

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 74

This section addresses some comments by the ancient apostle Paul. Paul's various writings contain a number of things which he states are of his own admonition and not "of the Lord", meaning they aren't by way of commandment of the Lord. Here a particular passage dealing with marriage between Christians and Jews is discussed.

It is safe to assume that while translating the Bible, Smith sought for and obtained greater understanding regarding the obscure passage of text.

1 FOR the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.

2 Now, in the days of the apostles the law of circumcision was had among all the Jews who believed not the gospel of Jesus Christ. 3 And it came to pass that there arose a great contention among the people concerning the law of circumcision, for the unbelieving husband was desirous that his children should be circumcised and become subject to the law of Moses, which law was fulfilled. 4 And it came to pass that the children, being brought up in subjection to the law of Moses, gave heed to the traditions of their fathers and believed not the gospel of Christ, wherein they became unholy.

5 Wherefore, for this cause the apostle wrote unto the church, giving unto them a commandment, not of the Lord, but of himself, that a believer should not be united to an unbeliever; except the law of Moses should be done away among them,

6 That their children might remain without circumcision; and that the tradition might be done away, which saith that little children are unholy; for it was had among the Jews; 7 But little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ; and this is what the scriptures mean.

v1 A verbatim quote of the KJV on 1 Cor. 7:14.

v2-4 The history behind what prompted Paul's statement.

v5 Paul's statement on the matter.

"should not be united", i.e., in marriage.

v6-7 An explanation of Paul's statement. The Lord's explanation of why Paul said what he did (v. 6), is endorsed by the Lord (v. 7).

On the doctrine of the sanctified condition of little children, cp. Moroni 8:8, D&C 29:46, D&C 137:10.

v6 The tradition referenced here may have been at the root cause of infant baptism. The act of circumcision among the Jews symbolized the removal of uncleanness as infant baptism among some Christian Sects is supposed to today.

The JST on Gen. 17:11 indicates circumcision at 8 days old was originally intended as a type given to symbolize baptism at 8 years of age. Ritual immersion among ancient Israel and modern Jews is called tevilah.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 74

This section was first published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 202-203. It was published the Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 13, page 576, dated July 15, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 8, page 116, dated April 15, 1852.

Excerpt from History of the Church

Upon the reception of the foregoing word [i.e., D&C 73] of the Lord, I recommenced the translation of the Scriptures, and labored diligently until just before the conference, which was to convene on the 25th of January. During this period, I also received the following, as an explanation of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 7th chapter, 14th verse:

[text of D&C 74 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 242)

Copyright © 2021 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.