

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 125

1 WHAT is the will of the Lord concerning the saints in the Territory of Iowa?

2 Verily, thus saith the Lord, I say unto you, if those who call themselves by my name and are essaying to be my saints, if they will do my will and keep my commandments concerning them, let them gather themselves together unto the places which I shall appoint unto them by my servant Joseph, and build up cities unto my name, that they may be prepared for that which is in store for a time to come.

3 Let them build up a city unto my name upon the land opposite the city of Nauvoo, and let the name of Zarahemla be named upon it. 4 And let all those who come from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south, that have desires to dwell therein, take up their inheritance in the same, as well as in the city of Nashville, or in the city of Nauvoo, and in all the stakes which I have appointed, saith the Lord.

At the time when the ecclesia in Illinois were instructed to gather into Nauvoo, the ecclesia living in Iowa wanted to know if they were to gather into Nauvoo as well. The Lord instructs those living in Iowa to gather together to a place they will name Zarahemla, which is on the opposite side of the Mississippi River from Nauvoo.

The last line of v. 2 suggests this command is intended to bring the ecclesia closer in geographically for some future event, which we would assume is the construction and consecration of the Nauvoo temple.

That the new city is to be named Zarahemla suggests that perhaps there is some parallel between the ancient land and city of that name and this new one. We know from Omni 1:12 the people were to flee from among their brethren into the wilderness, whoever would hear the voice of the Lord. In this case there is something of a parallel where the Saints, those who heed Smith, are fleeing from their hostile neighbors into the wilderness.

The precise location of this new Zarahemla is unclear, but it appears to be [approximately one mile west](#) of the current town of Montrose, Iowa.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 125

This section was first published in the Deseret News, volume 4, number 46, page 171, dated January 25, 1855. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 18, number 28, page 433, dated July 12, 1856. It was first published in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876, pages 408-409.

Excerpt from History of Utah

The History of the Church notes that Section 125 was given about 20 March 1841, but an entry for 6 March 1841 in the John Smith Journal suggests an earlier date. John Smith records that Alanson Ripley, bishop of the Saints in Iowa, came to see him on 6 March 1841 and gave him the following instructions: "Joseph said it was the will of the Lord the brethren in general in Ambrosia should move in and about the city Zerehemla with all convenient speed which the Saints are willing to do because it is the word of the Lord."

A major factor that permitted the Saints to gather again after their expulsion from Missouri was the liberal land offer extended to them by Isaac Galland. Dr. Galland promoted the Mormon cause by corresponding with political executives in Iowa and Illinois and by offering thousands of acres of land to the Saints on a twenty-year installment agreement with no interest. During the months of April to June 1839, Church land agents purchased from Galland about twenty thousand acres in Lee County, Iowa, and fifty acres in Commerce, Illinois (Nauvoo).

Section 125 instructed the Saints to build up opposite Nauvoo a city to be named Zarahemla. In addition, the town of Nashville was to be built up.

The settlements of Zarahemla, Nashville, Ambrosia, and Montrose were located in Lee County, Iowa, on properties that the Church had purchased from Isaac Galland in 1839.

The counsel to settle on the Iowa side of the Mississippi River and strengthen the settlements named in the revelation was publicly announced on 6 April 1841 at the general conference of the Church in Nauvoo. William Clayton, who was present at the conference, recorded the following:

A short revelation was also read concerning the saints in Iowa. The question had been asked what is the will of the Lord concerning the saints in Iowa. It read to the following effect Verily thus saith the Lord let

all those my saints who are assaying to do my will gather themselves together upon the land opposite to Nauvoo and build a city unto my name and let the name of Zarahemla be named upon it. And all who come from the East and West and North and South who have desires let them settle in Zarahemla that they may be prepared for that which is in store for a time to come.... Many of the brethren immediately made preparations for moving in here but on account of its being so late in the season President John Smith advised to get through with planting and then proceed to move in. (Lyndon W. Cook, Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

The remainder of the Apostles [excepting Parley P. Pratt and Orson Hyde] who had gone abroad now returned home, some of them reaching Nauvoo early in July, 1841.

Anticipating their arrival by several weeks... [in] the latter part of May [1841].... It was a part of the plan of the Mormon leader, besides building up a central Stake of Zion at Nauvoo, to establish other stakes in that vicinity. Among these, which had now been organized for several months, were those of Ramus and Lima in Hancock County, Quincy and Mount Hope in Adams County, Geneva in Morgan County, and Zarahemla in Lee County, Iowa. (Orson F. Whitney, History of Utah, page 186.)

Excerpt from Essentials in Church History

Mr. [Isaac] Galland in a communication to David W. Rogers [May 1839], suggested that the Saints locate in Iowa, which was a territory; for he thought they would be more likely to receive protection from mobs under the jurisdiction of the United States, than they would in a state of the Union, "where murder, rapine and robbery are admirable (!) traits in the character of a demagogue; and where the greatest villains often reach the highest offices." He also wrote to Governor Robert Lucas of Iowa, who had known the "Mormon" people in Ohio, and who spoke very highly of them as good citizens. Across the river [Mississippi at Nauvoo, Illinois] on the Iowa side, extensive holdings also were obtained. [1839.] The village of Nashville, in Lee County, with twenty thousand acres adjoining, were purchased; also other lands opposite Nauvoo. Here the Prophet instructed the Saints that a city should be built, to be called Zarahemla. A number of members of the Church had located here when the Saints were driven from Missouri, and it appeared to be

a suitable location for a permanent settlement of the people.... The idea seemed to be that the Latter-day Saints should spread out over considerable territory, and form organizations in various parts of the country, but this plan was abandoned, and the Saints scattered abroad were commanded by revelation in January, 1841, to gather to Hancock County, Illinois, and to Lee County, Iowa, and to build up the settlements in these parts occupied by the members of the Church. This was, the presidency wrote, "agreeable to the order of heaven." Consequently the Saints began to immigrate to Nauvoo, and the city grew rapidly by such additions. About one year after the location of the site, Nauvoo had a population of over three thousand souls, and six years later, at the time of the great western exodus, about twenty thousand. The stake at Zarahemla was later discontinued, but John Smith remained there to preside over the Saints in Iowa. [1846.] (Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History, pp. 268-69)

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