

Doctrine and Covenants 3-5

Lesson 5: Come, Follow Me, Doctrine and Covenants, 31 January 2025

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Introduction

In Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price, the account jumps from Martin Harris’ New York visit (early 1828) straight to the coming of Oliver Cowdery (April 1829), but there were many events during that year, as related in Joseph Smith’s other histories and other accounts of the period.

Starting to translate

Sometime during Martin Harris’s New York trip, Joseph began to truly translate, creating the first two-thirds of the manuscript today referred to as the book of Lehi. The details are uncertain, because he appeared to be waiting for word from Martin about finding a translator. But at the same time, Martin and Emma both testified that during this time, Emma wrote about two-thirds of the manuscript, which was fully completed by mid-April.¹

Emma’s time acting as Joseph’s scribe was something she spoke of with great fondness and emotion later in life. She told her son, Joseph Smith III:

I frequently wrote ~~for~~ day after day, often ~~he~~ sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it and dictating hour after hour, with nothing between us. He had neither mss [manuscript] nor book to read from. If he had anything of the Kind he could not have concealed it from me. The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen <table> cloth, which I have given him to fold them in. I ~~have~~ felt of the plates, as they lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like ~~st~~ thick paper, and would rustle <with a metallic sound> when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.²

After returning from New York, Martin Harris came to Harmony and assisted Joseph in the translation from about 12 April to 14 June 1828, over the objection of Martin’s wife, Lucy, who thought Joseph was only after Harris’ money. This was good timing to relieve Emma who was getting toward the end of her pregnancy.

For Joseph’s part, the information Martin had learned from his trip posed a challenge: no scholar was going to come to Joseph’s rescue to “git them translated.” He realized that he was on his own and needed to learn how to use the Nephite interpreters for that purpose. Though we have no details about this learning experience, he clearly figured it out sometime between February and April 1828, as he and Emma had translated much of that first manuscript by Martin’s arrival in April. With Martin there, the two men went to work, finishing the book of Lehi by mid-June.³

The lost manuscript

After they had translated “116 pages,”⁴ Martin asked for something that would quiet his wife’s concerns. Joseph would not let them see the plates, so Martin asked to take the translated manuscript. Joseph’s 1832 account tells it this way:

after we had translated 116 pages that he desired to carry them to read to his friends that peradventur he might convince them of the truth therefore I inquired of the Lord and the Lord said unto me that he must not take them and I spake unto him (Martin) the word of the Lord and he said inquire again and I inquired again and also the third time and the Lord said unto me let him go with them only he shall covenant with me that he will not shew them to only but four

¹ MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 90-91.

² Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:539.

³ MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 89-92.

⁴ The number of pages is probably an estimate, based on the fact that the later printer’s manuscript had exactly 116 pages up to the point where Joseph restarted in Mosiah. In other words, what he translated from the small plates to replace the lost book of Lehi recorded ended up being 116 pages in the printer’s manuscript, so Joseph referred to the lost manuscript as ‘116 pages,’ even though the number of pages lost may have been quite different. See MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 102-103 n58.

persons and he covenanted with the Lord that he would do according to the word of the Lord therefore he took them and took his journey unto his friends to Palmire Wayne County & State of N York.⁵

The 1838 history mentions five people instead of four, specifically his brother, Preserved Harris; his wife, Lucy Harris; his father and mother, Nathan and Rhoda Harris, and his wife's sister, Polly Harris Cobb.⁶

The time period for the three inquiries was the entire two months Martin was in Harmony, not just something in quick succession, as we might believe from the abbreviated account in the history.

Joseph said that after Martin took the manuscript, Moroni came and reclaimed the plates and the interpreters. The day after Martin left, on 15 June 1828, Emma gave birth to a little boy whom they named Alvin, but he died within the hour, and Emma nearly died herself. Joseph cared for her night and day. After two weeks Emma began to get better but there was no word from Martin, so with her urging, he left his wife in the care of her mother and took a stagecoach north to his parents' home, fasting and agonizing as he went. Being dropped twenty miles from his home, he walked all night. Exhausted but anxious to hear from Martin, Joseph called for him at breakfast time, and he reluctantly came after noon, delivering the news that the manuscript was gone. Martin had indeed shown it to several friends, and it had disappeared from his house when he was away one day.⁷ The manuscript has never been found; some claimed that Lucy Harris, Martin's wife, burned it. Joseph related the story simply in his 1832 history:

and he brake the covenant which he made before the Lord and the Lord suffered the writings to fall into the hands of wicked men and Martin was Chastened for his transgression and I also was chastened ~~also~~ for my transgression for asking the Lord the third time wherefore the Plates was taken from me by the power of God and I was not able to obtain them for a season.⁸

Lucy Smith, who was there, said that when Martin told him the manuscript was lost (exclaiming twice, "I have lost my soul!"), Joseph cried out, "Oh, my God, my God! All is lost, is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned. It is I who tempted the wrath of God by asking him for that which I had no right to ask, as I was differently instructed by the angel."⁹ Joseph Smith was 22 years old when this happened.

Immediately after returning to Harmony, Joseph walked out into a private area near his home and Moroni appeared to him again, handing him the interpreters. Using them, D&C 3 was received, the first written revelation of Joseph Smith's young prophetic experience. It was Joseph finding "his prophetic voice."¹⁰ Then Moroni took the interpreters back and left Joseph alone to ponder his situation.

The return of the plates

Lucy Smith recorded that Joseph repented all summer and on 22 Sep 1828, Moroni returned the plates and the interpreters to him.¹¹ But there is little indication that the translation resumed for several months, most likely because of the strong opposition of Emma's family and Joseph's complete lack of resources. He was just scaping by and had no money for paper, ink, and other supplies needed to do the work.¹² Local records show how little Joseph and Emma purchased and how often Joseph was working for others to try to earn something so they could have the necessities of life.¹³

Two events changed his course. The first was a visit from his father and brother, Samuel, who were accompanied by Joseph Knight, in February 1829. Joseph Sr. asked his son what his duty might be in this work, and Joseph used his seer stone to receive what is now D&C 4, Joseph's second recorded revelation. This was a call to serve, a mission beyond getting the plates translated, and is the first real hint of something bigger coming.¹⁴ Joseph Knight was strapped for cash himself but at this time gave Joseph and Emma "a little money to Buoy [buy] paper to translate."¹⁵

⁵ *JSP*, H1:15-16; History, circa Summer 1832, [5-6](#).

⁶ Griffiths, *Scripture Central Commentary*, 1:70.

⁷ MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 93-96.

⁸ *JSP*, H1:16; History, circa Summer 1832, [6](#).

⁹ Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844-1845, Bk. 7, p. [6](#).

¹⁰ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 69.

¹¹ Lucy Mack Smith, History, Bk. 7, p. [11](#); MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 97.

¹² Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 70.

¹³ Emma's brother, David Hale, kept a ledger for his store, which functioned more like a bank and barter record, with many entries for Joseph's activities during their time in Harmony. See [David Hale's Store Ledger, *BYU Studies*, 53:3](#).

¹⁴ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 70.

¹⁵ Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:19.

Joseph Sr. returned home but young Samuel stayed behind, and the record indicates that he and Emma served as scribes while Joseph made some effort at translation. But resources were scarce and not much progress appears to have been made.¹⁶

In March 1829, Martin Harris came to Harmony, seeking a “greater witness” of the work. This was the first time he and Joseph had seen each other since the loss of the manuscript. Martin came because his wife, Lucy, had threatened a lawsuit against Joseph to stop Martin from supporting him.¹⁷ Martin hoped that he could persuade Joseph to at least let him see the plates in the hopes of quieting his wife. Joseph sought the guidance of the Lord and the result was D&C 5, counseling Martin to be patient and he would indeed see the plates as one of three witnesses. Harris acted as scribe for Joseph for a few pages and as part of his effort to gain evidence to convince his wife, traded Joseph’s seer stone out for another during one of their breaks. When Joseph could tell something was wrong, Martin confessed his attempt, saying he had done it “to stop the mouths of fools.”¹⁸

It is not known what happened to these few pages recorded between February and April 1829. No surviving manuscript exists in Emma’s, Samuel’s, or Martin’s hand.¹⁹ There are several theories about what happened but two seem most likely. First, we do not have all of the original manuscript, much of it being destroyed by water when it was put in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, so perhaps a portion was in their handwriting. But the missing sections don’t correspond well to the timing of this early work, and Oliver Cowdery’s hand appears in each section that is preserved. The other theory is one I’ve not found documented elsewhere but which fits the circumstances. Perhaps Joseph restarted the translation back with the book of Lehi and began to redictate the same material as before. The work did not progress far (as explained above) but soon (perhaps as late as 5-6 April 1829), Joseph received D&C 10 which told him not to retranslate the book of Lehi but that the Lord had prepared another solution for that part of the history—the small plates of Nephi that contained Nephi’s personal account and those who followed after him. Thus, when Oliver arrived, the translation picked up in Mosiah where it had left off a year earlier and continued on through Moroni’s final words, then they finished by translating the small plates to the Words of Mormon. This would mean that the few pages Emma, Samuel, and Martin had recorded in February – April 1829 were set aside and never used.²⁰

Summary Chronology

- **Feb 1828 – Apr 1828** (Harmony, PA) – Joseph began to translate the “book of Lehi” with Emma as the main scribe; Emma wrote about two-thirds of the original manuscript, which would be dozens of pages.
- **Sat, 12 Apr-Sat, 14 Jun 1828** (Harmony, PA) – Joseph finished translating the first manuscript with Martin Harris as scribe.
- **Sat, 14 June 1828** (ca.) (Palmyra, NY) – Martin Harris took the translated manuscript pages to show to family and friends; the plates and interpreters were taken away from Joseph Smith.
- **Sun, 15 Jun 1828** (Harmony, PA) – Emma gave birth to a son (Alvin) who died shortly after birth; Emma was very ill for many days.
- **Early Jul 1828** (Manchester, NY) – Joseph traveled to his parents’ home to discover what had happened to the manuscript.
- **Mid to late Jul 1828** (Harmony, PA) – D&C 3 and at least portions of D&C 10 a little later that month.
- **Mon, 22 Sep 1828** (Harmony, PA) – Joseph received the plates and interpreters again, per Lucy Mack Smith; Lucy and Joseph Sr. visited Joseph and Emma shortly after this.
- **Feb 1829** (Harmony, PA) – Joseph Smith, Sr., and Samuel Smith visited Joseph with Joseph Knight’s help; D&C 4.
- **Mon, 2 Mar 1829** (ca.) (Harmony, PA) – Martin Harris visited Joseph; D&C 5.
- **Sun, 5 Apr 1829** (Harmony, PA) – Oliver Cowdery arrived with Samuel Smith.

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¹⁶ *JSP*, H1:16; History, circa Summer 1832, [6](#).

¹⁷ She threatened the suit in March and actually filed it in August 1829; see MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 107.

¹⁸ MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 111.

¹⁹ MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 115 n7.

²⁰ Of course, problems exist. No such pages have ever been found, but following D&C 10’s instructions, Joseph could have destroyed them. The reconstruction is thus speculative but does have the merit of fitting all the known dates and circumstances.

Setting

See “The lost manuscript” in the Introduction above for more details. In December 1827, Joseph and Emma had located to Harmony (today Oakland), Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, next to Emma’s father’s home, purchasing a small, two-room house and some property from Emma’s brother. Emma began helping with the early translation work, then Martin Harris came and assisted in the effort that produced over a hundred pages of translated manuscript. After Joseph implored the Lord three times, Martin was allowed to take the manuscript back to Palmyra to show to his wife and a limited number of friends in June 1828. Breaking his covenant, he showed the writing to others, and one day the manuscript disappeared from his house.

In the meantime, Emma gave birth to a son who died within the first hour, and she was near to death herself. Joseph cared for her for nearly three weeks. Then in early July 1828, Joseph left Emma in the care of her mother and traveled about 130 miles from Harmony to Manchester to learn what happened. Discovering that Martin had lost the papers, he was devastated and returned to Harmony. Shortly after his return, Joseph prayed for forgiveness in the woods near his home. Moroni appeared to him to temporarily return the Nephite interpreters, which had been taken with the plates when Martin left with the manuscripts. Using the interpreters, Joseph received Doctrine and Covenants 3 in mid- to late July 1828, after which the interpreters were again taken by the angel, leaving Joseph to ponder and repent.

Documents and Publication

The oldest record is in Revelation Book 1, in which it is the first thing written. It was first published as chapter 2 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, then as Section 30 in the 1835 and the 1844 Doctrine & Covenants.

Outline

1. One eternal round (1-4)	1835 verses compared to 2013			
2. Repent or lose the gift (5-15)	<u>1835</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>2013</u>
3. Help the Lamanites believe (16-20)	1	1-2	5	12-15
	2	3-4	6	16-20
	3	5-8		
	4	9-11		

Introduction

This is the first revelation of Joseph Smith which has a surviving text. The rebuke from the Lord is strong and not softened by any editing on Joseph’s part. Joseph Smith is chastised for fearing man more than God, counseled to repent to receive the Lord’s mercy, and taught that the Book of Mormon will come forth to fulfill the promises of the Lord. This section was clearly a turning point in the young Prophet’s life, helping solidify behaviors and commitments to obey God that served him all of his life. Starting with Sections 3 and 10, Joseph shifted from being a servant struggling with his own desires to one dedicated to doing things the Lord’s way.

The heading for this in Revelation Book 1 is: “Given to Joseph the Seer after he had lost certain writings which he had Translated by the gift & Power of God.”²¹

One Eternal Round (1-4)

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

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

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

4 For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows

²¹ *JSP*, MRB:9; Revelation Book 1, [1](#).

after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him.

Commentary

1 *the purposes of God cannot be frustrated.* It might have appeared to Joseph that the loss of the manuscript set the work back. But the Lord was not surprised by Joseph’s and Martin’s choices, and had anticipated them hundreds of years earlier by having Nephi prepare a second set of plates (1 Nephi 9:2-6; 19:1-6) and Mormon include them in the record (Words of Mormon 1:3-7). For the ancient prophets, this duplicate history was in the record for an unknown but “wise purpose” (Words of Mormon 1:7), but it allowed Joseph Smith to have a full account of the Lehiite people even after the book of Lehi from the large plates, which was the first part of the translation, was lost.

2 *his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.* This phrase only shows up elsewhere in Alma 37:12 (though his course being an eternal round also is in 1 Nephi 10:19, Alma 7:20, and D&C 35:1). The two phrases seem like a contradiction—how can God’s paths be straight and round at the same time? But like many scriptural sayings, they are a paradox. Says one commentary, “God’s course is absolutely straight, but oddly enough it end where it began. It is, therefore, a circle, or a round.” The example is that we start in God’s presence, leave, and with Christ, return—a straight (covenant) path that ends right back where we began, “though *we* may be different when we finish the course than we were when we started.”²²

However, it’s important to note that both the oldest copy of D&C 3 and the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon use the word “strait” in these verses, not “straight.” The spelling is changed by the typesetter in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, but in the Book of Commandments and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, it is still “strait.” It was changed to “straight” in the 1844 edition. If the meaning of “strait” (which means ‘narrow’) is correct, then the paradox is removed, for the path of a circle can be round but also strait/narrow.

3 *it is not the work of God that is frustrated.* Joseph’s emotions as recorded by his mother, Lucy, when he heard the manuscript was lost (see “The lost manuscript” above), were frantic and massively sorrowful. Perhaps he thought that by his actions he *had* somehow frustrated God’s work. But the revelation assures him that is quite impossible, which is both comforting and amazing.

4 *although a man may have many revelations.* This is not the Lord speaking in generalities, but to Joseph, who is “a man” receiving “many revelations.” God is telling the young Prophet that he has boasted in his own strength, set at naught God’s counsels, and followed his own will and carnal desires. Thus, he has fallen and incurred just vengeance. This is a harsh condemnation. How fascinating that Joseph would record such a personal chastisement as his first revelation. He did not try to hide his mistakes from the Church or the world but openly shared them in the hopes that we might learn the same lessons in a less painful way.

4 text note:

RB1 he must fall to the Earth & incur the vengeance of a Just God upon him
1833 he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him

The original manuscript for this section first had “he must fall to the Earth,” but then a later unidentified hand crossed out the phrase “to the Earth.” It is not printed in the 1833 version or any version afterwards. This phrase is used somewhat in the Bible to represent either bowing down in humility before God or another person (e.g., Joshua 7:1), or death (e.g., 2 Chronicles 20:24). In some cases, the cause of the fall is the power of God (e.g., Acts 9:4). The phrase is used even more times in the Book of Mormon, and it does sometimes mean humility (e.g., 3 Nephi 4:8) or death (e.g., Alma 47:24; 56:56; Helaman 9:3), but the most common and dominant meaning is to be overcome by the power of God (e.g., Jacob 7:15; Mosiah 4:1; 27:12; Alma 18:42; 19:16; 27:17; Helaman 9:4). All three are potential meanings of the phrase in this verse, meaning that the man who follows his own will and carnal desires will either be humbled, die, or overcome by God’s power and judgment, though the last seems to match the context best. See also the second reference to falling in v. 9.

Repent or Lose the Gift (5-15)

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

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

²² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:36.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary

5 *how strict were your commandments; and remember also the promises.* In his four-year experience with Moroni, Joseph had been told and reminded many times exactly how he was to treat the plates and the translation. Specifically in this case, the Lord had clearly told him ‘no’ when asked about Martin taking the plates. The rewards of faithfulness were also clearly taught and explained, especially in relation to the plates and by extension, the translation.

6 *how oft you have transgressed.* As with other parts of this revelation, these are severe chastisements to the young prophet that he freely shared, published, and publicly owned. His imperfections were on full display.

7 *you should not have feared man more than God.* Considering Joseph Smith’s position, it is in some ways understandable that he persisted in asking the Lord about letting Martin Harris take the manuscripts. Not only was Joseph young and still learning his prophetic role, but Martin was Joseph’s only real financial supporter at this time, and one of very few moral supporters. Martin was older; he helped fund the work; Martin wrote for Joseph; and Martin believed him, which helped Joseph’s credibility because of Martin’s prominent position in the community. If he lost Martin’s support, Joseph may have believed, the work would come to a halt (which it subsequently did after the manuscripts were lost). On the third request, the Lord said yes, but almost with a resigned sigh, ‘If you feel you must do it, then give him the pages, but it will not turn out well, as I have warned you.’

8 *he would have extended his arm.* A hard lesson for us all. Can we trust in God’s promises of support when things are really hard? He is not capricious but is also not like a vending machine where you put in your money and get what you want.²³ Our faith and hope is that in God’s big picture, he *always* goes what is best for us, even if in our limited vision we can’t always see it.

8 *fiery darts of the adversary.* The phrase “fiery darts” is found exclusively in the Bible in Ephesians 6:16, though there the darts come from “the wicked” (compare D&C 27:17). But Joseph may have encountered this exact phrase in his translation efforts already in the lost manuscript, because it will show up later in his translation of the small plates as Nephi records his words to his brothers after his own tree of life vision (1 Nephi 15:24; footnote 8b notes these references, which are the only ones in scripture with this phrase). Fiery darts likely refers to arrows coated with pitch and lit on fire before being shot at the enemy. While all arrows are potentially lethal to people, fiery arrows could destroy towns as they caught on fire anything they contacted.

9 *thou art Joseph.* In the early sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord uses this phrase with a person’s name four times, with Joseph Smith (this verse), Oliver Cowdery (6:20), Hyrum Smith (11:23), and David Whitmer (14:11). In each case, the Lord seems to be calling out a personal knowledge of the person by declaring their name. With the other three, he also declares “I am God,” perhaps affirming that relationship or establishing clearly who is speaking, since the voice the person heard dictating the revelation was Joseph’s. In this revelation, Joseph knew that, so the declaration of origin was not needed.

²³ See D. Todd Christofferson, “[Our Relationship with God](#),” April 2022 General Conference.

9 if thou art not aware thou wilt fall. In the apostasy of 1837-1838, Church members accused Joseph Smith of sinful behavior and being a fallen prophet, as this verse declares is a possibility. However, Joseph of 1828 and Joseph of 1838 are two very different people—he learned from this and other experiences the value of exact obedience (Alma 57:21).

10 God is merciful. Verse 10 is the turning point in the revelation. With the declaration of God’s mercy, the message shifts from condemnation and judgment to hope and promise.

10 *text note:*

- RB1 repent of that which thou hast done & he will only cause thee to be afflicted for a season
- 1833 repent of that which thou hast done, and he will only cause thee to be afflicted for a season
- 1835 repent of that which thou hast done, which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you

- RB1 & thou art still chosen & will again be called to the work
- 1833 and thou art still chosen, and wilt again be called to the work
- 1835 and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work

The 1833 Book of Commandments reads identically to Revelation Book 1. The change to the version we now use was made in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and it has remained that way since. The original promise, that God would only “afflict” Joseph for a season (cf. v. 14), then he would be again called to the work of translation must have given him great hope when he received it, but the 1835 change makes it more clear that repentance was required for the specific things mentioned in the revelation. The change from future to present tense at the end also emphasizes the continuing call of the Prophet, rather than leaving the impression that he needed to be called once again.

11 become as other men. To be called by God is to separate yourself from the world and be different than others who are without such a calling. The blessing of faithful service is to remain different from the world—in terms of having the Spirit, hearing the voice of God, and receiving his blessings in our lives. Transgression causes us to lose those blessings and return to a ‘mortal’ state of affairs, bereft of the daily support, direction, and peace of God.

12 *text note:*

- RB1 that Which God had given thee right to Translate
- 1833 that which God had given thee sight and power to translate

Sidney Rigdon changed the Revelation Book 1 version to “sight and power” which is how it reads in the 1833 publication and every one subsequently. Both versions are accurate: Joseph was given the “right” to translate by the Lord but also given the “sight and power” to translate through the interpreters and his seer stones.

12 a wicked man. We would not generally say that Martin Harris was a wicked man. He was supporting Joseph, scribing for him, and generally a kind and generous person. So why would the Lord use such strong language about him? Verse 13 gives four reasons, which is a good explanation of what the Lord intends with the word “wicked” and how we may well be wicked sometimes:

1. He “set at naught the counsels of God.”
2. He had “broken the most sacred promises which were made before God.”
3. He “depended upon his own judgment.”
4. He “boasted in his own wisdom.”

15 the counsel of thy director. The original manuscript first read “directors,” but the “s” was deleted by an unknown hand, making it singular, and it has always been published that way. The plural version may have caused some to see this as a reference to the interpreters. But in other scriptures, it is the Liahona that is called the director or directors (Mosiah 1:16; Alma 37:38, 45; D&C 17:1), and Joseph Smith does not mention having Lehi’s ball in any of his histories. Most likely this phrase refers to Joseph’s mentor during the last nearly five years, Moroni, who consistently taught him to guard and protect the plates and (by extension) the translation, and whose direction Joseph struggled to obey for so many years.

16-18 *text note:* These verses have several differences from the original manuscript (differences indicated in italics)

Current edition	Revelation Book 1
Nevertheless, my work shall go forth, for <i>inasmuch</i> as the knowledge of a Savior has come unto the world, <i>through the testimony of the Jews</i> , even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people—	Nevertheless my work shall go forth & <i>accomplish</i> its <i><my> purposes</i> for as the knowledge of a Saveiour hath has come into the world, even so shall the knowledge of my People
<i>And to the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites, through the testimony of their fathers—</i>	the Nephites & the Jacobites & the Josephites & the Zorumites Lamanites & the Lemuelites

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

come to the ~~Lamanites~~ knowledge of the Lamanites, & the Lemuelites & the Ishmaelites which dwindled in unbelief because of the *iniquities* of their Fathers ~~who hath~~ *have been* suffered to destroy their Brethren because of their iniquities & their Abominations

The 1833 Book of Commandments reads like Revelation Book 1, meaning that the purpose of the book is to bring the knowledge of the Lord's fallen people (the Nephites and associated groups) to the knowledge of those still remaining (the Lamanites and their associated groups). As with verse 10, the changes we see in our current edition were made in 1835, and clarify that the knowledge of the Savior came to the world through the Bible ("the testimony of the Jews") and that the purpose of the Book of Mormon is likewise to bring a knowledge of the Savior (compare the Book of Mormon title page) to "my people," implying the latter-day church, in addition to the Nephites and Lamanites and other associated groups (implying, interestingly, that Nephites are still on the earth today). It also makes explicit what is implied in the original version, that the Lord allowed the destruction of the Nephites, something that Joseph Smith may not have known in July 1828 when he received this revelation, because he hadn't translated the story beyond the days of King Benjamin.

Help the Lamanites believe (16-20)

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary

19 for this very purpose are these plates preserved. Verses 19-20 catalogue the reasons for the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, which Joseph will later read summarized so nicely in Moroni's title page.

- "That the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people"
- "That the Lamanites might":
 - "Come to a knowledge of their fathers"
 - "know the promises of the Lord"
 - "believe the gospel"
 - "rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ"
 - "be glorified through faith in his name"
 - "through their repentance . . . be saved"

Joseph Smith spent the summer of 1828 repenting and working on his farm to support himself and Emma. Martin Harris did not come back to Harmony. Though Joseph had the promise of getting the plates back and resuming the translation from Section 3, he did not know when that would happen. On 22 September 1828, Moroni returned the plates and translators. Either at that time or shortly thereafter, he received another revelation, now called Section 10.

Results

Joseph Smith spent the summer of 1828 repenting and working on his farm to support himself and Emma. Martin Harris did not come back to Harmony. Though Joseph had the promise of getting the plates back and resuming the translation from Section 3, he did not know when that would happen. On 22 September 1828, Moroni returned the plates and translators. Either at that time or shortly thereafter, he received another revelation, now called Section 10.

Doctrine and Covenants 4

Setting

Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Smith had not seen their son since late September 1828.²⁴ In January 1829, Joseph Smith, Sr., with his son, Samuel, took a trip to Harmony to see him, stopping first in Colesville to bring along Joseph Knight, Sr. They arrived in February. This was the first opportunity for the Smiths to meet the Hales. While there, Joseph Sr. (age 57 at this time) asked his son to inquire of the Lord what his duty might be, resulting in D&C 4, the second recorded revelation of Joseph's life. This section is widely used today as the qualifications for missionary work, and appropriately so. But it was intensely personal for Father Smith, who had struggled all his life with religion. He avoided organized churches but always felt unfulfilled in his life, like he was close to truth but could not find it. He had anxious dreams where he could almost find answers, but they would just elude him. He felt something critical was missing in his life. D&C 4 told him that his dream of being involved in something marvelous was coming true and invited him to do specific things that need not elude him, giving him that sense of completeness he lacked for so long.²⁵

Documents and Publication

The original manuscript is not extant. It was copied into Revelation Book 1 but only the first paragraph because several pages in that section were lost. The earliest complete copy is in the handwriting of Edward Partridge in a collection of revelations he kept for himself, written between December 1830 and early 1831.²⁶

This section was first published as Chapter 3 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, then as Section 31 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

1. Salvation in service (1-4)	1835 verses compared to 2013	
2. Missionary attributes (5-7)	<u>1835</u>	<u>2013</u>
	1	1-5
	2	6-7

Introduction

Qualifications to labor in the service of God are outlined. Though cited by missionaries today, the principles in this section apply to anyone who wishes to serve the Lord. John Whitmer wrote as introduction: "A Revelation to Joseph the Father of the Seer he desired to know what the Lord had for him to do & this is what he Received as follows."²⁷

Salvation in Service (1-4)

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

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

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

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

²⁴ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1844-1845, bk. 7, p. 8.

²⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 29; *JSP*, D1:10-12; Revelation, February 1829 [D&C 4], [Historical Introduction](#).

²⁶ See Revelation, February 1829 [D&C 4], [1](#).

²⁷ *JSP*, MRB:11; Revelation Book 1, [2](#).

Commentary

1 **a marvelous work.** The phrase comes from Isaiah 29:14, and the reference is to the Book of Mormon which was about to be translated and published (see D&C 10:61). By extension, the “marvelous work” would also include subsequent events—the restoration of the priesthood, the organization of the Church, etc.

2 **heart, might, mind and strength.** Each of these represent a unique aspect of our dedication to God. The “heart” is emotions, while “might” is our abilities and talents. “Mind” refers to all of our thoughts and intellect, while “strength” is our physical capacity. Only if we engage all of these are we able to “stand blameless before God at the last day.”

3 **if ye have desires to serve God ye are called.** There was no church and no priesthood in February 1829, so this does not refer to callings that come through proper priesthood channels. The concept here is that a call to engage in God’s work comes merely from a willing heart. Every believer can do good to their neighbor, share the love of God in their life, and be a witness for Christ. It is almost as if the Lord were saying, ‘Do you *want* to help? Great, that’s all we need to get started.’

4 **the field is white.** John 4:35 also includes this phrase, the only place in the Bible where it occurs. Some have noted that the word “white” represents wheat at its final stages, as it moves from green to a dry state ready for the harvest. Other scholars have concluded that in John the concept was a metaphor, referring to the white-clothed Samaritans coming out of the city to see Jesus. Whatever the case, this metaphor, used eight times in the Doctrine and Covenants (4:4; 6:3; 11:3; 12:3; 14:3; 31:4; 33:3, 7) was understood by Joseph Smith, Sr., and others of their day to mean that the field was fully ripe and it was time to reap the harvest, something Father Smith was deeply familiar with, given his farming background.

4 **layeth up in store that he perisheth not.** The Bible contains the phrase ‘laid up in store’ or ‘laying up in store’ several times (e.g., Deuteronomy 32:34; 2 Kings 20:17; Isaiah 39:6; 1 Timothy 6:19), but never in this context. This entire phrase is unique to Section 4.

4 **salvation to his soul.** Not only does reaping the harvest bring the message of salvation to others, but it saves our own souls as well. Like anyone who serves diligently in a calling or gives service to a neighbor in need, both parties are blessed by the experience.

Missionary Attributes (5-7)

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

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

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

Commentary

5 **faith, hope, charity and love.** “Charity” and “love” are typically interchangeable in the New Testament, translated from the same Greek word generally. But in the 1820s, the two words in English had related but different meanings. Charity was “that disposition of heart which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow men, and to do them good”²⁸ while love is “an affection of the mind excited by beauty and worth of any kind, or by the qualities of an object which communicate pleasure, sensual or intellectual.”²⁹ Thus, the Lord is calling upon us to engage both kinds of emotions.

5 **An eye single to the glory of God.** The phrase “eye single” occurs twice times in the New Testament (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34), where “single” means ‘being motivated by singleness of purpose.’ But the New Testament doesn’t explicitly call out that purpose. Here in Section 4, we are invited to focus our efforts on bringing glory to God.

5 **qualify him for the work.** If a desire to serve constitutes a call (verse 3), then faith, hope, charity, and love, with a focus on God’s glory qualify us to engage in the actual work. Working under any other terms could lead us to self-gratification, a quest for recognition, or other results that are not part of the Lord’s plan to move his work forward.

6 **faith, virtue . . . humility, diligence.** This is similar but not identical to a list in 2 Peter 1:5-7, 10. Peter wrote about them in an additive way—one trait builds on or leads to the next. There are also strong conceptual links with 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; the words are not the same but the attributes align amazingly.

²⁸ [Websters 1828 - Webster's Dictionary 1828 - Charity.](#)

²⁹ [Websters 1828 - Webster's Dictionary 1828 - Love.](#)

6 text note:

1833 Remember temperance, patience, humility, diligence, &c.
1835 Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence

The original manuscript for the last part of this section (after verse 3a) is not extant. The Edward Partridge copy³⁰ and the 1833 edition has the shorter list of attributes above, which was lengthened in the 1835 printing.

6 **temperance**. The attributes the Lord mentions were tailored to Joseph Smith, Sr. Temperance was particularly a challenge for him as he sometimes drank in excess.³¹

7 **Ask, and ye shall receive**. Similar phrases are found in Matthew 7:7 and Luke 11:9. It is a marvelous promise that represents the great blessings God has promised to those who engage their whole beings in his service. It was also one of the scriptures Joseph Smith cited that prepared him to go into the grove of trees and experience his First Vision.

Results

Joseph Smith, Sr. understood the message of this revelation and embraced the invitations. Before this revelation, he was reluctant to speak of Joseph’s work, likely because it would only bring criticism and persecution on the family. But upon returning home, he shared the message with a schoolteacher boarding with their family, by the name of Oliver Cowdery. Oliver prayed to know for himself, and soon was traveling to Harmony to meet Joseph and become his scribe and close friend.

In 1830, Father Smith shared the gospel with some others in Palmyra, resulting in some baptisms. That same year, he took the Book of Mormon and the message of the Restoration to his extended family and converted many of them. All of this brought peace to his troubled soul. Since his day, tens of thousands of missionaries have used D&C 4 as their call to labor, resulting in a Church that now numbers in the millions. Joseph Smith Sr.’s simple question—what would the Lord have me do—has been impactful in ways he couldn’t have imagined.

Doctrine and Covenants 5

Setting

Not long after the visit from his parents that resulted in D&C 4, Martin Harris returned to Harmony in March 1829 to see Joseph Smith for the first time since the loss of the first manuscript. Like Joseph’s parents, Martin also wanted to know if the plates had been returned to Joseph. He was humble and contrite but desired some kind of communication from the Lord, still wanting to know if it would be his privilege to see the plates.

Martin’s visit was also motivated by threats his wife was making about a lawsuit against Joseph Smith. She wanted her husband to quit supporting him. The lawsuit she did indeed file in August 1829 got (false) witnesses who stated that Joseph Smith had told them he was a fraud and that the box holding the plates actually contained sand, lead, or was just empty. Martin wanted to get something to take back to his wife that would calm her fears and avoid this outcome. He hoped to see the plates for himself or have some other tangible proof as a “greater witness” that would do this.³²

Martin was also somewhat wavering in his testimony, telling Emma’s father, Isaac Hale, that he “must have a *greater* witness, and said that he had talked with Joseph about it.”³³ The next day, Isaac heard Joseph reading part of this revelation, where the Lord told Martin that “no greater witness can be given him.” But the promise was there that if Martin was humble and repented, he could be a witness of the plates.

Documents and Publication

Not extant in Revelation Book 1 (it has several pages missing from the first part of the book), the oldest source comes from a copy later in the possession of Newel K. Whitney but written by Oliver Cowdery, probably about 6 April 1829 (the

³⁰ JSP, D1:13; Revelation, February 1829 [D&C 4], [1](#).

³¹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 30.

³² MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 107-110.

³³ Harper, *Making Sense*, 31.

day after he met Joseph Smith, making that copy the oldest known text of a Joseph Smith revelation).³⁴ First published as Chapter 4 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, this was also Section 32 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants, with fairly extensive editing in the 1835 version, the most noticeable of which is to change the address from third person to second person (addressing Joseph Smith as “you” to distinguish him from Martin, “him”).

Outline

	1835 verses compared to 2013			
	<u>1835</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>2013</u>
1. The word through Joseph Smith (1-10)	1	1-4	4	21-22
2. Three other witnesses (11-20)	2	5-8	5	23-29
3. Martin Harris as a witness (21-29)	3	9-20	6	30-35
4. Directions concerning the translation (30-35)				

Introduction

This was Joseph Smith’s third recorded revelation. Though directed to Martin Harris, unlike other revelations (D&C 4 already received, and others that will be received in the coming days), this one was spoken to Joseph to give to Martin, not directly to Martin, almost as if Martin’s faith was not yet prepared to receive direct communication. The 1833 Book of Commandments had a head for this section: “Martin desired of the Lord to know whether Joseph had, in his possession, the record of the Nephites.”³⁵ This could mean ‘again’ (asking if Joseph had received them again after the loss of the first manuscript) or ‘at all,’ referring to the “greater witness” that Isaac Hale said Martin was after.

The Word Through Joseph Smith (1-10)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 But this generation shall have my word through you;

Commentary

1 *has desired a witness at my hand.* Martin Harris had enjoyed several witnesses, including the experience in New York with the scholars, a personal witness of the work from the Spirit, and translating much of the first manuscript at Joseph’s dictation the previous year. Now he wanted another witness that Joseph had the plates back—not just Joseph’s word that it had happened; Martin wanted to see the plates for himself.

2 *you should stand as a witness.* The first witness of the Book of Mormon was Joseph Smith. Others will be called, as this revelation teaches, but Martin needs to accept Joseph as a witness.

³⁴ *JSP*, D1:13-14; Revelation, March 1829 [D&C 5], [1](#).

³⁵ *JSP*, D1:15; Book of Commandments, 1833, [10](#).

2 text note:

1833 this shall you say unto him : -I the Lord am God
1835 this shall you say unto him, He who spake unto you said unto you, I the Lord am God
The Lord affirms that he has already spoken to Martin in the past and is still speaking to him now.

3 you have no power over them. The Lord reminded Joseph that he was ultimately in control of the plates, and that Joseph had promised not to show them to anyone except the Lord commanded it.

4 a gift to translate. Joseph had, at this point, just received one gift from God—the ability to use the interpreters to translate the plates. Until the translation was complete, he would receive “no other gift.”

4 text note:

1833 he has a gift to translate the book
1835 you have a gift to translate the plates, and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you
The book is the result of translating the plates, so the 1835 change is more accurate. The clarification that translation was the “first gift” and not the only gift, as the 1833 might imply, is also significant (see the next note).

4 text note:

1833 I will grant him no other gift
1835 I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished
Translation wasn’t Joseph’s only gift but it was the only one he was given until the work of translation was completed. Building on this idea of Joseph’s future mission, verse 6 was not in the original revelation but was added in 1835.

6 hereafter you shall be ordained. The promise is made that priesthood authority and power are coming soon, but not yet. With that ordination will come the charge to teach and “deliver my words unto the children of men”—in other words, the message of the Book of Mormon but also other revelations.

7 they would not believe . . . if it were possible that you should show them all these things. Faith and belief do not come by seeing things—miracles or artifacts. The witness of the Spirit is the true converter and the only lasting impact.

7 text note:

1833 if it were possible that he could show them all things
1835 if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I have committed unto you
The things that Joseph had in his possession were “committed” to him with serious covenants of protection and limitations on how he could use them. The addition also clarifies what “things” Joseph could show them—meaning the plates and interpreters.

9 it shall be made known unto future generations. Referring to the Book of Mormon plates (the thing “reserved” and “entrusted” unto Joseph), the promise is given that future generations will have them and see them.

10 shall have my word through you. But during this time, the published book is the Lord’s gift, along with revelations like this one, which will start to come with increasing frequency.

10 text note:

1833 But this generation shall have my words
1835 But this generation shall have my word through you
The word of the Lord comes to our dispensation specifically through Joseph Smith first.

Three Other Witnesses (11-20)

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

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

13 I will give them power that they may behold and view these things as they are;

14 And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the ris-

ing up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary

11 *the testimony of three of my servants.* This is the promise of the three witnesses. Joseph was the first witness (verse 2) but he would shortly have other witnesses that would raise their own voices in testimony. This was, of course, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, but not for three more months—Joseph hadn’t even met Oliver or David at this time. During the translation of the Book of Mormon with Oliver, Joseph again saw that there would be three witnesses (Ether 5:3) and a later revelation (D&C 17) spoke of what that experience would entail for the three.

11 *text note:*

1833 yea and the testimony of three of my servants
 1835 And in addition to your testimony the testimony of three of my servants whom I shall call and ordain,

1833 shall go forth with my words

1835 unto whom I will show these things and they shall go forth with my words that are given through you
 The Three Witnesses were also ordained, serving as chief elders of the early Church and later selecting and ordaining the Twelve Apostles. The role of Joseph Smith in bringing forth God’s word is again highlighted—his is the first testimony.

12 *they shall know of a surety.* There would be a powerful manifestation to go with their witness—not just a handling of the plates, but a declaration “from heaven” by the voice of God himself.

12 *text note:*

1833 three shall know of a surety that these things are true
 1835 they shall know of a surety that these things are true: for from heaven will I declare it unto them

The pronoun addition reflects that the “three” were already mentioned (v. 11). The source of the experience of the Three Witnesses is clarified.

14 *to none else will I grant this power.* Though others would see and handle the plates, only the three witnesses would have the declaration from heaven, “this same testimony.”

14 *text note:* Most of verse 14, starting with “in this the beginning...” is an 1835 addition. Two scriptures are referred to in this addition. The first is Revelation 12:6-8, where, according to the JST, the woman (“the church of God”) fled into the wilderness “to be delivered of her pains,” which resulted in the coming forth of “the king of our God and his Christ.” The second reference is Songs of Solomon 6:10, the source for the rest of the verse. This is especially interesting because in 1833, Joseph Smith learned that the Song of Solomon was not inspired and did not belong in the Bible. It is removed from the JST but this one verse is quoted (with a slight variation), perhaps implying a more ancient source for the metaphor. It is also quoted in D&C 105:31 and 109:73, the first structured like this usage, the second in the same order as Song of Solomon 6:10.

16 *I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit.* At this point in the Church, there is no baptism, confirmation, or priesthood authority to do either of these things. But the Lord enlightens and teaches and strengthens by the Spirit in all circumstances those who believe.

16 *text note:*

1833 they shall be born of me
 1835 they shall be born of me, even of water and of the Spirit

The meaning of “born of me” is clarified with this 1835 addition.

17 *ye are not yet ordained.* The promise of being born by “water and of the Spirit” was given (verse 16), but the Lord was clear that the fulfillment of that promise required authority, which ordination was yet in the future. Note that verse 17 was not in the 1833 version of the revelation but was added in 1835.

18-19 *text note:* These two verses were substantially edited and shortened in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants from the 1833 Book of Commandments, which basically matches the oldest copy by Oliver Cowdery.³⁶

1833	1835
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³⁶ *JSP*, D1:17, Revelation, March 1829 [D&C 5], [1-2](#).

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

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

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

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

19 *consumed away and utterly destroyed*. The consequence of not obeying the Lord's message is destruction at the Second Coming, as sure as was the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied in the New Testament (verse 20).

Martin Harris as Witness (21-29)

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary

21 *yield to the persuasions of men no more*. Though directed at Joseph as a call to repent, this warning is equally directed at Martin Harris, because of the lost manuscript where Martin gave in to the “persuasions of men.”

22 *eternal life, even if you should be slain*. Joseph is only 23 years old when this revelation is given, but the Lord alludes to that future day in Carthage Jail when he will give his life for his testimony.

23 *concerning the man*. The Lord again refers to Martin in the third person, speaking to Joseph and using him as an intermediary. Verses 24 through 29 are directed just to him (previous verses were a mixture of speaking to Joseph and Martin).

24 *a view of the things which he desires to see*. Martin greatly desired to see the plates, and the Lord offers him that experience on the condition of sincere humility and repentance.

24 text note:

- 1833 a view of the things which he desireth to know
- 1835 a view of the things which he desires to see

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

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

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

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

Martin didn't just desire a knowledge but specifically wanted to see the plates.

25 *I know of a surety.* This verse is very similar to the language drafted by the witnesses after their experience, as printed in each copy of the Book of Mormon since the beginning. Martin did indeed continue all of his life to affirm that the witness he had of the plates was a real event.

25 *text note:*

1833 I have seen the things

1835 I have seen the things which the Lord hath shown unto Joseph Smith, jr.

Which "things" Martin saw is clarified in 1835

27 *if he deny this . . . he is condemned.* Martin Harris and the other witnesses never did deny their experience or their testimony, even when they were estranged from Joseph and the Church. They saw their experience as a "covenant" with the Lord, as this verse says, and took it to have eternal consequences.

28 *except he humble himself . . . he shall have no such views.* The necessity of humility is mentioned several times with Martin, who was a prominent and prosperous man in Palmyra. The promised witness was conditional on Martin being humble, repenting, keeping the commandments, and exercising faith—just as we are promised blessings today based on similar obedience.

29 *nor trouble me any more.* Martin has asked for this experience many times. With this assurance, the Lord expects no more questions, which appears to be the case. Fortunately for Martin, he didn't have to wait long, but in March of 1829, with little progress being made on the translation, they could not see how rapidly things would change with Oliver Cowdery's arrival on 5 April.

Directions Concerning the Translation (30-35)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary

30 *stop for a season.* Joseph Smith didn't yet know it, but his slow efforts were about to be greatly multiplied with the arrival of Oliver Cowdery in April. He had translated a little in the previous months, using Emma and her brother Reuben and perhaps Joseph's brother Samuel as scribes. Anticipating the burst of effort that would begin with Oliver's arrival in four weeks or less, the Lord commanded him to take a break from the translation "for a season." This was also an indirect statement that Martin was not to resume his work as scribe, which might have been a consideration with his return to Harmony.

32 *he will fall into transgression.* Just as the Lord foreshadowed Joseph's death in Carthage, he predicted that Martin would not remain faithful in all things. Though Martin left the Church for many years, in the end he returned and died in full fellowship.

33 *many that lie in wait to destroy thee.* Joseph had faced opposition from the beginning but this was more serious. The Lord promises that if he obeys commandments, his "days may be prolonged," but after alluding in 22 to being "slain," this additional warning was taken seriously.

34 *I will provide means.* "Means" in Joseph's past had been both financial support and a helper in Martin Harris. Soon it would be Oliver Cowdery, who will play a significant role in not only the translation effort, but in the entire restoration of the gospel and the establishment of the Church. Other supporters, like Joseph Knight, Sr. and Joseph's brother Samuel, also provided means during this critical time.

35 *thou shalt be lifted up at the last day*. When Jesus comes in glory, every knee shall bow and many will fall to the earth. Joseph’s promise is that at that day, he will be personally lifted up by the Lord and brought to stand with him, so that all would acknowledge the greatness of the latter-day Prophet of the Restoration.

Results

As historian Steven Harper put it, Martin came to Harmony saying, “Show me, and I’ll believe” but the Lord told him, “Believe, and I’ll show you.”³⁷ Martin left Harmony very excited about the Book of Mormon. He rode a stage home and excitedly told his fellow passengers about Joseph Smith’s “gold bible & stone in which he look’d & was thereby enabled to translated the very ancient chara[c]ters.”³⁸ When Lucy did get the trial she hoped to have against Joseph Smith, Martin testified “with boldness decision and energy.” Lucy Mack Smith recorded, “he raised his hand to Heaven and said I can swear,— that Joseph Smith never got one dollar from me since God made I did once voluntarily of my own free will and accord put \$50 into his hands before many witnesses for the purpose of doing the work of the Lord. This I can pointedly prove and I can tell you furthermore that Joseph Smith has certainly ~~not~~ never shown any disposition to get any man’s money and as to the plates which he professes to have and if you gentlemen do not believe it but continue to resist the truth it one day be the means of damning your souls.” Upon his testimony, the judge dismissed the case.³⁹

Martin continued to be a committed and strong follower of Joseph Smith, was one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and ultimately funded the publication of the book later in 1829. While we may think of Martin in relation to the lost manuscript, we should not forget all the good he did for the Church in those early days. Martin learned humility, just as the Lord said he needed to in this revelation, and it made him a more powerful witness.

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³⁷ Harper, *Making Sense*, 33.

³⁸ *JSP*, D1:15; Revelation, March 1829 [D&C 5], [Historical Introduction](#).

³⁹ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1844-1845, Bk. 8, [p. 7](#).

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