

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 111

The Lord is not impressed with their attempts to use worldly means to obtain worldly wealth to pay off their debts (v. 1). He would prefer they attend primarily to their ecclesiastical duties (v. 3), and leave the financial matters to the Lord (v. 5). So much so that He commands them to forget about the financial matters and attend to spiritual ones (v. 8-9).

This echoes the admonitions of D&C 84:62-116 where spiritual matters of the ministry are emphasized over the physical matters, following the line of Matt. 10:9-10.

Reading this section, it feels like the Lord is saying the reason they came to Boston was foolish, but as long as they are there, then they should use their time to further His work.

Note the header to this section in the current edition of the Doctrine & Covenants says "The brethren transacted several items of church business and did some preaching." Included in the "several items" is they were looking for engravers to produce plates for the Kirtland Safety Society. Thus, while they were looking for treasure buried under a house, they were also looking into starting the Bank in Kirtland. This expands the context of the Lord's admonition in v. 5. The sad irony is this revelation preceded the entire Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking fiasco. Had they heeded the Lord's admonitions here, they could have avoided a lot of problems.

1 I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies. 2 I have much treasure in this city for you, for the benefit of Zion, and many people in this city, whom I will gather out in due time for the benefit of Zion, through your instrumentality. 3 Therefore, it is expedient that you should form acquaintance with men in this city, as you shall be led, and as it shall be given you.

4 And it shall come to pass in due time that I will give this city into your hands, that you shall have power over it, insomuch that they shall not discover your secret parts; and its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours. 5 Concern not yourselves about your debts, for I will give you power to pay them. 6 Concern not yourselves about Zion, for I will deal mercifully with her. 7 Tarry in this place, and in the regions round about; 8 And the place where it is my will that you should tarry, for the main, shall be signaled unto you by the peace and power of my Spirit, that shall flow unto you. 9 This place you may obtain by hire.

And inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city; 10 For there are more treasures than one for you in this city. 11 Therefore, be ye as wise as serpents and yet without sin; and I will order all things for your good, as fast as ye are able to receive them. Amen.

v1 While they are engaging in folly in this search for secret buried treasure, the Lord is not displeased because there are some substantive things they can do during their visit.

"notwithstanding your follies", in the KJV the term "folly" is used more in line with the obsolete English usage which means "wickedness" as opposed to simple foolishness, especially in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 34:7, Josh. 7:15, Isa. 9:17). In the contemporary English of this revelation "folly" means more "foolishness" than "wickedness", but in the Biblical English of the KJV, it is more "wickedness" than "foolishness". It seems likely, given the context, the Lord is using it more in the contemporary English context, as if it were really wickedness, it seems likely His rebuke would be more harsh.

v4 "discover your secret parts", a quote from Isa. 3:17 which is intended to mean "put you to shame" or "humiliate you". An improved translation over the KJV would be something like "expose your private parts". In Isa. 3 the statement is referring to the women of Israel going into captivity and being publicly stripped and humiliated as slaves. This verse in D&C is not referring to the same subject as Isa. 3, but just to the humiliation they have faced on this "folly" (v. 1) and potential humiliation they may be subjected to because of their debts (v. 5).

v9 "Inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city", According to Smith and Sjodahl, "History is, perhaps, the most useful knowledge a missionary can have, next to a thorough understanding of the principles of the gospel, but 'ancient inhabitants' refers more particularly to the ancestors of the Prophet. The Revelation was given at Salem, the county seat of Essex County, Massachusetts. It was in that county that Robert Smith, the first of the Smith family in America, settled. It was the residence of many more of the pioneer immigrants to America, whose descendants joined the Church. At Salem, the county seat, the records for all the towns in the county were kept, and the Smiths' record, among others,

were there. The matter of genealogy evidently entered into the inquiry concerning the 'ancient inhabitants,' for a purpose which was manifest later, of the salvation of the dead." (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, page 729)

v10 "there are more treasures than one in this city", the issue of treasure is one that runs throughout this revelation. In some cases it is referring to literal physical treasure (i.e., material wealth) and in other cases it is referring to figurative spiritual treasure (i.e., people who worship the Lord). The rhetoric and symbolism is derived from Isaiah's usage: for literal see, Isa. 45:14, Isa. 54:11, Isa. 60:1-18, and also Micah 4:13; for figurative see Isa. 49:18, Isa. 62:3. In Isaianic context, the fulfilment of a verse like 4 would coincide with Isa. 60:1-18.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 111

This section was first published in the Deseret News, volume 3, number 3, page 9, dated December 25, 1852. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 15, number 51, page 822, dated December 17, 1853. It was published in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876, pages 370-371. The late publication was likely owing to it being rather embarrassing, and being quite specifically tailored to one historic event without significant novel theological content.

Excerpt from History of the Church

On Monday afternoon, July 25th, in company with Sidney Rigdon, Brother Hyrum Smith, and Oliver Cowdery, I left Kirtland...and the next evening, about ten o'clock we arrived at Buffalo, New York...we took passages on a line boat for Utica, where we arrived about eight o'clock A.M. of the 29th, just in time to take the railroad car for Schenectady, the first passenger car on the new road....

On the 30th, at seven o'clock A.M., we went on board the steamer John Mason, which took us to the Erie, lying over the bar....

From New York we continued our journey to Providence, on board a steamer; from thence to Boston, by steam cars, and arrived in Salem, Massachusetts, early in August, where we hired a house, and occupied the same during the month, teaching the people from house to house, and preaching publicly, as opportunity presented; visiting occasionally, sections of the surrounding country, which are rich in the history of the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, in Indian warfare, religious superstition, bigotry, persecution, and learned ignorance....

I received the following:

[text of D&C 111 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 2, pages 463-465)

Excerpt from Comprehensive History of the Church

Another circumstance connected with this Kirtland period, and in a way related to the financial difficulties of the times, is dwelt upon by anti- "Mormon" writers to the disadvantage of the Prophet and of the church; and for that reason it is necessary to mention it here. Briefly told it amounts to this: In July, 1836, in the midst of the greatest financial distress

at Kirtland, the Prophet, with his brother Hyrum, Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery made a journey to Salem, Massachusetts, where they hired a house during the month of August and spent their time in teaching the people from house to house and preaching publicly, as opportunity presented; visiting occasionally sections of the surrounding country which are rich in the history of the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, in Indian warfare, religious superstitions, bigotry, persecution and learned ignorance. While the Prophet gives a somewhat circumstantial account of this journey to Salem and his return to Kirtland in September, he nowhere assigns an adequate cause for himself and company making it--the object of it is not stated. Ebenezer Robinson, for many years a faithful and prominent elder in the church, and at Nauvoo associated with Don Carlos Smith--brother of the Prophet--in editing and publishing the Times and Seasons, states that the journey to Salem arose from these circumstances. There came to Kirtland and a brother by the name of Burgess who stated that he had knowledge of a large amount of money secreted in the cellar of a certain house in Salem, Massachusetts, which had belonged to a widow (then deceased), and thought he was the only person who had knowledge of it, or of the location of the house. The brethren accepting the representations of Burgess as true made the journey to Salem to secure, if possible, the treasure. Burgess, according to Robinson, met the brethren in Salem, but claimed that time had wrought such changes in the town that he could not for a certainty point out the house "and soon left." They hired a house and occupied it and spent their time as per the narrative of the Prophet already quoted. While in Salem the Prophet received a revelation in which the folly of this journey is sharply reprov'd:

[text of D&C 111 quoted]

(B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church, volume 1, page 411)

Excerpt from Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

On 25 July 1836, Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon left Kirtland, Ohio, for the East. Indebtedness plagued church leaders in Ohio. With the rapid increase of membership, constant travel to regulate Church branches, the purchase and development of several properties (including the temple), and the purchase and/or operation of several business enterprises (including the Whitney store and

the printing office), Church leaders desperately sought every available opportunity to obtain money. Private discussions had already addressed the topic of founding a bank in Kirtland.

A major factor that encouraged this trip east was the affirmation of a Massachusetts member of the Church named Burgess that a "large amount of money had been secreted in the cellar of a certain house in Salem, Massachusetts." Sufficient credence was given to the statement of this brother, undoubtedly Jonathan Burgess of Barnstable, Massachusetts, that "steps were taken to try and secure the treasure."

Arriving in New York City the last day of July, these Church authorities made business contacts, inquired about plates and dies for printing notes for the Church bank, and went sightseeing. The foursome left New York City on 3 August for Salem, where they arrived the following day. According to one account, "Brother Burgess met them in Salem, evidently according to appointment, but time had wrought such a change that he could not for a certainty point out the house and soon left."

Section 111, received on Sunday, 6 August 1836, mentioned the "follies" of the party for giving too much attention to earthly "treasures." Moreover, the revelation emphasized that the city had "more treasures than one," meaning prospective converts to the gospel message. As a consequence, Elder Rigdon filled at least two preaching assignments in Salem.

After remaining approximately three weeks, the Prophet, Cowdery, and Rigdon departed for Kirtland, about 25 August 1836. (Hyrum Smith had departed for Ohio the previous week.) The trio arrived back in Kirtland sometime in September 1836. Verse two implies that many people would be gathered out of the Salem area. It is significant to note that over one hundred converts were baptized in 1841 through the labors of Erastus Snow. (Lyndon W. Cook, Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pages 220-221)

Excerpt from The Return

Immediately upon our return home from the mission spoken of in our last article, we discovered a great change had taken place in the church, especially with many of its leading official members.

A spirit of speculation was poured out, and instead of that meek and lowly spirit which we felt had heretofore prevailed, a spirit of worldly ambition, and grasping after the things of the

world, took its place. Some farms adjacent to Kirtland were purchased by some of the heads of the church, mostly on credit, and laid out into city lots, until a large city was laid out on paper, and the price of the lots put up to an unreasonable amount, ranging from \$100 to \$200 each, according to location.

We were sorry to see this order of things, as we felt it would tend to evil instead of good. But having received an assurance of the truth of the gospel, and having an anxiety to warn our fellow men to flee from the wrath to come, and make their calling and election sure, through obedience to the gospel, we therefore made arrangements to take a second mission.

When at home we worked in the printing office as usual. The hands in the office were the same as formerly, to wit: James Carrell, foreman, Don Carlos Smith (Joseph Smith's youngest brother, who was president of the Quorum of high priests,) Solomon Wilber Denton, who was a member of the high priest's Quorum, and Samuel Brannan, who has since figured so extensively in San Francisco, California. We may have occasion to make mention of each of these hereafter.

A brother in the Church, by the name of Burgess, had come to Kirtland and stated that a large amount of money had been secreted in the cellar of a certain house in Salem, Massachusetts, which had belonged to a widow, and he thought he was the only person now living, who had knowledge of it, or to the location of the house. We saw the brother Burgess, but Don Carlos Smith told us with regard to the hidden treasure. His statement was credited by the brethren, and steps were taken to try and secure the treasure, of which we will speak more fully in another place.

[...]

We soon learned that four of the leading men of the Church had been to Salem, Massachusetts in search of the hidden treasure spoken of by Brother Burgess, viz: Joseph Smith, jr. Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery. They left home on the 25th of July, and returned in September.

[...]

We were informed that Brother Burgess met them in Salem,

evidently according to appointment, but time had wrought such a change that he could not for a certainty point out the house, and soon left. They however, found a house which they felt was the right one, and hired it. It is needless to say they failed to find that treasure, or the other gold and silver spoken of in the revelation.

We speak of these things with regret, but inasmuch as they occurred we feel it our duty to relate them, as also some of those things which transpired under our personal observation, soon after. ([Ebenezer Robinson, The Return, Volume 1, Number 7, pages 104-106](#))

Chronology of Events Pertaining to the Kirtland Safety Society

Jul-Aug, 1836 Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery travel to New York City and Boston looking for engravers for KSS notes.

Aug 6, 1836 D&C 111 received, Lord tells them to not be concerned about their debts.

Oct, 1836 Safe purchased, first shares sold only to small group of church leadership.

Nov, 1836 KSS Articles of Agreement formalized, Cowdery travels to Philadelphia and begins procurement of dies and plates to produce notes.

Dec, 1836 Orson Hyde travels to Columbus, Ohio, seeking a Bank charter, but lacks the political connections and means, and is rejected.

Jan 6, 1836 Three days before officially opening, Smith seeks revelation from Lord over KSS endeavor, wherein Lord tells Smith it will work as long as the Saints keep the commandments, undocumented, referenced in journal of Wilford W. Woodruff.

Jan, 1837 Anti-bank formed with Rigdon as President and Smith as Cashier. Cowdery returns with dies & plates. Paper notes reprinted, hostile actors buy up notes and force a bank run, payments in specie suspended.

Feb, 1837 Hyde returns to Columbus and attempts a charter a second time, again unsuccessful. Lawsuits against bank officers begin by hostile actors.

May, 1837 Nationwide Bank Panic, starts in New York City, spread through entire country, economic depression last for years.

Jun, 1837 Smith and Rigdon resign, Frederick G. Williams and Warren Parrish elected.

Jul 23, 1837 D&C 112 received, revelation to Marsh about

Twelve Apostles.

Aug, 1837 Smith publicly warns members against KSS bank notes. Parrish acts in bad faith.

Oct, 1837 Smith and Cowdery go to court.

Nov, 1837 KSS closes doors.

Jan 13, 1838 Smith and Rigdon flee Kirtland for Missouri.

Jul 8, 1838 D&C 117 received, remaining elders at Kirtland to liquidate holdings to eliminate debts, go to Far West, Missouri.

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