

# D&C 47-52

Lesson 10, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 21 Nov 2016

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## General Introduction

In March 1831, with Joseph Smith's arrival in Ohio the previous month and the Law (D&C 42) received, other matters came to the Prophet's attention. First was the need to replace the long-absent Oliver Cowdery as Church Historian. John Whitmer, who had been acting as one of Joseph Smith's scribes for several months, received that call (D&C 47). There were also preparations to be made ahead of the arrival of the New York Saints who were all coming to Ohio in the spring (D&C 48). Another was the need to clarify some important doctrines relative to the nearby Shakers, one of whom had joined the Church after the first preaching to their group by Oliver Cowdery and the others the previous fall (D&C 49).

Though previous revelations had attempted to deal with some of the spiritual exhibitions taking place among the converted Ohio Saints, a stronger and more direct one was needed to differentiate between false and true manifestations of the Spirit (D&C 50). Then as the New York Saints began to arrive in groups, Bishop Partridge requested help knowing how best to get them settled (D&C 51). Of course, even with a commandment, not all converts were ready to full consecrate their property, and the Colesville Saints led by the Knight family ended up going to Missouri instead of settling in Ohio. Finally, it also became time to send a large number of missionaries to Missouri and for the Lord to reveal the location of the center place of Zion there, so teams of missionaries set out, ready to hold the next Church conference in Missouri (D&C 52). If the mission to the Lamanites planted the Missouri seed, the pairs of elders heading to Missouri in the summer of 1831 was the confirmation that the area was going to play a huge role in early Church history, for better or for worse.

### Summary Chronology

- **Tue, 8 Mar 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 46 and 47. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon began the translation of the New Testament, with this date at the top of the first manuscript page. John Whitmer also began copying the first Old Testament manuscript as commanded in D&C 47, completing that work on 5 April 1831 (through Gen. 24:42a, which is as far as the Old Testament had been translated).
- **Thu, 10 Mar 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 48.
- **Thu, 7 Apr 1831** – The translation of the New Testament had proceeded to Matthew 9:2, according to this date on the New Testament manuscript. John Whitmer was also making a copy of the New Testament manuscript, keeping pace with the translation. On this day also, Martin Harris finally sold 151 acres of his farm for \$3,000 to cover the cost of printing the Book of Mormon.
- **Fri, 8 Apr 1831** – Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter from Missouri to the Church in Ohio, outlining the challenges of their mission in Missouri and hoping Parley P. Pratt was coming soon with permission to preach the native Americans.
- **Sat, 30 Apr 1831** – Emma Smith gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl, who lived about three hours. Family records later called them Thadeus and Louisa. Either on this day or shortly thereafter, the Murdock twins were given to Emma to care for, after the death of their mother.
- **Sat, 7 May 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 49, causing some brethren to depart for the Shaker mission. Also on this day, Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter to Joseph Smith and the other brethren in Ohio about their work and trials in Missouri.
- **Sun, 8 May 1831** – Leman Copley, Sidney Rigdon, and Parley Pratt visit the Shakers and were given permission to read D&C 49 to them. However, no further interest in conversation ensued, and they left and went back to Kirtland in time to be present for the reception of D&C 50.
- **Mon, 9 May 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 50. Also on this day, Joseph and Emma officially adopted the John Murdock twins after his wife, Julia, died in childbirth, the same day Emma gave birth to their twins. They named them Joseph and Julia.
- **Sat, 14 May 1831** – The Colesville Branch, including Joseph Smith, Sr., Lucy Smith, and Porter Rockwell, arrived in Ohio. D&C 51 was received about a week later in their behalf.
- **Fri, 20 May 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 51.
- **Fri-Mon, 3-6 Jun 1831** – The first Church conference in Kirtland was held, during which a number of

men were called on missions and several were “ordained to the High Priesthood” [office of high priest].

- **Fri, 3 Jun 1831** – Joseph Smith saw God the Father and Jesus Christ on the first day of the conference.

- **Mon, 6 Jun 1831** – On the last day of the conference, Joseph Smith received D&C 52.
- **Sun, 19 Jun 1831** – Joseph Smith, Sidney Gilbert, Martin Harris, Edward Partridge, William W. Phelps, and Sidney Rigdon all departed for Missouri.

## D&C 47 – John Whitmer as Church Historian

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### Date and Location

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Tuesday, 8 March 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

### Setting

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The Lord had asked the Church to keep a history (D&C 21:1). At first, Oliver Cowdery had done that by keeping Church meeting minutes and writing down the revelations Joseph received, but when he went on his mission to Missouri, there needed to be another. John Whitmer did many scribal duties in late 1830 and early 1831. In his history, John Whitmer described what happened: “I was appointed by the voice of the Elders to keep the Church record. Joseph Smith Jr. said unto me you must also keep the Church history. I would rather not do it but observed that the will of the Lord be done, and if he desires it, I desire that he would manifest it through Joseph the Seer. And thus came the word of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> The result is D&C 47, received on 8 Mar 1831, the same day as D&C 46, and the same day Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon started working on the translation of the New Testament.

### Documents and Publication

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Oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1. It was first published as Chapter 50 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and as Section 63 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

### Commentary

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**1 *write and keep a regular history***. John Whitmer’s history is generally not as detailed or consistent as Oliver Cowdery’s. Much like many of us with our personal journals, Whitmer was not very consistent in keeping the history, which is perhaps why the Lord, knowing John, counseled him to keep a “regular history.” But Whitmer’s history is, in some cases, the best source of information about events during that period.

**1 *transcribing all things which shall be given you***. John Whitmer made copies of Joseph Smith’s revelations and

translations, which is probably his most significant contribution, and his copies of the early revelations are often the oldest or even only manuscript copies still in existence.

**1 *until he is called to further duties***. Perhaps Whitmer expected this was only temporary, as it was with Oliver Cowdery, who was called on a mission. But though Whitmer served in other Church capacities, he maintained his position as Church historian until he left the Church in 1838.

**2 *lift up his voice in meetings***. Having served as a clerk for several years, I know how easy it is for a recorder of events to sit quietly doing that role and be an observer only. The Lord counseled Whitmer to also participate in meetings and offer counsel and perspective.

**3 *keep the church record and history continually***. Reiterating the command in v. 1, Whitmer was counseled to write “continually” so that the Church’s records had no gaps or missed significant events and details. This also expanded his role from historian to record keeper, meaning membership, ordinations, and other related information.

**3 *Oliver Cowdery I have appointed to another office***. Oliver was the “second elder” (D&C 20:3), the leader of the mission to Ohio and Missouri, and would later help with printing scriptures and newspapers and many other efforts.

**4 *inasmuch as he is faithful***. John Whitmer was not always faithful, and in the end, left the Church. The blessings he received from this calling left with him.

**4 *by the Comforter, to write these things***. Writing for the Lord is not just writing your own thoughts and observations, but writing by inspiration, so the Spirit directs what should be recorded for posterity.

### Results

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John Whitmer had a strong testimony of Joseph Smith as a prophet. When Joseph the man asked him to be the historian, he was inclined to say no. But when Joseph the Seer had a revelation with the same request, Whitmer accepted without hesitation.

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<sup>1</sup> JSP, H2:36.

John Whitmer was sustained and ordained (set apart) as Church Historian about a month after this revelation, on 9 April 1831. His history began on 12 June 1831, and continued until he left the Church in 1838. He called it “The Book of John Whitmer,” following the pattern in the Book of Mormon. He also served during this time as a scribe and copyist (creating ‘backup’ manuscripts of revelations and translations) for the Prophet, kept more extensive meeting minutes than before, and he created Revelation Book 1 with copies of most of Joseph Smith’s revelations.<sup>2</sup>

Sadly, after his excommunication in 1838, Whitmer refused to give his history to the Church. It eventually ended up with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ). It was published in the past but was out of print for many years. Fortunately, today it is included in the Joseph Smith Papers project so anyone can read it.<sup>3</sup>

## D&C 48 – Getting Ready for New York Saints

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### Date and Location

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Thursday, 10 March 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

### Setting

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Two things were happening at the same time in March 1831: first, the New York Saints were on their way to Ohio (per D&C 37). Second, the Lord was preparing the Church to look toward Missouri and the land of Zion there (e.g., D&C 28:9). Bishop Edward Partridge was responsible to help the migrating New Yorkers find places to live. Should land be purchased? Was the gathering to Ohio just temporary or would people be established here? Where would the money come from to pay for it all?

Partridge was anxious for answers as some New York Saints began to arrive. Martin Harris had been called to help with the effort in a letter date 22 February 1831, but had not yet arrived, adding to the Bishop’s anxiety. Edward Partridge took his questions to Joseph Smith, who inquired of the Lord and received D&C 48 in response on 10 March 1831.<sup>4</sup>

### Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is found in Revelation Book 1. It was first published as Chapter 51 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and as Section 64 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

### Commentary

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**1 *ye should remain...in your places of abode.*** It wasn’t yet time to move to Missouri or any other place. At this time, the gathering place was Ohio and the Saints there should maintain their homes and businesses.

**1 *for the present time.*** The time had not yet come to leave Kirtland. In fact, while many will go to Missouri in 1831 and beyond, many will stay in Kirtland until the late 1830s. This phrase is used several times in this revelation, emphasizing the temporary nature of the instruction.

**2 *impart to the eastern brethren.*** Many of the Ohio Church members were already a bit land-poor, and others were coming having sold their properties at a loss, so the command for the Ohio Saints to share what they had was truly a call to generosity.

**3 *let them buy for the present time.*** The “them” referred to here are the New York immigrants. Since there wasn’t enough Ohio land owned by Saints to let all the new arrivals have a useful share, they were also to use the funds brought with them from New York to purchase additional lands.

**4 *save all the money that ye can.*** Saving for righteous purposes is not contrary to consecration. In fact, it sustains it. Through their righteous efforts, the Saints were to obtain and save as much as they could for the cause of purchasing lands later in “the city,” meaning Zion.

**5 *not yet to be revealed.*** They knew the general area from previous revelations but not the specific place. That will be revealed after the New York Saints arrived and “certain men [are] appointed” to “know the place.”

**6 *according to his family, according to his circumstances.*** The gathering to Zion or New Jerusalem was not to be a panic or a mad rush but was to be done in order, as directed by priesthood leaders and as each family’s circumstances allowed.

**6 *appointed to him by the presidency and the bishop.*** The original revelation read “appointed to him by the bishop and the elders of the church,” which matches the form of Church government in place in 1831. Later, when the First

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<sup>2</sup> JSP, D1:285.

<sup>3</sup> JSP, H2:2-110.

<sup>4</sup> JSP, D1:286-287.

Presidency was organized, this revelation was edited to reflect that presidency making the decisions.

## Results

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Armed with this basic but helpful information, Bishop Partridge and the Ohio Saints were ready to deal with up to two hundred people coming from New York in the next few weeks. Those who had land freely shared, and Saints coming from New York with sufficient funds did purchase some land in Ohio. Others were directed to go straight to

Missouri and get the settlements started there, such as the Colesville Saints, who gave up much to gather to Ohio and thus did not have sufficient to purchase more lands. When they arrived in Ohio and had trouble finding a place for them to settle as a group, they instead continued on to Missouri, following instruction from Church leaders.

D&C 48 answered questions about and clarified D&C 42, the Law of consecration. It asked Saints to work hard, save money for righteous purposes, and help each other. What mattered most was their desires.<sup>5</sup>

# D&C 49 – Mission to the Shakers

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## Date and Location

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Saturday, 7 May 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

## Setting

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Leman Copley, a convert of the Church from Thompson, Ohio, came to see Joseph Smith with several questions. He had been baptized but not yet ordained, and wanted missionaries to go back and teach his former church members.

Copley had previously joined the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, otherwise known as the Millennial Church, the Shaking Quakers, or just the Shakers. The church had started in England when French Protestants called Camisards joined with British Quakers. One of the group, a young woman named Ann Lee, believed she received revelation to lead the group. She took many of them to America, ending up in a town near Albany, New York. They rode the wave of the spiritual awakenings that also brought many to the Church in those days, filling the Shakers' ranks. They received the nickname Shakers because they often shook, trembled, and danced in their meetings.

The Shakers' leader in America, Ann Lee (or Ann Stanley, her married name) became known as a person of great piety, and eventually they considered her the Messiah. They developed the idea that the Messiah came first in the form of a man, then secondly as a woman—Ann Lee or Mother Ann—and thus the Second Coming had already occurred. They taught celibacy as the higher law, were pacifists, believed wealth was a sin, lived a communal lifestyle, rejected ordinances like baptism, denied the atonement, and avoided meat, especially pork. They believed in God as both eternal Father and Mother.

Leman Copley had been part of the Shaker group in Ohio in North Union (today called Shaker Heights, part of

Cleveland) but had left because over celibacy. He not only wanted someone to preach to his old friends, but wanted to understand how Shaker doctrines fit in with the restored gospel. He believed that some Shaker doctrines were still true after joining the Church, and wanted the Lord to direct him in this thinking.

The first contact with the local Shakers had been when Oliver Cowdery was in Kirtland in the fall of 1830. He had preached to them and left a Book of Mormon, and their leader, Ashbel Kitchell didn't know what to make of it all. But they continued trade with the Mormons in Kirtland through the spring of 1831. This interchange may have led to Copley's conversion in early March 1831.<sup>6</sup>

Previously dated "March 1831," evidence from the Joseph Smith Papers project shows that the correct date is 7 May 1831, the same day Leman, Sidney Rigdon, and Parley P. Pratt left to meet the Shakers.

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1, which was probably recorded almost the same day it was received. It was first published as in *The Evening and the Morning Star* (Nov. 1832), then as Chapter 52 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and Section 65 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

## Outline

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- The time of the Second Coming unknown (1-7)
- Repent and obey (8-14)
- Various Shaker practices corrected (15-23)
- Zion shall flourish (24-25)
- Support to the missionaries (26-28)

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<sup>5</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 165.

<sup>6</sup> *JSP*, D1:297-298; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:90-91.

## Commentary

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### The time of the Second Coming unknown (1-7)

**1 *preach my gospel...unto the Shakers.*** Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, and convert from the Shaker faith Leman Copley were all commanded to go teach the local Shaker group a few miles from Kirtland. This revelation was given on Saturday morning, and by that evening they were with the Shakers teaching. They stayed the night and preached to the group on Sunday, then returned to Kirtland in time for Parley P. Pratt to be present with the Prophet when D&C 50 was received on Monday, 9 May 1831.

**2 *they are not right before me.*** The Shaker doctrines contained some truth, and the Lord acknowledged their desire for truth, but still called them to repent. Their practices about celibacy alone would be sufficient to warrant this condemnation.

**4 *reason with them...according to that which shall be taught him by you.*** Leman was a good door-opener on this mission, but the preaching was to be left to Sidney and Parley, who had proved their faithfulness. When Leman did teach, it was to be according to the doctrines Sidney and Parley taught him, not based on his knowledge of Shaker beliefs and practices. The goal here was full repentance and right practice before the Lord, not a compromised middle ground, which is what Copley evidently was striving for. Unless Copley did things this way, the Lord warned “he shall not prosper.”

**5 *sent mine Only Begotten Son.*** This is a strong affirmation of the redemption wrought by Christ, contrary to Shaker beliefs, and that those that don’t receive Christ as Redeemer “shall be damned.” There are only two places in the Doctrine and Covenants where the Father’s own voice declared that Jesus is “mine Only Begotten Son,” here and D&C 124:123.

**6 *the Son of Man...reigneth in the heavens.*** Christ is not a woman on the earth (also v. 22, even more explicitly), but a glorified man and God, reigning on the right hand of the Father.

**7 *the hour and the day no man knoweth.*** The day of the Second Coming was not yet and was, in fact, not known to anyone on earth, or the angels—indeed they would not know “until he comes.”

### Repent and obey (8-14)

**8 *holy men that ye know not of.*** In the translation of the Bible, Joseph and Sidney had learned about people being translated—the city of Enoch or Zion, and some of Melchizedek’s people. These people were reserved to come back to the earth in the last days (see the JST Appendix in the Bible, Genesis 14 entry).

**9 *sent unto you mine everlasting covenant.*** God has always interacted with his children on earth through covenants, as Joseph learned in the translation of the Bible—starting with Adam and moving forward through successive dispensations. Now again the covenants were being made known to man for their own salvation.

**10 *the nations of the earth shall bow to it.*** When Jesus comes again in power and glory, all will be compelled to recognize him and bow down, and the things that are “now exalted” will be “laid low.”

**11 *say unto them.*** Verses 12-25 were the message that the missionaries were to deliver to the Shakers.

**11 *mine apostle of old, whose name was Peter.*** Verses 12-14 are an expansion or alternate version of Peter’s message to the Jews in Acts 2:38. You might think this would end up in Acts 2 in the New Translation, but this verse in the JST is unchanged, perhaps reflecting the specific interpretation for the Shakers (similar words marked with italics).

Acts 2:38 Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

D&C 49:12-14 Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus, who was on the earth, and is to come, the beginning and the end; *Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*, according to the holy commandment, *for the remission of sins*; And whoso doeth this *shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*, by the laying on of the hands of the elders of the church.

**13 *Repent and be baptized.*** Shakers did not believe in baptism, so this ‘standard’ call is especially applicable to them, as the Lord reminds them that this is a “holy commandment.” Evoking Peter’s name drove home the point that the New Testament’s chief apostle clearly taught the need for these things.

### Various Shaker practices corrected (15-23)

**15 *whose forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God.*** Getting to the heart of a critical Shaker doctrine, the Lord confirmed that marriage is part of his plan. Note that this was received long before the concept of eternal marriage was understood in the Church, indicating that any marriage relationship “ordained of God.”

**16 *that the earth might answer the end of its creation.*** Marriage is the divinely ordained means of bringing children into the world, which perpetuation of the species—and their eventual exaltation—is how the earth itself answers for its own creation.

**17 *according to his creation before the world was made.*** This is the first scripture in the Doctrine & Covenants to mention the pre-existence of man, though the Prophet had encountered other scriptures in the record of Enoch in the

New Translation that discuss the concept (e.g., Moses 6:51).

18 *who forbiddeth to abstain from meats...is not ordained of God*. The double negative sounds a little odd today, but the idea is that those who forbid the eating of meat are not of God, confronting another Shaker doctrine. Beasts and fowls are “ordained for the use of man” (v. 19), using similar language to that which shall be used later in D&C 89:12.

20 *not given that one man should possess that which is above another*. God does bless some with more than others, but under his perfect law, that would be shared with others who have less, so that no one is poor, hungry, and lacking. Both the rich and the poor suffer in a system where inequality is the rule.

21 *wasteth flesh and hath no need*. Killing for the sake of doing it was condemned, similar to a JST change encountered a few months earlier in Genesis 9 (see footnote “a” for this verse).

22 *not in the form of a woman*. Ann Lee was not the female form of the Messiah.

23 *be not deceived*. The Lord declared that they have been deceived—the Second Coming had not happened but is coming after several signs, outlined in this and the next few verses.

23 *the heavens to be shaken, and the earth to tremble*. One of the signs preceding the Second Coming is the shaking of the heavens and the earth that results in valleys being raised, mountains being lowered, and rough places being made smooth.

## Zion shall flourish (24-28)

24 *Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness*. Jacob or Israel flourishes in two wildernesses—the restored nation of Israel and the latter-day Israel in its various wildernesses—Missouri, Illinois, and Utah, as three examples.

24 *Lamanites shall blossom as the rose*. The phrase comes from Isaiah 35:1 and this is the only reference applying it to the Lamanites. This is especially interesting to present to the Shakers, for while they had been given one or copies of the Book of Mormon by previous missionaries, it would be surprising if they were conversant with the term “Lamanites.” Perhaps the declaration was intended to provoke questions and a conversation about the Book of Mormon.

25 *Zion shall flourish upon the hills...rejoice upon the mountains*. This great piece of Isaiah-like Hebrew poetry ties the growth of Zion to temples using the Old Testament symbolism of mountains and hills as places of worship.

## Support to the missionaries (26-28)

26 *go forth as I have commanded you*. The missionaries were to go to the Shakers, as the Lord had instructed.

26 *ask and ye shall receive*. A common scriptural phrase (from 3 Nephi 27:29, for example), this was still timely for the brethren who were being sent and needed help from the Lord.

27 *I will go before you and be your rearward*. This is the only Doctrine and Covenants use of this phrase, that comes from Isaiah 52:12, 58:8, 3 Nephi 20:42 and 21:29.

28 *I am Jesus Christ, and I come quickly*. The final phrase gets to the heart of the Shaker confusion—Christ was the Messiah and no one else, and he had not come but would do so quickly, and they must all be prepared.

## Results

This revelation taught the Shakers that Jesus Christ was the only Messiah, that marriage and family were divine institutions, not to be discarded but essential to God’s plan, and they needed to be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by authorized servants of the Lord. It did affirm some of their beliefs, such as the importance of equality and wasting of animal life. But even in both of these areas, they went beyond the mark and needed their practices reigned in to match the Lord’s expectations for us all.

Leman Copley did go with Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt to preach to his former friends, the Shakers, at their local gathering place in North Union, Ohio, about eighteen miles from Kirtland. Copley and Rigdon arrived Saturday night with Parley joining them Sunday morning. Their two-day mission was not successful, though they were allowed to preach to the group and Sidney Rigdon read D&C 49 to them. Ashbel Kitchell, the Shaker leader, stood and said, “The Christ that dictated that [D&C 49] I was well acquainted with, and had been from a boy, that I had been much troubled to get rid of his influence, and I wished to have nothing more to do with him.” He released the missionaries from any responsibility for preaching, “and take all the responsibility on myself.” Sidney asked the people if they agreed, and they support Kitchell’s position, which Sidney sadly accepted.<sup>7</sup>

Seeing they rejected the message, Parley Pratt rose and shook the dust from the tails of his jacket as a testimony against them, which angered the Shaker leader, who called Pratt a “filthy Beast.” He also called Leman Copley a hypocrite, and directed his people to go home.<sup>8</sup> Parley left immediately, Sidney stayed for dinner, and Leman spent the night.

<sup>7</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 170-171.

<sup>8</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 170-171; also *JSP*, D1:298-299.

The experience dampened Copley's testimony, and the next month (June 1831), he broke his promise to let the Colesville Saints settle on his 759-acre farm in Thompson. Working with Ashbel Kitchell, he had the New York members evicted from his property. After that, he was in and

out of the Church for several years, sometimes even working against Joseph Smith and testifying against him in court, then seeking forgiveness and coming back. In the end, he left it when the Saints moved to Missouri, remaining in Ohio the rest of his life and joining a couple of break-off churches from the Kirtland apostasy period.<sup>9</sup>

## D&C 50 – False Spirits and True Prayer

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### Date and Location

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Monday, 9 May 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

### Setting

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After the four missionaries to the Lamanites came to Kirtland in November 1830, they baptized over 100 people. But their mission wasn't to Kirtland, and they soon continued on, leaving the new church in the care of Sidney Rigdon. But he took Edward Partridge and went to New York to meet Joseph Smith, leaving the Ohio members weak and vulnerable. Satan took full advantage of their situation, convincing them to do many false practices, such as crawling on the floor like a snake, acting like a baboon, swooning, fainting, and more.<sup>10</sup>

John Whitmer was very concerned when he arrived in January as temporary leader, and Parley Pratt was likewise concerned when he returned to the area in the spring of 1831 after his mission to Missouri. He, John Murdock, and several other elders approached the prophet the day after Parley had returned from his short mission to the Shakers (on Monday, 9 May 1831), asking for guidance. They did not want to "err in judgment concerning these spiritual phenomena."<sup>11</sup> D&C 50 was the result, given in their presence while they watched Joseph slowly dictate one sentence at a time as the scribe wrote in longhand.<sup>12</sup>

### Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1. It was first published in *The Evening and Morning Star* (August 1832), then as Chapter 53 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and as Section 17 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

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<sup>9</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 67-69.

<sup>10</sup> John Whitmer described them as having visions they could not explain, pretending to wield the sword of Laban or scalp others like an Indian, sliding on the floor, imaging they were sailing like a Lamanite, and "many other vain and foolish manoeuvres that are unseemingly, and unprofitable to mention" (*JSP*, H2:38). Others said they ran through the wood, then climbed on a stump and

### Outline

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- False spirits and hypocrites (1-9)
- Preaching and hearing by the Spirit (10-22)
- Truth edifies and prayers are answered (23-36)
- The good shepherd and stone of Israel (37-46)

### Commentary

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#### False spirits and hypocrites (1-9)

1 ***attend to the words of wisdom which shall be given.*** Not a reference to D&C 89 but to the general idea of "words of wisdom" from God; compare 1 Corinthians 12:8 and Moroni 10:9 where the word of wisdom is a gift from God.

1 ***spirits which have gone abroad in the earth.*** This unique phrase to all of scripture references the variety of spiritual manifestations the Kirtland Saints were experiencing.

2 ***false spirits.*** There are manifestations of the Spirit that bless the lives of the followers of Christ. There are also spirits that are counterfeits that attempt to damage the righteous by imitating the true Spirit in some way, but which are "deceiving the world."

3 ***Satan hath sought to deceive you.*** Lucifer knows the damage the Church will do to his plan. Even at this young age, it is having an impact. He was striving to shut it down and strip its power in the beginning before it could become a voice to the world. Clearly he did not succeed collectively, though he sadly was successful with some individually and continues to be today.

4 ***abominations in the church.*** That might seem like a harsh word to use, but it means something intensely disliked, a shameful action or habit. The evil influence allowed into the lives of some of the members would profane

preached to imaginary audiences, or ran to the river and made as if they were baptizing someone, though no one was there (*JSP*, D1:305).

<sup>11</sup> From *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, quoted in Harper, *Making Sense*, 175.

<sup>12</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 172-174; also Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:101-102.

the Church, cause divisions and strife, and bring misery to many, making it an abomination to the Lord.

**5 *blessed are they who are faithful and endure.*** Those who through their faith are able to combat Satan’s lies and forces, and keep doing that all through their lives, will be blessed with “eternal life.”

**6 *who unto them that are deceivers and hypocrites.*** On the flip side, those who work with Satan to promote his lies and hypocrisy will be brought to judgment. It’s important to see that in the Lord’s economy, the opposite of “faithful” is not “sinner” but “deceiver,” demonstrating that those who sin but sincerely want to change and improve always can, which those who intentionally do wrong are at the greatest risk.

**7 *there are hypocrites among you.*** Some are simply deceived by Satan, but others are sinning with ulterior motives, knowing full well that their behavior is deceptive and destructive. The deceived will be “reclaimed” but the deceivers will be “cut off, either in life or in death” (v. 8).

**8 *who unto them who are cut off from my church.*** As an example of intentional hypocrisy, those who commit sins and have no contrition will be cut off or excommunicated from the Church, thus being “overcome of the world.”

**9 *let every man beware.*** We need to carefully check our actions and thoughts against the Lord’s standards—scriptures, prophets, the Holy Ghost—lest we end up on the wrong side of “truth and righteousness.”

## Preaching and hearing by the Spirit (10-22)

**12 *reason with you that you may understand.*** The Lord spoke plainly and directly, as one man with another, that all may understand his words. Compare Isaiah 1:18a.

**13 *unto what were ye ordained?*** The Lord had stated just two days previously two examples of teachings that were not “ordained of God” (D&C 49:15, 18). Now he posed the question—what is the purpose of their ordination as elders of the Church? Why has the Lord shared his priesthood authority in the first place? V. 14 is the answer.

**14 *To preach my gospel by the Spirit.*** The ultimate purpose of priesthood is summarized here. We are not to receive false spirits (v. 15) but only the true Spirit that brings comfort and truth.

**15 *in this are ye justified?*** The Lord posed a thoughtful and probing question: were the Saints in Ohio, who had seen these spiritual manifestations and deemed them to be from God, justified in believing that? Was there any basis for their conclusion? The answer was in the very question: these “spirits which ye could not understand” could not be from God because his Spirit brings peace, knowledge, understanding, and joy, not confusion or puzzlement.

**16 *ye shall answer this questions yourselves.*** Rather than giving the answer straight out, the Lord will teach them some principles and let them draw their own conclusions.

**17 *doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?*** Those receiving this revelation were called by God to preach the gospel. Can they preach this truth by the Spirit that teaches and testifies of all truth, or by another means?

**18 *it is not of God.*** If we preach the gospel without the Spirit of truth present, we are simply not of God. Without the Spirit, there would be no conviction or conversion, no change of heart, no true understanding of the message.

**19 *doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?*** Not just the preacher but the listener must be taught and edified by that same Spirit for the experience to be fully effective and of God. If that exchange does not occur, “it is not of God” (v. 20).

**22 *he that preacheth and he that receiveth understand one another.*** If the Spirit is supporting the teacher of truth and the listener is hearing by that same Spirit, both understand, are edified and uplifted, and rejoice in the experience.

The manifestations the Kirtland Saints were experiencing were clearly not edifying or instructing to either the ‘preacher’ or the ‘observer,’ so they were not of God.

## Truth edifies and prayers are answered (23-36)

**23 *that which doth not edify is not of God.*** To edify is to build up and strengthen. Anything that does not build up another person is not from God. Sometimes even in jest we say or do things that cut another person down a bit. Such actions are not supported by the Lord. In fact, it chases away the Spirit and brings darkness.

**24 *That which is of God is light.*** 1 John 1:5 declares that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” This verse expands that to teach that anything that comes from God is also light. If there is a dark feel to something, we can be assured it is not of God.

**24 *light groweth brighter and brighter.*** The opposite of v. 23 is to build up others, to support and sustain them, to encourage and cheer them. This brings light, and the more we do it, the more light comes into ours and other’s lives, “until the perfect day.”

**25 *chase darkness from among you.*** The truths taught here chase away darkness, making way for the promised light that comes from God.

**26 *appointed to be the greatest.*** Speaking in the long-term, the person ordained of God is first the “least and the servant of all,” but in the end will be blessed of God to become the greatest—not better than anyone else, but enjoying the greatest blessings God can give.



27 *all things are subject unto him*. Those ordained of God and sent forth (v. 26) have all things “in heaven and on earth” subject to them.

28 *purified and cleansed from all sin*. Blessings that come through calls and service allow righteous individuals to possess all the important things of eternity, but only on the condition that they apply the Atonement of Christ and are purified and cleansed from sin—in other words, justified.

30 *it shall be given you what you shall ask*. The righteous are promised the blessing that whatever they ask in the name of Christ will be done (v. 29). But then the Lord clarifies that what they should be ask will be given unto them of God—so it is impossible to ask anything inappropriate under such circumstances.

31 *you may know that it is not of God*. The pattern for determining if a manifestation is from God or not was laid out. If they prayed for understanding or discernment about something and received no confirming word from the Spirit, they could be certain it was not of God, in which case they were given “power over that spirit” (v. 32) that they might let everyone humbly but boldly know its source (v. 33).

34 *rejoice that he is accounted of God worthy*. When they have such an experience, the elders are to rejoice that God has found them worthy of such a blessing. A constant attitude of gratitude is an important part of humility and service.

35 *power to overcome all things*. The promise was that obeying the Lord’s commandments and laws—present and future—will result in the reception of the Father’s kingdom and the power to overcome all evil things.

36 *blessed are you who are now hearing these words*. Those who truly hear the words of the Lord through his Prophet will be blessed with forgiveness of sins.

### The good shepherd and stone of Israel (37-46)

37 *Joseph Wakefield* was from the New York area, now in Kirtland. He and *Parley Pratt* were called to go to the various branches of the Church in the area and teach them this revelation, that the false spirits might come under control. This they did with success among existing members while also baptizing more. Parley Pratt went on to be a great missionary, an apostle, and a powerful voice in defense of the gospel message.

Wakefield was in the first group of those ordained a high priest the following month (3 June 1831), but by 1834 he had joined the dissidents against Joseph Smith and was excommunicated. He explained that he lost his testimony of

Joseph Smith when he saw him come down from the translating room (working on the Bible) and play with his children.<sup>13</sup>

38 *John Corroll* was also a new convert from the Ohio area, first taught and baptized by the Lamanite missionaries passing through Kirtland. He shared the gospel with many, including in response to this revelation, and like Wakefield, was ordained a high priest in June 1831, served in leadership positions, and suffered imprisonment for his faith. Eventually the persecution overcame his commitment, and he pulled away from the Church, finally being excommunicated in March 1839. He remained in Missouri the rest of his life, writing and speaking out against the Church.<sup>14</sup>

39 *Edward Partridge* had apparently hindered the work in some way and was here chastised for those actions. He was promised forgiveness if he did repent, which would appear to be exactly what happened.

40 *ye are little children*. The Church was young and inexperienced and had much to learn and suffer. The promise was that they would “grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth.” But this should not be considered a pejorative: Jesus himself taught that we all need to humble ourselves like little children to become the greatest (Matthew 18:3-4; v. 26 above).

Many of the phrases in the next few verses are unique in the Doctrine and Covenants and very much a part of John’s gospel, such as where Jesus referred to his disciples as “Little children” (John 13:33).

41 *you are of them that my Father hath given me*. The concept of the Father giving certain people to Jesus is a very Johannine concept (John 6:37; 10:29; 17:11, 24). Though we are “little children,” we belong to Christ and he has overcome the world, so he can protect us care for us.

42 *none of them...shall be lost*. Those given to Jesus by the Father are a unique group—not a single one of them will be lost to God. See John 17:12; 18:9; 3 Nephi 27:30-31.

44 *the good shepherd, and the stone of Israel*. Though both of these phrases are unique in the Doctrine and Covenants here, a number of Biblical and Book of Mormon scriptures use these same metaphors, predominantly John 10:11 and Genesis 49:24. Others include Isaiah 8:14; 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Matthew 7:24; 21:42; Alma 5:38-39, 41, 57, 60; Helaman 7:18; and 3 Nephi 11:39-40. The imagery of us as sheep and Christ as the loving, committed shepherd is compelling and instructive, when we consider how helpful, defenseless, and prone to wander sheep are. But Christ is the bedrock upon which we must build our

<sup>13</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:107-108.

<sup>14</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:108.

lives, a solid foundation that will stabilize us in trials and challenges.

45 *you shall hear my voice and see me*. The final promise of this wonderful section on discerning of spirits is the ultimate promise of personal interaction with Jesus Christ, to know definitively that he is. This implication from the context is that this is a Second Coming manifestation, though nothing precludes it from being a more personal, individual event.

46 *Watch, therefore, that ye may be ready*. Though not a quote, this phrasing echoes language in the parable of the thief breaking into the house at an hour not expected by the home owner (Matthew 24:42-44; Luke 12:39-40). Because we do not know when Jesus will come so that we can see him and hear his voice, we have to always be watchful and ready, ever prepared to meet him.

## Results

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In a masterful piece of teaching, the Lord spoke plainly and on a level that the “little children” of the Church then and

now can understand. This revelation was circulated and understood by many. An example was Jared Carter who was leading a meeting where a woman fell on the floor. He and a companion kneeled right there and asked God and received a certainty that this was not a manifestation of the true Spirit. Jared rebuked the false spirit. Some in the congregation disagreed with him, believing in their traditions still, but Jared knew that the promises in D&C 50 had been fulfilled, and that he had the “approbation of my Heavenly Father.”<sup>15</sup> Another example was when Joseph rebuked an evil spirit in Harvey Whitlock by laying on his hands.<sup>16</sup>

Parley Pratt and Jared Wakefield obeyed their commission they received and set many of the branches of the Church in order, and the amount of false spirits in the Kirtland area decreased dramatically. It took time but the Kirtland Saints generally embraced D&C 50 and other similar teachings and abandoned their unacceptable practices.<sup>17</sup>

# D&C 51 – Instructions to the Bishop

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## Date and Location

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Friday, 20 May 1831, at Thompson, Ohio, on Leman Copley’s farm.

## Setting

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The sixty or so Colesville area New York Saints, led by Newel Knight and anchored by Joseph and Polly Knight, arrived in Kirtland as a group in mid-May 1831. They had suffered in the migration, having difficulty selling their properties, struggling with illness and injuries, and being stranded in Buffalo, New York, for two weeks waiting for the ice to break so they could board a ship and sail on Lake Erie.<sup>18</sup>

When they arrived in Kirtland, Bishop Edward Partridge had some work to do. Leman Copley had already said they could settle on his large 759-acre farm in nearby Thompson, but Partridge asked Joseph for more detailed directions, and D&C 51 was the result.<sup>19</sup> Orson Pratt, who was present when the revelation was received on Copley’s farm in Thompson, Ohio, noted that Joseph was “as calm as the morning sun” but that “his face was exceedingly white, and seemed to shine.”<sup>20</sup>

The date of May 1831 in pre-2013 scriptures is accurate but not precise. Revelation Book 1 lets us date this revelation to exactly 20 May 1831.

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1. It was first published as Section 23 in the 1835 and then the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

## Outline

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- Bishop Partridge administers stewardships (1-8)
- Be one (9-12)
- The bishop’s storehouse (13-15)
- Ohio the gathering place for now (16-20)

## Commentary

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### Bishop Partridge administers stewardships (1-8)

1 *how to organize this people*. Given at Thompson, probably at the Copley farm surrounded by Colesville Saints, this revelation is specifically about this newly arrived group, but the principles in it are used for years in both Ohio and Missouri. The New York Saints have not heard

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<sup>15</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 179.

<sup>16</sup> *JSP*, D1:305n354.

<sup>17</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 180.

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

<sup>19</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 181.

<sup>20</sup> Cook, *Revelations*, 69.

the details of the law of consecration, though it was promised to them if they came to Ohio (D&C 38:32).

**2 organized according to my laws.** The laws of D&C 42 were to be the foundation for all decisions relating to the settlement of the New York Saints.

**3 text note:**

In the original, there was a significant piece of instructions that is now missing, as a result of an 1833 law suit in Missouri (see Results below). The text was deleted in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, the first publication of this revelation. See v. 5 below for commentary. The deleted text was as follows (from RB1):

wherefore let my Servent Edward [Partridge] receive the properties of this People which have covenanted with me to obey the Laws which I have given & let my Servent Edward receive the money as it shall be laid before him according to the covenant & go & obtain a deed or Article of this land unto himself for I have appointed him to receive these things & thus through him the Properties of the Church shall be covenanted unto me

Though it doesn't mention Lemam Copley by name, the reference to his having already covenanted his land for "this People" is clear. Partridge was to give Copley a "deed or Article" as his stewardship but the Church would retain ownership, under the original revelation.

**3 Edward Partridge...in whom I am well pleased.** How great it would be to get a revelation from the Lord that described any of us this way! Edward Partridge and his assistants (later called counselors, who were initially Isaac Morley and John Correll<sup>21</sup>) were striving to do what was right and thus their actions were pleasing to the Lord.

**3 every man equal according to his family...circumstances...needs.** The law was to be applied by the bishop according to the needs of each man and his family situation; it is the process that is equal, not the outcomes.<sup>22</sup> Some were able to sell farms and such back in New York and were prepared to buy land; others came with little or nothing and would need assistance from the bishop to get established. Everyone consecrated all that they had and received back what they needed to support their family.

**3 wants and needs.** The word "wants" did not mean the same thing in 1831 that it does today. Instead, it was a synonym for "needs," both words carrying the same meaning of 'lacking' or 'poverty' or 'necessity.' Thus the law of consecration was not designed to meet our desires but our needs.<sup>23</sup>

**4 give unto him a writing.** Every steward received a written acknowledgement of that stewardship, so all were clear on what the personal property would be. Under the law of consecration, there was no reason for people to dispute

over property lines or personal property as all was clearly spelled out and documented. See verse 5 below.

**4 text note:**

RB1 has "...that he shall hold it of the Church until he transgress & is not counted worthy by the Church voice of the Church according to the laws to belong to the Church". The present text, editing in 1835, called the stewardship received "this right and inheritance in the church" and has all this apply to a person desiring to participate "according to the laws and covenants of the church," in order for the property to belong to the Church.

**5 text note:**

This verse was not in the original revelation (and a verse between 2 and 3 was deleted—see above) but was added in the 1835 Doctrine & Covenants as the practices of the Church with regards to property and deeds became more certain. Initially, Partridge gave stewardships to people as a lease or loan, with the Church retaining ownership (per D&C 42:30-32). However, later in March 1833, Missouri courts held that the Church could not retain ownership of the land if the person left the Church and requested it back (see Results below). Being commanded to follow the law in all cases (v. 6), the Prophet modified the language of this section to match that decision, with this verse being the addition.

The new practice was therefore to legally deed the consecrated land to the person, but the Church retained ownership of donations of money or property beyond the deed. This is, essentially, the practice today, with monetary or in-kind donations (such as stock or estate gifts) given to the Church becoming the property of the Church. If someone were to leave the Church today, they cannot legally ask for their tithing, fast offerings, or missionary donations back—they were freely given and have become Church property. But if we were consecrating property and the person left the Church, they would already have an unencumbered title to their stewardship and so would fully own their land and house.

**6 according to the laws of the land.** There was no interest in circumventing any laws or going outside of the legal system. Rather, the Lord counseled the Saints to work within national and local laws to make consecration work.

**7 that which belongs to this people be appointed unto this people.** In other words, the property the Colesville Saints brought with them should be retained among the group and not collected and used more broadly among other New York arrivals or the local Ohio members.

**8 an agent appointed.** This was not Bishop Partridge, but another person from among the Colesville group, to collect their combined money they brought from selling their farms and businesses, and pool it for the greater good of the group, that they might have food and clothing until they could get established on their own stewardships.

<sup>21</sup> JSP, D1:316.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:113.

<sup>23</sup> Harper, *Making Sense*, 182-183.

## Be one (9-12)

9 *let every man deal honestly...be one*. The keys to consecration are honesty and unity. Without those two traits, the system quickly breaks down and bickering and bad feelings result.

10 *given unto that of another church*. We generally think of the “church” as the whole organization, but here the Lord uses the word to mean the specific group of members from Colesville, which today we would call a ward or branch (but those terms were not in use in 1831). In other words, the Colesville group was not to give their funds to another group of members unless it was a loan which was contracted to be paid back and arranged through Bishop Partridge (vv. 11-12). These New Yorkers would need all their funds for what lie ahead, which the Lord knew but they did not yet—another journey, this time to Missouri.

## The bishop’s storehouse (13-15)

13 *let the bishop appoint a storehouse*. This was already discussed in D&C 42 and was re-emphasized here. This is fundamentally the same principle that continues in operation today with the various bishop’s storehouses in each area or region.

14 *he shall be employed*. The bishop was the only Church employee at this time, and was authorized to draw on the storehouse for the needs of his own family. Today the Church has many more employees and they are paid according to common wages, rather than going to the storehouse to acquire food or clothing.

15 *according to my laws*. Though they were to adhere to the laws of the land (v. 6), they were also to organize themselves according to the Lord’s laws, as given in the revelations through Joseph Smith.

## Ohio the gathering place for now (16-20)

16 *this land for a little season*. In the case of the Colesville Saints, it was a fairly short time, as Lemman Copley evicted them from his land in June 1831, about one month after their arrival (see D&C 54).

17 *act upon this land as for years*. Even though they knew up front it was temporary, they were to act as if they would be there for years. So we must do, rarely knowing how long a given situation in our lives will last, such as a job, an economic situation, a family dynamic, a Church calling,

or other activities, blessings, or trials. When we put ourselves in the hands of God, we do our best with every circumstance and assignment he gives to us.

18 *this shall be an example unto my servant Edward*. The way the law was being implemented here with the Colesville Saints in Thompson was to be a model for how it will work in other areas.

19 *enter into the joy of his Lord*. Faithful and wise stewards then and now can experience great joy in this life, and exaltation in the life to come; see Matthew 24:25; 25:21.

## Results

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Lemman Copley was originally commanded in D&C 51 to consecrate his farm, but he would not give the deed to Bishop Partridge. This was mainly due to his vacillating testimony of the Church after the mission to the Shakers (D&C 49) but could also have been due to his not having full title to his land.<sup>24</sup> He finally evicted the Colesville Saints from his property in collaboration with the Shaker leader, Ashbell Kitchell. This resulted in the Colesville Saints having nowhere to live in Ohio, so they ended up being the first group to head directly to Missouri (D&C 54). There they would again try and implement the Law of consecration under the direction of Bishop Partridge.

There was also a long-term impact with D&C 51. It directed Saints to deed all their property and possessions to the Church through the bishop, and then receive a stewardship back from the bishop. Since all properties belonged to the Church at that point, if the person left the Church, the land and other property did not go back to them.

This came into question in a court case in Missouri in March 1833, brought by a person named Bates who left the Church. The court ruled that it was not allowable under law for a person to give all of their property over to the Church, and ordered the property returned. To comply with this ruling, Joseph Smith deleted a verse that gave legal title to the Church and added a new verse which clarified the role of stewardships as private property. Thus the system we currently follow today was set up, with donations going to the Church and non-refundable to the donor if they later change their mind.

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<sup>24</sup> JSP, D1:315.

# D&C 52 – Missionaries to Missouri

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## Date and Location

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Monday, 6 June 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio, during the last day of a conference of the elders of the Church.

## Setting

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A four-day conference was held according to commandment (D&C 44) on 3-6 June 1831.<sup>25</sup> By then, almost all of the New York Saints had arrived in Ohio, and were getting settled in the various communities in and around Kirtland. John Corrill reported that there were about fifty elders in attendance, “which was about all the elders that then belonged to the church.”<sup>26</sup> The conference minutes themselves, taken by John Whitmer, listed forty-three elders, nine priests, and ten teachers, all meeting in a small schoolhouse near Isaac Morley’s home. On Sunday, 5 June, an even larger group convened to hear sermons in a field while the speakers stood on a hill.<sup>27</sup>

On 3 June, the first day of the conference, Joseph Smith and twenty-two other elders were “ordained to the high Priesthood.”<sup>28</sup> It’s not certain just how this priesthood ordination was perceived at first. Journal entries indicate that it was tied to “the order of Milchesidec [Melchizedek]” which was something Joseph Smith had learned about in translating the Bible. The Book of Mormon taught about the “high priesthood of the holy order of God” and “after the order of his Son,” tying it to language used in the Bible about Melchizedek. It also referred to men thus ordained as “high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father” (Alma 13:6-10; Hebrew 6:20). But the understanding of the division of offices came gradually. It wasn’t until October 1831 that men thus ordained were referred to differently than elders in meeting minutes, and it was only in retrospect many years later that Church leaders understood these to be the first ordinations to the office of high priest.<sup>29</sup>

At the conference, some of the men just ordained seemed to become possessed of devils, requiring Joseph Smith and others to cast them out. Joseph Smith also preached with great power and by the Spirit, according to those present, teaching them about the kingdom of God in that day, that some would die before seeing the gathering of Israel, and

that John the Revelator was then among the ten tribes preparing them for their return. He told Lyman Wight, who was apparently the first one ordained to the high priesthood, that he would “see the Lord and me[e]t him nere the corner of the house.” Wight did just that, reporting, “I now see God and Jesus Christ at his right hand.”<sup>30</sup> In short, it was a conference of great spiritual manifestations, as had been promised in D&C 38:32 and 44:1-2.

D&C 52 was received at the end of the conference, on 6 June 1831 (not 7 June as previous printings stated). Fourteen pairs of elders were commanded to journey to Missouri by various routes, preaching along the way, with others sent north and east (vv. 8 and 35).

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is found in Revelation Book 1. It was first published as Chapter 52 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and as the first Section 66 in the 1835 and the only Section 66 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>31</sup>

## Commentary

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**1 *called and chosen in these last days, by the voice of his Spirit.*** The men just ordained to the high priesthood and others present had all felt the Spirit calling them to be part of this great but young and tender work. As their numbers continued to grow, the anticipation must have been strong.

**2 *the next conference, which shall be held in Missouri.*** The brethren had just concluded the first conference in Ohio, and now the Lord stated that the next one would be held in Missouri. This was a time of excitement among the brethren, as they expected new knowledge and the establishment of Zion in Missouri.

**3 *Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon.*** The first pair of missionaries called to Missouri were Joseph and his now constant companion, Sidney Rigdon, who was working closely with the Prophet on the Bible translation and who had already received more than one revelation with Joseph. Rigdon was leaving a wife and small family of children, while Joseph was leaving Emma who had, only a month previous, given birth to twins who did not live but then taken in the Murdock twins after their mother died, and adopted them as their own. Emma was left to care for the

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<sup>25</sup> See introduction and minutes from the conference in *JSP*, D1:317-327.

<sup>26</sup> *JSP*, H2:145.

<sup>27</sup> *JSP*, D1:317-318, 327.

<sup>28</sup> *JSP*, D1:326, from the minutes of the conference.

<sup>29</sup> *JSP*, D1:321-322.

<sup>30</sup> *JSP*, D1:322-323; also *JSP*, H2:39-41.

<sup>31</sup> The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants mistakenly had two sections numbered “66,” what are today D&C 52 and 53. This was corrected in 1844. As a result, from this point on, the section numbers in 1835 and 1844 are typically off by one.

twins alone in the care of friends (Joseph and Emma had no home at this point) while Joseph went to Missouri.<sup>32</sup>

**4 *it shall be made known unto them what they shall do.***

When they left Ohio for Missouri shortly after this revelation, they went in faith, not knowing just where they were going or what their assignment was when they arrived.

**5 *the land of your inheritance.*** If Joseph and Sidney were faithful, the Lord would also reveal unto them the location of the city of Zion or New Jerusalem, the land which the Saints would inherit forever.

**6 *if they are not faithful, they shall be cut off.*** The Lord's expectations were high and strict; if the Prophet and Rigdon were not fully faithful during this trip, they could lose their authority to lead the kingdom. It was these kinds of statements that some of the brethren looked to when they were later trying to justify their rejection of Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet.

**7 *Lyman Wight...John Corrill.*** The pairing of these two brethren as companions is the next set mentioned. Lyman Wight was the first man ordained to the high priesthood.

**8 *John Murdock...Hyrum Smith.*** John Murdock and Hyrum Smith were called to travel together to Missouri by way of Detroit (which of course is in the opposite direction, for the most part). This was the same John Murdock whose twins Joseph and Emma had adopted a month previous. He had other children but no wife, so would have to leave all his children in the care of others.

**9 *preaching the word by the way.*** The "word" that Hyrum and Corrill were to preach was those things found in the scriptures written by prophets and apostles and that which the Holy Spirit taught them through faithful prayer.

**10 *baptizing by water, and the laying on of the hands by the water's side.*** This is a new policy, for up to this point, confirmations were done in special meetings and sometimes weeks after baptism. This is an urgent mission and they are not to delay this important ordinance, since the brethren were to keep moving toward Missouri.

**11 *I will cut my work short in righteousness.*** This is the first time this phrase appears in the D&C, though it is used in a slightly different form twice more (84:97; 109:59). The closest Biblical passage is Romans 9:28, "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." The Lord used it here to explain why they were to bypass confirmation meetings and confirm at the water's edge (v. 10).

**12 *let my servant Lyman Wight beware.*** Lyman had already been called to travel with John Corrill (v. 7). Now he

was warned, like Peter (Luke 22:31) or Helaman (Alma 37:12) or the Book of Mormon disciples (3 Nephi 18:18), that Satan was desiring to sift him like the chaff from the wheat, to pull him away from the Saints and from the Lord.

**13 *ruler over many things.*** Continuing the eschatological themes, the reference in this verse is to Matthew 25:21-23, where faithful servants given a small stewardship were promised even greater ruler ship.

**14 *a pattern in all things.*** The pattern is how to distinguish true from false teachers, and is given in the next few verses. Truth teachers pray, are contrite, and obey the ordinances (v. 15). Their language is meek and edifying, and their fruits are praise and wisdom (v. 16-17). As they tremble under God's power, they are made strong (v. 18).

**19 *ye shall know the spirits in all cases.*** Following the pattern in verses 15-18, the elders would be able to know if a manifestation they see is from the Lord.

**20 *according to men's faith it shall be done.*** The Lord invited the all the elders chosen in these last days (v. 21) to have faith and expect that their righteous desires would be done.

**22 *Thomas B. Marsh...Ezra Thayre.*** The fourth named companionship was called out, though this one will be short-lived as Thayre didn't get ready as commanded and Marsh was given a different companion (D&C 56:5). Ezra was called again in a few months (D&C 75:31).

**23 *Isaac Morley...Ezra Booth.*** The fifth companionship was named. Isaac Morley was a prominent land owner in Ohio who served well and faithfully in the Church, ending up in Sanpete valley where he died in 1864.<sup>33</sup>

Booth was a Methodist minister converted in Ohio after reading the Book of Mormon and witnessing Joseph heal his wife's arm. He did go on the trip to Missouri but lost faith in Joseph along the way, and returned to Ohio an apostate. He participated in the tarring and feathering of Joseph in 1832 and wrote much against the Church.<sup>34</sup>

**24 *Edward Partridge...Martin Harris.*** This interesting sixth companionship combined the bishop with the charge to implement the law of consecration with the man from New York charged with helping get the New York Saints settled. Given all there was to do in Ohio, one might expect them both to stay behind. But their work was going to be in Missouri, so the Lord is leading them there. They were to travel to Missouri with Joseph and Sidney.

**25 *David Whitmer...Harvey Whitlock.*** The seventh companionship paired an Ohio brother who was just ordained a high priest. Harvey went on to serve missions but faltered

<sup>32</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:119.

<sup>33</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 198-200.

<sup>34</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 30-31.

in the faith several times, and was in and out of the Church multiple times, finally ending up with the Reorganized Church.<sup>35</sup>

26 **Parley P. Pratt and Orson Pratt.** The brothers Pratt were called as the eighth missionary pair to go to Missouri.

27 **Solomon Hancock and Simeon Carter.** Companionship number nine consisted of Hancock, an Ohio convert who stayed faithful through Missouri and Illinois persecutions, serving on high councils and in other assignments. He died in Iowa during the trek to the west in 1847.<sup>36</sup>

Carter was another Ohio convert, though fifty miles from Kirtland. He had organized a large branch near his home, converting many of his neighbors. He also stayed with the Church through all the early years of persecution, serving on many missions and baptizing scores. He was an early settler to Brigham City, living there until 1869 when he passed away.<sup>37</sup>

28 **Edson Fuller and Jacob Scott.** Fuller was one of the Ohio converts caught up in the bizarre spiritual manifestations. He declined to serve this mission and stayed in Ohio, continuing to preach after his manner (falling on the floor or hanging from a ceiling beam). He converted a few in Ohio but at least one was rebaptized, being uncertain of the efficacy of Fuller's ordinance after preaching in this manner. He left the Church shortly after this revelation.<sup>38</sup>

29 **Levi W. Hancock and Zebedee Coltrin.** Hancock was an Ohio convert who faithfully served this mission and others. He was a president of the Seventy and a leader in Missouri and Illinois, a leader of the Mormon Battalion. He settled in Manti, Utah, and later in Washington county (near St. George) where he died in 1882.<sup>39</sup>

Coltrin was another faithful brother who served this mission but returned to Ohio to live. He saw the Father and the Son during the School of the Prophets and was present during some of Joseph's revelations, including the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89). Serving in various Church positions, he followed the Saints to Missouri, Illinois, and Utah, where he served as a patriarch until his death in 1887 in Spanish Fork.<sup>40</sup>

30 **Reynolds Cahoon and Samuel H. Smith.** Cahoon served this and other missions, faithfully staying with the Saints in Ohio, Missouri, and Nauvoo, then on to Utah, where he lived until his death in 1861.<sup>41</sup>

31 **Wheeler Baldwin and William Carter.** Baldwin was baptized just days before this mission call. He suffered

through Missouri persecutions but left the Church, moving to Iowa and joining Alpheus Cutler's True Church of Jesus Christ, then joined the Reorganized Church.<sup>42</sup>

Carter was blind at the time of this call and refused to go to Missouri. He left the Church later in 1831 but was rebaptized in 1832 and did help with the construction of the Kirtland temple. Nothing is known of him after that.<sup>43</sup>

32 **Newel Knight and Selah J. Griffin.** Griffin was an Ohio convert. Knight was unable to go with him, so Griffin was assigned as Thomas B. Marsh's companion (D&C 56:5-6). He stayed in Missouri with his family and lost their home under mob persecution. He moved to Illinois but did not go west with the Saints.<sup>44</sup>

33 **unto one place, in their several courses.** The brethren were counseled to all journey to Missouri but by different routes, in order to cover as much ground as possible in their preaching, which would be fruitful (v. 34).

35 **Joseph Wakefield and Solomon Humphrey.** These two were called to go east to preach the gospel to their own extended families (v. 36).

37 **Heman Basset be taken...Simonds Ryder.** Basset had been unfaithful and so his assignment was transferred to Ryder. Of course, this is the revelation where his name was misspelled (still is spelled wrong in the D&C) which caused him to eventually leave the Church.

38 **Jared Carter...George James be ordained a priest.** At the end of the conference, these two were added as new ordinations.

39 **watch over the churches, and declare the word.** Those not called to go to Missouri should still actively serve in the Ohio area, including caring for the poor and needy (v. 40).

41 **take with them a recommend from the church.** The Church leaders were to take formal recommends with them, documenting their overall authority for use in Missouri. Oliver Cowdery, who was still there, would get one as well.

43 **will hasten the city in its time.** Referring to Zion or the New Jerusalem.

## Results

The revelation directed the brethren to travel two-by-two to Missouri where the next conference would be held and the land of inheritance made known. Accordingly, Joseph

<sup>35</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 326-327.

<sup>36</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 116-119.

<sup>37</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 57-59.

<sup>38</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 92-93.

<sup>39</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 114-116.

<sup>40</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 65-67.

<sup>41</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 46-48.

<sup>42</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 9-10.

<sup>43</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 60-61.

<sup>44</sup> Black, *Who's Who*, 109-110.

Smith and many traveling with him left Kirtland on 19 June 1831. They arrived in Independence in mid-July. The mission calls in verses 22 (Thomas B. Marsh and Ezra

Thayre) and 32 (Newel Knight and Selah J. Griffin) were later revoked (see D&C 56:5-7). Arriving in Missouri, the Lord kept his promise, as will be discussed in D&C 57.

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For text notes:

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

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