

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 56

Section 56 continues the theme from D&C 54, namely problems with the members failing to observe the Law of Consecration.

While the revelation was prompted by a request from Thomas B. Marsh concerning his inability to fulfil his mission call, the reason why he was not able to fulfil that call is what is addressed here. His previously assigned companion was not available, as a result of controversy over land which had been consecrated to the Church's use, so Marsh asked for guidance.

1 Hearken, O ye people who profess my name, saith the Lord your God; for behold, mine anger is kindled against the rebellious, and they shall know mine arm and mine indignation, in the day of visitation and of wrath upon the nations. 2 And he that will not take up his cross and follow me, and keep my commandments, the same shall not be saved. 3 Behold, I, the Lord, command; and he that will not obey shall be cut off in mine own due time, after I have commanded and the commandment is broken. 4 Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good; and all this to be answered upon the heads of the rebellious, saith the Lord.

v1-4 Opening statement. The rebellious who profess the Lord's name, but do not do His will, be subject to His anger (v. 1). Those who do not live a godly life and keep the commandments will not be redeemed by the Lord (v. 2). Those who do not obey the Lord's commands will be rejected by Him (v. 3). The Lord issues commands as He sees fit, and those who reject His commands will suffer the consequences (v. 3).

The text can be arranged as an inverted parallelism:

- A - (v. 1) Mine anger is kindled against the rebellious
- B - (v. 2) He that does not keep commandments is not saved
- B - (v. 3) He that will not obey shall be cut off
- A - (v. 4) All this to be answered upon the heads of rebellious

This statement is similar to that of D&C 54:3-7.

v1 "O ye people who profess my name", D&C 41:1 states those who profess His name and rebel are those who receive the heaviest cursing.

"the day of visitation and of wrath upon the nations", i.e., the Day of the Lord, cf. D&C 1:9-14. This is the day in which the sheep are separated from the goats, both on earth and

in the spirit world.

v4 "I, the Lord, command and revoke", cp. D&C 58:32. The Lord reserves the right to adapt to the situation at hand. When men reject His commands, he issues new commands so His will is not frustrated.

5 Wherefore, I revoke the commandment which was given unto my servants Thomas B. Marsh and Ezra Thayre, and give a new commandment unto my servant Thomas, that he shall take up his journey speedily to the land of Missouri, and my servant Selah J. Griffin shall also go with him. 6 For behold, I revoke the commandment which was given unto my servants Selah J. Griffin and Newel Knight, in consequence of the stiffneckedness of my people which are in Thompson, and their rebellions. 7 wherefore, let my servant Newel Knight remain with them; and as many as will go may go, that are contrite before me, and be led by him to the land which I have appointed.

8 And again, verily I say unto you, that my servant Ezra Thayre must repent of his pride, and of his selfishness, and obey the former commandment which I have given him concerning the place upon which he lives. 9 And if he will do this, as there shall be no divisions made upon the land, he shall be appointed still to go to the land of Missouri; 10 Otherwise he shall receive the money which he has paid, and shall leave the place, and shall be cut off out of my church, saith the Lord God of hosts; 11 And though the heaven and the earth pass away, these words shall not pass away, but shall be fulfilled.

12 And if my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., must needs pay the money, behold, I, the Lord, will pay it unto him again in the land of Missouri, that those of whom he shall receive may be rewarded again according to that which they do; 13 For according to that which they do they shall receive, even in lands for their inheritance.

v5-13 A series of particular commands aimed at specific individuals. The missionary companionships are shuffled as a result of some people's unwillingness to follow through on what the Lord commanded (v. 5-7). One person in specific is commanded to do the Lord's will or get out of the Church (v. 8-10), one way or the other (v. 11). Smith is then authorized to deal with the matter in the manner the Lord dictates (v. 12-13).

14 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto my people--you have many things to do and to repent of; for behold, your sins have come up unto me, and are not pardoned, because you seek to counsel in your own ways. 15 And your hearts are not satisfied. And ye obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. 16 Wo unto

you rich men, that will not give your substance to the poor, for your riches will canker your souls; and this shall be your lamentation in the day of visitation, and of judgment, and of indignation: The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved! 17 Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose bellies are not satisfied, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men's goods, whose eyes are full of greediness, and who will not labor with your own hands!

v14-17 The sin of greed is addressed, whether the sinner is wealthy or poor. Naturally, the people being addressed here are among the ecclesia, cf. v. 1.

v16-17 These failed to observe D&C 42:30-55. Also cp. Mosiah 4:17-25.

18 But blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, whose hearts are broken, and whose spirits are contrite, for they shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs. 19 For behold, the Lord shall come, and his recompense shall be with him, and he shall reward every man, and the poor shall rejoice; 20 And their generations shall inherit the earth from generation to generation, forever and ever. And now I make an end of speaking unto you. Even so. Amen.

v18-20 The poor who are pure in heart are addressed, cp. Alma 32:12-16. Where the wicked and rebellious are cut off with the Day of the Lord, the poor who are pure in heart will inherit the earth for the generations spanning the Millennium.

Note the Lord does not praise the rich who are pure in heart, likely because in the present situation there are none. Those with land, the rich, are not disbursing it to those who have none. Any rich who are pure in heart would have disbursed their lands, and therefore would no longer be rich in material things, but would be pure in heart.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 56

The first excerpt is Smith's recollection, the second is John Whitmer's, which suggests there were some problems among the members. The third and fourth are historical comments which detail the sources of the problems.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833, pages 130-133. It was then published in 1835 in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants, pages 197-198. It was published in the Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 4, pages 433-434, dated February 15, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 5, number 8, page 115, dated January, 1845.

Excerpt from History of the Church

Soon after I received the foregoing, Elder Thomas B. Marsh came to inquire what he should do; as Elder Ezra Thayre, his yoke-fellow in the ministry, could not get ready to start on his mission as soon as he (Marsh) would; and I inquired of the Lord, and received the following:

[text of D&C 56 quoted]

On the 19th of June, in company with Sidney Rigdon, Martin Harris, Edward Partridge, William W. Phelps, Joseph Coe, Algernon S. Gilbert and his wife, I started from Kirtland, Ohio, for the land of Missouri, agreeable to the commandment before received, wherein it was promised that if we were faithful, the land of our inheritance, even the place for the city of the New Jerusalem, should be revealed. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, pages 186-188)

Excerpt from Book of John Whitmer

After some of the elders had left and the time for Joseph Smith Jr. and others to leave. Some of those who had been commanded to take their journey speedily, that some had denied the faith, and turned from the truth. And the Church at Thompson, Ohio, had not done according to the will of the (Lord): Therefore, before Joseph and his company left thus came the word of the Lord; saying:

[text of D&C 56 quoted]

The Church at Thompson made all possible haste to leave for Missouri, and left and none of their enemies harmed them. The

Church at Chardon, Ohio, was also anxious to take their journey to Missouri, and by much teasing they obtained a permit to take their journey. (John Whitmer, Book of John Whitmer, chapter 8, paragraphs 4-5)

Excerpt from Regional Studies in LDS History

Upon arriving in Kirtland, Elder Marsh was busied with the responsibilities of settling his family. However, at a conference held 3 June 1831, he, with others, were ordained High Priests under the hands of Lyman Wight. Three days later on June 6th, fourteen sets of elders were called by revelation to journey to Missouri, preaching by the way. This revelation reads:

And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant Thomas B. Marsh and my servant Ezra Thayre take their journey also, preaching the word by the way unto this same land. (D&C 52:22)

The Journal History alludes to the fact that Ezra Thayre, with Lemam Copley had become involved in temporal affairs in a land sale arrangement at Thompson, Ohio, and were therefore not ready to leave on this mission, whereas Elder Marsh had readied himself for the journey.

This became a problem to Marsh, and he, therefore, went to the Prophet to inquire as to what his course should be. The Prophet made it a matter of prayer and received the following revelation as an answer to Thomas B. Marsh:

Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good; and all this to be answered upon the heads of the rebellious, saith the Lord.

Wherefore, I revoke the commandment which was given unto my servants Thomas B. Marsh and Ezra Thayre, and give a new commandment unto my servant Thomas, that he shall take up his journey speedily to the land of Missouri, and my servant Selah J. Griffin shall also go with him. (D&C 56:4-5)

(Larry C. Porter, Milton V. Backman, Jr., and Susan Easton Black, Regional Studies in LDS History Series: New York, page

137, appearing in an essay by A. Gary Anderson entitled "Thomas B. Marsh: The Preparation and Conversion of the Emerging Apostle")

Excerpt from Regional Studies in LDS History

When faced with the dilemma of the Colesville Saints, the Prophet sought divine assistance and was directed to instruct the branch to leave the Thompson area and move immediately to Missouri (D&C 54). Parties on both sides of the tumultuous situation at the Copley farm received a sound rebuke for their participation (D&C 54, 56). Ezra Thayre was given a particularly direct chastisement and called upon to "repent of his pride, and his selfishness, and obey the former commandment which [the Lord had] given him concerning the place upon which he lives" (D&C 56:8). A synopsis of the action taken against Lemam Copley was expressed by Joseph Knight, Jr., who recorded, "The man was turned out of the church for bad conduct;...he then began to persecute us and we had to leave his farm and pay sixty dollars damage for putting up his houses and planting his ground." (Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson, *Regional Studies in LDS History Series: Missouri*, page 283, from an essay by Larry C. Porter entitled "The Colesville Branch in Kaw Township, Jackson County, Missouri, 1831 to 1833")

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