

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 12

This section is addressed to Joseph Knight, Sen., who had come to the assistance of Joseph and Oliver in giving them food in the Spring of 1829, so they might continue the work of translation uninterrupted.

1 A great and marvelous 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 knock it shall be opened unto you.

v1-5 uses the same general opening address as D&C 11 and 14, which is derivative of D&C 4.

6 Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion. 7 Behold, I speak unto you, and also to all those who have desires to bring forth and establish this work; 8 And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care. 9 Behold, I am the light and the life of the world, that speak these words, therefore give heed with your might, and then you are called. Amen.

v6-9 A statement specifically to Knight, but also made general in v. 7, stating that if he is physically willing and spiritually prepared he may assist in the work of Zion.

These verses emphasize it is the Lord speaking to Knight, "I say unto you (v. 6)...I speak unto you (v. 7)...I am the light and the life of the world, that speak these words (v. 9)." Given the tangible presence of Smith and the manner in which the revelation was received, it would be easy to confuse or question the origin of the message, particularly if Knight had lingering doubts.

v7 Note the admonitions the Lord gives Knight are dealing with personal spirituality. Knight was already helping Smith and Cowdery by giving them material support. He obviously had no problems with physical things when it comes to building Zion. Now the Lord wants him to focus on personal spiritual things.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 12

We have a considerable amount of historical material establishing the context of Joseph Knight, Sr.'s relationship with Joseph Smith, Jr. and his willingness to support the effort to translate the Book of Mormon.

The first set of excerpts is from Joseph Knight, Jr. and Joseph Knight, Sr. commenting on Joseph Smith's character and the events of the translation and giving the context of how their relationship was formed. The second set of excerpts is Joseph Smith commenting on his friendship with Joseph Knight, Sr. and the considerable assistance he gave to him. The third excerpt is a historical commentary with one additional quotation of Joseph Knight, Sr.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833 on page 31, then in the Kirtland edition Doctrine & Covenants in 1835 on page 169. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 3, number 20, page 884, on August 15, 1842 and in Millennial Star, volume 3, number 10, page 164 on February, 1843.

Excerpts from Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration

In 1827 [the winter of 1826-1827] he [my father, Joseph Knight, Sr.] hired Joseph Smith. Joseph and I worked and slept together. My father said Joseph was the best hand he ever hired. We found him a boy of truth. He was about 21 years of age. I think it was in November [1826] he made known to my father and I that he had seen a vision, that a personage had appeared to him and told him where there was a gold book of ancient date buried, and if he would follow the directions of the angel he could get it. We were told it in secret; I being the youngest son, my two older brothers did not believe in such things. My father and I believed what he told us. I think we were the first [to believe] after his father's family [and probably Martin Harris]. . . . At last he got the plates, and rode in my father's wagon and carried them home. (Milton V. Backman, Jr., Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration, pages 72 [excerpt from Autobiography of Joseph Knight, page 1])

[In] the forepart of September [1827], I [Joseph Knight, Sr.] went to Rochester on business and returned by Palmyra to be there by the 22nd of September. I was there several days.... That night we went to bed and in the morning I got up and my

horse and carriage were gone.... After a while he [Joseph Smith] came home [with] the horse. All came into the house to breakfast but nothing [was] said about where they had been. After breakfast Joseph called me into the other room.... He set his foot on the bed, leaned his head on his hand and said, ... "It is ten times better than I expected." Then he went on to tell length and width and thickness of the plates; and said he, "They appear to be gold." But he seemed to think more of the glasses or the Urim and Thummim than he did of the plates, for, said he, "I can see anything; they are marvelous. Now they are written in characters and I want them translated." (Milton V. Backman, Jr., Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration, pages 72 [excerpt from Reminiscences of Joseph Knight, in the Church Archives])

When Joseph began to translate he was poor...and had no one to write for him but his wife, and, in the winter, her brother wrote a little for him. Even though his wife, Emma, did write for him she could not do much because she had to take care of the house. His wife's father and family were all against him [Joseph] and would not help him. He and his wife came up to see me [in Colesville, New York,] the first winter of 1828 and told me his case. But I [Joseph Knight, Sr.] was not in easy circumstances and I did not know what it might amount to, and my wife and family were all against me helping him. But I did give him a few provisions and a few things out of the store: a pair of shoes and three dollars in money to help him a little....

The last of March [1828] I told my wife that I must go down and see Joseph again. She asked, "Why do you go so soon?"

I said, "Come, go and see."

And she went with me. Next morning we went down and found them well and they were glad to see us. Joseph talked to us about his translating and some revelations he had received. From that time my wife began to believe....

In the spring of 1829 Oliver Cowdery [traveled to Pennsylvania where] he received a revelation concerning the work. Oliver was convinced of the truth of the work and agreed to write for Joseph until the work was finished. Now Joseph and Oliver came up to see me and asked if I could help them buy some provisions, they having no way to buy them. When they arrived I was not there. I was in the Catskills. But when I came home my folks told me what Joseph wanted. I had engaged to go to the Catskills again the next day and I went, but I did buy a barrel of mackrel and some lined paper for writing. When I returned home, I bought some nine or ten bushels of grain and five or six bushels of taters and a pound of tea. I left to see them and

they were in want. Joseph and Oliver were gone seeking employment for provisions, but they found none. They returned home and found me there with the provisions and they were glad for they were out. Their family consisted of four, Joseph, and his wife, Oliver, and Samuel Smith. They went back to work and had provisions enough to last until the translation was finished. (Milton V. Backman, Jr., Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration, pages 117-118 [excerpt from Reminiscences of Joseph Knight, in the Church Archives])

Excerpts from History of the Church

About the same time an old gentleman came to visit us of whose name I wish to make honorable mention-Mr. Joseph Knight, Sen., of Colesville, Broome county, New York, who, having heard of the manner in which we were occupying our time, very kindly and considerately brought us a quantity of provisions, in order that we might not be interrupted in the work of translation by the want of such necessities of life; and I would just mention here, as in duty bound, that he several times brought us supplies, a distance of at least thirty miles, which enabled us to continue the work when otherwise we must have relinquished it for a season. Being very anxious to know his duty as to this work, I inquired of the Lord for him, and obtained the following:

[text of D&C 12 follows]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 1, page 47)

During this month of April [1830], I went on a visit to the residence of Mr. Joseph Knight, of Colesville, Broome county, New York, with whom and his family I had been for some time acquainted, and whose name I had previously mentioned as having been so kind and thoughtful towards us while translating the Book of Mormon. Mr. Knight and his family were Universalists, but were willing to reason with me upon my religious views, and were, as usual, friendly and hospitable. We held several meetings in the neighborhood; we had many friends, and some enemies. Our meetings were well attended, and many began to pray fervently to Almighty God, that He would give them wisdom to understand the truth. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 1, page 81)

On the day following, a court was convened for the purpose of investigating those charges which had been preferred against me. A great excitement prevailed on account of the scandalous

falsehoods which had been circulated, the nature of which will appear in the sequel. In the meantime, my friend, Joseph Knight, had repaired to two of his neighbors, viz., James Davidson and John Reid, Esqrs., respectable farmers, men renowned for their integrity, and well versed in the laws of their country; and retained them on my behalf during my trial. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 1, page 89)

I find my feelings of the 16th inst. towards my friends revived, while I contemplate the virtues and the good qualities and characteristics of the faithful few, which I am now recording in the Book of the Law of the Lord, -of such as have stood by me in every hour of peril, for these fifteen long years past, -say, for instance, my aged and beloved brother, Joseph Knight, Sen., who was among the number of the first to administer to my necessities, while I was laboring in the commencement of the bringing forth of the work of the Lord, and of laying the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For fifteen years he has been faithful and true, and even-handed and exemplary, and virtuous and kind, never deviating to the right hand or to the left. Behold he is a righteous man, may God Almighty lengthen out the old man's days; and may his trembling, tortured, and broken body be renewed, and in the vigor of health turn upon him, if it be Thy will, consistently, O God; and it shall be said of him, by the sons of Zion, while there is one of them remaining, that this man was a faithful man in Israel; therefore his name shall never be forgotten. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 5, page 124-125)

Excerpt from Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Joseph Knight, Sr., a resident of Colesville, New York, in 1829, was one of the first individuals to step forward and assist the Prophet during the translation of the Book of Mormon by supplying money, food, and writing materials. He also paid attorney's fees for Joseph Smith. The Prophet, who always maintained a great love and high esteem for Joseph Knight, Sr., said,

For fifteen years he has been faithful and true, and even-handed and exemplary, and virtuous and kind, never deviating to the right hand or to the left. Behold he is a righteous man, may God Almighty lengthen out the old man's days; and may his

trembling, tortured, and broken body be renewed, and in the vigor of health turn upon him if it be Thy will, consistently, O God; and it shall be said of him, by the sons of Zion, while there is one of them remaining, that this was a faithful man in Israel; therefore his name shall never be forgotten. [History of the Church, 4:124-125]

Of his early acquaintance with the Prophet, Joseph Knight, Sr., wrote,

He came to me perhaps in November [1826] and worked for me until about the time that he was Married, which I think was in February [January 1827]. And I paid him the money and I furnished him with a horse and Cutter to go and see his girl Down to Mr. Hails. And soon after this he was Married....

He had talked with me and told me the Conversation he had with the personage which told him if he would Do right according to the will of God he mite obtain [the plates].

Old Mr. Smith and Martin Harris Come forrod to Be Baptize for the first. They found a place in a lot a small Stream ran thro and they were Baptized in the Evening because of persecution.... I had some thots to go forrod, But I had not red the Book of Morman and I wanted to exeman a little more I Being a Restorationar and had not examined so much as I wanted to. But I should a felt Better if I had gone forward. But I went home and was Baptised in June with my wife and familey. [Jesse, Joseph Knight's Recollections]

(Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 21)

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