

General Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 117-120

These four sections were all received the same day, Sunday, July 8, 1838, which was the next to last day of a conference held at Far West, Missouri. At the conference the cornerstone of a Temple to be built at Far West was placed, in obedience to D&C 115:8-10.

This conference is also notable in Church history because of Sidney Rigdon's [Fourth of July Oratory](#), which was later [printed by the Church](#) for distribution. This oratory ended with some rather fiery language that ended up being used by those hostile to the Church to justify the Extermination Order and the [1838 Mormon War](#), which started about a month later.

Also at this conference, Smith read three revelations received on January 12, 1838, the day he permanently left Kirtland, which are apparently lost to history.

The entry in History of the Church covering the events of the conference read as follows:

July 4.—The day was spent in celebrating the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, and also by the Saints making a "Declaration of Independence" from all mobs and persecutions which have been inflicted upon them, time after time, until they could bear it no longer; having been driven by ruthless mobs and enemies of truth from their homes, and having had their property confiscated, their lives exposed, and their all jeopardized by such barbarous conduct. The corner stones of the Houses of the Lord, agreeable to the commandments of the Lord unto us, given April 26, 1838, were laid.

Joseph Smith, Jun., was president of the day; Hyrum Smith, vice-president; Sidney Rigdon, orator; Reynolds Cahoon, chief marshal; George M. Hinckle and J. Hunt, assistant marshals; and George W. Robinson, Clerk.

The order of the day was splendid. The procession commenced forming at 10 o'clock a. m., in the following order: First, the infantry (militia); second, the Patriarchs of the Church; the president, vice-president, and orator; the Twelve Apostles, presidents of the stakes, and High Council; Bishop and counselors; architects, ladies and gentlemen. The cavalry brought up the rear of the large procession, which marched to music, and formed a circle, with the ladies in front, round the excavation. The southeast corner stone of the Lord's House in

Far West, Missouri, was then laid by the presidents of the stake, assisted by twelve men. The southwest corner, by the presidents of the Elders, assisted by twelve men. The northwest corner by the Bishop, assisted by twelve men. The northeast corner by the president of the Teachers, assisted by twelve men. This house is to be one hundred and ten feet long, and eighty feet broad.

The oration was delivered by President Rigdon, at the close of which was a shout of Hosanna, and a song, composed for the occasion by Levi W. Hancock, was sung by Solomon Hancock. The most perfect order prevailed throughout the day.

July 6.—This day I received a letter from Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, dated at Kirtland, Ohio, expressing their good feelings, firmness in the faith and prosperity.

Also another letter from my brother Don Carlos Smith, as follows:

Nine Miles From Terre Haute, Indiana.

Brother Joseph:—I sit down to inform you of our situation at the present time. I started from Norton, Ohio, the 7th of May, in company with father, William, Wilkins Jenkins Salisbury, William McClary and Lewis Robbins, and families, also Sister Singly. We started with fifteen horses, seven wagons, and two cows. We have left two horses by the way sick, and a third horse (our main dependence) was taken lame last evening, and is not able to travel, and we have stopped to doctor him. We were disappointed on every hand before we started in getting money. We got no assistance whatever, only as we have taken in Sister Singly, and she has assisted us as far as her means extended. We had, when we started, \$75 in money. We sold the two cows for \$13.50 per cow. We have sold of your goods to the amount of \$45.74, and now we have only \$25 to carry twenty-eight souls and thirteen horses five hundred miles.

We have lived very close and camped out at night, notwithstanding the rain and cold, and my baby only two weeks old when we started. Agnes is very feeble; father and mother are not well and very much fatigued; mother has a severe cold, and in fact it is nothing but the prayer of faith and the power of God, that will sustain them and bring them through. Our courage is good, and I think we

shall be brought through. I leave it with you and Hyrum to devise some way to assist us to some more expense money. We have unaccountably bad roads, had our horses down in the mud, and broke one wagon tongue and thills, and broke down the carriage twice, and yet we are all alive and encamped on a dry place for almost the first time. Poverty is a heavy load, but we are all obliged to welter under it.

It is now dark and I close. May the Lord bless you all, and bring us together, is my prayer. Amen. All the arrangements that brother Hyrum left for getting money failed; they did not gain us one cent.

Don C. Smith.

The three revelations which I received January 12, 1838, the day I left Kirtland, were read in the public congregation at Far West; and the same day I inquired of the Lord, "O Lord! Show unto thy servant how much thou requirest of the properties of thy people for a tithing," and received the following answer, which was also read in public:

[text of D&C 119 quoted]

Also I received the following:

[text of D&C 120 quoted]

Also I received the following:

[text of D&C 117 quoted]

Also I received the following:

[text of D&C 118 quoted]

Far West, July 9, 1838, a conference of the Twelve Apostles assembled at Far West, agreeable to the revelation, given July 8, 1838. Present, Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt and William Smith. T. B. Marsh, presiding.

Resolved 1st. That the persons who are to fill the places of those who are fallen, be immediately notified to come to Far West; as also, those of the Twelve who are not present.

Resolved 2nd. That Thomas B. Marsh notify Wilford Woodruff, that Parley P. Pratt notify Orson Pratt, and that President Rigdon notify Willard Richards, who is now in England.

Voted that President Marsh publish the same in next number of *The Elders' Journal*.

President Rigdon gave some counsel concerning the provisions necessary to be made for the families of the Twelve, while laboring in the cause of their Redeemer, advising them to instruct their converts to move without delay to the places of gathering, and there to strictly attend to the law of God.

T. B. Marsh, President.

G. W. Robinson, Clerk.

(Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church, volume 3, chapter 5, pages 41-47)

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 117

While the bulk of the members of the Church had either apostatized or left Kirtland, some few still remained. The Lord instructs these individuals to conduct their business promptly and remove to Far West, Missouri.

1 VERILY thus saith the Lord unto my servant William Marks, and also unto my servant Newel K. Whitney, let them settle up their business speedily and journey from the land of Kirtland, before I, the Lord, send again the snows upon the earth. 2 Let them awake, and arise, and come forth, and not tarry, for I, the Lord, command it. 3 Therefore, if they tarry it shall not be well with them.

4 Let them repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous desires, before me, saith the Lord; for what is property unto me? saith the Lord. 5 Let the properties of Kirtland be turned out for debts, saith the Lord. Let them go, saith the Lord, and whatsoever remaineth, let it remain in your hands, saith the Lord.

6 For have I not the fowls of heaven, and also the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the mountains? Have I not made the earth? Do I not hold the destinies of all the armies of the nations of the earth? 7 Therefore, will I not make solitary places to bud and to blossom, and to bring forth in abundance? saith the Lord. 8 Is there not room enough on the mountains of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and on the plains of Olaha Shinehah, or the land where Adam dwelt, that you should covet that which is but the drop, and neglect the more weighty matters? 9 Therefore, come up hither unto the land of my people, even Zion.

10 Let my servant William Marks be faithful over a few things, and he shall be a ruler over many. Let him preside in the midst of my people in the city of Far West, and let him be blessed with the blessings of my people. 11 Let my servant Newel K. Whitney be ashamed of the Nicolaitane band and of all their secret abominations, and of all his littleness of soul before me, saith the Lord, and come up to the land of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and be a bishop unto my people, saith the Lord, not in name but in deed, saith the Lord.

v1-11 Marks and Whitney are to sell off the Church's assets quickly and be out of Kirtland before winter starts (v. 1-2), otherwise there will be trouble (v. 3). The Lord tells them to not be covetous over the Church's properties (v. 4-5), reminding them of His power over Creation (v. 6-9). Marks and Whitney are then admonished to be faithful (v. 10-11).

v4-9 The Lord tells Marks and Whitney that He is the engineer

of history and has the power of Creation in His hands, so if the Church were obedient He could bless them beyond whatever it is they are currently coveting. The result is they are neglecting the "more weighty matters", cp. Matt. 23:23. The Lord is addressing Marks and Whitney, apparently Whitney in specific (cf. 11).

v11 The Lord's warning to Whitney concerning the apostates is obscure. Perhaps Whitney felt some sense of obligation of dealing with the apostates to some degree with respect to disposing of the Church's properties. Or, perhaps he was persuaded by or sympathetic to the issues the apostates were raising, or was possibly fearful of them. Whatever the issue was, the Lord tells Whitney to forget about it, and history shows us he did.

12 And again, I say unto you, I remember my servant Oliver Granger; behold, verily I say unto him that his name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord. 13 Therefore, let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, saith the Lord; and when he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord. 14 Therefore, let him come up hither speedily, unto the land of Zion; and in the due time he shall be made a merchant unto my name, saith the Lord, for the benefit of my people. 15 Therefore let no man despise my servant Oliver Granger, but let the blessings of my people be on him forever and ever.

v12-15 Granger, Smith's business agent, is addressed (v. 12-15).

v11 "Nicolataine band", a reference to the apostates of Kirtland in 1837. The name the Lord applies to them is drawn from Rev. 2. Heber C. Kimball described this sorrowful time:

"A man's life was in danger the moment he spoke in defense of the Prophet of God. During this time I had many days of sorrow and mourning, for my heart sickened to see the awful extent that things were getting to. The only source of consolation I had, was in bending my knees continually before my Father in Heaven, and asking Him to sustain me and preserve me from falling into snares, and from betraying my brethren as others had done; for those who apostatized

sought every means and opportunity to draw others after them. They also entered into combinations to obtain wealth by fraud and every means that was evil.”
(Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball, pg. 101.).

16 And again, verily I say unto you, let all my servants in the land of Kirtland remember the Lord their God, and mine house also, to keep and preserve it holy, and to overthrow the moneychangers in mine own due time, saith the Lord. Even so. Amen.

v16 Conclusion, wherein the Lord likens the apostates to the ancient money changers, cf. Matt. 21:12.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 117

Section 117 was received after an unpublished revelation received January, 12, 1838, presented below.

This section was first published in the Deseret News, volume 3, number 10, page 37, dated April 2, 1853. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 16, number 12, pages 183-184, dated March 25, 1854. It was first published in the Doctrine and Covenants in the 1876 edition, pages 379-381.

Excerpt from Joseph Smith Papers

Thus saith the Lord Let the presidency of my Church take their families as soon as it is praticable and a door is open for them and move on to the west as fast as the way is made plain before their faces and let their hearts be comforted for I will be with them

Verily I say unto you the time [has] come that your laibours are finished in this place, for a season, Therefore arise and get yourselves on to a land which I shall show unto you even a land flowing with milk and honey you are clean from the blood of this people and wo unto those who have become your enimies who have professed my name saith the Lord, for their judgement lingereth not and their damnation slumbereth not, let all your faithfull friends arise with their families also and get out of this place and gather themselves together unto Zion and be at peace among yourselves O ye inhabitants of Zion or there shall be no safety for you. ([Joseph Smith, Jr., Joseph Smith Papers, Revelation, 12 January 1838](#))

Excerpt from Doctrine and Covenants Commentary

The Lord had commanded the Saints to gather and build up Far West speedily (See Sec. 115:17). A company of 515 souls, known as the Kirtland Camp, left Kirtland on the 6th of July, 1838, for Zion. On the 14th of September, it appears only 260 members were left, the others having been scattered "to the four winds." The camp arrived in Adam-ondi-Ahman on the 4th of October. Neither Marks, Whitney, nor Granger were members of this company. Joseph Smith at Far West had no means of knowing, at that time, who had, or who had not, left for Zion; but the Lord knew. (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodhal, Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, page 744)

Excerpt from Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

After a very eventful Independence Day celebration, a three-day Church conference was held, 6-8 July 1838, in Far West, Missouri. On the final day of the conference, the Prophet Joseph Smith received several revelations.

Section 117, received on the morning of 8 July, instructed William Marks, president of the Kirtland Stake, and Newel K. Whitney, bishop, to sell the remaining Church properties, liquidate Church debts, and move posthaste to Far West, Missouri.

Oliver Granger was to return to Kirtland, Ohio, commissioned as the Prophet's attorney-in-fact to "settle up his business affairs." Concerning Granger's responsibility the Prophet later stated, "As I was driven from Kirtland without the privilege of settling up my business, I had...employed Colonel Oliver Granger as my agent, to close all my affairs in the east."

A letter to Marks and Whitney, bearing the date 8 July 1838 and signed by the First Presidency, stated the following:

We send you by the hand of br O. Granger a revelation recd this morning. By this you will understand the will of the Lord concerning you & will doubtless act accordingly—It would be wisdom for all the Saints that can come this Summer to come.... If they cannot sell their property let them turn it out for the debts.... There needs be no fear in the Saints coming up here there are Provisions or will be in great abundance of all kinds.

(Lyndon W. Cook, Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

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