

Doctrine and Covenants 97-100

David A. LeFevre

General Introduction

Things in both Missouri and Ohio were not good in the fall of 1833. Missouri Saints saw formal, government-sanctified persecution against them come to a head, with the destruction of the Church's printing press and William Phelps' home, the tarring and feathering of Bishop Edward Partridge and Charles Allen, the closing of the bishop's storehouse and store, and the forced signing of an agreement by Church leaders to leave the country by early 1834.

In Ohio, excommunicated member Doctor Philastus Hurlbut was causing many problems, determined to destroy the Church and especially Joseph Smith. He was raising money against them and collecting affidavits from Palmyra and other residents to establish the bad character and practices of the Prophet.

As news of the troubles in Missouri reached him in mid-August, Joseph's heart went out to his friends in Zion but he was at a loss as to what to do. He prayed and received some assurances that all would be well, but the direct course of action escaped him until December 1833. In the meantime, he wrote letters and sent brethren to help, and waited on the Lord. He and Sidney also decided to go on a brief mission to Upper Canada as the request of some non-members and their baptized family members in that area.

Summary Chronology

- **Wed, 29 Aug 1832** – D&C 99 received, Hiram, Ohio.
- **Fri, 2 Aug 1833** – D&C 97 received, Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Fri, 2 Aug 1833** – D&C 94 received, Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Tue, 6 Aug 1833** – D&C 98 received, Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Sat, 5 Oct 1833** – Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon left Kirtland for northwest New York, accompanied by Freeman and Huldah Nickerson of Perrysburg, NY.
- **Sat, 12 Oct 1833** – D&C 100 received, Perrysburg, New York.
- **Fri, 18 Oct 1833** – Joseph and Sidney arrived at Mount Pleasant, Upper Canada.
- **Sun, 20 Oct 1833** – Joseph and Sidney preached in Brantford and Mount Pleasant, Upper Canada.
- **Sun, 27 Oct 1833** – Joseph and Sidney baptized twelve in the Mount Pleasant area, with two more the following day, confirming all new converts on Mon, 28 Oct.
- **Tue, 29 Oct 1833** – Joseph and Sidney departed Mount Pleasant for Buffalo, New York, then took passage on a boat, arriving back in Kirtland on Mon, 4 Nov 1833.

D&C 97 – Agency in Zion

Setting

Received Friday, 2 August 1833, at Kirtland, Ohio.

As in Kirtland, a School of the Prophets (or sometimes called “school of the Elders”) was established in Jackson County, Missouri, led by Parley Pratt. He described holding weekly meetings in an open spot among the trees with about sixty brethren. They “prayed, preached and prophesied, and exercised [themselves] in the gifts of the Holy Ghost.” Oliver Cowdery wrote one letter on 9 July 1833 and other members of the school wrote another sometime that same month with questions about running the school.

The letter written by the presidency of the high priesthood (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams) in reply, dated 6 August 1833, including copies of three revelations, with D&C 97 being the first one.¹ The letter called this revelation, “the communication which we received from the Lord concerning the school in Zion.”

Of course, when this letter was written, Jackson County Church members were already suffering dramatically, with the printing press and Phelps’ house destroyed, Bishop Partridge and Charles Allen were tarred and feathered, and Sidney Gilbert was forced to close his store. Church leaders had been compelled to sign an agreement that all members would leave Jackson County. Joseph and the leaders in Ohio were yet unaware of all this, but the revelation anticipates it.²

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in a letter from Church leaders in Ohio to Edward Partridge in Missouri (6 Aug 1833; *JSP*, D3:228-243), with other copies in RB2 (about 6 Aug 1833) 61-64 and RB1 (about late 1833) 171-172. It was published as Section 81 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and as Section 82 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Faithful commended but some chastened (1-9)
- Build a house in Zion (10-17)
- Zion, the pure in heart, shall prosper (18-21)
- Vengeance on the ungodly (22-24)
- Zion shall escape if she is faithful (25-28)

Faithful commended but some chastened (1-9)

1 ***my friends***. The revelation was given to the presidency of the high priesthood, which was Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams.

1 ***my will concerning your brethren in the land of Zion***. As mentioned in Setting above, the Saints in Zion had just experienced the beginnings of serious persecution by their Missouri neighbors. Though unknown to the men receiving this revelation, the Lord knows and offers warning in the context of their knowledge, even as the persecution had already started. This revelation allowed the “truly humble” to find wisdom and truth.

2 ***mercy unto all the meek***. Mercy is shown by the Lord to the meek and humble and “all whomsoever I will” in order to make any later judgments thoroughly justified in all eyes. If the Lord is abundant in mercy, then when he has to exact punishment, it is impossible to call him unfair.

3 ***pleased that there should be a school in Zion***. The Lord had counseled the Saints in Missouri to hold both a school and build a temple. The revelation commends them for doing the former and chastises them for not doing the latter.

3 ***Parley P. Pratt***. Parley Parker Pratt had been one of the initial missionaries to Missouri with Oliver Cowdery, and had stayed there much of the time since that mission. He had been called to lead the School of the Prophets in Missouri³ where the brethren met weekly in the woods. Pratt described in his autobiography that sometimes he had to walk the six miles to the meeting place barefoot, given his financial situation, but that he was there each week to lead the school.⁴

4 ***until I shall give unto him other commandments***. Pratt was to continue teaching the school until the Lord called him away. His next assignment was to serve a mission to the eastern states in March 1834.

5 ***expounding all scriptures and mysteries***. Previously in the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith (24:5, 9), Emma Smith (25:7), Orson Hyde (68:1), and Sidney Rigdon (71:1) had all been told to expound scriptures. Parley Pratt is given the same privilege, entering a unique group.

¹ The other two were D&C 94, received the same day as this revelation, and 98, received the same day as the letter.

² Revelation, 2 August 1833-A [D&C 97], *JSP*, D3:198-203; Harper, *Making Sense*, 357-358.

³ Though there is no record of his call, it appears to have been referred to in a letter in June 1833 from Church leaders in Ohio to those in Missouri; see *JSP*, D3:201n232.

⁴ Harper, *Making Sense*, 357.

6 *those that must needs be chastened*. Some of the sins of those in Missouri were clear and easy to be seen, while others were more private and “shall be made known” at a future time. We cannot hide even our sinful thoughts from God. See D&C 95:10.

7 *The ax is laid at the root of the trees*. This verse is nearly a quote from Matthew 3:10 (also Luke 3:9). Alma quoted the Spirit telling him the same thing several years before John the Baptist would have said it (Alma 5:52). This is the only use of this phrase in the Doctrine and Covenants.

8 *hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite*. The original source is probably Psalm 34:18, but it is in the Book of Mormon that the phrase gets the most use, with seven occurrences.⁵ The phrase is also used several times in the Doctrine and Covenants, this being the last one.⁶

8 *observe their covenants by sacrifice*. Sacrifice was a part of covenant making in Biblical times, just as it is today, though now it is not with animals but with another sacrifice commanded by the Lord, including humility, meekness, obedience, and unity with others.

9 *a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream*. There is no exact quote like this in the Bible or Book of Mormon but the concept of the righteous being likened to a tree by a river is attested in several scriptures. The closest to this phraseology is perhaps Ezekiel 17:5, “He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree.”⁷

Build a house in Zion (10-17)

10 *a house should be built unto me in the land of Zion*. Though the command to build a temple in Zion had been known since the summer of 1831 (D&C 57:3), the plan for the temple, which was patterned after the vision of the Kirtland temple received by the presidency of the high priesthood, had only been sent at the end of June, arriving just four days after the agreement was signed to leave the county.⁸

11 *by the tithing of my people*. Tithing at this time doesn’t mean 10% of increase, as it does in the Church today. Rather, it ties to the sacrifice of the law of consecration and doing the works of God (see v. 12).⁹

13 *a place of thanksgiving for all saints*. The original temple plans allowed for public worship in the bottom section of the building and “a place of instruction” in the upper story to prepare leaders and missionaries for service.

14 *understanding . . . in theory, in principle, and in doctrine*. Compare D&C 88:78. The schooling of leaders and missionaries had these goals, to help them understand how things fit together, the principles on which things worked, and how that aligned with the doctrines of God.

15 *my glory shall rest upon it*. Building a house in the name of the Lord and keeping it undefiled allows God’s glory to be in that house, just as it was in the ancient tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) and temple (1 Kings 8:11) in Israel.

16 *all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God*. Because it is the house of the Lord, he is there; thus those prepared with pure hearts who come to the temple shall see God (though not necessarily in the house, according to the language here). Compare Matthew 5:8; 3 Nephi 12:8; D&C 93:1.

17 *I will not come into unholy temples*. What defiles a temple? Bringing unholy—unsanctified, not dedicated to God—things into it.

Zion, the pure in heart, shall prosper (18-21)

18 *if Zion do these things she shall prosper*. “Zion” up to this point was equivalent to Jackson County, Missouri. But with this revelation, that definition becomes broadened and enlarged, such that Zion shall “spread herself” and be glorious and great. Later Joseph Smith will say that “the whole of North and South America is Zion.”¹⁰

⁵ 2 Nephi 2:7; 4:32; 3 Nephi 9:20; 12:19; Mormon 2:14; Ether 4:15; Moroni 6:2.

⁶ D&C 20:37; 56:17, 18; 59:8; 97:8.

⁷ Psalm 1:3 is also very close; see also Jeremiah 17:8 and Revelation 22:2.

⁸ JSP, D3:201n239.

⁹ JSP, D3:201n241.

¹⁰ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 3:226.

18 **very terrible**. “Terrible” is used in over fifty verses in the Old Testament, and the word is the same root as the word ‘to fear.’ Here that would mean that Zion is to be feared. Compare D&C 45:70, 74.

19 **Surely Zion is the city of our God**. Zion’s greatness will one day be recognized by the whole earth. They will recognize that Zion cannot fall or be moved because “God is there.” This compares to language used about Enoch’s city of Zion (Moses 7:13, 16-17).

19 **text note**.

The 6 August 1833 copy of this revelation in the letter to Missouri has “removed” instead of “moved” in this verse, which matches the language of Psalm 125:1 and Isaiah 33:20. Only here and in D&C 101:17 is Zion not “moved” out of her place.

20 **be her salvation and her high tower**. God is Zion’s salvation because of his presence and protection, as well as his atoning sacrifice. To be the “high tower” of the city means to watch over and protect her (see 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 18:2; 144:2).

21 **let Zion rejoice**. Even as the members in Missouri were trying to figure out how to cope with the persecutions they were suffering and with their losses, the Lord advocated rejoicing. The setbacks of 1833 did not affect his larger view of the salvation of Zion that would come in his own due time.

21 **Zion—THE PURE IN HEART**. In the translation of Genesis, Joseph Smith learned that Enoch’s Zion received that name because they were united in heart and mind, live righteously, and took care of their poor (Moses 7:18). Building on that example and being crisp and clear, the Lord defined Zion as the pure in heart (Matthew 5:8; 3 Nephi 12:8).

Vengeance on the ungodly (22-24)

22 **vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly**. Shifting gears dramatically from Zion prospering, the Lord contrasts that with the state of the wicked, who will mourn (v. 21) as judgment falls upon them.

23 **The Lord’s scourge**. In Isaiah 10:26 and 28:15-18, the Lord’s scourge was the Assyrian empire who came through like an overflowing river and swept away the northern kingdom of Israel and much of the southern kingdom of Judah.

A “scourge,” of course, is a whip used to give lashes or punishment to the disobedient. This revelation says that the Lord’s punishment will go on “by night and by day” until it “shall vex all people.” This will continue until the Second Coming.

24 **indignation of the Lord**. Indignation is great anger, to be wroth or even grieved. Though the Lord loves his children, he has great anger against their wicked deeds.

Zion shall escape if she is faithful (25-28)

25 **Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things**. Anger and punishment awaited a disobedient Zion (v. 26), but a promised deliverance also waited her if she was diligent and faithful. That promise still stands today as we build up Zion.

26 **with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire**. These things all came upon members of the Church in Missouri over the next several years, but the warning also has future implications for those who build up Zion in any age.

27 **if she sin no more none of these things shall come upon her**. Agency is the grand operating rule of heaven, with accountability its close partner. The implication is that if members in Missouri had started building the temple as commanded right away, instead of doing nothing for two years, there may have been a very different outcome for them in 1833-1838. We’ll never know but the lesson we can learn is that consequences follow sin in any dispensation or period of Church history, and likewise blessings follow obedience in all time and eternity.

28 **a multiplicity of blessings upon her**. The Lord promises not only blessings but a vast abundance of them as we strive to do his will.

Results

Parley Pratt later wrote that Church leaders and members in Missouri had not complied with the principles of this revelation. He concluded, “notwithstanding many were humble and faithful . . . the threatened judgment was poured out to the uttermost.”¹¹

One commentary reminds us not to judge these good people too harshly: “It is possible to overemphasize the failings of the Missouri Saints, as compared to the body of Church members today. These were good people, but they expected a paradise of milk and honey; and the sacrifice of one’s personal expectations in order to build the house of God was as difficult, or even more difficult, then as it is now.”¹²

D&C 97 is a large “if . . . then” statement, which programmers quickly understand and which is easily grasped by anyone. If we do *x*, then *y* will happen. If the Saints build a temple, then the Lord will bless them; if they are obedient, then they will escape the power of their enemies; if they are slothful, then the Lord will have to scourge them.¹³ The choice is there for all of us who want to build up Zion today as much as it was for the Saints in 1833.

D&C 98 – Dealing with Persecution

Setting

Received Tuesday, 6 August 1833, at Kirtland, Ohio.

The exact reasons behind this revelation were not shared by the Prophet Joseph Smith, but events leading up to it related to the content give good indications of the questions he may have brought to the Lord.

Joseph Smith was aware that in Missouri there were rising hostilities. He didn’t yet know about the destruction of the press and the other events of the end of July yet—Oliver Cowdery did not arrive until 9 August with that news—but the mounting tensions had been discussed in letters exchanged the previous weeks. Certainly, the Lord’s will concerning the interactions with the other Missourians would have been on his mind.

More immediate to the Kirtland Saints were the efforts of Doctor Philastus Hurlbut. He was excommunicated in late June by a bishop’s court, briefly reinstated by Joseph Smith on appeal, then excommunicated again a few days later when it was discovered that he intentionally deceived Joseph with feigned repentance. Hurlbut made it his business after that to persecute Church leaders, especially the Prophet, with the goal of destroying the Church. In Joseph’s words when writing to Missouri Saints, “We are no safer here in Kirtland than you are in Zion the cloud is gathering arou[nd] us with great fury and all pharohs host or in other words all hell and the com[bined] pow[e]rs of Earth are Marsheling their forces to overthrow us.”¹⁴ With persecution in both main locations of the Church, it is natural that the Prophet would seek the Lord’s will relative to these challenges.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in a letter from Church leaders in Ohio to Edward Partridge in Missouri (6 Aug 1833; *JSP*, D3:228-243), with other copies in RB2 (about 6 Aug 1833) 66-71 and RB1 (about late 1833) 173-177. It was published as Section 85 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and as Section 86 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Afflictions work for good (1-3)
- Befriend good laws (4-8)
- Seek honest and wise people (9-10)
- Proven in all things (11-15)
- Turn hearts (16-18)

¹¹ Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, cited in *JSP*, D3:200.

¹² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 3:223.

¹³ See Harper, *Making Sense*, 358.

¹⁴ Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 18 August 1833, *JSP*, D3:264.

- Kirtland's sins (19-22)
- Bear afflictions with patience (23-32)
- When to go to battle (33-38)
- Forgive your enemies (39-48)

Afflictions work for good (1-3)

1 ***fear not***. In nearly one hundred references in the scriptures, people are told “fear not,” often by divine messengers or the Lord himself. It is natural to fear the unknown and even more when pending troubles are anticipated. The Lord counsels otherwise, in his first command given.

1 ***let your hearts be comforted***. This is the first time this phrase is used in the Doctrine and Covenants. A similar idea is expressed in a few Biblical scriptures, such as Genesis 18:5, Ephesians 6:22, and Colossians 2:2, but not as a command or blessing from God.

1 ***in everything give thanks***. This has to be one of the more challenging commandments given by the Lord. When someone is suffering from severe challenges in life, it can be hard to feel like thanking the Lord for much of anything. But from an eternal perspective, when we do that, we will realize the promise of v. 3.

2 ***Waiting patiently on the Lord***. Patience in suffering is another human challenge. The timing of the Lord does not always match our own desires, sometimes leaving us struggling to trust and wait for his action.

2 ***sworn and decreed that they shall be granted***. The Lord promises that he has heard our prayers, and they are recorded in the heavens with a “seal and testament” that they will be granted. However, that decree does not include a specific time. In some cases, the granting of our petitions may happen immediately, but in other cases it may not even be in this life. Still, the promise is as strong as it gets, with “an immutable [unchangeable] covenant” (v. 3).

3 ***all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good***. In the midst of trials and struggles, it is to our benefit to repeat this promise often and believe it. Sometimes we might be tempted to believe that living a righteous life means no afflictions, but Saints are never given that promise—in fact, we are told to expect trials (D&C 54:10; 58:4; 95:1). But we can take comfort that they will be for our eternal blessing.

3 ***to my name's glory***. In some cases, our afflictions will not only be for our good but will bring glory to God as well. Examples of patient suffering, kindness in the midst of persecution, and similar examples of charity amidst challenges are powerful examples to many and can bring softened hearts, conversions, and changed lives.

Befriend good laws (4-8)

4 ***text note***:

In a rare occurrence, Joseph Smith recorded part of this revelation in his own hand in Revelation Book 2. It begins and ends in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams, but starting in this verse with the words “concerning the Laws of the land” until the end of verse 6 (“the constitutoonal Law of the land”), it is in the Prophet’s handwriting. It is not known why he wrote this particular section himself.

4 ***observe to do all things whatsoever I command***. Though this section is about “the laws of the land,” the first principle is to obey God and his laws. Only in that context can man’s laws be interpreted. This is especially interesting today as our country’s lawmakers often move away from the premise that God’s laws exist and are eternal to a more situational morality that can only lead to confusion and contradictions.

5 ***the law of the land which is constitutional***. At this time, nearly all members of the Church were Americans, so constitutional law applied to all, though the principle holds true for any country who has central laws ratified by the people. The Constitution of the United States consists of the founding document with seven articles signed by the Constitutional Convention and ratified by the states between 1788 and 1790, and subsequent amendments. In 1833, there were twelve amendments: the ten bill of rights amendments, one regulating the authority of federal courts, and the last refining the function of the electoral college. The Lord stated that such laws which support “freedom in maintaining rights and privileges” were justified before him.

6 ***befriending that law which is the constitutional law***. Church members are encouraged to be engaged in supporting good laws which support freedom and rights.

7 ***whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil.*** Whatever doesn't support freedom, rights, and basic morality is evil. Likewise, adding many things that go beyond the concept of the constitutional basis for governing can be evil as well. That doesn't mean that state and local laws are bad or that interpretations of the constitution are not allowed, but if new laws run contrary to the principles in v. 5, it risks being something that will take away freedom.

8 ***ye are free indeed.*** Because first of all God makes us free, we are free, no matter what our government says or does. But good law will also make us free and should be befriended.

Seek honest and wise people (9-10)

9 ***when the wicked rule the people mourn.*** From Proverbs 29:2, which also states that “when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.”

10 ***honest and wise men should be sought for diligently.*** When considering people for public office and government leadership, the Lord's counsel is that first and foremost, they should be honest and wise. Though the passage says “men,” this would certainly include any women who run for office today. Once such good and wise people get in office, we should “observe to uphold” them and help them be successful in their efforts, in order to avoid evil.

Proven in all things (11-15)

11 ***forsake all evil and cleave unto all good.*** Similar to Romans 12:9, where Paul counseled, “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

11 ***live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.*** From Deuteronomy 8:3, which Jesus quoted in his confrontation with Satan in Matthew 4:4. This is our ultimate act of obedience, the surrendering of our will to live by the words of God alone.

12 ***give unto the faithful line upon line.*** D&C 93:11-14 taught how Christ progressed “grace for grace” and “grace to grace.” With Christ as our model, then, we also must learn, grow, and progress line upon line until we receive of the fullness of the Father and the Son (D&C 93:19-20).

12 ***I will try you and prove you herewith.*** As the Lord reveals his will to us for our lives, we face a test: will we obey the promptings of the Spirit to repent, change, and grow, or will we reject them and take a step backwards? Each personal revelation we receive is a test, an opportunity to prove ourselves to him and to move forward in our eternal progression. Compare 3 Nephi 26:8-11 which teaches that the Lord restricted what went in the scriptures in order to try the faith of the people before giving more.

13 ***whoso layeth down his life in my cause.*** There had been deaths among the Saints so far, but due to natural causes, not persecution or martyrdom. Those kinds of deaths would come all too soon, however, and the Lord promised “life eternal” to those who experience the ultimate trial in mortality—to have life taken away. Compare Matthew 10:39; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24.

14 ***be not afraid of your enemies.*** Because the Lord ultimately controls life and death and the blessings and punishments of eternity, there is no reason to fear what others can do. All will be made right in the end.

14 ***I will prove you in all things.*** Every choice we make in life is a chance to prove ourselves to God. There is no time when we are not accountable for being obedient to the light and truth we have. Every choice we make proves us to the Lord.

15 ***if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy.*** Those who have made sacred covenants are especially accountable for keeping their promises and obligations. In this day, the “covenant” referred to was likely consecration.

Turn hearts (16-18)

16 ***renounce war and proclaim peace.*** The voice of the Latter-day Saints should not be one to cry for war. That said, when war is required by the law of the land, Latter-day Saints do not sit on the sidelines and do nothing. Like Moroni in the book of Alma, we defend our families and lands when needed, but quickly sue for peace as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

16 ***turn the hearts of the children to their fathers.*** From Malachi 4:6, this promise was first quoted to Joseph Smith by Moroni (D&C 2:2 and Joseph Smith—History 1:39). Not until temple ordinances in Nauvoo were introduced was this tied

to doing work for the dead. Instead, here it directed them toward pursuing peace between people and families that the promises made previously would be real in their childrens' hearts.¹⁵

17 ***the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets***. Expanding the meaning of v. 16, the Lord specifically looked to the promise of the Jews embracing the gospel in the last days, as they fully embrace the words of their own and modern prophets, testifying of the Redeemer, Savior, and Lamb of God. Without this understanding of the prophets and covenants of the fathers by their descendants, the whole earth would be under a curse to the consumption of all flesh.

18 ***Let not your hearts be troubled***. Returning to the theme of “fear not” from v. 1 and v. 14 to not fear their enemies, the Lord again reassured the Saints to trust him and not trouble themselves over trials and struggles they might be facing.

18 ***in my Father's house are many mansions***. From John 14:2 and Ether 12:32, this scripture means that in the house of God in heaven, there is plenty of room for everyone that should be there. Indeed, Jesus has already “prepared a place” for the righteous that they might be with the Father and with him.

Kirtland's sins (19-22)

19 ***I, the Lord, am not well pleased with many . . . at Kirtland***. Previous revelations had called out unacceptable behavior in Missouri (especially D&C 97 received just four days previously), but these comments were directed at the Saints in and around the Kirtland area.

20 ***they do not forsake their sins***. As the revelation has taught (vv. 11-15), when we receive light, knowledge, and commandments from God, we are being tested to see how we will obey. The Lord is letting the Kirtland Saints know that they have not been living up to the light and knowledge they had so far received, with a need to forsake pride and covetousness and live by the wise words of eternal life he has given them.

21 ***chasten them and will do whatsoever I list***. Without repentance, God has no choice but to chasten his children, to give them every opportunity to repent and do his will, and no excuse that they had not been warned and guided to do the right things.

22 ***turn away all wrath and indignation***. Necessary punishments leading to course corrections could be avoided through obedience: “observe to do whatsoever I command you.”

22 ***the gates of hell shall not prevail against you***. In Matthew 16:18, Peter was told that the power of revelation that he had received about the identity of Jesus would be the foundation of the Church such that the gates of hell shall not prevail. This means that death and hell will have no power over those who keep the commandments of the Lord.

Bear afflictions with patience (23-32)

23 ***concerning your families***. This section focuses on a personal response for families and heads of households. The societal and organizational responses are in the next section.

23 ***if men will smite you***. The next set of verses talks about the Lord's expectations to physical trials and abuse. This one says that bearing a first attack with patience and without revenge will be a source of reward from the Lord. Compare Matthew 5:38-42.

24 ***meted out as a just measure against you***. If the response to the attack is not patient enduring, then in the eyes of God and likely of others, it will seem like a just attack.

25 ***smite you the second time***. The Lord's promise is also that patiently bearing a second attack without retribution or revenge will result in blessings “an hundred-fold” more than bearing a single attack with patience.

26 ***smite you the third time***. Patiently bearing a third attack results in even more blessings, symbolically stated as “doubled unto you four-fold” beyond the “hundred-fold” increase of v. 25.

27 ***three testimonies shall stand against your enemy***. Patiently suffering three attacks from an enemy is a great model of Jesus' teachings to go beyond the Mosaic “eye for an eye” (Exodus 21:24) method of retribution to a Zion-like enduring of persecution that truly demonstrates discipleship and Christ-like behavior.

¹⁵ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 713.

28 **warn him in my name.** After the third patient bearing of affliction, we should warn the enemy that the Lord will bring judgment upon him if he continues.

29 **I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands.** “Once our enemy’s malice is a matter of record, we well as the repeated nature of his attacks, then any measures we are forced to take may be understood as justifiable self-defense. Note that we are not justified in taking vengeance in such a case, for “vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19; see also D&C 98:45). Rather, we are justified by the principle of self-defense.”¹⁶

30 **if thou wilt spare him, thou shalt be rewarded.** Though a person might be justified in taking defensive action after the three attacks, showing additional patience and mercy will still be rewarded.

30 **unto the third and fourth generation.** Patiently and righteously enduring persecution can be a valuable example to children, grandchildren, and more. See also v. 46 below.

31 **if he has sought they life, and thy life is endangered.** It is one thing to have property attacked, but it is another thing entirely for life to be threatened. In that case, “thine enemy is in thine hands and thou art justified” in defending yourself against his attacks.

32 **the law I gave unto my servant Nephi, and thy fathers.** This law of patience in afflictions is not just a latter-day law like the Word of Wisdom but is something the Lord has given to “all mine ancient prophets and apostles.” It is the covenant peoples’ way of dealing with persecution and afflictions.

When to go to battle (33-38)

33 **not go out unto battle . . . save I, the Lord, commanded them.** Shifting gears from a family situation to the larger view of the covenant people overall or even society’s perspective on war, the Lord is clear that war is not justified until it is first commanded by the Lord. That means that all wars fought without permission of prophets or similarly guided spokespeople are evil and wrong.

34 **first lift the standard of peace.** When attacked or confronted with the possibility of war, we are to first apply for peace and seek a solution that doesn’t involve open conflict.

35 **neither the second nor the third time.** One attempt to settle differences peacefully is not enough; as with personal attacks, the Lord requires three attempts at a minimum to establish peace before their grievances can even be brought before the Lord.

36 **justify them in going out to battle.** Armed with three legitimate efforts to sue for peace, the appeal to the Lord is likely to result in a commandment to take up arms in self-defense. Compare Deuteronomy 20:10-12 where under the Mosaic Law (not the one being described here), they first offered a peaceful conquest of a city but if the people resisted, they were to attack, and Deuteronomy 20:16-17 where certain cities were not given the option of peaceful surrender before conquest.

37 **I, the Lord, would fight their battles.** A Zion society with full trust in the Lord would not need a normal army for self-defense. Relying on the Lord, when enemies came against Enoch’s Zion, “he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him” (Moses 7:13).

38 **this is an ensample unto all people.** “Ensample” means, of course, “example.” In other words, the principles outlined here are the Lord’s direction for dealing with national aggression and armed attacks. Imagine if the whole world followed this example and never attacked another nation. War would end in very short order!

Forgive your enemies (39-48)

39 **thine enemy . . . repent.** The sincere repentance of even an enemy who has threatened or done wrong things is to be accepted and his previous actions held “no more as a testimony against” him. This section moves us away from the corporate or national policy of dealing with aggression back to the more personal situation, as discussed in vv. 23-32.

40 **thou shalt forgive him, until seventy times seven.** Not just one, two, or three times, but using the metaphor from Matthew 18:22, forgiveness is to be sincerely given no matter how times it is sincerely sought.

¹⁶ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 3:243-244.

41 ***trespass against thee and repent not.*** Even if your enemy does not repent, the Saint is to offer forgiveness, not once or twice, but three times (vv. 42-43).

44 ***the fourth time thou shalt not forgive him.*** The Lord does not require infinite forgiveness for continued wrongdoing. On the fourth offense, the offense is to be presented to the Lord and will be there as a testimony against him “until he repent” and rewards his victim “four-fold in all things.”

45 ***thou shalt forgive him.*** Sincere repentance, even on the part of an enemy that does harm multiple times, should always be sincerely forgiven, echoing v. 40.

45 ***I, the Lord, will avenge thee.*** If the enemy does not repent, then vengeance is still in the hands of the Lord; it is not justification for us to take action against him except to appeal to the Lord for retribution.

46 ***upon his children, and upon his children’s children of all them that hate me.*** Several references to a multi-generational impact are made in this section. This follows Old Testament language and is not meant to imply a doctrine of inherited sin. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that parental sins are often sadly passed on to subsequent generations who can suffer the consequences of their parents’ bad decisions. The language here is especially instructive, however: the problem is typically among children who reject and “hate” the Lord. The impact of unrighteous parents can be minimized or even eliminated among those who love the Lord (v. 47).

48 ***their trespasses shall never be brought any more as a testimony before the Lord.*** Repentance is the great eternal equalizer, allowing personal sins not only to be forgiven but the consequences of those sins, which can last for generations, to be averted and repaired by the miraculous power of the Atonement.

Results

Three days after this revelation, Oliver Cowdery arrived in Kirtland, bearing the news of the destruction of the press and printed materials, the tarring and feathering of two brethren, and the agreement to leave the county under threat of further violence. The next day, Oliver Cowdery dictated a letter to the Saints in Missouri, and Joseph Smith added a postscript. “Brethren if I were with you I should take an active part in your sufferings & although nature shrinks yet my spirit would not let me forsake you unto death God helping me Oh be of good cheer for our redemption draweth near Oh God save my Brethren in Zion Oh brethren give up all to God forsake all for Christ sake.”¹⁷

Eight days later, on 18 August 1833, Joseph wrote more to the people in Missouri, this time in his own hand and filled with references to this revelation.¹⁸ It begins as a prayer to the Lord, praying for blessings for the suffering Saints in Missouri. He said, “give unto thy servant Joseph ~~have~~ a word that shall refresh the hearts and reviv[e] the spir[it]s yea souls <of> those afflicted ones who have been called to leave their homes and go to a strange land not knowing what should befall them behold this is like Abraham.” He pleaded, “O Lord what more dost thou require at their hands before thou wilt come and save them.” He requested, “<let> this <be> reco[r]ded in heaven for thine angels to look upon and for a testimony against all those ungodly men who have committed those ungodly deeds.”

Ending the prayer, he then wrote directly to the Missouri leaders of his love towards them. “I take the pen to address you but I know not what to—say to you . . . my heart faints within me.” He explained that since the news of the mobbings in Missouri appeared in the local press, they were feeling threatened also in Kirtland: “evevery man has to wa[t]ch their houses every night to keep off the Mob[b]ers Satan has Come down in Great wrath upon all the Church of God and the[re] is no saifty only in the arm of Jehovah.” He explained that “he that will have his robes washed in the blood of the Lamb must come up through great tribulation even the greatest of all afflictions,” but that through all that, Christ was their friend. Quoting this revelation, he faithfully declared, “I verily know that he will spedily deliver Zion for I have his immutable covenant,” while acknowledging that he didn’t know “the means how exactly the thing will be done.” He counseled patience as this revelation had done: “we must wait on God to be gracious and call on him with out ceasing to make bare his arm for our defence.” He cautioned, “we must wait patiently until the Lord come[s] and restor[es] unto us all things . . . for he will do it in his time.” He avoided condemning any person for the tragedy: “this affliction is sent upon us not for your sins but for the sins of the chิร์ch . . . we cast no reflections upon you we are of one heart and one mind on this subject.” Echoing the call of D&C 98 to leave things in the Lord’s hands, he taught, “if our kingdom were of this world then we would fight but our weapons are not carnal.” He counseled the brethren to anticipate getting government support because “as you know we are all friends to the Consitution yea true friends to that Country ~~we hea~~ for which our fathers

¹⁷ Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 10 August 1833, *JSP*, D3:243.

¹⁸ Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 18 August 1833, *JSP*, D3:258-269.

bled.” He declared, “all things shall work together for good to them who are willing to lay down their lives for Christ sake.” He concluded by saying, “we w[a]it the Comand of God to do whatever he ple[a]se and if <he> shall say go up to Zion and defend thy Brotheren by <the sword> we fly.”

It was because of the principles in D&C 98 that the Church later worked with the government to seek redress for their losses of land and personal property in Missouri. It got Joseph Smith engaged in politics, to the point that later in 1844, he ran for president of the United States. The Saints thoroughly documented the injustices inflicted on them in Missouri, bringing that to courts and government officials. It was only when they did not obey the principles in D&C 98 that they suffered greatly.

D&C 99 – John Murdock’s Next Mission

Setting

Received Wednesday, 29 August 1832, at Hiram, Ohio.

D&C 99 is out of order; chronologically it falls between sections 83 and 84. It appears to have been put out of order when Orson Pratt compiled the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, when he mistakenly put the date as August 1833. This was corrected in the 1981 edition and made more specific to 29 August in the 2013 edition.

John Murdock joined the Church in November 1830 and in the spirit of consecration, determined to devote himself to the ministry full-time. Shortly after the death of his wife, Julia, giving birth to twins that ended up in the care of Joseph and Emma Smith, he was called on a mission to Missouri (D&C 52:8). He had arranged for the care of his older three children, and preached in Michigan, Indiana, Missouri, and Ohio. He returned to Hiram, Ohio in June 1832, sick from his travels. He discovered that his young son, Joseph, had passed away, after the mobbing of Joseph and Sidney in March of that year. Those caring for his older three children were requesting compensation of some kind.

As he worked in that area and regained his health, he received this revelation from Joseph Smith, calling him to again go out preaching the gospel, now in the eastern states.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in RB2 (about 29 Aug 1832) 19-20, with another copy in RB1 (about late 1832) 148. It was published as Section 78 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and then as Section 79 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 *thou are called to go into the eastern countries.* As the Setting explains, Murdock had already traveled hundreds of miles preaching, as called to do in D&C 52:8. Now the Lord will take him in the opposite direction, to preach in Ohio, New York, and other points east.

2 *declare my word in the demonstration of my Holy Spirit.* Murdock had many experiences with the Spirit, starting with his first reading of the Book of Mormon with his wife and continuing with his baptism, confirmation, and ordination.¹⁹ See 1 Corinthians 2:4 for the same language.

3 *who receiveth you as a little child, receiveth my kingdom.* In a variation of Mark 9:37 and Luke 9:48, Murdock was to preach to the childlike, who would receive the message of the kingdom of God restored on earth. These people, like the merciful, would “obtain mercy” (compare to Matthew 5:7; 3 Nephi 12:7).

4 *whoso rejecteth you shall be rejected of my Father.* Reversing the previous two verses, the promise is that rejecting the gospel delivered by a faithful missionary will result in rejection by the Father, whose message is being taught.

4 *cleanse your feet in the secret places.* The missionaries can make a formal declaration against those who reject the message by cleaning their feet of the dust of the area. This was a practice Jesus gave to his apostles when he sent them out (Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5) and which had been taught previously in the Doctrine and Covenants (24:15; 60:15; 84:92). Doing it privately avoided creating public contention while still marking the rejection to God.

¹⁹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 364.

5 *I come quickly to judgment.* Phrases like this were interpreted by Saints in the early days of the Church as having a very immediate fulfillment. With the passage of time, we interpret “quickly” in a looser sense, ascribing that to the due time of the Lord. However, for each person who accepts or rejects the messages of the missionaries and thus become fully accountable for their choices, the judgment may come all too quickly individually.

5 *as it is written of me in the volume of the book.* The phrase in this verse being paraphrased originally comes from the apocryphal book 1 Enoch, which was quoted by Jude 1:14-15, which seems to be the “book” referred to by the Lord.

6 *until your children are provided for.* Murdock was to see first to the needs of his three children so that during his travels, they were cared for and not a financial burden to others. He was to arrange to have them “sent up kindly unto the bishop of Zion.” “Kindly” can also mean ‘properly’ or ‘appropriately.’²⁰

7 *after a few years . . . thou mayest go up also.* It was not the Lord’s will for Murdock to abandon his family and only serve him. He, too, was to make plans and arrangements to go to Missouri after his service.

8 *Otherwise thou shalt continue proclaiming my gospel until thou be taken.* Because how long he served as a missionary was left up to him (v. 7), Murdock’s choice was to go to Zion or keep preaching until he died serving the Lord.

Results

John Murdock did arrange good care for his children and provided for them financially, as the revelation commanded. He arranged for the three to be taken to Missouri, expecting to join them there after his mission.²¹ He left on his mission on 24 Sep 1832. During that mission, he had a vision of the Savior. He served another mission in 1833-1834, then went to Missouri with Zion’s Camp and stayed, taking care of his children again. He was driven from his home in Missouri, served as a bishop and member of a stake presidency in Nauvoo, and joined the exodus to Utah, after which he served a two-year mission to Australia. He was then called as a patriarch, in which calling he served until his death in 1871.²²

D&C 100 – Preaching in Canada

Setting

Received Saturday, 12 October 1833, Perrysburg, NY, at the home of Freeman and Huldah Nickerson.

Missionary work had been successful in northwestern New York, even after the mass departure of members there for Ohio in 1831. There were a number of branches established, some with a hundred members. In 1833, both David Patten and Amasa Lyman had enjoyed good success, baptizing about one hundred and eighty people between them.

One of the recent converts had been Freeman Nickerson of Perrysburg, New York. His son, Moses Nickerson, visited his parents in June 1833 and heard the message of the restored gospel. He returned home to Mount Pleasant, Upper Canada (near what is now Hamilton, Ontario; see Image #1), requesting that missionaries be sent his way.

Freeman Nickerson and his wife, Huldah, made a trip to Kirtland, Ohio, in September 1833, asking for Joseph and Sidney to accompany them to Canada for that purpose. The group left on 5 October 1833. They also had requests from two others, one Joseph Smith’s uncle, John, to visit people in that same area, making it a trip of great opportunity.

The group arrived in Perrysburg at the Nickerson home on 12 October. Joseph wrote in his diary that he had much anxiety about his family, probably due to the threats from Doctor Philastas Hurlbut. D&C 100 was received that day as a result of his query about his family. However, most of the revelation pertained to their mission and current Church events.²³

²⁰ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 720.

²¹ He paid Caleb Baldwin to take his three oldest to Missouri. Once there, Orrice (7) lived with George and Amanda Egglestone Pitkin, John (6) with Morris and Laura Clark Phelps, and Phebe (4) with Sidney Gilbert and his wife Elizabeth. Julia, the only remaining young twin, stayed with Emma and Joseph Smith the rest of her life; see *JSP*, D3:273; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 720-721.

²² Black, *Who’s Who*, 201-204; *JSP*, D3:273; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 3:248; Harper, *Making Sense*, 365-366.

²³ Revelation, 12 October 1833 [D&C 100], *JSP*, D3:320-323.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy in NKW (12 Oct 1833) with another copy in RB2 (not before 4 Nov 1833) 71-72. It was published as Section 94 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and as Section 95 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Preach by the Spirit (1-8)
- Sidney's and Joseph's roles (9-12)
- Zion shall be redeemed (13-17)

Preach by the Spirit (1-8)

1 ***your families are well.*** Today we take it for granted that we can readily communicate with our families, almost no matter where we are in the world. How comforting it must have been to the brethren to know from the Lord their families were well at home while they were engaged in the Lord's service a week's travel away.

2 ***follow me, and listen to the counsel.*** Moving quickly away from the subject that was apparently most on the Prophet's mind, the revelation was the word of the Lord to help them be successful in their mission.

3 ***I have much people in this place.*** Northwestern New York had been a productive missionary location but there were still many more to be converted, both there and in the (Canadian) "regions round about."

3 ***an effectual door shall be opened.*** From 1 Corinthians 16:9, where Paul wrote about "a great door and effectual" being opened to him, for missionary success as well as adversaries. The word translated "effectual" can mean 'active' or 'powerful.' This is the first time this phrase is used in the Doctrine and Covenants.

4 ***suffered you to come unto this place.*** Since no specific revelation was recorded commanding them to take this journey, it would seem that they did it of their own initiative, at the request of Freeman Nickerson. Here the Lord indicates that he allowed that to happen, knowing the good their efforts would bring about.

5 ***speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts.*** It would be difficult to find anyone more prepared for such a mission as Joseph and Sidney. Not only had Joseph had visions and manifestations from multiple heavenly beings and messengers, translated the Book of Mormon, received many revelations, and presided over the Church he organized, but he and Sidney (and Frederick Williams) had spent the previous three years translating the entire Bible, making them deeply immersed in Biblical doctrine and language. The Lord had a lot to work with in these two men. It was a great promise that they could speak extemporaneously and would "not be confounded before men." See also D&C 84:85.

6 ***it shall be given you in the very hour.*** See Matthew 10:19 where Jesus' disciples were given a similar promise. This promise is not an excuse to show up for a Sacrament meeting talk or Sunday lesson unprepared, expecting the Spirit will tell you what to say at the last minute. People given this promise have years of preparation and material stored up that the Lord can work with.

7 ***declare in my name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness.*** The brethren were to declare the source of their inspiration in solemnness and humility, taking no credit themselves for any of it.

8 ***the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record.*** As they relied on the Spirit, giving credit to God and keeping a truly humble heart, their efforts would be blessed with an outpouring of the Spirit to those listening to their words, so they might know for themselves the truth.

Sidney and Joseph's roles (9-12)

9 ***Sidney, should be a spokesman unto this people.*** Shortly after his baptism, Sidney Rigdon had journeyed from Ohio to New York to meet Joseph Smith. The Lord had revealed at that time that he would be a scribe for Joseph, and "inasmuch as ye do not write, behold, it shall be given unto him to prophesy; and thou shalt preach my gospel and call on the holy prophets to prove his words, as they shall be given him" (D&C 35:23). That commandment was now expanded for Sidney to be a spokesman, like Aaron was for Moses (Exodus 4:14-16; also 2 Nephi 3:17-18; v. 11). Sidney had experience as a preacher and was very knowledgeable about the Bible and Christian doctrine. He was well-known as a strong orator.

10 *give unto him power to be mighty in testimony*. Sidney and Joseph would support each other, with Sidney delivering the powerful sermons and Joseph the powerful testimony. No one could tell the story of the Restoration better!

11 *he shall be a revelator unto thee*. Continuing with Joseph's role, he was still the one receiving God's word for their partnership, so that Sidney could "know the certainty of all things" pertaining to the kingdom of God.

12 *continue your journey and let your hearts rejoice*. The plan was to go up into Canada and meet with Freeman Nickerson's sons. The Lord counsels them to continue with that plan, with rejoicing and faith, and promises to be with them.

Zion shall be redeemed (13-17)

13 *a word concerning Zion*. Recent events in Missouri weighed heavily on Joseph Smith, as his letters portray (see Results in D&C 98 above). Though it may not have been part of his immediate prayer that precipitated this revelation, it was constantly on his mind. Knowing that, the Lord gave him comfort and counsel.

13 *Zion shall be redeemed, although she is chastened*. The promise was sure and still is today, though the chastening surely went on longer than Joseph Smith anticipated, later involving him very directly.

14 *Orson Hyde and John Gould*. These two men had been sent to Missouri after learning of the events there from Oliver Cowdery, to assess the situation and provide whatever help they could. They left Ohio on 4 September and arrived at the end of the month.²⁴ The Prophet had likely not heard anything back from them yet and was concerned for their welfare as well. The Lord reassured him of their safety, "inasmuch as they keep my commandments."

15 *all things shall work together for good to them that walk uprightly*. Compare Romans 8:28 and D&C 90:24, from which this is a near quote. This sentiment is famously echoed in Joseph's own letter from Liberty Jail later (D&C 122:7).

16 *I will raise up unto myself a pure people*. D&C 43:14 spoke of the Lord reserving unto himself a "pure people." This reflects Moses' words that the Lord would establish a "holy people unto himself" (Deuteronomy 28:9).

17 *all that call upon the name of the Lord*. Calling for the Lord's help in their lives through ardent prayer and keeping his commandments leads to the promise of being "saved" by God. This phrase is unique to this section in the Doctrine and Covenants. Compare Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13; Alma 9:17.

Results

Encouraged by the revelation, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon left Perrysburg, New York, went through nearby Lodi, then proceeded north and west to cross the Niagara River into Upper Canada (modern Ontario). By 18 October they reached the homes of Freeman Nickerson's sons, Eleazar and Moses. On Sunday, 20 October, they preached in nearby Brantford and then later that day at Mount Pleasant. During the next week, they baptized and confirmed fourteen, including the Nickerson sons and Lydia Bailey, the future wife of Newel Knight. Eleazar was ordained and elder and likely left in charge of the small branch.

Joseph and Sidney returned home to Kirtland, arriving 4 November, finding "all well according to the promise of the Lord." Meanwhile in Mount Pleasant, twenty more people were baptized before the end of the year, establishing a solid presence for the Church of Christ in Canada.²⁵

Later, other missionaries, such as Parley P. Pratt, will return to this area of Canada and convert hundreds, including John Taylor, the third president of the Church, and Mary Fielding, future wife of Hyrum Smith and mother of President Joseph F. Smith. Such was the power of the "effectual door" opened by the labors of these men in late 1833.

²⁴ JSP, D3:260.

²⁵ Revelation, 12 October 1833 [D&C 100], JSP, D3:323-324.

Images



Image #1: Proselytizing mission, October-November 1833 (D&C 100). Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon traveled with Freeman Nickerson to Mount Pleasant, Upper Canada, to proselytize Nickerson's relatives, preaching in western New York along the way. From Joseph Smith Papers project.

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