

## Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 58

The text for this chapter can be arranged as follows:

Introduction (v. 1-5):

A - (v. 1) Learn of me what I will concerning you

B - (v. 2) Blessed if you keep My commands despite tribulation

C - (v. 3) You cannot behold God's designs

B - (v. 4) After tribulation come blessings

A - (v. 5) Remember what I tell you and lay it to heart

Why Missouri? Four reasons (v. 6-12)

Three specific cases with comments (v. 13-43)

Case 1, Edward Partridge (v. 13-33)

Paraphrase on judges in Israel (v. 17-23)

Paraphrase on commandments and agency (v. 26-33)

Case 2, Martin Harris with comments (v. 34-39)

Paraphrase on consecrating your goods (v. 36-37)

Case 3, William W. Phelps with comments (v. 40-43)

Paraphrase on repentance (v. 42-43)

General instructions on the establishment of Zion (v. 44-65)

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, and give ear to my word, and learn of me what I will concerning you, and also concerning this land unto which I have sent you. 2 For verily I say unto you, blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven. 3 Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation. 4 For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand. 5 Remember this, which I tell you before, that you may lay it to heart, and receive that which is to follow.

v1-5 Introduction, focusing on faithfulness. As is later commented on in v. 6-12, the Lord's people need to learn to keep the His commands. The Church has been having problems adhering to the Lord's guidelines, cp. D&C 54.

As indicated above, these verses can be arranged such that the center of the inverted parallelism emphasizing the fact that they cannot behold God's plans, so they must have faith to follow his commands, which will result in them being glorified.

These verses are reminiscent of Isa. 55, compare v. 1 here with Isa. 55:3 and v. 3 with Isa. 55:8-9.

6 Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you-that you might be obedient, and that your hearts might be prepared to bear testimony of the things which are to come; 7 And also that you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall

stand; 8 And also that a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor; yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail; 9 Yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited. 10 First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; 11 And after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come. 12 Behold, I, the Lord, have spoken it.

v6-12 The Lord explains why Zion is to be established in Missouri, giving four reasons:

- 1 - That you might be obedient (v. 6).
- 2 - That your hearts might be prepared to bear testimony (v. 6).
- 3 - That you might be honored in laying the foundation of Zion (v. 7).
- 4 - That a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor...that the earth may know the words of the prophets shall not fail (v. 8-12).

v8-12 Reason 4 is expanded upon to quote the various prophetic words which are noted as not being allowed to fail, cp. Isa. 24:9-11, Isa. 25:6, Matt. 22:2-14 (Luke 14:16-24), also cp. D&C 56:18-20.

The Lord's interest in establishing Zion is to provide a place for His people to gather and start establishing His theocracy of justice and mercy.

v10-11 The first that are made last (v. 10), and the last are made first (v. 11), cp. Matt. 20:16.

13 And that the testimony might go forth from Zion, yea, from the mouth of the city of the heritage of God-- 14 Yea, for this cause I have sent you hither, and have selected my servant Edward Partridge, and have appointed unto him his mission in the land. 15 But if he repent not of his sins, which are unbelief and blindness of heart, let him take heed lest he fall. 16 Behold his mission is given unto him, and it shall not be given again.

17 And whoso standeth in this mission is appointed to be a judge in Israel, like as it was in ancient days, to divide the lands of the heritage of God unto his children; 18 And to judge his people by the testimony of the just, and by the assistance of his counselors, according to the laws of the kingdom which are given by the prophets of God. 19 For verily I say unto you, my law shall be kept on this land. 20 Let no man think he is ruler; but let God rule him that judgeth, according to the counsel of his own will, or, in other words, him that counseleth or sitteth

upon the judgment seat.

21 Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land. 22 wherefore, be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet. 23 Behold, the laws which ye have received from my hand are the laws of the church, and in this light ye shall hold them forth. Behold, here is wisdom.

24 And now, as I spake concerning my servant Edward Partridge, this land is the land of his residence, and those whom he has appointed for his counselors; and also the land of the residence of him whom I have appointed to keep my storehouse; 25 wherefore, let them bring their families to this land, as they shall counsel between themselves and me.

26 For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. 27 Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; 28 For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

29 But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned. 30 Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments? 31 Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? 32 I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing. 33 Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above.

v13-43 Three specific cases with comments are given. These three cases can be seen as general examples of people who could use the "benefits" of Missouri as detailed in v. 6-12.

v13-33 Case 1, Edward Partridge. Partridge is re-called as a judge in Israel, but must repent of his sins lest he fall (v. 14-16). Judges are to govern the people according to God's laws (v. 17-20). The ecclesia should obey both the laws of the land, and of the church (v. 21-23). Partridge is to move his family to Missouri and live there, with the others called (v. 24-25). Partridge and his counselors should counsel with each other and with the Lord, exercising initiative in doing good. They should not have to be compelled to do good, but should be looking for opportunity to do good (v. 26-28). The Lord will hold people responsible who do not keep the commandments, and who seek to find fault with the Lord and His servants so they can excuse themselves from the work (v. 29-33).

v13 This verse might be read as Reason 5, but is more an application of Reason 2 (v. 6) than as a new reason.

v17-23 Parenthesis on judges in Israel. Verses 17-19 detail the responsibilities of a judge in Israel. Verse 20 is a warning saying judges are not to think they are above the Law, as all are ruled by God. Verses 21-22 state that the Church should adhere to the laws of the land until Theocracy is instituted. Verse 23 states the Laws received from the Lord's Hand are for the government of His Church, cp. D&C 42:2, 28. And v. 23 concludes the parenthesis by stating these things are wisdom.

v24-25 Resuming the subject from v. 16, instructs Partridge and his counselors to establish themselves in Missouri, and counsel between themselves and between the Lord.

The Lord is making it explicit the move to Missouri is not a short-term endeavor, but is intended to establish a permanent settlement.

v26-33 Parenthesis on commandments and agency. Picking up on the last line in v. 24 on counseling together and with the Lord, a lengthy discussion ensues. The verses can be divided into a positive exhortation (v. 26-28), and a negative condemnation (v. 29-33). The Lord states He wants servants who deliberately exercise their agency to go about the Lord's work, for which they will be rewarded (v. 26-28). However, those who question the Lord's commands and slothfully keep them will be held responsible for their lack of faith and be damned (v. 29-32).

v31-33 A particularly stinging rebuke to sign-seekers. There are those who expect the Lord to keep His end of the bargain even when they fail to keep their end. When He doesn't as a result of their failure to keep the covenant, they excuse themselves by saying the work really wasn't the Lord's after all. In reality the blame rests at their feet, and "their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above". Compare D&C 56:4, D&C 82:10. Statements such as this are classical OT covenantal theology, cp. Lev. 26, Deut. 28.

34 And now I give unto you further directions concerning this land. 35 It is wisdom in me that my servant Martin Harris should be an example unto the church, in laying his moneys before the bishop of the church. 36 And also, this is a law unto every man that cometh unto this land to receive an inheritance; and he shall do with his moneys according as the law directs. 37 And it is wisdom also that there should be lands purchased in Independence, for the place of the storehouse, and also for the house of the printing. 38 And other directions concerning my servant Martin Harris shall be given him of the Spirit, that he

may receive his inheritance as seemeth him good; 39 And let him repent of his sins, for he seeketh the praise of the world.

v34-39 Case 2, Martin Harris with comments. Harris is required to consecrate all his monies to the Church for the buying of properties (v. 34-35). Additional commands concerning Harris will be forthcoming, but let him repent of his desire to seek praise of the world (v. 38-39).

v36-37 A parenthesis reiterating the subject of D&C 42:30-55. On v. 37, also cp. 57:8, 11.

40 And also let my servant william w. Phelps stand in the office to which I have appointed him, and receive his inheritance in the land; 41 And also he hath need to repent, for I, the Lord, am not well pleased with him, for he seeketh to excel, and he is not sufficiently meek before me. 42 Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. 43 By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins--behold, he will confess them and forsake them.

v40-43 Case 3, William W. Phelps with comments. Phelps is told he needs to humble himself and be meek before the Lord, because he is trying to "excel" (i.e., to outdo, or surpass, or be superior to) those around him.

v42-43 Parenthesis on repentance. In the strictest scriptural sense, to repent means to change one's mind, from the Greek "metaneo". Not in the sense, "I'll change my mind and have strawberry instead of vanilla", but in the sense of altering one's thoughts, how one thinks, and what one's mind dwells on. In this case, it is difficult to truly discern a person's thoughts so you cannot determine whether they really have altered what and how they think. However, v. 43 gives the standard of "By their fruits ye may know them" method of testing. If a person has confessed a particular behavior and forsaken it, then their thoughts on that issue have been changed and they have repented.

In many instances the term "repent" in colloquial English is equated with the works that attend a change of mind as described above. However, strictly speaking from the scriptures, these works are a product of and attendant to repentance and required by implication, but are not explicitly part and parcel to the act of "repentance". This may seem an obscure point, but consider the difference in what is required between repentance for fleshed (mortal souls) and unfleshed (post-mortal) spirits. The fleshed spirits must subdue their rebellious flesh to their spirits, where post-mortal spirits have no flesh to subdue.

44 And now, verily, I say concerning the residue of the elders of my church, the time has not yet come, for many years, for them to receive their inheritance in this land, except they desire it through the prayer of faith, only as it shall be appointed unto them of the Lord. 45 For, behold, they shall push the people together from the ends of the earth. 46 wherefore, assemble yourselves together; and they who are not appointed to stay in this land, let them preach the gospel in the regions round about; and after that let them return to their homes. 47 Let them preach by the way, and bear testimony of the truth in all places, and call upon the rich, the high and the low, and the poor to repent. 48 And let them build up churches, inasmuch as the inhabitants of the earth will repent.

49 And let there be an agent appointed by the voice of the church, unto the church in Ohio, to receive moneys to purchase lands in Zion. 50 And I give unto my servant Sidney Rigdon a commandment, that he shall write a description of the land of Zion, and a statement of the will of God, as it shall be made known by the Spirit unto him; 51 And an epistle and subscription, to be presented unto all the churches to obtain moneys, to be put into the hands of the bishop, of himself or the agent, as seemeth him good or as he shall direct, to purchase lands for an inheritance for the children of God. 52 For, behold, verily I say unto you, the Lord willeth that the disciples and the children of men should open their hearts, even to purchase this whole region of country, as soon as time will permit. 53 Behold, here is wisdom. Let them do this lest they receive none inheritance, save it be by the shedding of blood.

54 And again, inasmuch as there is land obtained, let there be workmen sent forth of all kinds unto this land, to labor for the saints of God. 55 Let all these things be done in order; and let the privileges of the lands be made known from time to time, by the bishop or the agent of the church. 56 And let the work of the gathering be not in haste, nor by flight; but let it be done as it shall be counseled by the elders of the church at the conferences, according to the knowledge which they receive from time to time.

57 And let my servant Sidney Rigdon consecrate and dedicate this land, and the spot for the temple, unto the Lord. 58 And let a conference meeting be called; and after that let my servants Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, Jun., return, and also Oliver Cowdery with them, to accomplish the residue of the work which I have appointed unto them in their own land, and the residue as shall be ruled by the conferences. 59 And let no man return from this land except he bear record by the way, of that which he knows and most assuredly believes. 60 Let that which has been bestowed upon Ziba Peterson be taken from him; and let him stand as a member in the church, and labor with his own hands, with the brethren, until he is sufficiently chastened for all his sins; for he confesseth them not, and he thinketh to hide them. 61 Let the residue of the elders of this church, who are coming to this

land, some of whom are exceedingly blessed even above measure, also hold a conference upon this land. 62 And let my servant Edward Partridge direct the conference which shall be held by them. 63 And let them also return, preaching the gospel by the way, bearing record of the things which are revealed unto them. 64 For, verily, the sound must go forth from this place into all the world, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth--the gospel must be preached unto every creature, with signs following them that believe. 65 And behold the Son of Man cometh. Amen.

v44-65 General instructions on the establishment of Zion given to the rest of the Elders in Zion. Elders are to continue preaching among all people, and are not yet to gather into Zion (v. 44-48). Lands in and around Zion are to be bought legally (v. 49-53). Skilled laborers are to go up to Zion in an orderly manner to assist in it's founding (v. 54-56). Consecrate the land and organize a conference to include all of the traveling missionaries (v. 57-65).

v44 The Lord's intent at that time was not to fulfil but to initiate the establishment of Zion so as to fulfil, as the "time has not yet come for many years".

On how long "many years" is, the minimum explicitly stated in the Scriptures was between 4 and 7 years in Lev. 25:51 or 8 years in the case of 1 Ne. 17:4. The maximum was ~1400 years in the case of 1 Ne. 15:13. There were many other lengths as well in between, so trying to figure out how many is "many years" is not productive.

v45-47 Compare D&C 52:33-34.

v52-53 Compare v. 37, D&C 48:4, D&C 63:30-31.

v56 "Let the work of the gathering be not in haste, not by flight", a quotation of Isa. 52:12, also cp. 3 Ne. 20:42, 3 Ne. 21:29 for similar quotes with eschatological applications.

v59 Compare D&C 52:9.

v64 "with signs following them that believeth", cp. D&C 46:10-26.

## Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 58

Two contemporaneous accounts, first by Smith and then by John Whitmer, followed by a historical commentary which includes details regarding the initial establishment at Independence, MO.

### Excerpt from History of the Church

The first Sabbath after our arrival in Jackson county, Brother W. W. Phelps preached to a western audience over the boundary of the United States, wherein were present specimens of all the families of the earth; Shem, Ham and Japheth; several of the Lamanites or Indians representative of Shem; quite a respectable number of negroes descendants of Ham; and the balance was made up of citizens of the surrounding country, and fully represented themselves as pioneers of the West. At this meeting two were baptized, who had previously believed in the fulness of the Gospel.

During this week the Colesville branch, referred to in the latter part of the last revelation, and Sidney Rigdon, Sidney Gilbert and wife and Elders Morley and Booth, arrived. I received the following:

[text of D&C 58 quoted]

On the second day of August, I assisted the Colesville branch of the Church to lay the first log, for a house, as a foundation of Zion in Kaw township, twelve miles west of Independence. The log was carried and placed by twelve men, in honor of the twelve tribes of Israel. At the same time, through prayer, the land of Zion was consecrated and dedicated by Elder Sidney Rigdon for the gathering of the Saints. It was a season of joy to those present, and afforded a glimpse of the future, which time will yet unfold to the satisfaction of the faithful.

As we had received a commandment for Elder Rigdon to write a description of the land of Zion, we sought for all the information necessary to accomplish so desirable an object. The country is unlike the timbered states of the East. As far as the eye can reach the beautiful rolling prairies lie spread out like a sea of meadows; and are decorated with a growth of flowers so gorgeous and grand as to exceed description; and nothing is more fruitful, or a richer stockholder in the blooming prairie than the honey bee. Only on the water courses is timber to be found. There in strips from one to three miles in width, and following faithfully the meanderings of the streams, it grows in luxuriant forests. The forests are a mixture of oak, hickory, black walnut, elm, ash, cherry, honey locust, mulberry, coffee bean, hackberry, boxelder, and bass wood; with the addition of cottonwood, butterwood, pecan, and soft and hard maple upon the bottoms. The shrubbery is beautiful, and consists in part of plums, grapes,

crab apple, and persimmons.

The soil is rich and fertile; from three to ten feet deep, and generally composed of a rich black mould, intermingled with clay and sand. It yields in abundance, wheat, corn, sweet potatoes, cotton and many other common agricultural products. Horses, cattle and hogs, though of an inferior breed, are tolerably plentiful and seem nearly to raise themselves by grazing in the vast prairie range in summer, and feeding upon the bottoms in winter. The wild game is less plentiful of course where man has commenced the cultivation of the soil, than in the wild prairies. Buffalo, elk, deer, bear, wolves, beaver and many smaller animals here roam at pleasure. Turkeys, geese, swans, ducks, yea a variety of the feathered tribe, are among the rich abundance that grace the delightful regions of this goodly land-the heritage of the children of God.

The season is mild and delightful nearly three quarters of the year, and as the land of Zion, situated at about equal distances from the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, as well as from the Alleghany and Rocky mountains, in the thirty-ninth degree of north latitude, and between the sixteenth and seventeenth degrees of west longitude, it bids fair-when the curse is taken from the land-to become one of the most blessed places on the globe. The winters are milder than the Atlantic states of the same parallel of latitude, and the weather is more agreeable; so that were the virtues of the inhabitants only equal to the blessings of the Lord which He permits to crown the industry of those inhabitants, there would be a measure of the good things of life for the benefit of the Saints, full, pressed down, and running over, even an hundredfold. The disadvantages here, as in all new countries, are self-evident lack of mills and schools; together with the natural privations and inconveniences which the hand of industry, the refinement of society, and the polish of science, overcome.

But all these impediments vanish when it is recollected what the Prophets have said concerning Zion in the last days; how the glory of Lebanon is to come upon her; the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of His sanctuary, that He may make the place of His feet glorious. Where for brass, He will bring gold; and for iron, He will bring silver: and for wood, brass; and for stones, iron; and where the feast of fat things will be given to the just; yea, when the splendor of the Lord is brought to our consideration for the good of His people, the calculations of men and the vain glory of the world vanish, and we exclaim, "Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God hath shined."

On the third day of August, I proceeded to dedicate the spot for the Temple, a little west of Independence, and there were also present Sidney Rigdon, Edward Partridge, W. W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris and Joseph Coe.

The 87th Psalm was read:-

[text of Ps. 87 quoted]

The scene was solemn and impressive.

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, pages 190-199)

**Excerpt from the Book of John Whitmer**

Now after the elders that were commanded to go to Missouri had arrived, they held a conference upon that land according to revelation given in a preceding commandment. And thus they rejoiced together upon the land of Zion. And offered their sacraments and oblations unto the Lord, for his mercy and goodness which endureth for ever.

When they had held their sacrament meetings, and the laying of the foundation of the City, and cornerstone of the temple, the Lord gave commandments to return.

I here give a copy of the proceedings of the laying of the first logs of the city of Zion. As written by Oliver Cowdery:

"After many struggles and afflictions, being persecuted by our enemies, we received intelligence by letter from our brethren; who were at the east. That Brother Joseph and Sidney, and many other elders, were commanded to take their journey to this land, the land of Missouri. Which was promised unto us should be the land of the inheritance of the Saints, and the place of the gathering in these last days. Which intelligence cheered our hearts, and caused us to rejoice exceedingly. And by the special protection of the Lord, Brother Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sidney Rigdon, in company with eight other elders, with the Church from Colesville, New York, consisting of about sixty souls, arrived in the month of July and by revelation the place was made known where the temple shall stand, and the city should commence. And by commandment twelve of us assembled ourselves together, viz., Elder Joseph Smith, Jr., the Seer, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Newel Knight, William W. Phelps, and Ezra Booth who denied the faith.

"On the 2nd day of August 1831, Brother Sidney Rigdon stood up and asked saying: Do you receive this land for the land of your inheritance with thankful hearts from the Lord? answer from all, we do. Do you pledge yourselves to keep the laws of God on this land, which you never have kept in your own lands? we do. Do you pledge yourselves to see that others of your brethren who shall come hither do keep the laws of God? we do. After prayer he arose and said, I now pronounce

this land consecrated and dedicated to the Lord for a possession and inheritance for the Saints (in the name of Jesus Christ having authority from him.) And for all the faithful servants of the Lord to the remotest ages of time. Amen.

"The day following, eight elders, viz., Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Frederick G. Williams, Wm. W. Phelps, Martin Harris, and Joseph Coe, assembled together where the Temple is to be erected. Sidney Rigdon dedicated the ground where the city is to stand: and Joseph Smith, Jr., laid a stone at the northeast corner of the contemplated temple in the name of the Lord Jesus of Nazareth. After all present had rendered thanks to the great ruler of the universe, Sidney Rigdon pronounced this spot of ground wholly dedicated unto the Lord forever: Amen."

Some of the elders who traveled to the land of Missouri and preached by the way, tarried here in this land, among whom is the Bishop E. [Edward] Partridge, Isaac Morley and John Corrill. Some were sick on their way to the land, but all were restored to health. Among those who were sick were John Murdock, Parley P. Pratt and Thomas B. Marsh-They all tarried until after they attended a conference in this land. They have since all gone to preach the gospel and call sinners to repentance. (John Whitmer, Book of John Whitmer, chapter 9, paragraphs 2-7)

### **Excerpt from Regional Studies in LDS History**

On Wednesday, 3 August 1831, Joseph Smith and a small group of elders went to a knoll about a half-mile west of the Independence courthouse, turned south from the old road (now Lexington Avenue), and made their way about 200 feet through the thick forest. The Prophet then indicated the specific spot where the temple was to stand, and placed a stone to mark the northeast corner of the future structure. Relevant scriptures were read, and a dedicatory prayer was offered, in accordance with previously revealed instructions (D&C 58:57). "The scene was solemn and impressive." In December of that same year, Bishop Edward Partridge purchased in behalf of the Church some 63.27 acres, which included the spot dedicated for the temple.

For the next two years, Independence, Jackson County, was a focal point of the Saints' activity. Interest grew when, in June of 1833, Joseph Smith released his plan for the city of Zion. At the center of the mile-square city, he envisioned two large blocks containing 24 sacred "temples." These were to be assigned to the various priesthood quorums and were to serve a variety of

functions. The Prophet anticipated that the city would have a population of from 15,000 to 20,000 so that these 24 buildings would be needed as "houses of worship, schools, etc." Because all inhabitants of the city should be living on a celestial level (D&C 105:5) all these structures could properly be regarded as "temples"-places of communication between heaven and earth-even though their functions were not restricted to ordinance work. (Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson, Regional Studies in LDS History: Missouri, page 139, from an essay by Richard O. Cowan entitled "The Great Temple of the New Jerusalem")

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