

General Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 59-62

When reading D&C 59-62 it is important to note they were all received within a week of each other. D&C 60 can be seen as a follow up to D&C 59:20-23 emphasizing the need to keep the commandments. D&C 61 is reactionary to their not heeding the contents of D&C 60. And, D&C 62 is a restate of D&C 60 with emphasis on the conditional nature of the Lord's relationship with mankind.

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 59

The subject of D&C 59 is the blessed state of those who labor to establish Zion. The text for this section can be arranged as an inverted parallelism based upon subject:

- A - (v. 1-2) Blessed are they who keep my commandments...they shall rest from labors and receive a crown
 - B - (v. 3) Their reward is the good things of the earth
 - C - (v. 4) Commandments not a few
 - C - (v. 5-14) Quite a few commandments
 - B - (v. 15-19) The good things of the earth
 - A - (v. 20-23) Admonition to keep commandments...enjoy peace in this life and eternal life in next

The first section of text (v. 1-4) serves as an introduction to the blessings. The subsequent text (v. 5-23) then expands considerably upon those blessings, explaining what they are.

1 Behold, blessed, saith the Lord, are they who have come up unto this land with an eye single to my glory, according to my commandments. 2 For those that live shall inherit the earth, and those that die shall rest from all their labors, and their works shall follow them; and they shall receive a crown in the mansions of my Father, which I have prepared for them. 3 Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in its strength. 4 And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time--they that are faithful and diligent before me.

v1-4 Those who keep the commandments and are faithful inherit eternal life and glory (v. 1-2). Those faithful to the gospel who are standing in Zion shall be blessed with the good things of the earth (v. 3). The faithful of the Lord will receive revelations and plenty of commandments, as the elect have plenty of responsibilities (v. 4, cp. D&C 29:4, D&C 93:46).

v1-2 These verses are apparently influenced by the recent passing of Polly Knight, wife of Joseph Knight. See historical material below.

5 Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him. 6 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it. 7 Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things. 8 Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. 9 And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; 10 For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; 11 Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times; 12 But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord. 13 And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full. 14 Verily, this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer.

v5-14 As predicted in v. 4, here are some commandments. This section of text is a paraphrase of the original 10 Commandments. Note the heavy emphasis on observing the Sabbath. Isaiah presents observing the Sabbaths as the epitome of worshiping the Lord, cp. Isa 56:1-8, Isa. 58:13-14. It should be noted that in the OT the Sabbaths included the three divinely instituted festal ingatherings (Lev. 23) as well as the last day of each week. These three festal ingatherings focused on Temple worship, and as the header for this section indicates the land in general and the Temple Lot in specific were dedicated.

v9-14 The observance of the Sabbath is detailed. The KJV rendering of "rest" in Gen. 2:2, would be better translated "cease". The Hebrew term means to "cease" or "stop" from one's ordinary labors, and not to take a nap or lie around. It means one sets aside the secular pursuits of the week performed to maintain our lives in favor of spiritual pursuits.

Verse 13 goes on to say that the only labor to be performed is to prepare the food that will be eaten on that day, that is don't bake several loaves for the rest of the week, do canning for food storage, or host elaborate social engagements. All other labors of necessity are to be put off. The general idea here is that people should plan ahead so as to avoid these kinds

of things on the Sabbath. For example, Exod. 35:3 prohibits kindling a fire on the Sabbath (in those days starting a fire could be a lot of work), but they were allowed to cook on a fire that was already going. The message here is: plan ahead for the Sabbath. So you either do your cooking ahead of time or have your fire already going with an adequate wood supply around so it can be kept going through the Sabbath without rekindling. The Lord wants people to enjoy the Sabbath and put off the things of the world as much as possible by doing a little planning ahead.

15 And inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance--
16 Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this, the fulness of the earth is yours, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which climbeth upon the trees and walketh upon the earth; 17 Yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards; 18 Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart; 19 Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.

v15-19 The good things of the earth. Enjoying the bounty of the land is a classic covenant blessing, cp. Lev. 26:4-5, Deut. 28:4-5, D&C 49:18-20, D&C 89:10-21.

These verses can be taken as the blessings enumerated for observing the commandments in v. 5-18. In modern times in an industrial economy these blessings seem antiquated, but the same general tenor applies. Even though we are not living in a subsistence agriculture economy, we can still be blessed with abundance as a result of our obedience. Its just that the blessing takes some form other than what is growing in the back 40 acres. And, taken from a worldwide perspective, there are still many people who practice subsistence agriculture.

20 And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion. 21 And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments. 22 Behold, this is according to the law and the prophets; wherefore, trouble me no more concerning this matter. 23 But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come. 24 I, the Lord, have spoken it, and the spirit beareth record. Amen.

v20-23 The closing admonition. Taken independently these four verse can be arranged as follows:

- A - (v. 20) Material/temporal blessings
- B - (v. 21) How man offends God
- B - (v. 22) Stop offending God
- A - (v. 23) Spiritual/eternal blessings

v20 "to be used, with judgement, not to excess, neither by extortion", cp. D&C 49:20-21.

v22 "trouble me no more concerning this matter", the Lord is irritated by people committing the acts described in v. 21, and He wants His people to stop offending Him on these points.

v24 Conclusion. An authority statement indicating the Holy Spirit will back up what was just said.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 59

Excerpt from History of the Church

On the 4th [of August, 1831] I attended the first conference in the land of Zion. It was held at the house of Brother Joshua Lewis, in Kaw township, in the presence of the Colesville branch of the Church. The Spirit of the Lord was there.

On the 7th, I attended the funeral of Sister Polly Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight, Sen. This was the first death in the Church in this land, and I can say, a worthy member sleeps in Jesus till the resurrection [footnote states: Polly Knight's health had been failing for some time, according to a statement made by her son, Newel. She was very ill during her journey from Kirtland to Missouri. "Yet," says her son, "she would not consent to stop traveling; her only, or her greatest desire was to set her feet upon the land of Zion, and to have her body interred in that land. I went on shore and bought lumber to make a coffin in case she should die before we arrived at our place of destination-so fast did she fail. But the Lord gave her the desire of her heart, and she lived to stand upon that land."].

I also received the following:

[text of D&C 59 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, pages 199-200)

Excerpt from Regional Studies in LDS History

Joshua Lewis' home in Kaw Township was the site of the first conference of the Church in Missouri, held on 4 August 1831. The Lewis family had been converted by the Lamanite missionaries at the outset of their labors in the area, and were a stabilizing influence in getting the Saints settled. Talks by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon highlighted the assemblage of 14 elders and 31 members. Later Lewis and his family were forced to flee Jackson County with those he had befriended, and he died in Clay County, Missouri, 28 October 1835.

Polly Peck Knight, wife of Joseph Knight, Sr., had been very ill for some time. While yet en route from Kirtland to Missouri, her son Newel had gone ashore and procured wood for her coffin should she die on the way. Polly had steadfastly held on, expressing a desire to be buried in the land of Zion. When they arrived in Jackson County she was taken into the home of Joshua Lewis because of her extreme condition. She died 6 August 1831. Her husband, Joseph Knight, Sr., related that "Joseph and Sidney attended her funeral on the Eighth [seventh]. She was Burried in the woods a spot Chosen out By our selves. I was along By where she was Buried a few Days after and I found the hogs had Began to root whare she was Buried. I Being verry unwell But I took my ax

the nex Day and went and Bilt a pen round it. It was the Last I done for her." At her services the Prophet addressed the family "in a verry [sic] able and consoling manner." (Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson, *Regional Studies in LDS History*, page 291, from an essay by Larry C. Porter entitled "The Colesville Branch in Kaw Township, Jackson County, Missouri, 1831 to 1833")

Copyright © 2013 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.