

D&C Lesson 34
Faith in Every Footstep
(D&C 136)
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(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. Israel's ancient Exodus deliberately foreshadowed the **far greater Exodus to occur in the Last Days.**

A. The Lord Himself told the Saints their Exodus would be like ancient Israel. "I am he who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and **my arm is stretched out in the last days**, to save my people Israel" (D&C 136:22).

B. Thus, the Lord would bear witness this was His Latter-day Israel by performing the same miracles.

C. Some other groups, aware of the Biblical prophecies, also had felt parallels in their experiences to ancient Israel and felt they were fulfilling those prophecies.

1. These included the Pilgrims whose leaders pointed out many parallels. It also included other religious groups as they began to settle the wilderness of the United States.

2. However, those parallels were limited. And today most in the other Christian Churches feel the "Latter-day gathering of Israel" is only meant to be "spiritual," not physical.

II. But for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the parallels were real events! And the parallels far more numerous, thorough, and even continue today.

A. In Brigham's day, many Saints had already crossed the great seas on arks, coming to a still virgin land. Like ancient Israel, they sought for a place in the wilderness where they could freely and unitedly worship their God.

B. In being driven from yet another "gathering place," Nauvoo, to an even more distant wilderness, they experienced the miraculous crossing of a great river. For **thousands passed over on an unusual freeze of the Mississippi's waters, like ancient Israel who crossed over on "dry ground."**

C. Like ancient Israel, they were fed by the remarkable appearance of a flock of quail in the wilderness, which no other religious group experienced.

D. There were additional miraculous feedings in the wilderness, such as when some of the Mormon Battalion, returning to help their families, were blessed in a similar way.

1. "On the morning of the 10th, we all were united in calling on the Lord to regard our situation in mercy and send us food from an unexpected quarter that we might have wherewith to subsist upon. And here the Lord heard our prayers. Soon ... wild turkeys began to pass our camp in droves" (William I. Woolf, ed., *The Private Journal of William Hyde*, (1962), 48-49).

E. Furthermore, after the saints arrived in Salt Lake Valley far away from civilization and with continual influx of new pioneers, they found themselves severely suffering for want of supplies. Heber C. Kimball, under the spirit, shocked himself and others by prophesying they would soon have the "goods" they needed and at low cost. Almost no one, even himself, believed it. But this prophecy was soon fulfilled when gold seekers suddenly came into the valley and bartered or sold at low prices the things they decided they could not get across the deserts and mountains ahead.

Was this not the saints "manna" in their wilderness?

III. The Saints' recognized they were given a special guidance, which those of ancient Israel foreshadowed. The Cloud by Day was actually a witness of the greater **comfort** of the Holy Ghost they would receive, and the Pillar by Night also foreshadowed the **spiritual guidance** of that same Holy Ghost.

A. An additional guidance was foreseen by Jeremiah, who prophesied they would be led "by the rivers of waters in a straight way" (Jeremiah 31:9). The Latter-day Saints were led to their Promised Land by following six-hundred miles of the North Platte River (LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, p. 232).

B. Also through Jeremiah the Lord made His promise of gathering "Ephraim, my firstborn," referring to the descendants of Ephraim during the re-gathering of the Ten Tribes, which would occur in the latter-days (Jeremiah 31:9).

IV. While this was a real physical Exodus, it was also a spiritual one.

A. Brigham Young reminded them of that when he told them "this shall be our covenant--- that we will walk in all ordinances of the Lord" (D&C 136:4).

B. They were told that if they helped even the least to make the Exodus, with a pure heart, they would eventually be blessed: in flocks, herds, fields, houses, and families (D&C 136:11).

C. He also warned that those who sought "to build up themselves" and seek not the counsel of the Lord, would have no power in the end. (D&C 136:19),

D. Above all, the Lord promised that even though they were now being driven out, not only of Nauvoo, but of the United States, by their enemies, "fear not thine enemies; for they shall not have power to stop my work. Zion shall be redeemed in my own due time" (D&C 136:17-18).

V. All the parallels to ancient Israel were not accidental. The Saints knew this, and loaded their hymns with "ancient Israelite" imagery.

A. Thus William W. Phelps wrote, "How long we have **wandered As strangers in Sin. [The significant name of the wilderness in Exodus, but with obvious double meaning]**. And cried in the desert for thee! Our foes have rejoiced When our sorrows they've seen. **But Israel will shortly be free.**" [From "Redeemer of Israel"].

B. And Richard Smyth wrote: "Israel, Israel God is calling. Calling thee from lands of woe. Babylon the great is falling; God shall all her tow'rs o'erthrow."

VI. The Saints did conquer their extremely challenging Exodus because the Lord revealed a great principle.

"Let every man use all his influence and property to remove this people to the place where the Lord shall locate a stake of Zion" (D&C 136:10) (Emphasis added).

A. And the Saints followed that counsel. From the beginning they were sent back to help the sick and the elderly leave Nauvoo.

B. From the beginning, as commanded, they planted crops so that saints who followed could have sustenance.

C. Eventually, the brethren established the Perpetual Emigration Fund, so that anyone who needed help could get it, with the understanding they would then themselves contribute when able.

VII. It is important to understand that “The Exodus” did not end then. We are *still* a great caravan moving forward!

A. People are still being called out of the Babylons of the world to come into this Exodus Caravan. We are being called to seek the ultimate Promised Land --- **Eternal Life with the Father and with His Son, Jesus the Christ.**

B. And through our being anxiously engaged in missionary work, in temple work, in priesthood and auxiliary work, in home teaching and visiting teaching, **we are still being called to give our all to help each other in this Caravan reach that ultimate Promised Land.**

C. I came to realize this as my family gathered in Nauvoo for a family reunion in July, 2013.

It was wonderful to be so clearly taught again what the Saints had endured in their final days in Nauvoo and Carthage: To see more clearly how they labored and sacrificed to go West; To be there where it all began. We walked down Parley Street, reading the words of so many who left their all to head into a great unknown, with undaunted faith. It was deeply moving.

D. At the close of our last day there, after hearing so many wonderful missionaries share their testimonies orally or musically, we were returning to our hotel. We passed by a church owned by another faith. I understand it is beautiful inside, and I feel those inside are faithful in ministering to others.

1. But as I passed by, the church stood mostly in darkness. We had just left great groups of working Saints, and I could not help but feel the contrast of the few individuals who bore the load of ministering in that faith, **to the multitudes who were sharing the burden of ministering in our own.**

The principle taught during the Exodus is the same principle which works among us today: **“Let every man use all his influence and property to remove this people to the place [Eternal Life] which the Lord has prepared for us.**

VIII. The Exodus has had a profound influence upon us later generations.

A. I cannot help but reflect with tearful gratitude that when the missionaries of Christ’s Latter-day church went out into the world bearing the witness of the Restored Gospel, that while most people rejected it, my ancestors did not.

B. My gratitude expands further when I think of what each sacrificed for the Word.

One gave up silk dresses and a maid, and ended up walking across the plains carrying her baby because others in the wagon objected to its crying.

One’s husband was killed in an “accident,” but she always felt it was actually deliberate due to his becoming a Mormon. Her minister tried to persuade her to stay by promising her a new dress every year and other assistance. But she too came, widowed, with a young son who walked.

One grandmother, at age 13, who had lost her mother at an early age, drove a team across the wilderness.

One arrived with only a nickle in his pocket.

In reaching the Valley, nearly all were sent to develop other areas not yet developed, again leaving more comfortable surroundings for two room log homes with dirt roofs in some cases.

But it is these histories of my family who were so willing to leave all, and not just once but again and again, and suffer all for the sake of Jesus Christ, which gives me faith and the courage to make my own sacrifices for Him.