

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 90

1 THUS saith the Lord, verily, verily I say unto you my son, thy sins are forgiven thee, according to thy petition, for thy prayers and the prayers of thy brethren have come up into my ears. 2 Therefore, thou art blessed from henceforth that bear the keys of the kingdom given unto you; which kingdom is coming forth for the last time. 3 Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come; 4 Nevertheless, through you shall the oracles be given to another, yea, even unto the church. 5 And all they who receive the oracles of God, let them beware how they hold them lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall when the storms descend, and the winds blow, and the rains descend, and beat upon their house. 6 And again, verily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom; 7 As also through your administration the keys of the school of the prophets, which I have commanded to be organized;

8 That thereby they may be perfected in their ministry for the salvation of Zion, and of the nations of Israel, and of the Gentiles, as many as will believe; 9 That through your administration they may receive the word, and through their administration the word may go forth unto the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first, and then, behold, and lo, they shall turn unto the Jews. 10 And then cometh the day when the arm of the Lord shall be revealed in power in convincing the nations, the heathen nations, the house of Joseph, of the gospel of their salvation. 11 For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ.

v1-11 These verses deal with the establishment of the First Presidency and addresses where responsibilities and keys lie. Their sins are forgiven, their callings extended (v. 1-6), and their responsibilities identified (v. 8-11).

The ambiguous pronouns in these verses are something of a problem. Comments below reflect an attempt to determine by context who in specific each pronoun is referring to, but it isn't guaranteed.

The text can be arranged by subject into two simple synthetical parallelisms as follows:

- A - (v. 1) Smith's sins forgiven
 - B - (v. 2) Smith, Rigdon, Williams bear keys of kingdom
 - B - (v. 3) Keys never to be taken from the three of them
- Paranthesis 1 (v. 4-5) Inequality among the three: Smith to receive oracles
- A - (v. 6a-d) Rigdon's and William's sins forgiven
- Paranthesis 2 (v. 6e-7) Equality among the three: school of the prophets
- C - (v. 8) Rigdon, Williams to be perfected in ministry to Zion, Israel, Gentiles
 - D - (v. 9a-c) Through Smith's administration, Rigdon and Williams to obtain the word, that the word may go to the Gentiles first
 - D - (v. 9d-10) Then the word will go to the "Jews", the house of Joseph
- C - (v. 11) Every man to hear the fulness of the gospel by the Comforter

Note the two parentheses are complimentary in that they address equality/inequality issues among the members of the First Presidency.

v1 Smith's sins are forgiven him as a consequence of his prayers and those of his brethren, which "brethren" are probably Rigdon and Williams.

v2-3 The ambiguous pronouns in these two verses are apparently referring to Smith, Rigdon and Williams as all three are equally invested with the keys of the kingdom per v. 6. Verse 2 also states this manifestation of the kingdom is the final manifestation. Verse 3 indicates keys obtained in mortality have post-mortal consequences as well. This would be as expected since various post-mortal persons appeared to Smith and others to restore keys.

v4-5 A parenthesis. Verse 4 states Smith (the ambiguous pronoun "you" must be referring to Smith per D&C 28:2, 7 and D&C 43:2-7) is the only one to receive oracles for the Church. While the councillors have the keys of the kingdom, they do not possess the right to receive revelation for the ecclesia. Verse 5 then goes on to deliver an admonition to the ecclesia (referred to in the last line of v. 4) that they are to carefully heed the oracles delivered to them by Smith, or they will suffer the fate of the parable from Matt. 7:24-27.

v6a-d As was Smith's sins forgiven in v. 1, so are the two councillors.

v6e-7 The second parenthesis. This one indicates that with regard to administering the school of the prophets, they are equals.

v8-11 The text forms a tight parallelism where the C's (v. 8, 11) state all nations shall receive the gospel, and the D's (v. 9-10) state that the fulness of the gospel will go to the Gentiles first, then to natural Israel (cp. D&C 45:24-25).

v8 The role of the councillors is to administer the gospel to all nations.

v9-10 The term "Jews" in v. 9 is probably referring to natural Israel in general, following Isaiah's and Nephi's usages, rather than those of the tribes of Judah in specific as v. 10 refers to the house of Joseph.

v10 "the heathen nations", apparently equated with "the house of Joseph" which immediately follows it in the text, and would be referring to the remnants of Ephraim and Manasseh in the New World, cp. 1 Ne. 15:13. A heathen is defined as one who is idolatrous, barbaric, pagan.

v11 "the Comforter", they are granted the Spirit to assist them in their missionary efforts, cp. D&C 88:3-4.

12 And now, verily I say unto you, I give unto you a commandment that you continue in the ministry and presidency. 13 And when you have finished the translation of the prophets, you shall from thenceforth preside over the affairs of the church and the school; 14 And from time to time, as shall be manifested by the Comforter, receive revelations to unfold the mysteries of the kingdom;

15 And set in order the churches, and study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people. 16 And this shall be your business and mission in all your lives, to preside in council, and set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom. 17 Be not ashamed, neither confounded; but be admonished in all your high-mindedness and pride, for it bringeth a snare upon your souls. 18 Set in order your houses; keep slothfulness and uncleanness far from you.

v12-18 The text is largely a set of commands to Smith in particular. However, v. 16-18 broaden out the application to the ecclesia, per v. 15, in general and forwards a series of

admonitions.

v13 Referring to the ongoing inspired editing of the Bible.

19 Now, verily I say unto you, let there be a place provided, as soon as it is possible, for the family of thy counselor and scribe, even Frederick G. Williams. 20 And let mine aged servant, Joseph Smith, Sen., continue with his family upon the place where he now lives; and let it not be sold until the mouth of the Lord shall name. 21 And let my counselor, even Sidney Rigdon, remain where he now resides until the mouth of the Lord shall name. 22 And let the bishop search diligently to obtain an agent, and let him be a man who has got riches in store--a man of God, and of strong faith-- 23 That thereby he may be enabled to discharge every debt; that the storehouse of the Lord may not be brought into disrepute before the eyes of the people. 24 Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another. 25 Let your families be small, especially mine aged servant Joseph Smith's, Sen., as pertaining to those who do not belong to your families; 26 That those things that are provided for you, to bring to pass my work, be not taken from you and given to those that are not worthy-- 27 And thereby you be hindered in accomplishing those things which I have commanded you. 28 And again, verily I say unto you, it is my will that my handmaid Vienna Jaques should receive money to bear her expenses, and go up unto the land of Zion; 29 And the residue of the money may be consecrated unto me, and she be rewarded in mine own due time. 30 Verily I say unto you, that it is meet in mine eyes that she should go up unto the land of Zion, and receive an inheritance from the hand of the bishop; 31 That she may settle down in peace inasmuch as she is faithful, and not be idle in her days from thenceforth.

v19-31 A set of various particulars dealing with specific people.

32 And behold, verily I say unto you, that ye shall write this commandment, and say unto your brethren in Zion, in love greeting, that I have called you also to preside over Zion in mine own due time. 33 Therefore, let them cease wearying me concerning this matter. 34 Behold, I say unto you that your brethren in Zion begin to repent, and the angels rejoice over them. 35 Nevertheless, I am not well pleased with many things; and I am not well pleased with my servant William E. McLellin, neither with my servant Sidney Gilbert; and the bishop also, and others have many things to repent of. 36 But verily I say unto you, that I, the Lord, will contend with Zion, and plead with

her strong ones, and chasten her until she overcomes and is clean before me. 37 For she shall not be removed out of her place. I, the Lord, have spoken it. Amen.

v32-37 The text explains the Lord's relationship with Zion. He works to establish Zion through His servants (v. 32-34), and will chasten those who are not behaving as they should (v. 35-36). Regardless, the Lord's purposes will not be confounded, His intention is that Zion will be established (v. 37, cp. D&C 101:17-20).

Even though the Lord has instructed the ecclesia at Kirtland to build a Temple, He still expects the ecclesia at Missouri to observe the commandments to establish Zion and build a Temple.

v32-33 Recall at this point in time "Zion" is very specifically referring to the ecclesia at Independence, Missouri. In the preceding conflict in sections 84-88, which behind the scenes was quite contentious, the Lord stayed above the fray, until the dispute was resolved with the leadership at Kirtland humbling themselves and the Lord telling them to build a Temple there at Kirtland in section 88.

As the question over building the Temple has been resolved, the Lord weighs in and comments on how individual people are doing, as far as He is concerned. But, regardless, the Lord has clearly had enough of their petty worldly aspirations for leadership and power within the Church.

Note, the Lord does not let the leadership at Kirtland off without comment, per v. 15-18. And, in D&C 93:41-50, the Lord chastens the leadership rather harshly.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 90

Little is known regarding why this revelation was given.

The revelation was first published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 214-216. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 23, pages 736-737, dates December 15, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 24, pages 375-376, dated August 7, 1852.

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Jesse Gause, who had served with Sidney Rigdon as counselor to the Prophet in the presidency of the high priesthood, was excommunicated in December 1832. The vacancy was filled by Frederick G. Williams. A fairly well-to-do farmer from Kirtland, Williams had served as Joseph Smith's scribe since 20 July 1832. As a clerk to the presidency Williams had the Prophet's confidence, and was a natural choice. On 5 January 1833 a revelation called Frederick G. Williams to be "a Councillor and scribe unto my servant Joseph." (Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

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