

## Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 72

Newell K. Whitney is called to be a Bishop in the Church in the Kirtland, Ohio. Smith and Rigdon were told in the preceding revelation of D&C 71 to stop working on the translation of the Bible and to preach the gospel in the surrounding area. Smith and Rigdon then started traveling around Kirtland and was discussing the temporal and spiritual needs of the Church in that area with the local Elders, when this revelation was received.

1 Hearken, and listen to the voice of the Lord, O ye who have assembled yourselves together, who are the high priests of my church, to whom the kingdom and power have been given. 2 For verily thus saith the Lord, it is expedient in me for a bishop to be appointed unto you, or of you, unto the church in this part of the Lord's vineyard. 3 And verily in this thing ye have done wisely, for it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity. 4 For he who is faithful and wise in time is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for him of my Father. 5 Verily I say unto you, the elders of the church in this part of my vineyard shall render an account of their stewardship unto the bishop, who shall be appointed of me in this part of my vineyard. 6 These things shall be had on record, to be handed over unto the bishop in Zion. 7 And the duty of the bishop shall be made known by the commandments which have been given, and the voice of the conference. 8 And now, verily I say unto you, my servant Newel K. Whitney is the man who shall be appointed and ordained unto this power. This is the will of the Lord your God, your Redeemer. Even so. Amen.

v1-8 The Lord addresses the leadership of the Church (v. 1) and tells them to appoint an overseer (v. 2) who will take an accounting of their stewardships (v. 3, 5-6). Those who are faithful in their earthly stewardships in the Church will be worthy of the Father's dwelling place (v. 4). Additional responsibilities of the overseer will be made known by revelation (v. 7, cp. V. 9-23). Whitney is then called as a bishop (v. 8, cp. D&C 68:14).

Verses 1-8 were received, Whitney was ordained, and then v. 9-23 and v. 24-26 were received.

v2 "a bishop", the Greek term "episkopos", appearing in the KJV New Testament occurrences of "bishop", translates best to the modern English "overseer". The Lord wants someone to take an

accounting of those who have responsibilities within the Church, per v. 3.

v4 "he who is faithful and wise in time [i.e., temporal life, mortal probation] is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for him of my Father [i.e., eternal life]."

v6 Compare D&C 69:5-6.

9 The word of the Lord, in addition to the law which has been given, making known the duty of the bishop who has been ordained unto the church in this part of the vineyard, which is verily this-- 10 To keep the Lord's storehouse; to receive the funds of the church in this part of the vineyard; 11 To take an account of the elders as before has been commanded; and to administer to their wants, who shall pay for that which they receive, inasmuch as they have wherewith to pay; 12 That this also may be consecrated to the good of the church, to the poor and needy. 13 And he who hath not wherewith to pay, an account shall be taken and handed over to the bishop of Zion, who shall pay the debt out of that which the Lord shall put into his hands. 14 And the labors of the faithful who labor in spiritual things, in administering the gospel and the things of the kingdom unto the church, and unto the world, shall answer the debt unto the bishop in Zion; 15 Thus it cometh out of the church, for according to the law every man that cometh up to Zion must lay all things before the bishop in Zion.

16 And now, verily I say unto you, that as every elder in this part of the vineyard must give an account of his stewardship unto the bishop in this part of the vineyard-- 17 A certificate from the judge or bishop in this part of the vineyard, unto the bishop in Zion, rendereth every man acceptable, and answereth all things, for an inheritance, and to be received as a wise steward and as a faithful laborer; 18 Otherwise he shall not be accepted of the bishop of Zion. 19 And now, verily I say unto you, let every elder who shall give an account unto the bishop of the church in this part of the vineyard be recommended by the church or churches, in which he labors, that he may render himself and his accounts approved in all things.

20 And again, let my servants who are appointed as stewards over the literary concerns of my church have claim for assistance upon the bishop or bishops in all things-- 21 That the revelations may be published, and go forth unto the ends of the earth; that they also may obtain funds which shall benefit the church in all things; 22 That they also may render themselves approved in all things, and be accounted as wise stewards.

23 And now, behold, this shall be an ensample for all the

extensive branches of my church, in whatsoever land they shall be established. And now I make an end of my sayings. Amen.

v9-23 The duties of a bishop. He is to administer the storehouse and the Church's finances (v. 9-15), take an accounting of member's responsibilities and issue appropriate certificates (v. 16-19), and administer the recompense for those who labor for the Church (v. 20-22). These things are to regulate all of the Church, and not just the local branch headed by Whitney (v. 23).

v14 Compare D&C 70:12.

v20-22 Those involved in the publication of the revelations (i.e., the Literary Firm) are to be recompensed out of the storehouse for their time, cp. D&C 70:1.

24 A few words in addition to the laws of the kingdom, respecting the members of the church--they that are appointed by the Holy Spirit to go up unto Zion, and they who are privileged to go up unto Zion-- 25 Let them carry up unto the bishop a certificate from three elders of the church, or a certificate from the bishop; 26 Otherwise he who shall go up unto the land of Zion shall not be accounted as a wise steward. This is also an ensample. Amen.

v24-26 Some additional words on another subject, namely those going up to Zion shall carry a certificate from three elders or from the bishop. The intent was probably to formally keep people in accord with D&C 58:56 and D&C 63:24.

## **Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 72**

This section was first published in the Evening and Morning Star, volume 1, number 7, pages 53-54, dated December, 1832. It was published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants, pages 223-224, in 1835. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 9, pages 513-514, dated May 1, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 8, pages 114-115, dated April 15, 1852.

### **Excerpt from History of the Church**

Knowing now the mind of the Lord, that the time had come that the Gospel should be proclaimed in power and demonstration to the world, from the Scriptures, reasoning with men as in days of old, I took a journey to Kirtland, in company with Elder Sidney Rigdon on the 3rd day of December, to fulfil the above revelation (i.e., D&C 71). On the 4th, several of the Elders and members assembled together to learn their duty, and for edification, and after some time had been spent in conversing about our temporal and spiritual welfare, I received the following:

[text of D&C 72 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 239)

### **Excerpt from Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith**

On 1 December 1831, the Prophet received a revelation (section 71) instructing him and Sidney Rigdon to preach the gospel in the "regions round about." In obedience to this directive, they stopped translating the Bible and on 3 December 1831 journeyed to Kirtland. On the following day several elders and members assembled in Kirtland, Ohio, to learn their duty and be edified. After those assembled had spent some time in conversation, the Prophet received section 72. (Lyndon W. Cook, Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

### **Excerpt from The Doctrine and Covenants: Our Modern Scripture**

Edward Partridge had been called ten months earlier (February 1831) to be the first bishop in the Church. (See D&C 41:9.) In the meantime, Bishop Partridge (D&C 58:24) and Sidney Gilbert, an agent (D&C 64:18), had been directed to move to Missouri. This left nobody in Ohio to administer temporal

affairs there. Thus, in August the Lord had called Newel K. Whitney to be the agent (D&C 63:42-45), and now, in December 1831, to be the bishop in Ohio (See D&C 72:8). Bishop Whitney was to render an accounting to Bishop Partridge, thus setting the pattern of a plurality of bishops, some having local jurisdictions working under a presiding bishop. Whitney was to "recommend" those who were worthy and who were going to Zion (verse 19); this may have been the beginning of the custom of calling one's membership records his "recommends." (Richard O. Cowan, *The Doctrine and Covenants: Our Modern Scripture*, pages 108-109)

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