

D&C 59-63

Lesson 12, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 5 Dec 2016

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General Introduction

Joseph Smith and a number of elders were called to journey to Missouri in the summer of 1831 (D&C 52-56). There Joseph learned the location of the city of Zion and the location for the temple (D&C 57). The group of sixty-two or so Colesville Saints were the first body to settle there, and shortly after D&C 57, Joseph Smith helped them lay a log of the first home to be built in their settlement, starting the formal Latter-day Saint presence there. The next day he and Sidney Rigdon dedicated the spot for the temple, and the following day they held the first conference in Missouri. It was a great time of rejoicing and anticipation as they now could focus on a specific location and begin to build up Zion.

Now came the hard work of determining the best way to go about that effort. D&C 58 gave direction to purchase lands by the law and continue to preach, closely followed by D&C 59 which gave other commandments for the Saints to be sure to live in Zion, especially concerning the Sabbath day.

With the reasons accomplished for their trip to Missouri, the Lord directed the men to return home in D&C 60. Taking up canoes to travel downstream on the Missouri River, the trip went well for three days until they ran into some issues, which led to contention. Ezra Booth was especially critical of Joseph's decisions and style but others had concerns as well. Once those were settled, D&C 61 directed them to split up and take different routes home to accomplish various purposes. Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon went toward St. Louis, stopping in Chariton one night, only to find four of the missionaries there who had not yet made it to Jackson county. D&C 62 directed those brethren to continue on to Independence and fulfill their missions, then return home.

Finally, back in Ohio, there were a host of challenges to deal with, including apostasy, lands to manage, the need to raise money for Zion, and more, so D&C 63 was received. Ezra Booth's frustrations from the trip combined with Symond Ryder's and the two began a series of newspaper articles and acts designed to hurt or destroy, if possible, the young Church. Their actions continued for many months but grew out of Booth's disillusionment of Joseph Smith's

prophetic call as he observed Joseph up close and personal for several days, and because of perceived inequalities on his part in how Joseph traveled versus the way he was required to travel to and from Missouri. Eventually, Joseph and Sidney will need to stop work on the translation of the Bible to combat Booth's attacks, and it will lead to Joseph being tarred and feathered and Sidney seriously injured in the March 1832.

Summary Chronology

- **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.
- **Sun, 7 Aug 1831** – This date saw the death of Polly Knight and the reception of D&C 59 by Joseph Smith.
- **Mon, 8 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 60.
- **Tue, 9 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith and ten other elders left Independence in canoes on the Missouri River, heading home to Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Thu, 11 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith's and Sidney Rigdon's canoe ran into a submerged log, dumping them into the river. The two almost drowned but managed to swim ashore. The group camped that night at McIlwaine's Bend.
- **Fri, 12 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 61.
- **Sat, 13 Aug 1831** – The company encountered a group of other elders on their way to Independence, in Chariton, Missouri. Joseph Smith received D&C 62.
- **Sat, 27 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith and those in his party arrived back in Kirtland from their journey to Missouri.
- **Tue, 30 Aug 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 63.
- **Mon, 12 Sep 1831** – Joseph and Emma moved to the John and Alice (Elsa) Johnson farm in Hiram, Ohio.

D&C 59 – The Sabbath and Other Commandments

Date and Location

Sunday, 7 August 1831, Jackson County, Missouri.

Setting

Even before the Colesville Saints left Ohio to go to Missouri, one of them was very sick—Polly Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight, Sr., and the mother of Newel Knight. She was so sick that Newel bought wood during the trip to make her coffin, not expecting her to survive the journey. But her great desire was to plant her feet in Zion, and to be buried there. She got both desires, dying about three weeks after their arrival, on 7 August 1831.¹ Joseph’s history noted her passing: “This was the first death in the church in this land, and I can say a worthy member sleeps in Jesus till the resurrection.”²

On the same day as her passing and funeral, Sunday, 7 August, the Prophet received D&C 59. The earliest copies state that Oliver Cowdery was the scribe for this revelation, which may have been the first one since Oliver had left for his mission to Missouri nearly ten months earlier.

The revelation speaks of Sabbath day observance, probably an important topic for the newly arrived Saints. Sabbath observance in Missouri was non-existent; one visitor in 1833 noted that on the Sabbath there was “the unusual Gambling & noise, & assemblies around taverns.”³ Sabbath observance had not really been addressed in previous revelations, so this filled in an important gap for members who would soon be without Joseph’s regular presence. It also may reflect the poor and rugged circumstances they faced, reminding them that bounties of the earth were their potential blessing.⁴

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy (about 30 Aug 1831) appears to be from the Newel K. Whitney collection, in Oliver Cowdery’s handwriting (who was the scribe for the original revelation). There is also a copy in Revelation Book 1 (about Sep 1831) and in Samuel Smith’s writing (early 1832). It was first published in July 1832 in *The Evening and the Morn-*

ing Star, then as Chapter 60 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and as Section 19 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Blessings for the faithful (1-4)
- Commandments (5-8)
- The Sabbath (9-19)
- Blessings of the righteous (20-24)

Commentary

Blessings for the faithful (1-4)

1 *eye single to my glory*. As previously noted (see commentary on D&C 4:5), this phrase is from the New Testament (Matthew 6:22 and Luke 11:34) but also from 3 Nephi 13:22 (equivalent to Matthew 6:22). The phrase means ‘being motivated by singleness of purpose,’ but these passages do not explain what that purpose should be. Mormon 8:15 adds that it our purpose should be God’s glory and the D&C picks up five times on that, including this one (4:5; 27:2; 55:1; 59:1; 82:19).

2 *those that die shall rest from all their labors*. This likely has reference specifically to Polly Knight but the blessing is made applicable to all of the Colesville Saints, and to all of us as well who come up to Zion. The promise of “a crown in the mansions of my Father” from the Savior is a comforting one.

3 *blessed are they whole feet stand upon the land of Zion*. The Lord’s immediate audience for this blessing have been ‘on the road’ for about three months, moving from Colesville, New York in April, then from Ohio in June, finally settling here. This avant-garde group of Saints were the first group to settle in Missouri and were starting from scratch for the second time in as many months. Their promise was the this new land would reward them with “the good things of the earth” and with blessings from above” (v. 4).

4 *commandments not a few*. Commandments from God, coming through “revelations in their time” are a blessing, a crown from above. Most of this section is a reiteration of

¹ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:163; Joseph Smith’s later history recorded her death as 6 August but a letter written on 7 August by Edward Partridge to his wife says that she died on the morning of that date (*JSP*, D2:31n158).

² “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 139, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed Decem-

ber 1, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/145?highlight=sleeps%20in%20jesus%20until%20the%20resurrection>.

³ *JSP*, D2:30-31.

⁴ *JSP*, D2:31.

“commandments not a few,” with a special focus on the Sabbath day.

Commandments (5-8)

5 love the Lord thy God. The “first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:38) is to love God, which must come first ahead of all else, or else our priorities will never be correct.

5 in the name of Jesus Christ. All things are done through Christ, just as he is the only way back to the Father. Thus we even love God and serve him in Christ’s name.

6 love thy neighbor as thyself. See Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:39. This is a charge to put our neighbor’s interests on a par with our own.

6 Thou shalt not steal. See Exodus 20:15 and Matthew 19:18. In the rough and tumble world of Missouri in 1831, this was likely a particular challenge, perhaps not for the Colesville Saints with each other but among the somewhat lawless society in which they now found themselves.

6 neither commit adultery. See Exodus 20:14 and Matthew 19:18. Another reflection of the nature of the society around them but also a fundamental principle to righteous living among the Saints.

6 nor kill. See Exodus 20:13 and Matthew 19:18.

6 nor do anything like unto it. Prophets have applied this passage to abortion, fornication, homosexuality, self-abuse/stimulation, child molestation, and other forms of sexual perversion.⁵ In the case of the Kirtland Saints, it likely also referred to their acts of pretending to butcher, disembowel, scalp, or otherwise act out a killing.⁶

7 thank the Lord thy God in all things. As we frequently here in General Conference, gratitude is a critical character trait of a disciple of Christ, “the noblest of virtues.”⁷ One of the best ways to overcome feelings of sadness and despair is by exercising gratitude, counting our blessings, and expressing thanks to the Lord.

8 offer a sacrifice. Not an Old Testament sacrifice of a lamb or other animal, but the sacrifice of our wills, our hearts, our humility: “a broken heart and a contrite spirit.”

The Sabbath (9-19)

9 keep thyself unspotted from the world. The only other scripture that uses the word “unspotted” is James 1:27, where he says being unspotted is part of pure and undefiled religion, but doesn’t define it any further. In this revelation,

the Lord declares that to be “more fully” unspotted, we should keep the Sabbath day holy, including a number of activities outlined in the following verses.

9 go to the house of prayer. The phrase “house of prayer” is first used in Isaiah 56:7, which Jesus later quoted as he cleansed the temple (Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). This is the first use of the phrase in the Doctrine and Covenants, though it is used subsequently in reference to the temple (88:119; 109:8, 16). In Latter-day Saint worship, we do not go up to the temple on the Sabbath—in fact, the temple is closed on that day. Our house of prayer becomes our ward building on the Sabbath, where we offer up our sacraments, strengthened by our temple attendance during the week.

10 to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions. For many with demanding Church callings, the Sabbath is anything but a day of rest. But this revelation clears up a common misunderstanding—we rest from our normal, everyday labors, but pay our devotions to the Most High, which often includes many hours of service to others.

11 thy vows shall be offered up...at all times. Honesty and integrity and other elements of living the laws of God don’t just happen on Sunday, but are things that we need to live every day.

12 thine oblations and thy sacraments. “Oblations” means any kind of offering, such as time, money, or talents. “Sacraments” is a covenant or a renewal of covenant, a commitment to live the commandments. Anciently, a ‘sacrament’ was a time to swear loyalty to the king. So today we swear our loyalty to the Father through the sacrifice and name of his Son.

12 confessing thy sins. In the early days of the Church, sins were often confessed publicly. Today, sins are confessed appropriately, either to an individual or group harmed by an action, and to the requisite priesthood authority. Much confessing of sins takes place on the Sabbath as bishops and others meet with those in their flocks.

13 food be prepared with singleness of heart. Sometimes this is interpreted to mean ‘a simple meal.’ But the context is less on the amount of work involved and more on the focus of our efforts. Like our eye being “single,” our food should be prepared with the glory of God in mind.

13 that thy fasting may be perfect. We don’t fast each Sunday, in the sense of going without food for a higher purpose. We do, however, go without the world, as it were,

⁵ Robinson, and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:164

⁶ Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 104.

⁷ Recent examples include Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “O How Great the Plan of Our God!” and Henry B. Eyring, “Gratitude on the Sab-

bath Day,” both from October 2016; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Grateful in Any Circumstances” (April 2014), and “Thanks Be to God” by Russel M. Nelson (April 2012). The quote is from Thomas S. Monson, “The Divine Gift of Gratitude” (October 2010).

each Sunday as we serve each other and worship God. In that sense, our fasting can be perfect each week.

13 *that thy joy may be full*. Fasting is equated to joy—and why shouldn't it? When we fast sincerely, with a purpose, we can experience great blessings from God, which blessings should lead us to joy. Verse 14 continues the thought, equating fasting with “rejoicing.”

15 *not with much laughter*. Speaking of our Sabbath behavior, the Lord counsels against excessive laughter. That doesn't mean walking around with a down-turned face all day—in fact, we're told to have “a glad heart and a cheerful countenance.” It does mean, for example, that entertainment should not be our pre-occupation on that day.

16 *the fulness of the earth is yours*. This was not always true in ancient Israel, where their diets and eating patterns were restricted by revelation to Moses. To Saints of our day, the earth is ours to enjoy, within the realm of our stewardships.

17 *the good things which come of the earth*. The earth is our stewardship and we are to use the things the Lord has provided for food, raiment, housing, and other needs. Everything that comes from the earth is “made for the benefit and the use of man” (v. 18).

18 *please the eye and gladden the heart*. Beyond utility (“for food and for raiment” in v. 19), many things were given by God for beauty and for happiness. Our eyes are pleased and our hearts gladdened by many sights, including beautiful scenery, a baby animal, an attractive garden, or a newborn baby.

19 *enliven the soul*. To “enliven” is to invigorate or make cheerful. The Lord has given us the things of the earth to brighten our very souls.

Blessings of the righteous (20-24)

20 *used, with judgment, not to excess*. The Lord had given us the earth to use, but not abuse. Part of the law of consecration and stewardship is the wise use of the resources provided to us by a loving God.

21 *offend God...his wrath kindled*. The Lord gives two human activities that offend God and make him angry: neglecting to acknowledge that it is the Lord behind everything we experience, and not keeping his commandments. Thus gratitude and obedience are primary laws of eternity.

22 *according to the law and the prophets*. This has reference to the Torah or the five books of Moses, and the

prophets, which is the majority of the Hebrew Bible. More specifically, it is a phrase that Jesus used many times (e.g., Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; 3 Nephi 12:17; 15:10). The point is that all the things the Lord just taught the Church in D&C 59 are also covered in the Bible, so they should study that to learn more.

23 *peace in this world, and eternal life*. The benefits of a righteous life are summed up by two crowning blessings: peace in this life and eternal life in the next.

24 *the Spirit beareth record*. Those who hear these words from the mouth of Joseph Smith dictated to his scribe, or who read them later, can know of their truth by the power of the Spirit which will testify to them. This is an important pattern, showing we're not to obey mindlessly but to discover and confirm truth for ourselves.

Results

More than a reiteration of Biblical principles, D&C 59 calls the settlers of Zion to be different from the world all around them. It expands the law of consecration (D&C 42) to include obedience to other of God's laws and to divine principles of earthly stewardship, not just to our small personal plot of land.

While all of these commandments were likely challenging in Missouri in 1831, Sabbath observance was especially a rare experience in the rough, western frontier town of Independence. Like ancient Israel, keeping that commandment alone would set members of the Church apart from the rest of the population, and it would bless their lives at the same time. Said President Gordon B. Hinckley: “the Sabbath day of the Lord is becoming the play day of the people. It is a day of golf and football on television, of buying and selling in our stores and markets. Are we moving to mainstream America as some observers believe? In this I fear we are. What a telling thing it is to see the parking lots of the markets filled on Sunday in communities that are predominantly LDS. Our strength for the future, our resolution to grow the Church across the world, will be weakened if we violate the will of the Lord in this important matter. He has so very clearly spoken anciently and again in modern revelation. We cannot disregard with impunity that which He has said.”⁸

While Sabbath observance has always been a topic, a recent re-emphasis on it has come from the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve.⁹ D&C 59 is a good reminder of the Lord's expectations for that day each week.

⁸ Gordon B. Hinckley, “Look to the Future,” October 1997 General Conference, as quoted in Harper, *Making Sense*, 208-209.

⁹ See Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath is a Delight” (April 2015) and the training that went out to all stakes and wards at

<https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/archive/general-conference-leadership-training/2015/10?lang=eng>.

D&C 60 – Commandment to Journey Home

Date and Location

Monday, 8 August 1831, Jackson County, Missouri.

Setting

Joseph Smith and the other Ohio brethren had fulfilled what they came to do in Missouri on this trip. They had been there for three weeks, and seeing not much else they could do and with the summer winding down, they were “anxious to return home.”¹⁰ They sought to know the Lord’s will for them next, and the result was D&C 60, which was received the day after D&C 59, on Monday, 8 August 1831.

D&C 60-62 all deal with the same journey back to Kirtland, and are best considered together in that context.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1 (about Sep 1831). It was first published as Chapter 61 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and as Section 70 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and Section 71 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Preach the gospel (1-14)
- Shaking off the dust explained (15-17)

Commentary

Preach the Gospel (1-14)

1 *return speedily to the land from whence they came.* Unlike their trips down to Missouri, where they were commanded to preach and go in different directions (D&C 52), for the trip home, the Lord asked them to move “speedily” and get back to their families, farms, and businesses. Of course, he clarified in v. 8 that they were still to preach along the way.

2 *they will not open their mouths.* Most of the brethren sent to Missouri were commanded to preach along the way (D&C 52:9), but some of them hurried to Missouri, arriving not long after Joseph Smith (who was to go straight there, D&C 52:3). Because they feared man and didn’t preach, the Lord was angry with them. Without repentance

and increased faithfulness, the result would be a loss of what they had been blessed with (v. 3).

4 *I shall make up my jewels.* The phrase comes from Malachi 3:17 and was quoted by the Lord in 3 Nephi 24:17. However, the word translated “jewels” in Malachi has the meaning of ‘treasure’ and is used in that sense in other scriptures, where the Lord speaks of the covenant people of Israel as his “peculiar treasure,” meaning one that belongs just to him.¹¹ In the Doctrine and Covenants, this is the first use of the phrase, with the other one in 101:3. In short, it means in the day that the Lord gathers up his treasure, or those that belong to him, then all will know and recognize the power of God in the work they are doing.

5 *made, or bought, as seemeth you good.* Going back to the Lord not needing to command in all things (D&C 58:27-29), the instruction here is to choose the method of transportation, with the Lord declaring that “it mattereth not unto me.” What the Lord cared about was for them to quickly get to St. Louis.

6 *take their journey for Cincinnati.* Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery were told to go from St. Louis to Cincinnati, Ohio, the full reasons for which would be given later (v. 17). They were to preach in that city “with loud voices.” By doing this, they would be made holy and have their sins forgiven (v. 7). One result of this trip was the purchase of a printing press in Cincinnati for use in Missouri by William W. Phelps and Cowdery.

7 *I am able to make you holy.* The brethren were commanded to lift up “holy hands” upon the people of Cincinnati. Confirming their ability to keep this commandment, the Lord affirmed that he would make them holy and forgive their sins. To be “holy” means to be set apart and consecrated for a specific purpose.

8 *two by two, and preach the word, not in haste.* The others in the group were to go home a little less speedily than Joseph and Sidney, preaching after they left St. Louis, until they returned to Kirtland.

8 *among the congregations of the wicked.* This phrase is not found in the Bible or Book of Mormon (though “congregations of evil doers” is in Psalm 26:5) and is used for the first time here. It is used several more times in D&C 61-62 (during the rest of the trip home) and once in 68:1. It referred not to other churches as much as any place where

¹⁰ JSP, D2:35.

¹¹ See Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; 1 Chronicles 29:3; Psalm 135:4; Ecclesiastes 2:8.

the “wicked” gathered, meaning those who had yet to embrace the gospel and a relationship with God (the ‘unredeemed’).¹²

9 for the good of the churches. The various branches of the Church would be benefitted by this activity, both through converts and through the strengthening that comes to the missionaries themselves with preaching and bearing testimony.

10 impart of the money which I have given him. Bishop Edward Partridge was instructed to give some of the funds he had collected from the Saints to help pay for the trip home by these brethren. If they were able, they were to repay the money when they returned to Kirtland (v. 11).

12 I speak of the residue who are to come. Other missionaries had been faithfully preaching after leaving Kirtland and had therefore not yet arrived in Missouri. The next two verses were directed at them, telling them to not waste any time in Missouri, nor bury their talents, but to preach in Missouri, then return to Kirtland speedily, continuing to teach along the way (vv. 13-14).

Shaking off the Dust Explained (15-17)

15 not in their presence. Shaking the dust off the feet was not just something the missionaries did, but the symbolism was well-understood by all who had ever read the New Testament. Thus the Lord counseled the elders to do this act in private to avoid provocation. This was likely needed after Parley P. Pratt’s shaking off the dust in front of the Shakers which caused bad feelings in that group (D&C 49).

16 this is sufficient for you. This is what they needed to get home to Kirtland and complete their assigned missions.

17 The residue hereafter. Other information would be shared by the Lord as needed as the brethren journeyed home. D&C 61-62 were also given during the trip home, relating to experiences the brethren had en route.

Results

Joseph Smith and ten others purchased canoes (secured by Ezra Booth and another elder)¹³ and started down the Missouri River toward St. Louis the day after this revelation was received. Their journey was long and had additional learnings, as reflected in the next two revelations Joseph Smith received.

D&C 61 – Journeying on the Waters

Date and Location

Friday, 12 August 1831, McIlwaine’s Bend on the Missouri River, Missouri.

Setting

Joseph Smith and ten elders left Independence on Tuesday, 9 August 1831, going down the Missouri River in purchased canoes toward St. Louis. The first night, they camped at Fort Osage, eating “an excellent wild turkey for supper.”¹⁴ Some of the brethren were upset at what had transpired in Missouri, expecting a more miraculous result and an immediate fulfillment of the promises of Zion. Their disappointment led to murmuring and animosity. Oliver Cowdery rebuked them, saying that an accident was going to happen if they didn’t improve.¹⁵

On Thursday, 11 August, Joseph and Sidney’s canoe hit a log just under the water (called a “sawyer”), which nearly flipped their boat and could easily have drowned them. It

wasn’t the first incident of the day but it was the most serious. Joseph said they should get off the river, and some called him a coward, but the group put out at McIlwaine’s Bend (about five miles west of modern Miami, Missouri, though the Bend no longer exists due to changes in the river).

Shortly after that, William W. Phelps had a vision of something he described as “the destroyer,” but the meaning of which is uncertain. They counseled together about their situation, with some upset with Oliver about his words, and others not liking Joseph Smith’s style of leadership, calling him dictatorial. After many hours, they finally reconciled, and the next morning (12 August 1831), after prayers, the Prophet received D&C 61.¹⁶

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is from Revelation Book 1 (about Sep 1831) and in Sidney Gilbert’s notebook (about Sep 1831) It was first published in *The Evening and Morning Star* in

ber 3, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/148>.

¹⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 212.

¹⁶ *JSP*, D2:38-39.

¹² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:172-173.

¹³ *JSP*, D2:36n188.

¹⁴ “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 142, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed Decem-

December 1832, then as Chapter 62 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and as Section 71 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and Section 72 in the 1833 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Destructions on the waters (1-12)
- Cursed waters (13-22)
- Command the waters (23-29)
- Preparing for the Coming of the Son of Man (30-39)

Commentary

Destruction on the waters (1-12)

1 **him who has all power**. An appropriate beginning, given that the brethren could have felt quite powerless after their experiences on the river.

2 **O ye elders of my church**. The Joseph Smith Papers editors surmise that the ten elders present for this revelation were Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Gilbert, William W. Phelps, Reynolds Cahoon, Samuel Smith, Ezra Booth, Frederick G. Williams, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Joseph Coe. Some are mentioned in the revelation, while others' presence can be traced from other documents.¹⁷

2 **whose sins are now forgiven you**. Many had sinned, been critical, and accusatory. After they worked things out among themselves, the Lord also offered forgiveness, with mercy extended to the humble.

3 **the inhabitants on either side are perishing**. There was work to do in this area, even as the brethren had floated past many people. Some of them could go more slowly, preaching by the way.

4 **many dangers upon the waters**. Rivers were indeed dangerous places, with no dams or locks or other means of controlling them. The elders had experienced this and could now bear testimony of it, which many did, including William Phelps who first published this revelation the next year.

5 **especially upon these waters**. The declaration is not a universal warning for all waters, as some may have interpreted this section in the past. The Missouri River posed particular dangers and the thing these elders learned was that travelling here was not a good method for migrating Saints to use in the future.

6 **he that is faithful...shall not perish**. Some popular interpretations use D&C 61 to justify some activities and some practices, such as missionaries not swimming. But this is a

misuse of the text, as it clearly states that the faithful would be protected. The Lord even commanded Sidney Gilbert and William W. Phelps (v. 7) to stay on the river.

8 **until you were chastened for all your sins**. The Lord also allowed this event to bring out the contentions that were happening, help them work through them and humble themselves, and feel the needed reprimand for their mistakes.

8 **be one**. The Lord was not pleased with their divisiveness and pride. A Zion society becomes such by repenting and unifying themselves.

9 **take their former company**. William Phelps and Sidney Gilbert were instructed to continue together in the canoe, with the promise that they would be preserved (v. 10). Their trip was urgent, because they had to get home and prepare their families to return to Missouri to settle (D&C 55:5). The others would be walking, so they took "needful" clothing (v. 11), with Gilbert, as the agent, taking the rest of their supplies and money in the boat (v. 12).

Cursed waters (13-22)

13 **for your good**. Like later revelations (especially 121 and 122), a lesson learned was that the Lord allows things to happen that actually benefit us, even though they are hard in the short term.

14 **in the beginning blessed the waters**. From the creation of the world, the waters were blessed, but in the last days, they would be cursed (see Revelation 8:8-11). We have not yet reached the full extent of the curse, as outlined in Revelation 8 and the next two verses.

15 **no flesh shall be safe upon the waters**. Revelation 8:8-11 describes a day when creatures in the sea, ships, and men on the rivers and seas will be destroyed (see also Revelation 16:2-4). That day is not here yet, clearly, but is part of the signs of the last days. The only people able to travel on the waters in those days will be "he that is upright in heart" (v.16).

17 **in the beginning cursed the land**. After the Fall, the land was cursed (Genesis 3:17), but the Lord promised that in the last days, that curse would be lifted, that the covenant people might "partake of the fatness thereof."

18 **forewarn your brethren concerning these waters**. The Missouri River was not a place the Lord wanted the Saints to travel as they were coming up to (or leaving) Zion. Other waterways were not part of the warning, and the very safe canal system of the US at that time was an excellent way to travel (v. 23).

19 **the destroyer rideth upon the face thereof**. The identity of the "destroyer" is not known. In the Old Testament, this

¹⁷ JSP, D2:39n214.

phrase was used during the Exodus when the firstborn were killed (Exodus 12:23) and to represent other occasions of mortal or divine destruction.¹⁸

20 *angry with you yesterday*. The way the verse is worded almost makes the Lord sound fickle, angry one day but not the next. But it was the murmuring and backbiting that brought on the anger, and the repentance of the brethren that turned away the anger. The Lord is, of course, entirely consistent.

21 *take their journey in haste*. Some of the brethren had taken advantage of the current of the river and had refused to paddle their canoes earlier in the trip.¹⁹ There needed to be a greater sense of urgency on the part of these men to complete their missions and return home.

22 *by water or by land*. The Savior reiterated that the decision about how to travel was up to them and he had no preference as to their method of transportation, as long as they fulfilled their missions.

Command the waters (23-29)

23 *not come upon the waters to journey, save upon the canal*. In the case is Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon, who were commanded to go to Cincinnati, there were not to use the Missouri River but to precede on land, though the Lord allowed for them to use waterways if it was a canal, which were dredged and very safe.

24 *after they leave the canal they shall journey by land*. The standard pattern for coming to Zion would be taking the canal system from Ohio or wherever the people were starting, then taking land conveyances the rest of the way, pitching tents as needed as sleeping (v. 25). This was to apply to everyone (v. 26).

27 *unto whom is given power to command the waters*. Though it is not explicit, most agree that Joseph Smith, like Moses, was given power over the waters, by virtue of his keys and authority.²⁰

28 *as the Spirit of the living God commandeth*. No matter how we journey around the earth, we are to seek to do so by the direction of the Spirit, for that will protect us more than any other precaution.

Preparing for the coming of the Son of Man (30-39)

30 *shall not open their mouths*. Joseph, Sidney, and Oliver were to hasten to Cincinnati, not even stopping to preach to “the wicked” along the way. Once in Cincinnati, they were to “lift up their voices” (v. 31). Then they were to hurry

home, only stopping to strengthen the churches but not preaching to the wicked (v. 32).

32 *the congregations of their brethren*. As opposed to the congregations of the wicked, those who had joined the Church were to be supported by Joseph, Sidney, and Oliver on their journey home.

33 *among the congregations of the wicked*. The other brethren were to spend their time among “the wicked,” teaching and preaching, that they might rid their garments of sin and become spotless before God (v. 34).

35 *Reynolds Cahoon...Samuel H. Smith*. The Lord instructed these two brethren to remain as companions, though the rest were free to choose their traveling and preaching companions.

36 *be of good cheer, little children*. This is a complementary phrase, not a demeaning one as it might sound. We are commanded to be as little children (Matthew 18:3). John especially used this phrase,²¹ likely as a term of endearment and to indicate their humility and willingness to submit to God.

37 *you have humbled yourselves before me*. Blessings come to the humble, including the kingdom of God.

38 *be watchful and be sober*. Being watchful toward the Second Coming should lead to both preparation and patience, since we don’t know the hour. To be sober means to take things seriously, to be sedate or subdued, with self-control and free from extravagance.

39 *Pray always*. Ending with a counsel to pray was appropriate given that pray had immediately preceded this revelation and is an important tool to all to avoid temptation.

39 *abide the day of his coming*. Emphasizing that they did not know the time of the Second Coming, the Lord stated that it might be during their lives or after they have died.

Results

Learning of the dangers of the river and per the Lord’s instructions, all of the group but two (William W. Phelps and Sidney Gilbert) continued the journey on foot, crossing overland to another bend in the river, then crossing over the Missouri at Chariton. Joseph, Oliver, and Sidney Rigdon went by stagecoach to Cincinnati, then returned to Kirtland, Ohio.

The lesson was that the Missouri River was not a good way to go up to Zion, which is true, based on information from the time, with its “very-varying channel” and accumulation of logs under the water. John Whitmer even called it “the

¹⁸ Judges 16:24; Job 15:21; Psalm 17:4; Proverbs 28:24; Jeremiah 4:7.

¹⁹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 212.

²⁰ Harper, *Making Sense*, 214; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:181.

²¹ John 13:33; 1 John 2:1, 12, 13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21.

River Distruction (or Missorie).” In fact, seventy percent of all steamboat wrecks were attributed to these dangers on the river.²²

Phelps published this revelation, since he was commanded to tell others about it, once he got his newspaper up and running in 1832. In his associated editorial, he mentioned both the dangers of river travel as well as *cholera*, which is a water-borne disease and which can ravage whole cities.²³

D&C 62 – Meeting in Chariton

Date and Location

Saturday, 13 August 1831, near the Missouri River, at Chariton, Missouri.

Setting

After leaving the other elders and setting off across land, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon crossed the Missouri River at Chariton (there is no town in that location today but the township of that name is still documented near the Missouri River in Chariton county, just southwest of Forest Green). As they came into the small town (population about 1,800 at that time²⁴), who should they see but a group of elders from Kirtland, heading for Independence. This group included Hyrum Smith, John Murdock, Harvey Whitlock, and David Whitmer. Hyrum Smith and John Murdock had first gone to Detroit before turning south to Missouri, hence their delay. Sickness had also delayed the men for several days.²⁵ The joyous reunion—which would not have occurred, had the brethren stayed in their canoes—triggered yet another revelation, the third of this journey, on Saturday, 13 August 1831, D&C 62.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1 (about Sep 1831), though Elizabeth Gilbert also had a copy in late 1831.²⁶ It was first published as Chapter 63 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, as Section 72 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and as Section 73 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 *who knoweth the weakness of man*. With his ability to see and know all, the Lord certainly knows all of our weaknesses. Yet his love is such that we can lay all of that be-

fore him and know that it does not impact his feelings toward us. Because of that love, knowledge, and relationship, he can “succor [help, aid] them who are tempted.”

This also could be speaking directly to the illness John Murdock was then suffering, which apparently lasted for at least two weeks.

2 *your mission is not yet full*. Though these brethren had come far, they still needed to complete their assigned journey all the way to Independence (see also v. 4). Do we sometimes pull up just short of our missions or assignments, thus missing out on blessings that go unrealized because of that shortfall?

3 *recorded in heaven*. These brethren had been diligent in their missionary efforts, in contrast to some of the others who had journey to Missouri quickly and who did not preach out of the fear of man. Angels look upon their testimonies, and their sins are forgiven because of their diligence.

4 *hold a meeting and rejoice together*. The brethren were not only to continue to Missouri but were to hold a meeting upon arrival, which would include a sacramental experience. This was to be done to fulfill a promise that the faithful would be “preserved and rejoice together in the land of Missouri” (v. 6; compare D&C 52:42-43).

5 *declare glad tidings*. Once they held the meeting, they were free to return home as they desired, except that they were to preach among “the congregations of the wicked” the glad tidings of the Restoration.

6 *I, the Lord, have brought you together*. Traveling across hundreds of miles of open territory on different schedules and with no means of communications, the chances of these brethren meeting up were small. The Lord confirmed that he brought them together in order to “rejoice together in the land of Missouri.”

²² JSP, D2:39.

²³ William W. Phelps, ay of Journeying for the Saints,” in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, December 1832, 5.

²⁴ See <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/place/chariton-county-missouri>.

²⁵ Murdock recorded that he was sick in bed one week and finally traded his watch for a wagon ride to Chariton from a man named William Ivy (Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:183-184).

²⁶ JSP, D2:44.

7 ride upon horses. The Lord had no objection to the use of horses or wagons (“chariots”) to keep the work moving. The key was to have a “thankful heart in all things.”

8 according to judgment and the directions of the Spirit. Church leaders, teachers, and parents learn quickly that both personal judgment and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are essential to our success in the Church.

9 the kingdom is yours. What an amazing blessing for this small group of priesthood holders in a little town in Missouri in 1831, just sixteen months after the Church was organized.

Results

Per the Lord’s instructions, the four Independence-bound elders did hold a meeting in Jackson County on 24 August 1831, reading scriptures and singing hymns with the small group of members there. Then they turned around and headed back to Ohio. They bought a horse for Joseph Murdock, (who had been too sick to travel for some of the journey and who still stayed in Chariton for another week²⁷), which helped them keep going, as the revelation invited them to do.

Joseph Smith and his party continued their journey, first passing through Fayette, Missouri, then taking a stage to St. Louis, then another stage all the way to Kirtland, arriving on 27 August 1831.

D&C 63 – How to Gather to Missouri

Date and Location

Tuesday, 30 August 1831, Kirtland, Ohio, on the Isaac Morley farm.

Setting

Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery returned to Kirtland on 27 August 1831. The next day, Oliver Cowdery was ordained to the high priesthood (a high priest), as he had been in Missouri when those ordinations began. Two days later, on 30 August 1831, D&C 63 was given. During that summer, with Joseph and other Church leaders traveling to Missouri and back, Kirtland had been without leadership, and some had fallen away. Also, some of the missionaries that returned still held some bad feelings toward Joseph for various things that happened along the trip. This all combined to create a small ‘Kirtland apostasy’ in the fall of 1831, just after this revelation.

More significantly for the Prophet, he now knew the location of Zion and the temple in Independence and as he shared that with the Ohio Saints, it raised many questions. When and how should they gather there? What should they do with their properties? How were they to raise the money needed to buy the land? Sidney Rigdon had been commanded (D&C 58:50) to write a letter to help with the raising of funds in the various churches, which he had done, but was it what the Lord wanted?

Finally, where were Joseph and Sidney to live? The Morley farm was being sold and the families living there going to Missouri, so they both needed new homes, since that was

their current place of residence. Joseph needed the Lord’s help answering these questions and concerns.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy was made on the same day as the revelation, from the Newel K. Whitney papers, written by Oliver Cowdery, who was scribe for the original revelation. John Whitmer also made a copy in Revelation Book 1 just a few days later (sometimes in Sep 1831) and Sidney Gilbert had one in his notebook (made about Oct 1831). It was first published in *The Evening and Morning Star* in February 1833, then as Chapter 64 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, as Section 20 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Fear and tremble (1-6)
- Faith and signs (7-12)
- Adultery (13-16)
- Sinners suffer the second death (17-19)
- Blessings of the faithful (20-23)
- Purchase lands in Zion (24-31)
- Wars (32-35)
- Gather to Zion (36-48)
- A day of warning (49-58)
- The Lord’s name (59-66)

²⁷ JSP, D2:44.

Commentary

Fear and Tremble (1-6)

1 *you that call yourselves the people of the Lord.* This message is universal and calls many to self-examination and repentance, but appears to be specifically aimed at those who ‘call themselves’ the Lord’s people but were not living up to that standard.

2 *whose anger is kindled against the wicked and rebellious.* The revelation starts with a this strongly worded rebuke against those who had rebelled in various ways during the last few weeks, both those in Kirtland and those who had made the trip to Missouri.

3 *whom he will take, and preserveth in life.* The Lord reminded them who controlled life and death; he could preserve them or take them from this life quickly into the next. The thought continues in v. 4 that the Lord “buildeth up...and destroyeth when he pleases” and has the power to cast a soul down to hell.

5 *utter my voice, and it shall be obeyed.* As God, the universe requires absolute obedience to his commands.

6 *take heed...fear and tremble...hold their lips.* This poetic but serious call to repentance warns that the Lord knows what has been happening and is giving fair warning that it is time to be more faithful.

Faith and Signs (7-12)

7 *signs, but not unto salvation.* Signs, or manifestations of God’s Spirit and power in our lives, will be given, but history has consistently demonstrated that signs do not convert, though they can strengthen faith once it exists.

8 *those among you who seek signs.* There were still many in Kirtland who valued supernatural signs and manifestations, believing that they demonstrated the truth of the work in which they were engaged. The Lord assures them it had been so “even from the beginning.”

9 *faith cometh not by signs.* Signs of God’s presence and authority were promised—tangible, physical blessings that could only be attributed to God—but with the warning that such signs do not give a testimony, but rather follow a testimony and a commitment to righteous living. A ready example of this was Ezra Booth, a former Methodist minister who joined the Church after seeing Alice Johnson’s arm healed by the Lord through Joseph Smith. But his faith didn’t last long, and now he was critical of the Prophet on many points. Because his commitment was based on a sign and not a conversion of the heart, it had no staying power.

10 *by the will of God.* Faith or the priesthood are not like “the Force” from Star Wars or some other unseen power that acts the moment we call upon it. Rather, as we develop

faith, God may choose to bless our lives by his power and according to his will. It is the responsibility of the priesthood bearer called upon to give a blessing to be prepared to have the Spirit dictate that will to him, and it is the responsibility of the seeker of a blessing, whether through the priesthood or prayer and fasting, to also seek to know and conform to God’s will. Faith is trusting that the outcome is truly in his hands, regardless of its impact on our lives at this moment in time.

11 *no signs, only in wrath unto their condemnation.* Signs might be displayed to the unfaithful, such as the example of Alma giving a sign to Korihor in Alma 30 (especially vv. 43-56), but it works against them and to their judgment.

12 *not pleased with those among you who have sought after signs.* The Lord has consistently condemned those who seek proof of the power of his work by viewing a miracle or by some other physical sign. In the New Testament, he often associated such sign-seeking with adultery (e.g., Matthew 16:4), just as he next does here in this revelation.

Adultery (13-16)

13 *many have turned away from my commandments.* How sad it must have been for Joseph Smith to see some of these early converts, who joined the Church with enthusiasm and excitement, so quickly fall away. The small falling away at that time is nothing like the serious apostasy that will happen in the late 1830s in Kirtland, but every soul is precious and would bring heartache.

14 *adulterers...remain with you.* Some of those who left the Church were adulterers, in deed or in mind, but many who remained also struggled with this sin. This is probably the most damaging sin in the Church today.

15 *beware and repent speedily.* While it’s true that this life is a probation and gives us a space to repent (2 Nephi 2:21), we need to “be wise in the days of [our] probation” (Mormon 9:28) and repent quickly, because we do not want to hear, “your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure” (Helaman 13:38).

16 *he that looketh on a woman to lust.* This was already discussed as part of the Law given to the Church (D&C 42:24). The majority of the ‘adultery’ experienced then and today is not the act of sexual betrayal, but the thought of doing so by lusting after other women. The rampant use of pornography in our day is this very thing, for each time such an image is consumed, it generates lustful and frankly unrealistic thoughts and desires that have nothing to do with the reality of a relationship that requires work, commitment, and mutual support. Such consumers of lust “shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall

fear,” declared the Lord. What a horrific price to pay for inappropriate Internet browsing.

Sinners Suffer the Second Death (17-19)

17 **the second death.** Harking back to D&C 29:27-29, the Lord puts sin in its eternal framework—it will bring judgment upon us, triggering great losses or at best delays of eternal reward.

18 **they shall not have part in the first resurrection.** This is the second the “first resurrection” has been mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants, but it is found in the book of Revelation in the New Testament and in several references in Mosiah and Alma in the Book of Mormon.²⁸

19 **ye are not justified.** We are not forgiven of our sins when we allow adulterous thoughts, lies, and other such sins among us.

Blessings of the Faithful (20-23)

20 **the same shall overcome.** In the language of Revelation, the faithful overcome the world, ultimately receiving that world as their inheritance.

21 **the earth shall be transfigured.** The Church had not yet received the fulness of the information about the earth’s future state, some of which Joseph Smith had learned through his Bible translation work. Here the Lord showed that the pattern for how the earth would change was given to Christ personally when upon the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:2-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36), and promised a fuller account of that event in the future.

22 **not by the way of commandment.** The Lord does give commandments but will not reveal all things as a commandment. This is both merciful to those who are not ready to obey but also follows the principle of “line upon line, precept upon precept” (Isaiah 28:10), allowing those with willing and obedient hearts to learn more.

23 **the mysteries of the kingdom...living water...everlasting life.** These amazing blessings are promised to those who keep the commandment, cast sin from their lives, and seek the Spirit in all things. The Lord will individually reveal great mysteries which will lead them to eternal life.

Purchase Lands in Zion (24-31)

24 **not in haste.** The gathering to Zion needed to be an orderly process, not something that people rushed into. The Church needed to avoid “confusion” and “pestilence” which would come if they all left in a hurry.

25 **hold it in mine own hands.** Zion is in the Lord’s control and he will take care of events there if they do things in the way he directs.

26 **render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s.** Quoting Matthew 22:21, which was about abiding by the taxing laws of the land, this comment prepares the Saints for the direction that comes next about doing things in a legal and proper way.

27 **you should purchase the lands.** The Lord counseled them to legally buy the lands through the bishop there, sending the money ahead so things are prepared for new arrivals. Going against the Lord’s careful plan will result in anger among the current residents and even the shedding of blood, because Satan is attempting to stop it all (v. 28).

29 **but by purchase or by blood.** There are only two ways for this to succeed, and the Lord’s way is to purchase the lands legally and build partnerships with the residents of the land.

30 **if by purchase, behold you are blessed.** Purchasing the land is much preferred, because if by blood, the Saints themselves will suffer. This is, of course, what later happened.

31 **you are forbidden to shed blood.** To be clear, redeeming Zion by bloodshed would mean the loss of Zion as the Saints were forbidden to be the aggressors. Their enemies would not hesitate to shed their blood, drive them from their cities and churches, and they would lose their inheritance. There could not have been a clearer warning of what was going to happen if they didn’t follow the Lord’s plan exactly.

Wars (32-35)

32 **I am holding my Spirit from the inhabitants of the earth.** Because of the wickedness of the world, many lived without the influence of the Spirit in their lives. Anyone who was seeking to do God’s will, however, would have that Spirit to help and support them.

33 **the wicked shall slay the wicked.** It is not that the Lord inflicts such punishment upon them, but rather that wicked choose to fight each other. Though this is the only occurrence of this phrase in scripture, the concept is in Revelation 17:16-18 where the kingdoms of the world (represented by ten horns) make war upon the great city, Babylon, the great whore, who was their partner but has fallen and left them desolate, so they destroy her.

34 **the saints also shall hardly escape.** “Hardly” means ‘with difficulty.’²⁹ Faithful members will be impacted by

²⁸ Revelation 20:5-6; Mosiah 15:21, 22, 24, 26; 18:9; Alma 40:15-17; D&C 45:54. Only two other D&C sections mention it later, D&C 76 and 132.

²⁹ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:200.

the struggles in the world, but that with difficulty, they can escape the punishments the wicked will bring upon themselves. But with faith in Christ, they can look for him to come down in their time of need and “consume the wicked with unquenchable fire.”

35 *not yet, but by and by.* As always when the Lord pronounces judgment, he cautions on guessing at the timeline—it is not yet but will happen eventually. We should not believe the final judgment is eminent but trust in God’s timing.

Gather to Zion (36-48)

36 *my saints should be assembled upon the land of Zion.* It is the Lord’s will that this happen, but in proper order and under the direction of inspired leaders.

37 *take righteousness in his hands and faithfulness upon his loins.* Both of these two phrases are unique to D&C 63 in all of scripture. Given what the Lord had just spoken about, though, with the Saints needing to take action to go up to Zion in proper order and to avoid sins like adultery, they are good images to use.

37 *declare both by word and by flight that desolation shall come.* Missionaries were to preach the word to the wicked world to prepare for judgment and also by their example of gathering together to live his laws that trouble for the unrighteous was ahead.

38 *who dwell upon this farm.* The Isaac Morley farm where Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon and others were living needed to be sold and the residents should find new places to live.

39 *Titus Billings.* Titus was left in charge of selling the Morley property after the Morleys left for Missouri (per D&C 52:23). He sold this property and his own and went to Missouri in the spring of 1832. He was one of the great faithful Saints who struggled with all the challenges and persecutions, and stayed faithful through the Missouri and Nauvoo periods and the migration west.

40 *the moneys which can be spared.* After needs were met for the migration, the rest of the money should be sent to Bishop Partridge for use in buying more lands in Missouri.

41 *he shall be enabled to discern by the Spirit those who shall go up.* The Lord gave authority to Joseph Smith to determine who should go to Zion and who should stay in Kirtland. One of the later problems is that not everyone waited for Joseph to tell them when to go, but in their enthusiasm to get to Zion, left anyway. This put pressure on Church resources to try and accommodate all the immigrants, and contributed to the Missourians feeling overwhelmed.

42 *Newel K. Whitney retain his store.* The Gilbert & Whitney store in Kirtland was a great asset, so the Lord commanded Newel, the agent in Kirtland, to keep it running. Because it was consecrated (“or in other words, the store,” emphasizing the communal ownership of it³⁰), the surplus would benefit the land purchases in Missouri (v. 43).

44 *let him do according to wisdom.* The Lord had confidence in Newel’s ability to run the store effectively and profitably, thereby helping the cause of Zion.

45 *let him be ordained unto this power.* For now, Knight was to serve as an agent to Bishop Partridge, who was in Missouri. Later (D&C 72:8), he will be called as bishop himself in Kirtland.

46 *speedily visit the churches.* This was a command to visit the branches of the Church in the Ohio area, teach them these principles of gathering, and request their support for the gathering to Zion. They were to use Sidney Rigdon’s letter, which the Lord will have him rewrite (see vv. 55-56).

47 *shall overcome the world.* Bookending the promise in v. 20, the repetition that the faithful and obedient would overcome the world ties everything between these verses together.

48 *an inheritance in this world...a reward in the world to come.* Those contributing financial support to Zion were promised an inheritance (in other words, land in Missouri) and an even greater eternal reward.

A Day of Warning (49-58)

49 *an inheritance before the Lord, in the holy city.* Even the faithful who “die in the Lord” were promised an inheritance in Zion after the resurrection. Thus Zion is not only a blessing to mortals, but part of God’s plan for his resurrected and exalted children.

50 *die at the age of man.* This is not so much a specific number of years as meant to convey the concept that people in the Millennium will live to a good, old age, not threatened by disease, war, accident, or other challenges in our present world.

51 *changed in the twinkling of an eye.* During the Millennium, people will not die in a painful, suffering way, but will be resurrected instantaneously, changed from mortal to immortal in a blink of the eye.

52 *for this cause preached the apostles.* The doctrine of the resurrection was a bold and unknown one in the days of the early apostles, as it is for most of our world now. The promise of living again and never dying after we are raised

³⁰ Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 229-230.

from mortal death is one of great comfort to those who accept Christ and his doctrines.

53 *speaking after the manner of the Lord, they are now nigh at hand.* From the Lord's perspective, this is about to happen. To our mortal reckoning, it might feel a bit longer. But we can be assured that the promises will all be fulfilled.

54 *foolish virgins among the wise.* See Matthew 25:1-13 for the parable of the ten virgins.

54 *pluck out the wicked.* Combining parables, the Lord also referenced the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-43.

55 *not pleased with my servant Sidney Rigdon.* Sidney was commanded (D&C 58:50-51) to write a letter describing the benefits of Missouri to help raise funds for Zion among the churches. He wrote it, but must have relied on his own wisdom and not on the Spirit to receive this condemnation.

56 *he shall make another.* Sidney was instructed to write the letter again. If he did not do it according to the Spirit this time, the task would be given to someone else.

57 *those who desire...let them be ordained.* Echoing words back in D&C 4, those who desired to preach the gospel were here given the opportunity to be ordained and go do it. No waiting for a call for the willing—just express the desire and go to work.

58 *a day of warning, and not a day of many words.* The voice of warning is raised (D&C 1:4, 38). It is concise and accurate, not taking many flowery phrases to say what is important for the world to hear.

The Lord's Name (59-66)

59 *I am from above, and my power lieth beneath.* In poetic terms, the Lord expressed how his power and influence are everywhere, "in all, and through all," leading to the ultimate result that one day all things will be subject to him.

60 *even Jesus Christ.* So there is no confusion about who is speaking, the message is explicit—it is the very Jesus Christ, the beginning and the end, the Savior of the world.

61 *beware how they take my name in their lips.* Not just a reference to swearing, though surely that is part of it, but also how we speak and do things in Jesus' name. We must not use his name hypocritically or inappropriately, such as for our own influence or authority. We must be single to his glory whenever we invoke his name.

62 *use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority.* This should help us interpret the similar injunction in Ten Commandments about using the Lord's name in vain. Here the Lord explains that using his name in vain has to do with speaking in his name as if we had the authority to do so, but we do not—in other words, a false apostle or representative.

63 *let the church repent of their sins.* Repentance continues to be the key message to the world and to the Church. The promise is great: the repentant will be owned by the Lord, the unrepentant will be cut off or put out of his presence.

64 *that which cometh from above is sacred.* Revelation from the Lord is a sacred experience and should be treated with respect and care, shared when the Spirit prompts, which Spirit comes through prayer. Without that confirming experience, it could well cause the condemnation of the people speaking and hearing the revelation.

65 *Joseph Smith...Sidney Rigdon.* The two brethren were among those living on the Morley farm, which was being sold, so they needed to find a place to live. The Lord promised that they would find their new homes by the Spirit as an answer to prayer.

66 *receive a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Those who "overcome with patience" and live righteously in spite of the wickedness of the world around them, are promised a glory that exceeds what they can conceive now. Those who reject the covenants and commandments are faced with "a greater condemnation."

Results

There was some apostasy that fall, and some Kirtland members did fall away. One of these was Ezra Booth, who ignored the commandment to preach along the way and journey quickly and comfortably back to Ohio on steamboat and stagecoach. He was upset that Joseph Smith had traveled quickly in such ways while he had to walk all the way to Missouri.³¹ He found Joseph Smith to be disappointing as a prophet. Booth was disciplined in a council of elders on 6 September and his license to preach revoked.³² He then began to write letters against the Church published in a local paper which had an impact on local public opinion. He influenced others, including Symonds Ryder, who quickly became antagonistic, publishing his first letter against the Church the same day as Booth's loss of license.³³ A few months later, Booth and Ryder helped lead the tar and feathering of Joseph Smith and injuries inflicted on Sidney Rigdon.

³¹ Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 297.

³² *JSP*, D2:59-61.

³³ Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 297.

But most in Kirtland were still obedient and continued to sacrifice and serve. Specifically, in relation to this revelation, Titus Billings made the necessary arrangements with his property and left for Missouri in the spring of 1832.

Sidney Rigdon wrote another epistle about Zion which was acceptable. With that letter and this revelation, Newel K. Whitney, who was “ordained an agent unto the Disciples in this land” on 1 September,³⁴ and Oliver Cowdery together visited the churches in the area throughout the fall of 1831 and raised money for purchasing lands in Missouri. Later, Oliver and John Whitmer made a trip to Missouri to deliver the money to Bishop Partridge.

On 12 September 1831, less than two weeks after D&C 63 was received, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon both moved to Hiram, Ohio, about thirty-two miles south of Kirtland, where they lived for the next year, Joseph and Emma staying with John and Elsa Johnson and Sidney moved his family into one of the cottages on their farm.

Joseph did begin directing by revelation just who should go up to Zion. The day following this revelation, he received another (not published in the Doctrine and Covenants) that directed John Burk, Erastus Babbitt, and David Elliott to move and settle in Missouri that fall.³⁵ Subsequent revelations continued to direct others to make that move.

Below are some excerpts from the second letter that Sidney Rigdon wrote that was used to solicit support for Zion from the Ohio churches:³⁶

I Sidney a servant of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father and through the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ unto the Saints which are scattered abroad in these last days May grace mercy & peace rest upon you from God the Father & from our Lord Jesus Christ who is greatly to be feared among his saints & to be had in reverence of all them who obey him—

Beloved brethren it has pleased God even the Father to make known unto us in these last days the good pleasure

of his will concerning his saints & to make known unto us the things which he has decreed upon the nations even wasting and destruction until they are utterly destroyed...And as the time is now near at hand for the accomplishment of his purposes & the fulfilment of the prophecies which have been spoken by all the holy prophets ever since the world began he has sent & signified unto us by the mouth of his holy prophet that he has raised up in these last days the speedy accomplishment of his purpose...

So in these last days he has commenced to gather them unto a place provided before of God and had in providence of God for this purpose & which he now holds in his hands that they through faith & patience may inherit the promises a land which God by his own commandment has consecrated to himself where he has said that his laws shall be kept & where his saints can dwell in safety through their perseverance in well doing & their unfeigned repentance of all their sins our Heavenly Father has provided this land himself...with an exceeding fertile soil & cleared ready for the hand of the cultivator bespeaks the goodness of our God in providing so goodly a heritage & its climate suited to persons from every quarter of this continent...it abounds with fountains of pure water the soil climate & surface all adapted to health indeed I may say that the whole properties of the country invite the saints to come & partake in their blessings but what more need I say about a country which our Heavenly Father holds in his hands for if it were unhealthy he could make it healthy...

I conclude by exhorting you to hear the voice of the Lord your God who is speaking to you, in much mercy & who is sending forth his word & his revelations in these last days....

³⁴ *JSP*, D2:58.

³⁵ *JSP*, D2:55-56.

³⁶ From Cook, *Revelations*, 99-101.

Works Consulted

For text notes:

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

RB2 – Revelation Book 2, from *JSP*, MRB:407-665.

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

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

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

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

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