

B: Hey, everybody, welcome to Talking Scripture. A podcast where we illustrate relevance and application of the scriptures in Come Follow Me.

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M: Welcome to Talking Scripture. I'm Mike, and I'm Bryce. And today we are going to be in section 94 through 97 of the Doctrine and Covenants. These sections talk about building some buildings and building some temples.

We are going to start in section 95. We'll get to 94, but we're going to start in the 95th section.

B: Yeah, I love that this week we're going to do 97 and 95, because that is one of the great lessons of church history, is the foil between the Kirtland Temple and the nonexistent Jackson County Temple. Now, foil is a literary term where the author places two characters or two situations that are going in opposite directions right next to each other. Kind of like you foil swords or you foil character. So think about that in great literature, even in the Book of Mormon, we've got Nephi foiled with Laman, we've got King Benjamin foiled with King Noah, we've got Amalakiah foiled with Captain Moroni.

There's often, you know, a very good character who's moving up, foiled or put in close proximity with a bad character who's kind of moving down. Well, these two circumstances are going to foil each other because the Kirtland Saints have been commanded to build a temple in Kirtland.

And that was back in Section 88. It's been several months and they have not built the temple. So they're going to be rebuked severely. Now, how the Kirtland Saints responded to that rebuke will be one side of the foil.

They got it. And they didn't need another rebuke. The other side of that foil is in 97. Here in Section 97, the persecution has begun from the Missourians. Church leaders have been tarred and feathered and forced to sign an agreement to leave.

And then in Section 97, the Lord gives them a way out of the persecution and commands them to build a temple. He says Zion will escape if she does this. You will escape destruction if you build this temple.

Well, we're going to foil what the Kirtland Saints do when they're rebuked for not building the temple with what the Jackson County Saints don't do when they are commanded in their persecution to build a temple and they don't do so.

That's going to be one of our main points today. And I want you all to think about, do you have a Kirtland temple attitude towards temples or do you have a Jackson County attitude towards temples?

If you remember back in Section 88, verse 119, the Lord said, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer."

We now recognize that he was calling upon them to build a temple. That was January of 1833. It's now been five months. It's now June 1st of 1833. And they have not fulfilled that commandment. They have not built a temple.

They have lots of excuses. They have lots of reasons. Kind of like we have reasons to not attend the temple. Very good, legitimate reasons. But they haven't built it. So let's start in 95, verse one: "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation and I have loved you."

In other words, Kirtland saints - prepare yourselves for the rebuke I'm about to give you. I love you. I want to give you something incredible. And you're not doing what you need to do to receive it. So he is going to lay into them. Verse two: "Wherefore you must needs be chastened and stand rebuked before my face."

I mean, this is kind of like Jesus to Peter "Get thee behind me, Satan." This is that caliber of a rebuke. You must needs be chastened and stand rebuked before the Lord, "For you have sinned against me, a very grievous sin in that you have not considered the great commandment in all things that I have given unto you concerning the building of my own house." That God considers a very grievous sin. He is so antsy to give us the things that come in his house and they haven't done it. In verse six, he says again, you have sinned a very grievous sin.

It's like you're blind and you're walking in noonday sun. That's the level of sin this is,

M: I don't think in 1833 any of them understand the significance of the temple. It's completely foreign and the meaning behind the text is lost to them. The ritual behind so many of the things in the Old Testament, once it's divorced from ritual, we have the words.

But if we don't know the meaning behind the words, the stuff is lost.

B: Yeah.

So to their credit, they have no idea why they need to build a temple. You and I at least have had the benefit of going into the temple. Many of us love the temple and we know the blessings.

Not one of them had ever attended a temple. They had no idea what the blessings were. So understandably, they don't seem to catch the urgency that the Lord is pushing them to build this building.

M: I think that's why the Lord has to speak very plainly.

B: Yeah.

And that's Foyle number one. That's what I want to emphasize is, yes, to their credit, they didn't fully understand. And they needed a rebuke from the Lord to know how the Lord felt about not building the temple. Now he's even going to address - I love what he says in verse 11.

It is my will that you should build a house. "If you keep my commandments, you shall have power to build it." I know you're poor. I know you don't have a lot of money. I know there's not an architect in the church.

I know you're lacking resources. But if you keep my commandments, you shall have power to build it. And by the same token, he says to every one of us today, if you keep the commandments, you will have power to get to the temple.

And so what happened after this rebuke is, I think, the untold story. This was June 1st. Four days later, on June 5th, we find the following entry in church history. We'll place this in the show notes so that you can have a copy of it.

I'd encourage you to put it somewhere in your scriptures in Section 95. Four days later, this entry in church history. George A. Smith hauled the first load of stone for the temple. And Hyrum and Reynolds Cahoon commenced digging the trench for the walls of the Lord's house and finished the same with their own hands.

Four days after that rebuke they got it and they didn't need another rebuke. And Hyrum Smith is out digging the trenches for the foundation with his bare hands. Now, that leaves everyone without an excuse. At least have that type of effort.

They were willing to do what they could, anything that they could. It was their best offering.

M: Yeah, it wasn't the best building in the world, but it was enough. And I think that's another message about who this God is that we worship, isn't it?

B: And here's the thing. What we're about to talk about in the next several podcasts is the outpouring of glory and light that comes into Kirtland at the dedication of that temple. Because of their efforts to jump right on it and go dig the foundation and build it, it was the best they could do at the time.

And the Lord responded to that with just tremendous outpouring at the dedication of that temple. Now, let's contrast that with Section 97. The Jackson County Saints, under pressure from the Missourians, have signed an agreement to leave and the Lord comes in and Section 97 and says, I'll give you an out.

verse 10: He says, "It is my will that a house should be built and to me in the land of Zion." Now, this time, he goes against what he normally does in verse 11. He says, "Build it speedily." You build it as fast as you can, just build the building.

First, he says in verse 18, "If Zion do these things, she shall prosper. Spread herself and become very glorious. Very great. Very terrible." And then verse 25, "Zion shall escape if she observed to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her" to build a temple, and they don't do so.

M: Verse 22, "Lo, vengeance comeeth speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind. And who shall escape it?" That's laid out as the possible punishment, right?

B: Even verse 25 says, "Zion shall escape if she do all these things whatsoever I have commanded her. But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance and devouring fire."

And that's exactly what happened in Jackson County. They didn't build the temple.

M: It's a sad story.

B: Now, we're going to get to that whole story in just a minute, but I just want you to see the comparison between Kirtland and Jackson County. Kirtland's saints were rebuked, I mean, thoroughly rebuked for not building the temple, and their response was to run out and immediately run a load of stones, and Hyrum Smith starts digging the foundation with his bare hands and then look at what happens in Kirtland and the outpoint in the spirit that comes with the temple as compared to what happens in Jackson County.

So there's our foil. And just just as you study that this week, would you put yourself in those shoes and say, when it comes to the temple am I more Kirtland kind of person or Jackson County kind of person?

Now, again, to the credit of the Jackson County Saints, they are poor and they are being persecuted. But I think they let the excuses mount. Well, we can't build the temple, we don't have the resources.

I don't want to speak evil of the Jackson County Saints, but their failure to build that temple kind of represents a lot of us who could easily attend, but we just let the concerns and the cares of the world prevent us from doing so.

Now, that being said, that's not the whole story. There's a couple other buildings he commanded them to build. And again, this is part of the foil in Section 94. He's going to command them to build two other buildings that never get built, but the temple does get built.

So let's go back to 94 and talk about those other two buildings and then jump back into 95 and talk about what are some of the reasons the Lord gives as to why we should build temples.

M: So Section 94 is the construction of what's called the church building committee. Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Calhoun and Jared Carter are appointed as members of this committee. So in essence, Section 94 is a section that doesn't come to pass in the sense that these buildings are not constructed.

Verse 10 talks about a house of printing of the translation of my scriptures, and then verse three of section 94 says, "Let the first lot on the south be consecrated unto me for the building of a house, for the presidency, for the work of the presidency and obtaining revelations.", those buildings were not built.

Now, notice verse 16, verse 16 of this section says, "These two houses are not to be built until I give you a commandment concerning them." And that commandment doesn't come. We think the reason why this happens is because so much energy and effort is put into construction of the temple in Kirtland, which is built.

Now that's the most important building. The presidency and the printing of translation moved forward without the construction of these buildings. And so that's big picture when it comes to Section 94. In other words, the nuts and bolts of running a church, you have to print the manuscripts of the scriptures.

The presidency has to have a place where they can conduct business. Also, as a side note, I find it interesting that Joseph finds it so important to record meetings, to keep minutes, to have the revelations recorded. This is very much a prophet that is entrenched in the idea of documentation.

And so many things are documented because Joseph Smith insists it. And a lot of this is coming from the Lord where the Lord is saying this has to happen.

B: Section 21- the organization of the church, he says "There shall be a record kept among you." He makes it very clear, and Joseph is faithful to that for the rest of his life. He hadn't been up till then, but he will be. He'll be very faithful to that.

M: Yes. So according to historical sources, from what we can tell, there's no evidence that these buildings were built. So that's essentially Section 94,

B: Which I love the symbolism of that, because in our daily lives, we do have to deal with the everyday concerns of life. We do need to feed our children and we need to have our homes and mow our lawns, and we need to provide for transportation.

And those things are important. But I love that the Saints who had to choose, chose to build the temple, the kingdom of God, first. They built the temple even though these other two houses never did get built.

All right, that leads us to 95, which we've talked about the rebuke where the Lord says "You've sinned a very grievous sin", but verse four, the Lord begins to say why we need temples. He says, 4 "The preparation wherewith I designed to prepare my own apostles." The temple is a preparation. And what's going to flow out of the temple will be his strange act that I may bring to pass my strange act.

Now, that's an appropriate phrase, pointing to the temple, right, that I'm going to bring to pass my strange act. Many of you who went to the temple for the first time probably said, yes, this is a strange act. Verse four "That I may pour out my spirit upon all flesh."

And then we add verse eight "To endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high." I want to build a house where I can pour out my spirit upon you and endow you with power.

M: The Lord is having temples being dedicated, or at least the ground dedicated for them. Before we even have church buildings, I mean, just to rewind the clock right here. Section 95 is given June of 1833. But Joseph goes on a mission to Missouri in the summer of 1831.

The church is barely a year old when this happened. And they go and they dedicate a site for the construction of a temple on August 3rd, 1831. This is a big deal. And so there has to be a temple in Jackson County. There has to be a temple in Kirtland. So now it's been a couple of years and there's just not been any progress. And so the Lord says we've got to do this. So let's talk about strange act. OK, that's coming out of Isaiah 28.

B: I think we need to go to verse 13 before we go to verse 4. He says, look, we're not going to build a house after the manner of the world. "For I have given not on to you that you shall live after the manner of the world."

What makes this a strange act is that it's not like what the world does. So I am not going to build a building, I'm not going to do the things that the world does, we're going to change. We're going to be different. We're going to be strange to the world, which now sets us up - He's done that from the very beginning. He has called for a peculiar people, a strange act. And now let's jump to Isaiah.

M: Yeah. OK, so this is not going to be a podcast on Isaiah, but I think this is important to at least look at it. Now, if I was teaching a gospel doctrine class, I would want to read all of Isaiah 28 to kind of get a feel for what's happening, for why the Lord's using this phrase, because

this phrase, "this strange act" is coming out of the 21st verse of Isaiah 28. So I'm just going to read it. And then we're going to pull back the lens and look at Isaiah 28 in its context. So here we go.

Isaiah 28: 21 reads as follows. "For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act."

Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, a consumption even determined upon the whole earth. Give ye ear, hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech."

Now, what's going on? OK, so first, Isaiah 28 : 21 is talking about a couple things that are military victories at the beginning of that verse. The idea of him rising up, as in Mount Perazim is reference to David's routing of the Philistines.

And you can read that in second Samuel 5: 20 and 21. And the reference to the valley of Gibeon is referring to the enemies of the Israelites called the Amorites. And it's their destruction as contained in Joshua, 10: 5-11.

So we're we're referencing a couple of military victories. But then the Lord says, "I'm going to do my work, my strange work." And that word does mean strange. It means foreign, it means different. And I think strange is an appropriate word.

But really to understand verse 21, because I think if we just lift it out and we read it out of context, I think we miss the big picture. And so if you take a look at the entire chapter of Isaiah 28 with this lens and you kind of broaden it out, you get these themes.

So starting from the beginning, there is this rebuke of the drunkards of Ephraim. And if you remember, Ephraim is the northern kingdom. This is Isaiah. He's 740 B.C.. So the northern kingdom of the ten tribes still exists in that time period.

And the leaders of the northern kingdom are going to be taken by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. This is a historical fact. This happened. And Isaiah is continually talking about them being taken. And so he gives this woe to the drunkards of Ephraim.

And he talks about verse three, the crown of their pride, their drunkenness and they will be trodden under feet. He says that their tables are full of vomit and filthiness. That's Isaiah 28, verse eight. So it's a rebuke of them.

But just in case the people in Jerusalem get too comfortable. Isaiah then turns to them and says, Oh, well, you're next. And so if you go to verse 14, he says "Hear, the word of the Lord, Ye

scornful men that rule this people, which is in Jerusalem, because you have said we have made a covenant with death and with hell we are at agreement.”

Now, there's a lot that can be said here. On one level, I think the rulers of Jerusalem is the political, but also the religious leaders, and I think they're corrupt. I think Isaiah is living in a day where he is chastising both the political and religious leaders and he's calling them out.

Also, historically, we know that because of a serious might that there were emissaries sent from the king in Jerusalem to Egypt to create a military alliance. And Isaiah warns them in other passages, don't do this. Just trust the Lord and you'll be OK.

Well, they sent emissaries anyways. That may be what's going on. We don't know, because it doesn't say. It just says a covenant with death. And so we're kind of left like, welcome to Isaiah. Sometimes words mean many things.

So, in essence, big picture. He's rebuking leaders in the north. He's rebuking the leaders in the south. And then the next part is verse 16, where he says, “I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone.”

And in the Hebrew, he's doing some puns here. And Masada, Masada, “a sure foundation”, like a sure sureness or a foundation foundation. He says, “I will do this. I will lay this down. And then he says he calls it “a precious corner.”

“A sure foundation: and he that believeth shall not make haste.” Now, I'm going to say this, I think this is Helaman 5:12. I think the stone is Jesus. Jesus is going to fix all this sickness. Everything up to verse 16 is everything sick. Table's full of vomit and, you know, stammering lips and drunkenness and all this stuff, Jesus is going to fix. But I also think this has reference to the stone, you see the stone or the foundation stone was the center of the holy of holies.

In other words, this is temple literature. This is a temple text. And so there's a lot going on with this. And you can pull that thread. We give you a lot of thread you can pull on if you want to go to the show notes and read it, because then you get to verse 17 and this is more temple construction type language.

Look in verse 17: “Judgment also will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet and hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.” You see a plummet and a line is used for construction. And there's all kinds of stuff in masonry that has to do with a square and setting things right in straight.

So we have this verse. It's kind of enigmatic, it's a little bit esoteric, but that's a temple verse. And it's about building and we'll get this when we get the section 124 and 128, the Lord's going to use all this language again and repeat it.

So the Lord says it in multiple places. So with those with eyes to see and ears to hear are going to go, oh, I see what he's saying. Oh, there's multiple levels. OK, so then you get to verse 18 about those that have made the covenant with death, and there's going to be a desolating scourge.

Now, this is very reminiscent of what Bryce just talked about in the Doctrine and Covenants, which we've just read, because they're making these covenant with death. And then we get a very strange passage, verse 20: "The bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering is narrower than he can wrap himself in."

What is that even talking about? That could be its own podcast. But know, that in the culture of Isaiah, the temple at the new year was where the king and queen were ritually married. And it represented the fertility of the land and the fertility of God.

And many ancient near Eastern cultures believed in a heavenly father and a heavenly mother. They had different names for these, and we're not going to go through all their names. But the idea was that as they engage in what was called a sacred embrace, that there would be a sacred embrace between heaven and earth. And the earth would be fertile.

And so I believe that Isaiah is running a parody on that, that he's saying that you're sick, you're not doing it right, you're not doing a religion right. So the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in.

Now, there's so much more. And we give you some really great stuff from Henri Frankfort for that. Wrote a great book called Kingship in the Gods. If you're standing in front of a gospel doctrine class, you're probably just going to skip verse 20.

But just know that verse 20 belongs in this section and it's just so foreign to us because we live in 2021. But if we get in Isaiah's head and get in his day, verse 20 sits right where it should sit, because then he says God is militarily going to fix things. He's going to set it right and he's going to bring up past his strange act.

The couple more right after he says that from verse 25 to the end of the passage, the end is all about fertility and harvesting. And that is what we do in temples. We're gathering Israel. We're getting this, the Lord says and Doctrine and Covenants, we're going to put the wheat in the barn. We're going to gather the seeds, the sera, the seeds.

That's the glory of God and he's going to pull it all back. And so all of this is couched in this imagery of the ancient Near East. But the center of it to me is that phrase in verse 21, where it's a strange act or a strange work because it's foreign.

And I think it's foreign to some of these people, even in Isaiah's day, because they've lost some truth. And I think in Joseph's day. Back to Joseph Smith. How do you package these ideas of temple and fertility and sacred marriage and God binding us to him through covenant?

How do you even introduce the idea of a heavenly mother to 1833 Saints? Well, you do it line upon line and precept upon precept, and you reveal these things in the temple a little here and a little there.

And I don't know how much Joseph knows in 1833, but I know this: from my reading of the ancient near eastern literature and these cultures, I'm seeing these connections from Isaiah to the Doctrine and Covenants. And Joseph at 27 is tying all these threads up.

And if he understands what's going on, it's got to be driving him, Bryce, crazy. He's got to be going, I don't even know where to start because we can't even get the building built.

B: Yeah, we don't even have a car. We don't have an architect. We don't have enough manpower. But bless his heart, I think he's getting a sense, especially from this rebuke, about why we build these buildings. So just I love that strange act.

But let me just pull out a couple others from Section 95. He wants to build a place where he can pour out his spirit upon flesh. verse eight: He can endow us with power. Now go to verse 16.

The Kirtland Temple was a different temple than you and I know in our day. The Kirtland Temple was really a Restoration temple where Keys came and we began the process of connecting heaven and earth. Not really an endowment building, not really a sealing. We didn't do baptisms for the dead in the Kirtland Temple.

So there was a lower part and a higher part. But I love the phrase that comes out of verse 16. We made the lower part and dedicated unto the Lord for sacrament offerings, preaching, fasting, praying and the offering up of your most holy desires unto me.

I would strongly emphasize that phrase, we build temples to give us a place to take our most holy desires unto the Lord. And that he can pour out his spirit upon us. There is something about taking our burden into the temple. There's something about when burdens are poured down upon us. We take those burdens to him in his house.

Let me take you back to the dedicatory prayer of King Solomon's temple in 1 Kings Chapter 8, he stretches forth his hands and he dedicates the temple.

And in that prayer, he utters something that is true of all temples. He says the following - This is First Kings Chapter eight versus 37 through 39. He says "If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence blasting, mildew, locusts, or if there be caterpillar, if there are enemies, besiege them in the land of their cities whatsoever plague whatsoever sickness they're being" - Now, think about the modern burdens on modern Latter day Saints-- financial challenges, health challenges, pandemics, all sorts of restrictions, loss of life, loss of freedoms, loss of job opportunities "whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be."

Now, listen. "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man or by all thy people, Israel, which shall know every man, the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house. Then here thou in heaven, thy dwelling place and forgive. And do and give to every man, according to his ways."

That was from the first recorded temple dedication that we know of. It makes the temple a place where we take our burdens. We unload those burdens and we partner with God in the temple, and he becomes a partner in those challenges.

Let me give you an example of that very aspect of the dedicatory prayer. When Jehoshaphat is king over Judah and he's encompassed about by an enemy, he remembers that promise. And he takes his people to the temple.

In 2 Chronicles, Chapter 20. A great company cometh against him. Verse 3, he feared, and he set himself to seek the Lord, and I just think of all the Latter day Saints out there with all of the challenges that you face with health problems and financial problems and relationship problems and children who are going astray or whatever -- whatsoever plague whatsoever sickness there be.

Verse three, "We fear, but we set ourselves to seek the Lord." Verse four, "He gathers them to seek the Lord," verse five "to the house." And then he reminds them of the promise of the dedication. He says in verse 6, "Oh, lord God of our fathers, art thou not God and heaven and rulest thou not now in the heavens and in thine hand is there not power and might so that none is able to withstand. Art thou, not our God, who drove us out, the inhabitants of this land before thy people, and gave us to the seed of Abraham, thy friend. And they dwell therein and have built thee a sanctuary wherein for thy name," saying now he's quoting the dedicatory prayer.

And he says, quote, "If when evil comes upon us as the sword judgment or pestilence or famine, we stand before this house and in thy presence, for thy name is in this house and cry into the in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help." He pulls up the dedicatory promise. Lord, you promised that when these burdens are poured about on our shoulders, if we come to this temple, you will hear and help. And so then he prays verse 12: which I as a parent have prayed numerous times.

"Oh, our God, wilt thou not judge them, for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us. Neither know we what to do. But our eyes are upon thee."

how many times have you uttered that prayer? Lord, I don't know what to do. I can't defeat this foe on my own. And I don't know what to do, but by taking it to the temple, you partner with God.

Listen to what he says in verse 15. He says, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude for the battle is not yours, but God's." That's why we build temples to give us a place to take our most holy desires to him. The innermost depths of our soul desires.

And by taking them to the temple, we partner with God in the solution.

M: I like how you made that personal. The temple is for your concern, for you to go and talk to the Lord, that is so good.

B: OK, very quickly, 96, before we get to 97, there was a farm in Kirtland, Ohio. We kind of refer to it as the French farm.

M: Yeah. It's about 130 acres. And it was upon this land that the Kirtland Temple was built. And Peter French agreed to sell it to the church for 5000 dollars. And so the Lord basically says in verse 2 "Let my servant Newark weni take charge of the place which is named among you.:

So he's given the reigns. Verse three, again, "It will be divided into Lots, according to wisdom, for the benefit of those who seek an inheritance."

You know, we're trying to figure out how are we going to run this? Who's in charge and Newel K. Whitney is the bishop up here. And so after the farm is sold, negotiations were concluded for the acquisition of all the properties. And though all the funds needed to meet the obligations were not raised for some time.

On May 4th, 1833, a Council of Hyrum Smith and Jared Carter and Reynolds Cahoon served as a committee to oversee the construction of some of the church buildings on this property. And so they moved forward with the purchase of the land and the connection between Peter French, John Johnson, the building committee and the temple.

So in connection with this, we have 96: 6. So the Lord says again, "Verily I say unto you, it is wisdom and expedient in me that my servant, John Johnson, who's offering I've accepted and whose prayers I have heard and to whom I give a promise of eternal life inasmuch as he keepeth with my commandments from henceforth." And then he's cited as being a descendant of Joseph.

Prior to this revelation, the Prophet Joseph and his wife, Emma, have lived with John and Elsa Johnson in Hyrum. And it was on this farm that the leading elders of the church met in conference and determined to publish a selection of the revelations which had been received known as the Book of Commandments. We read about that in Section 67, and it was there that Joseph Smith and Sidney were tarred and feathered.

He and Elsa gave liberally of their means to the building of the kingdom and eventually sold their farm in Hyrum, Ohio, to pay the mortgage on the Peter French farm. In this section, the Lord is saying to John Johnson that he is faithful and that if he continues faithful, that he will inherit eternal life.

I really like this commentary by Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig Ostler, where they say this, that this simple passage in the Doctrine and Covenants had a profound influence on the life of John Johnson in the history of the church.

John gave liberally of his means. He and Elsa together gave liberally of their means to the building of the kingdom and eventually sold their farm in Hyrum, Ohio, as part of honoring the covenant that he made as a member of this order.

His offering, it was combined with the money of the order, and it was used to pay the mortgage on the Peter French farm, and it was upon this land that the Kirtland Temple was built. So that's kind of the connection between Peter French, John Johnson, the building committee and the temple.

In other words, what we're trying to connect here is that the temple just didn't happen. You see John and Elsa Johnson had a beautiful farm. And by the way, the church owns it today. You can go visit it.

And there's church missionaries there and you can go walk those grounds. And it's beautiful. And I'm sure it was beautiful in 1833. And the Lord asked him to give it and he did. And so in verse six, where he says, I've accepted his offering, that's a great offering.

I mean, in these sections where it says we're going to build the temple by the tithing of my people, the word tithing prior to Section 119 didn't mean 10 percent. It meant whatever God asked. And John did that.

And because he made that offering, the Peter French farm and the mortgage was - they were able to combine the money from that to to purchase that land and to build the temple. And so those are kind of the events in church history swirling around in Section 96.

B: Now we're going to turn our attention from Kirtland and we're going to go out to Zion, where things are getting messy. The summer of 1833 was a difficult time for them in Independence. About 4 or 5 disgruntled citizens had met at the Independence Courthouse.

They form a committee to decide, let's draft a document that spells out what we want to happen with these Mormons. And so let's do a little bit of the history. We need to understand what happens in the summer of 1833 before we jump into the Lord's response and giving them an opportunity to see if we can stay on our lands.

M: The people that lived in Missouri at the time, they just weren't like some of these people coming from the northeast. And as these members of the church were coming, you know, there were about a thousand of them. And so possibly as many as one fourth of the residents of Jackson County by this time period were Latter day Saints.

And politically, there was some tension because they could see where the wind was blowing. And the idea was if the Latter day Saints become the majority, then they could make political moves and they were worried about the church's stance on slavery.

Major, major issue because if I remember taking you back to the 1820's -- the Missouri compromise, the United States kind of had a line of latitude that basically said above this line are free states and below this line are slave states.

And they would only let one in at a time so that it maintained the balance in Congress. They wouldn't let a slave state in without balancing non slave state. And so they kind of split the country in half.

And if you wanted in, there had to be a counterpart. Well, the problem is Maine wanted in, but there wasn't a counterpart on the south that was a slave state. And so they allowed Missouri to come in above that line of latitude as a compromise.

Missouri was allowed to be a slave state to balance Maine. So the Missourians, where slave owners do exist and own slaves, know that their state is kind of an exception to the rules. They were granted a temporary exception.

And now here comes all these members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which are anti slavery, and they're moving in and the populations are growing. You can see the tension brewing here.

M: It was difficult.

B: It was very difficult.

M: And in July, they published in their paper, they published an article to the free people of color. And it caused some dissension. And it literally did come to the point where on July 20th, members of a of a local mob of individuals went to the church leaders and demanded that they leave.

You know, we think that they were probably somewhat caught off guard. And so the Saints, they refused to leave the county immediately. And so about 3 to 500, we don't know exactly how many, about three to five hundred men of the mob descended upon the Latter day Saints on July 20th, 1833, and destroyed the press. And they also destroyed most of the copies of the 1833 Book of Commandments. And according to John Whitmer, he said that the mob consisted of the whole of the county. Those are his words.

B: One of those members was Lilburn Boggs, who at the time was lieutenant governor. Was there present and condoning the violence. Now, that name is going to become a prominent name, but he's one of the ones that was there that day.

M: Yeah, we'll get back to him. The brick home of W.W. Phelps was demolished. The press was demolished. They ransacked the Gilbert and Whitney store and they tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge and Charles Allen. And so the Saints did get to a peace agreement on the 23rd when they signed an agreement to leave by January 1st, 1834.

So this is all happening at the end of July, July 23rdish. And so they send letters north to Joseph now. If you think about this, if you and I lived in 1833, it's not like email where they instantly can know what's happening.

There's not social media where they can see the video. And so from the best we can tell, Section 97, if you look at the date, August 2nd, there is no way Joseph Smith knows the extent of what's happening in Jackson County.

So if you do a careful reading of this section, knowing that Joseph doesn't know this stuff, he doesn't know what's happening. I mean, for example, look at verse 7 of section 97. "The axe is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that bring, if not forth, good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire."

That's referencing the statement by John in the gospels. But it has reference to a tree - It really can't defend itself. The best way a tree can not get chopped down is probably if it's making fruit, you're not going to cut it down.

And I think the Lord is essentially saying the axe is right there. But if you guys make fruit, it's going to be OK. Look at verse 9 "I the Lord will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree, which is planted in a goodly land by a pure stream."

You had the table set before you. So what do you do? Verse 10, "Build my house." Now, I certainly wasn't there. I don't I can't speak for them. I can't even imagine having to make these decisions. But it probably frustrated Joseph when he learned that they signed an agreement to leave on January 1st when the Lord wants them to build the temple.

And I see this tension that's being caused and also just know politically back then, if the bulk of a people wanted your printing press destroyed, they could do it. Like we don't. You know, in today's world where we talk about the freedom of the press and we protect the press.

In 1833, it was pretty much if the people don't like it, they can do this kind of stuff. And I guess the reason why I'm saying this is because this is going to happen again in 1844 when a different press is destroyed.

And so I think historically, we just have to put those lenses on and look at this through that lens and not the lens of presentism, meaning that we're judging it by our standard, but looking at it through theirs.

And so that's what's going to happen. Now, we don't have the war yet. The 1838 war is when the people in Missouri have had enough and they say, hey, you Latter-Day Saints have to leave the state.

At this point The people in Jackson County are content with just pushing the Saints out of Jackson County northward. And so that's where we are right now in 1833.

B: And in that history, the Lord issues this escape route. So he keeps talking about that, OK, if you bring forth good fruit, the tree won't be cut down. And then he says in verse 10, "Build my house." Like we've said earlier, 11 is an exception to the rules.

How many times do we build temple speedily? The Salt Lake Temple certainly wasn't built speedily. It's not how the Lord does it. We do it right. We do it slowly. We do it carefully. We don't do it speedily.

But this temple was to be built as quickly as possible. And then he says in 18, "If Zion do these things, she shall prosper and spread herself and become very glorious, very great and very terrible." And then again, verse 21, the emphasis is on what kind of people you are.

If we're going to build a celestial city, we have to be a celestial people. And he had already indicated that there were several among the Saints who needed to be rebuked. They were not living properly. So he reminds them in verse 21 that Zion is the pure in heart.

Be a Zion people. We'll build a Zion city and will get the protection of the Lord. If we are a Zion people. Verse 25, "Zion shall escape if she observed to do the things whatsoever I have commanded her" specifically if she builds that temple, build the temple and you will escape.

Now, this is not the first time that offer has been given by the Lord. Let me take you back to the Old Testament. Now, a little brief Old Testament history: The kingdom of Israel has split into two kingdoms.

There's a northern kingdom called the kingdom of Israel that has ten tribes in it. They're more wicked. The southern kingdom is the kingdom of Judah. And as the northern tribes become more and more wicked, the threat of being carried away and lost is now growing very real.

If you'll turn with me to the Old Testament to 2 Chronicles 29, I'll start in 29. Hezekiah becomes King of Judah. And he reigns in righteousness and he rebuilds the temple and Hezekiah understands the blessings and the promises of the temple.

The northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, the ten tribes up north that are on the verge of being captured by the Assyrians and taken captive. This whole concept of the lost ten tribes, that's about to happen. They haven't been taken away.

But watch the offer made by the Lord. 2 Chronicles, chapter 30, verse 1. Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah and wrote letters to Ephraim. Now, Ephraim was the capital of the northern kingdom. He wrote letters to Ephraim and Menassah that they should come to the House of the Lord at Jerusalem.

There it is. Come to the temple. Now watch for the promise of verse 6.. He sends letters out and here's what the letters say, "ye children of Israel. Turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the king of Assyria."

See, the persecution had already begun. Just like in Jackson County, it had already started. He says, turn to God. Verse seven, "Be not like your fathers, like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see

Now be ye not stiff neck as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified forever and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you."

Isn't he saying the exact same things that the Jackson County Saints? Build a temple speedily, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. "For if ye turn again unto the Lord," here's the promise, If we turn again into the Lord, "your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive so that they shall not come again into this land. For the Lord Your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his faith from you if you return unto him."

Couldn't that have happened in Jackson County? Isn't this kind of the same idea? If you turn to the Lord, if you covenant and build that temple, your children shall find compassion before the Missourians. So that they shall not come again into this land.

M: You know, Bryce is a lover of texts. I got to say, the northern kingdom had some good stuff. And the reason why I believe this is because Lehi's Bible reads different than our Bible. Because Lehi was a northerner.

And I imagine the Bible we have would be richer and fuller if those ten tribes had listened. Yeah, I just think we're missing more than we even know. Yeah.

B: Now look at verse 10. The post went from city to city throughout the whole country of Ephraim and Menassah, even into Zebulon but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. They missed the opportunity to escape. Unfortunately, so will the Jackson County Saints.

They don't build the temple. Now, to their credit, They don't have much. And the persecution is rising. But they don't build the temple, and I have wondered ever since what would have happened to the northern tribe if they had responded to Hezekiah's invitation.

And what would have happened in Jackson County if they had, like Hyrum Smith gone out immediately and started to dig the foundation of that temple as speedily as they could? Would the Missourians have backed down and made a place for the Saints in Missouri?

Would Zion have prospered and spread herself and become very glorious and great and very terrible? But we have to ask what if because they didn't do that. And I think that foil, Kirtland and Jackson County is a great foil for today's Latter day Saints.

The call to make the temple the symbol of your membership. Will you have a Kirtland attitude and do what you need to do and make it as high a priority as I possibly can with all the other challenges I face?

But I'm going to do everything I can to get there to covenant, to learn and to grow. Or are we more like the Jackson County Saints and we have the blessings available to us and we don't avail them?

M: And the beauty is we each get to decide in our own lives. We can take these passages and they speak about them them, there, then, and we can take them in and say, how can I apply this to me here now?

And I think in that application, we're participating with the text in our own life. That's just a beautiful foil, Bryce. And it's a beautiful way to look at the big picture and then to adjust our lives accordingly. It's a great invitation.

B: Yeah. Go back to verses 13 through 16 very quickly and you could make a wonderful list of why we build temples, he says, "For a place of thanksgiving for all the Saints." I love that. When we build temples to thank the Lord, we build them as an offering of our gratitude.

May I suggest, then, that Latter day Saints should attend the temple as an offering of our gratitude? I will go to the temple to thank the Lord for all that he does in my life - a place of Thanksgiving. Next, verse 13, "A place of instruction for all those who are called to the work of the ministry in all their several callings and offices." In other words, if you want to be a better primary teacher, go to the temple. If you want to be a better bishop, go to the temple.

If you want to be a better minister. If you want to be a better high council or member of the Relief Society presidency, go to the temple and be instructed in the work of your ministry, verse 14, "that they may be perfected in the understanding of their ministry, In theory, in principle, in doctrine, in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on Earth", in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on Earth.

If you want to be a better parent. Go to the temple. If you want to be a better teacher or professional, go to the temple. Verse 15, "Inasmuch as my people build a house and to me in the name of the Lord and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it."

It is a place of his glory. It is a place where he lives and we get to be home for a moment. "And my presence shall be there for I will come into it and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God."

We get to go home. We get to go be with him. Feel him. Know him. Now, we'll spend a little bit more time on that concept when we get to the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, that's a major part of that dedicatory prayer.

He'll say that we will enter the threshold and feel that he's home. But those are some reasons why we build temples to give thanks, to be instructed and to be with him. And then back in the previous sanctions, to be endowed with power, to offer up our most holy desires and to have the spirit poured out upon us, all of those things can happen outside of the temple. Yes. But there is something about a bethel, something about a sacred, dedicated building that has a ladder between God and Earth that allows us to connect with him in sacred ways.

Wonderful little contribution here in the middle of this conflict in Missouri. But we would just encourage you, as you study those two approaches to temples this week, that you ponder where you fit. Are you a Kirtland Temple type of person?

Are you a Jackson County type of person? I invite you to receive the blessings the Lord wants to give you if we will go build and maintain and covenant and worship in the temples.

M: And with that, we thank you for being with us today. We will be back next week when we talk about sections 98 through 101.

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