

# D&C 53-58

Lesson 11, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 28 Nov 2016

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## General Introduction

June, July, and August of 1831 were indeed eventful months. D&C 53-56 were mostly directed to individuals (with 54 being given to the group of Colesville Saints moving from New York to Ohio) who were key players in the Church in Ohio and most of whom would shortly become key players in the events in Missouri. Men were first ordained to the high priesthood (later call ‘high priests’) in a June 1831 conference in Ohio. Elders called in D&C 52 to journey to Missouri left Ohio and began to work their way southwest to that western territory. Among them was Joseph Smith.

In Missouri, the Lord kept his promise to reveal important information about Zion and the New Jerusalem. The center place was revealed to be in Jackson County, with a lot for the temple identified. Men were called to stay in Missouri and form the foundation of the Mormon settlement there. Others were called to journey back to Ohio, creating a challenging dynamic of two main Church locations for several years.

The Lord laid out a careful plan in D&C 57-58 for how the Saints could peacefully and legally increase their presence in Missouri. They were to purchase lands over time, gradually move people there, and be as productive and profitable as they could with land purchases, a printing business, and other efforts. Being taught to do many good things without waiting for a revelation telling them to do so, these men and their families who soon joined them sacrificed much with the goal of building up Zion and God’s kingdom on earth. These were exciting days for a Church barely a year old and a Prophet, who was just twenty-five years old himself, now leading hundreds of converts in an ambitious mission to prepare the world for the Second Coming.

### Summary Chronology

- **Fri, 10 Jun 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 54 in Kirtland, Ohio, directions for the Colesville Saints.
- **Tue, 14 Jun 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 55 in Kirtland, Ohio, a call to William W. Phelps.
- **Wed, 15 Jun 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 56 in Kirtland, Ohio, a revelation for Thomas B. Marsh.
- **Sun, 19 Jun 1831** – Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Martin Harris, Edward Partridge, William W. Phelps, Joseph Coe, Sidney Gilbert, and Elizabeth Gilbert left Kirtland for Missouri. They went by stage, canal boat, and by foot, passing through Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis. They arrived about 14 July in Independence.
- **Tue, 28 Jun 1831** – The Colesville Saints left Ohio on their journey to Missouri. They arrived on Tue, 26 July 1831.
- **Thu, 14 Jul 1831** – Joseph Smith and his party arrived in Independence, Missouri, about nine hundred miles from Kirtland.
- **Sun, 17 Jul 1831** – William W. Phelps (in 1861) claimed that Joseph first taught the principle of plural marriage on this date.
- **Wed, 20 Jul 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 57, the first revelation in Missouri (at Independence) about getting Zion established in Missouri.
- **Sun, 24 Jul 1831** – The first Church service was held in Missouri under Joseph Smith’s direction; two were baptized.
- **Tue, 26 Jul 1831** – The sixty or so Colesville Saints arrived in Independence, Missouri.
- **Mon, 1 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 58 in Independence, Missouri, about implementing the laws of Zion.
- **Tue, 2 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith assisted the Colesville Saints in laying the first log of the first house built by Latter-day Saints in Missouri.
- **Wed, 3 Aug 1831** – The temple spot in the Church was in Independence and was dedicated by Joseph Smith on this date.
- **Thu, 4 Aug 1831** – The first Church conference in Missouri was held, with about forty-four members present.
- **Fri-Mon, 3-6 Jun 1831** – The fourth conference of the Church was held, the first one in Ohio. Many wonderful spiritual manifestations are enjoyed, including Joseph and Lyman Wight seeing the Father and the Son, Joseph’s teaching that John the Revelator was among the Ten Tribes, and the first men being ordained to the high priesthood.
- **Wed, 8 Jun 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 53 in Kirtland, Ohio, a revelation to Sidney Gilbert.

- **Tue, 9 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Gilbert, William W. Phelps, Sidney Rigdon, and others leave Independence to go back to Ohio.
- **Sat, 27 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith and those in his party arrived back in Kirtland from their journey to Missouri.
- **Mon, 12 Sep 1831** – Joseph and Emma moved to the John and Alice (Elsa) Johnson farm in Hiram, Ohio.

## D&C 53 – Directions to Sidney Gilbert

### Date and Location

Wednesday, 8 June 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

### Setting

This revelation is an example of the appropriate way to make ourselves available to the Lord when we are anxious to serve—not seeking a specific calling but expressing willingness.<sup>1</sup>

Algernon Sidney Gilbert, age 41 at the time of this revelation, was an early convert to the Church in Kirtland, Ohio. He was Newel K. Whitney’s business partner. Gilbert was not mentioned in D&C 52, when many Ohio brethren were called on missions, mostly to Missouri. This may have been due to his well-known insecurity about his ability to preach.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, he was willing to help in the cause, and so a couple days after the conference, he came to Joseph Smith individually, seeking the Lord’s will for him. D&C 53 is the result, received on 8 June 1831. Gilbert had been ordained an elder just two days before, on 6 June 1831.<sup>3</sup>

### Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is either Newel K. Whitney papers or Sidney Gilbert notebook. Also in Revelation Book 1. First published as Chapter 55 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, as the second Section 66 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and as Section 67 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

### Commentary

**1 I have heard your prayers.** Gilbert was anxious to serve in the kingdom in a way that fit with his own abilities. He prayed to be a servant in the kingdom and now the Lord would answer his prayer.

**1 calling and election.** This is the only use of this phrase outside of 1 Peter 1:10. In 1831, it did not have the meaning we associate with it today, based on Joseph Smith’s later teachings. Here the Lord is merely referring to Gilbert’s call to serve in the Church.

**2 forsake the world.** More than just a spiritual command, this specifically called Gilbert to leave his home, his business, and his former life, and serve the Lord in new capacities. This he faithfully did, such that B. H. Roberts later noted, “the Lord has had few more devoted servants in this dispensation.”<sup>4</sup>

**3 Take upon you mine ordination.** Because of this phrase, some had concluded that the revelation had to be received before Gilbert was ordained an elder, but that took place on 6 June 1831, according to the Far West Record, and the correct date for this revelation is 8 June 1831. Thus the language here is not to be “ordained” as in a priesthood office but to look to a different meaning. Both the earliest copy and the 1833 and 1835 publications used the word “ordinances” here instead of “ordination.” A common meaning for ordinances was ‘rules’ or ‘commandments,’<sup>5</sup> so the Lord is really saying, ‘Obey my commandments, even those of an elder,’ meaning leadership and preaching. See v. 6 below.

**4 be an agent unto this church.** Gilbert acted in this capacity while purchasing real estate for the Church in Missouri. He reported to the bishop, Edward Partridge, and the two worked together closely during the years 1831-1834.

**5 take your journey with my servants.** Not having previously been called to go to Missouri with the others, now Gilbert received that command to go in Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon’s party.

**6 the first ordinances which you shall received.** Probably meaning ‘commandments’ (see v. 3 above). Gilbert received some information now that he needed to obey, with

<sup>1</sup> McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 398.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:124-125.

<sup>3</sup> See Minute Book 2, entry for 6 June 1831, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-2/6>; also Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:125.

<sup>5</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:126; the 1828 Webster’s dictionary defines “ordinance” as first, a rule established by authority, and second, an observance commanded. See <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/ordinance>.

“the residue” of his duties coming later when they arrive in Missouri.

## Results

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Sidney Gilbert and his wife Elizabeth were obedient to D&C 53 and traveled to Missouri with Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, leaving Kirtland on 19 June 1831, just 11 days after the revelation. There he received further instructions (D&C 57), to which he was also obedient, opening a store (which doubled as the bishop’s storehouse) and serving as the Church’s agent in real estate transactions. He made handwritten copies of many of the early sections of

the Doctrine and Covenants, some of which are the oldest copies known today.

Sidney Gilbert was faithful, though he received one rebuke in 1833 (D&C 90:35), probably relative to a letter he wrote. He suffered great persecution in Missouri, had his home destroyed and the store plundered. He had nothing left but his Bible and his hand-copied revelations. He opened a new store in Liberty, and was generous with the Church and other members. He died of cholera on 29 June 1834, contracted while taking care of others who were so inflicted.

# D&C 54 – Colesville Saints to Go to Missouri

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## Date and Location

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Friday, 10 June 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

## Setting

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Leman Copley, mentioned previously in D&C 49, had agreed to share his 759-acre farm with the arriving Colesville, New York Saints. This arrangement probably went back to February 1831, when Joseph Knight, Sr., who had first taken Joseph Smith to Ohio, met with Copley and talked through the details.<sup>6</sup>

When the group of about sixty<sup>7</sup> Colesville Saints arrived in May 1831, led by Newel Knight, Copley put them to work on his large farm and allowed them to start building homes and fences and planting crops. But a short time later, after the Shaker mission, Leman changed his mind, and enlisted the help of his former Shaker leader, Ashbel Kitchell, to eject the Colesville members from his land. This may have been in part due to the fact that he felt slighted by the Colesville Saints who questioned why no Shakers were converted during his mission.<sup>8</sup> There is also a question about his full ownership of the land, perhaps making it legally impossible for him to consecrate it.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of the reasons, he not only asked these recent arrivals to leave his land, but charged them sixty dollars for “damage” done while they were there, which Joseph Knight said was “fitting up his houses and planting his ground.”<sup>10</sup> “He didn’t want consecration,” notes one scholar, “he wanted exploitation.”<sup>11</sup> Confused and uncertain what to do, Newel Knight went to Joseph Smith in

Kirtland. The Prophet inquired of the Lord, and Section 54 is the result, received on 10 June 1831.

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1. First published as Chapter 56 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, then as Section 67 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and Section 68 in 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

## Commentary

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1 **he who was crucified for the sins of the world.** The Lord immediately explains who is speaking through Joseph Smith so there is no confusion on the part of the Colesville Saints. This isn’t Joseph telling them what to do but the Lord himself, directing their path.

2 **Newel Knight.** Newel Knight had just been called to go to Missouri as a missionary with Selah Griffin (D&C 52:32). Leman Copley’s rejection of the Law of consecration caused Knight’s call to be modified. He would still “stand fast in the office whereunto I have appointed you” and go to Missouri, but no longer just as a missionary. Instead, he was to lead the Colesville Saints there to settle (see v. 7).

3 **let them repent.** The Colesville Saints were not perfect in this experience either. Their criticisms of Leman Copley following the Shaker mission certainly contributed to the problem. They also needed to repent and humble themselves.

4 **void and of none effect.** The New Yorkers had not broken the covenant, Leman Copley had. But they made the

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<sup>6</sup> JSP, D1:334.

<sup>7</sup> One study counted twenty-three adults and thirty-nine children in twelve families as making up the group, a total of sixty-two; see McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 401.

<sup>8</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:128.

<sup>9</sup> JSP, D1:315.

<sup>10</sup> JSP, D1:335.

<sup>11</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 192.

covenant, too, and Copley's decision had an effect on them, causing them to lose a place to live.

**5 *wo to him by whom this offense cometh.*** A not so veiled reference to Leman Copley, who is strongly condemned by the Lord for breaking his covenant.

**5 *better for him that he had been drowned.*** From Matthew 18:6, where the Savior said such a fate was better for those who “offend one of these little ones which believe in me.” The only other place this is found in scripture is D&C 121:22, the Prophet's letter from Liberty Jail as part of a litany of things that could happen to “those who swear falsely against my servants, that they might bring them into bondage and death.”

**6 *blessed are they who have kept the covenant.*** The Colesville Saints who had honored their part of the consecration covenant, who had taken their stewardships seriously and worked hard, they would “obtain mercy.”

**7 *flee the land.*** Enemies were going to hurt these Saints if they stay. To avoid that, they were to organize, appoint leaders to represent them, and move on.

**7 *appoint whom you will to be your leader.*** Newel Knight had led them to Ohio and continued to lead their group of sixty or so to Missouri.

**8 *into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri.*** This is the first call of anyone in the Church to go live in Missouri. It will certainly not be the last.

**8 *unto the borders of the Lamanites.*** The early members of the Church considered all Native Americans as “Lamanites,” and so the Lord spoke their language. The “borders” of these people was the edge of organized territories, the Missouri frontier, on a large reservation on the west side of the Mississippi River just created in 1830.

**9 *seek ye a living like unto men.*** They would live the law of consecration later, but when they first arrived in Missouri, they would have no land and little money. Therefore the Lord commanded them to earn their livings as best they could until the time came to live the law of D&C 42.

**10 *be patient in tribulation until I come.*** In the world, tribulation comes to nearly everyone committed to live the Lord's commandments. It will be that way even until the Second Coming, when the righteous will find “rest to their souls.”

## Results

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The Colesville Saints wasted no time. Gathering their belongings a second time, they again took a long journey, leaving Thompson, Ohio on 28 June 1831 and arriving in Independence on 26 July. This group of sixty or so faithful Saints became the first Mormon settlers in Missouri, and worked hard to settle that rugged and untamed part of the country. Coming from beautiful New England farms and settled businesses and communities, the rough nature of frontier Missouri must not only have been a shock to them but a great burden to bear. Still, the group stayed strong and together through it all.

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# D&C 55 – Call to William W. Phelps

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## Date and Location

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Tuesday, 14 June 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

## Setting

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In April 1830, Parley Pratt gave a Book of Mormon to a 38-year-old man named William Wines Phelps. He was a printer and editor of three newspapers in New York, most recently the anti-Masonic paper, the *Ontario Phoenix*, out of Canandaigua. He read the book that Parley gave him and immediately believed it was true, announcing that he was going to join that Church. In December 1830, he met Joseph Smith in Fayette which increased his commitment. However, in April 1831, he was arrested, likely due to a debt he owed. As terms of his release, he turned over the

newspaper to another, and immediately journeyed to Kirtland to join the Church.

He arrived with his family just before the Prophet and others left for Missouri. On 14 June 1831, he met Joseph and asked to know the Lord's will concerning him, and the result was D&C 55.<sup>12</sup>

Early sources disagree on some dates related to this, with the *Far West Record/Minute Book 2* stating that Phelps was ordained an elder on 6 June 1831. But the 14 June date for this revelation is in the oldest source and that agrees with dates in other records. The *Far West Record* is incorrect since Phelps himself listed 16 June as his baptismal and ordination date, just two days after this revelation. However, some evidence suggests that additional ordinations after 6 June were simply added under that date.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *JSP*, D1:336-337; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 403.

<sup>13</sup> *JSP*, D1:339n504.

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1. First published as Chapter 57 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, as Section 68 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and as Section 69 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

## Commentary

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1 *my servant William*. There aren't many places in the Doctrine and Covenants where the names haven't been expanded to include first and last names from the originals which almost always used just first names. For whatever reason—perhaps because he was the printer of the scriptures—no last name was ever added here.

1 *baptized by water*. Phelps and his wife had not yet joined the Church, but had come to Kirtland just for that reason.

2 *thou shalt be ordained*. Phelps was apparently ordained an elder the same day he was baptized and confirmed, which was even unusual in Joseph Smith's day. But the Lord had an immediate need for him and so put him to work right away.

3 *you shall lay your hands...give the Holy Ghost*. Sometimes we perhaps take this kind of thing for granted a bit today. Phelps went from a printer to a minister with true Biblical-like authority in one day, which must have been truly amazing to him.

4 *assist my servant Oliver Cowdery*. Oliver had remained in Missouri all this time, since arriving there in conjunction with his mission to the Lamanites. Phelps was to work with Oliver on printing important Church items.

4 *selecting and writing books*. William was also tasked with creating school books for children in the Church. This didn't happen until Nauvoo, however, as the printing press in Missouri was destroyed in July 1833, before they could start printing anything beyond *The Evening and the Morning Star* newspaper and 1833 Book of Commandments.<sup>14</sup>

5 *take your journey...be planted in the land of your inheritance*. It is certain that the Phelps didn't expect such a

call, having just arrived in Ohio from New York, but they were prepared to do the Lord's will and left in just a few short days, as commanded.

6 *Joseph Coe also take his journey*. Joseph Coe joined the Church in New York and came to Ohio just in time for the early June conference. Here the Lord called him to also journey to Missouri with the others. He was forty-six years old at the time of this revelation. He went to Missouri as commanded, and returned to Kirtland, faithful for several years. He helped purchase the mummies and papyri that became the book of Abraham, and helped build the Kirtland temple. But like others, fell away during the end of the Kirtland era. He remained in Kirtland, living on Joseph Smith's former farm, for the rest of his life.<sup>15</sup>

## Results

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William Phelps did as the Lord asked, getting baptized, confirmed, and ordained, then going to Missouri a few days later with Joseph and others. He established a printing business in Independence. He printed the Church's first newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, a Church hymnal, and the 1833 edition of Joseph Smith's revelations, *The Book of Commandments*. (The latter project was not finished because the press and type were destroyed with only five of six signatures printed.) He wrote several hymns, including "Gently Raise the Sacred Strain," "Praise to the Man," and "The Spirit of God."<sup>16</sup> He continued faithful to the Church all his life, printing more newspapers, including the *Deseret News* in Utah, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and much more. He was also a powerful witness of the Restoration.<sup>17</sup>

William W. Phelps is a great example of the Lord bringing someone into the Church at the right time with the talents and experience needed to complete a specific mission. His timely baptism and previous experience allowed the Church to establish its own printing office for the first time, giving voice to the message of the gospel in a new and expansive way, and blessing the Saints with printed versions of God's commandments to them in the last days.

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<sup>14</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:133.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:133; Black, *Who's Who*, 62-64.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:131.

<sup>17</sup> McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 402.

# D&C 56 – Revelation for Thomas B. Marsh

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## Date and Location

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Wednesday, 15 June 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

## Setting

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Ezra Thayre joined the Church in New York in Oct 1830 (see Setting to D&C 33). He came to Ohio in 1831, apparently with a fairly substantial sum of money from selling his farm in New York. This he consecrated to the Church and received a stewardship. He moved on to the Frederick G. Williams 144-acre farm, while Williams was serving a mission in Missouri with the four Lamanite missionaries (Oliver Cowdery, etc.). Other families were living there as well, including Joseph Smith, Sr.

On 15 May 1831, Joseph Smith received a revelation (not included in the Doctrine and Covenants<sup>18</sup>) that said how this property was to be managed, putting Joseph Smith, Sr., in charge and commanding a house to be built for Ezra. Called on a mission to Missouri (D&C 52:22), Ezra hesitated until the financial arrangements with this deal were finalized. Essentially, he wanted a secure deed to his part of the Williams farm before he would leave town, or his money back that he had consecrated. But the law of consecration did not give out deeds of stewardship or return money, so they were at an impasse. Finally, Ezra's companion, Thomas B. Marsh, who was very ready to go, tired of waiting, and asked Joseph what to do. (Note that Ezra Thayre was not involved in the Copley/Thompson problems, as the heading indicated in pre-2013 scriptures; his challenge was with the Williams property in Kirtland.)

In the meantime, another companionship, Newel Knight and Selah Griffin, had a different challenge. Newel was desired by the Colesville Saints to lead them to Missouri following their expulsion from the Leman Copley property in Thompson, Ohio (D&C 54:7 told them to select their own leader). Thus Thomas Marsh and Selah Griffin both needed companions. The Lord dealt with all these factors at the same time in this revelation in mid-June 1831.<sup>19</sup>

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1. It was first published as Chapter 58 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, as Section 69 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and as Section 70 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

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<sup>18</sup> See *JSP*, D1:309-314.

## Outline

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- Commandments to his servants (1-13)
- Commandments to the Church (14-20)

## Commentary

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### Commandments to his servants (1-13)

1 ***mine anger is kindled against the rebellious***. The Lord's anger hasn't been kindled since D&C 5. Kindled anger is just getting started, igniting, or arousing, meaning the Lord is just beginning to get angry. Quick repentance brings an end to anger and a return to blessing. In this case, he was angry at those "who profess my name" but are rebellious.

1 ***in the day of visitation and wrath upon the nations***. The ultimate punishment of the rebellious will be at the time of the Second Coming when the full wrath of the Lord will be poured out on the nations of the earth. This is the only time in scripture this phrase is used.

2 ***take up his cross***. This phrase was used once previously in the Doctrine and Covenants (23:6), in a revelation to Joseph Knight, Sr. But with the translation of the Bible, the Prophet had recently learned a deeper meaning:

And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself from all ungodliness, and from every worldly lust, and keep my commandments. Break not my commandments, for to save your lives; for whosoever will save his life in this world, shall lose it in the world to come; and whosoever will lose his life in this world for my sake shall find it in the world to come. Therefore, forsake the world, and save your souls (JST Matthew 16:25).

3 ***he that will not obey shall be cut off***. The Lord used the example of Ezra Thayre to teach a more powerful lesson: those who break God's commandments will be cut off (excommunicated or cut off from God's presence) "in mine own due time." It may not happen even in this life, but it will happen as the Lord has promised.

4 ***I, the Lord, command and revoke***. The Lord does not remove our agency, but gives us every opportunity to do the right thing. He commands and lets us choose, then revokes if we choose poorly, with the consequences falling on the heads of the unrepentant.

5 ***I revoke the commandment which was given***. With the preamble of vv. 1-4, the Lord revoked the mission calls to Thomas Marsh and Ezra Thayre (52:22) as well as that

<sup>19</sup> *JSP*, D1:339-341; Harper, *Making Sense*, 196; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:134-135.

given to Newel Knight and Selah Griffin (52:32). Ezra's call was revoked because of his delay, and Newel's because of the problems at the Thompson farm of Leman Copley where his leadership was needed. The result was that Thomas Marsh and Selah Griffin became companions instead, still called to preach on the way to and in Missouri.

**7 let my servant Newel Knight remain with them.** The Lord had told the Colesville, now Thompson, Saints to select their own leader (D&C 54:7), and they wanted Knight, so the Lord changed his call to preach on the way to Missouri to leading that group to Missouri.

**8 repent of his pride, and his selfishness.** Ezra's sin was due to pride and selfishness, which is at the root of many sins. If he could quickly give them up and honor the commitment he had already made relative to the Williams' land, he could still serve a mission in Missouri (v. 9).

**10 receive the money...and shall leave.** If he did not repent, Thayre was to get his donated money back and leave the Williams' farm, but at the cost of place on the farm and his membership in the Church.

**11 though the heaven and the earth pass away, these words shall not pass away.** D&C 1:38 had a similar phrase, but these are the only two times in Doctrine and Covenants these words are used. Other verses speak of the passing of heaven and earth in an eschatological sense but not as an oath, as it is used here. Compare Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; and Luke 21:33, where it is also an oath.

**12 pay it unto him again.** If Ezra did not repent and Joseph Smith had to repay him from Church funds, that repayment would be rewarded by the Lord and given back in the way of land in Missouri (v. 13).

## Commandments to the Church (14-20)

**14 you seek to counsel in your own ways.** Call it justification, call it rationalization, call it whatever you would like—people who try to do things their own way and not the way of the Lord—and sometimes even try to tell the Lord what he should or should not do—are in need of repentance, without which they cannot be forgiven.

**15 your hearts are not satisfied.** Counting our blessings is a better strategy for happiness than the pursuit of worldly things. If you measure success by how much 'stuff' you acquire, you will never be happy, because no one can have it all, and especially not with possessions. Being satisfied for what we have and not letting our hearts dwell on what we don't have leads to a life of peace and joy.

**15 have pleasure in unrighteousness.** We may not consider ourselves unrighteous, but do we take pleasure in any thing that is not in harmony with God's plan for our life? Do we have any 'pet' sins that we especially hang on to? If so, then we "obey not the truth."

**16 Wo unto you rich men.** The rich who will not give to the poor are at risk of judgment. Such hoarded riches "canker your souls." In the law of consecration, this refers to anyone who would get back less than they put in.

**16 the harvest is past, the summer is ended.** From Jeremiah 8:20, where it reflects that unrighteous actions have led to a poor harvest and now there is no way to make up for lost opportunities; we suffer the consequences of our choices.

**17 Wo unto you poor men.** The rich do not fall under condemnation alone; the poor who are not humble and satisfied with what they receive are also condemned, because they are greedy, lazy, and seek other's goods for themselves. In the law of consecration, this refers to anyone who would get less back than they put in.

**18 blessed are the poor who are pure in heart.** By contrast, those who are humble and contrite (remorseful or penitent) are promised to see God coming in his glory and to enjoy "the fatness of the earth."

**19 he shall reward every man, and the poor shall rejoice.** When Jesus comes again, he will set all things right, so that those who suffered from poverty in this life will be recompensed for their suffering, and those who had much in this life will receive their appropriate reward.

**20 inherit the earth from generation to generation.** Several psalms speak of the meek and lowly inheriting the earth,<sup>20</sup> a theme Jesus taught in Matthew 5:5 and 3 Nephi 12:5. This is the first reference to this concept in the Doctrine and Covenants, though we see it again in 88:17.

## Results

Thomas Marsh and Selah Griffin obeyed the Lord and went on their mission to Missouri, preaching by the way. Ezra Thayre was rebuked for pride and stubbornness in October 1831. He apparently repented because he did serve a mission to Missouri with Thomas Marsh in January 1832. He helped acquire the land where the Kirtland temple was built, marched with Zion's Camp, moved to Missouri, and was expelled with the other Saints. He lived in Nauvoo and was a member of the Council of Fifty. But when the Church went west, he stayed in the east, finally becoming a member of the Reorganized Church.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 25:13; 37:9, 11, 22; 82:8

<sup>21</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:135-136.

# D&C 57 – Getting Established in Missouri

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## Date and Location

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Wednesday, 20 July 1831, at Independence, Missouri.

## Setting

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Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland in February 1831. Less than five months later, he was off to Missouri, leaving behind a wife and two young children, the adopted Murdock twins. The purpose of the trip was to locate and start to build up Zion. The journey of about 900 miles took about a month. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Martin Harris, Edward Partridge, William W. Phelps, Joseph Coe, and Sidney and Elizabeth Gilbert left Kirtland on 19 June 1831. The company read “a chapter in the Bible” each day, praying and worshipping together as they traveled and preached.<sup>22</sup> At St. Louis, the group separated, with Rigdon and the Gilberts taking the water route up the Missouri River, and the rest of the company traveling to Independence on foot. The walking group arrived on 14 July, with the water group coming about a week later (see Image #5).<sup>23</sup> Others of the larger missionary group (D&C 52) arrived over the rest of the summer, along with the Colesville group of about sixty, who arrived on 26 July.

Upon their arrival in Missouri, they experienced a great reunion with the missionaries who were still there from their service that began the previous fall, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Frederick G. Williams, and Ziba Peterson, Parley Pratt having already returned to Ohio and joined the group of missionaries moving west. Said Joseph Smith:

The meeting of our brethren, who had long waited our arrival, was a glorious <one> and moistened with many tears. It seemed good and pleasant for brethren to meet together in unity. But our reflections were great: coming as we had from a highly cultivated state of society in the east, and standing now upon the confines or western limits of the united States, and looking into the vast wilderness of those that sat in darkness, how natural it was to observe the degradation, leanness of intellect, ferocity and jealousy of a people that were nearly a century behind the times; and to feel for those who roamed about with out the benefit of civilization, refinement or religion!—yea, and exclaim in the language of the prophets:—when will the wilderness blossom as the rose; when will Zion be built up in her glory, and where will

thy Temple stand unto which all nations shall come in the last days? Our anxiety was soon relieved by receiving the following [D&C 57].<sup>24</sup>

Relevant scripture references are: Isaiah 35:1 (blossom as the rose); Psalm 102:16 (Zion); Isaiah 2:2 (temple).

D&C 57 is the first one revealed in Missouri and was the fulfillment of other scriptures, such as D&C 42:35-36 and 52:1-5. It was revealed on 20 July 1831. It answers one of three questions that Joseph Smith took to the Lord: “where will thy Temple stand unto which all nations shall come in the last days?” D&C 58 is its companion, building on the locations revealed in D&C 57 to reveal how Zion could be brought into existence. It is important to note that in none of these revelations were the two “when” questions answered. Instead, the Lord focused on ‘where’ and ‘how,’ counseling patience and faith for the ‘when’ answers.

Incidentally, the work on the translation of the Bible was laid aside during the time in Missouri. When Joseph and Sidney Rigdon stopped to go to Missouri, they ended their work on the New Testament at Matthew 26:71, having nearly finished the book of Matthew and especially having received a substantially revised Matthew 24, in response to D&C 45 earlier that year.

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1; also in Sidney Gilbert notebook and Revelation Book 2. It was first published as Section 27 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants. There is a note in Revelation Book 1, written by John Whitmer, reading “Not to be printed at present,” so it was not included in the 1833 Book of Commandments.

## Outline

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- Independence is the center place of Zion (1-5)
- Brethren called to build up Zion (6-16)

## Commentary

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### Independence is the Center Place of Zion (1-5)

1 *Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed.* Other revelations had indicated that Missouri was the designated location for Zion, but not the specific site.

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<sup>22</sup> Jesse, *Papers*, 1:356.

<sup>23</sup> *JSP*, D2:3.

<sup>24</sup> "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 127, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed Novem-

ber 26, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/133>; see also Jesse, *Papers*, 1:357.



**2 *this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion.*** Less than sixteen months after the organization of the Church, the Lord revealed to anxious Saints the location of the promised New Jerusalem (Ether 13:1-12), according to previous revelations (D&C 42:35-36 and 52:1-5).

**3 *the place which is now called Independence.*** Independence was not an established city when Joseph and the others arrived in 1831. It was only four years old, having been founded in March 1827. It grew because of its location on the Missouri River and as the launching point and destination to sites further west, and was very prosperous in the 1830s and 1840s. Members of the Church came first in 1831 and were driven out in 1833.

**3 *a spot for the temple.*** The location designated was about a half mile west of the brick courthouse, which was at that time under construction (finished in 1832; see Images #3 and 4).<sup>25</sup> This lot was just outside of the designated town of Independence, at the time. Today the temple lot is empty except for a small meetinghouse and headquarters of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), but on either side of it are two important Community of Christ structures, their Auditorium and Temple. Kitty-corner is the LDS visitor's center and a church, along with LDS Family Services and the regional Facilities Management office for the Church (see Images #1 and 2).

**4 *land should be purchased by the saints.*** The Lord wasn't going to hand it over to Church members in some divine cataclysm. Rather, they were to acquire the needed land through normal, legal channels. The targeted land was everything on the western side of town, all the way to the border between Missouri and the Native American reservation where now one finds Kansas City (which was founded in 1838).

**4 *between Jew and Gentile.*** "Jew" in this case points to the Native Americans/Indians or Lamanites, which can be considered descendants of the Jews based on language in the Book of Mormon. "Gentile" refers to the Missourians.

**5 *every tract bordering by the prairies.*** The Church was directed to purchase lands, "inasmuch as my disciples are enabled," all along the border between Missouri and what is now Kansas (see Image #6 for lands owned by 1833). This meant their land purchases would be close to the Native American lands, potentially anticipating a stronger relationship there.

## Brethren Called to Build Up Zion (6-16)

**6 *Sidney Gilbert.*** Sidney was called to assist the bishop (D&C 53:4) in purchasing and managing the lands mentioned in the previous verses.

**7 *Edward Partridge.*** Edward was already the Church's bishop (D&C 41, 42, and 51); now his calling shifted to Missouri, with the charge to manage the consecration and stewardships of the Church's property in the area.

**8 *Gilbert plant himself in this place, and establish a store.*** Gilbert was also commissioned to open a store and use the income to help the cause of Zion and to provide needed goods for migrating members. Interestingly, there is still a store called the Gilbert Whitney & Co. store at the same location where Gilbert first established his store, in obedience to this commandment.

### 9 *text note.*

The original revelation read, "that he may send goods also unto the Lamanites even by whom he will." Thus the "license" was from government Indian agents, which would allow him to sell to the Native Americans. This would entail government purchases or subsidies, thus providing both income to purchase properties and a chance to preach the gospel to the Native Americans (v. 10).<sup>26</sup>

**11 *William W. Phelps...a printer unto the Church.*** William's background was printing and publishing and he had already been commanded to serve in this capacity (D&C 55:4). This brand-new convert was called to start printing for the Church, which required him to purchase a printing press (from Cincinnati), type, and paper, get it all to Missouri, build a building, and start his business. This was no small undertaking, but Phelps jumped in with enthusiasm and began printing the Church's first newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, in June 1832, less than a year after this commandment.

**12 *let him obtain whatsoever he can obtain.*** Phelps was not just to print for a Church audience but so "the world [would] receive his writings." That could also generate some income for the Church to be used in purchasing lands.

**13 *let my servant Oliver Cowdery assist him.*** Oliver was called to assist William Phelps in the printing business, and helped acquire the press and other tasks. Though Phelps had more experience, Oliver had learned much about printing with the Book of Mormon, overseeing that whole process while Joseph was living in Harmony.

**13 *to copy, and to correct, and select...by the Spirit.*** Oliver's role was to be more than a typesetter, though. Rather, Phelps was to follow Oliver's lead as the spiritual leader in determining what to print, even as Oliver assisted him with the mechanics of the printing operation. It was really a powerful partnership.

<sup>25</sup> See <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/courthouse-mentioned-revelation-zion>.

<sup>26</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 200.

14 *be planted in the land...with their families*. The move to Independence was permanent for these brethren; they were to bring their families and ‘plant’ themselves in Zion.

15 *the bishop and the agent*. Edward Partridge and Sidney Gilbert.

16 *those families which have been commanded to come*. Referring to the Colesville Saints, who arrived just five days after this revelation was given. They were on the way at this time and there was an urgent need to find places for those twelve families to live.

17 *further directions shall be given hereafter*. These were the only ones called to gather to Missouri at this time—Gilbert, Phelps, Partridge, Cowdery, and the Colesville Saints. Other people would be called later, and others would come of their own free will, but this was the advance group of Latter-day Saints that would establish the Church’s first permanent presence in Missouri.

## Results

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Sidney Rigdon dedicated the land of Missouri for the spread of missionary work on 2 August 1831. The next day, Joseph Smith dedicated land for the building of a temple, though the land itself was not purchased by the Church until four months later by Edward Partridge, just over 63 acres purchased for \$130. Partridge went on to purchase over two thousand acres of land for Church use.<sup>27</sup>

Sidney Gilbert established a store across from the courthouse, and William Phelps set up his printing shop just down the street. It was on the courthouse square that Bishop Partridge was tarred and feathered just two years later, at the same time the printing press was destroyed and the work on the Book of Commandments halted. The Missouri enemies of the Church persecuted these men for basically doing what the Lord had commanded them to do—buy lands, print books and a newspaper, and prepare the land for Zion.<sup>28</sup>

# D&C 58 – How to Succeed in Zion

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## Date and Location

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Monday, 1 August 1831, Jackson County (probably Independence), Missouri.

## Setting

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Ten days after his arrival, on Sunday, 24 July 1831, Joseph Smith lead a Church service in Missouri, after which two converts were baptized. The next day, 25 July, the sixty or so Colesville Saints arrived. The first two traveling missionaries called in D&C 52 had also arrived, Isaac Morley and Ezra Booth.<sup>29</sup> Seeking to know the Lord’s will now that they had followed the direction to come to Missouri, they petitioned the Prophet, and D&C 58 was the result, given on 1 August 1831.

It is important to understand the feelings of the people at this time. They had arrived in this land, excited to establish Zion. However, what they found disappointed them. The missionary work in the area had produced very few converts—unlike the hundreds in New York and Ohio—and the area was generally rough and undeveloped. Joseph Smith described it as “nearly a century behind the times.”<sup>30</sup>

The task was daunting. Some, like Ezra Booth, claimed that Joseph Smith had a revelation that told them Oliver had raised up a large Church in Missouri (no such revelation is found in any of his papers). Finding only ten or less converts, there were feelings of disappointment.<sup>31</sup>

Compounding these feelings, Joseph and Edward Partridge, the Church bishop, had a strong disagreement about the lands the Lord had commanded to be purchased, Partridge considering them to be poor land. Partridge later apologized but it added tension to the situation. No wonder they sought direction from God. D&C 58 addressed all this and more, counseling the early brethren to look beyond the current conditions and to imagine them in a Zion society.

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest known copy is in Revelation Book 1, though other copies are known to have existed, including those in the possession of Edward Partridge, Sidney Gilbert, and Ezra Booth, whose copy was partially quoted in a letter. It was first published as Chapter 59 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, then as Section 18 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants. It was also published by Church

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<sup>27</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 200-201; Cook, *Revelations*, 91-92.

<sup>28</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 201.

<sup>29</sup> "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 129, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed Novem-

ber 27, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/135>.

<sup>30</sup> See D&C 57 Setting above.

<sup>31</sup> *JSP*, D2:12-13.

critic Eber D. Howe in his 1834 book *Mormonism Unveiled*, with several differences from the Whitmer copy in Revelation Book 1.

## Outline

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- Enduring tribulation (1-7)
- Marriage supper of the Lamb (8-13)
- The role of bishops (14-18)
- Obedience and agency (19-33)
- Martin Harris an example (34-39)
- William W. Phelps to repent (40-43)
- Gather to Missouri (44-58)
- Preach the gospel (59-65)

## Commentary

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### Enduring tribulation (1-7)

**1 *learn of me what I will...concerning this land.*** D&C 57 promised more information about how things would work in Missouri, and this revelation starts that flow of direction from the Lord.

**2 *whether in life or in death.*** Not all the blessings promised were going to be realized in this life. From the start, the Lord is careful about the timing of the promises to the faithful.

Though directly relevant to D&C 59, Polly Knight, wife of Joseph Knight, Sr., and a great friend to Joseph Smith, was ill when this revelation was given. She died just six days later. Perhaps anticipating her death, the Lord promised the same blessings to those who live or died faithfully.

**3 *the design of your God concerning those things.*** The Saints could not see “with your natural eyes” the plans of God to bring about “things which shall come hereafter.” The Lord is teaching both faith and patience here.

**3 *after much tribulation.*** The Lord’s language is important, given the context and subsequent events. He used the word “tribulation” three times (vv. 2-4). The people of that day were anxious to inhabit Zion, and fervently sought that blessing. But the Lord warned them in several ways that there would be many difficulties before that day was fully achieved. Glory would come, but not until they had endured much.

**4 *the day cometh...the hour is not yet.*** From the perspective of the seventy or so people in Missouri in the summer of 1831, “not yet” must have seemed quite soon. Today we look back and still say, ‘not yet.’ The promise is sure that Zion will be redeemed and all the prophecies fulfilled, but

we do not know the time or the method by which the Lord will bring that to pass.

**5 *Remember this, which I tell you before.*** These words were perhaps helpful to the Saints in the dark days of 1833 and later in 1838 when persecutions in Missouri were raging. They were to lay to heart the warnings of tribulation and patience, that they might “receive that which is to follow.”

**6 *for this cause I have sent you.*** Why did the Lord send all these folks to Missouri? He made it clear in vv. 6-8: 1) to give them the opportunity to show obedience; 2) that they would be prepared to bear testimony of things to come; 3) to honor their efforts to lay the foundation of Zion, 4) to bear record of where Zion would one day be; and, 5) to care for the poor and prepare them for the great feast of the Lord. Note that it was *not* to build a city that would usher in the Millennium or drive out the existing people or anything like that. Sometimes we read what we want into the Lord’s commands.

**7 *laying the foundation.*** These early Saints will forever be honored for this pioneering work. They faithfully went, giving up all and laying their lives on the line for the cause of Zion. The foundational work they achieved is the heritage of the Church today.

### Marriage Supper of the Lamb (8-13)

**8 *a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor.*** The poor had already been promised such a feast (D&C 56:18).

**9 *a supper of the house of the Lord.*** The power of the temple and its ordinances was not fully understood by the Saints in 1831, but the Lord was teaching them using this language. To this covenantal supper “all nations” would be invited. Compare Revelation 19:7-17.

**10 *First, the rich and the learned, with wise and the noble.*** The first people invited to participate in these activities would be those with the means to hear the gospel and help build the kingdom. This is not giving preference to them as much as realizing that these people are more likely just to hear the message first, because of their circumstances.<sup>32</sup> Though many in that time might consider themselves more poor than rich, more uneducated than learned, they still were far ahead of the majority of the population of the world in that day.

**11 *after that cometh the day of my power.*** “All nations” (v. 9) including the rich and the poor (v. 10), the lame, the blind, and the deaf, will be invited to this great marriage supper, the celebration of the coming of Christ to the earth.

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<sup>32</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:151-152.

12 ***I, the Lord, have spoken it.*** The poor and suffering are assured that the promised blessings will come to them because the Lord himself personally assures it.

13 ***that the testimony might go forth from Zion.*** The words of the Lord will be taken to all the world by the missionaries of Zion.

### The role of bishops (14-18)

14 ***for this cause I have sent you hither.*** For all the reasons just cited in verses 6-13, the Lord has sent them to Missouri at this time.

14 ***my servant Edward Partridge.*** The first bishop of the Church had been called to administer the law of consecration and stewardship in Missouri (D&C 57:7), but he apparently realize that would entail living in Missouri until this revelation.<sup>33</sup> Partridge was one who had questioned the vision of Zion when seeing the conditions in Missouri. He needed to repent to lead in righteousness (v. 15).

15 ***his sins, which are unbelief and blindness of heart.*** Partridge likely looked at the land of Missouri with less favor than his home in Ohio. He struggled to believe in the Lord's promises about the land. In the end, this was one of the reasons for persecution experienced by the Saints there.

16 ***it shall not be given again.*** Partridge's call was for the here and now; rejecting it would mean a permanent change in his status and calling.

17 ***to be a judge in Israel.*** This is the scriptural foundation for this part of the calling of a modern-day bishop as well. The bishop is a judge over the people. Partridge was to judge how to divide up the lands, which modern bishops do not do, but he was also called to "judge his people" with the assistance of counselors (v. 18), which modern bishops do every week. The combination of judge and counselors invokes Isaiah 1:26, where judges and counselors are restored as at the first.<sup>34</sup>

18 ***according to the laws of the kingdom.*** The laws were given in D&C 42 and subsequent revelations.

### Obedience and agency (19-33)

19 ***my law shall be kept on this land.*** The Lord's laws for Missouri are the Law of Consecration and Stewardship (D&C 42). That was to be the law of Zion, administered by Bishop Partridge.

20 ***let God rule him that judgeth.*** The bishop (and everyone else in Zion) is not to consider himself a ruler over anyone. Rather, all submit themselves to the rule of God, who is the ultimate judge.

21 ***he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.*** It is a rare thing when any follower of Christ is required to disobey the laws of the land. Some people today try to use religion as an excuse to ignore civil law, but the Lord made it clear that that was not appropriate in the Church. That is the pattern until Christ comes to personally reign on the earth (v. 22), when we'll have perfect laws of the land.

In the meantime, Saints are also expected to influence laws for good. Brigham Young stated, "If this people live to the principles they have embraced, they will be capable of counseling the nations; for we build upon a just foundation, and our principles are truth, righteousness, and holiness."<sup>35</sup>

22 ***be subject to the powers that be.*** The phrase is only used here and in Romans 13:1 in all scripture. In Romans, Paul counseled members to "be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." The argument that the "powers that be" in Missouri were ordained of God is not made. However, it was expedient to obey the laws of the land "until he reigns whose right it is to reign."

23 ***in this light ye shall hold them forth.*** The laws of the Church were the laws of the Lord and the people should teach them to others from that perspective.

24 ***the land of his residence.*** The Lord reaffirmed that Bishop Partridge was to live in Missouri and make it his home. Both Partridge, his counselors, and Sidney Gilbert ("him whom I have appointed to keep my storehouse") were to bring their families and establish themselves in this land (v. 25).

25 ***as they shall counsel between themselves and me.*** These leaders were to move with their families to Missouri, but were to do it based on their personal revelations from the Lord, which would come while counseling with him.

26 ***it is not meet that I should command in all things.*** To this point, the Church had been heavily reliant on the word of the Lord through Joseph Smith. While the teachings and leadership of the Prophet would not diminish, the Lord called the growing Church to exercise their own spiritual gifts, to "counsel between themselves and me" (v. 25) and take action accordingly. This anticipates Joseph Smith being hundreds of miles away in Kirtland, making it difficult

<sup>33</sup> Partridge wrote to his wife shortly after this that he had left Painesville earlier that year, fully expecting to return after the Missouri mission: "I told people I was coming back & bid none a farewell but for a short time" (JSP, D2:16n74).

<sup>34</sup> JSP, D2:15n69.

<sup>35</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 7:66, quoted in McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 422.

if not impossible to bring every question to him for a revelation. Each person, within his or her stewardship, must learn to hear the voice of the Spirit and act accordingly.

**27 *be anxiously engaged in a good cause.*** There are many good causes all around us. We must not wait for the Lord to say, ‘Go do that,’ but should prayerfully consider our time and talents and contribute them to appropriate good causes. By exercising our “free will” in this way, we can “bring to pass much righteousness.” It also teaches us not to wait for an assignment, request, or even opportunity to present itself. We should anxiously seek out opportunities to serve and help, even without a divine prompting.

**28 *the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves.*** We cannot reach our ultimate destiny by waiting to be told what to do every step of the way. God has given us the power to decide, to learn, to grow, to serve, and agency is eternally granted to men and women that they might use that power to do good and receive an eternal reward.

This doctrine of agency was restored as part of the translation of the Bible, from the earliest chapters of Genesis (Moses 1-4), and has at its basis the concept of being an agent, or acting in behalf of another. In other words, God puts his power in us, his children, and we are to be his agents or representatives, doing his will throughout the earth. This is also the meaning of disciple—someone learning to be like the master—and especially apostle—someone commissioned to act on behalf of another.

**28 *inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.*** It is very reassuring that we can find good things to do in the world all on our own, and know that the Lord will recognize those efforts and bless us for them.

**29 *the same is damned.*** Three categories of evil agents are mentioned: 1) those that don’t do anything until commanded; 2) those that doubt the commands they have received; and, 3) those that are slothful in keeping commandments. All such are damned—meaning condemned or found guilty, not necessarily referring to an eternal punishment—the exact opposite of being justified or pronounced clean.

It’s also important to remember that in the Doctrine and Covenants, the word “commandment” typically equals “revelation.” That is, the Lord is saying, ‘Don’t wait to do some good until I reveal something to the prophet.’<sup>36</sup>

**30 *hold him guiltless that obeys not.*** The rhetorical question is readily answered by the very nature of God—he

who made man cannot hold someone guiltless who disobeys.

**31 *have promised and have not fulfilled.*** Another rhetorical question—can God promise something and have it not happen? No, because his word is perfect and completely trustworthy.

**32 *I revoke and they receive not the blessing.*** God commands and sometimes people ignore his commands. In that case, he can revoke the command and we will not receive the blessing that would have come had we been obedient.

**33 *Then they say...this is not the work of the Lord.*** God promises blessings to the obedient and withholds them from the unrighteous (vv. 30-32). The impatient will say that the work is not true because the promises are not fulfilled before their eyes, but the Lord’s work requires both patience and faith because blessings may not be immediate.

**33 *their reward lurketh beneath.*** Referring to the concept of heaven as above us and hell (Hebrew Sheol, Greek Hades) being below. The disobedient will receive their rewards in the dark underworld.

### Martin Harris an example (34-39)

**34 *further directions.*** Promised in D&C 57:16, here was more information about the land of Zion.

**35 *be an example unto the church.*** Martin Harris had sacrificed much for the Church, including selling his property to pay for the printing of the Book of Mormon, then selling the rest to come first to Ohio and now Missouri. It cost him his marriage and other family relationships. He could not have had much money left. Nevertheless, the Lord called on him to be the first in Missouri to take the remainder of his money and consecrate it to the Church, so that Martin might be an example and lead the way for others. Humble now and willing, that is exactly what he did.

**36 *this is a law unto every man that cometh.*** In Missouri, there were to be no exceptions. Every family that came was to follow Martin’s example and lay everything before the bishop as a consecration, and receive a stewardship in return, just as it is described in D&C 42 and subsequent clarifying revelations.

**37 *the storehouse, and also for the house of the printing.*** These two locations were purchased quickly.<sup>37</sup> See Image #1 for their locations, relative to the courthouse and the temple lot.

<sup>36</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:154.

<sup>37</sup> The printing office lot (#76) was purchased for \$50 from James Gray on 8 August 1831. The old log courthouse was first

purchased for the store for \$371 (*JSP*, D2:17n83), though in 1832 another lot was purchased across from the new courthouse for the storehouse, with the old building being used for storage.

38 *given him of the Spirit*. Martin Harris was to be directed in further efforts by the Spirit of the Lord, “that he may receive his inheritance.”

39 *let him repent of his sins*. Martin, like us all, still struggled with personal sins, though he was a consecrated and faithful member. In his case, he sought “the praise of the world.”

### William W. Phelps to repent (40-43)

40 *stand in the office to which I have appointed him*. Perhaps Phelps was having second thoughts, as were so many others. The Lord confirmed his calling and inheritance in Missouri.

41 *he seeketh to excel, and he is not sufficiently meek*. William Phelps also was called to repentance for a pride and an ambition that was outside the laws of consecration. There is no sin in excelling at what you do; the sin is in our motivation and desires as we excel, in recognizing that all success is a gift from God, and staying humble about anything we might achieve.

42 *I, the Lord, remember them no more*. What an amazing promise! The Lord has a perfect memory and certainly can recount every sin we ever committed, but through the Atonement of Christ, he promises that those who truly repent are not only forgiven and justified, but that the Lord will speak of them no more, as if he had forgotten them completely.

43 *he will confess them and forsake them*. The measure of repentance is visible and easy to measure—a sinner has truly repented when the sin is confessed appropriately and forsaken—given up and never done again. President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “No one can ever be forgiven of any transgression until there is repentance, and one has not repented until he has bared his soul and admitted his intentions and weaknesses without excuses or rationalization. He must admit to himself that he has grievously sinned. When he has confessed to himself without the slightest minimizing of the offense, or rationalizing its seriousness, or soft-pedaling its gravity, and admits it is as big as it really is, then he is ready to begin his repentance.”<sup>38</sup>

### Gather to Missouri (44-58)

44 *the time has not yet come, for many years*. Even as the Lord called them to do the work, he put it in a long-term context. These pioneers are called to labor for Zion, but the final result will not be seen for “many years.” The rush to get to Zion in spite of the Lord’s counsel to go patiently

and only when “appointed” was one of the reasons for the many problems and confrontations the Saints experienced in the 1830s.

45 *they shall push people together from the ends of the earth*. The elders, charged with missionary work, will assist the Lord in pushing everyone into a great gathering effort that will bring them into God’s kingdom. This is a quote from Deuteronomy 33:17 that is only found there and here in all scripture.

46 *assemble yourselves together*. A conference was held in response to this command, after which the elders who were not called to remain in Missouri headed home, preaching by the way, as instructed.

47 *bear testimony of the truth in all places*. To “bear testimony” is a phrase uniquely found in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, though Revelation 1:2 comes close, with the note that John “bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.” This explains why Latter-day Saints tend to use this term more than other religions. The elders were commanded to bear their testimonies of the truth everywhere they went.

48 *build up churches*. Not everyone was to gather immediately or even ever to Zion, but elders were to build up churches “in all places” (v. 47) wherever they found repentant souls.

49 *an agent appointed by the voice of the church*. This will be Newel Whitney, who received this calling later (D&C 63:42-45; 72:8). **Text note:** The original version ended with these words. In 1835, the Prophet added “unto the church in Ohio, to receive moneys to purchase lands in Zion.” This change clarified the role of this agent in Ohio, who replaced Sidney Gilbert, the former Ohio agent, since he was now called to perform that task in Missouri.

50 *Sidney Rigdon...shall write a description of the land of Zion*. Sidney Rigdon was called to write a description of Zion that might be sent out among the branches of the Church to solicit funds for the purchase of lands. He did this, though the first draft was not acceptable, for reasons unknown (D&C 63:55-56).<sup>39</sup> His second very favorable version of the beauties of Missouri is recorded in Joseph’s history.<sup>40</sup>

51 *an epistle and subscription*. This letter, written by Rigdon, will request a “subscription” or “sign-up sheet”<sup>41</sup> would gather the names and commitments of those willing to give on a plan, and help local leaders follow up and collect the money, which would be forwarded to the agents in

<sup>38</sup> *Love Versus Lust*, 10, quoted in McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 425.

<sup>39</sup> *JSP*, D2:19n93.

<sup>40</sup> “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” pp. 137-139, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed

November 27, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/143> (and 144 and 145).

<sup>41</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:159.

Ohio and Missouri, then used by Bishop Partridge to purchase lands.

**52 purchase this whole region of country.** The Lord's will was for the Church to legally purchase all the lands described in D&C 57, which included everything west of Independence and along the western Missouri border. If the Church had purchased those lands and still owned them today, we would own all of what is today Kansas City and its suburbs, including where the current Kansas City temple sits.

**53 none inheritance, save it be by the shedding of blood.** Purchasing lands was the Lord's method of expanding Zion, but if the Saints did not do this, it might come to battles that would shed blood (see also D&C 63:27-29). As it turned out, this is exactly what happened.

**54 let there be workmen sent forth of all kinds.** Once the lands were legally obtained, the Church would improve on the lands and make them profitable to further grow the kingdom. Note that it doesn't state that the workmen had to be Latter-day Saints, leaving open the option of leasing out the lands for farming, ranching, or other purposes.

**55 Let all these things be done in order.** The Lord again cautioned patience and caution in doing things properly. This anticipated the Saints' success if they worked within the system, made friends of their neighbors, and other factors that would have allowed Zion to be established carefully and without conflict.

**56 not in haste, nor by flight.** Again, the work was to proceed in an orderly way, by the direction of Church leaders. Many did not follow this counsel, but came on their own, expecting the Church to still support them when they arrived, taxing the resources of the Church and the bishop, and bringing undue attention of other Missourians to the situation of the Church growing too quickly and without means to support themselves.

**57 let my servant Sidney Rigdon consecrate and dedicate this land.** This was done on 2 August 1831<sup>42</sup> (see Results below).

**58 let a conference meeting be called.** This was held on 4 August in Kaw Township at the home of Joshua Lewis, a convert from the Jackson County area.<sup>43</sup>

**58 Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, Jun., return, and also Oliver Cowdery.** These three key Church leaders were commanded to return to Ohio. Oliver would not be there long but Rigdon and Joseph would stay in the Kirtland area for seven more years, with several visits to Missouri in those years.

## Preach the gospel (59-65)

**59 except he bear record by the way.** As people traveled on Church business, they were to be missionaries all along the way, teaching and sharing their testimony of "that which he knows and most assuredly believes." Preaching the gospel was everyone's call, as it is today.

**60 bestowed upon Ziba Peterson be taken from him.** Ziba was one of the missionaries that had come with Oliver Cowdery. His license to preach was revoked, making him a "member in the church" as opposed to a licensed elder. He was to "labor with his own hands" until he was humbled. It only lasted three days, but that was long enough for him to repent and humble himself. On 4 August, at the conference held in Missouri, he confessed "his transgressions which were satisfactory to the Church as appeared [or 'approved'] by unanimous vote."<sup>44</sup>

The nature of his sins is not recorded but the resolution was to marry Rebecca Hooper, one of the people converted during his time there. Ezra Booth wrote that Ziba had been engaged to one woman and received her parents' permission to marry, but then had courted and become engaged to another; in short, he needed to make up his mind. It's not clear if Hooper was the first or the second woman, but the resolution was satisfactory to the conference, so Ziba's license was restored.

**61 Let the residue of the elders...also hold a conference.** There were still several pairs of missionaries traveling to Missouri, preaching along the way. The Lord desired that they finish their travels and hold their own conference in Missouri, once they all arrived. See D&C 62 for more details; the conference was apparently held on 24 August.<sup>45</sup>

**62 let my servant Edward Partridge direct the conference.** The above-mentioned conference was to be overseen by Bishop Partridge, the highest authority in Missouri.

**63 let them also return, preaching the gospel by the way.** After the missionaries held their conference in Missouri, they were not to stay but were to return to Ohio, preaching on the return trip as they had done on the way down.

**64 the gospel must be preached unto every creature.** The Missouri missions were the start of a great missionary effort in the Church that would eventually reach to all corners of the earth. It began with a group of men mostly walking from Ohio to Missouri and back again, preaching along the way.

**65 behold the Son of Man cometh.** This reminded the young Church of the ultimate goal of their efforts and prep-

<sup>42</sup> JSP, D2:20n102.

<sup>43</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:160.

<sup>44</sup> JSP, D2:23.

<sup>45</sup> JSP, D2:21n111.

arations, and heightened interest in preparing for the Second Coming. This was a great motivator to preach, grow, and labor in those early and fragile days.

## Results

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The day after this revelation, Joseph Smith helped the Colesville Saints lay the first log of the first building in Zion, a church/school building in Kaw Township, about twelve miles west of Independence. That same day, Sidney Rigdon dedicated the land for the work of the Lord and the gathering of the Saints. John Whitmer, Church historian, quoting something previously written by Oliver Cowdery (but which is unknown today except in Whitmer's quotation), wrote:

On the second day of August, 1831, Brother Sidney Rigdon stood up and asked, saying: Do you receive this land for the land of your inheritance[e] with thankful hearts from the Lord? answer from all we do, Do you pledge yourselves to keep the laws of God on this land, which you have never have kept in your own land? we do. Do you pledge yourselves to see that others of your brethren, who shall come hither do keep the laws of God? We do. After prayer he arose and said, I now pronounce this land consecrated and dedicated to the Lord for a possession and inheritanc for the Saints, (in the name of Jesus Christ having authority from him.) And for all the faithful servants of the Lord to the remotest ages of time. Amen.

The day following eight Elders viz., Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Frederick G. Williams, Wm. W. Phelps, Martin Harris, and Joseph Coe, assembled together where the temple is to be erected. Sidney Rigdon dedicated the ground where the city is to Stand: and Joseph Smith Jr. laid a stone at the North east corner of the contemplated Temple in the name of the Lord Jesus of Nazareth. After all present had rendered thanks to the great ruler of the universe. Sidney Rigdon pronounced this Spot of ground wholly dedicated unto the Lord forever. Amen.<sup>46</sup>

Harper calls D&C 58 “a map that shows how to get to Zion from where we are,” though he laments that “it is a seldom used map, and some have wandered in the wilderness for year, not understanding the Lord’s directions or preferring their ‘own way’ (D&C 1:16).”<sup>47</sup>

Some responded favorably to D&C 58. Edward Partridge and Ziba Peterson repented but Ezra Booth left the Church and criticized those who continued to follow Joseph Smith. Partridge was surprised by the call to live in Missouri but wrote his wife, Lydia, asking her to join him. “We have to suffer and shall for some time,” he told her, considering the rough conditions of the Missouri frontier. He said there would be “many privations here which you and I have not been much used to for years.” Indeed, the successful businessman would sacrifice everything for the vision of Zion, his life threatened, and peeling off tar and feathers. He told Lydia, “I am occasionally chastened I sometime fear my station is above what I can perform to the acceptance of my Heavenly Father. I hope you and I may conduct ourselves as at last to land our souls in the heaven of eternal rest. Pray that I may not fall.” Lydia packed up everything and their five daughters and went to Missouri to be with him.<sup>48</sup>

These Saints were laying the foundation for a great work, as the Lord had said. They could not foresee that in less than two years, they would be driven from the land by people who could not understand their desire for Zion and saw them only as a threat.

I believe that today we are beginning to see the fulfillment of D&C 58. The “rich and the learned, the wise and the noble” have come into the Church and put it in a financial position that Edward Partridge could likely not have imagined. Using those funds, we take the gospel to more and more of the world, build more and more temples, educate more of the Saints, raise the poor out of their circumstances, and keep working and improving our implementation of the law of consecration. One day we will fulfill the vision of D&C 58, with a fully humble and repentant people supporting each other, converting as many as will hearken, and gathering to all our places of Zion. I hope Joseph has time now and again to look down and smile.

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<sup>46</sup> JSP, H2:44-45.

<sup>47</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 204.

<sup>48</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 204-205.



# Images

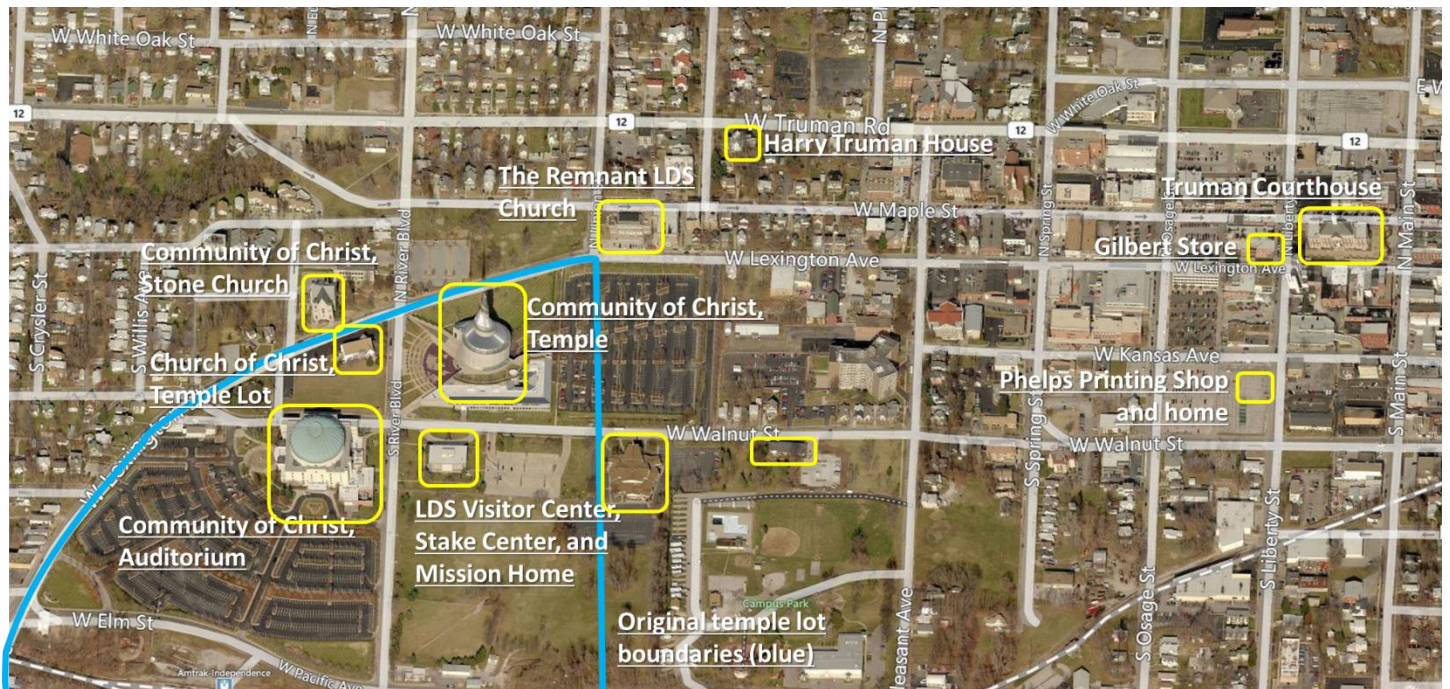


Image #1: View of downtown Independence, Missouri today.

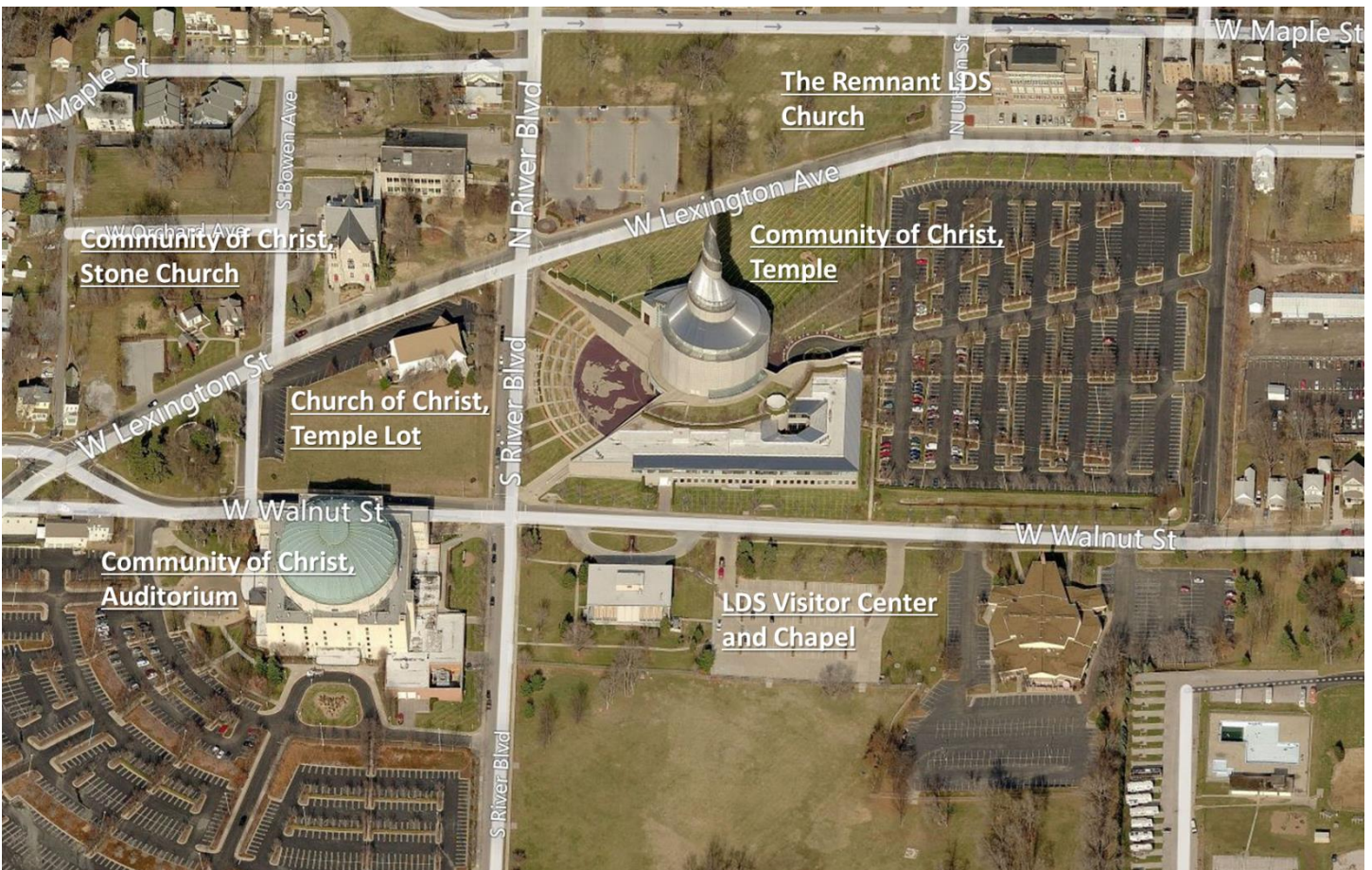


Image #2: Close-up on Church of Christ, Temple Lot, Community of Christ, and LDS buildings



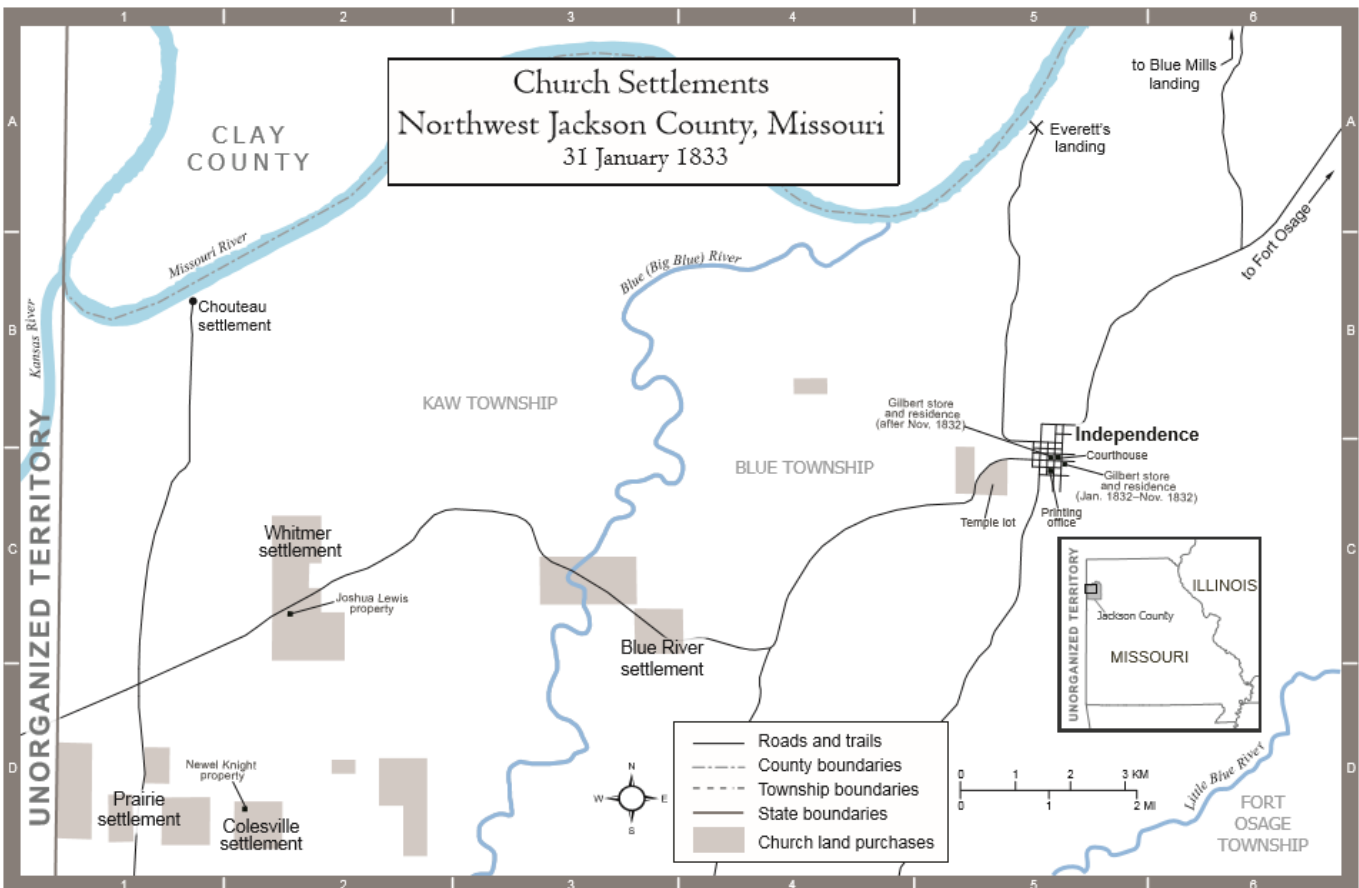
Image #3: Courthouse in 1836 (from the Harry Truman collection)



Image #4: The Truman Courthouse today



Image #5: Joseph Smith's travel between Ohio and Missouri, 1831 (from Joseph Smith Papers website)



RESEARCH: Max H. Parkin  
 CARTOGRAPHY: Brice Lucas and Blake Baker

Image #6: Church settlements, northwest Jackson county, Missouri, 1831-1833 (from Joseph Smith Papers website)

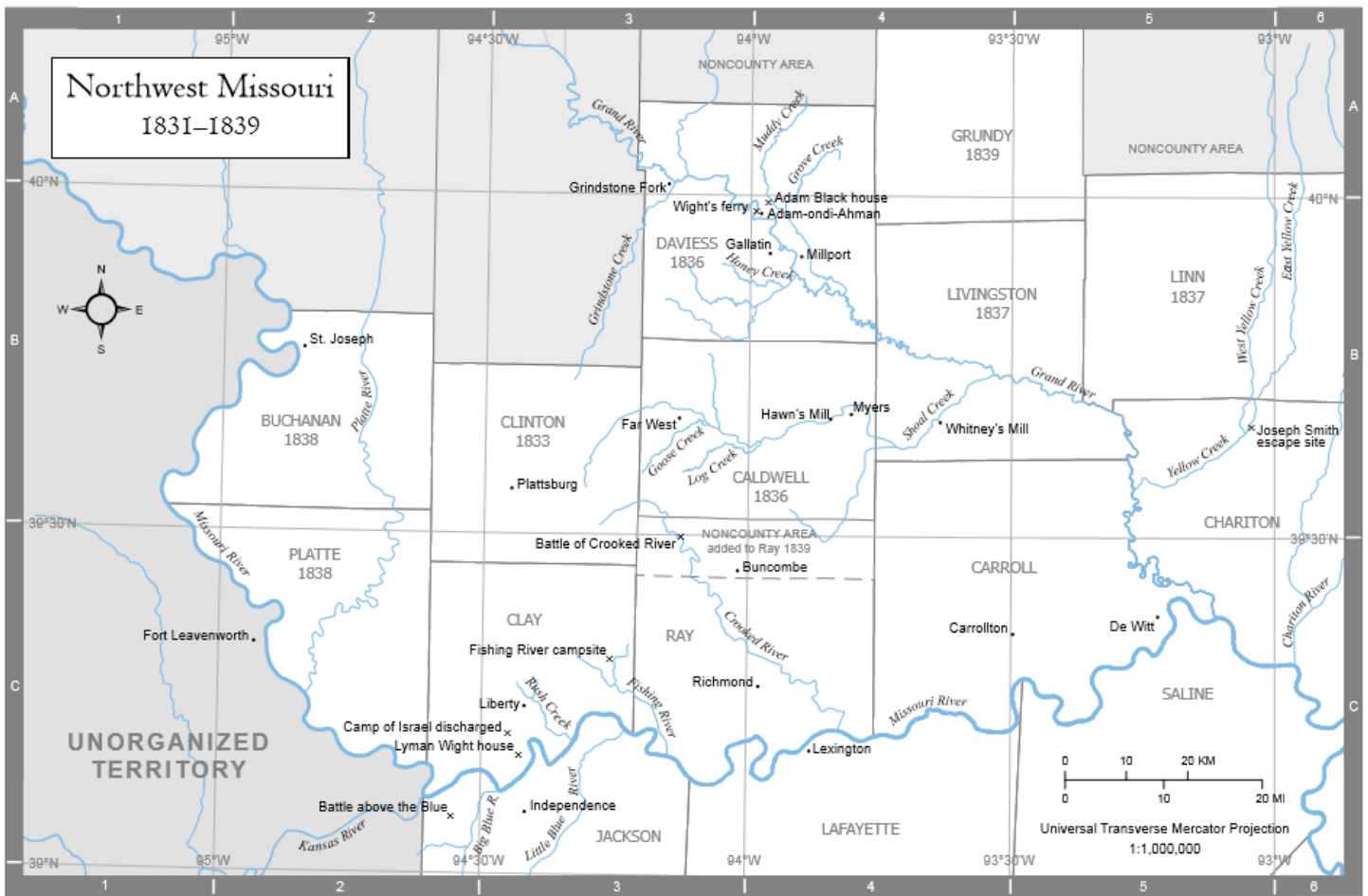


Image #7: Northwest Missouri, 1831-1839, with significant LDS sites (from Joseph Smith Papers website)

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