

# D&C 101-102

Lesson 22, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 6 Mar 2017

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## General Introduction

Things continued to deteriorate in both Missouri and Ohio in late 1833. On 21 October, a warrant was issued in Kirtland against twenty-two Latter-day Saint men and their families, including Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, and Sidney Rigdon. The charge was that they were destitute and without means of support, and so they were “warned out,” meaning requested to “depart the Township immediately.” Something similar was done back in January 1831 when Mormons had first started coming to the area. Clearly the warrant was unjustified as most of the people on it were well-established, with homes and businesses. Joseph and Sidney were still in Canada at that time. This is one of the first examples of anti-Mormon legal action.<sup>1</sup>

In Missouri, despite the agreement Church leaders had signed under duress that they would leave Jackson County starting in January 1834, Joseph Smith had advised members to retain their property deeds and remain on their lands, pending legal appeals. Missouri Mormons personally appealed to state governor Daniel Dunklin in early October, requesting an army to sustain them in maintaining their legal properties and rights and to provide redress for losses suffered, such as the printing press. He counseled them to work through the court system to address their wrongs, promising support if that course of action failed them. Accordingly, on 30 October they hired legal counsel (the firm of Wood, Reese, Doniphan and Atchison,<sup>2</sup> names which would be important in Church history for several more years in Missouri) and publicly announced their intentions to stay on their lands. This angered many of those who had attacked them and forced them to sign the agreement to leave, and a new wave of violence broke out.<sup>3</sup>

On 31 October, several houses were damaged, and men whipped or beaten at a settlement near Big Blue River. The next day, a group threw stones at Sidney Gilbert’s store and then threw some of his merchandise out into the street. One of the attackers was arrested but a judge released him, then granted a warrant to him to arrest Sidney Gilbert and three others who had captured him, and the four were put in jail. After another confrontation at the Big Blue Settlement, Church leaders met during the night of 4-5 November and determined to leave the county immediately, rather

than risk increased hostilities and loss of life. A militia leader, Colonel Thomas Pitcher, empowered by Lieutenant Governor Lilburn Boggs, forced about 150 Church members to surrender their arms and imprisoned several. Militia/mob members tied up and whipped men, and families fled into the woods and prairies to escape.<sup>4</sup>

In the coming weeks, Church members fled to surrounding counties, but Van Buren residents to the south and Lafayette county residents to the east refused to allow them to stay, forcing them back into Jackson county. Most fled north to Clay county where people were more accepting of the refugees. Because they had to cross the Missouri River at the ferries to get there, both sides of the river were choked with “men, women, children, goods, wagons, boxes, chests, provisions, &c.”<sup>5</sup>

By mid-November, most Latter-day Saints had left Jackson County. William W. Phelps wrote a letter to Church leaders in Ohio, documenting recent events. It did not arrive in Ohio until on or just before 5 December 1833. He wrote:

“the enemy had suddenly come down upon our brethren above Blue, and had thrown down 10 or 12 houses, and nearly whipped some to death, among whom was H[iram] Page [because he wouldn’t deny his witness of the Book of Mormon].—This was done on Thursday night [31 Oct 1833].—On Tuesday night [5 Nov 1833] they commended in Independence; broke all the windows of the brethren’s houses in; broke open the doors of bro. [Sidney] Gilbert’s store, strewed the goods in the streets. Saturday night [2 Nov 1833] they fell upon the brethren at the Blue—nearly beat one [David Bennett] to death! But one of Manship’s sons [one of the mob] was dangerously wounded with a rifle all, they fled. On Monday [4 Nov 1833] about sun set, a regular action was fought above Blue; we had 4 wounded—They had 5 wounded and killed; among the latter were Mr. Breazeal [Hugh Breazeale] and Mr. Linville. From Friday till Tuesday after noon our brethren were under arms. On Tuesday [5 Nov 1833] the mob had about three hundred collected—Before any blood was shed we agreed to go away immediately.

<sup>1</sup> Warrant, 21 October 1833, *JSP*, D3:325-331.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 3:258-259.

<sup>3</sup> *JSP*, D3:332-333.

<sup>4</sup> *JSP*, D3:336-337.

<sup>5</sup> *JSP*, D2:337, quoting Parley P. Pratt, *History of the Late Persecution*.

It is a horrid time, men, women, and children are fleeing, or preparing to, in all directions, almost...it was resolved that we should be driven forthwith into Clay county. The brethren have been driven into the wood, and God only knows what will become of them. Women and children are flocking to Everett's and Hancock's Ferry. Our families will have to take the ground for a floor to-night if they get down in season to cross the Missouri. Yours in affliction."<sup>6</sup>

A week later, Phelps wrote again that they were desperately out of food with no money to purchase any or the means to acquire it; they had lost so much in their hasty departures. They were building homes of logs as fast as they could with the cold weather upon them, but there were not enough men and tools to take care of all needs. He wrote, "Now is the hour that tries our souls; yea, the souls of the saints; we want victuals and clothes, and we mean to be saved, even if we die—for life with the present prospect before us, is not very desirable!"<sup>7</sup>

A few days later, Edward Partridge, the bishop in Missouri, wrote a longer letter to Ohio, outlining the legal position of the Church in the area, seeking Joseph's counsel. He explained that they had followed the governor's advice and tried to work through local authorities, but no one had shown any inclination to protect their rights. The state militia that had been called out to protect them turned out to be mostly made up of antagonists and became the mob that drove them out of their homes. He concluded, "I am of the opinion that unless God works for his people & displays

his power in some way or another we cannot return to the land again."<sup>8</sup>

## Summary Chronology

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- **Mon, 21 Oct 1833** – A warrant was issued against many Mormon families for being destitute, Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Thu, 31 Oct 1833** – Church members on the Big Blue River in Jackson county are attacked. Other attacks follow on subsequent days.
- **Mon, 4 Nov 1833** – Joseph and Sidney arrived back in Kirtland from their mission to Upper Canada.
- **Mon-Tue, 4-5 Nov 1833** – Church leaders meet and determine to leave Jackson County.
- **Thu, 5 Dec 1833** – On this day or just before, William Phelps' 6-7 Nov letter arrived in Kirtland, documenting the departure from Jackson County.
- **Tue, 10 Dec 1833** – Joseph Smith received additional letters from William Phelps, Edward Partridge, and John Corrill in Missouri, documenting the condition of the Saints there, and wrote back.
- **Mon-Tue, 16-17 Dec 1833** – D&C 101 was received, Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Mon-Wed, 17-19 Feb 1833** – D&C 102 was recorded and edited, Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Wed, 19 Feb 1833** – The first high council meeting was held, discussing the case of Curtis Hodges.

## D&C 101 – Agency and Accountability in Zion

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### Date and Location

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Monday and Tuesday, 16 and 17 December 1833, at Kirtland, Ohio

### Setting

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After receiving news in early December of the outbreak of violence in Missouri against the Saints that had driven them from their homes and out of Jackson County, Joseph Smith wrote back on 5 Dec 1833 to Edward Partridge, the bishop in Missouri. He did not yet know the full extent of the situation and advised in that letter to stay on their lands and "maintain the ground as Long as there is a man Left."<sup>9</sup>

It's not clear if leaders in Missouri ever got this letter. Events were moving far faster than the postal service. On 10 December, the Prophet had more details and wrote another letter, agonizing over the events in Jackson County. He quoted Biblical scriptures and some of his own previous revelations (including "after much tribulation cometh the blessing," D&C 58:4, underlining in the letter), but he struggled with a definitive answer. "I cannot learn from any communication by the spirit to me that Zion has forfeited her claim to a celestial crown notwithstanding the Lord has caused her to be thus afflicted,"<sup>10</sup> and, "how many will be the days of her purification, tribulation and affliction, the Lord has kept hid from my eyes, and when I enquire concerning this subject the voice of the Lord is, Be

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<sup>6</sup> Letter from William W. Phelps, 6-7 November 1833, *JSP*, D3:339-341.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from William W. Phelps, 14 November 1833, *JSP*, D3:343.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Edward Partridge, between 14 and 19 November 1833, *JSP*, D3:344-350 [quote is from page 350].

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Edward Partridge, 5 December 1833, *JSP*, D3:366-374 [quote is from page 374].

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Edward Partridge and Others, 10 December 1833, *JSP*, D3:376.

still, and know that I am God!” He exclaimed, “I am ignorant and the Lord will not show me.”<sup>11</sup> He concluded the letter with a prayer on behalf of those in Missouri.

It was with these feelings that a revelation finally came, explaining what the Saints in Missouri should do. It apparently came late one night and into the next morning, finishing about breakfast time on Tuesday, 17 December 1833. Oliver Cowdery was scribe.

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is in RB2 (between about Dec 1833 and Jan 1834), 73-83, with another copy in RB1 (about early 1834), 183-189. It was first published as a broadsheet in Kirtland (about late Dec 1833-19 Jan 1834), then in *Mormonism Unveiled* (between 1 Oct and 28 Nov 1834), as Section 97 in 1835, and as Section 98 in 1844.

## Outline

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- Why persecutions happened (1-8)
- Nations punished, Saints comforted (9-15)
- Zion will be established (16-21)
- The Millennium (22-31)
- Future blessings (32-42)
- The parable of the nobleman (43-62)
- Gathering (63-75)
- Agency, accountability, and the Constitution (76-80)
- Seeking redress (81-101)

## Commentary

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### Why persecutions happened (1-8)

**1 *afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out.*** As explained in the General Introduction and Setting for this revelation, the Saints in Missouri had suffered greatly, starting in July 1833 and continuing through the end of the year.

**2 *in consequence of their transgressions.*** The Lord had warned the Missouri members several times to repent or face trials and that tribulation was part of establishing Zion.<sup>12</sup> They were given strict commandments with high expectations.<sup>13</sup> Here the Lord is clear that the persecutions have come because of their transgressing of these commandments and the law of consecration.

**3 *they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels.*** From Malachi 3:17 (also 3 Nephi

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<sup>11</sup> *JSP*, D3:377.

<sup>12</sup> For example, D&C 58:4; 84:76; 97:25-26; Letter to William W. Phelps, 27 November 1832, *JSP*, D2:315-321.

<sup>13</sup> For example, D&C 57, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 18 August 1833, *JSP*, D3:262.

24:17) and previously quoted in D&C 60:4 (see commentary there), this is a reference to the treasure belonging to the Lord, of which the covenant people are a symbol.

**4 *tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son.*** The story of Abraham is in Genesis 22:1-14, where the KJV text says “God did tempt Abraham,” but the sense of the term is a test or trial, not a temptation. In August 1833, Joseph Smith had written to Missouri leaders that their affliction “reminds me of Abraham offering up Isaac his only son but my Brotheen [brethren] have been called to give up even more than this their wives and their children yea and their own life also.”<sup>14</sup> See also D&C 58:4; 95:1; 98:12.

**5 *cannot be sanctified.*** Chastening is a requirement for sanctification or being made pure and holy. The Lord proclaimed that those who could not endure such chastening simply could not become sanctified.

**6 *envyings and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires.*** The Lord listed some of the broken commandments by some of the Missouri members. These are mostly ‘internal’ sins, meaning ones that are in minds and hearts and may not even have an outward manifestation.

**6 *they polluted their inheritances.*** They had been given consecrated lands and had “polluted” those sacred properties with their individual sins.

**7 *slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord.*** For example, it had been two years since the land for the temple had been dedicated, but nothing had been done to begin its construction in all that time. Many had come to Zion, rejecting the Law of Consecration altogether and buying their own private property, which the Lord had commanded for all going to Zion. Because they were slow to hearken when it was peaceful, the Lord was reciprocally slow to hearken to their petitions for help now that they were in trouble.

**8 *they feel after me.*** From Acts 17:27, this represents how blind people are in their sins, like they are feeling their way in the dark.

### Nations punished, Saints comforted (9-15)

**9 *my bowels are filled with compassion towards them.*** Bowels filled with compassion is a Book of Mormon phrase (Mosiah 15:9; 3 Nephi 17:6-7) but it is also found in 1 John 3:17 in the KJV.<sup>15</sup> It is only used in the Doctrine and Covenants here and shows how deeply the compassion

<sup>15</sup> The phrase in 1 John 3:17 is “his bowels of compassion,” with the italicized words added by the translators to represent the sense of the Greek word *splagchna*, which can represent the intestines or the heart and thus a metaphor for compassion.

is felt. In the early 1800s, the term “bowels” could also mean the heart or just the inner part.<sup>16</sup>

**9 in the day of wrath I will remember mercy.** See Romans 2:5 and D&C 63:6. The “day of wrath” is the time of the wrath against the wicked, a time of judgment, during which the Lord will remember them with mercy.

**10 I would let fall the sword of mine indignation in behalf of my people.** Though this is the only verse with this phrase, the sword of the Lord falling on the enemies of the Saints was promised in D&C 35:14 and 87:6.

**11 poured out without measure upon all nations.** A “measure” is a pre-determined amount, implying restraint. The Lord is declaring that the day is coming when the restraint will be lifted on the punishment wicked nations will receive.

**11 when the cup of their iniquity is full.** The imagery probably comes from Revelation 17:4, where the woman named “Babylon” has a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness.

**12 all who are found upon the watch-tower.** Typically, the person found on the tower cries out a warning voice to others, but here that definition is expanded to include “all mine Israel,” making the covenant people of the modern Church those who stand on the tower crying out the Lord’s messages to the whole world.

**13 scattered shall be gathered.** Though gathering is a common theme of the last days, this message for the Missouri Saints just scattered to the winds from their homes in Jackson County must have been personally relevant.

**14 they who have mourned shall be comforted.** From Matthew 5:4 (and 3 Nephi 12:4), this was also very personally relevant to those who had not only lost home and possessions but lives, health, food, security, and more.

**15 they who have given their lives for my sake shall be crowned.** Revelation 2:10 promises those who are “faithful unto death” a “crown of life.” At this point, only one person had died because of persecution among Church members but that statistic would not hold very long.

## Zion will be established (16-21)

**16 let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion.** Joseph Smith had expressed great concern about the future of Zion, as had Bishop Partridge and many others—probably just about every member of the Church at this time felt it. They were to take comfort in the knowledge that God was in control (“all flesh is in mine hands”).

**16 be still and know that I am God.** See Psalm 46:10. This was the phrase that Joseph Smith told Edward Partridge that he got from the Lord relative to events in Missouri prior to this time.<sup>17</sup> It makes one wonder if when dictating this revelation to Oliver Cowdery, the Prophet dictated this phrase yet again and wondered if he would again get no answers to his questions. Fortunately, this time the revelation continued and didn’t stop with this comforting phrase.

**17 Zion shall not be moved out of her place.** One of the questions being raised was if Jackson County, Missouri, would still be the center place of Zion? The Lord confirmed the earlier revelations as to the location, in spite of present difficulties (also v. 20)

**18 come to their inheritances, they and their children.** As with many such statements, it would have been difficult not to interpret this with a short-term fulfillment in 1833. But it still applies to us today, giving comfort that the promises made by the Lord will be fulfilled ultimately.

**18 with songs of everlasting joy.** Isaiah 35:10 speaks of this day, the ransomed remnant shall return to Zion singing such songs.

**18 to build up the waste places of Zion.** Isaiah 58:12 declares that the righteous will “build up the old waste places” and “raise up the foundations” so that they get the nickname “The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths.”

**19 that the prophets might be fulfilled.** God proves the inspired words of his prophets to be true as part of his plan of declaring the salvific message to all his children.

**21 they shall be called stakes.** When the center-place of Zion was full, the Lord’s plan was to create branches of Zion that would eventually fill the world.

## The Millennium (22-31)

**22 gather together, and stand in holy places.** Though there are certainly holy places on earth, it is typically the people that live by God’s laws that make a place holy. The gathering of the Saints who keep sacred covenants in Jackson County or any other location will make those places holy.

**23 prepare for the revelation which is to come.** The revelation promised here is when the whole earth sees Jesus all at once, during his majestic Second Coming. Symbolically, the veil between God’s temple in heaven and the earth will be taken away to make that happen.

**24 every corruptible thing . . . shall be consumed.** At Christ’s coming, the earth will be changed from its current telestial state to a terrestrial one, prepared for the Millennial reign of the Savior. As part of that, everything that is

<sup>16</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 3:265.

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Edward Partridge et al., 10 December 1833, *JSP*, D3:377.

not worthy of a terrestrial glory will be consumed in the fire of his coming.

**25 *all things shall become new.*** Compare Revelation 21:5; D&C 29:24; 63:49. The Millennial earth will be radically different from the present one. We cannot imagine now a world that is so thoroughly transformed that it will be all new when the Lord comes to dwell upon it.

**26 *the enmity of all flesh, shall cease from before my face.*** At the Fall, the Lord put enmity (opposition or hostility) between mankind and Satan (Genesis 3:15; Moses 4:21). But the fall brought opposition between man and animals and more. In the new world, post-Second Coming, enmity between man, animals, and “all flesh” will end, bringing peace to the earth for the first time since the Garden of Eden (see Isaiah 65:25 and 11:6-9).

**27 *whatsoever any man shall ask, it shall be given.*** Compare Isaiah 65:24 where the Lord promises that even before they call on him, he will answer.

**28 *Satan shall not have power to tempt any man.*** See D&C 43:31; 45:55; 84:100; 88:110; Revelation 20:1-3. “Satan will be bound and divested of power in two ways: (1) The righteous will pay no heed to him. (2) Satan will actually be bound by the priesthood power of the Savior himself so that he cannot act in his accustomed ways.”<sup>18</sup>

**29 *no sorrow because there is no death.*** While everyone dies eventually, in past ages of the earth, unexpected death was more frequent than today. This promise must have been of great comfort to them, even as it is to us today. With no death whatsoever in the Millennium, the sorrow we always feel with the passing of a loved one will not exist. All infants will live to old age (v. 30).

**31 *changed in the twinkling of an eye.*** The phrase comes from 1 Corinthians 15:52, with that verse and the one before it teaching the same thing as this verse: during the Millennium, people will not “sleep” and be buried in the earth but will instantly go from mortality to immortality (compare 3 Nephi 28:8 where the three Nephites are promised to be changed in a twinkling when their missions are complete). In other words, the spirit world will not be needed during this time except as a holding place for those who are waiting for the final resurrection.

### Future blessings (32-42)

**32 *he shall reveal all things.*** Those who have questions today will have ready answers in the Millennium. No matter the realm of knowledge sought (vv. 33-34), all things shall be revealed to people in the earth during that time.

**35 *yet shall they partake of all this glory.*** The persecuted who endure in faith and the martyrs for the Lord’s name

shall enjoy the glory of the Lord in full, the same as those on the earth during the reign of Christ.

**36 *fear not even unto death.*** Until that Second Coming and the dramatic changing of the world, death will continue to be part of our world. But we should not fear it for it is not final nor does it have more than temporary power over us. Without it, we could not experience joy, because only in God is there full joy.

**37 *care for the soul.*** Missouri members were suffering in body, but the Lord counseled them to keep that in perspective, and focus instead on the care of their souls, which required spiritual obedience and commitment.

**38 *seek the face of the Lord always.*** D&C 93:1 promised the faithful to see the face of the Lord. Now the promise is extended to a commandment to seek his face, to strive to enjoy his presence. While few may achieve that in this life, all will see his face; the key is to be ready for it, so it is a joyful experience and not a fearful one.

**38 *in patience ye may possess your souls.*** A paraphrase of Luke 21:19, “In your patience possess ye your souls.” In Luke, the Greek word translated “patience,” *hupomonē*, can mean steadfastness, perseverance, endurance, or fortitude, and to “possess” (Greek *ptaomai*) means to obtain, acquire, or control. We might relate this to the standard phrase, those who endure to the end acquire eternal life.

**39 *they are accounted as the salt of the earth.*** “Ye are the salt of the earth,” Jesus told his disciples (Matthew 5:13; 3 Nephi 12:13). Two sister missionaries once asked me for a topic for their scripture study, and I suggested “salt of the earth.” Later, they reported back that they were surprised where that study took them. Though the reference is only found in Matthew and 3 Nephi and this single reference in the Doctrine and Covenants, as they studied those verses, they recognized the power of the metaphor—salt is pure and simple in its composition. Salt cannot be contaminated without being destroyed but it can be rendered useless by being mixed with other substances. Salt has many uses (more so in the ancient world than the modern) and yet can only be found in certain places and harvested with some difficulty, making it precious in that day. Comparing all that to our lives makes for a fascinating study.

**41 *even many, but not all; they were found transgressors.*** Those in Zion were striving to be the salt of the earth but some were transgressors of God’s laws. Because Zion required a pure people, even some of them who were sinful corrupted the collective salt, forcing it to be “cast out and trodden under the feet of men.” This answers a question that Joseph Smith said was especially vexing for him,

<sup>18</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 3:273.

which was why “those who are innocent are compelled to suffer for the iniquities of the guilty.”<sup>19</sup>

42 ***He that exalteth himself shall be abased.*** Paradoxes in the gospel abound. This is one: if you try to make yourself important, you’ll be humbled; if you strive for humility, you’ll be exalted.

### The parable of the nobleman (43-62)

43 ***a parable, that you may know my will concerning the redemption of Zion.*** This was the topic Joseph Smith puzzled over the most. Fascinating that he got his answer in parable form, something that could potentially be interpreted in different ways, depending on the circumstance and perspective of the listener. This one is especially interesting in that it draws pieces from several different parables in the New Testament. The interpretation in general seems to be that the Missouri Saints were not obedient in building the required tower (the temple) which would have helped them see the enemy coming and been prepared. Instead, the enemy moved in quickly, scattered the servants, and took possession of the land. Now it would take an army to redeem the land again and drive the enemy away.

44 ***A certain nobleman had a spot of land.*** The land was excellent, “very choice,” and on it he commanded his servants to plant twelve olive trees.

45 ***set watchmen round about them.*** Other scriptures portray watchmen on towers, including Isaiah 21:6; Jeremiah 51:12; and Ezekiel 33:2-9. Jesus also gave a parable where a householder planted a vineyard and protected it with a hedge and a tower (Matthew 21:33; Mark 12:1).

47 ***what need hath my lord of this tower?*** The servants questioned the reason for the tower, as it was a significant amount of effort to build and “this is a time of peace” (v. 48).

49 ***Might not this money be given to the exchangers?*** Like another of Jesus’ parables, exchangers figure in the story; in Jesus’ parable, the master told the servant he should have invested the master’s money with the exchangers, which in this one, it is the servants that speculate achieving a higher profit with exchangers.

50 ***they became very slothful.*** While debating, the servants slacked off on their required efforts, according to their agreement with the nobleman.

51 ***the enemy came by night.*** Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the tares has the enemy come and sow the tares by night “while men slept” (Matthew 13:25). He they don’t come to plant seeds to break down the wall and destroy the olive trees. Afraid, the servants simply fled.

52 ***what is the cause of this great evil?*** The nobleman required accountability of his servants, wanting to know how everything could have been destroyed? Hadn’t they followed his commands (v. 53)?

54 ***the watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off.*** With no one watching over the vineyard, they didn’t know about the enemy until the attack was already in progress, at which time they had no choice but to scatter.

55 ***said unto one of his servants.*** A later revelation identified this as Joseph Smith (D&C 103:21).

55 ***gather together the residue of my servants.*** The servant chosen by the lord of the vineyard was requested to raise an army of “young men” and “middle age” men.

56 ***redeem my vineyard.*** The “redeem” here means to return the vineyard to its former state and ownership. The enemy has not only destroyed it but has overrun it and taken control. The army is to drive them away and return the vineyard to its legal owner.

57 ***break down the walls of mine enemies.*** The enemy will be fortified in the vineyard, so the army will need to tear down their walls and towers and scatter their forces.

58 ***avenge me of mine enemies.*** The lord of the vineyard required that the army raised by the servant seek justice against the enemies who stole and destroyed the lord’s property.

59 ***When shall these things be?*** A critical question to be sure: how quickly should this army be raised and taken against the enemy?

60 ***When I will; go ye straightway.*** The answer in the parable requires that the servant go immediately but does not promise the desired result until the lord wills it.

61 ***my seal and blessing upon you.*** The servant being asked to raise the army receives the blessings of the lord of the vineyard as a “faithful and wise steward” and someone who will be “a ruler in my kingdom.”

62 ***did all things.*** The servant in the parable was immediately obedient, but it wasn’t until “after many days” that the desired result was achieved.

### Gathering (63-75)

63 ***wisdom in me concerning all the churches.*** Members of the Church were scattered all over the United States now. Many were being asked to gather to Ohio or Missouri

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<sup>19</sup> Letter to Edward Partridge and Others, 10 December 1833, JSP, D3:377.

and eventually all were to be in Missouri, according to earlier revelations. What is to be done now with that gathering effort?

64 **build them up unto my name upon holy places.** One of the purposes of gathering was to bring Saints together in groups large enough to build temples and participate in ordinances only had in the house of the Lord.

65 **according to the parable of the wheat and the tares.** See commentary on D&C 86.

67 **continue to gather together.** Gathering was still the order of the day for the early Church.

68 **let not your gatherings be in haste.** See D&C 58:56 and 133:15. The need to gather should not be outweighed by the need to do it in an orderly and thoughtful way. Too many had gathered to Missouri in haste, causing problems.

70 **purchase all the lands with money, in the region round about.** The Saints were to set up permanent homes in the area around Jackson County (v. 71) and make that a new gathering place.

72 **gather together all their moneys.** Like the physical gathering, the collection of money to purchase lands should “done in their time, but not in haste.”

73 **send them to purchase these lands.** As an example, a church in Essex County, New York sent their own “wise men” to Kirtland with \$848 to purchase lands according to this revelation.<sup>20</sup>

75 **already in store sufficient, yea, even an abundance.** With new converts joining all the time, if all were consecrated, there was more than enough to accomplish these purposes and give everyone an inheritance in and around Zion and other gathering places like Kirtland.

## Agency, accountability, and the Constitution (76-80)

76 **continue to importune for redress.** It was not time to give up on getting their lands and homes back. Rather, the Lord directed the refugee Saints to keep using legal means to recover their properties.

77 **the laws and constitution.** The laws of the land exist to protect rights. God “suffered” them to be established and they “should be maintained.”

78 **agency which I have given unto him.** Agency is a pre-existent gift from God, something he has decreed that he will not take away from us, though all other things can be removed. God will always respect our right to choose, so much that the only recorded war in heaven was over this issue (Moses 4:1-4).

78 **that every man may be accountable.** The other side of the coin with agency is accountability; we are free to choose but then are also responsible for the results of that choice.

79 **it is not right that any man should be in bondage.** Slavery is not correct under any circumstance, according to God’s law. It removes sacred agency and accountability for the enslaved individual. How can a person be correctly judged whose only choice was to obey a master, right or wrong, or die?

80 **for this purpose have I established the Constitution.** “Wise men” created this documented. They were raised up by the Lord and “redeemed the land by the shedding of blood” to free it from enslavement, as it were, to the British.

## Seeking redress (81-101)

81 **the parable of the woman and the unjust judge.** The Lord has already given a parable to illustrate why the recent events in Missouri happened and how the Camp of Israel would support them. This parable is taken from the New Testament (Luke 18:1-5) and was already cited by Joseph Smith in his 10 December letter to Edward Partridge as representative of the effort those in Missouri should make to get their case heard.

81 **text note:**

RB2 has parentheses around the phrase “(for men ought always to pray and not faint)” which improves the reading of this verse. This format persisted until at least 1844 but the parentheses were dropped somewhere along the way, at least by 1951.

86 **Let them importune at the feet of the judge.** As Governor Dunklin had requested, the Lord tells them to first take their grievances to the judicial system. If that fails to bring results, they should appeal to the governor (v. 87) and then if needed, the president of the United States (v. 88).

89 **if the president heed them not.** If all of these avenues of appeal do not resolve the situation, then the Lord promised direct support to “vex the nations.”

90 **in his time, will cut off those wicked.** The promise is strong (“in his fierce anger”) and sure, but tempered in terms of timing, which is up to God.

91 **outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing.** From Alma 40:13, where those who choose evil are cast out to experience eternal misery.

92 **Pray ye, therefore, that their ears may be opened.** The Lord does not want us to pray for divine retribution when we are wronged. Rather, we should pray for our enemies (in the spirit of Matthew 5:44).

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<sup>20</sup> JSP, D3:395n434.

93 *that all men may be left without excuse*. Following all legal avenues of appeal for redress leaves the government and everyone around them without excuse for supporting them in their requests. Everyone must have heard the details of their case (v. 94) and deliberately rejected them before they are judged by the Lord.

95 *my act, my strange act, and perform my work, my strange work*. Compare Isaiah 28:21. “Strange” does not mean weird or odd but unfamiliar or unknown. When the Lord acts, men will not be expecting it. But when they see it, they will clearly know it is from the Lord (“that men may discern”).

96 *contrary to my commandment . . . sell my storehouse*. Sidney Gilbert ran a general store in Independence that also served as the bishop’s storehouse for that area. His store had been attacked, the goods thrown into the street, and Sidney driven out. One of the questions was should they Missouri members sell any of their properties to try and recover some of the money spent. The Lord’s answer was not to sell the storehouse to their enemies.

97 *polluted by mine enemies*. Because consecrated properties were all considered houses of the Lord, to sell it to an enemy would be the same as having it desecrated (“polluted”) by those enemies.

98 *a very sore and grievous sin*. The pollution of sacred properties was a sin to the Lord.

99 *hold claim . . . though they should not be permitted to dwell thereon*. During the appeal process at least, the Saints were to hold their titles and lay claim to their properties in Jackson County, even if they could not live there.

100 *they shall dwell thereon*. As the Missouri Saints were faithful and “bring forth fruit and works meet for my kingdom,” they had the promise that in the time of the Lord they would receive their inheritances again.

101 *They shall build, and another shall not inherit it*. Compare Isaiah 65:21-22. The day would come that the Saints would build and plant and be the ones to enjoy the

fruits of their labors, unlike the present situation where they built and planted and lost it all to their enemies.

## Results

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The revelation is fundamentally about agency and accountability. The Lord gives us commandments and direction, and it is up to us to obey. When do and when we do not, there are consequences, which we have chosen by our exercise of agency. We cannot avoid the consequences of our choices, nor can we avoid the consequences of the choices made by others. The Lord supports the Constitution and the just laws of this and other nations only when they support agency, liberty, and choice. Coercion is never part of God’s plan.

To help him exercise his own agency, a copy of this revelation was sent to Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin. They also planned to send a copy to United States president, Andrew Jackson, though it is not known if it was delivered.

Following the parable in this revelation and the more clear commands in D&C 103, in February 1834, Joseph Smith began recruiting men for the Camp of Israel, later known as Zion’s Army, traveling broadly and calling for volunteers to join him to go and redeem their brethren. The Camp left in May 1834 for Missouri.

Many did not obey the command to gather in patience and an orderly way, but instead moved quickly to Kirtland the Missouri, inflating real estate prices and causing a spirit of speculation and a desire to get rich. Sadly, this later led to many of the problems in Kirtland that drove people out of the Church and to problems in Missouri, such as William W. Phelps and John Whitmer being excommunicated for selling land to newly arrived members at inflated prices.

Zion has great promises in D&C 101, and his promises are sure, but it also makes clear that they will be fulfilled in his own time and way. The role of agency allows us to choose to follow the Lord in faith, even when we cannot be certain of the immediate outcome.

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# D&C 102 – The Constitution of the High Council

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## Date and Location

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Monday to Wednesday, 17-19 February 1834, at Kirtland, Ohio

## Setting

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On 11 January 1834, members of the United Firm in Kirtland, Ohio, including Oliver Cowdery who was visiting from Missouri after the persecutions there, together wrote

out a prayer to the Lord and asked the Lord to grant it together. They asked that they and their families would be protected—a very real threat in the Kirtland area, after the events in Missouri were made known and with escalated persecution from Doctor Philastus Hurlbut. They prayed that Joseph Smith might prevail in his lawsuit against Hurlbut (which had a hearing scheduled for two days later). They prayed for the means to pay off some of the debts they were facing with the loss of property and income in



Missouri and increase debts in Kirtland with the replacement printing press. And they prayed that the members in Missouri might have enough food, clothing, shelter, and that the elect could be quickly gathered to prepare for the Second Coming.<sup>21</sup>

Following the instructions in D&C 101 and Joseph Smith's letters, leaders in Missouri appealed to the courts, to Governor Daniel Dunklin, and to United States President Andrew Jackson. Their appeals were denied in all cases, in spite of the fact the Dunklin had promised to support the Saints in reclaiming their lands with military force.<sup>22</sup>

Early meetings of Church leaders were all called "conferences," with major Church conferences held quarterly, per revelation. As the Church grew, smaller, regional gatherings of leadership took the name "councils." In a meeting held on 12 February 1834, Joseph Smith declared, "I have never set before any council in all the order in which a Council ought to be conducted, which, perhaps, has deprived the Councils of some, or many blessings." He taught that council members needed to be pure in heart to pass good judgment. He said that in ancient councils, none would speak or even leave the room until the voice of the Lord was heard regarding the questions before them. He lamented that in their councils, "one would be uneasy, another asleep, another praying another not; one's mind on the business of the Council and another thinking on something else." He worried that such actions would condemn them before the Lord.<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, on 17 February 1834, Joseph Smith led a meeting where he organized a standing "Presidents Church Council" in Kirtland, consisting of twelve men, presided over by the presidency of the high priesthood. (Two days later, this was called the "high Council of the Church of Christ," and then later the Kirtland high council.) He also outlined the rules and procedures to be used by the council.

Following this meeting, the Prophet took the minutes and rewrote them "with all the strength and wisdom that he had," and presented the substantially edited minutes back to the council on 19 February. D&C 102 reflects those edits.<sup>24</sup>

## Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Minute Book 1 (about 17 Feb 1834), 29-31. That copy was edited by Joseph Smith over the next two days in Minute Book 1 (about 19 Feb 1834), 31-35. Other copies include RB2 (about Aug 1834), 111-115 and Hyde and Pratt Notebook (between 28 Apr and 27 Aug

1834), 45-55. It was first published as Section 5 in 1835 and then Section 5 in 1844.

## Outline

- The role of the high council (1-8)
- Procedures (9-18)
- Decisions by the president (19-23)
- Traveling high priests and councils (24-3)

## Commentary

### The role of the high council (1-8)

1 ***a general council of twenty-four high priests***. High priests (and sometimes elders, priests, teachers, and unordained members) met together regularly to conduct Church business. Based on Joseph Smith's comments in one such meeting on 12 February 1834, there needed to be some changes to the council process, and this meeting of a general council initiated those changes. Besides the twenty-four high priests, there were up to sixty-two priesthood holders in attendance on 19 February.<sup>25</sup>

1 ***the high council of the church of Christ***. The name was initially meant to represent the council with the highest authority in the Church. Subsequent events put the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in that role and "high council" became a stake body led by the stake presidency.

2 ***The high council was appointed by revelation***. Though the specific revelation where this was appointed is not known, it follows the pattern of Joseph Smith organizing other leadership roles in the Church as president of the high priesthood.

2 ***for the purpose of settling important difficulties***. The high council had two roles; this first one was to settle difficulties, which could include counseling on issues with the presidency, taking assignments to work with members or other leaders, or performing other duties as requested by the presidency.

2 ***could not be settled by the church or the bishop's council***. This first high council set the pattern for subsequent ones. Though it was the final council of appeal initially, as the Church continued to grow, each stake high council became the final council of appeal locally, whose decisions could be appealed to the First Presidency.

3 ***Joseph Smith, Jun.*** The presidency of the high priesthood were the "acknowledged presidents" of the council, with other initial council members listed in the verse. Note

<sup>21</sup> Prayer, 11 January 1834, *JSP*, D3:403-407.

<sup>22</sup> *JSP*, D3:407-408.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes, 12 February 1834, *JSP*, D3:427-431.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes, 17 February 1834, *JSP*, D3:435-439; Revised Minutes, 18-19 February 1834 [D&C 102], *JSP*, D3:439-444.

<sup>25</sup> *JSP*, D3:439.

that the first council listed here was selected by lot according to the 17 February minutes and were sustained initially as the first high council, but at least two of them were from Missouri and only in Ohio temporarily, so they later had to be replaced by Ohio residents.

**3 *standing council.*** This was another name given this group at first, and was later used to distinguish them from the “traveling high council composed of the twelve apostles” (v. 30).

**4 *according to the law of heaven.*** Joseph Smith taught the brethren “the order of Councils in ancient days . . . as show to him by vision.”<sup>26</sup> He also taught that he had learned of “the dignity of the office which had been conferred upon me by the ministering of the Angel of God.”<sup>27</sup>

**5 *who voted in the name and for the church.*** The numbers given do not account for the fifteen appointed to the presidency and the council, making sixty-two total in attendance.<sup>28</sup>

**6 *cannot have power to act without seven.*** Seven was the required number to convene a council. Any less than seven meant there were insufficient numbers to make a decision. This protected both any person being brought before the council for a case and the members of the council themselves, who could be held accountable as part of the group, even if not present.

**7 *appoint other high priests.*** If councilors were absent, traveling, sick, etc., the seven or more remaining members could appoint someone to temporarily take that person’s place, as needed. Today, invitations to fill gaps for disciplinary councils are typically extended by the stake presidency to worthy and experienced high priests.

**8 *whenever any vacancy shall occur.*** From the language of these minutes, it would appear that appointment to the high council was anticipated as a lifetime assignment, because causes for vacancy listed were only “death,” “transgression,” or “removal from the bounds” (meaning moving away). Today, high councilors are called and released as needed by the stake presidency, after being confirmed by the high council (as described in this verse).

## Procedures (9-18)

**9 *the president of the council, is appointed by revelation.*** Here, this refers to Joseph Smith, but the same is true of stake presidents today who are appointed by the revelation of the visiting authority who calls him. He is also sustained “by the voice of the church” as this verse outlines.

**9 text note:**

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<sup>26</sup> JSP, D3:437.

<sup>27</sup> JSP, D3:429.

The minutes read that the president is “appointed by the voice of the Savior,” which was certainly true of Joseph Smith. He edited this in 1835 to the current reading.

**10 *assisted by two other presidents.*** Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were the other presidents in the presidency of the high priesthood at this time.

**11 *he has power to preside.*** Having all three presidents there was desirable but not required: any of the three of them could preside individually, if needed.

**12 *cast lots by numbers.*** When the council meets to consider a case (not just to conduct business or other more typical reasons), they start by casting lots or giving each one a number. It doesn’t specify how this is to be done; many stakes today use folder slips of paper or tiles, and have each member of the council select a number.

**13 *the twelve councilors shall consider whether it is a difficult one.*** Because the high councilors usually don’t know the details of a case before it is presented to them, the stake president will offer what he thinks is the difficulty of the case, and the speakers are assigned accordingly. As it specifies here, two speak for cases that are not difficult, four for difficult ones, and six for “more difficult” cases (vv. 13-14).

**15 *The accused, in all cases, has a right to one-half of the council.*** The designated speakers are not the only ones allowed to speak but they will be specifically called on. The others are still to look out for the interests of the accused and the Church, based on the number they drew in the lots.

**16 *every man is to speak according to equity and justice.*** The Spirit is sought for and all are requested to consider the information presented “in its true light” that the whole conversation can be one that is equitable and has justice in mind.

**17 *even numbers . . . stand up in behalf of the accused.*** The six councilors who drew even numbers are to especially consider the person brought before them, with the goal of “preventing insult and injustice.” This doesn’t mean that they cannot seek justice, as v. 16 explains, but they are to make sure the person is dealt with fairly and through true love. Though the revelation does not call it out specifically, the councilors who drew odd-numbers speak in behalf of the Church and watch for its interests. This is not to be understood as “prosecutor” and “defender” in the sense of a typical courtroom outside the Church; all are united in finding truth and seeking justice.<sup>29</sup>

**18 *the accused shall have a privilege of speaking.*** Though councils can be held without the person present, if they re-

<sup>28</sup> JSP, D3:437n120.

<sup>29</sup> McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 745-746.

fuse to attend or are otherwise unavailable, the typical situation is to give them the opportunity to speak and tell the story from their own perspective. This would be done “after the evidences are heard” and the appointed councilors have spoken (two, four, or six).

### Decisions by the president (19-23)

19 ***the president shall give a decision.*** The councilors are not there to decide but to ask questions, speak out with concerns, and otherwise explore the case thoroughly. But it is only the presiding officer who makes the final decision, after seeking the Lord’s will in prayer.

19 ***call upon the twelve councilors to sanction the same by their vote.*** The decision of the president is put to a sustaining vote by the council.

20 ***discover an error in the decision of the president.*** If any of the high councilors during or after the council discover any kind of error in the “evidences and pleadings,” they can share that with the president and request a re-hearing of the case.

21 ***the decision shall be altered accordingly.*** The president can reconsider the new information and alter his previous decision accordingly, with the sustaining of the council again.

22 ***the first decision shall stand.*** Without new information, the president’s decision is not to be changed.

23 ***the president may inquire and obtain the mind of the Lord by revelation.*** If the case involves a “difficulty” with regards to “doctrine or principle,” and the evidence is lacking to make a clear decision, the president is directed to seek revelation from God to resolve the issue. When this revelation was given, the only “president” involved was Joseph Smith. Following that pattern, today doctrinal issues are only handled by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve.

### Traveling high priests and councils (24-34)

24 ***high priests, when abroad, have power to call and organize a council.*** In areas of the Church where there is no president or standing council, high priests who are traveling through and preaching could organize a council as needed to deal with immediate issues. Today, if there is no stake president and high council, such as in a District, this is handled through mission presidents, who can convene a temporary council with the same authority as a stake president.

25 ***appoint one of their own number.*** The presiding authority at the council would be selected by those in the

council. This was only a temporary position, held for the duration of the case only.

26 ***transmit, immediately, a copy of their proceedings.*** These traveling high priests who might need to hold a council were to send a full copy of the council notes and conclusion as quickly as possible to established Church leaders. Today it goes to the First Presidency.

#### 26 text note:

The 1834 minutes specify to send the notes of the council “to the high council at the seat of the government of the Church.” This was changed by Oliver Cowdery in vv. 26, 27, and 33 to the present reading, “the seat of the First Presidency of the Church,” in 1835.<sup>30</sup>

27 ***they may appeal to the high council.*** A decision made by a council organized by traveling high priests could be appealed to the high council in Kirtland (which was “the seat of the general government of the Church” at this time, as the original minutes recorded) and have the presidency of the high priesthood consider it. If they determined to change it, it erased the former decision “as though no such decision had been made,” in order to keep clean the name of the person on Church records.

28 ***only to be called on the most difficult cases.*** These councils called by traveling high priests should not be considered except for cases that would call for six speakers—the most difficult ones. The minutes do not specify what to do with the less difficult ones, other than that they should not be considered by the traveling high priests.

29 ***have power to say.*** The final say relative to the difficulty of a case and therefore whether a council should be convened it up to the traveling high priest.

#### 30-32 text note:

These verses were not in the original minutes but were added by Joseph Smith in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants once the Quorum of the Twelve came into existence.

30 ***the traveling high council composed of the twelve apostles.*** When the Quorum of the Twelve was organized in 1835, referred to as the “traveling high council,” this clarification was needed between their role and that of the traveling high priests with councils.

31 ***there can be an appeal.*** The decision of a stake high council or a traveling high priest council could be appealed to the presidency of the high priesthood, but the authority of the Council of the Twelve was such that there was no appeal; collectively, they had the same authority to make decisions regarding cases as did the First Presidency.

32 ***called in question by the general authorities.*** Decisions of the Council of the Twelve can be questioned by “the general authorities”—meaning the presidency of the high

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<sup>30</sup> JSP, D3:443n136.

priesthood. Today that term is used to refer to all who have “general” authority over the Church (First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, Seventies, Presiding Bishop) versus local authority (area seventies, stake presidents, mission presidents, bishops, etc.).

**33 *power to determine whether any such case, as may be appealed.*** The presidency of the high priesthood (today the First Presidency) has the final determination of the worthiness of a case to be appealed, because their decision cannot be appealed.

**34 *proceeded to cast lots or ballot, to ascertain who should speak first.*** On the date of the reading of the minutes, a council was convened to hear a case, and they cast lots and selected numbers accordingly, with the names being recorded in the minutes.

***Oliver Cowdery, Orson Hyde, Clerks.*** The original minutes included only Orson Hyde’s name. Oliver Cowdery’s was added in 1835, likely due to the edits he made in the text during the initial meeting on 19 February and while preparing it for printing.

## Results

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After hearing the minutes Joseph Smith had revised read three times and making at least one correction, the priesthood brethren present on 19 February 1834 voted unanimously and accepted the minutes as the “constitution of the high Council of the Church of Christ hereafter.” Joseph Smith then blessed his “two assistant presidents” (Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams) “that they might have wisdom to magnify their office, and power over all the power of the adversary.” He then gave blessings to the

twelve high councilors “that they might have wisdom and power to counsel in righteousness” in their duties.

Three patriarchal blessings were given (meaning, fathers gave them to sons), with Joseph Smith, Senior, blessing his sons Joseph and Samuel, and John Johnson blessing his son Luke. They all raised their hands to heaven “in token of the everlasting Covenant” and Joseph Smith declared the council “organized according to the ancient order, and also according to the mind of the Lord.”<sup>31</sup>

The first high council then heard the first case on the same day the minutes were approved, one involving Curtis Hodges. After hearing the evidence, Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Coe spoke, who had drawn numbers 1 and 2 in the lot. Curtis Hodges spoke last, and Joseph Smith rendered a decision, which the council supported by vote, after which Brother Hodges acknowledged his wrong-doing, saying that he “never saw it before and appeared to feel thankful that he saw it, he said he had learned more during this trial, than he had since he came into the Church.”<sup>32</sup> The first council process worked exactly as the inspired minutes outlined them, with positive results. This same pattern is followed each time a high council convenes in the Church today.

In July 1834, a similar group was organized by Joseph Smith in Clay County, Missouri, with the Presidency of the Church in Missouri (what we would today call the stake presidency) as its presidency. Later that group was transferred to Caldwell County, holding its meetings at Far West. When Joseph Smith moved to Far West in March 1838, this became the “high Council at the seat of the general government of the Church”—in other words, the highest of the high councils. The Nauvoo high council likewise filled that role in the early 1840s.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *JSP*, D3:445-446.

<sup>32</sup> *JSP*, D3:446-448.

<sup>33</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 3:284.

# Images

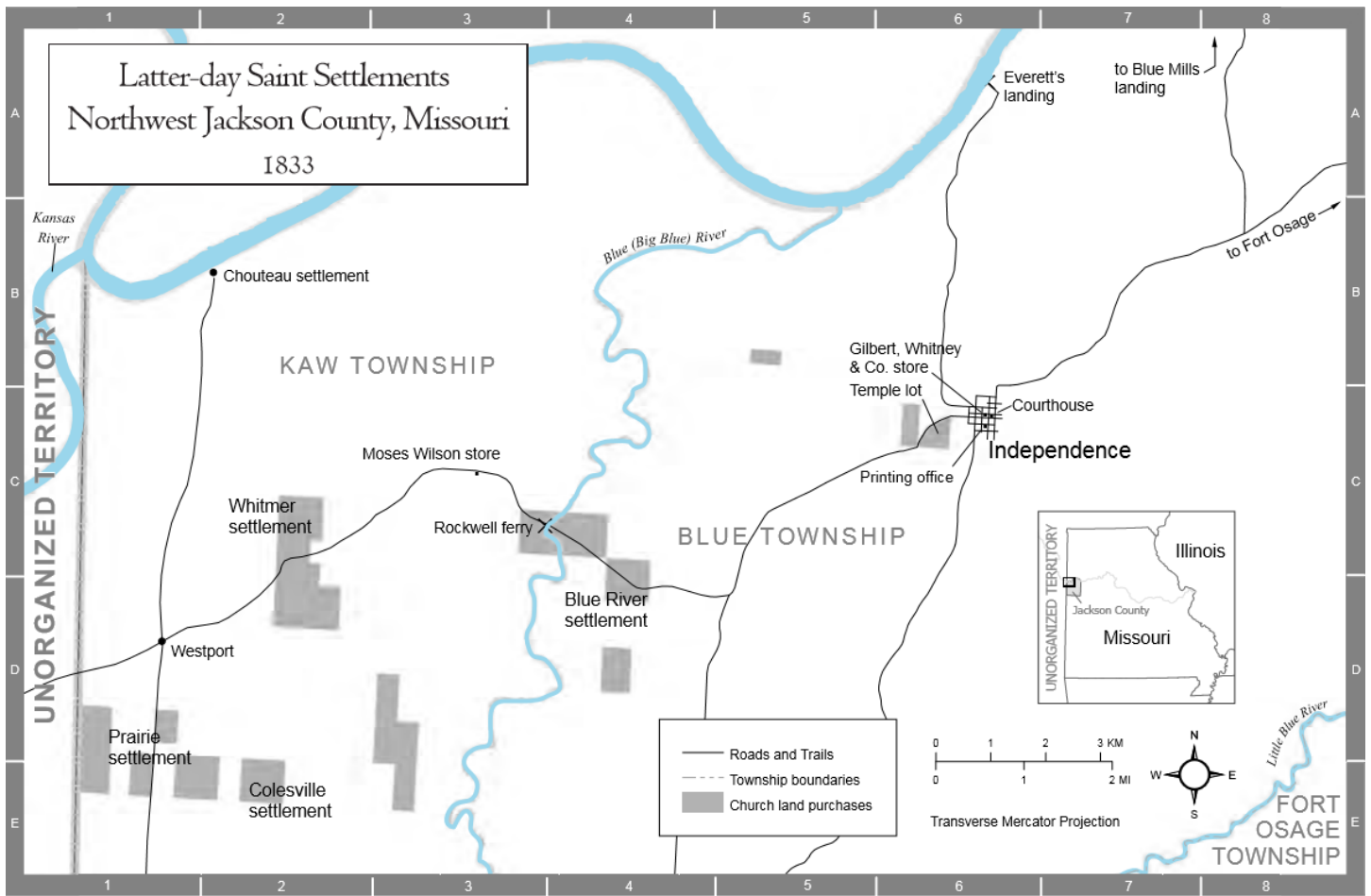


Image #1: Latter-day Saint Settlements in Northwest Jackson County, Missouri, 1833. From the Joseph Smith Papers website.

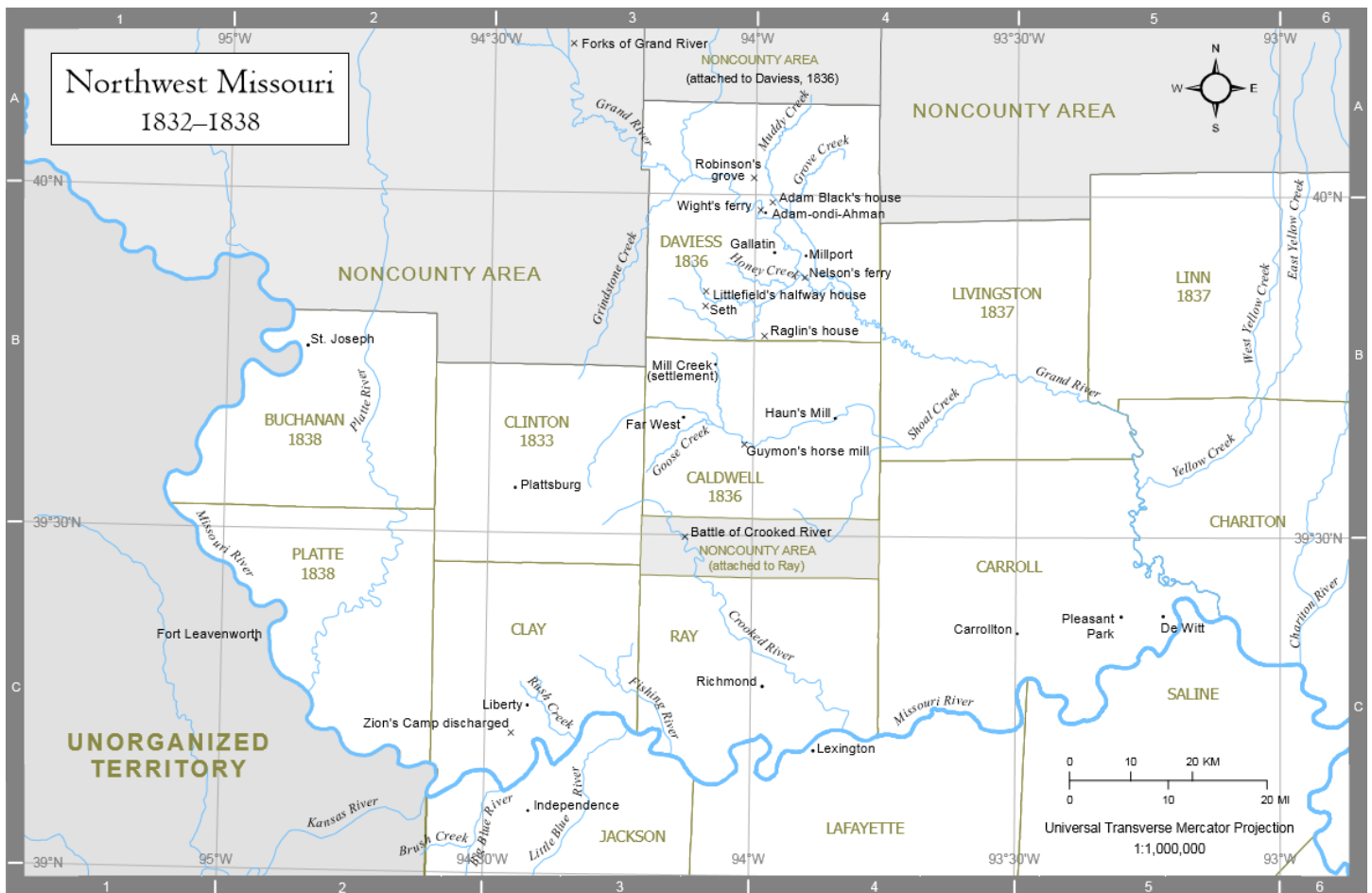


Image #2: Northwest Missouri, 1832-1838. From the Joseph Smith Papers website.

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