

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 118

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: Let a conference be held immediately; let the Twelve be organized; and let men be appointed to supply the place of those who are fallen.

2 Let my servant Thomas remain for a season in the land of Zion, to publish my word. 3 Let the residue continue to preach from that hour, and if they will do this in all lowliness of heart, in meekness and humility, and long-suffering, I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that I will provide for their families; and an effectual door shall be opened for them, from henceforth. 4 And next spring let them depart to go over the great waters, and there promulgate my gospel, the fulness thereof, and bear record of my name. 5 Let them take leave of my saints in the city of Far West, on the twenty-sixth day of April next, on the building-spot of my house, saith the Lord.

6 Let my servant John Taylor, and also my servant John E. Page, and also my servant Wilford Woodruff, and also my servant Willard Richards, be appointed to fill the places of those who have fallen, and be officially notified of their appointment.

v1 The apostasy of some of the Twelve Apostles (cf. D&C 114:12, D&C 117:11) necessitates their replacement.

v3 The remaining faithful members of the Twelve are encouraged to continue in meekness and humility, and if they do so they and their families will be materially taken care of. The financial speculation occurring at Kirtland at the time placed many of the Saints in precarious positions, so this promise was an important one.

v4-5 The faithful Twelve are told to commence their foreign missionary activities until the following Spring.

v5 "on the twenty-sixth day of April", with respect to the date, in the Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, Hyrum W. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl state:

Enemies of the Church threatened to make compliance with this command impossible, but when the day came, the Twelve and others met on the Temple ground at Far West, and Alpheus Cutler laid the foundation stone again, by rolling up a stone and placing it near the southeast corner, according to the Revelation (Section 115:11), whereupon the Twelve engaged in prayer. Then they sang, "Adam-ondi-Ahman," and, finally, took leave

of the Saints. Then they were ready for their respective missions. When the enemies heard of the proceedings, they were very much chagrined because they had forgotten the date.

v6 The replacement apostles are identified by the Lord by name.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 118

The text of this section was first published in *Desert News*, volume 3, number 10, page 37, dated April 2, 1853. It was published in the *Millennial Star*, volume 16, number 12, page 184, dated March 25, 1854. It was first published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1876, pages 381-382.

Excerpt from The Doctrine and Covenants: Our Modern Scripture

The wave of apostasy in Ohio even affected the Twelve Apostles; of the four men called in this section to fill the resulting vacancies, two—John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff—later became presidents of the Church, while a third—Willard Richards—became a counselor in the First Presidency.

Earlier revelations had called the Twelve to perform an overseas mission beginning during the spring of 1839 (D&C 114:1), and also directed that construction on the Far West Temple be renewed on April 26 of that year (D&C 115:8-11). Section 118 now instructed the Twelve to leave for their mission from Far West on the above date. (Verses 5-6.) During the winter of 1838-39, however, the Latter-day Saints fled from Missouri under the governor's threat of extermination if they remained in the state. Non-Mormons openly boasted that these circumstances would prevent the Twelve from keeping the above commandment and, thus, prove Joseph Smith to be a false prophet. But, the apostles returned to Far West at great personal risk, and early in the morning of April 26, 1839, they laid the cornerstone of the temple and then prepared to depart for their missions. It was on this occasion that Wilford Woodruff was ordained an apostle. (Richard O. Cowan, *The Doctrine and Covenants: Our Modern Scripture*, pages 183-184)

Excerpt from Journal of Discourses

The Twelve Apostles were called by revelation to go to Far West, Caldwell county, to lay the foundation of the cornerstone of the Temple. When that revelation was given this Church was in peace in Missouri. It is the only revelation that has ever been since the organization of the Church, that I know anything about, that had day and date given with it. The Lord called the Twelve Apostles, while in this state of prosperity, on the 26th day of April, 1838, to go to Far West to lay the cornerstone of the Temple; and from there to take their departure to England to

preach the Gospel. Previous to the arrival of that period the whole Church was driven out of the State of Missouri, and it was as much as a man's life was worth to be found in the state if it was known that he was a Latter-day Saint; and especially was this the case with the Twelve. When the time came for the corner stone of the Temple to be laid, as directed in the revelation, the Church was in Illinois, having been expelled from Missouri by an edict from the Governor. Joseph and Hyrum Smith and Parley P. Pratt were in chains in Missouri for the testimony of Jesus. As the time drew nigh for the accomplishment of this work, the question arose. "What is to be done?" Here is a revelation commanding the Twelve to be in Far West on the 26th day of April, to lay the cornerstone of the Temple there; it has to be fulfilled. The Missourians had sworn by all the gods of eternity that if every other revelation given through Joseph Smith were fulfilled, that should not be, for the day and date being given they declared that it would fail. The general feeling in the Church, so far as I know, was that, under the circumstances, it was impossible to accomplish the work; and the Lord would accept the will for the deed. This was the feeling of Father Smith, the father of the Prophet. Joseph was not with us, he was in chains in Missouri, for his religion. When President [Brigham] Young asked the question of the Twelve, "Brethren, what will you do about this?" the reply was, "The Lord has spoken and it is for us to obey." We felt that the Lord God had given the commandment and we had faith to go forward and accomplish it, feeling that it was his business whether we lived or died in its accomplishment. We started for Missouri. There were two wagons. I had one and took brother [Orson] Pratt and President Young in mine; brother Cutler, and one of the building committee, had the other. We reached Far West and laid the corner stone according to the revelation that had been given to us. We cut off apostates and those who had sworn away the lives of the brethren. We ordained Darwin Chase and Norman Shearer into the Seventies. Brother George A. Smith and myself were ordained into the quorum of the Twelve on the corner stone of the Temple; we had been called before, but not ordained. We then returned, nobody having molested or made us afraid. We performed that work by faith, and the Lord blessed us in doing it. The devil, however, tried to kill us, for before we started for England everyone of the Twelve was taken sick and it was about as much as we could do to move or stir. (Wilford Woodruff, Journal of Discourses, volume 13, page 159.)

Excerpt from Millennial Star

Early on the morning of the 26th of April [1839], we held our Conference, cut off 31 persons from the Church and proceeded to ordain Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith to the office of the Twelve, to fill the places of those who had fallen. Darwin Chase and Norman Shearer, (who had just been liberated from Richmond prison, and arrived the evening previous) were then ordained to the office of the Seventies.

The Twelve then offered up vocal prayer in the following order: Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, John E. Page, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith; after which we sang: "Adam-ondi-Ahman," and then we took our leave of the...Saints, agreeable to the revelation....

As the Saints were passing away from the meeting, brother [Theodore] Turley said to Page and Woodruff, "Stop a bit, while I bid Isaac Russell good-bye" and knocking at his house called brother Russell. His wife answered, "Come in; it is brother Turley." Russell replied, "It is not; he left here two weeks ago," and appeared quite alarmed; but on finding it was Turley, asked him to sit down; but he replied, "I cannot; I shall lose my company." "Who is your company," inquired Russell. "The Twelve." "The Twelve?" "Yes; don't you know that this is the twenty-sixth, and the day the Twelve were to take leave of their friends on the foundation of the Lord's house to go to the islands of the sea? The revelation is now fulfilled and I am going with them." Russell was speechless, and Turley bid him farewell.

Thus was this revelation fulfilled, concerning which our enemies said, If all the other revelations of Joseph Smith were fulfilled that one should not, as it had day and date to it. (Brigham Young, Millennial Star, September 12, 1863, 25:567, 583-84)

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