

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 103

The Lord gives the Church instructions regarding how to redeem Zion from her enemies.

1 VERILY I say unto you, my friends, behold, I will give unto you a revelation and commandment, that you may know how to act in the discharge of your duties concerning the salvation and redemption of your brethren, who have been scattered on the land of Zion; 2 Being driven and smitten by the hands of mine enemies, on whom I will pour out my wrath without measure in mine own time. 3 For I have suffered them thus far, that they might fill up the measure of their iniquities, that their cup might be full; 4 And that those who call themselves after my name might be chastened for a little season with a sore and grievous chastisement, because they did not hearken altogether unto the precepts and commandments which I gave unto them.

v1-4 The Lord addresses the leadership of the Church in Kirtland on what they are to do regarding the scattering of Zion (i.e., the ecclesia in Missouri). This section of revelation instructing the leadership of the church how to act (v. 1) is prefaced with some comments on the why of the matter. The enemies of Zion have been permitted to afflict them that they may "fill up the measure of their iniquity" (v. 2b-3), and that the inhabitants in Zion may be chastened as a result of their rebellion (v. 4).

v3 Compare D&C 101:11.

v4 Compare 101:4.

5 But verily I say unto you, that I have decreed a decree which my people shall realize, inasmuch as they hearken from this very hour unto the counsel which I, the Lord their God, shall give unto them. 6 Behold they shall, for I have decreed it, begin to prevail against mine enemies from this very hour. 7 And by hearkening to observe all the words which I, the Lord their God, shall speak unto them, they shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are subdued under my feet, and the earth is given unto the saints, to possess it forever and ever.

8 But inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of the world shall prevail against them. 9 For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men; 10 And inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

11 But verily I say unto you, I have decreed that your brethren which have been scattered shall return to the lands of

their inheritances, and shall build up the waste places of Zion. 12 For after much tribulation, as I have said unto you in a former commandment, cometh the blessing. 13 Behold, this is the blessing which I have promised after your tribulations, and the tribulations of your brethren--your redemption, and the redemption of your brethren, even their restoration to the land of Zion, to be established, no more to be thrown down. 14 Nevertheless, if they pollute their inheritances they shall be thrown down; for I will not spare them if they pollute their inheritances.

v5-14 An example of classic covenant theology. Using an if...then...else formula, the Lord explains they will begin to prosper against their enemies (v. 5-6) if they will heed his commands (v. 7), else their enemies will prevail (v. 8).

This pattern has its origin in Lev. 26. Verses 9-10 invoke covenant of Israel themes. Verses 11-14 go into the literal blessings and curses whereas v. 6-10 are cast in figurative language (v. 11-13 is blessing, v. 14 is curse).

v9 Compare D&C 86:11 for a similar statement.

"light unto the world", a requirement for Israel, cf. Isa. 42:6. cp. Matt.5:16.

"saviors of men", this phrase refers to the purpose of the elect, see D&C 93:46. The 1981 LDS Edition of the D&C provides a cross reference to Obad. 1:21. There is no direct connection between these two passages, it is just indicating an appearance of the same term in the KJV. The JPS translation on Obad. 1:21 passage renders it "liberators" for the KJV "saviors".

v10 This verse is derived from D&C 101:39-42.

v12 "in a former commandment", i.e., D&C 58:4.

15 Behold, I say unto you, the redemption of Zion must needs come by power; 16 Therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel. 17 For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm. 18 And as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be. 19 Therefore, let not your hearts faint, for I say not unto you as I said unto your fathers: Mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence. 20 But I say unto you: Mine angels shall go up before you, and also my presence, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land. 21 Verily, verily I say unto you, that my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., is the man to whom I likened the servant to whom the Lord of the vineyard spake in the parable which I have given unto you.

v15-21 A man like Moses to redeem Zion. These verses compare ancient Israel under Moses with the contemporary ecclesia. Verses 15-18 portray the ecclesia as in bondage and of being in need of deliverance as was Ancient Israel from Egypt, cp. D&C 138:18, 22.

However, v. 19-21 presents the contemporary ecclesia as different from ancient Israel as the Lord will be directing them Himself rather than via angels. In Exod. 33:2-3 the Lord curses Israel for their rebellion. The Lord was angry with Israel to the point where if He walked among them He would destroy them. So He used Moses as an intercessor as well as angels. But in this case, the contemporary ecclesia is told they will be guided by the Lord firsthand, similar to the brother of Jared, cf. Eth. 1:42.

The statement in v. 19-21 has an implicit warning built in. Just as ancient Israel was cursed for their rebellion and ultimately excluded from the Lord's presence, so may the contemporary ecclesia incur His wrath in the same manner if they continue their rebellion. Thus, while their position at that point was better than that of ancient Israel, the warning is that if they persist in their rebellion, as did ancient Israel, they will be cut off as was ancient Israel.

v15 Smith is invested with the authority to curse Zion's enemies with the Lord's power to their destruction, cp. v. 24-26.

v17 The Abrahamic covenant requires the Lord to protect, preserve and deliver the children of Abraham. And He does so via His hand, or in other words, His servant invested with His authority.

v18 "fathers were led", cp. D&C 136:22.

"at the first", initially the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt. Subsequent to the Exodus they became rebellious, resulting in the wandering in the wilderness. Ultimately they were scattered by Assyria and Babylon.

v20 "in time ye shall possess the holy land", cp. D&C 136:18.

v21 Smith identified as the servant in the parable appearing in D&C 101:55-61.

22 Therefore let my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., say unto the strength of my house, my young men and the middle aged--Gather yourselves together unto the land of Zion, upon the land which I have bought with money that has been consecrated unto me. 23 And

Let all the churches send up wise men with their moneys, and purchase lands even as I have commanded them.

24 And inasmuch as mine enemies come against you to drive you from my goodly land, which I have consecrated to be the land of Zion, even from your own lands after these testimonies, which ye have brought before me against them, ye shall curse them; 25 And whomsoever ye curse, I will curse, and ye shall avenge me of mine enemies. 26 And my presence shall be with you even in avenging me of mine enemies, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

27 Let no man be afraid to lay down his life for my sake; for whoso layeth down his life for my sake shall find it again. 28 And whoso is not willing to lay down his life for my sake is not my disciple.

v22-28 Gather the strength of the Lord's house to Zion. This is the theory behind the practical application of v. 29-36. Smith is instructed to gather men together into something of an army so as to march down to Missouri and defend their rights and property.

v22 "Gather...upon the lands which I have bought", note the Lord takes possession of the acts performed by His authorized servants.

v23 Despite the difficulties they are still instructed to buy land, cp. D&C 101:70.

v26 Derivative of D&C 98:23-48. Use of this statement from D&C 98 indicates the ecclesia in Zion had suffered sufficiently enough at this point in time to be justified in cursing their enemies and taking vengeance upon them.

v27-28 In most instances when the scriptures refer to laying down your life, they are referring to a spiritual sacrifice. However, these people are being sent into a situation that had potential for being life threatening.

29 It is my will that my servant Sidney Rigdon shall lift up his voice in the congregations in the eastern countries, in preparing the churches to keep the commandments which I have given unto them concerning the restoration and redemption of Zion.

30 It is my will that my servant Parley P. Pratt and my servant Lyman Wight should not return to the land of their brethren, until they have obtained companies to go up unto the land of Zion, by tens, or by twenties, or by fifties, or by an hundred, until they have obtained to the number of five hundred of the strength of my house. 31 Behold this is my will; ask and ye shall receive; but men do not always do my will. 32 Therefore, if you cannot obtain five hundred, seek diligently that

peradventure you may obtain three hundred. 33 And if ye cannot obtain three hundred, seek diligently that peradventure ye may obtain one hundred. 34 But verily I say unto you, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not go up unto the land of Zion until you have obtained a hundred of the strength of my house, to go up with you unto the land of Zion.

35 Therefore, as I said unto you, ask and ye shall receive; pray earnestly that peradventure my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., may go with you, and preside in the midst of my people, and organize my kingdom upon the consecrated land, and establish the children of Zion upon the laws and commandments which have been and which shall be given unto you. 36 All victory and glory is brought to pass unto you through your diligence, faithfulness, and prayers of faith.

v29-36 The practical application of the theory discussed in v. 22-28. Gather the strength of the Lord's house to Zion.

v31-34 Allowing for men who would refuse to take up arms for Zion (v. 31), the Lord allows them to be flexible in gathering together men to go and redeem Zion (v. 32-33). But the minimum number of men to go to Zion is 100 (v. 34).

v35-36 They are to pray that the substance of v. 15-26 is fulfilled. Verse 36 goes on to make the outcome of the entire situation dependant upon their diligence, faithfulness and prayers. Again, blatantly derivative of the conditional nature of the covenant formula.

v35 "peradventure", meaning "perhaps" or "possibly". This suggests the Lord is not overly optimistic about the outcome.

37 Let my servant Parley P. Pratt journey with my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. 38 Let my servant Lyman Wight journey with my servant Sidney Rigdon. 39 Let my servant Hyrum Smith journey with my servant Frederick G. Williams. 40 Let my servant Orson Hyde journey with my servant Orson Pratt, whithersoever my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., shall counsel them, in obtaining the fulfilment of these commandments which I have given unto you, and leave the residue in my hands. Even so. Amen.

v37-40 New companionships are assigned.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 103

Excerpt from Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt

After making our escape into the county of Clay [Missouri] being reduced to the lowest poverty I made a living by day labor, jobbing, building, or wood cutting, till some time in the winter of 1834, when a general conference was held at my house, in which it was decided that two of the Elders should be sent to Ohio, in order to counsel with President [Joseph] Smith and the Church at Kirtland, and take some measures for the relief or restoration of the people thus plundered and driven from their homes. The question was put to the Conference: "Who would volunteer to perform so great a journey?"

The poverty of all, and the inclement season of the year made all hesitate. At length Lyman Wight and myself offered our services, which were readily accepted. I was at this time entirely destitute of proper clothing for the journey; and I had neither horse, saddle, bridle, money nor provisions to take with me; or to leave with my wife, who lay sick and helpless most of the time.

Under these circumstances I knew not what to do. Nearly all had been robbed and plundered, and all were poor. As we had to start without delay, I almost trembled at the undertaking; it seemed to be all but an impossibility; but "to him that believeth all things are possible...." [Mark 9:23.] We were soon ready, and on the first of February we mounted our horses, and started in good cheer to ride one thousand or fifteen hundred miles through a wilderness country. We had not one cent of money in our pockets on starting.

We traveled every day, whether through storm or sunshine, mud, rain, or snow; except when our public duties called us to tarry. We arrived in Kirtland early in the spring, all safe and sound; we had lacked for nothing on the road, and now had plenty of funds in hand. President Joseph Smith and the Church in Kirtland received us with hospitality and joy unknown except among the Saints; and much interest was felt there, as well as elsewhere, on the subject of our persecution.

The President inquired of the Lord concerning the matter, and a further mission was appointed to us. (Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, pages 107-109)

Excerpt from Doctrine and Covenants Commentary

In a previous Revelation (Section 101:55-60), it was made known to the Prophet that he would be required, at some future time, to lead "the strength of mine house" to the land of Zion, in order to "redeem" it. The Revelation in this Section was received four

months and twelve days afterwards, directing him to begin to gather up the strength of the Church for a relief expedition. Elders Lyman Wight and Parley P. Pratt had just arrived in Kirtland, from Missouri, with a message from the Saints. A meeting of the High Council was called. The messengers from Zion told the Council that the scattered Saints had obtained food and clothing in exchange for labor, and that they were quite comfortable for the time being; but they were grief-stricken because they had been driven from their homes in Zion, and they earnestly desired to know, if possible, how and by what means Zion was to be redeemed. This Revelation, given before the meeting of the Council was held, is an answer to that very question. When the messengers had stated the case, the Prophet had the answer ready. He had prepared to announce that he was going to Zion and that he would call for volunteers to accompany him. The Council endorsed this, and between thirty and forty men volunteered to go, whereupon the Prophet Joseph was elected Commander-in-Chief of the expedition. (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, page 659)

Excerpt from Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

On 1 January 1834, Church leaders in Clay County, Missouri, voted that Lyman Wight and Parley P. Pratt "be sent as special messengers, to represent the situation of the scattered brethren in Missouri, to the Presidency and Church in Kirtland, and ask their advice." Wight and Pratt left Clay County for Ohio on 12 January and arrived in Kirtland on Saturday, 22 February 1834. After hearing a recital of the meager conditions and sufferings of the Saints in Missouri, the Prophet received section 103, which, alluding to the parable in section 101, directed Joseph Smith to organize a body of men to journey to Missouri and "redeem the land." Eight men, named in the revelation, were to enlist volunteers to make the trip to Missouri. An entry from Heber C. Kimball's journal captures the historical setting:

Brother Joseph received a revelation concerning the redemption of Zion, part of which remains yet to be fulfilled. He sent Messengers to the East and to the North, to the West and to the South to gather up the Elders and, He gathered together as many of the brethren as he conveniently could, with what means they could spare to go up to Zion to render all the assistance that we could to our afflicted brethren. We gathered clothing and other necessaries to carry up to our brethren and sisters who had been plundered; and putting our horses to the wagons and taking our firelocks and ammunition, we started on our journey;

leaving only Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon and a few aged workmen who were engaged at the Temple; so that there were very few men left in Kirtland.

This body, known as Zion's Camp, grew to approximately 205 members. The plan of this armed body of men was to return the Missouri Saints to their homes in Jackson County in cooperation with state authorities and under state protection. The advance guard left Kirtland on 5 May 1834. (Lyndon W. Cook, Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 209)

Excerpt from Journal of Discourses

We were driven from Jackson County, in the State of Missouri, in the Fall of the year 1833, and three or four months after that event the revelation was given from which I have read this extract, promising that, after much tribulation, we and our children after us should be restored to the lands of our inheritances.

Have we had much tribulation? Yes. Look at the many times we have been driven since that revelation was given. We were driven out of Clay County, then out of Kirtland, in Geauga County, now called Lake County, Ohio; and after that we were driven from Caldwell County, from Daviess County, Ray County, and several other surrounding counties in the State of Missouri, and finally expelled from the State, leaving a great many thousand acres of land for which we hold the deeds to the present day. After that we settled in the State of Illinois, in Nauvoo. We were there but a few years when the Prophet, his brother and several others were killed, and again we were driven....

What were the crimes of which we were accused in the various places from which we were expelled? If any of our people had been guilty of breaking the laws it was in the power of our enemies to bring us before their courts of justice, for in all these places they held all the civil offices in their own hands. But they very well knew that, so far as the laws of the country were concerned, they could not reach this people. Why? Because we were not guilty of the transgression of any of their laws.

When we were driven from Nauvoo there were some unable to leave poor, feeble, and sick; Nauvoo was a kind of a sickly place and a great many people were sick there, and many of the sick, infirm and poor had to be left behind, being unable to leave with the main body of the Saints. We walked over the Mississippi river on the ice and wandered and wallowed about in the snowdrifts of Iowa with our teams and wagons, but these poor people could not get away in time. The mob were very anxious to come in possession of our property, and hence after the main body got out one or two hundred miles from Nauvoo, where there were no inhabitants, cut

off from all resources, and unable to obtain any information from our poor brethren, the mob was so anxious to get the property of which they had forcibly deprived us, that they attacked the city with cannon and musketry, and finally drove these poor people out and compelled them to cross the river, where a great many of them perished. Were not these tribulations? Yes, and they were all foretold years before they came to pass. (Orson Pratt, Journal of Discourses, volume 17, pages 293-294, February 7, 1875)

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.