

D&C Lesson 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS AND CHURCH HISTORY

Prepared by Duane S. Crowther, January 2001

1. **Three Mormon Metaphors: *Capstone, Keystone and Cornerstone***

A. *Metaphor*: “Use of a word denoting one kind of object or idea in place of another to suggest a likeness between them.” [*Merrriam-Webster’s Pocket Dictionary*, p. 210]

B. “President Ezra Taft Benson, the 13th President of the Church, explained that the Doctrine and Covenants can be described as the **capstone** of our religion:

‘The Doctrine and Covenants brings men to Christ’s kingdom, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” [D&C 1:30] . . .

‘The Book of Mormon is the **keystone**’ of our religion, and the Doctrine and Covenants is the **capstone**, with continuing latter-day revelation. The Lord has placed His stamp of approval on both the keystone and the capstone” [in *Conference Report*, April 1987, p. 105; *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 83].

. . . the keystone and the capstone teach us about the Savior, who is the **cornerstone** of our religion [Ephesians 2:20]. These scriptures also testify of the Savior and the truthfulness of his gospel.”

[*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, p. 2]

2. **Major course objectives for the year**

A. ***Draw closer to God through the study of the revelations.***

B. ***Increase in our personal ability to receive and discern revelation.***

“One of the high hopes we as a presidency have for this coming year in Sunday School is that members of the Church will draw closer to God through the study of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and early Church history, and in the process, increase in their ability to receive and discern revelation in their own lives” said Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy and general Sunday School president.”

[“Revelations discerned through study,” *Church News*, Week ending January 6, 2001, p. 3]

Available on the internet: www.ldschurchnews.com

3. **A brief summary of the structural development of the Doctrine and Covenants**

A. *June 9, 1830* - the first general conference of the Church, held at Fayette, New York:

1. The “Articles and Covenants [were] read by Joseph Smith, Jr. and received by [the] unanimous voice of the whole congregation.” [*Far West Record Book*, Des. Bk., 1983, p. 1]

a. Consisted of D&C sections 20 & 22, given April 1830.

b. Published in the *Evening and Morning Star*, June, 1832.

B. *July, 1830* - Joseph Smith began to copy and prepare the revelations received up to that time for future publication, as commanded in D&C 24:5. Assisted by Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer. [*History of the Church* 1:104. Hereafter, this source will be referred to as HC.]

C. The first handwritten manuscript was titled *Kirtland Revelation Book*, but was commonly called the *Book of the Law of the Lord*. Problem: handwritten copies of the revelations began to acquire copying errors, so Joseph wanted to publish a single, correct version.

D. *Nov. 1, 1831* - ***A special conference was held at Hiram, Ohio to decide whether to publish the revelations.*** In attendance were: Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, Peter Whitmer Jr., Sidney Rigdon, William E. McLellan, Orson Hyde, Luke S. Johnson, and Lyman E. Johnson. The decision was made to publish 10,000 copies.

1. Joseph asked Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon and William McClellan to write a preface to the revelations. They asked Joseph to inquire of the Lord about the preface.

2. Between conference sessions, Joseph inquired of the Lord and received a revelation which became *Section 1*, the Lord's preface. Joseph dictated the revelation to a scribe in response to Oliver's plea for help. [HC 1:221-224] In a later session that day Joseph asked the brethren to add their personal testimony of the truthfulness of the revelations.

3. A cluster of revelations were received at or immediately following the November 1 conference: D&C 1, 67, 68, 69, 133, 70. (*Read HC 1:221-237 and the historical headings for these sections.*)

4. The published revelations were to be titled *Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ*.

5. William W. Phelps was appointed printer for the Church and was commissioned to settle in Independence, Missouri. He published selections from the *Kirtland Record Book* [parts of sections 65, 68, 72, 76, 83, and 88] in *The Evening and Morning Star* [later called the *Times and Seasons*] between February and June 1832 from his own personal copies.

6. William W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer were appointed by Joseph Smith in 1832 to review the revelations and select those which should be printed. [*Far West Record*, p. 46]

6. *July 20, 1833* - An anti-Mormon mob destroyed the press at Independence during the printing of the *Book of Commandments*. Five large sheets, each with 32 pages [160 total pages] had been printed. Three children rescued a few of these sheets from the mob during their attack.

7. *April 19, 1834* - Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon were appointed to prepare the Book of Commandments for printing, adding the latest revelations to those already selected.

E. August 17, 1835 - A second special conference was held in Kirtland, Ohio to finalize the contents of the book. (**Canonization:** The quorums voted, one by one, on each revelation to be included: The First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, High Priests, Seventies, Elders, Aaronic Priesthood, general Church membership.) The Quorum of the Twelve added their written testimony.

F. Printed Editions

1. *First edition:* The book was printed and became available in the late summer of **1835**. It contained two sections: (1) the seven *Lectures on Faith*, and (2) 102 revelations. Frederick G. Williams was the printer. The book was titled *Doctrine and Covenants of the Latter-day Saints*. The title was drawn from the headings to the two sections: Section 1: "On the Doctrine of the Church of the Latter-day Saints." Section 2: "Covenants and Commandments."

2. *Second edition:* **1844**. Proofread by the Prophet Joseph Smith, reprinted in 1845 and 1846.

3. *Third edition:* **1876**. Twenty-six sections were added: 2, 13, 77, 87, 108-111, 113-118, 120-123, 125, 126, 129-132, 136. Orson Pratt divided the revelations into verses, rearranged them by order of the date in which they were revealed. [*Church Historian's Office Journal*, November 14, 1875, p. 70]

4. *Fourth edition:* **1908**. Added the Manifesto. [Proclaimed September 24, 1890, Adopted October 6, 1890: abolished plural marriage in the United States; it was continued in the Mexican and Canadian LDS colonies until 1913, when plural marriage was abolished world-wide.]

5. *Fifth edition:* **1921**. 136 sections plus the Official Declaration [the Manifesto]. *Lectures on Faith* were omitted [never had been canonized as scripture]. Text was arranged in double columns, added chapter headings, footnotes, cross references, index, concordance. The work was done by James E. Talmage under the direction of the First Presidency.

6. *Sixth edition:* **1981**. 138 sections plus 2 Official Declarations [Manifesto, and all worthy males may hold the priesthood]. Part of the complete reworking and republishing of all four LDS

scriptures. [1972: Harold B. Lee decided it should be done. 1973: Spencer W. Kimball made it his first major project after becoming President. Scripture Publication Committee: T.B. Monson, B.K. Packer, B.R. McConkie, M.J. Ashton; N.A. Maxwell was staff executive assistant.]

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