

Come Follow Me Lesson 8
February 15-21
D&C 14-17

D&C 14

Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to David Whitmer, at Fayette, New York, June 1829. HC 1: 48—50. The Whitmer family had become greatly interested in the translating of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet established his residence at the home of Peter Whitmer, Sen., where he dwelt until the work of translation was carried to completion and the copyright on the forthcoming book secured. Three of the Whitmer sons, each having received a testimony as to the genuineness of the work, became deeply concerned over the matter of their individual duty. This revelation and the two next following (Sections 15 and 16) were given in answer to an inquiry through the Urim and Thummim. David Whitmer later became one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. (During the translation of the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery corresponded with the Peter Whitmer Sr. family about the work in which he was engaged. In her history, Joseph's mother wrote that the Lord instructed Joseph and Oliver by means of the Urim and Thummim to request to live with the Whitmers. "One morning as he applied it to his eyes to look upon the record, instead of the words of the book being given to him, he was commanded to write a letter to one David Whitmer, who lived in Waterloo. This man Joseph had never seen, but he was instructed to say to him that he must come with his team immediately, in order to convey Joseph and Oliver back to his house, that they might remain with him there until the translation should be completed, as an evil-designing people were seeking to take away Joseph's life in order to prevent the work of God from going forth among the world" (Smith, History of Joseph Smith, 1996, 192). David arrived with a wagon in early June to transport Joseph and Oliver to his family's home in Fayette. During this move, Joseph entrusted the plates to Moroni for safekeeping. David Whitmer recorded an interesting event that occurred en route. "When I was returning to Fayette, with Joseph and Oliver, all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old fashioned wooden spring seat and Joseph behind us; while traveling along in a clear open place, a very pleasant, nice- looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, 'good morning, it is very warm,' at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation, and by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, 'No, I am going to Cumorah.' This name was something new to me, I did not know what Cumorah meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and as I looked enquiringly of Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again" (Millennial Star, 49:772). Shortly after the three men arrived in Fayette, Moroni delivered the plates to Joseph in the Whitmer garden. Describing the circumstances at the Whitmer farm, Joseph said, "It was arranged that we should have our board free of charge, and the assistance of one of his brothers to write for me, and also his own assistance when convenient. Having much need of such timely aid in an undertaking so arduous, and being informed that the people in the neighborhood of the Whitmers were anxiously awaiting the opportunity to inquire into these things, we accepted the invitation, and accompanied Mr. Whitmer to his father's house, and there resided until the translation was finished and the copyright secured. Upon our arrival, we found Mr. Whitmer's family very anxious concerning the work, and very friendly toward ourselves. They continued so, boarded and lodged us according to arrangements; and John Whitmer, in particular, assisted us very much in writing during the remainder of the work. "In the meantime, David, John and Peter Whitmer, Jun., became our zealous friends and assistants in the work; and being anxious to know their respective duties, and having desired with much earnestness that I should inquire of the Lord concerning them, I did so, through the means of the Urim and Thummim, and

obtained for them in succession the following revelations . . ." (Smith, History of the Church, 1:49). Revelations of the Restoration, 122-3)

1—6, Laborers in the vineyard will gain salvation; 7—8, Eternal life is the greatest of God's gifts; 9—11, Christ created the heavens and the earth.

1 A GREAT and ^amarvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men.

2 Behold, I am God; give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my word.

3 Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God.

4 Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God.

5 Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will ^aknock it shall be opened unto you.

6 Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion. Keep my commandments in all things.

SCRIPTURE MASTERY: 7 And, if you ^akeep my commandments and ^bendure to the end you shall have ^ceternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God. (Even though he was one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, he lost the Spirit and was excommunicated from the Church in 1838. Although he never denied his testimony of the Book of Mormon, he was a constant critic of Joseph Smith and died outside the Church. We note with particular interest that when Moroni showed the Three Witnesses the plates, he turned directly to David Whitmer and said, "David, blessed is he that endureth to the end" (Roberts, Conference Report, October 1926, 126).)

8 And it shall come to pass, that if you shall ask the Father in my name, in faith ^abelieving, you shall receive the ^bHoly Ghost, which ^cgiveth utterance, that you may stand as a ^dwitness of the things of which you shall both ^ehear and see, and also that you may declare ^frepentance unto this generation.

9 Behold, I am ^aJesus Christ, the ^bSon of the ^cliving God, who ^dcreated the heavens and the ^eearth, a ^flight which cannot be hid in ^gdarkness;

10 Wherefore, I must bring forth the ^afulness of my ^bgospel from the ^cGentiles unto the house of Israel. (Wilford Woodruff: **We are all Gentiles. The Latter-day Saints are all Gentiles in a national capacity. The gospel came to us among the Gentiles. We are not Jews, and the Gentile nations have got to hear the gospel first. The whole Christian world has got to hear the gospel, and when they reject it, the law will be bound and the testimony sealed, and it will turn to the house of Israel. Up to the present day we have been called to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and we have had to do it.**—JD 18:112, September 12, 1875.)

11 And behold, thou art David, and thou art called to assist; which thing if ye do, and are faithful, ye shall be blessed both spiritually and temporally, and great shall be your reward. Amen. (David Whitmer had already received a witness to the Lord's promise. In the preparation to move the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to his father's farm, there were several manifestations of divine intervention, which brought both spiritual and temporal blessings. When Oliver Cowdery's letter arrived at the Whitmer home requesting that David travel to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to transport him and Joseph to Fayette, the family was not certain how to respond. David Whitmer explained, "I did not know what to do, I was pressed with my work. I had some 20 acres to plow, so I concluded I would finish plowing and then go. I got up one morning to go to work as usual, and on going to the field, found between five and seven acres of my ground had been plowed during the night. "I don't know who did it; but it was done just as I would have done it myself, and the plow was left standing in the furrow" (Millennial Star, 49:772). Describing this event, Lucy Mack Smith recalled: "When he [David] informed his father of the fact, his father could not believe it till he examined for himself and ascertained that it was actually true. 'Well,' said his father, 'there must be some overruling power in this thing, and I think you had better go as soon

as you get your plaster of paris sown [a common fertilizer of the day] and bring up the man with his scribe.' "To this also David agreed. The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, he took the half-bushel measure under his arm and went out to the place where he supposed the plaster to be, as he knew exactly where he had left it twenty- four hours earlier. But when he came to look for it, behold, it had entirely disappeared! Every vestige of it was gone from the spot where he left it. He ran to his sister's house a few yards distant and inquired if she knew what had become of it. "'Why?' she said, in surprise. 'Was it not all spread yesterday?' "'Not to my knowledge,' answered David. "'I am astonished at that,' replied his sister, 'for the children came to me in the forenoon and begged of me to go out and see the men sow plaster in the field, saying that they never saw anybody sow plaster so fast in their lives. I accordingly went and saw three men at work in the field, as the children said, but, supposing that you had hired some help on account of your hurry, I went immediately into the house and gave the subject no further attention.' "David made considerable inquiry in regard to the matter, both among his relatives and neighbors, but was not able to learn who had done it. However, the family were convinced that there was an exertion of supernatural power connected with this strange occurrence" (Smith, History of Joseph Smith, 1996, 193-94). As if this was not enough to convince the Whitmers that the Lord had chosen Joseph Smith to be his servant, David related: "When I arrived at Harmony, Joseph and Oliver were coming toward me, and met me some distance from the house. Oliver told me that Joseph had told him when I started from home, where I had stopped the first night, how I read the sign at the tavern, where I stopped the next night, etc., and that I would be there that day before dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me; all of which was exactly as Joseph had told Oliver, at which I was greatly astonished" (Millennial Star, 49:772). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 124-5)

D&C 15

Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to John Whitmer, at Fayette, New York, June 1829. HC 1: 50; see also heading to Section 14. The message is intimately and impressively personal, in that the Lord tells of what was known only to John Whitmer and himself. John Whitmer later became one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. (Doctrine and Covenants 15 and 16 are identical save the names John and Peter in verse one and the word "unto" in verse 5 of section 16, which was inserted after 1843. They are the only known revelations to have been given in exactly the same wording. Similar to the first six verses of sections 6, 11, 12, and 14, the parallel wording indicates that the messages were directed intimately to the recipients but also to "all those who have desires to bring forth and establish this work" (D&C 12:7). **Like mission calls that are extended today, the wording of each call is identical. Nonetheless, the recipients esteemed the call as an intimate revelation giving direction to their service in the kingdom of God. The publication of these three sections (D&C 14-16) illustrates the importance that Joseph Smith and those who assisted in the Restoration attached to the Lord's words. Elder John A. Widtsoe explained: "The Doctrine and Covenants is a compilation of the revelations received by Joseph Smith to individuals and for the guidance of the Church. From the first years of the work the Prophet kept every scrap of paper pertaining to the progress of the work. In fact this care of things that must have seemed trivial is one of the evidences of the sincerity of the man. For example, when John and Peter Whitmer asked for help, he received for each of them a revelation, substantially the same. . . . "This simple revelation is directed to the individual and at first sight has no permanent value for the Church. Yet as a revelation from God it was preserved and published. An insincere man could have eliminated this and other similar revelations as of little consequence. Not so with Joseph. The Lord had spoken. The words were part of the building of the kingdom of God, and the same advice would be useful to many men then and now"** (Joseph Smith, 251-52). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 126)

1—2, *The Lord's arm is over all the earth*; 3—6, *To preach the gospel and save souls is the thing of most worth.*

1 HEARKEN, my servant John, and listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer.
2 For behold, I speak unto you with ^asharpness and with power, for mine arm is over all the ^bearth. (The phrase “arm of God” denotes His power and authority.)
3 And I will ^atell you that which no man ^bknoweth save me and thee alone—
4 For many times you have desired of me to know that which would be of the most worth unto you.
5 Behold, blessed are you for this thing, and for speaking my words which I have given you according to my commandments.
6 And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to ^adeclare ^brepentance unto this people, that you may bring ^csouls unto me, that you may ^drest with them in the ^ekingdom of my ^fFather. Amen. (Orson F. Whitney: The obligation of saving souls rests upon every man and woman in this Church—if not with equal weight, at least proportionately, according to their strength, their time, their opportunities, their abilities; and they cannot get out from under this responsibility on the plea that it belongs only to such and such persons. Did not the Lord say, through Joseph the Seer, at the beginning of this work, "Behold, it is a day of warning, and not a day of many words. . . . it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor"? [Sec. 63:58, 88:81.] (CR, October 1913, p. 99.))

D&C 16

Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Peter Whitmer, Jun., at Fayette, New York, June 1829. HC 1: 51; see also heading to Section 14. Peter Whitmer, Jun., later became one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. (Sections 14-16 are virtually identical.)

1—2, *The Lord's arm is over all the earth*; 3—6, *To preach the gospel and save souls is the thing of most worth.*

1 ^aHEARKEN, my servant Peter, and listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer.
2 For behold, I speak unto you with sharpness and with power, for mine arm is over all the earth.
3 And I will tell you that which no man knoweth save me and thee alone— **(Some think that the dash here in these three sections may mean that there were some things said to these brethren that were personal and not recorded in the scripture.)**
4 For many times you have desired of me to know that which would be of the most worth unto you.
5 Behold, blessed are you for this thing, and for speaking my words which I have given unto you according to my commandments.
6 And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father. Amen.

D&C 17

Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, at Fayette, New York, June 1829, prior to their viewing the engraved plates that contained the Book of Mormon record. HC 1: 52–57. Joseph and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, had learned from the translation of the Book of Mormon plates that three special witnesses would be designated. See Ether 5: 2–4; also 2 Nephi 11: 3 and 27: 12. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris were moved

upon by an inspired desire to be the three special witnesses. The Prophet inquired of the Lord, and this revelation was given in answer, through the Urim and Thummim.

(Not only did the witnesses know that the book was of God, they also knew that it was based on real history and real people who really did what the book claims they did, for they saw for themselves the artifacts associated with that history. Thus, the Testimony of Three Witnesses makes untenable any claim that the Book of Mormon may be inspired without being historical. ACD&C 1:99)

1–4, By faith the Three Witnesses shall see the plates and other sacred items; 5–9, Christ bears testimony to the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

1 BEHOLD, I say unto you, that you must rely upon my word, which if you do with full purpose of heart, you shall have a ^aview of the ^bplates, and also of the ^cbreastplate, the ^dsword of Laban, the ^eUrim and Thummim, which were given to the ^fbrother of Jared upon the mount, when he talked with the Lord ^gface to face, and the ^hmiraculous directors which were given to Lehi while in the wilderness, on the borders of the ⁱRed Sea. (There is no other account of anyone else seeing the Liahona in the latter days except for the vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses on this occasion. Revelations of the Restoration, 131 The breastplate. The breastplate was contained in the stone box that held the plates. **Lucy Mack Smith had the privilege of handling the breastplate soon after Joseph received it from the Hill Cumorah. She said that Joseph "handed me the breastplate spoken of in his history. "It was wrapped in a thin muslin handkerchief, so thin that I could see the glistening metal and ascertain its proportions without any difficulty. "It was concave on one side, and convex on the other, and extended from the neck downwards, as far as the center of the stomach of a man of extraordinary size. It had four straps of the same material for the purpose of fastening it to the breast, two of which ran back to go over the shoulders, and the other two were designed to fasten to the hips. They were just the width of two of my fingers (for I measured them), and they had holes in the end of them to be convenient in fastening"** (Smith, History of Joseph Smith, 1996, 148-49). **The Urim and Thummim were attached to the breastplate by means of a rod. William Smith, the Prophet's brother, explained that "a pocket was prepared in the breastplate on the left side, immediately over the heart. When not in use the Urim and Thummim was placed in this pocket, the rod being of just the right length to allow it to be so deposited. This instrument could, however, be detached from the breastplate . . . when away from home, but [Joseph] always used it in connection with the breastplate when receiving official communications, and usually so when translating, as it permitted him to have both hands free to hold the plates"** (Smith, in Rod of Iron 1, 3 [February 1924]: 7). Revelations of the Restoration, 129-130))

2 And it is by your faith that you shall obtain a view of them, even by that faith which was had by the prophets of old.

3 And after that you have obtained faith, and have seen them with your eyes, you shall ^atestify of them, by the power of God; **(You shall testify of them, by the power of God. Nephi wrote that "when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1). As these men lived worthy of that companionship, there was a great power that attended their testimony. Those who were privileged to hear one or more of the Three Witnesses bear testimony also had opportunity to have that testimony confirmed by the power of the Holy Ghost. William H. Homer visited with Martin Harris in the Kirtland Temple about the last of December 1869. He asked Martin, "'What about your testimony to the Book of Mormon? Do you still believe that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith was a Prophet?' Again, the effect was electric. A changed old man stood before me. It was no longer a man with an imagined grievance. It was a man with a message, a man with a noble conviction in his heart, a man inspired of God and endowed with divine knowledge. Through the**

broken window of the Temple shone the winter sun, clear and radiant. "'Young man,' answered Martin Harris with impressiveness, 'Do I believe it! Do I see the sun shining! Just as surely as the sun is shining on us and gives us light, and the . . . [moon] and stars give us light by night, just as surely as the breath of life sustains us, so surely do I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, chosen of God to open the last dispensation of the fulness of times; so surely do I know that the Book of Mormon was divinely translated. I saw the plates; I saw the Angel; I heard the voice of God. I know that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith was a true Prophet of God. I might as well doubt my own existence as to doubt the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon or the divine calling of Joseph Smith.' It was a sublime moment. It was a wonderful testimony. We were thrilled to the very roots of our hair. The shabby, emaciated little man before us was transformed as he stood with hand outstretched toward the sun of heaven. A halo seemed to encircle him. A divine fire glowed in his eyes. His voice throbbed with the sincerity and the conviction of his message. It was the real Martin Harris whose burning testimony no power on earth could quench. It was the most thrilling moment of my life" (Homer, "Passing of Martin Harris," 469-70; emphasis added) Revelations of the Restoration, 132-133)

4 And this you shall do that my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., may not be destroyed, that I may bring about my righteous purposes unto the children of men in this work. (The strength and importance of the testimony of the Three Witnesses of the Restoration is immeasurable. It is significant that not only did the Prophet Joseph Smith testify truthfully of his sacred revelatory experiences but others shared these experiences with him. Many articles and books have been written to explain away or refute the testimony of Joseph Smith. Indeed, the authors of these articles have sought to destroy the Prophet by destroying the credibility of his testimony. However, these critics curiously leave the testimony of the Three Witnesses alone. It has been the common practice for detractors of the Restoration to stick their heads in the sand and ignore the special witness of these three men. One cannot get around their testimony nor undermine it. Notwithstanding their struggles and trials, each of these men remained true to their testimony of these events to their deaths. Their testimony gives great credibility to the testimony of Joseph Smith. Revelations of the Restoration, 134)

5 And ye shall testify that you have seen them, even as my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., has seen them; for it is by my power that he has seen them, and it is because he had faith.

6 And he has translated the ^abook, even that ^bpart which I have commanded him, and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true.

7 Wherefore, you have received the same power, and the same faith, and the same gift like unto him;
8 And if you do these last ^acommandments of mine, which I have given you, the ^bgates of hell shall not prevail against you; for my ^cgrace is sufficient for you, and you shall be ^dlifted up at the last day. (David Whitmer recounted what then followed: "We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon but also the brass plates, the plates of the Book of Ether, the plates containing the records of the wickedness and secret combinations of the people of the world down to the time of their being engraved, and many other plates. . . . There appeared as it were, a table with many records or plates upon it, besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the Sword of Laban, the directors—i.e., the ball which Lehi had, and the Interpreters. I saw them just as plain as I see this bed (striking the bed beside him with his hand), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life, declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God." When asked if he saw the angel at that time, Brother Whitmer replied, "Yes; he stood before us, our testimony as recorded in the Book of Mormon is strictly and absolutely true, just as it is there written." Joseph then left Oliver and David and found Martin Harris engaged in prayer, as he had previously been instructed by the Lord (see D&C 5:24). After joining him in prayer, Joseph and Martin had the heavens open and saw the same vision as the first two. ACD&C, 1:101)

9 And I, Jesus Christ, your ^aLord and your God, have spoken it unto you, that I might bring about my righteous purposes unto the children of men. Amen.

(The testimony of the Three Witnesses is given in the preface to the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris never faltered in bearing testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. As history attests, however, they did falter in other Church-related areas. David Whitmer left the Church and never came back. Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris both left the Church but were eventually rebaptized and died in full fellowship. But even while they were out of the Church, all three continued to bear solemn witness of the reality of their experience on that day. They undoubtedly felt the weight of the Lord's warning to them to keep his commandments or the gates of hell would prevail against them. **Francis W. Kirkham wrote about Oliver Cowdery's death** that "in the year 1878, David Whitmer said to Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith concerning his departure: 'Oliver died the happiest man I ever saw. After shaking hands with the family and kissing his wife and daughter, he said, "Now I lay me down for the last time; I am going to my Savior"; and he died immediately, with a smile on his face.'" (*New Witness for Christ*, 1:248.) The *Richmond Democrat* carried the following account of **David Whitmer**: "On Sunday evening, at 5:30 (Jan. 22, 1888), Mr. Whitmer called his family and some friends to his bedside, and addressing himself to the attending physician, said: 'Dr. Buchanan, I want you to say whether or not I am in my right mind, before I give my dying testimony.' The doctor answered: 'Yes, you are in your right mind, for I have just had a conversation with you.' He then addressed himself to all around his bedside in these words: 'Now you must all be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all, the Bible and the record of the Nephites (Book of Mormon) is true, so you can say that you have heard me bear my testimony on my death-bed. All be faithful in Christ, and your reward will be according to your works. God bless you all. My trust is in Christ forever, worlds without end. Amen.'" (In Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:270.) **The last testimony of Martin Harris** was given to Elder William Harrison Homer, who was with him at the time of his death. Elder Homer recorded: "The next day, July 10, 1875, marked the end. It was in the evening. It was milking time, and Martin Harris, Jr., and his wife, Nancy Homer Harris, had gone out to milk and to do the evening's chores. In the house with the stricken man were left my mother, Eliza Williamson Homer, and myself, who had had so interesting a day with Martin Harris at Kirtland. I stood by the bedside holding the patient's right hand and my mother at the foot of the bed, Martin Harris had been unconscious for a number of days. When we first entered the room the old gentleman appeared to be sleeping. He soon woke up and asked for a drink of water. I put my arm under the old gentleman, raised him, and my mother held the glass to his lips. He drank freely, then he looked up at me and recognized me. He said, 'I know you. You are my friend.' He said, 'Yes, I did see the plates on which the Book of Mormon was written; I did see the angel; I did hear the voice of God; and I do know that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, holding the keys of the Holy Priesthood.' This was the end. Martin Harris, divinely-chosen witness of the work of God, relaxed, gave up my hand. He lay back on his pillow and just as the sun went down behind the Clarkston mountains, the soul of Martin Harris passed on. . . . (Signed) William Harrison Homer. "Signed in the presence of Mrs. W. H. Homer, Joseph Homer, Leah Widtsoe, John A. Widtsoe." (In *New Witness for Christ*, 1:253–54.))