

Doctrine and Covenants 51–57

“A FAITHFUL, A JUST, AND A WISE STEWARD”

Summary:

Doctrine and Covenants 51. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Thompson, Ohio, May 20, 1831. At this time the Saints migrating from the eastern states began to arrive in Ohio, and it became necessary to make definite arrangements for their settlement. As this undertaking belonged particularly to the bishop’s office, Bishop Edward Partridge sought instruction on the matter, and the Prophet inquired of the Lord.

1–8, Edward Partridge is appointed to regulate stewardships and properties;

9–12, The Saints are to deal honestly and receive alike;

13–15, They are to have a bishop’s storehouse and to organize properties according to the Lord’s law;

16–20, Ohio is to be a temporary gathering place.

Doctrine and Covenants 52. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to the elders of the Church, at Kirtland, Ohio, June 6, 1831. A conference had been held at Kirtland, beginning on the 3rd and closing on the 6th of June. At this conference the first distinctive ordinations to the office of high priest were made, and certain manifestations of false and deceiving spirits were discerned and rebuked.

1–2, The next conference is designated to be held in Missouri;

3–8, Appointments of certain elders to travel together are made;

9–11, The elders are to teach what the apostles and prophets have written;

12–21, Those enlightened by the Spirit bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom;

22–44, Various elders are appointed to go forth preaching the gospel while traveling to Missouri for the conference.

Doctrine and Covenants 53. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Algernon Sidney Gilbert, at Kirtland, Ohio, June 8, 1831. At Sidney Gilbert’s request, the Prophet inquired of the Lord as to Brother Gilbert’s work and appointment in the Church.

1–3, Sidney Gilbert’s calling and election in the Church is to be ordained an elder;

4–7, He is also to serve as a bishop’s agent.

Doctrine and Covenants 54. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Newel Knight, at Kirtland, Ohio, June 10, 1831. Members of the Church living in Thompson, Ohio, were divided on questions having to do with the consecration of properties. Selfishness and greed were manifest. Following his mission to the Shakers (see the heading to section 49), Leman Copley had broken his covenant to consecrate his large farm as a place of inheritance for the Saints arriving from Colesville, New York.

As a consequence, Newel Knight (leader of the members living in Thompson) and other elders had come to the Prophet asking how to proceed. The Prophet inquired of the Lord and received this revelation, which commands the members in Thompson to leave Leman Copley’s farm and journey to Missouri.

1–6, The Saints must keep the gospel covenant to gain mercy;

7–10, They must be patient in tribulation.

Doctrine and Covenants 55. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to William W. Phelps, at Kirtland, Ohio, June 14, 1831. William W. Phelps, a printer, and his family had just arrived at Kirtland, and the Prophet sought the Lord for information concerning him.

1–3, William W. Phelps is called and chosen to be baptized, to be ordained an elder, and to preach the gospel;

4, He is also to write books for children in Church schools;

5–6, He is to travel to Missouri, which will be the area of his labors.

Doctrine and Covenants 56. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, June 15, 1831. This revelation chastises Ezra Thayre for not obeying a former revelation (the “commandment” referred to in verse 8), which Joseph Smith had received for him, instructing Thayre concerning his duties on Frederick G. Williams’ farm, where he lived. The following revelation also revokes Thayre’s call to travel to Missouri with Thoma B. Marsh (see section 52:22).

1–2, The Saints must take up their cross and follow the Lord to gain salvation;

3–13, The Lord commands and revokes, and the disobedient are cast off;

14–17, Wo unto the rich who will not help the poor, and wo unto the poor whose hearts are not broken;

18–20, Blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, for they will inherit the earth.

Doctrine and Covenants 57. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, July 20, 1831. In compliance with the Lord’s command to travel to Missouri, where He would reveal “the land of your inheritance” (section 52), the elders had journeyed from Ohio to Missouri’s western border. Joseph Smith contemplated the state of the Lamanites and wondered: “When will the wilderness blossom as the rose? When will Zion be built up in her glory, and where will Thy temple stand, unto which all nations shall come in the last days?” Subsequently he received this revelation.

1–3, Independence, Missouri, is the place for the City of Zion and the temple;

4–7, The Saints are to purchase lands and receive inheritances in that area;

8–16, Sidney Gilbert is to establish a store, William W. Phelps is to be a printer, and Oliver Cowdery is to edit material for publication.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How familiar are instructions for “living arrangements?”

The prophet Joseph
Smith’s instructions to

Bishop Edward Partridge reminded me of the biblical instructions Moses’ gave to Aaron. It’s a practical priesthood function. In about five decades of being a tour guide in Israel, one of many experiences stands out as most touching. It is the experience of connecting Israel’s history and a sacred way of ancient dwelling. There seemed to be a celestial, terrestrial and celestial identity. I see the Lord’s people as a “temple society,” a “Zion,” with eleven parts (tribes) of the camp in a surrounding perimeter. Each tribe had stakes with banners identifying their location. Eleven tribes made a circled around one tribe, the priestly Levites, who made a ring around the Lord’s “presence,” his tabernacle. The tabernacle, the “Holy of Holies,” the center part of the camp of Israel, was likewise identified by stakes that were draped with curtains because of its very holy and high priestly state. Eventually, Israel began to grow and wander from the unity the temple society, (eventually became known as Salem – Jerusalem. Eventually, a system of cities and of sub-capital cities began to develop. Only worthy members were able to be brought through the

Aaronic priestly courtyard to participate in ordinances and sacrifices that occurred in the Melchizedek priestly part of the temple with its altar in front of the “Holy of Holies.” Fast forward to the present-day – the temple courtyards gave way to sacred “temple buildings” with telestial, terrestrial, and celestial identity. Instructions are given to prepare the people to be a Zion society. Again, its lesser and higher priestly environments and ordinances are designed to bring us home into the Living Lord’s presence.

How recent are Temple buildings?

Before the first Israelite temple was built, the entire encampment of Israel was a “city temple” Apparently it will be that way again when the Lord returns to Jerusalem.” For it is ordained that in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead.” (**Doctrine and Covenants 124:36**) Jewish statements include: “In Pre-Temple times, in the desert, the whole encampment was considered to be in a state of sanctity, and hence anyone who was *Tameh* (unclean) was forced to go outside the marked boundaries and was forbidden to return until he had completed the purification ritual. With the destruction of the Temple, such sanctions ceased to apply. Nevertheless, the

maintenance of ritual impurity has remained an essential aspect of Jewish life. Thus, because all Jews are now assumed to be ritually impure, they are even today forbidden to enter the Temple area in Jerusalem." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The call to go to the temple includes the phrase, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." (**Psalm 24:1-3**) Since the Jews know they don't have a priestly dedicated Temple, they have used the (always four-cornered) meal table as a substitute "altar." It is appropriate to wash hands before every prayer at the beginning and ending of each meal. That is why kosher hotels have a basin and naturally flowing water at the entrances of each dining room. There are large cups in public restrooms and other public fountains (like the Western Wall) so a Jew can fill the cup and then let the water flow naturally over his hands before he prays. Those before and after prayers include a plea to rebuild the Temple!

What decorum guidelines could I have in my temple-like home?

The Lord's house is where His glory and honor dwells (**Psalm 26:8**). The ark holding the *Torah* scroll is a reminder of the ark in the temple that held the tablets-the word of the Lord. Once, as I was leading my guests to the Western (Wailing) Wall, I observed a young *Bar Mitzvah* lad anxious to open the ark to retrieve the scroll so he could get on with his presentation to the congregation. His grandfather stopped him and said, "Knock first! Inside represents the essence and the presence of the Lord. Be polite; first you knock, then pull the curtain aside and then you take the scroll." We long for the time when we can return to "dwell in thy courts" (**Psalm 65:4**), and be "shielded," safe from the imbalance of the world around us. (**Psalm 84**). A pattern that is interesting is that the first Israelite temple in the land of Israel was in the hands of the tribe of Ephraim. "Situated in the mountains of central *Erez* [land of] Israel, *Shiloh* was in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim and housed the 'temporary sanctuary' or Tabernacle containing the Ark of the Law." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The latest temples outside the land of Israel are now in the hands of Ephraim, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The destiny of

Joseph and Judah is that they will eventually come together to build the temple in Jerusalem. There is a Jewish tradition that the Messiah's return will reflect either the date or event of the destruction of the First and Second Temples. A part of Joseph Smith's mission was to restore home life similar to temple worship. Eventually, the "Lord will suddenly come to his Temple." (**Malachi 3:1**) ". . . it seems, the ancient Israelites were commanded to build a sanctuary so that God may dwell amongst them (**Exodus 25:8**). The Tabernacle became the place to which sacrifices were brought in times of joy and in times of sadness. It became the place to which Moses retired when he wanted to communicate with God. When the Children of Israel camped in the desert, the Tabernacle was erected at the very center of the camp; when they moved, the Tabernacle was taken apart, and was moved with them. Physically and spiritually it was the central object for the Children of Israel and it was through the Tabernacle that they felt their connection with God." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) "The tabernacle, sometimes called the temple, was a very ornate though portable building, which the children of Israel carried with them in the wilderness. It was to this temple that Hannah went to pray and where Samuel ministered. It was the duty of the Levites to take care of this building and keep it in order. They took it apart, carried it and all that pertained to it from place to place as they journeyed in the wilderness, and then set it up again when a new camp was made." (**Doctrines of Salvation, Joseph Fielding Smith, Vol.3, Pg.112**)

How goodly are our homes?

Even in the Book of Mormon, such an organized camp could be imagined as a place where a special holy convocation was being held. "And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another. And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple,

that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them;" (**Mosiah 2:5-6**) It is easy to imagine that ancient Israel lived this way as a preparatory exercise of living with God.

"Balaam ... stood on a lofty summit overlooking the camp of the People of Israel in the plain below . . . Balaam blessed the nation, predicting its victory over Edom and Moab . . . Balaam, seeing Israel's tents arranged in such a way that each family was assured of its privacy, praised the nation he had come to curse, with the words: 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwelling places, O Israel!'" (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr. - Numbers 24:5**)

How do I recognize a false spirit?

True spirit manifestation testifies of Christ!
"According to some modern commentators, the building of the tower (of Babel) was an example of man's extreme pride in his own ability. The building became such an obsession that, according to the *Midrash* (Jewish biblical interpretation), when a builder fell off the tower to his death, the other builders paid no attention, but when a brick fell, they would cry: 'When shall another come in its place?' According to this interpretation, every generation has its own Tower of Babel, when it begins to idolize its technology. The moral of the story is thus as applicable today as it was thousands of years ago." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The tower people wanted to 'make a name' for themselves rather than take the 'name of God' upon themselves. In Hebrew, the name of God, "*Jehovah*," (English spelling) is unmentionable. It means "I AM." That conjugation is not even used in modern Hebrew. Moses asked the Lord's name: "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus, shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." (**Exodus 3:13-14**) The practice of avoiding the use of "I am" in Hebrew seems to suggest a way to reduce pride. Ancient Joseph overcame his

"pride" and served his brothers forgivingly (at first without even identifying himself). He thereby established a pattern for a Latter-day Joseph, who for the time being is keeping his identity from Judah and should avoid all forms of pride as he serves his family forgivingly.

What can I safely teach?

The answer is so simple: what the Prophets have written. "And let them journey from thence preaching the word by the way, saying none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith." (**Doctrine and Covenants 52:9**) As we reflect on our teaching and learning preparations, reflect on these instructions; "Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be by some other way it is not of God. And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? If it be some other way it is not of God. Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth? Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together. And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day." (**Doctrine and Covenants 50:22-24**) [emphasis added] "The rabbis regarded Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as the last of the prophets, the 'divine spirit' having ceased in Israel with their deaths. "Zechariah continued in the same task as Haggai; he too encouraged the Jews to rebuild the Temple. Zechariah reminded Israel that before God returned to the Temple the people must return to God through righteousness, justice, and mercy: 'Return to Me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you.' The nation's future security would be guaranteed, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts' (4:6), and Israel would

flourish once again. Zechariah prophesied of the Golden Age of the Messiah when God's Kingdom would be established on earth.”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How do some Jews describe the Cherubim (angels) on the Holy of Holies?

Rabbi Chaim Paltiel was a French Biblical commentator of the thirteenth century, said that the two cherubim represent the two attributes of God, mercy and justice. In any case, the Jewish biblical tradition indicates that two unblemished, first-born goats were offered on the Day of Atonement, (*Yom Kippur*). One is “blessed” with the sins of the congregation (mercy), then tied with a red ribbon and led out of the Temple’s Eastern “Gate of Mercy.” It was never to be touched and had to “die on its own.” The other goat (justice) was sacrificed and parts consumed by the congregants. The message of the atonement is clear. The one scapegoat carrying the sins of the people is led away, in His mercy, He forgives us. Believing and knowing that is beautiful. What is even more interesting is that on the Day of Atonement, the Book of Job is read in its entirety. Jonah's account is a simple *Chiasmus* – a lesson in opposition. Jonah was sent “up and north” to preach repentance. Instead, he went “down and south.” He went “down into the sea,” “down to his death.” Yet, he was saved. He came back up after three nights and three days. That was the only sign Jesus of Nazareth gave the Scribes and Pharisees of his Messianic role as their Redeemer, the author of the plan of Atonement. “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three

days and three nights in the whale's belly; so, shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” ([Matthew 12:38-40](#)) “The Hebrew word for justice is *zedek*, and indicative of Judaism's attitude is the fact that another form of the same root *zedakah*, means 'charity.' For justice must be tempered with mercy and indeed the main attribute of God is His integration of justice and mercy. Yet another Hebrew word derived from the same root is *Zaddik*, which means 'righteous.' The righteous man is one who is both just and merciful. “The stress placed upon this quality is evident both in the many charitable institutions existing in Jewish communal life, and in the daily prayers which implore God to deal compassionately even with the undeserving man. Human beings are frail, imperfect creatures constantly open to error, and so they are totally dependent on God's mercy.”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How do the rich and poor fulfill God’s purposes?

“The indigent person struggles to maintain his dignity and faith in God despite his reduced circumstances. The affluent one must constantly recognize that it was not his power, creativity or intelligence that brought him wealth, but God’s blessing alone. True wealth is humbling. And when we share what we have with others, we call God’s blessing upon ourselves and are able to give even more to charity . . . becoming partners with God in creation . . . through our many acts of charity and loving-kindness over the generations, our many *mitzvot* (commandments/blessings) that brought perfection to the world God created, have invested the world with Godliness and transformed it.” ([Based on an address of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likutei Sichot vol. 27, p. 342-343.](#))