

General Introduction

These revelations are the first ones Joseph Smith received after going to live in Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri, in early 1838.

After the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society in 1837, many turned against Joseph Smith and those who stood behind him, such as Brigham Young. But as this opposition was building, the outpouring of missionary work that was to come from the Kirtland temple dedication unfolded marvelous, with missionaries called to preach all over the United States, Canada, and Britain. These new converts were encouraged to gather to Ohio and Missouri, now to Far West and Caldwell County, the new headquarters of the Church in Missouri. The county had been created by the Missouri legislature for the Church. Their intention was that the troublesome Latter-day Saints would stay in that county, but Church did not agree to that and clearly planned on continued expansion into northern Missouri. This set up the tensions and hostilities that arose later in 1838.

Back in Ohio in late 1837 and early 1838, many leaders questioned Joseph's prophetic calling, because of the failure of the Safety Society. He believed that Church and finances were forever linked together, but many wanted a prophet who only preached on spiritual matters. The rifts grew throughout 1837 until some members of the Quorum of the Twelve, the Three Witnesses, and others rejected Joseph's leadership altogether. In the end, about one-third of Church leaders were disaffected and perhaps over ten percent of membership. Under Warren Parish's leadership, an attempt was made to take over the temple and start a new Church, but their efforts were thwarted by those supporting the Prophet. Many leaders were chastised by Joseph and disciplined by Church councils.

In Missouri, the same sentiments and the opinion that leaders had acted contrary to covenants of consecration and revelation caused the criticism of the presidency of Zion—David Whitmer and his counselors, John Whitmer and William W. Phelps—by the high council. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon made a trip to Missouri to attempt to resolve things, which seemed to help for a time. However, at the same time, Frederick G. Williams was replaced by Hyrum Smith in the First Presidency.

Returning to Ohio, Joseph realized the time had come to leave Ohio for good. Increased persecution, lawsuits, and other challenges finally resulted in a 12 January 1838 revelation, not in the Doctrine and Covenants, which directed the First Presidency as follows:

Thus saith the Lord, let the Presidency of my Church, take their families as soon as it is practicable, and a door is open for them, and moove to the west, as fast as the way is made plain before their faces, and let their hearts be comforted for I will be with them, Verrily I say unto you, the time has come, that your labors are finished in this place for a season. Therefore arise— and get yourselves, into a land which I shall show unto you, even a land flowing with milk & honey, You are clean from the blood of this ~~Generation~~ people, And wo, unto those who have become your enimies, who have professed my name saith the Lord, for their Judgement lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not, Let all your faithfull friends arise with their families also, and get out of this place, and gather themselves together unto Zion, or their shall be no saf[e]ty for you; Even so Amen.¹ which they did that same day.

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon left Kirtland the same night, waiting for their families to join them in a nearby town. The long, hard winter journey took two months, with sickness and other challenges slowing them down. Emma was pregnant with a son that would be born that summer. Finally, members from Missouri send wagons and carriages to bring them into Far West, and the Prophet and his family arrived on 14 March 1838, staying with George and Lucinda Harris. Before he arrived, the Missouri high council had excommunicated John Whitmer and William W. Phelps, effectively dissolving the presidency in Missouri. A month later, other excommunications for Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman Johnson occurred under Joseph's leadership.

The excommunications only heightened the problems between the dissidents and the Church, however. Led by Oliver Cowdery who had been studying law, several suits were brought against Joseph and others who supported him. During

¹ Journal, March-September 1838, 8 July 1838, in *JSP*, J1:283.

this period of time, sections 113-115 were received and recorded and Joseph and Emma welcomed a new, healthy son to their little family, Alexander Hale Smith, even as opposition with the dissidents grew in threats and seriousness, including the formation of a group committed to enforcing Church leader directives, the “Danites.” As a result of such threats, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and other excommunicated former members left Caldwell County in the summer of 1838.

Looking to increase the potential lands available to Church members, exploratory groups were sent to Daviess County, just north of Caldwell, where land could be first settled for free, then purchased for only \$1.25 per acre after government surveying was complete. This availability of land was the main motivation of the Saints settling north of Caldwell County, where land had already been surveyed and was generally more expensive. During one of these trips, Joseph Smith received D&C 116, designating Spring Hill as the location of the future location of Adam’s return.

In June 1838, Sidney Rigdon called dissenters salt that had lost its savor and declared that they should leave the county. At a Fourth of July celebration, he also declared strongly that the Saints would defend themselves against aggression. In this climate, D&C 117-120 were received, providing additional direction in a troubling time. It wasn’t long, however, when hostilities increased between Latter-day Saints and their neighbors, beginning in Daviess County where the Missourians believed the Latter-day Saints didn’t belong in the first place.²

Summary Chronology

- **Fri, 28 Jul 1837** – Joseph Smith left Kirtland, Ohio, for Toronto, Upper Canada, to visit members, returning Sun, 27 Aug 1837.
- **Sun, 17 Sep 1837** – Joseph Smith appointed 109 missionaries, in Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Wed, 27 Sep 1837** – Joseph Smith left Kirtland, Ohio, for Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri.
- **Tue, 7 Nov 1837** – Frederick G. Williams was removed as the second counselor in the First Presidency, with Hyrum Smith taking his place.
- **About Sun, 10 Dec 1837** – Joseph returned to Kirtland, Ohio, from Missouri.
- **Late Dec 1837** – Twenty dissenters were excommunicated, including Martin Harris, Warren Parrish, Luke Johnson, and John F. Boynton, at Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Fri, 12 Jan 1838** – Following the instructions of a revelation received this same day, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon fled Kirtland, Ohio, for Far West, Missouri.
- **Mar 1838** – D&C 113 was recorded, at Far West, Missouri.
- **Sat, 10 Mar 1838** – John Whitmer and William W. Phelps were excommunicated, at Far West, Missouri.
- **Wed, 14 Mar 1838** – Joseph Smith arrived at Far West, Missouri.
- **Wed, 11 Apr 1838** – D&C 114 was received, at Far West, Missouri.
- **Thu, 12 Apr 1838** – Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated, at Far West, Missouri.
- **Fri, 13 Apr 1838** – David Whitmer and Lyman Johnson were excommunicated, at Far West, Missouri.
- **Thu, 26 Apr 1838** – D&C 115 was received, at Far West, Missouri.
- **Fri, 27 Apr 1838** – After unsuccessful attempts to get John Whitmer’s Church history records, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and George W. Robinson began writing a new, detailed history of the Church.
- **Sat, 19 May 1838** – D&C 116 was recorded as part of Joseph Smith’s journal, at Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri.
- **Jun 1838** – The group later known as the “Danites” were formed in reaction to dissenters, by Sampson Avard, Jared Carter, and George W. Robinson.
- **Sat, 2 Jun 1838** – Alexander Hale Smith, son of Joseph and Emma Smith, was born, at Far West, Missouri.
- **Sun, 17 Jun 1838** – Sidney Rigdon gave his “Salt Sermon” criticizing dissenters, at Far West, Missouri.
- **Thu, 28 Jun 1838** – Stake organized at Adam-ondi-Ahman, with John Smith as president.
- **Wed, 4 Jul 1838** – During an Independence Day celebration, the cornerstones of the Far West temple were laid and Sidney Rigdon declared the Saints’ intent to defend themselves.
- **Sun, 8 Jul 1838** – D&C 117, 118, 119, and 120 were received, at Far West, Missouri.

² *JSP*, J1:226-232; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:95-96; Gentry and Compton, *Fire and Sword*, 23-167; Harper, *Making Sense*, 418-419; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 909.

- **Mon, 6 Aug 1838** – On election day, fighting broke out in Gallatin, Daviess County, Missouri, between Latter-day Saints trying to vote and Missourians trying to prevent it.

D&C 113 – Isaiah Questions and Answers

Setting

Received mid- to late March 1838, at Far West, Missouri.

Shortly after arriving in Far West on 14 March 1838, Joseph Smith directed his scribe, George W. Robinson, to begin keeping a book that Robinson titled “The Scriptorial Book of Joseph Smith Jr. President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints In all the World.”³ He then recorded a motto Joseph Smith had conceived about the end of March, immediately followed by “Quest. on scripture” which is the heading for three questions and answers, then “Questions by Elias Higbee,” followed by two more questions and answers.⁴ Due to the other entries in the journal and other circumstances, the most likely date is between 16 and 29 March.

The first three questions are about Isaiah 11, which was one of the scriptures quoted to Joseph Smith by Moroni when he first appeared to him in September 1824 (Joseph Smith—History 1:40). The questioner is not identified but was likely the Prophet himself. The format is similar to D&C 77, which contains questions and answers about the book of Revelation.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in the Journal, March-September 1838 (under the date of 12 Apr 1838), 16-17. It was first published in the *Deseret News* (5 March 1853) and as Section 113 in 1876.

Commentary

1 ***Who is the Stem of Jesse.*** Isaiah 11:1-5 is a continuation of a metaphor that Isaiah begins in chapters 9 and 10, where Israel is like a forest or vineyard that gets hewn down and burnt by its oppressors, becoming a wasteland. The image at the start of chapter 11 is a field of stumps, one of which is the “stem” or ‘stump’ (*geza* in Hebrew) of Jesse.

2 ***thus saith the Lord: It is Christ.*** Many commentators of Isaiah see the stump as representative of the house of David (Jesse’s son) cut down by its enemies. But it is an excellent metaphor for Jesus as well. Born of the kingly line from David, he could have sat on the throne of his ancestor, were the kingly line in power in his day. Instead, he fulfilled his mission by being cut down in his prime and put in a tomb, all in our behalf.

3 ***What is the rod.*** In Isaiah 11:1, a “rod” is growing out of the stump. This is Hebrew *hōter*, or shoot, a small branch starting to grow out of the sawed down tree. This is a common sight for many who have cut down a tree and left the stump, only to see new life coming out of its roots again.

4 ***It is a servant in the hands of Christ.*** Previous revelations have described Joseph Smith using similar language (e.g., D&C 27:13). The servant is not named but he is the clear and best candidate. It represents that Joseph Smith’s authority grows out of the stump, Christ, who was cut down for us all.

Though the question is not asked, the “Branch” in this verse also refers to Christ, as even the KJV translators noted by capitalizing it. Thus, from the stump grows two new lives, as it were: Christ the Branch as the resurrected Savior, and his servant, the shoot, both having power through the Atonement.

5 ***the root of Jesse.*** Verse 10 of Isaiah 11 starts a new section or pericope, which can be seen by the opening, “And in that day...” The word “root” is Hebrew *šōreš*, which means the root of a plant or tree but also is a metaphor for descendants. The “root” will stand up as an ensign or banner to call the people, including the Gentiles, together.

6 ***it is a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph.*** The “root” is explained as another servant in the last days who will hold priesthood power and keys of gathering. This is also surely Joseph Smith.

³ Journal, March-September 1838, in *JSP*, J1:236, underlining in original; see image of the page on 234.

⁴ Elias Higbee was a member of the Missouri high council at this time; Cook, *The Revelations*, 225.

7 **what people had Isaiah reference to?** Shifting gears to Isaiah 52:1 at the request of Elias Higbee, the Prophet examined two verses in that chapter that are a key to understanding much of it. Throughout Isaiah 42-54, there are two alternating types of ‘songs’: the first directed at a servant and others directed at the daughter of Zion. The servant is the Messiah and the daughter of Zion is Israel. Both suffer, the daughter of Zion for her own sins and mistakes, the servant for all of us. The daughter is finally redeemed and exalted by the servant. Isaiah 52:1-2 falls in one of the last daughter of Zion sections of the text.

8 **those whom God should call in the last days.** The daughter of Zion has been captive, imprisoned by her enemies. The call in Isaiah 52:1 is to wake up and put on strength and garments, which represent covenant, and to be clean. The description in D&C 113:8 captures that call from the Lord to put on priesthood power (represented by the garments) and proclaim the message that God will gather Zion and redeem Israel, that she might have “that power which she had lost.”

9 **Zion loosing herself from the bands of her neck.** As a captive taken in war, the daughter of Zion would have a rope tied around her neck to take her away to a foreign land and a life of slavery. In Isaiah 52:2, he calls her to loosen that band around her neck. This is not something she can do on her own as a slave. That request can only come from one who has conquered her enemy and thus redeemed her from her slavery.

10 **the scattered remnants are exhorted to return to the Lord.** Israel in all her scattered conditions and locations is called by the missionary force and the Spirit to “return to the Lord” with the promise of revelation again. The answer in Isaiah goes beyond the two verses to the end of the pericope and the next, where the people know the Lord by name and the messengers bringing the gospel blessings to them are declared to have ‘beautiful feet,’ meaning the feet that carry the message are beautiful to those who receive it. Through those efforts and his own mighty hand, “the Lord shall bring again Zion,” meaning gather “the remnants of Israel in their scattered condition among the Gentiles.”

Results

At a time when many were calling Joseph Smith a fallen prophet and challenging his authority to speak for the Lord, the inspired answers to questions about these verses in Isaiah must have been of great comfort to the Prophet. Perhaps he reflected back to Moroni’s first visit and declarations, when he first learned “from an angel standing in the air inside [his] bedroom that [he was] the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.”⁵ Though never published in his lifetime, he had his scribe record these revelatory interpretations in his “Scriptory” book so he could return to them and remind himself of his unique calling and blessings.

D&C 114 – David W. Patten Call to Preach

Setting

Received Wednesday, 11 April 1838, at Far West, Missouri.

The high council in Missouri had rejected the leadership of the presidency in Missouri—President David Whitmer and his counselors, William W. Phelps and John Whitmer—in February 1838. Joseph Smith instructed the two senior apostles, Thomas Marsh and David Patten, to assume control and they were sustained as “presidents pro tempore” with Marsh as senior president and Patten as his counselor/assistant president. On 6 April 1838, Brigham Young was added as second counselor or assistant president.

Joseph Smith arrived in Far West in mid-March 1838. Patten requested his counsel about a month later, and was given this revelation, which George W. Robinson recorded in Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory” book, his journal for this period.

David Patten was the captain of the Caldwell County militia, also respectfully called “Captain Fear-not.”

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is from Joseph Smith’s March-September 1838 Journal (11 Apr 1838), 32.⁶ It was first published in the *Deseret News* (19 March 1853), then as Section 114 in 1876.

⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 420.

⁶ In *JSP*, J1:257.

Commentary

1 ***settle up all his business as soon as he possibly can.*** The Lord called David Patten to prepare for a long missionary journey, requiring him to dispose of his merchandise and prepare for the support of his family in his absence. Though he surely thought that mission was to another nation, he instead was called to a different mission that required as great, if not greater, preparation.

1 ***a mission unto me next spring, in company with others, even twelve.*** This revelation does not give the details of the mission call, just the call to prepare. But Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde were just returning from a mission to England and their efforts were on everyone's minds. They were called to testify of Christ and bear the good news of the restored gospel "unto all the world."

2 ***those among you who deny my name.*** As mentioned in the General Introduction and the Setting, the leadership in Missouri and in the Church overall had been severely impacted by the dissenters at this time. There were many who denied that the Church was still run in the name of Christ.

2 ***others shall be planted in their stead and receive their bishopric.*** "Bishopric" does not refer just to that calling as we think of it today but to the more generic New Testament use of the term (*episcopos* in Greek) as an assignment or calling. The fact is, in the Church, no one is irreplaceable and others can be easily planted to take their place.

Results

David Patten continued to be a loyal supporter of Joseph Smith. The day after this revelation, Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated, and the day following David Whitmer and Lyman Johnson received the same outcome. It must have been a great comfort to have men like David Patten standing with Joseph as the Church went through this difficult transition. More details about the mission spoken of in this revelation were given in D&C 118 in July 1838.

Patten, however, did not go on the mission. On 25 October 1838, Patten led a group of men to Crooked River to rescue three Latter-day Saint men who had been captured and held as hostages by Missourians following the brawl at the election in Gallatin, Missouri in early October. Patten and his men were successful in freeing the men, but in the battle, Patten was shot in the stomach. He died later that evening. Two other Church members were killed as well. Joseph Smith said at Patten's funeral, "There lies a man that has done just as he said he would—he has laid down his life for his friends." An 1841 revelation said, "David Patten I have taken unto myself; behold, his priesthood no man taketh from him; but, verily I say unto you, another may be appointed unto the same calling." (D&C 124:130). Just as this short revelation promised that "other shall be planted" in the stead of those just cut off from the Church, so the work of the Lord moved on with new leaders, including John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff as new apostles.⁷

D&C 115 – Building Up Far West

Setting

Received Thursday, 26 April 1838, at Far West, Missouri.

Joseph Smith had arrived in Far West on 14 March 1838. Far West was growing fast and more Saints were coming into northwestern Missouri all the time. Before Joseph's arrival, in celebrating the seventh anniversary of the Church on 6 April 1837, the Saints in Far West had ambitiously dug a foundation for a temple there. Now they wondered what to do next.

The other issue was the large numbers of Saints from Kirtland who would be arriving shortly as well as new converts gathering as requested. With just under 5,000 people already in Far West, what should they do with those still coming? Government land in unsurveyed Daviess County was far less expensive than the land in Caldwell County around Far West. Was that the right direction?

⁷ Harper, *Making Sense*, 422; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:104; *JSP*, J1:257n111.

These questions and others were concerns that caused the Prophet to inquire of the Lord and receive this revelation.⁸

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Joseph Smith's journal, March-September 1838 (26 April 1838), 32-34. It was first published in the Church paper, the *Elders' Journal* (August 1838), then as Section 115 in 1876.

Outline

- The name of the Church (1-4)
- Places of refuge (5-6)
- Build a house of the Lord (7-16)
- The keys are held by Joseph Smith (17-19)

The name of the Church (1-4)

1 ***your counselors who are and shall be appointed.*** Hyrum Smith replaced Frederick G. Williams as counselor in the First Presidency in November 1837. Hyrum and Oliver Cowdery had been two of four assistants to the First Presidency in 1837, but Cowdery was excommunicated in early 1838 and Hyrum Smith was now a counselor, leaving just two assistants, Joseph Smith, Sr., and John Smith.⁹

2 ***Edward Partridge and his counselors.*** The revelation was also direction to the bishopric in Missouri. Partridge's counselors were Isaac Morley and Titus Billings.¹⁰

3 ***the high council . . . and unto all the elders and people.*** The high council in Missouri was called out, retaining the name "Zion" even though they were far north of Jackson County. But the revelation was directed to everyone in the Church.

3 ***Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*** The first name of the Church was "The Church of Christ." On 3 May 1834, it was changed by a vote of council to "The Church of the Latter Day Saints," owing to there being other churches called Church of Christ. It is here in his revelation that the Lord gives the name (also v. 4) that is still essentially used today, "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."¹¹

Note that the original revelation reads "Latter Day Saints," which the Reorganized Church kept as the way of writing their name until they changed to The Community of Christ in April 2001. Our Church changed it "Latter-day Saints" in 1851, following the British style of hyphenation. Under President Harold B. Lee, the word "The" was consistently added and capitalized at the beginning of the name.¹²

Places of refuge (5-6)

5 ***Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard.*** Though some of the words show up in other scriptures, this phrase as assembled is unique in all of scripture. This is a general command given to the entire Church.

6 ***for a defense, and for a refuge.*** The Second Coming remained a prominent part of Latter-day Saint doctrine, and the gathering was seen as the primary means of coming out of the wicked world into a place of safety that could avoid "wrath when it shall be poured out."

⁸ "Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman," <https://history.lds.org/article/doctrine-and-covenants-far-west>, accessed 7 Apr 2017; Harper, *Making Sense*, 423; Cook, *The Revelations*, 227

⁹ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 916-917.

¹⁰ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:109.

¹¹ Later in the 1800s, the hyphen was added and the d made small, Latter-day.

¹² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:109-110; Harper, *Making Sense*, 423; Cook, *The Revelations*, 227; *JSP*, J1:258n115.

Build a house of the Lord (7-16)

7 ***Far West, be a holy and consecrated land.*** Gathering makes a place holy and consecrated or set apart for that purpose. But one commentary notes that Far West is fifty-five miles north of Jackson County and thirty miles south of Adam-ondi-Ahman (see D&C 116), putting it roughly in the middle of two historically holy locations.¹³

8 ***build a house unto me.*** Having established the practice of temple building in Kirtland, the Lord commands it to continue in Far West, that Saints may be gathered to worship the Lord.

9 ***a beginning of this work . . . this following summer.*** Referring to the summer coming up shortly; v. 10 picks the exact day: the fourth of July.

10 ***labor diligently.*** The Lord wanted commitment and sacrifice but also obviously could see ahead and interestingly asked for just the right amount of commitment to start the project but not finish it before the troubles in Missouri would come to a head. He didn't expect much beyond the foundations in the first year and instructed them to start work again the next summer (1839). But by the summer of 1839, there were no supporters of Joseph Smith left in Missouri.

13 ***let not my servant . . . get in debt any more.*** Again, the foresight of God comes through. Not only was the Church, and many of its leaders, including Joseph and Sidney, still in debt for the temple in Kirtland which they had now abandoned, but with the loss of all support from Kirtland properties and economy, they were very poor. The Lord wisely instructed them to incur no new debts, setting a pace for the building of this temple that appeared more relaxed in 1838 and clearly anticipated it not being done before they had to leave.

14 ***according to the pattern which I will show.*** The First Presidency had a vision before building the Kirtland temple, showing them the pattern for constructing it. They also had a revelation regarding the temple in Independence, which was not built. The Lord declared that he would do the same here. Though we have no record of the revelation, many have proposed that the plan for the Far West temple would have been quite different from Kirtland. With the sealing powers restored and the doctrines of baptism for the dead being taught near this time, it is possible that the temple could have included spaces for these ordinances, as Nauvoo did a few years later.¹⁴

15 ***I will not accept it.*** If the temple was not built according to revelation, it would not be accepted by the Lord—in other words, no appearance of Christ as was experienced in Kirtland on 3 April 1836 (D&C 110). But if they built it by that pattern, it would be accepted (v. 16).

The keys are held by Joseph Smith (17-19)

17 ***Far West should be built up speedily.*** The pace was already dramatic, going from essentially unsettled land in 1837 to a town of nearly 5,000 in early 1838. The Lord expected that to continue. But this speaks not just to the numbers but to the quality of life, encouraging members to start businesses and public works efforts to make Far West a wonderful place to live.

This was dramatically different than the gathering strategy in Jackson County, where the Saints were told to move slowly so as not to overwhelm their new neighbors (e.g., D&C 63:24). Since Caldwell County was set aside for Church members, there was no need to hold back but gather as quickly as possible.

18 ***other places should be appointed for stakes.*** Now that the pattern of stakes of Zion was established, the vision was to have them in many places. An important consideration was who had the authority to organize a stake. In the months before the First Presidency arrived in Missouri, William W. Phelps and John Whitmer had designated Far West as a stake. An unpublished revelation from 12 January 1838 taught that only the First Presidency could do that.¹⁵ The Lord affirmed that revelation here. Indeed, even today, all stake and ward boundary changes and creation of new units must have the approval of the First Presidency.

19 ***I will be with him, and I will sanctify him.*** Speaking of Joseph Smith (v. 18), the Lord himself declared his support for his Prophet, unto whom he had given keys and the right to ministry.

¹³ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:111-112.

¹⁴ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 921.

¹⁵ Revelation, 12 January 1838-B, [1](#); Cook, *Revelations*, 228.

Results

Thomas Marsh wrote in a letter to Wilford Woodruff shortly after this revelation,

Since Br. Joseph came to this place, we have been favored with a lengthy revelation in which many important items are shown forth. First that the Church, shall hereafter be called, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Second it saith “Let the City Farwest be a holy and a consecrated land unto me, and it shall be called most holy, for the ground upon which thou standest is holy: Therefore, I command you to build a house unto me, for the gathering together of my Saints, that they may worship me.” 3d. It also teaches, that the foundation stone must be laid on the 4th of July next [1838], and that a commencement must be made in this following season; and in one year from that time, to continue the work until it is finished. Thus we see that the Lord is more wise than men, for Phelps & Whitmer thought to commence it long before this, but it was not the Lords time, therefore, he over threw it, and has appointed his own time. The plan is yet to be shown to the first presidency, and all the Saints, in all the world, are commanded to assist in building the house.¹⁶

Per this revelation, the cornerstones were laid on 4 July 1838 with great ceremony, and the work progressed so that the walls were nearly three feet high. But with persecutions later that year, that was as far as it got; it was never completed. The next stake was organized in June 1838 at Adam-ondi-Ahman, in anticipation of large numbers of Saints arriving there that summer and fall.

D&C 116 – Adam-ondi-Ahman

Setting

Received Saturday, 19 May 1838, at Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri, near Wight’s Ferry.

Pursuant to the 26 April revelation to look for lands for Saints to settle and to form stakes (D&C 115), Joseph Smith went north three times into Daviess County. On one of these trips, he traveled with Sidney Rigdon, Thomas Marsh, David Patten, Edward Partridge, Elias Higbee, Simeon Carter, Alanson Ripley, George Robinson, and others. Some Church members had already settled in that county, including Lyman Wight, who built a ferry on the nearby Grand River.

On Saturday, 19 May 1838, the brethren crossed the Grand River and walked through timber about eighteen miles to Wight’s home. His house was at the bottom of a hill that Joseph Smith nicknamed “Tower Hill” because of an archaic tower visible at the top. Surveying the land to lay claim that afternoon, they came to Spring Hill, which Joseph said had another name by “the mouth of [the] Lord.”

The quote from the Journal, written by George Robinson, is: “In the after part of the day, Prest^s smith and Rigdon and myself, went to Wights. Ferry about a half mile from this place [Tower Hill] up the river, for the purpose of selecting and laying claims to city plott near said Ferry, in Davis [Daviess] County Township 60, Range 27 & 28, and Sections 25, 36, 31, 30, which was called Spring Hill a name appropriate by the bretheren present, but after wards named by the mouth of [the] Lord and was called Adam ondi Awmen [Adam-ondi-Ahman], because said he it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of days shall sit as spoke of by Daniel the Prophet.”¹⁷ The edits to the present form of D&C 116 were made by Orson Pratt when he prepared the 1876 Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁸

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is Joseph Smith’s Journal, March-September 1838 (18 May—1 June 1838), 43-44. It was first published in the *Deseret News* (2 April 1853), then as Section 116 in 1876.

¹⁶ Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, 30 April 1838, Church Archives, quoted in Cook, *The Revelations*, 227.

¹⁷ 18 May—1 June 1838, Friday-Friday, Journal, March-September 1838, in *JSP*, J1:270-271.

¹⁸ Harper, *Making Sense*, 428.

Commentary

1 **Adam-ondi-Ahman**. The name was introduced in revelation in DC 78:15 and 107:53. Indeed, William W. Phelps had already written a hymn by that name by the dedication of the Kirtland temple in 1836. But this was the first time the name had been applied to a location.

1 **where Adam shall come to visit his people**. The name is applied to the location because of a future event, one where Adam will come and all keyholders of all dispensations will stand before him, then Adam delivers all keys to Christ. This does not require that the location in D&C 107:53-56 be the same one. The Lord is quite capable of reusing a name that had meaning in the past and applying it to a different location related to a similar but future event. Of course, it could be the same physical location for both events, but it doesn't have to be.

1 **the Ancient of Days**. See Daniel 7:9-14, where the vision of a man sitting on a throne is a representation of a glorified, resurrected being. See also Daniel 12:1 and D&C 27:5-14. Many commentators believe this is God but Joseph Smith taught that it was Adam (D&C 138:38).

Results

A stake was formed at Adam-ondi-Ahman, often called the Diahman stake, shortly after this revelation (28 June 1838), with John Smith as president and Reynolds Cahoon and Lyman Wight as counselors. Vinson Knight was called as a temporary bishop as well, and Newel K. Whitney was commanded in D&C 117:11 to come to Adam-ondi-Ahman and serve as bishop. He did not get that opportunity as the Saints were driven out before he arrived.

D&C 117 – Duties of Those Still in Kirtland

Setting

Received Sunday, 8 July 1838, at Far West, Missouri.

In April, the Lord had called all who could, to leave Kirtland and gather to Far West (D&C 115:17). Many had already left, and the last large group had departed on 6 July, just two days before this revelation was received. But two prominent men had stayed behind, Bishop Newel K. Whitney and his agent, William Marks, who was also apparently the stake president of what was left in Kirtland. Whitney had extensive property and business holdings in Kirtland and was no doubt anxious to close them out to his best advantage before moving on. Perhaps Marks, as his agent, had the same concern in behalf of the Church.¹⁹

Note: Sections 117-120 were all recorded as being received on the same day, in the “Scripitory” book (Journal, March-September 1838), though in the order 118, 119, 120, and 117.²⁰

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is Journal, Mar-Sep 1838 (8 July 1838), 57-58. It was first published in the *Deseret News* (2 April 1853), then as Section 117 in 1876.

Outline

- Marks and Whitney (1-11)
- Oliver Granger (12-16)

Marks and Whitney (1-11)

1 **settle up their business speedily**. Joseph Smith did not know that Marks and Whitney were still in Kirtland even though most of the other Saints had left, but the Lord did.

¹⁹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 430-431; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:122-123; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 927.

²⁰ *JSP*, J1:284-290.

2 **come forth, and not tarry.** As good as their intentions may have been, they were still not being fully obedient to the previous command to come “speedily” to Far West (D&C 115:17).

3 **if they tarry it shall not be well with them.** There would be no benefit to staying longer when they were needed in Missouri, even if to them it appeared that staying longer was wise.

4 **what is property unto me?** The God of the universe, who created all things, made it clear that a store, an ashery, or other of their concerns were not that significant to him, in the bigger picture.

5 **Let them go, saith the Lord.** The Lord instructed them to sell off the properties in their possession for whatever they could get and use that to help pay off the debts of the Church. The rest should remain in ownership of individuals or the Church, to be taken care of later.

6 **Have I not made the earth?** Like v. 4, this reminder of who the whole earth belongs to is helpful to frame up the commandment. If the Lord is the creator of all and controls even “the destinies of all the armies,” they should trust him to take care of them.

7 **will I not make solitary places to bud and to blossom.** The nearly treeless expanse of prairie around Far West and most of Caldwell County surely seemed like a “solitary place” to many of the Saints, especially compared to the verdant hills of northern Ohio. But this wasn’t the last time the Saints would rely on this promise to make an unpromising location blossom and flourish with God’s blessings.

8 **the mountains of Adam-ondi-Ahman.** Though finding “mountains” in Daviess county, which the Prophet had learned was the location of Adam-ondi-Ahman (D&C 116), was probably more poetic than literal, there was certainly plenty of room for many Saints to live in that area.

8 **on the plains of Olaha Shinehah.** “Shinehah” was found in Abraham 3:13, where it is translated “the sun.” This aligns with Hebrew and other Semitic cognates that mean “year,” or one journey around the sun. Olaha could be related to “Olea” in the same verse in Abraham, which is there translated as “moon” and also has Hebrew and other Semitic cognates with that meaning.²¹

9 **the land of my people, even Zion.** The location of the Lord’s people was Zion, not just Independence, Missouri. The concept of Zion begins to expand in this time.

10 **Let him preside in the midst of my people in the city of Far West.** William Marks was called by this to serve as the stake president in Far West, shifting his assignment from Ohio to Missouri.

11 **the Nicolaitane band and of all their secret combinations.** The phrase comes from Revelation 2:6, 15, where it refers to a group who left the faith, though we know no details about them. Applying that same label to those who had left and who were working against the Church now in Kirtland, the Lord strongly counseled Bishop Whitney to avoid them.

11 **be a bishop unto my people.** Though still the bishop in Kirtland, there wasn’t much to be a bishop over anymore. The Lord invited Bishop Whitney to come to Adam-ondi-Ahman and be the bishop there.

Oliver Granger (12-16)

12 **Oliver Granger.** Granger, forty-four years old, had joined the Church in 1833 and already served several missions. He helped build the Kirtland temple and was a member of the high council there. He had just moved to Missouri in June 1838. Now he was being asked to return to Kirtland for another mission.

12 **his name shall be had in sacred remembrance.** Not enough members of the Church have heard of, much less held Granger’s name in sacred remembrance. But the verse indicates that it is the Lord who shall remember him, which is an even greater blessing.

13 **contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency.** Oliver’s calling was to return to Kirtland and manage the financial affairs—debts and properties—of the Church there, especially to remove the debts taken on by the First Presidency members in building the temple and in the Safety Society failure.

²¹ Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 273.

14 ***in the due time he shall be made a merchant unto my name.*** Granger's skills were such that he would have been a successful businessman under other circumstances, but he put his efforts to fulfilling this mission to become a merchant for the Lord and received great blessings (v. 15).

16 ***overthrow the moneychangers.*** There were attempts to take the Kirtland temple away from the Church. This verse likens them to the money changers in the temple at Christ's time, which he overthrew (Matthew 21:13).

Results

Oliver Granger carried a copy of this revelation from Far West, where he received it from the Prophet, to Kirtland, and delivered it to William Marks and Newel K. Whitney. Marks and Whitney followed the revelation, settled up, and left for Missouri. Unfortunately, they arrived too late, as Governor Bogg's extermination order of 27 October 1838 had already forced the Saints from their homes and put many of its leaders in prison. Both joined the Saints in Illinois and Marks became a stake president and Whitney a bishop there.

Oliver Granger worked hard to settle the financial affairs of the Church in Kirtland to the satisfaction of its honest debtors. He was commended by Church leaders, bankers, and community leaders alike for his integrity, virtue, and business acumen. He, too, tried to rejoin the Saints in Missouri too late, ended up in Illinois for a time, then returned to Kirtland with his family to continue his mission there. He died in 1841 in Kirtland at the age of forty-seven, having secured the good name of the Church and the First Presidency by seeing to their debts.²²

D&C 118 – Concerning the Twelve

Setting

Received Sunday, 8 July 1838, at Far West, Missouri.

At the date of this revelation (the same as sections 117, 119, and 120), four of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve had been excommunicated (Luke and Lyman Johnson, William E. McLellin, and John Boynton). Replacements needed to be called and direction given the quorum concerning their efforts. As the Church leaders gathered in Far West in conference to take care of Church business, one of their pleas to the Lord was, "Show unto us they will O, Lord concerning the Twelve."²³ The answer was this revelation.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Journal, Mar-Sep 1838 (8 Jul 1838), 54-55. It was first published in the *Deseret News* (2 April 1853), then as Section 118 in 1876.

Commentary

1 ***Let a conference be held immediately.*** Referring to a quorum meeting of the Twelve, so they might "be organized."

2 ***Let my servant Thomas remain for a season.*** Though most of the revelations used first names only when recorded, it's rare that last names have not been added later. In this case, "Thomas" refers to Thomas B. Marsh, the president of the quorum. He was leading the publication of the *Elder's Journal*, the only Church publication happening at this time.

3 ***preach from that hour.*** The calling of the Twelve was to preach the gospel, which should go on. In fact, the Lord was about to dramatically step up their preaching responsibilities, with the promise of care for their families.

4 ***next spring let them depart to go over the great waters.*** Other communications had referred to the mission to England made by Heber C. Kimball and others as a mission over the "great waters," so though it may sound vague to us, these men knew this was a call to preach in England.

5 ***take leave of my saints in the city of Far West, on the twenty-sixth day of April next.*** The Lord called for a very specific departure date and location, which would prove challenging after subsequent events.

²² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:127; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 930-931; Harper, *Making Sense*, 433-434.

²³ *JSP*, J1:285.

6 *John Taylor . . . John E. Page . . . Wilford Woodruff . . . Willard Richards*. These were the four new apostles, names which are very well known to students of Church history today.

Results

The members of the Twelve in Missouri did meet “immediately,” the very next day on 9 July. They determined to notify the four new apostles in various ways. John Taylor had only been baptized two years previous; he and John Page were both ordained at Far West in December 1838, in the midst of their leaving Missouri. Wilford Woodruff was serving a mission in Maine and was ordained in Far West on 26 April 1838, as the Twelve met at the temple lot to start their mission to England. Willard Richards was in England at this time of this revelation; he remained there until the other apostles joined him and was ordained by Brigham Young there.

The Twelve did fulfill the exact commandment to leave from Far West on 26 April 1839. Because the Saints had been driven from Missouri the previous winter, it was very dangerous for them to meet at that spot. Enemies of the Church also knew of the revelation and the charge to meet at that time and place, increasing the threat. The apostles and a few other members left Quincy, Illinois, and crept into Far West under cover of night. After midnight or early in the morning of 26 April 1839, they held a quorum meeting, relaid the southeast cornerstone (but not before having Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith sit on it to be ordained, the latter being the replacement for Thomas Marsh who had left the Church a few weeks previous), conducted other Church business, sang and prayed, and left to return to Quincy. Having fulfilled the revelation exactly, they found to their delight in Quincy that Joseph Smith and his Liberty Jail companions were free—the two groups had both crossed Missouri at the same time. Then the Twelve made final preparations to go to England.²⁴

D&C 119 – Tithing and Consecration

Setting

Received Sunday, 8 July 1838, at Far West, Missouri.

The law of consecration and stewardship was received in February 1831, shortly after Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland, Ohio (D&C 42). It directed members to consecrate all their property to the Church through the bishop, who would then give back a stewardship. Any surplus from the righteous exercise of that stewardship was to then come back to the bishop to care for the poor, purchase lands for Zion, and help build the temple.

Because of all the difficulties encountered from 1833 to 1838, the Church had been neither able to fully apply the law nor benefit from its blessings. Instead, the Church was facing large debts and poor prospects of repayment in the summer of 1838, much less the means to build up the Church even more in Far West and other locations. Pondering the situation, Bishop Whitney in Kirtland first proposed a tithing of the Saints, according to their reading of Malachi 3:10. Taking the next step, the bishopric in Missouri proposed any annual tithe of two percent of each family’s net worth.

As the conference met in Missouri on 6-8 July, Church finances were an important topic. Pondering both proposals by the bishops, the Prophet asked the Lord, “O! Lord, show unto thy servants how much thou requirest of the properties of thy people for a Tithing?”²⁵ This short revelation was the answer.²⁶

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Journal, Mar-Sep 1838 (8 Jul 1838), 56. It was first published as Section 107 in 1844.

Commentary

1 ***I require all their surplus property.*** The first statement is that nothing had changed with the law of consecration and stewardship: the Lord still needed all Saints to give their surplus into the bishop’s storehouse to help meet the various financial needs of the Church.

²⁴ Harper, *Making Sense*, 436-439; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:130-131.

²⁵ *JSP*, J1:288.

²⁶ Harper, *Making Sense*, 440-441; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:137-139.

2 *the building of mine house . . . the debts of the Presidency.* Verse 2 explains what to do with the surplus: build the temple, build up Zion and the priesthood, and pay off the debts owed by the First Presidency for all the things they funded in Kirtland.

3 *this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people.* The word “tithing” or “tithed” is used three times in this short revelation. In each case, it refers not to the thing as we use it for today but back to the requirement in v. 1: “all their surplus property” as well as to the next part in v. 4. In other words, consecrating your surplus is the first part of “tithing,” and verse 4 explains the second part.

4 *those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually.* After giving their entire surplus, the burning question was, ‘How much do I give each year?’ In other words, under the requirement of D&C 42 and subsequent revelations, the Lord left the amount of annual surplus up to each person. Since the brethren asked for a percentage, he gave them one: ten percent, which is the meaning of the word translated “tithing” from Hebrew (*ma’ašer*). It is still a freewill offering and still up to each person to determine what is their “interest,” but now all have a clear target.

4 *a standing law unto them forever.* This clarification of consecration or tithing was not a replacement or a temporary law—it was like the previous teaching on consecration, an eternal law, “a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken” (D&C 42:30).

5 *all those who gather unto the land of Zion shall be tithed.* Those who came to Zion for the first time were to be given this law—give your surplus when you arrive, and then give ten percent of your interest each year—if they wish to remain worthy to stay in Zion.

6 *if my people observe not this law . . . it shall not be a land of Zion unto you.* This law of consecration/tithing being observed by all, along with the other “statutes and . . . judgment” from the Lord, is what makes Zion holy and sanctified.

7 *And this shall be an ensample unto all the stakes of Zion.* What applies to Far West, Missouri, applies to the whole Church.

Results

Sometimes we might think that the Lord gave the early Church consecration, but they couldn’t live it, so he gave them tithing instead, like how the children of Israel had the higher law taken away to receive instead the Law of Moses. This is a misunderstanding of D&C 119 and the law of tithing. In this revelation, the Lord gave a specific answer to a specific question, using the language they used from Malachi. But he broadened the meaning of the term “tithing” from their narrow percentage definition to help them see that all their offerings to the Lord were “tithing,” meaning freewill, faith-motivated offerings to build up the kingdom.²⁷

Today the Church functions without the first part—giving all surplus property—and among the membership of the Church, just relies on the second part—one-tenth of annual interest, which is now considered “income.” It’s a beautiful, egalitarian practice, that lets everyone share in the growth of the kingdom on equal footing, whether I make \$10 a year or \$10 million. But I think the Lord still wants those of us with a surplus to read vv. 1-3 and ponder just what we can give. And we have very specific ways to help beyond tithing—missionary funds, Humanitarian Fund, and so much more. And that’s just in the Church. Sharing our surplus—which can be money or time and effort—with others in need in organizations of all kinds surely brings the smiles of heaven upon the Saints even as it helps so many others who cannot help themselves in our unfair, unkind, and winner-take-all world.

D&C 120 – Council on the Disposition of the Tithes

Setting

Received Sunday, 8 July 1838, at Far West, Missouri.

²⁷ Harper, *Making Sense*, 441-442; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:141-142.

After the revelation on tithing (D&C 119), the brethren at the conference wanted to know how these tithes were to be managed by Church leaders, or “the desposition of the properties tithed.”²⁸ Before this, all consecrated and surplus properties were put in the hands of the bishop. But with the growth of the Church and new quorums of authority, the question arose, wondering if that practice should be continued. This brief revelation was the result.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Journal, Mar-Sep 1838 (8 Jul 1838), 57. It was first published in the *Deseret News* (2 April 1853), then as Section 120 in 1876.

Commentary

1 ***it shall be disposed***. “It” meaning the tithing and surplus donations of the Church.

1 ***by a council***. The council is composed of the First Presidency, the Presiding Bishopric, and the Quorum of the Twelve (“my high council” in the revelation).

1 ***by mine own voice unto them***. The council will make all decisions about the disposition of funds according the voice of the Lord to them, by revelation.

Results

At first, this revelation set up the council to be the First Presidency, the local (Far West) bishop, and the high council there in Far West. As the Church continued to grow, the local bishopric was replaced by the Presiding Bishopric and the local high council by the Quorum of the Twelve. This council today—called the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes—manages all Church funds, as we hear annually in the audit report at the April General Conference. It is a system that worked in 1838 and continues to work for a worldwide Church with millions of members today.

²⁸ JSP, J1:289.

Images

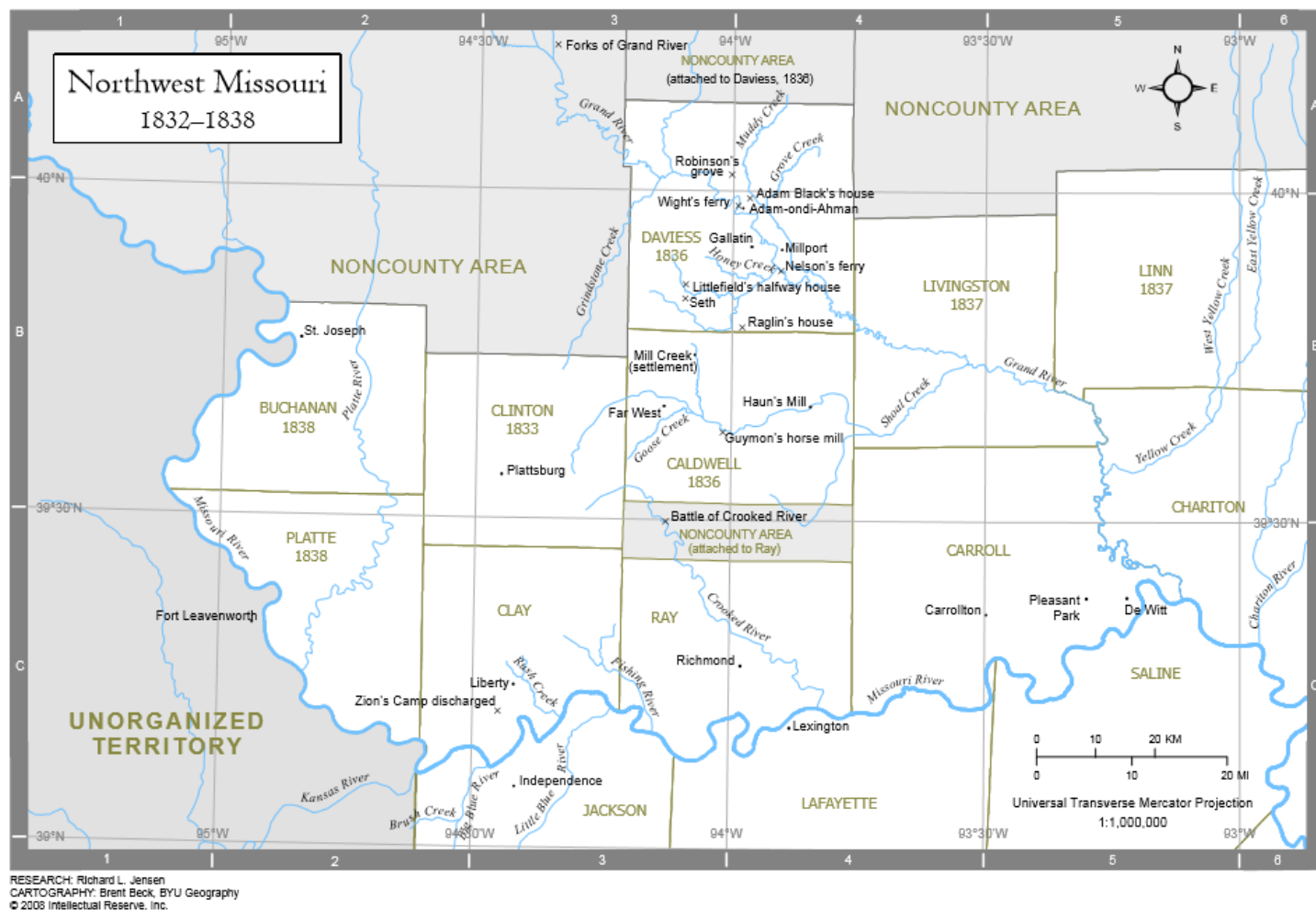


Image #1: Important Latter-day Saint sites in northwest Missouri; from Joseph Smith Papers website.

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