

Doctrine and Covenants 20-22

Lesson 11: *Come, Follow Me*, Doctrine and Covenants, 14 March 2025

David A. LeFevre

Introduction

With the Book of Mormon translation complete and Grandin signed up, the printing process began. Obstacles arose during that time, including Abner Cole illegally printing excerpts. The book went on sale at the end of March 1830 and was immediately used in missionary endeavors. A few days later, on 6 April 1830, following the laws of the state of New York, the Church was organized. During the rest of that spring and summer, more revelations were received, conferences were held, and several went on missions, growing the membership of the new and small Church.

The Summary Chronology below shows this but the correct order for the revelations of this period appears to be 21, 23, 22, 20. I have kept them in the numeric order of the Doctrine and Covenants to make it easier to track with *Come, Follow Me* and personal study, but it's good to keep that order in mind when considering the messages and results of each.

Summary Chronology

With the Book of Mormon translation complete and Grandin signed up, the printing process began. Obstacles arose during that time, including Abner Cole illegally printing excerpts. Finally, in late March 1830, the first books came from Luther Howard's bindery, located on the second floor of Grandin's building. Palettes of printed pages were lowered by a pulley system out the window from the third to second floor, for binding by Howard and his men. The finished books were then lowered to the first floor in the same way, for sale in Grandin's store and for distribution to Joseph Smith and others. The book went on sale at the end of March 1830 and was immediately used in missionary endeavors. A few days later, following the laws of the state of New York, the Church was organized. During the rest of that spring and summer, more revelations were received, conferences were held, and several went on missions, growing the membership of the new and small Church. A few months later, Oliver was writing from Ohio telling Joseph Smith to send 500 copies because the Book of Mormon was in great demand in Kirtland where hundreds were being baptized.

Summary Chronology

- **Fall 1829** – Oliver Cowdery authored “The Articles of the Church of Christ.”
- **Late Jan 1830** – Joseph Smith won arbitration against Abner Cole who had copied excerpts from the Book of Mormon he discovered at Grandin's print shop into his own newspaper, *The Reflector*, on 2, 13, and 22 Jan 1830.
- **Early 1830** – Joseph Smith received a revelation agreeing to Hyrum's plan to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon in Canada to raise money to help with the printing. Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery go to Kingston with that goal, but return unsuccessfully.
- **Mar 1830** – Meetings were reportedly held in Palmyra where people agreed to boycott the sale of the Book of Mormon. Binding of the book began.
- **About Sun, 14 Mar 1830** – Joseph Smith wrote the Preface to the Book of Mormon.
- **Fri, 19 Mar 1830** – Grandin stated in *The Wayne Sentinel* that the Book of Mormon would soon be available for sale.
- **Fri, 26 March 1830** – The Book of Mormon was advertised for sale at Grandin's bookstore in *The Wayne Sentinel*.
- **Late March 1830** – Solomon Chamberlain took 8-10 copies of the Book of Mormon and went preaching. He sold one copy.
- **Mon, 29 March 1830** – Hyrum and Samuel Smith are suspended from the Presbyterian church in Palmyra for non-attendance.
- **Tue, 6 April 1830** – The Church of Christ was organized in Peter Whitmer, Sr.'s home. D&C 21 was received and recorded. Joseph Smith, Sr., Lucy Smith, and many others were baptized.
- **Sun, 11 April 1830** – The first Sunday meeting of the Church was held at the Whitmer home in Fayette, with Oliver Cowdery giving the first sermon. Six people were baptized.
- **Between Tue, 6 and Mon, 11 April 1830** – Joseph Smith received D&C 23.

- **Fri, 16 April 1830** – Joseph Smith received D&C 22.
- **Sun, 18 Apr 1830** – Seven more people were baptized into the Church by Oliver Cowdery.
- **Sun, 25 April 1830** – Joseph Smith cast a devil out of Newel Knight.
- **June 1830** – Joseph Smith began translating the Bible, starting with what is now Moses 1.
- **Before Wed, 9 June 1830** – Joseph Smith dictated the final version of “The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ” (D&C 20).
- **Wed, 9 June 1830** – First conference of the Church; The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ were first publicly read and accepted by the conference; eleven were baptized, including three of Joseph Smith’s siblings.

Doctrine and Covenants 20

Setting

After the publication of the Book of Mormon was under way, sometime in the second half of 1829, Oliver Cowdery began to work on a document that became known as the “Articles of the Church of Christ.”¹ This was based on instructions he received in D&C 18:3-5. The intent of this document was to provide a handbook, of sorts, for governing the affairs of the church that was soon to be formed. Written as early as June 1829, Cowdery’s document drew heavily on the Book of Mormon text (more than half of the document) and early revelations to Joseph Smith, using yet unpublished manuscripts of both. Yet he also wrote it in the voice of the Lord, demonstrating that as the Second Elder and an ordained apostle, he was receiving revelation for the Church.

The Articles became part of the official Church records until 1831, when Symonds Ryder took (stole) it and other early documents as he angrily left the Church because, among other things, his name was misspelled in a revelation (ironically, it is still misspelled in the Doctrine and Covenants today in D&C 52:37—his name should be Symonds Rider). In 1960, a non-LDS descendant donated the lost documents to the Church, after they were discovered in an old dresser. The Articles of the Church of Christ was published and analyzed in Faulring, *Examination*. John Whitmer made a copy of it in Revelation Book 1, which today still includes most of the document (some of its content is lost).²

The Articles was a precursor (or as Richard Lloyd Anderson called it, a “forerunner”)³ to D&C 20. As Oliver’s attempt to codify several Church policies and practices, the Articles had a short life, replaced in the spring of 1830 with a new revelation through Joseph Smith.

Sometime between late March and 9 June 1830, while Joseph was up for an extended visit from Harmony, he and Oliver got together and produced what is today D&C 20, which was called by the early Saints, “The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ.” Revelation Book 1 records the date as 10 April 1830.⁴ As with other efforts, Joseph dictated while Oliver wrote. The document does not speak in the voice of the Lord, as others of Joseph’s revelations, but the principles within it were received by revelation, Joseph said in his history.⁵

Documents and Publication

The document was first published by Eber D. Howe in his paper, the *Painseville Telegraph*, on 19 April 1831, called by him “The Mormon Creed.” It was published in *The Evening and Morning Star*, June 1832.⁶ It was Chapter 24 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 2 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

¹ See Faulring, *Examination* and JSP, D1:368-370 (Appendix 3: “Articles of the Church of Christ,” June 1829, [Historical Introduction](#)) for details about the creation and use of the Articles of the Church of Christ.

² See JSP, R1:17-20 (Revelation Book 1, [23](#)). Oliver’s copy (taken by Rider) can be found in JSP, D1:368-377 (Appendix 3: “Articles of the Church of Christ,” June 1829, [1](#)) and Faulring, *Examination*, 76-79.

³ Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Organization Revelations (D&C 20, 21, and 22), in Millet and Jackson, *Studies in Scripture*, 114.

⁴ JSP, MRB:75; Revelation Book 1, [52](#).

⁵ JSP, H1:336 (Draft 2); History, circa June 1839-circa 1841 [Draft 2], [29](#).

⁶ JSP, D1:120; Articles and Covenants, circa April 1830 [D&C 20], [1](#). According to analysis of the texts, Howe’s publication seems older and closer to the original and is the one used in the Documents volume and noted in text notes below as “D1.”

D&C 20 in its present form differs in many places from the oldest copies we have and would likely differ more from the original. Like today's *General Handbook*, this was a living document that was edited and changed as the organization of the Church filled out. Some of those differences are noted below.

Note: Because Howe and the *Star* publication appended D&C 22 with D&C 20 with no separation, labeling both "The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ," some have thought both sections should indeed bear that title. But the other early manuscripts, such as Revelation Book 1, and the earliest Church publications of the revelations (such as the copy in *The Evening and the Morning Star*) separate them, and among Church members at the time, only D&C 20 was given that title. See D&C 22 below.

Outline

D&C 20 is naturally divided into two sections, 1-36 with historical and doctrinal statements, and 37-84, with procedures and ordinances.⁷ The first section (1-36) is also clearly divided into five subsections (per the outline below), with each one ending in "Amen."

1. Historical and Doctrinal Statements (1-36)
 - a. Joseph and Oliver first and second elders (1-4)
 - b. The role of the Book of Mormon (5-12)
 - c. So great witnesses (13-16)
 - d. Creation, fall, and atonement (17-28)
 - e. Justification and sanctification (29-36)
2. Procedures and Ordinances (37-84)
 - a. Preparation for baptism (37)
 - b. Priesthood duties (38-60)
 - c. Priesthood structure and authority (61-67)
 - d. New converts (68-69)
 - e. Blessing of children (70)
 - f. Baptism procedures (71-74)
 - g. Sacramental prayers (75-79)
 - h. Membership councils and conferences (80-84)

Introduction

The first verse today should be considered more like a section heading; this is reflected in the current edition by inserting a short dashed line between verses 1 and 2.

Joseph and Oliver First and Second Elders (1-4)

1 The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April—

2 Which commandments were given to Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church;

3 And to Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the second elder of this church, and ordained under his hand;

4 And this according to the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be all glory, both now and forever. Amen.

Commentary

1 *The rise of the Church of Christ.* This was the name of the Church in 1830 when it was first founded. Later it was changed to our current name (see Setting for D&C 21 below).

1 *regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country.* The Prophet and his associates had researched what was required for the state of New York when organizing a church and followed those laws precisely. The

⁷ Faulring, *Examination*, 71-72.

relevant statute was from 1813, entitled “an act to provide for the incorporation of Religious Societies” which required between three and nine men to start an organization.⁸

1 sixth day of the month which is called April. Normally we might expect the Church to be organized on a Sunday, but 6 April 1830 was a Tuesday, so that argues for exact guidance from the Lord. In fact, Joseph Smith is clear in his history that the date of the organization of the Church was given to him by revelation. The language of verse 1 shows that they are here reporting the event, not calling for it in the future. Thus D&C 20 documents the “rise of the Church of Christ” and was not the source of the commandment to organize the Church. Such a revelation was not recorded, to our knowledge. Joseph Smith never explained why the Lord had selected this date.

President Harold B. Lee expressed the belief that the sixth of April was chosen because it was “the anniversary of the birth of the Savior, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ” (*Ensign*, July 1973, 2). So did President Spencer W. Kimball (*Ensign*, May 1980, 54). Elder Bruce R. McConkie expressed a similar belief (*Mormon Doctrine*, 131; *Mortal Messiah*, 1:349-350). However, Church leaders have also noted that the language of D&C 20:1 merely represents the common way the year was identified and so should not be used to point to Jesus’ birth date. Scholarly analysis of all sources points more to a birthdate in the winter or spring of 5 BC. In other words, Jesus’ birthday *may* have been on 6 April, but may have been a different date, and certainly was not in AD 1.⁹

2 an apostle of Jesus Christ. This is the first mention of this office sequentially in the Doctrine and Covenants, though as we will see, it is not the first chronologically (see D&C 21:1). Here Joseph Smith was applying a title to himself and Oliver that the Lord had given them in that other revelation.

2 first elder. Titles in the Church would change as more understanding was gained. At this early date, Joseph Smith was simply known as the first elder, and Oliver as the second. In that day (and today in many churches), elders are those who lead the Church.

2 text note:

The title “first elder” (and “second elder” for Oliver Cowdery in verse 3) was not used typically until 1835, probably for clarity as to their roles, something the 1830 Church understood instinctively by current events; the early copies of this revelation just refer to them both as “elder.” Note, though, that the use of “first elder” in verse 5 was in the oldest copies, but was probably a clarification about who received the manifestation and not pertaining to his leadership position (e.g., of the two elders mentioned, Joseph was mentioned first).

2 text note:

D1 Joseph Smith, jun. who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church

RB1 Joseph ~~the seer~~, who was called of God & ordained an Apostle of Jesus Christ, an Elder of the[is] Church

1833 Joseph, who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of this church

1835 Joseph Smith jr. who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church

Typically, the oldest records use only first names. It was in the 1835 edition that full names were generally first given, as Church membership grew and the need for clarity arose. So, the use of “Joseph Smith, jun.” in Howe’s printing might be his own insertion, since he was publishing to an audience that would not know the Prophet. In RB1, John Whitmer first wrote “Joseph the seer,” which was his usual way of writing the Prophet’s name, then it was crossed out by Oliver Cowdery, who probably had access to the original or an early copy.

3 ordained under his hand. Oliver Cowdery was ordained under Joseph’s hand and vice versa on the 6 April meeting when the Church was organized, according to the commandment they had previously received.¹⁰

4 according to the grace of our Lord. Everything that had happened to Joseph and Oliver was a gift from God; they had not assumed any authority on their own.

The Role of the Book of Mormon (5-12)

⁸ Larry Porter, “A study of the origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the states of New York and Pennsylvania, 1816-1831,” Dissertation available at BYU Library; cited in Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:129.

⁹ Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From Bethlehem Through the Sermon on the Mount* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 383-394; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 155.

¹⁰ This commandment was received by “the word of the Lord” in the chamber of Father Whitmer (meaning upstairs where Joseph and Oliver were translating) according to Joseph’s history; History, 1838–1856, vol. A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], p. [27](#).

5 After it was truly manifested unto this first elder that he had received a remission of his sins, he was entangled again in the vanities of the world;

6 But after repenting, and humbling himself sincerely, through faith, God ministered unto him by an holy angel, whose countenance was as lightning, and whose garments were pure and white above all other whiteness;

7 And gave unto him commandments which inspired him;

8 And gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon;

9 Which contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also;

Commentary

5 *he had received a remission of his sins*. This is the first clear, public reference to the First Vision. In 1830, at least, forgiveness was the main purpose of the First Vision in Joseph Smith's life.¹¹ Later, in retrospect and as he gained understanding, it would become more of the beginning of his call, which is certainly how the modern Church approaches it. But here and in two of his early accounts, the blessing he came away from the vision with was forgiveness of sins.

6 text note:

D1 but after truly repenting,
God visited him

RB1 but after truly Repenting
God ministered unto him

1833 But after truly repenting,
God ministered unto him

1835 but after repenting, and
humbling himself, sincerely,
through faith, God ministered
unto him

The 1835 edition enhances our picture of Joseph's situation prior to Moroni's visit. It was more than just repentance, and it required deep humility and faith before he had a manifestation of additional forgiveness and the blessing of the appearance of the angel.

6 *an holy angel*. This was, of course, Moroni, who came after Joseph first became "entangled again in the vanities of the world" (verse 5) and repented and humbled himself.

7-8 text note:

D1 commandments which inspired him from on high, and gave unto him power

RB1 Commandments which inspired him from on high & gave unto him power

1833 commandments which inspired him from on high, and gave unto him power

1835 commandments which inspired him, and gave him power from on high

The shifting of "from on high" from the "inspired" phrase to the "power" phrase emphasizes the source of Joseph's power to translate the Book of Mormon. He always declared that it was done by the gift and power of God, which this 1835 change highlights.

7 *commandments which inspired him*. Moroni didn't just give Joseph tasks but gave him inspiring commandments. They were hard commandments, and he struggled with many of them, but they inspired him to be better and greater than he was. Of course, in the earliest days, Joseph's first revelations were also referred to as "commandments" (hence the name of the first publication, *The Book of Commandments*), so this language could simply be referring to those early revelations.

8 *by the means which were before prepared*. A subtle reference to the Nephite interpreters and Joseph's seer stones, or as he later called them all, the Urim and Thummim.

9 *record of a fallen people*. Few had read the Book of Mormon at this time, since it was just coming off the press, so this summary of its message by the Prophet captures the key points. It is a record of a people long passed away.

9 *the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ*. It is also a record that contains the message of salvation through Christ, who suffered, died, and was resurrected (e.g., 1 Nephi 19:9-10; Alma 7:11-13).

10 text note:

Note: This entire verse is not in the early copies or publications of this revelation, but was added in 1835.

¹¹ This is reflected in the 1832 account, the first one recorded and the only one in Joseph's own hand; History, circa Summer 1832, [2](#).

10 *confirmed to others by the ministering of angels*. Referring to the three witnesses’ experience, who then declared it unto the world.

11 *Proving . . . that the holy scriptures are true*. This is the first of three significant purposes of the Book of Mormon given in these verses. In a day when the Bible is ignored or neglected or turned into a mere collection of stories and fables, the Book of Mormon boldly declares not only the gospel of Christ and the reality of God, but that “the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.” The Book of Mormon “shall establish the truth of the first [the Bible]”(1 Nephi 13:39-40).

11 *God does inspire men and call them*. The second purpose of the Book of Mormon is to affirm that God is able to call prophets and apostles today, just as is recorded in scripture. He instructs them by the Holy Spirit and brings truth to the earth through these chosen servants. Thus, the book testifies of the mission of Joseph Smith and his successors.

11 *text note:*

D1 in these last days, as well as in days of old	RB1 in these last days as well as in days of old	1833 in these last days as well as in days of old	1835 in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old
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In all revelations recorded up to this section, “last days” had always referred to the day of judgment (see 4:2; 5:35; 9:14; 17:8; 18: 24; 19:3). D&C 20 shifts the meaning slightly to the sense we most often use today—the last days before the Second Coming of Christ (verse 1), which is a day of judgment (verse 13), so it was removed here and replaced with words that simply indicated the present day. In the 1835 edition, it shifted to the term “generations,” a word used nearly 100 times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

12 *he is the same God*. The third purpose of the Book of Mormon stated here is to show that God is unchanging from one age to the next.

So Great Witnesses (13-16)

- 13 Therefore, having so great witnesses, by them shall the world be judged, even as many as shall hereafter come to a knowledge of this work.
- 14 And those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life;
- 15 But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation—
- 16 For the Lord God has spoken it; and we, the elders of the church, have heard and bear witness to the words of the glorious Majesty on high, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

13 *so great witnesses*. Referring to the witnesses already cited—Joseph, Oliver and the other two Book of Mormon witnesses, the Book of Mormon itself, and even the Bible—God has let people in this time know these truths, and the world shall be judged according to their acceptance thereof. Those who receive it “receive a crown of eternal life” (verse 14), while those whose hearts are hard will be condemned (verse 15).

13-15 *text note:*

D1 hereafter receive this work, either to faith and righteousness, or to the hardness of heart in unbelief to their own condemnation	RB1 hereafter receive this work either faith & righteousness or to the hardness of heart in unbelief to their own condemnation	1833 hereafter receive this work, either to faith and righteousness, or to the hardness of heart in unbelief, to their own condemnation	1835 hereafter come to a knowledge of this work; and those who receive it in faith and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life but those who harden their hearts in unbelief and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation
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These three verses were substantially reworked in 1835, putting the focus on those who have a knowledge of the Restoration, not just the world in general.

16 *we, the elders of the Church, have heard and bear witness*. Though this could refer just to Joseph and Oliver as the named “elders” of the Church, the six founding elders in the legal documentation were also those who knew this to be true by divine manifestation and bore record of it.

Creation, Fall, and Atonement (17-28)

17 By these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them;

18 And that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them;

19 And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship.

20 But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man.

21 Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him.

22 He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.

23 He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day;

24 And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father;

25 That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved—

26 Not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who truly testified of him in all things, should have eternal life,

27 As well as those who should come after, who should believe in the gifts and callings of God by the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and of the Son;

28 Which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end. Amen.

Commentary

This section outlines several key doctrines from a Latter-day Saint perspective. This particular section is likely why Howe labeled the whole revelation “The Mormon Creed.”

17 *text note*:

Howe’s publication has an added phrase at the end of this verse not in Revelation Book 1, the 1833 Book of Commandments, or the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants: “. . . and that he is all power, and all wisdom, and all understanding.” However, at least one other early personal copy has the same phrase.¹² It is likely that Whitmer’s copy in RB1 dropped the phrase (his eye skipped a line or something) and that error was carried over in the published versions of the revelation.

17 *by these things we know that there is a God*. This refers to all the witnesses just cited, such as the priesthood restoration by divine messengers, an angel appearing to Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon itself, and more. All these things testify that there is a God in heaven who loves his children and reveals himself unto them for their salvation.

18 *he created man, male and female*. The second key doctrine after the existence of God is the divine creation of earth and of mankind, in the image of God. The emphasis on “image” and “likeness” not only matches that of Genesis but aligns with the Prophet’s own learning from his experience in the sacred grove.

19 *love and serve him*. The Genesis account does not include any such phrases, but later in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, this is a key theme, as Adam and Eve strive to teach their children to love and serve God, and Satan lures them away, especially Cain (Moses 5).

19 *text note*.

D1 and that he gave unto the children of men a commandment that they should love and serve him the only being whom they should worship

RB1 & that he gave unto the Children of men a commandment<s> that they should love & serve him the only being whom they should worship

1833 And that he gave unto the children of men commandments, that they should love and serve him the only being whom they should worship

1835 and gave them commandments that they should love and serve him the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being who they should worship

This verse was also reworked quite a bit in 1835, removing the long phrase “children of men” and clarifying who it is they should worship.

20 *by the transgression of these holy laws*. More than just the Fall itself, this phrase sums up man’s departure from God after the Fall, as Satan led them away from the Lord and to a truly fallen state.

¹² Sidney Gilbert’s copy, though replacing “is” with “has,” so God has these things and not is them. See *JSP*, D1:122n54; Articles and Covenants, circa April 1830 [D&C 20], [4](#), note 11.

20 *sensual and devilish*. This is a description of the state of man from the Bible (James 3:15) and the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 16:3; Alma 42:10). It showed up later this same year in the JST (Moses 5:13).

21 *God gave his Only Begotten Son*. Only John and Hebrews use this phrase in the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon uses it in about the same number (five quotes each). It is found ten times in the Doctrine and Covenants, starting here.

22 *suffered temptations but gave no heed*. Another phrase that appears in the New Testament (Hebrews 2:18) but more strongly in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 3:7; 15:5; Alma 7:11). Jesus was tempted but never fell into sin.

23 *crucified, died, and rose again*. This is the core of the gospel message, the good news about Jesus Christ, also according to Paul (Romans 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:14). The fact that the first declarations are focused on Christ and use language that any Christian of that day or this would embrace argues strongly for the Christianity of the restored gospel.

24 *on the right hand of the Father*. After successfully completing the Atonement, Jesus took his place of honor on the Father's right hand.¹³

25 *believe . . . be baptized . . . endure in faith*. Though it is certainly Biblical, combining these phrases was new doctrine—enduring, especially—different from the Protestant churches all around them. Compare to verse 29 and see verse 32 below.

26 *text note*:

D1 yea, even as many as were before he came in the flesh, from the beginning, which believed in the words of the holy prophets, which were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, which truly testified of all things

RB1 yea even as many as were before he came in the flesh from the beginning which believed in the words of the Holy Prophets which were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost which truly testify of him in all things

1833 Yea, even as many as were before he came in the flesh, from the beginning, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, who were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, which truly testified of him in all things

1835 not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who truly testified of him in all things, should have eternal life,

26-27 *in the meridian . . . beginning . . . come after*. Christ atonement applies to all people in every age, not just those in his day, and not just those since his day, but “all those from the beginning.” All prophets of all ages taught these truths and guided people toward eternal life.

28 *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God*. Similar phrases in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 15:5; Alma 11:44; Mormon 7:7) can sometimes confuse people, since we also emphasize that the Father and Son are separate and distinct. In our doctrine, they are individual beings but are fully united, acting and speaking as one in all things.¹⁴

Justification and Sanctification (29-36)

29 And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

30 And we know that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true;

31 And we know also, that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength.

32 But there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God;

33 Therefore let the church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation;

¹³ See Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrew 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Moroni 9:26.

¹⁴ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:135.

34 Yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also.

35 And we know that these things are true and according to the revelations of John, neither adding to, nor diminishing from the prophecy of his book, the holy scriptures, or the revelations of God which shall come hereafter by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the voice of God, or the ministering of angels.

36 And the Lord God has spoken it; and honor, power and glory be rendered to his holy name, both now and ever. Amen.

Commentary

29 *repent and believe*. More than just believing (verse 29), salvation in God’s kingdom requires a change of heart and a change of life—repentance.

30 *justification . . . is just and true*. Justification or being made righteous is achieving forgiveness of sins and being made clean before God and is only through the grace or great gift of Jesus Christ’s Atonement.

31 *sanctification . . . is just and true*. Likewise, sanctification or being pure, holy, and set apart, is a true doctrine, and is also only achieved through the grace of God.

32 *man may fall from grace*. Many of the declarations of doctrine are intentionally phrased to highlight how this new church was different from all others. Other churches of that day taught that it was impossible to fall from grace once saved, or that a person could depart from grace for a time and sin, but God would still save him or her. Here, the Prophet was boldly declaring that enduring to the end in faithfulness (see verse 25) is a necessary component of salvation. Without it, we can fall from the grace that justifies (verse 33) and sanctifies (verse 34) and brings us into the presence of God.

33 *take heed and pray always*. The remedy to keep from falling from grace is to “take heed,” meaning to always listen and obey, and continue in constant prayer.

34 *who are sanctified take heed also*. This counsel was not just for sinners. Sanctified individuals are still at risk because they might be pure and holy but embracing even small sin can quickly change that.

35 *neither adding to, nor diminishing from*. Referring to Revelation 22:18-19, which is still cited by some today as reason to reject the Book of Mormon and modern prophets, it is clear that nothing discussed adds to or takes away from “the holy scriptures,” meaning the Bible.

35 *revelations of God which shall come*. Building on the revelations of previous prophets, the Lord speaks today by the Holy Ghost, by his own voice, and by the voice of angels, to bring truth again to the earth. There would be many more in Joseph Smith’s lifetime and in the lives and ministries of subsequent prophets and in the lives of millions of Latter-day Saints.

36 *honor, power and glory be rendered to his holy name*. A doxology (praise text), thanking God for his merciful plan of redemption and salvation in our behalf. Doxologies are common in the book of Revelation (e.g., Rev. 1:5-6; 4:8, 11; 5:9-13; 7:10, 12; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 19:1-4, 6-8)

Preparation for Baptism (37)

37 And again, by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism—All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take

upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church.

Commentary

37 *the manner of baptism*. Taking its cues from Moroni 6:2-3, the preparation required of a new convert was outlined, which included humility, a desire for baptism, a broken heart and contrite spirit, true repentance, and a willingness to serve Christ. More about this starting with verse 68.

Priesthood Duties (38-60)

38 The duty of the elders, priests, teachers, deacons, and members of the church of Christ—An apostle is an elder, and it is his calling to baptize;

39 And to ordain other elders, priests, teachers, and deacons;

40 And to administer bread and wine—the emblems of the flesh and blood of Christ—

41 And to confirm those who are baptized into the church, by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures;

42 And to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church;

43 And to confirm the church by the laying on of the hands, and the giving of the Holy Ghost;

44 And to take the lead of all meetings.

45 The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God.

46 The priest's duty is to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament,

47 And visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties.

48 And he may also ordain other priests, teachers, and deacons.

49 And he is to take the lead of meetings when there is no elder present;

50 But when there is an elder present, he is only to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize,

51 And visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties.

52 In all these duties the priest is to assist the elder if occasion requires.

53 The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

54 And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

55 And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty.

56 And he is to take the lead of meetings in the absence of the elder or priest—

57 And is to be assisted always, in all his duties in the church, by the deacons, if occasion requires.

58 But neither teachers nor deacons have authority to baptize, administer the sacrament, or lay on hands;

59 They are, however, to warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ.

60 Every elder, priest, teacher, or deacon is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him; and he is to be ordained by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is in the one who ordains him.

Commentary

38 *elders, priests, teachers, deacons.* These were the only priesthood offices in the Church in 1830, and even then, there was no record of deacons being ordained until late 1831.¹⁵ The full organization of the Church came over time and as circumstances warranted it. It would have done no good to give to a church of a few dozen people an organization that included all the quorums of the First Presidency, the Twelve, the Seventy, and the offices required to run stakes, wards, and auxiliaries today. They simply would have been overwhelmed by it all. The offices listed in this verse were common among other churches of that day and were good starting points to both make the Church functional in that day and easily transition to the full Church organization later. Unlike today, young men did not hold the offices below elder in the earliest days, but adult men were ordained to these various offices to cover the needed functions of the Church, as outlined in the verses that follow. Elders: 38-45; priests: 46-52; teachers: 53-59; no specific duties for deacons are called out though their duties overlap with teachers somewhat (verses 57-59).

38 *An apostle is an elder.* An “elder” is a holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood, so Apostles, Seventies, and High Priests are correctly referred to as elders, even today. In 1830, an elder was a common term that also referred to a church leader, independent of any priesthood. Thus, another way to potentially read this phrase is, ‘an apostle is a church leader.’ Other churches may have used the titles of elder, priest, etc., but apostle was unique to the Church of Christ.

40-41 *text note:*

D1 and to administer the flesh and blood of Christ according to the scriptures

RB1 & to administering the flesh & blood of Christ according to the scriptures

1833 and to administer the flesh and blood of Christ according to the scriptures

1835 and to administer bread and wine—the emblems of the flesh and blood of Christ—and to confirm those who are baptized into the church, by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures

¹⁵ *JSP*, D1:124n65; Articles and Covenants, circa April 1830 [D&C 20], [4n22](#).

The 1835 clarification that bread and wine (today water, per the later D&C 27) are the emblems of the flesh and blood help set the symbolic aspect of the sacrament, not take the church down the path of transubstantiation in the Catholic Church. Verse 41 today was not in the early versions but was added in 1835. It is a clearer but somewhat redundant version of the content in v. 43.

40 to administer bread and wine. Elders blessed and passed the sacrament at the beginning, though priests also had the task (verse 46).

43 to confirm the church by the laying on of the hands. Confirming someone a member of the Church and giving them the gift of the Holy Ghost was not something done before the organization of the Church in April 1830. In fact, the Lord told them not to ordain others, administer the sacrament, or give the gift of the Holy Ghost until that time.¹⁶

45 text note:

D1 The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost

RB1 The Elders are to conduct the Meetings ~~according~~ as they are led by the Holy Ghost

1833 The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost

1835 The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God.

Leading by the Holy Ghost is important and mentioned first, but as the Church matured, it was important that those leading the meetings also followed the previously received commandments and revelations to promote consistency and order in meetings.

45 elders are to conduct the meetings. There were no high priests in the Church at this time, or presidencies or any kind, so the presiding authority was an elder.

47 visit the house of each member. The seeds of ministering were planted nearly 200 years ago.

47 pray vocally and in secret. Praying vocally was a challenge for many people in that day; some feared that Satan would hear their sincere prayers and work to thwart them. Joseph Smith had prayed many times in his life before the First Vision, but that was his first vocal prayer (JS-H 1:14). Other members expressed their difficulty with the concept but were encouraged by the Prophet to pray out loud.

49-50 text note:

D1 and to take the lead in meetings; but none of these offices is he to do when there is an elder present, but in all cases is to assist the elder, &c.

RB1 & take the lead ~~in~~ <of> meetings but none of these offices ~~is they~~ <are> <is he> to do when there is an Elder present, but in all cases ~~are~~ <is> to assist the Elders &c

1833 and take the lead of meetings; but none of these offices is he to do when there is an elder present, but in all cases is to assist the elder.

1835 and he is to take the lead of meetings when there is no elder present, but when there is an elder present he is only to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and visit the hour of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret, and attend to all family duties. In all these duties the priest is to assist the elder if occasion requires.

This lengthy 1835 addition clarifies that priests are still very engaged and not just waiting for an elder to tell them what to do if an elder is presiding. The recitation of duties is redundant with vv. 46-47 but emphasizes the priest's role in strengthening the Church.

53 watch over the church. Elders presided and went to conferences and priests visited members' homes, but teachers were to stay home and be watchmen over the church. Compare the later revelation in D&C 84:111.

55 see that all the members do their duty. The teachers were the 'policemen' of sorts, charged with keeping iniquity at bay, keeping members from lying, backbiting, and evil-speaking, and to keep members on task with their assignments and responsibilities.

58 text note:

D1 But neither the teacher nor the deacon has authority to

RB1 but neither ~~the~~ <the> Teachers nor ~~the~~ Deacons

1833 But neither the teachers nor deacons have authority to

1835 but neither teachers nor deacons have authority to

¹⁶ JSP, H1:326.

baptize nor administer the sacrament

have authority to Baptize nor administer the Sacrament

baptize nor administer the sacrament

baptize, administer the sacrament, or lay on hands

Adding “lay on hands” in 1835 clarifies the statement in v. 41 that only the elders have the role of confirming members and giving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

60 *to be ordained*. This draws on the language of Moroni 3:4.

Priesthood Structure and Authority (61-67)

61 The several elders composing this church of Christ are to meet in conference once in three months, or from time to time as said conferences shall direct or appoint;

62 And said conferences are to do whatever church business is necessary to be done at the time.

63 The elders are to receive their licenses from other elders, by vote of the church to which they belong, or from the conferences.

64 Each priest, teacher, or deacon, who is ordained by a priest, may take a certificate from him at the time, which certificate, when presented to an elder, shall entitle him to a license, which

shall authorize him to perform the duties of his calling, or he may receive it from a conference.

65 No person is to be ordained to any office in this church, where there is a regularly organized branch of the same, without the vote of that church;

66 But the presiding elders, traveling bishops, high councilors, high priests, and elders, may have the privilege of ordaining, where there is no branch of the church that a vote may be called.

67 Every president of the high priesthood (or presiding elder), bishop, high councilor, and high priest, is to be ordained by the direction of a high council or general conference.

Commentary

61 *meet in conference once in three months*. Conferences in the early Church were conducted for priesthood leaders and mainly for conducting business (verse 62), but there was teaching and instruction, too. The first conference was 9 June 1830 and they had them at least quarterly, sometimes more frequently. Eventually, conferences were held twice a year on a general level and twice a year on a stake level, thus matching this revelation to meet four times per year.

63 *text note*:

Verse 63 was added in 1835 to establish how elders were to receive their licenses to preach, a necessary change as the number of elders proliferated and the Church began to spread across the country.

63 *receive their licenses*. In a day when communication was challenging across distances, the method determined was to give paper certificates and licenses to those who were baptized and ordained to the various offices. If you went from one part of the Church to another, you presented your certificate to the presiding authority, then you would receive a sustaining vote and become part of that new area. Today our Church-wide computer system tracks it all for us and records can be safely and accurately moved from one ward to another in seconds. Record keeping was important in those days and will always be so.

65-67 *text note*:

These verses were not in the original Articles and Covenants, but were added in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. In 1830, these offices and procedures did not exist in the Church, but by 1835, they did, so Joseph Smith inserted these instructions to bring the Articles and Covenants up to date.

New Converts (68-69)

68 The duty of the members after they are received by baptism—The elders or priests are to have a sufficient time to expound all things concerning the church of Christ to their understanding, previous to their partaking of the sacrament and being confirmed by the laying on of the hands of the elders, so that all things may be done in order.

69 And the members shall manifest before the church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures—walking in holiness before the Lord.

Commentary

68 *The duty of the members*. Members had responsibilities, too, including being patient about not receiving the Holy Ghost and taking the sacrament until the elders or priests felt like they were sufficiently taught and prepared.

69 *godly walk and conversation*. Conversation does not mean ‘talking’ in this case. Instead, it follows the King James usage of the term, meaning ‘conduct’ (see Galatians 1:13).

Blessing of Children (70)

70 Every member of the church of Christ having children is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay

their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name.

Commentary

70 *lay their hands upon them*. This is the command to bless children, which other churches generally do not do. This echoes Christ’s behavior of calling children to him and blessing them (Matthew 19:13-15).

Baptism Procedures (71-74)

71 No one can be received into the church of Christ unless he has arrived unto the years of accountability before God, and is capable of repentance.

who has presented himself or herself for baptism, and shall say, calling him or her by name: Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

72 Baptism is to be administered in the following manner unto all those who repent—

74 Then shall he immerse him or her in the water, and come forth again out of the water.

73 The person who is called of God and has authority from Jesus Christ to baptize, shall go down into the water with the person

Commentary

71 *years of accountability*. This is a Book of Mormon doctrine (Moroni 8:8-22). The determination of what that age is was revealed with the work on the Joseph Smith Translation later in 1830 and then confirmed in D&C 68:25-27.¹⁷

72 *text note*:

Verses 72-79 were not in the first publication, but instead it just said, “And the manner of baptism & the manner of administering the sacrament are to be done as is written in the Book of Mormon.”¹⁸ By the time John Whitmer copied it into Revelation Book 1, either he expanded that section to quote the relevant parts of the Book of Mormon or the copy he was working from had already done so and included that text.¹⁹

73 *has authority from Jesus Christ to baptize*. Many churches preformed baptism in that day and do so in ours, but this was new doctrine among Protestants, to claim that a person had to have authority from Christ himself to do such an ordinance.

73 *Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ*. The original language here was, “Having authority given me of Jesus Christ . . .” which was a quote from 3 Nephi 11:25. It was changed in 1835 to be the language we use today.

Sacramental Prayers (75-79)

75 It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus;

Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

76 And the elder or priest shall administer it; and after this manner shall he administer it—he shall kneel with the church and call upon the Father in solemn prayer, saying:

78 The manner of administering the wine—he shall take the cup also, and say:

77 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy

79 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always

¹⁷ David A. LeFevre, “The Education of a Prophet: The Role of the New Translation of the Bible in the Life of Joseph Smith,” in Craig James Ostler, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and Barbara Morgan Gardner, *Foundations of the Restoration* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2016), 108-109.

¹⁸ *JSP*, D1:125; Articles and Covenants, circa April 1830 [D&C 20], 4.

¹⁹ *JSP*, D1:125n70 (Articles and Covenants, circa April 1830 [D&C 20], 4n27) reports John Whitmer’s copy in Zebedee Coltrin’s journal was phrased like Howe’s printed version, but other early copies include the Book of Mormon quotations.

remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them.
Amen.

Commentary

77 *bless and sanctify this bread*. The two sacrament prayers are identical to those in Moroni 4-5.

77 *willing to take upon them the name of thy Son*. Elder Oaks commented that this phrase expresses our willingness to perform temple ordinances and eventually receive the highest blessings available to us through Jesus' name.²⁰

Membership Councils and Conferences (80-84)

80 Any member of the church of Christ transgressing, or being overtaken in a fault, shall be dealt with as the scriptures direct.

81 It shall be the duty of the several churches, composing the church of Christ, to send one or more of their teachers to attend the several conferences held by the elders of the church,

82 With a list of the names of the several members uniting themselves with the church since the last conference; or send by the hand of some priest; so that a regular list of all the names of the whole church may be kept in a book by one of the elders, whomsoever the other elders shall appoint from time to time;

83 And also, if any have been expelled from the church, so that their names may be blotted out of the general church record of names.

84 All members removing from the church where they reside, if going to a church where they are not known, may take a letter certifying that they are regular members and in good standing, which certificate may be signed by any elder or priest if the member receiving the letter is personally acquainted with the elder or priest, or it may be signed by the teachers or deacons of the church.

Commentary

80 *as the scriptures direct*. Information about Church discipline is fairly sparse in the New Testament, with a bit more in the Book of Mormon. Today we have extensive direction from prophets in our handbooks to deal with such matters.

81 *text note*:

Howe's printed version says that either priests or teachers should go to the conferences with the membership information, but Revelation Book 1 and other early manuscript copies give that responsibility solely to the teachers.²¹

82 *a list of the names*. Teachers were asked to attend the conferences of the Church (verse 81) and bring with them lists of names of people who had joined the Church or been "expelled" (excommunicated, verse 83) since the last conference. This allowed Church leaders to track membership and keep the records up to date. Today this method is supplanted by local and stake clerks tracking membership information through a combined Church-wide database that makes it easy to share information and move it between units, as needed.

Results

Brigham Young reported that writing this document was a difficult experience for Oliver, and it took Joseph about two hours of laboring with him for him to accept it. This was perhaps due to the fact that the Articles and Covenants replaced Oliver's Articles of the Church from the previous year, and that the new one was dictated by Joseph with little or no input from Oliver, though a study of the two shows that the Articles of the Church had influence on what became D&C 20.

The Articles and Covenants were evidently read for the first time on 9 June 1830 in Fayette, at the first Church conference. They were presented to the elders in attendance, who were asked for their sustaining vote, which was given unanimously. Since there are no contemporary records of the 6 April 1830 organization of the Church, and since no one who attended the meeting and commented on it ever mentioned the Articles and Covenants being read, including Joseph Smith, and since the historical record appears to push us toward a date after 6 April for its final form, it is likely not part of that first meeting.

Much of what we do in the Church today still follows the patterns of D&C 20. Some things have changed, based on the growth of the Church, how priesthood offices have continued to change in nature and responsibility, and due to technological advances. But many parts of this revelation are foundational and will continue to guide the Church for decades, if not its entire existence.

²⁰ Dallin H. Oaks, "[Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ](#)," General Conference, April 1985, quoted in McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 171.

²¹ *JSP*, D1:126n73; Articles and Covenants, circa April 1830 [D&C 20], 4n30; *JSP*, R1:67; Revelation Book 1, [58](#).

On a more personal note for Oliver Cowdery, he was with Joseph in June 1830 in Harmony, where they began the translation work on the Bible. He was scribe for most of what is in the Book of Moses today. Later, in July or August 1830, Oliver went to Fayette and with the Whitmers became quite upset about some language in the Articles and Covenants. The verse in question (verse 37 today) talks about the qualification for baptism, declaring that a person must “truly manifest by their works that they have received the spirit of Christ unto the ~~remission~~ ^{<conviction>} ^{<remission>} of their sins”²² before they can be baptized. Oliver wrote to Joseph saying that it was “priestcraft” and commanded Joseph to remove it. Oliver’s status and continued leadership role seems to have caused him to see himself as co-equal with Joseph. Joseph returned to the Palmyra area shortly after Oliver’s letter, and laboring with him and the Whitmers, he was with difficulty able to convince them that the language should be retained as is. Oliver humbled himself, and on 26 September 1830, at the second Church conference, he read and sustained the Articles and Covenants. The Articles and Covenants were thereafter read as part of Church conferences for many years.

Doctrine and Covenants 21

Setting

On Tuesday, 6 April 1830, according to revelation,²³ a group of people gathered in the Peter Whitmer, Sr., home in Fayette, NY (near Waterloo, which is the location Lucy Smith gives in her history). Following the laws of the state of New York, six men—Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Samuel Smith—signed the formal documentation, voting to form the “Church of Christ” and accept Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as the presiding elders. Joseph and Oliver then ordained each other elders, the sacrament was passed, and a few others were ordained to various priesthood offices. The exact number attending is uncertain, but as many as fifty-six people may have been crammed into that small house. After the sacrament, Joseph and Oliver took several people who had been previously baptized and confirmed them members of the Church and bestowed the gift of the Holy Ghost on them.

Following the ending of the formal meeting but while the crowd was still present, Joseph was moved upon by the Spirit, and Oliver grabbed paper, ink, and quill and wrote while Joseph dictated the revelation now called D&C 21. That means that D&C 21 is ahead of D&C 20, chronologically (so are D&C 22 and 23, and mentioned above).

The Church has had three names: In April 1830, The Church of Christ. On 3 May 1834, it was “The Church of the Latter Day Saints.” And on 26 April 1838 (D&C 115), it was changed to “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” which was later hyphenated to “Latter-day Saints.”

Documents and Publication

The oldest known copy of this revelation is in Revelation Book 1, copied by John Whitmer. It was first published as Chapter 22 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and as Section 46 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

1. Joseph Smith’s calling (1-3)
2. A prophet guides Zion (4-12)

Joseph Smith’s Calling (1-3)

1 Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith.

3 Which church was organized and established in the year of your Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April.

²² *JSP*, MRB:81; Revelation Book 1, [55](#).

²³ *JSP*, H1:336 (Draft 2); History, circa June 1839-circa 1841 [Draft 2], [29](#).

Commentary

1 *there shall be a record kept.* Though no record of the 6 April 1830 meeting has ever been found except this revelation, the Saints became fastidious record keepers from this time on. This motivated Joseph to keep personal histories and journals and started a succession of Church historians and recorders who keep detailed records of all Church events, activities, decisions, and more.

1 *a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder.* Referring to Joseph Smith, the Lord gave him several titles, which still apply to Church leaders today, except for “translator.” Joseph Smith is the only man in this dispensation so far to receive that title from the Lord.

2 *inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof.* Joseph Smith did not perform these efforts of his own volition but rather acted under the direction of the Holy Spirit through revelations that instructed him how to proceed.

3 *Which church was organized and established.* Written in the past tense because it was done; the Church was formed earlier on the same day, previously given by the Lord as the day to organize the Church.

A Prophet Guides Zion (4-12)

4 Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

5 For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

6 For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.

7 For thus saith the Lord God: Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard.

8 Yea, his weeping for Zion I have seen, and I will cause that he shall mourn for her no longer; for his days of rejoicing are come

unto the remission of his sins, and the manifestations of my blessings upon his works.

9 For, behold, I will bless all those who labor in my vineyard with a mighty blessing, and they shall believe on his words, which are given him through me by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea, for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart.

10 Wherefore it behooveth me that he should be ordained by you, Oliver Cowdery mine apostle;

11 This being an ordinance unto you, that you are an elder under his hand, he being the first unto you, that you might be an elder unto this church of Christ, bearing my name—

12 And the first preacher of this church unto the church, and before the world, yea, before the Gentiles; yea, and thus saith the Lord God, lo, lo! to the Jews also. Amen.

Commentary

4 *give heed unto all his words.* Joseph was not just a visionary man and a translator of ancient records, but the Lord clarified his authoritative position in the Church. Members were to “give heed” to his teachings and be obedient to the commandments he gave, since they came from the Lord (verse 5).

5 *in all patience and faith.* Sometimes a prophet’s teachings are not obviously true in the short-term but are always proved correct in the long run. Patience and faith are required to be obedient and trust that the blessings will come.

6 *disperse the powers of darkness.* What a great promise, that the light of God would disperse the darkness of the world and the persecution all around them.

7 *to move the cause of Zion.* Zion was a developing concept in this stage of the Church but appears to have the meaning of God’s kingdom.

8 *his weeping for Zion.* Joseph had already shed many tears for the cause of Zion, even on this first day of the formal Church’s existence. He will shed many more in the years to come.

9 *Jesus was crucified by sinful men.* The core doctrine of the Church is always about Christ.

10 *ordained by you, Oliver Cowdery.* Joseph was already an apostle under the hands of Peter, James, and John, but to have all things done in order, needed to be ordained to his new Church office by one with authority. Oliver was the only one, other than Joseph, with apostolic authority at this time, so the Lord commissioned him to ordain Joseph Smith to the roles listed in verse 1. This pattern of apostles having authority to ordain the one that presides over them continues today each time a new president of the Church is ordained.

11 *he being the first unto you*. Joseph is the first elder, and Oliver the second. Oliver will perhaps forget that order over the next few months but will repent and play his correct role until 1838.

12 *the first preacher of this church*. Oliver might be second elder, but the Lord called him as first preacher, much like how Aaron was Moses' spokesman. Oliver did, in fact, deliver the first sermon in the new Church, the following Sunday.²⁴ As Steven Harper explained it, "Joseph will preside over Oliver, and Oliver over the Church of Christ. Oliver will be the primary preacher to the restored Church and on behalf of the Church to all mankind."²⁵

Results

After D&C 21, Joseph was no longer just the translator of the Book of Mormon or even the first elder of the Church—he was alone as the prophet, seer, and translator. The Church was again on the earth, for the first time in hundreds of years.

The evening of this meeting, Joseph Knight reported that Joseph Smith went into the woods to pray. He poured out his heart to the Lord and received a fulfillment of verse 8 in this revelation. "His joy seemed to be full. I think he saw the grate work he had Begun and was Desirus to Carry it out."²⁶

Doctrine and Covenants 22

Setting

Ten days after the Church was organized, on 16 April 1830, a group of people from the Manchester/Palmyra area came to Joseph Smith, seeking his guidance.²⁷ They confessed belief in the Book of Mormon and sought to join the Church, but they were Baptists and had already been baptized, so saw no reason to be baptized again. Having never been asked about this particular scenario, Joseph Smith took it to the Lord and received D&C 22 in response.²⁸

Some commentaries try to make D&C 22 an extension of D&C 20 and thus part of the Articles and Covenants of the Church. While it does clarify a question about baptism, which is discussed in D&C 20, the later date and the fact that in the official recording of it in Revelation Book 1, it remains a separate revelation, indicates that it should be treated independently.

Note: Based on the date, D&C 23 was received before D&C 22, and both were given before D&C 20 was recorded.

Documents and Publication

First published by E.D. Howe in his paper, the *Painseville Telegraph*, on 19 April 1831, and recorded in Revelation Book 1, it was Chapter 23 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 47 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

D&C 22 (1-4)

1 Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning.

2 Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works.

3 For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old.

4 Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.

²⁴ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 178.

²⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 77.

²⁶ Harper, *Making Sense*, 78.

²⁷ William McLellin recorded a copy of this revelation in his journal and dated it 16 April 1830 (Shipps and Welch, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, 235-239), which is the date followed by the Joseph Smith Papers team; see *JSP*, D1:137; Revelation, 16 April 1830 [D&C 22], [Historical Introduction](#).

²⁸ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:154.

Commentary

1 **old covenants**. Covenant making is not typically part of most Protestant theologies. Where baptisms were performed, most churches freely accepted one done by another church. It was seen as an expression of faith, not an ordinance essential to salvation. Tying it to covenant in the new Church and requiring proper authority was a somewhat radical idea for the time.

1 **new and everlasting covenant**. This is the first mention of this phrase in the Doctrine and Covenants. The full understanding of it as we now know it does not come about for some time (D&C 66:2; 131:2; 132:19), but here the Lord is using it in relation to the covenant of baptism. Since marriage is the ultimate expression of the new and everlasting covenant, and baptism precedes that, the name can easily apply to both.²⁹

2 **cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses**. The Lord is not saying that other baptisms were under the Mosaic Law, but treats them metaphorically, comparing those baptisms previously performed with the ancient law that was superseded by the new law when Christ came.

3 **it is because of your dead works that I have caused this**. The Church had to be restored because the authority to perform essential ordinances was gone from the earth, making all such efforts “dead works.”

4 **enter ye in at the gate**. Compare 2 Nephi 31:17, where the gate into the kingdom of God is baptism.

Results

Though this revelation was an important clarification for church practice, it also became a point of contention with different faiths. Alexander Campbell thought it wrong to require people to be “re-immersed.”³⁰ However, some churches agreed with this concept. This revelation affirmed the need to be baptized by the proper authority and in the correct manner, in order for it to be eternally efficacious.

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²⁹ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:156.

³⁰ *JSP*, D1:138; Revelation, 16 April 1830 [D&C 22], [Historical Introduction](#).

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