, who had moved to northern California in 1846.⁵²

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⁵¹ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 253.

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