

Doctrine and Covenants 14–17

“STAND AS A WITNESS”

Summary: *Doctrine and Covenants 14: Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to David Whitmer, at Fayette, New York, June 1829. HC 1: 48—50. The Whitmer family had become greatly interested in the translating of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet established his residence at the home of Peter Whitmer, Sen., where he dwelt until the work of translation was carried to completion and the copyright on the forthcoming book secured. Three of the Whitmer sons, each having received a testimony as to the genuineness of the work, became deeply concerned over the matter of their individual duty. This revelation and the two next following (Sections 15 and 16) were given in answer to an inquiry through the Urim and Thummim. David Whitmer later became one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. 1—6, Laborers in the vineyard will gain salvation; 7—8, Eternal life is the greatest of God’s gifts; 9—11, Christ created the heavens and the earth.*

Doctrine and Covenants 15: Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to John Whitmer, at Fayette, New York, June 1829. HC 1: 50; see also heading to Section 14. The message is intimately and impressively personal, in that the Lord tells of what was known only to John Whitmer and himself. John Whitmer later became one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. 1—2, The Lord’s arm is over all the earth; 3—6, To preach the gospel and save souls is the thing of most worth.

Doctrine and Covenants 16: Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Peter Whitmer, Jun., at Fayette, New York, June 1829. HC 1: 51; see also heading to Section 14. Peter Whitmer, Jun., later became one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. 1—2, The Lord’s arm is over all the earth; 3—6, To preach the gospel and save souls is the thing of most worth.

Doctrine and Covenants 17: Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, at Fayette, New York, June 1829, prior to their viewing the engraved plates that contained the Book of Mormon record. HC 1: 52—57. Joseph and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, had learned from the translation of the Book of Mormon plates that three special witnesses would be designated. See Ether 5: 2—4; also 2 Nephi 11: 3 and 27: 12. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris were moved upon by an inspired desire to be the three special witnesses. The Prophet inquired of the Lord, and this revelation was given in answer, through the Urim and Thummim. 1—4, By faith the Three Witnesses shall see the plates and other sacred items; 5—9, Christ bears testimony to the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How do some number configurations become meaningful?

During Jesus’ three-year ministry, Peter and other

Disciples were being taught numerous lessons of the eternal and spiritual nature of the Lord and the many physical witnesses of Him. This training was necessary so that when He was gone from their physical presence, they could fulfill their Apostolic mission, witnessing of Him. The presidencies of three are used often. “Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed, and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church. Twelve is another council number. The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the

name of Christ in all the world--thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling. And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned. The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and In all the world--thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.” (**Doctrine & Covenants 107:22-25**) “. . . But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. (**Matthew 18:16**)

What special gifts are given to the “Twelve?”

Great things were happening in the meridian of times. Great and influential men from each end of the Crossroads of the East, Ethiopia, and Damascus were being touched by the light of

truth. Men with worldly experience had their eyes touched with the greater heavenly light which was once again available. Saul's "brighter than the midday light" experience on the way to Damascus blinded him physically so that his spiritual eyes would be opened. His experience of watching Stephen's stoning, holding the witnesses' clothes, ultimately became his own. As his eyes were opened, his commission as one of the Twelve was to open the eyes of the Jews and the Gentiles, to give them light and truth. "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:16-18)

How may I appreciate the lesson of a yoke?

There is a Mosaic law that relates to a yoke of unlike animals. The inequity of plowing with a donkey and an ox is clearly visible when looking at the lesser creature. "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together."

(Deuteronomy 22:10) Consider that the Lord wants to relieve us of the inequities in life. He is saying, in effect, "I am carrying the burden; take advantage of it." In learning this principle, following Him and giving our burdens to Him (He has paid for them already), we cleanse our inner selves and are able to better serve Him. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Psalms 55:22) The prophet Isaiah taught us that the Lord would relieve us from the yoke of our burdens. "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden" (Isaiah 9:4) In examining the little information we have of Jesus' life, we see how privately and personally He takes burdens upon Himself.

What is the reason that the Hebrew word repentance also means to return?

"Repentance in Hebrew is known as *teshuvah*, which literally means 'return,' and signifies a return to God. A person who repents his sins is known as a *ba'al teshuvah*. Many rabbis of the

Talmud believed that the real *ba'al teshuvah* is greater even than a person who has never sinned and they furthermore said that when a person repents out of love of God (and not just out of fear of divine punishment), all the sins he had committed are considered to be *mitzvot* (commandments or blessings). This is perhaps the most comforting doctrine that Judaism has given to the world." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) "Returning to the Land of Israel" "returning to the Lord" are as great a motivating factor in Jewish life, as proselytizing is for Christians. Special "*Yeshiva*" institutes have been established to help those who have "gone astray." Someone who does not speak Hebrew may not recognize that "*Yeshiva*" and the word "*teshuvah*" have a common root. To facilitate adherence to the tenant that Godly things should constantly be sought after, the Jews have some traditional symbols which "Keep God's word in front of them" at all times. Jews remind themselves of God's words by binding leather phylacteries (*Tfillin*) on the arm and forehead as well as on all Jewish doorposts (*Mezuzah*). These are the words in the *Mezuzah*'and in the *Tfillin*: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) "There should be a *mezuzah* at the entrance to every home and on the doorpost of every living room within the home—this of course excludes lavatories, bathrooms, storerooms and stables. It is also customary to place *mezuzot* (plural) at the entrances to synagogues and public buildings, including all government offices in Israel. In Israel, a *mezuzah* must be put up immediately when a house is occupied by a Jew—outside Israel after the householder has lived in the house for 30 days. If the house is later sold to Jews, the *mezuzot* must be left on the doorposts. Today the *mezuzah* represents one of Judaism's most widely observed

ceremonial commandments.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What is a positive image of a sword?

On his passage from Beirut to Jaffa, at one o'clock in the morning, while Elder Orson Hyde (1805-1878), of the Quorum of the Twelve was meditating on the deck of the ship beating against a sultry gale-to-hurricane force Sirocco windstorm, Hyde said, “a very bright glittering sword appeared in the heavens, about two yards in length, with a beautiful hilt, as plain and complete as any cut you ever saw. What is still more remarkable, an arm, with a perfect hand, stretched itself out and took hold on the hilt of the sword. The appearance really made my hair rise, and the flesh, as it were, to crawl on my bones. The Arabs made a wonderful outcry at the sight; *O, Allah, Allah, Allah!* (Allah U-Achbar God is great) Hyde knew it fulfilled a blessing he received, “Unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the sign of the coming of the Son of man.” (**Orson Hyde Pamphlet, Travels and Ministry of Elder Orson Hyde**)

What does the term “Gates of hell shall not prevail” mean?

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(**Matthew 16:18**) President Harold B. Lee said: “The gates of hell would have prevailed if the gospel had not been taught to the spirits in prison and to those who had not had ample opportunity to receive the gospel here in its fulness. It would have prevailed if there was not a vicarious work for the dead . . . [or] other vicarious work pertaining to the exaltation which those who accept the gospel might receive, both ordinances for the living and for the dead.” (**Conference Report, Apr. 1953, pp. 26–28.**)