

D&C 124-126

Lesson 28, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 24 April 2017

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General Introduction

After being forced from their homes in Missouri in the winter of 1838-1839, Latter-day Saints moved east toward and across the Mississippi River, landing at various locations in western Illinois and eastern Iowa. Due to the generosity of its citizens who showed great empathy for the displaced refugees, Quincy became a principle gathering point. As they contemplated their next move, the Saints received Joseph Smith's letter from Liberty Jail that directed them to "secure to themselves the contract of the Land which is proposed to them by Mr. Isaac Galland,"¹ which was in what was then called Commerce, Illinois, on a peninsula at a bend in the Mississippi River north of Quincy and Warsaw.

Once Joseph Smith and the other imprisoned men were freed in spring 1839, they arrived in Illinois and began to look for a more permanent housing situation. Initially, there was much discussion about the merits of gathering again, and the scattered condition of the members of the Church in many counties seemed to alleviate some of the concerns that arose in Missouri when they congregated in close locations. But Joseph Smith's vision for the new home of the Church still included a temple, and for that to happen, there had to be a gathering.

Purchasing land in Commerce from Galland and other local speculators, the Church called for many to come to the new town, rechristened Nauvoo, the City Beautiful. Leveraging the sympathy of the residents of Illinois at their plight, the desire of state official to court their votes, and some new friendships with legislative influence, mainly through newcomer John C. Bennett, in December 1840, the state legislature granted and the governor signed a city charter for Nauvoo that gave them a large degree of self-governance, the right to organize a branch of the state militia, and a university. The Church seemed poised to move forward into an era of peace and prosperity they had not enjoyed for many years.

In the meantime, the Twelve departed for their mission to Britain that they had officially started on 26 April 1839 at

Far West, Missouri (having snuck back into the state and held their meeting just after midnight to fulfill the requirements of the revelation—D&C 118:4-5). None were in good financial shape or physical condition, with sickness common among the Twelve and their families. But their mission to England brought thousands of new converts who would migrate to Nauvoo and later Utah and buoy up the Church greatly impacted by apostasy in 1837-1839.²

The other effort that happened in late 1839 was the expedition to Washington D.C., to appeal for the help of the federal government in getting some restitution for their Missouri losses. The delegation included Sidney Rigdon, Elias Higbee, a former judge, Joseph Smith, and Orrin Porter Rockwell. The group added Dr. Robert D. Foster in Springfield, Illinois, to help care for the ailing Sidney Rigdon (like so many, he was suffering from malaria). They departed from Commerce on 29 October 1839, almost exactly one year after Bogg's extermination order and the arrest of dozens of Church leaders. Seeing he was not improving, Joseph and Elias Higbee left the rest of the group in Columbus, Ohio, with Sidney turning over his letters of introduction to the Prophet, adding his own endorsement. Arriving at the end of November, Joseph and Higbee quickly got down to business. On Friday, 29 November, they walked up to the door of the White House and requested an audience with the President, Martin Van Buren. Joseph was introduced by John Reynolds, the former governor and current congressman from Illinois. The outcome of the meeting was mixed: the President at first declined to help, considering it a state matter for Missouri, but after more conversation, reconsidered and offered some support. However, a second visit in late January or early February 1840 ended with the President reportedly saying he could not help them or he would lose the vote of Missouri, after which Van Buren just walked out and left them. Joseph Smith left disappointed and even angry at the President, as much by the abrupt dismissal he received as the answer.³

While we have very few of Joseph Smith's speeches prior to Nauvoo and many revelations, after 1839, the amount of

¹ "Letter to Edward Partridge and the Church, circa 22 March 1839," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-the-church-circa-22-march-1839/5>.

² "Take Special Care of Your Family," Revelations in Context, accessed 21 April 2017, <https://history.lds.org/article/take-special-care-of-your-family>.

³ Ronald O. Barney, "Joseph Smith Goes to Washington," in Holzapfel and Jackson, *Joseph Smith*, 390-420.

content shifts, with many talks and few revelations. Only three of the Prophet's revelations canonized in his lifetime were received in Nauvoo, and only nine sections in our current Doctrine and Covenants came during the Nauvoo period. In addition, several of those are letters of instruction as opposed to "Thus saith the Lord" revelations. That context makes the three revelations in this lesson all the more significant.⁴

Summary Chronology

- **Tue, 16 Apr 1839** – Joseph and the other Liberty Jail prisoners were allowed to leave Missouri and join their families in Illinois.

D&C 124 – Vision for Nauvoo

Date and Location

Tuesday, 19 January 1841, at Nauvoo, Illinois.

Setting

After getting the Nauvoo City Charter secured from the Illinois legislature and governor in December 1840 and with the incorporation of the Church in that state nearly complete (it was done 2 Feb 1841), Joseph Smith sought the Lord's will concerning their new city and the future of the Church. This was his first recorded revelation since his arrest and winter stay in Richmond and Liberty Jails and the longest of all the D&C sections. It could be considered an ecclesiastical charter much like the city charter granted by the state.⁵

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is Book of the Law of the Lord (19 January 1841), 3-15. It was first published in the *Times and Seasons* (1 June 1841), then as Section 103 in 1844.

Outline

- Proclamation to rulers (1-14)
- Commendations and warnings (15-21)
- Nauvoo House and temple (22-28)
- Baptisms for the dead (29-36)
- Temples as holy places (37-44)
- Jackson County work excused (45-55)
- Nauvoo House details (56-83)
- Nauvoo, not Kirtland (84-91a)
- Hyrum Smith calling (91b-96)
- Calls and labors (97-122)
- Priesthood officers and duties (123-145)

Commentary

Proclamation to rulers (1-14)

1 *I am well pleased with your offering and acknowledgments.* Joseph Smith came out of his five-month incarceration and trials with a renewed spirit of purpose and commitment. Now, more than a year and a half later, he is leading the Church with strength and authority, even though this is the first revelation he has recorded in quite some time.

1 *show forth my wisdom through the weak things of the earth.* If Joseph Smith had any power to move the work forward, it was from the Lord's wisdom through him, as one of the "weak things" of the world.

2 *make a solemn proclamation.* Just four days previous to this revelation, the Church had published a proclamation to the Saints outside of the Illinois/Iowa area. This proclamation had a different purpose and audience, explained in the next few verses.

3 *to the honorable president-elect.* In the election just held in 1840, Martin Van Buren was defeated, who was the president Joseph Smith visited twice in the White House and who declined to offer them any support in their quest for retribution for wrongs in Missouri. Troubled by a poor economy and with his plans for improved national financing hampered by a non-supportive congress, he was a one-term president. He was succeeded by William Henry Harrison, who took office on 4 March 1841.

4 *in the spirit of meekness and by the power of the Holy Ghost.* Though the proclamation was to say some bold things, the Lord still required it to be done with humility and as directed by the Spirit, good direction in any case.

5 *what shall befall them in a time to come.* The Spirit would direct the writers of the proclamation about what to say in relation to future events impacting world leaders.

⁴ "Organizing the Church in Nauvoo," Revelations in Context, accessed 21 April 2017, <https://history.lds.org/article/doctrine-and-covenants-organizing-nauvoo>; Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 3-119.

⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 455-456.

6 *the set time has come to favor her.* The purpose of the proclamation is first to announce to world leaders that Zion is established on the earth and they need to support her.

7 *fearing them not, for they are as grass.* Drawing on imagery from Isaiah 40:6-8, boldness was encouraged in the proclamation because though great leaders have broad power, in the end they are transitory and only serve for a short time, like grass that withers away in the hot sun.

8 *visit them in the day of visitation.* This language refers to the Second Coming, when the Lord will “unveil” his face and judge the wicked and those who reject the prophets.

9 *I will visit and soften their hearts.* There are many stories of the leaders of nations softening their hearts to allow the gospel message to be shared in their part of the world. There are also more stories to come as we wait to take the gospel into the remaining nations where we have no missionary force.

10 *where shall be the safety of my people.* To prepare for the Second Coming, the Lord established the Church in the last days, to provide safety and refuge for those who heed the message.

11 *come ye, with your gold and your silver.* The Lord requests not only the support of the leaders of the earth in allowing the preaching of the gospel but their monetary support as well.

11 *to the house of the daughters of Zion.* The “daughter of Zion” is a common reference in Isaiah. In that has half of the book, the story generally alternates between “servant songs” about a suffering servant and messiah and “daughter of Zion” songs (Isaiah 48-54).

12 *Robert B. Thompson.* Having served as both a clerk of a court and a newspaper writer, Thompson had good writing experience. He was called as “General Church Clerk” in October 1840 and helped with the petition to Congress. He was promised great blessings in conjunction with this assignment (v. 13). However, Thompson died unexpectedly at the age of twenty-nine on 27 August 1841, just a few months after this revelation and before any known work was done on the proclamation.

Commendations and warnings (15-21)

Hyrum Smith is praised in v. 15 because of his integrity and love of the right. In contrast, John C. Bennett is promised blessings with several “ifs”: if he receive counsel (v. 16); if he do this and if he continue (v. 17). Bennett, of course, will not remain in favor in the Church very long.

Lyman Wight (v. 18), who suffered with Joseph in Liberty Jail, was called to replace David W. Patten (v. 19) in the Quorum of the Twelve. He remained faithful until the

Prophet’s death in 1844, at which time he led a group of Saints to Texas to start their own church.

Verse 19 mentions three who had passed away: David Patten, a member of the Twelve killed at the Battle of Crooked River; Edward Partridge, the first bishop of the Church, died the previous June; and Joseph Smith, Sr., Church patriarch, died the previous October. They are all with the Lord and sitting with Abraham.

George Miller (vv. 20-21) replaced Edward Partridge as bishop and was called with three others as bishops over wards in Nauvoo in March 1841 (Newel K. Whitney, Isaac Higbee, and Vinson Knight were the others). This was later divided into ten wards with a bishop over each, establishing the pattern we still follow today.

Nauvoo House and temple (22-28)

The “house for boarding” or Nauvoo House, is discussed in vv. 22-24, a hotel for travelers to come and learn about the Church and the Saints.

Next was the command to build “a house to my name” in vv. 26-28, using OT language that called for people to bring their wealth and support the work of the Lord. The purpose of the temple was to restore “the fulness of the priesthood.

Baptisms for the dead (29-36)

The first mention of this in a published revelation (though Joseph Smith had written to the Twelve about it while they were in England), the Lord taught that a baptismal font needed to be built in the house of the Lord for these ordinances for the dead to be acceptable, though he allowed a period of time for them to perform them outside the temple. The first wooden baptismal font in the basement of the Nauvoo temple was completed in November 1841 and baptisms were done there starting at that time.

Temples as holy places (37-44)

Establishing the case for temple ordinances, the Lord reminded them of Moses’ commandments to build a tabernacle and the later construction of the temple (vv. 37-38). So all the ordinances of “my holy house” (v. 39) should take place in the house the Lord’s people are always commanded to build. They were to build in the place they had contemplated (on the bluff) and if they give it their best effort, the Lord will consecrate it or make it holy.

Jackson County work excused (45-55)

Nauvoo could be a permanent home if the people hearkened to the Lord, but if they did not, “they shall not be blest” (v. 45-46). Part of that expectation was to build a house (vv. 47-48). The principle that when the Lord’s people do their best to obey a commandment but are hindered

by their enemies, they are excused from that commandment was given (vv. 49-50). Thus the efforts to build up Jackson County were now excused and their enemies would be judged for how it was hindered (vv. 51-53). The slain of Missouri would be blessed (v. 54) and the work on the temple in Nauvoo was now what was required (v. 55).

Nauvoo House details (56-83)

Returning to the Nauvoo House, the Lord directed that Joseph and his family were to have a place there, as a blessing for his service (vv. 56-57). Like Abraham, Joseph and his seed would bless the earth (vv. 58-59). The name of the house is give as Nauvoo House (v. 60), a place where the Lord's servants might teach others of the gospel (v. 61).

The council to oversee the construction was appointed in v. 62. These men were to sell stock in the house to raise the funds to build it, no less than \$50/share and no more than \$15,000 from any one investor (v. 63-69). The money raised for the Nauvoo House cannot be used for any other purpose (v. 70). The Lord anticipated a four-fold repayment to investors (v. 71). Certain men are specifically called out as potential investors: Joseph Smith (v. 72); Vinson Knight (vv. 74-75); Hyrum Smith (v. 77); Isaac Galland (v. 78-79); William Marks (vv. 79-80); Henry Sherwood (v. 81); and William Law (v. 82), who was instructed not to go back to Kirtland (v. 83).

Nauvoo, not Kirtland (84-91a)

Almon Babbitt was chastised for setting up "a golden calf" to divert people from the truth. He was the leader in Kirtland at the time and was counseling people not to go to Nauvoo, contrary to what the Prophet taught (vv. 84-86).

William Law (vv. 87-91a) was ready to go to Kirtland, mainly because he was worried about the sicknesses in Nauvoo. The Lord instead called him to preach in the Nauvoo area and to take Hyrum Smith's place as a counselor in the First Presidency, and to trust the Lord with the rest.

Hyrum Smith calling (91b-96)

Hyrum Smith was called to two offices: "the office of Priesthood and Patriarch." The first was Oliver Cowdery's former position as Second Elder or Assistant President (vv. 94-96), an office only held by him and Hyrum. The second was to replace his father as Church patriarch (vv. 92-93).

Calls and labors (97-122)

This and the next section give specific calls to a number of people, more than any other section of the D&C. Only some are noted below.

William Law was called to be a member of the First Presidency in vv. 87-91 and was now given more promised related to that calling (vv. 97-102), such as healing the sick

and even raising the dead. Sadly, Law rebelled against the Church and was excommunicated in 1844, after which he started a newspaper called the *Nauvoo Expositor*, which printed things that caused the city council to order its destruction, which led to the arrest and murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

Sidney Rigdon (vv. 103-110) was invited to resume his role in the First Presidency if he would humble himself and repent. He was instructed to move into town and not go live in the east, and continue to be a spokesman and preach. He was promised that all would be well if he did so. He was invited to help write the proclamation (as outlined in vv. 1-14).

Amos Davies should invest in the Nauvoo House and prove himself faithful (vv. 111-114). He appeared to have done this but stayed in Nauvoo when the Saints went west.

Robert D. Foster had contracted to build a house for Joseph Smith but had not done that yet, so was called to repent and do it, as well as invest in the Nauvoo House and obey the First Presidency (v. 115-118). He was excommunicated in April 1844 and joined William Law's efforts to destroy Joseph Smith.

Those investing in the Nauvoo House should do so out of their testimonies and should help pay for the committee ("quorum") overseeing its construction (vv. 119-122).

Priesthood officers and duties (123-145)

After the scattering of the Missouri persecutions and the loss of leaders and members, it was time to reconstitute priesthood quorums, which the rest of the revelation does. This is similar to a sustaining of Church officers done at General Conference.

Hyrum Smith is patriarch (v. 124).

Joseph Smith is presiding elder, translator, revelator, seer, and prophet (v. 125).

Sidney Rigdon and William Law are counselors in the First Presidency (v. 126).

Brigham Young was the president of the Quorum of the Twelve, or the "traveling council" (v. 127) who hold the keys of taking the gospel to the earth (v. 128). The other members of the Twelve (one short at this time) are listed in v. 129). A note is added about David Patten holding his priesthood even into the next life.

The high council of Nauvoo are named (v. 132), Don Carlos Smith as president of the high priest quorum (v. 133-135), with Amasa Lyman and Noah Packard as counselors (v. 136). The presidency of the elders in v. 137, the seventies in v. 138 (with vv. 139-140 explaining the division of labor between elders and seventies), a bishopric in v. 141, and other presidencies in v. 142. These officers should be

sustained at the next general conference and given rooms for offices in the temple when it is done (vv. 143-144).

Results

Hyrum Smith was ordained as Assistant President and Patriarch of the Church on Sunday, 24 January 1841, replacing Oliver Cowdery and his own father, Joseph Smith, Sr., respectively in their offices.

On 3 February, the first Nauvoo elections were held. Most of the offices were filled by well-known Church leaders, including Joseph Smith as a city councilman, but some ‘old-timers’ from the Commerce area were also elected. A few days later, Joseph was appointed lieutenant general in the Nauvoo Legion by the governor.

John C. Bennett, promised a great reward if he would follow counsel, left the Church just a year and a half after this revelation, becoming a bitter persecutor of Joseph Smith and the Church after Bennett’s hypocrisy and adultery were exposed.

The proclamation to the world lost its assigned author, Robert B. Thompson, who died in August 1841, and partner, with Bennett’s apostasy. Though some attempts were made in subsequent years, no real progress was made until 1844 when William W. Phelps compiled twenty-two manuscript pages that he said were approved by Joseph Smith. After the martyrdom, Parley P. Pratt tackled finishing it on behalf of the Twelve, publishing it in 1845.⁶

The revelation called for two significant buildings in Nauvoo, the temple and the Nauvoo House. Though the cornerstones for the temple were laid on 6 April 1841, and work on Nauvoo House began that fall, neither was finished in Joseph Smith’s lifetime. Building both with equal priority taxed the resources of the struggling Church, after the losses of Missouri, even with thousands of new converts joining the Church from England and other parts of the United States. In the end, the temple was not fully completed in time for the departure from Nauvoo, and then it was put up for sale to help fund pressing financial needs. It never sold and in 1848 was destroyed by fire.

The Nauvoo House was left undone as the Saints moved west, though its cornerstone contained the original Book of Mormon manuscript, the likely original of D&C 124, and other important Church documents. Lewis Bidamon, Emma Smith’s second husband, took the stones from the unfinished larger house and used them to complete a smaller building on part of the foundation, known as the Riverside Mansion, which the family used starting in 1871 and which is still there today.

The Lord’s vision for Nauvoo, as expressed in D&C 124, motivated great action and commitment and blessed the lives of thousands, even though they had to flee their beloved City Beautiful before all its charges from the Lord were fully met. It nevertheless oriented the Prophet and the Church in a marvelous direction with blessings they could have experienced no other way.⁷

D&C 125 – title

Date and Location

date

Setting

setting

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is xxx (date), pages. It was first published as Section xxx in 18xx.

Outline

- Outline (vv)

Commentary

Topic (vv)

1

Results

results

⁶ You can see the printed version and read the whole text on BYU’s online library site: <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/2818> (accessed 22 April 2017).

⁷ “Organizing the Church in Nauvoo,” *Revelations in Context*, accessed 21 April 2017, <https://history.lds.org/article/doctrine-and-covenants-organizing-nauvoo>; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “The Nauvoo Temple,” in Holzapfel and Jackson, *Joseph Smith*, 421-424.

D&C 126 – title

Date and Location

date

Setting

setting

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is xxx (date), pages. It was first published as Section xxx in 18xx.

Outline

- Outline (vv)

Commentary

Topic (vv)

1

Results

results

Images

Image #1:

Works Consulted

For text and publication notes:

RB1 – Revelation Book 1, from *JSP*, MRB:8-405.

RB2 – Revelation Book 2, from *JSP*, MRB:407-665.

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SGN – Sidney Gilbert Notebook (various Dx volumes)

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