

## Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 115

With the difficulties in Kirtland, the leadership of the Church flees and gathers in Far West, Missouri. The revelation instructs the ecclesia to gather, establish the town so other Saints can gather there, and build a Temple.

It is interesting the note that while the Lord does not explicitly chastise those left behind at Kirtland who are questioning Smith's authority, He does emphatically endorse Smith as his mouthpiece.

1 VERILY thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and also my servant Sidney Rigdon, and also my servant Hyrum Smith, and your counselors who are and shall be appointed hereafter; 2 And also unto you, my servant Edward Partridge, and his counselors; 3 And also unto my faithful servants who are of the high council of my church in Zion, for thus it shall be called, and unto all the elders and people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, scattered abroad in all the world; 4 For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

v1-4 Opening summons to the ecclesia, with particular emphasis on the leadership who are still in the Lord's favor.

v3-4 The official name of the Church is formalized.

5 Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations; 6 And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth.

v5-6 The Church is to be a light to all nations (cp. 1 Ne. 22:11) and a refuge to the righteous.

7 Let the city, Far west, be a holy and consecrated land unto me; and it shall be called most holy, for the ground upon which thou standest is holy. 8 Therefore, I command you to build a house unto me, for the gathering together of my saints, that they may worship me.

9 And let there be a beginning of this work, and a foundation, and a preparatory work, this following summer; 10 And let the beginning be made on the fourth day of July next; and from that time forth let my people labor diligently to build a house unto my name; 11 And in one year from this day let them

re-commence laying the foundation of my house. 12 Thus let them from that time forth labor diligently until it shall be finished, from the corner stone thereof unto the top thereof, until there shall not anything remain that is not finished.

13 Verily I say unto you, let not my servant Joseph, neither my servant Sidney, neither my servant Hyrum, get in debt any more for the building of a house unto my name; 14 But let a house be built unto my name according to the pattern which I will show unto them. 15 And if my people build it not according to the pattern which I shall show unto their presidency, I will not accept it at their hands. 16 But if my people do build it according to the pattern which I shall show unto their presidency, even my servant Joseph and his counselors, then I will accept it at the hands of my people.

v7-16 Build a Temple at Far West (v. 7-8), start soon (v. 9-12), do not get into debt building it (v. 13), and build it according to the Lord's directions as revealed to Smith (v. 14-16).

The ecclesia [excavated the area for a foundation and laid cornerstones](#), but didn't get any further than that. The cornerstones of the Temple is where Sidney Ridgon preached the [July Fourth Oration](#), which, in part, lead to the Extermination Order.

17 And again, verily I say unto you, it is my will that the city of Far West should be built up speedily by the gathering of my saints; 18 And also that other places should be appointed for stakes in the regions round about, as they shall be manifested unto my servant Joseph, from time to time. 19 For behold, I will be with him, and I will sanctify him before the people; for unto him have I given the keys of this kingdom and ministry. Even so. Amen.

v17-19 Build up Far West quickly, according to the instructions the Lord gives to Smith.

## **Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 115**

The portion of text comprising D&C 115 was apparently an extract from a larger revelation, according to the [The Elder's Journal](#), where it was first published. If this is the case, the rest of the text of the larger revelation has apparently been lost.

This section was first published in the The Elder's Journal, volume 1, number 4, pages 52-53, dated August, 1838. Its was then published in the Deseret News, volume 3, number 9, page 33, dated March 19, 1853. It was first published in the Doctrine and Covenants in the 1876 edition, pages 377-378.

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

Section 115 is best known as the revelation that gives the official name of the Church. Previously the Church had been called "The Church of Christ" (6 April 1830 to 3 May 1834) and "The Church of the Latter Day Saints" (3 May 1834 to 26 April 1838). This revelation gave the final designation for the Church, which has remained unchanged to the present time.

Soon after section 115 had been received, Thomas B. Marsh wrote a letter to Wilford Woodruff explaining the contents of the revelation. Consider the following excerpt from Marsh's letter:

Since Br. Joseph came to this place, we have been favored with a lengthy revelation in which many important items are shown forth. First that the Church, shall hereafter be called. "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Second it saith "Let the City Farwest be a holy and a consecrated land unto me, and it shall be called most holy, for the ground upon which thou standest is holy: Therefore, I command you to build a house unto me, for the gathering together of my Saints, that they may worship me." 3d. It also teaches, that the foundation stone must be laid on the 4th of July next [1838], and that a commencement must be made in this following season; and in one year from that time, to continue the work until it is finished. Thus we see that the Lord is more wise than men, for Phelps & Whitmer thought to commence it long before this, but it was not the Lords

time, therefore, he over threw it, and has appointed his own time. The plan is yet to be shown to the first presidency, and all the Saints, in all the world, are commanded to assist in building the house.

The city of Far West was laid out in August 1836. By late 1838 the population was nearly five thousand, almost entirely Mormon. The corner stones of the Far West Temple were laid 4 July 1838, but even though walls for the building were at one time nearly three feet high, the edifice was never completed.

Verse 18 addressed the subject of organizing additional stakes of Zion. Particularly was this a sensitive issue at the time. William W. Phelps and John Whitmer earlier had designated Far West, Missouri, as a stake of Zion without the approval of the First Presidency. An unpublished revelation, received 12 January 1838, explained that only the presidency of the Church had that authority. (Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*)

#### **Excerpt from Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants**

The year 1837 has been called by some, "The year of the Great Apostasy in Kirtland." Many saints had become disaffected with the leadership of the church. Many left the church and sought to overthrow it. Commenting on this apostasy and time of trouble, Elder Wilford Woodruff has said:

I passed through that scene [great apostasy in Kirtland], as did some others who are now with us, and I wish now to refer to it because it is something we should lay to heart. Even Apostles took occasion to rise up and endeavored to dictate and direct the Prophet of God. Here... was a manifestation -- and a very strange one, too of the power that the devil had over the leading men whom God raised up to assist in laying the foundation of this Church and in bringing forth the Book of Mormon. Those who testified to the Book of Mormon were led away through not keeping the commandments of God and thinking that they themselves were great men. Some of them were learned men; some of them considered themselves very smart men, and they were so smart that they wanted to dictate and direct the Prophet of God. The consequence of all this was that they turned aside from the commandments of God.

Some of them had been true and faithful in their labors in the ministry. I have heard Oliver Cowdery testify of the Book of Mormon by the power of God, when it seemed as if the very earth trembled under his feet. He was filled with the Holy Ghost and the power of God while he was faithful, and so were many of these men. But Oliver Cowdery yielded to the temptation of the evil one, and we may say he apostatized. So did Martin Harris, and several others connected with them. They left the Church, they turned against Joseph and they said he was a fallen prophet, and they themselves wanted to direct the Church. I have remarked that there was a time when there were but two of the quorum of the Twelve Apostles then in [the] town of Kirtland who stood by Joseph Smith and upheld him as a Prophet, Seer and Revelator. I was not a member of that quorum at that time; I was a Seventy. Several of these men called upon me in that time of this apostasy and asked me to join them against the Prophet; the Prophet was fallen, they said. Now, I had seen enough myself of the Prophet of God and I had read enough of the revelations of God through him, to know that he was a Prophet of God and not a fallen prophet. I saw that these men were yielding to the devil, and I told them so. Said I: "You will all go to hell unless you repent. Joseph has been raised up by the power of God and to the Church and kingdom of God here on the earth, and you will fall and go to perdition unless you repent of your sins and turn from the position you are in today." A good many of them did fall. I will here name one instance. I saw one of these Apostles in the Kirtland Temple, while the Sacrament was being passed, stand in the aisle and curse the Prophet of God to his face while he was in the stand, and when the bread was passed he reached out his hand for a piece of bread and flung it into his mouth like a mad dog. He turned as black in the face almost as an African with rage and with the power of the devil. What did he do? He ate and drank damnation to himself. He did not go and hang himself, but he did go and drown himself, and the river went over his body while his spirit was cast into the pit where he ceased to have the power to curse either God or His Prophet in time or in eternity. (Millennial

Star 57:339-340, May 30, 1895, Quoted in Roy W. Doxey,  
The Latter-day Prophets and The Doctrine and  
Covenants, Vol. 4, pp. 214-215)

Under these trying circumstances in Kirtland, the Prophet Joseph Smith was obliged to flee for his safety to Far West, Missouri. In a revelation given to Joseph in Far West (D&C Section 115), the Lord directed all members of the church to gather in and build up the city and area surrounding Far West. (See D&C 115:1-3, 7, 17-18) Thus, the Lord established a new gathering place for His saints at that time.

Since the temple in Kirtland had been defiled, the Lord also directed the saints to build a temple unto Him in Far West. (See D&C 115:8-16) (L. G. Otten and C. M. Caldwell, Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants, volume 2, pages 272-273)

#### **Excerpt from Biography of Lorenzo Snow**

During the time my brother was on this, his first mission, a great change had been going on in Kirtland, in the midst of the Saints. A spirit of speculation had crept into the hearts of some of the Twelve, and nearly, if not every quorum was more or less infected. Most of the Saints were poor, and now prosperity was dawning upon them-the Temple was completed, and in it they had been recipients of marvelous blessings, and many who had been humbled and faithful to the performance of every duty-ready to go and come at every call of the Priesthood, were getting haughty in their spirits, and lifted up in the pride of their hearts. As the Saints drank in the love and spirit of the world, the Spirit of the Lord withdrew from their hearts, and they were filled with pride and hatred toward those who maintained their integrity. They linked themselves together in an opposing party pretended that they constituted the Church, and claimed that the Temple belonged to them, and even attempted to hold it.

Warren Parrish, who had been a humble, successful preacher of the Gospel, was the ringleader of this apostate party. One sabbath morning, he, with several of his party, came into the Temple armed with pistols and bowie-knives, and seated themselves together in the Aaronic pulpits, on the east end of the Temple, while Father Smith and others, as usual, occupied those of the Melchizedek Priesthood on the west. Soon after the usual opening services, one of the brethren on the west stand arose, and just after he commenced to speak, one on the east interrupted him. Father Smith, presiding, called to order-he

told the apostate brother that he should have all the time he wanted, but he must wait his turn-as the brother On the west took the floor and commenced first to speak, he must not be interrupted. A fearful scene ensued-the apostate speaker becoming so clamorous, that Father Smith called for the police to take that man out of the house, when Parrish, John Boynton, and others, drew their pistols and bowie-knives, and rushed down from the stand into the congregation; J. Boynton saying he would blow out the brains of the first man who dared to lay hands on him. Many in the congregation, especially women and children, were terribly frightened-some tried to escape from the confusion by jumping out of the windows. Amid screams and shrieks, the policemen, in ejecting the belligerents, knocked down a stovepipe, which fell helter-skelter among the people; but, although bowie-knives and pistols were wrested from their owners, and thrown hither and thither to prevent disastrous results, no one was hurt, and after a short, but terrible scene to be enacted in a Temple of God, order was restored, and the services of the day proceeded as usual.

But the next day Father Smith, and sixteen others, were arrested on complaint of the apostate party, charged with riot, and bound over for their appearance in court to answer to the charge. With others, I was subpoenaed as a witness, and I found the court scene as amusing as the Temple scene was appalling. The idea of such a man as Father Smith-so patriarchal in appearance-so circumspect in deportment and dignified in his manners, being guilty of riot, was at once ludicrous and farcical to all sane-minded persons. And after the four Gentile lawyers (two for each party) had expended their stock of wit, the court dismissed the case with "no cause for action," and Father Smith and his associates came off triumphant.

During the proceedings, it was very interesting to hear the lawyers for the defense describe the opposite traits of character exhibited in the lives and appearances of the men who had apostatized from what they were when faithful in the work of God. One of them, Mr. Bissell, of Painesville, Ohio, pointing to John Boynton, said: "Just look at Mr. Boynton, see how changed! Before he apostatized, we used to see him in Painesville-he then was humble, and seemed truly a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus; but how does he seem now? all puffed up with pride. He looks more like a celestial dandy than a Saint."

Five of the quorum of the Twelve were in this apostasy; and some in every organized quorum became disaffected. Wherever the spirit of speculation-a grasping for the things of the

world-obtained, the light of the Spirit of God departed, and impenetrable darkness ensued. Some even became so blind as to seek to depose the Prophet of God. At length the hostility of the belligerent party assumed such threatening attitude that, late in the autumn of 1837, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon had to flee for their lives; and at a moment's warning, started for Missouri. But their absence did not check the persecution waged by those apostate brethren-others became the targets of their malice. Through their influence, the aged Father Smith was served with a State's warrant, but fortunately for him he was placed in the custody of Luke Johnson, who, although one of the apostates, was averse to the bitter spirit of persecution which characterized others. Naturally of a jovial turn, he was more inclined to ridicule than hostility. Having been somewhat conversant with law usages, he volunteered his services as legal adviser for Father Smith, although his custodian. He privately told Father Smith's friends that the suit was instigated through malice-that he knew Father Smith was innocent, and he was determined to do all he could for him; and he was true to his word.

A room adjoining the one in which the court was in session, was lighted by one window. Before Father Smith was brought for trial, Mr. Johnson had examined the premises, and under the aforesaid window, on the outside, he had cautiously made preparation so that the old gentleman could reach the ground without injury. Before the court proceeded to business, Mr. Johnson said he would like a few minutes private conversation with his client. Permission was granted for him to take the prisoner into the room aforementioned. When in, he drew the nail which was the only fastening to the window-raised the window, and said to Father Smith, "Go right up to Esquire Snow's-he is a quiet man, and no one will think of going there for you." The old gentleman did his bidding, and came directly to our father's, who had purchased a home in Kirtland, and was living a mile and a quarter distant from the court scene; when he arrived, it was nearly midnight.

Mr. Johnson replaced the nail in the window, and, after giving Father Smith time to clear the premises, proceeded to the court room, where he soon discovered that his client had not followed him; whereupon he hurried hack to the room to see what was detaining him. After hunting about there a short time, he came back to the court room, apparently very much disconcerted, and reported the unaccountable fact that the prisoner was not to be found. After close search by those present, who found the



nail fastening in the window all right, the question was, 'How did he make his escape?' The constable, who manifested the greatest astonishment of all present, finally settled the question by saying, "It is another Mormon miracle."

Father Smith remained between two and three weeks at our father's house, "hid up" from his enemies; but during the time, with the legal assistance of the justice of the peace (an honorable Gentile), he arranged his business matters preparatory to leaving for the west. Before he left, he was joined by six others, whose lives were threatened by apostates. (Eliza R. Snow, Biography of Lorenzo Snow, pages 20-24)

### **Excerpt from History of Joseph Smith, By His Mother**

Soon after the apostasy that took place in Kirtland our enemies began again to trouble us. Having seen our prosperity in everything to which we had set our hands previous to this, they became discouraged, and ceased their operations; but, suddenly discovering that there was a division in our midst, their fruitful imaginations were aroused to the utmost, to invent new schemes to accomplish our destruction.

Their first movement was to sue Joseph for debt, and, with this pretense, seize upon every piece of property belonging to any of the family. Joseph then had in his possession four Egyptian mummies, with some ancient records that accompanied them. These the mob swore they would take, and then burn every one of them. Accordingly, they obtained an execution upon them for an unjust debt of fifty dollars; but, by various stratagems, we succeeded in keeping them out of their hands.

The persecution finally became so violent that Joseph regarded it as unsafe to remain any longer in Kirtland, and began to make arrangements to move to Missouri. One evening, before finishing his preparations for the contemplated journey, he sat in council with the brethren at our house. After giving them directions as to what he desired them to do, while he was absent from them, and, as he was about leaving the room, he said, "Well, brethren, I do not recollect anything more, but one thing, brethren, is certain, I shall see you again, let what will happen, for I have a promise of life five years, and they cannot kill me until that time is expired."

That night he was warned by the Spirit to make his escape, with his family, as speedily as possible; he therefore arose from his bed and took his family, with barely beds and clothing sufficient for them, and left Kirtland in the dead hour of the

night. The day following, the constable, Luke Johnson, an apostate, served a summons upon my husband, telling him that no harm was intended, and desired him to go immediately to the office.

I begged Johnson not to drag my husband away among our enemies, for I knew, by sad experience, the direful consequences of these civil suits. Johnson paid no attention to what I said, but hurried my husband away to the office. He was taken for marrying a couple without being licensed. Luke Johnson bustled about, pretending to be very much engaged in drawing the bonds and in making arrangements, such as were required of him by the party to which he belonged. The first opportunity that offered itself, he went to Hyrum and told him he would take his father into a room, which he pointed out, and, said Johnson, "I will manage so that he can get out, which will set him at liberty to go where he pleases." In this way he escaped, by the help of Hyrum and John Boynton, from the window.

My husband, after traveling about two miles, stopped with Brother Oliver Snow, who was father to Eliza Snow, the poetess. The old man told Mr. Smith that he would secrete him, and, calling his family together, he forbade them telling any one of his being there.

Johnson came to me and inquired if Mr. Smith had returned home. This frightened me very much, and I exclaimed, "Luke, you have killed my husband." He denied it, but gave no further explanation. In a short time I found out where he was and sent him both money and clothes to travel with, so that in a few days he started with Don Carlos and Brother Wilber. By this time handbills were stuck up on every public as well as private road, offering a reward for him, and describing his person, in order, if possible, to prevent his escape. Runners were also sent throughout the country to watch for him, with authority to bring him back in case he should be found; but, in spite of all their diligence, he succeeded in making his escape and getting to New Portage, where he stopped with Brother Taylor. Don Carlos, having accompanied his father to the above-named place, returned home again to his family; but, immediately discovering that the mob contemplated taking him for the same offense, he moved with his family to New Portage, and was there with his father until the rest of the family were ready to remove to Missouri. Hyrum had already moved there with his family.

Shortly after they left, a man by the name of Edwin Woolley came to Kirtland to see Mr. Smith; not finding him there, he went to New Portage, and persuaded my husband to accompany him

to Rochester, Columbia Co.

After Mr. Smith had been at this gentleman's residence about two weeks, we became very uneasy about him; and, as we did not know at that time whither he had gone, William set out in pursuit of him, in order to learn, if possible, whether he had met with friends, and was well provided for, or had fallen into the hands of his enemies, and been murdered, for we had as much reason to apprehend the latter calamity, as to hope for the former good fortune.

It was some time after William arrived at New Portage, before he could ascertain where my husband had gone. But as soon as he did receive the desired information he proceeded to Mr. Woolley's, where he found his father in good health, but extremely anxious about the family.

Immediately after this, William returned home, and his father went again to New Portage. Here he remained with Don Carlos, until we were ready to start to Missouri.

When we were ready to start on our journey, I went to New Portage, and brought my husband to his family, and we all proceeded together on our journey, highly delighted to enjoy each other's society again, after so long a separation.

As soon as we had got fairly started, our sons began to have calls to preach, and they directly discovered that if they should yield to every solicitation, our journey would be a preaching mission of no inconsiderable length, which was quite inconsistent with the number and situation of our family. They therefore stopped preaching while on their journey, and we proceeded as fast as possible, under the disadvantageous circumstances with which we were frequently surrounded. Sometimes we lay in our tents, through driving storms; at other times we were traveling on foot through marshes and quagmires. Once in particular, we lay all night exposed to the rain, which fell in torrents, so that when I arose in the morning, I found that my clothing was perfectly saturated with the rain. However, I could not mend the matter by a change of dress, for the rain was still falling rapidly, and I wore my clothes in this situation, three days; in consequence of which I took a severe cold, so that when we arrived at the Mississippi river, I was unable to walk or sit up. After crossing this river, we stopped at a negro hut, a most unlovely place, yet the best shelter we could find. This hut was the birth-place of Catharine's son Alvin.

The next day my husband succeeded in getting a comfortable place, about four miles distant, for Catharine and her infant,

and they were carried thither on a lumber wagon, the same day. We then agreed that Sophronia, and her husband, McCleary, should stop and take care of Catharine, while Mr. Smith and the remainder of the party, should take me, and make what speed they could to Huntsville.

Our progress was but slow, for I was unable to travel far in a day, on account of a violent cough with which I was afflicted; however, we at length arrived there, and succeeded in getting a place where we could stay for some considerable length of time, if we should think proper to do so.

The next morning after our arrival, the family being absent, I seized the opportunity to make an effort to get far enough from the house to pray without interruption. Accordingly I took a staff in each hand, and, by the assistance which they afforded me, I was enabled to reach a dense thicket, which lay some distance from the house. As soon as I was sufficiently rested to speak with ease, I commenced calling upon the Lord, beseeching him to restore me to health, as well as my daughter Catharine. I urged every claim which is afforded us by the Scriptures, and continued praying faithfully for three hours, at the end of which time I was relieved from every kind of pain; my cough left me, and I was well.

At one o'clock, Wilkins J. Salisbury, Catharine's husband came to Huntsville, and informed us that Catharine was so much better, that, if she had a carriage to ride in, she could proceed on her journey.

After getting a carriage, Salisbury returned to his wife, who was forty miles from Huntsville, and the first day she traveled, she rode thirty miles. The second day, it commenced raining quite early in the morning, and continued to rain all day. However, this did not stop Catharine; she started about eight o'clock, and arrived a little before noon. When she got to Huntsville she was wet and cold. We put her immediately into a dry bed, and soon after she had an ague fit. The Elders were called to lay hands upon her, after which she seemed better, but continued weak and inclined to chills and fever for sometime.

The day following I washed a quantity of clothes, and then we proceeded on our journey, and met with no further difficulty until we arrived at Far West. (Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, pages 247-253)

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