

GD27 - "They Must Needs Be Chastened and Tried, Even as Abraham"
Goose Creek Ward, Ashburn, VA Stake
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Overall, the history which this lesson covers is not a flattering one. The Saints in Missouri were told to establish Zion, and instead they rebelled against the Lord. The result was the Church was scattered by her enemies and Zion was, for the mean time, confounded.

The lesson material below is in four sections. The first section deals with the underlying theology behind the Lord chastening His people. The subsequent three sections deal with the major historical reasons, presented in roughly what would be chronological order, why the Saints in Missouri failed to establish Zion.

THEOLOGY - Chastening the Rebellious

When the Lord's people forget Him and ignore His prophets, He has to resort to means to get them to repent. The primary means are various combinations of physical punishment, as is spelled out in great detail in Lev. 26:14-39.

Lev. 26:14 **But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;** 15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, [but] that ye break my covenant: 16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 **And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.**

18 **And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you** seven times more for your sins. 19 And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: 20 And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.

21 **And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you** according to your sins.

22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your [high] ways shall be desolate.

23 **And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; 24 Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you** yet seven times for your sins. 25 And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of [my] covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. 26 [And] when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver [you] your bread again by

weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

27 **And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me;** 28 **Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you** seven times for your sins. 29 And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. 30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. 31 And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. 32 And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. 33 And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. 34 Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye [be] in your enemies' land; [even] then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. 35 As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. 36 And upon them that are left [alive] of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. 37 And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. 38 And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. 39 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.

As long as His people rebel against Him He continues to heap woe upon them so they will repent. If necessary, this continues until there remains little more than a scattered remnant.

But, as soon as the people repent, the Lord has mercy on them, as is explained as the text from Lev. 26 continues:

Lev. 26:40 **If they shall confess their iniquity**, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; 41 And [that] I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: 42 **Then will I remember my covenant** with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Whenever they repent the Lord remembers His covenant with Israel and turns back to them.

This pattern occurs repeatedly in the OT and BofM as the people cycle through wickedness, are punished and left to suffer, repent and then return to the Lord.

The pattern is the same in modern times. And it occurred with the members of the LDS Church in Missouri in the early and mid 1830s. They failed to follow Him, so He left them to be chastened at the hands of their enemies. The Lord states this flatly in D&C 101:

D&C 101:1 VERILY I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance-- 2 **I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon**

them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions;

Verses 1-15 of D&C 101 use the same formula as that of Lev. 26 when it comes to the rebellious among the Lord's people.

HISTORY - Problems with Leaders in Zion

Very early on in September 1832 the leaders in Missouri were eager to have Joseph relocate from Kirtland, Ohio to Independence, Missouri and make that the center for the Church. Smith did not do as requested and the leaders were displeased with him because of it:

On September 22-23, 1832, Hyrum sat in conference with the brethren. During the conference period, a special meeting of the twelve high priests was called to consider a letter from Brother Sidney Gilbert, W. W. Phelps, and John Corrill of Jackson County, Missouri. Grave problems had arisen among the Saints in Zion, problems such as too many poor people; not enough saintliness due to pride, jealousy, and a lack of co-operation; and the well-to-do who hesitated to consecrate their property into the new social order known as the "United Order."

When the letter was read, it was observed that the Missouri brethren expressed hope that there (Missouri), the church headquarters soon would be established. The letter stated that the little branch needed the presence of Joseph, Hyrum, and the other brethren. At the moment this was not possible because the proximity of Kirtland to the larger centers of population to the east and north provided better opportunity for missionary work. For the time being, contact with Missouri could be maintained only by frequent letters and visits.

Two months later came another letter from Sidney Gilbert, this one a gloomy message dated December 10, and followed on December 15 by one from W. W. Phelps which contained—as the leaders expressed it—"low, dark, and blind insinuations which were not received from the fountain of light," (Sidney Gilbert,) and "which betrayed a lightness of spirit that ill becomes a man (W. W. Phelps) placed in the important and responsible station he is placed in."

A reply had to be written to meet the growing crisis. The council agreed that Hyrum Smith was the man to write it and appointed Orson Hyde to assist him. On January 14, 1833, Hyrum sat down and wrote the following: "Kirtland Mills, Geauga Co., Ohio, From a conference of Twelve High Priests, to the Bishop, his Council and the Inhabitants of Zion." The epistle contained several passages from revelations to show the importance of humility and obedience to the commandments of the Lord. It admonished the Missouri Saints to read the revelations and the Book of Mormon and to abide by their teachings, telling them that unless they repented the judgments of God would fall upon them. It also stated that Brother Joseph did not seek monarchical power and authority but was striving to magnify the high office and calling which were his by the command of God and the united voice of the Church. If the people of Zion did not repent, the Lord would seek another place and another people. Continuing, Hyrum said, "We have the best of feelings and feelings of the greatest anxiety for the welfare of Zion: We feel more like weeping over Zion than we do like rejoicing over her, for we know that the judgments of God hang over her, and will fall upon her except she repent. . . . We now say to Zion, this once in the name of the Lord,

Repent! Repent! Awake! Awake! put on thy beautiful garments. . . ." (Pearson H. Corbett, Hyrum Smith Patriarch, pages 114-115)

On March 8, 1833 the Lord calls the leaders of the Church to repentance:

D&C 90:32 And behold, verily I say unto you, that ye shall write this commandment, and say unto your brethren in Zion, in love greeting, that I have called you also to preside over Zion in mine own due time. 33 Therefore, let them cease wearying me concerning this matter. 34 Behold, I say unto you that your brethren in Zion begin to repent, and the angels rejoice over them. 35 Nevertheless, I am not well pleased with many things; and I am not well pleased with my servant William E. McLellin, neither with my servant Sidney Gilbert; and the bishop [Edward Partidge] also, and others have many things to repent of. 36 But verily I say unto you, that I, the Lord, will contend with Zion, and plead with her strong ones, and chasten her until she overcomes and is clean before me. 37 For she shall not be removed out of her place. I, the Lord, have spoken it. Amen.

In general the leaders didn't repent. There were persistent power struggles and conflict between the leadership in Missouri and Joseph in Kirtland.

HISTORY - Problems with the General Members

The Lord commanded the Saints very early on to establish the United Order under the Law of Consecration, cf. D&C 51:3, D&C 82:20.

After the Saints had moved to Missouri, the Lord again commands them in December 1833 to observe the United Order because they were generally ignoring it:

D&C 101:72 Now, verily I say unto you, let all the churches gather together all their moneys; let these things be done in their time, but not in haste; and observe to have all things prepared before you. 73 And let honorable men be appointed, even wise men, and send them to purchase these lands. 74 And the churches in the eastern countries, when they are built up, if they will hearken unto this counsel they may buy lands and gather together upon them; and in this way they may establish Zion. 75 There is even now already in store sufficient, yea, even an abundance, to redeem Zion, and establish her waste places, no more to be thrown down, were the churches, who call themselves after my name, willing to hearken to my voice.

However, the Saints did not observe it and it was subsequently broken up into separate local orders in April 1834, one in Kirtland and one in Missouri:

D&C 104:47 And now, a commandment I give unto you concerning Zion, that you shall no longer be bound as a united order to your brethren of Zion, only on this wise-- 48 After you are organized, you shall be called the United Order of the Stake of Zion, the City of Kirtland. And your

brethren, after they are organized, shall be called the United Order of the City of Zion. 49 And they shall be organized in their own names, and in their own name; and they shall do their business in their own name, and in their own names; 50 And you shall do your business in your own name, and in your own names. 51 And this I have commanded to be done for your salvation, and also for their salvation, in consequence of their being driven out and that which is to come. 52 The covenants being broken through transgression, by covetousness and feigned words-- 53 Therefore, you are dissolved as a united order with your brethren, that you are not bound only up to this hour unto them, only on this wise, as I said, by loan as shall be agreed by this order in council, as your circumstances will admit and the voice of the council direct.

And then shortly thereafter in June 1834 the United Order was entirely dissolved:

D&C 105:1 VERILY I say unto you who have assembled yourselves together that you may learn my will concerning the redemption of mine afflicted people-- 2 Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now. 3 But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them; 4 And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; 5 And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. 6 And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer. 7 I speak not concerning those who are appointed to lead my people, who are the first elders of my church, for they are not all under this condemnation; 8 But I speak concerning my churches abroad--there are many who will say: Where is their God? Behold, he will deliver them in time of trouble, otherwise we will not go up unto Zion, and will keep our moneys. 9 Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion-- ... 34 And let those commandments which I have given concerning Zion and her law be executed and fulfilled, after her redemption.

All of this because of greed. Orson Pratt commented on the situation:

We find, a few years after these revelations that I have read were given, the Lord saw that we were so covetous and filled with the selfish principle instilled into our minds by our forefathers, that we would not give heed to the law which he gave concerning the consecrations that were to be made in Jackson County, Mo., and he determined in his own mind that that should not be a land of Zion unto the present generation of people, take them as a people; and he made this decree, after giving them revelation upon revelation, warning them by the mouth of his servant Joseph, who went in person and warned them, and sent up his revelations a thousand miles from Kirtland and warned them. After they had been sufficiently warned, for some two years and upwards, after their commencement of the settlement of Jackson County, Missouri, the Lord fulfilled that which he had spoken concerning them--that they should be driven out of the land of Zion. This was literally fulfilled. Why? Because of covetousness. You will recollect my reading, I think

last Conference, a letter written by the Prophet Joseph Smith. I think it is in the 14th volume of the Star, in connection with the history of this Church published in that periodical. That letter was written to one of the brethren in Zion in relation to the consecrations of the properties of the people. The Lord said in that revelation that the principle which he had revealed in relation to the properties of his Church must be carried out to the very letter upon the land of Zion; and those individuals who would not give heed to it, but sought to obtain their inheritances in an individual way by purchasing it themselves from the Government, should have their names blotted out from the book of the names of the righteous, and if their children pursued the same course their names should be blotted out too, they and their children should not be known in the book of the law of the Lord as being entitled to an inheritance among the Saints in Zion.

We find, therefore, that the Lord drove out this people because we were unworthy to receive our inheritances by consecration. As a people, we did not strictly comply with that which the Lord required. Neither did they comply in Kirtland. Many of those persons were called by name to enter into a inferior order, afterwards called The Order of Enoch, in which only a portion of their property was consecrated, and even they did not comply, but some of them broke the most sacred and solemn covenants made before high Heaven in relation to that order. The Lord said concerning them that they should be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan in this world, as well as be punished in the world to come. He also told them that that soul that sinned and would not comply with the covenant and promise which they made before him in relation to their properties, should have his former sins returned to him, which had been before remitted in baptism.

This ought to be an example for us who are living at a later period in the history of the Church of the living God, and who ought, by this time, to have become thoroughly experienced in the law of God. It is true we are not now required to consecrate all that we have; this law has not been binding upon us since we were driven from the land of Zion. The reason why this law was revoked was because the Lord saw we would all go to destruction in consequence of our former tradition in relation to property if this law had continued to be enforced after we were driven out, hence he revoked it for the time being, as you will find recorded in one of the revelations given June 22nd, 1834, after we were driven from Jackson County. I will repeat the words--"Let those commandments which I have given concerning Zion and her law, be executed and fulfilled after her redemption." Here you perceive that, for the salvation of this people and of the nations of the earth among the Gentiles, God saw proper to revoke this commandment and to lay it over for a future period, or until after the redemption of Zion. Zion is not yet redeemed, and hence we are not under the law of full consecration. But is that any reason why we should not be under some other law differing from the one we were formerly required to practice? Do we live up to the law called the Order of Enoch, which is inferior to that law requiring full consecrations." No we do not. Let us go down another scale in the ladder of obedience, and inquire if we are carrying out a law inferior to the Order of Enoch, that is, the law of Tithing? Do the Latter-day Saints comply with that, and, to begin with, when they come from the nations of the earth, do they consecrate their surplus property to the Lord, placing it in the hands of the Bishop of his Church, and after that pay one-tenth of their annual income into the treasury of the Lord? Where is there a person carrying out this law which was revealed in the year 1838 and which has never been revoked? It is one of the most simple and inferior laws, far below the order of full consecrations and far below the Order of Enoch, but have we as a people complied with this? I think not. Can you find one out of a hundred persons in Salt

Lake City who has carried out this law? Have you done it? The Bishops, whose duty it is to collect the tithing can answer this question better than I can, but I very much doubt whether the records of the Bishops would show that the people have complied with the latter clause of this law--namely to pay one-tenth of their annual income, to say nothing about their surplus property. Are we under condemnation or are we not? Judge ye for yourselves. What will become of this people unless we reform, and repent of our sins in these respects? That which I have already spoken will be fulfilled upon their heads--they will lose the spirit of the Gospel.

We are looking for the redemption of Zion. What would be our condition if the Lord were to say unto us this season, "Arise, my Saints, arise, go back to the land which I promised to give to you and to your children for an everlasting possession; go back and build up the New Jerusalem according to the law of the celestial kingdom," as recorded in the revelation in which the Lord says unless she be built according to that law he can not receive her unto himself. What kind of A Zion would we build it called this present season to go back to Jackson County? We would have to begin altogether a new order of things. Are we prepared for it? I think not. If the people had faithfully complied with these inferior laws they would be better prepared: but when I see the backwardness of many of the people of this Territory calling themselves Latter-day Saints, about paying their tithing, refusing to do so or being careless about it, I say in my heart, "Oh Lord, when will thy people be prepared to go back and build up the waste places of Zion according to celestial law?" (Orson Pratt, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 15, pages 358-361, delivered March 9, 1873)

HISTORY - The Final Straw - Contradicting D&C 98

D&C 98 was the Lord's comment on the persecution the Saints in Missouri were facing. He warns them to seek for peace, and not revenge:

D&C 98:23 Now, I speak unto you concerning your families--if men will smite you, or your families, once, and ye bear it patiently and revile not against them, neither seek revenge, ye shall be rewarded; 24 But if ye bear it not patiently, it shall be accounted unto you as being meted out as a just measure unto you.

However, as time passed and the offenses mounted, the leaders of the Church in Missouri and the members as well were ignoring the Lord's counsel and doing exactly the opposite allegedly in His name:

Independence Day, July 4, 1838, was crucial. At Far West the Saints celebrated the national holiday and laid the cornerstones of a temple. Orator for the day was Sidney Rigdon, who, despite recent illness, maintained the ability to whip feelings into high emotion. His speech, approved by Joseph Smith and other Church leaders, was a declaration of independence for the Saints from any further mob violence or illegal activity. He concluded his long and stinging oration with words that must have sunk deep into the heart of every listener:

We take God and all the holy angels to witness this day, that we warn all men in the name of Jesus Christ, to

come on us no more forever, for from this hour, we will bear it no more, our rights shall no more be trampled on with impunity. The man or the set of men, who attempts it, does it at the expense of their lives. And that mob that comes on us to disturb us; it shall be between us and them a war of extermination; for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us: for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses, and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed.—Remember it then all MEN.

We will never be the aggressors, we will infringe on the rights of no people; but shall stand for our own until death. We claim our own rights, and are willing that all others shall enjoy theirs.

No man shall be at liberty to come into our streets, to threaten us with mobs, for if he does, he shall atone for it before he leaves the place, neither shall he be at liberty, to vilify and slander any of us, for suffer it we will not in this place.

We therefore, take all men to record this day, that we proclaim our liberty this day, as did our fathers. And we pledge this day to one another, our fortunes, our lives, and our sacred honors, to be delivered from the persecutions which we have had to endure, for the last nine years, or nearly that. Neither will we indulge any man, or set of men, in instituting vexatious law suits against us, to cheat us out of our just rights, if they attempt it we say wo unto them.

We this day then proclaim ourselves free, with a purpose and a determination, that never can be broken, "no never! no never!! NO NEVER"!!!

The jubilant audience responded: "Hosannah, hosannah, hosannah! Amen. Amen. Amen!" and repeated it three times.

Much of Rigdon's oration was obviously heated rhetoric, but it represented the determination of the Saints to fight back. When distorted reports reached the mobs and other Missouri citizens, however, it provided a basis for charges of treason and violence against the Saints that were fostered by those who wanted to drive them from the state. (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, page 133)

This is nothing less than a flat out contradiction of the substance of D&C 98, and Sidney has the gall to present it to the members of the Church as though it were endorsed by the Lord.

Subsequent to this event the worst violence broke out in the months of September and October 1838, which included the Haun's Mill Massacre and Bogg's Extermination Order.

Conclusion

The same laws that governed the covenant people anciently govern them today. As long as the Lord's people rebel against Him, He will chastize them until they repent. The history of the Early Saints in Missouri is a history of rebellion and chastisement.

What does this tell us today? If we do the same things, we will get the same treatment.