

## Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 122

See comments on D&C 121 for background on this text.

This block of text appears immediately after the text comprising D&C 121:34-46 and is quoted without interruption.

The header for the D&C states, "The word of the Lord to Joseph Smith the Prophet". This forwards the view the person doing the speaking in the text is the Lord and the target is Smith. This is not the case. It is clear from the letter this text is extracted from where Smith is continuing on in his address to the ecclesia, thus the speaker is Smith and not the Lord and the target audience continues to be the same as that for D&C 121:34-46 and not Smith. Furthermore, there is no text appearing in the letter presenting it as a quotation of the Lord. Finally, the text in the letter immediately following this quotation unequivocally presents Smith as addressing his brethren.

Despite this, the section verse summaries and various commentators present the speaker as the Lord and the audience as Smith. One would assume this is because v. 6 recounts an incident that actually occurred to Smith personally, and v. 7 refers to "my son". The deduction is then this must be the Lord recounting the incident to Smith. However, it is just as plausible Smith is recounting the event he went through to the ecclesia as an example of kinds of tribulation they all, even the Prophet, must face. And the "my son" is more likely referring to the representative Priesthood holder (characterized in the singular "thy") in 121:44-46.

While it is possible this text is a quotation of the Lord aimed at Smith, there is nothing in the text identifying it as such as occurs with the positively identified quotation in D&C 121:7-25.

1 THE ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee; 2 while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.

3 And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors. 4 And although their influence shall cast thee into trouble, and into bars and walls, thou shalt be had in honor; and but for a small moment and thy voice shall be more terrible in the midst of thine enemies than the fierce lion,

because of thy righteousness; and thy God shall stand by thee forever and ever.

v1-2 The servant of the Lord acts as a witness who causes the sheep to be divided from the goats. Those who hear the Lord's servants hear Him, cp. John 5:45-47. While fools will mock the Lord's servant, the elect will hear the servant's voice, cp. D&C 29:7.

v3-4 While traitorous apostates will cause the Lord's servants trouble (i.e. temporal suffering, cp. John 16:33), the time will come when the Lord's servant will trouble the apostates (i.e., eternal suffering).

5 If thou art called to pass through tribulation; if thou art in perils among false brethren; if thou art in perils among robbers; if thou art in perils by land or by sea; 6 If thou art accused with all manner of false accusations; if thine enemies fall upon thee; if they tear thee from the society of thy father and mother and brethren and sisters; and if with a drawn sword thine enemies tear thee from the bosom of thy wife, and of thine offspring, and thine elder son, although but six years of age, shall cling to thy garments, and shall say, My father, my father, why can't you stay with us? O, my father, what are the men going to do with you? and if then he shall be thrust from thee by the sword, and thou be dragged to prison, and thine enemies prowl around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb; 7 And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

8 The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? 9 Therefore, hold on thy way, and the priesthood shall remain with thee; for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever.

v5-7 Various tribulations of mortality are presented, with those recounted in v. 6 being a real historical event which led up to Smith's present incarceration. It then concludes by stating that these various tribulations are for their experience and benefit, cp. 2 Ne. 2:11.

v6 Lyndon W. Cook in Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith says:

Verse 6 refers to the Prophet's arrest and heart-rending departure from his family at Far West, Missouri in November 1838. Lyman Wight described the inhumane scene: About the hour the prisoners were to have been shot on the public square in Far West, they were exhibited in a wagon in the town, all of them having families there, but myself; and it would have broken the heart of any person possessing an ordinary share of humanity, to have seen the separation. The aged father and mother of Joseph Smith were not permitted to see his face, but to reach their hands through the curtains of the wagon, and thus take leave of him. When passing his own house, he was taken out of the wagon and permitted to go into the house, but not without a strong guard, and not permitted to speak with his family but in the presence of his guard and his eldest son, Joseph, about six or eight years old, hanging to the tail of his coat, crying father, is the mob going to kill you? The guard said to him, "you damned little brat, go back, you will see your father no more."

"with a drawn sword", a metaphor for "with threat of physical violence".

v8 The Lord in mortality suffered more than anyone and was not spared anything. The rhetorical question is then asked, "Are you greater than the Lord that you should be spared the suffering allotted you?"

v9 "their bounds are set, they cannot pass", the ambiguous pronouns "their" and "they" are referring to the traitors and persecutors referenced in v. 4-7. The ecclesia is informed that those who persecute them are limited in their scope and ability (cp. Matt. 6:34), and as long as the ecclesia remains faithful they have nothing to fear from their enemies.

## **Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine and Covenants 122**

Section 122 was first published in Times and Seasons, volume 1, number 9, pages 131-134, dated July, 1840. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 1, number 8, pages 193-197, dated December, 1840. It was published in the Desert News, volume 4, number 5, pages 17, dated February 2, 1854. It was first published in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876, pages 388-389.

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