

D&C Lesson 30

“THE PRISONERS SHALL GO FREE”

Prepared by Duane S. Crowther, August 2001

1. Biblical references to work for the dead

A. *1 Cor 15:1-58* - Explains the overall plan of salvation:

1. *15:1-7* - “I declare unto you the gospel, . . . Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; . . . he rose the third day . . .” He was seen of Cephas, the twelve, more than 500 brethren, of James, again of all the apostles.

2. *15:12-19* - “How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? . . . If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

3. *15:20-28* - “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . . As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

4. *15:29*: “*Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?*”

5. *15:35-42* - “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? . . . All flesh is not the same flesh: . . . there are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: . . . there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.”

6. *15:42-50* - “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body . . . As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”

7. *15:51-53* - “We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruption must put one incorruption.”

8. *15:54-58* - “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin.”

B. *1 Pet. 3:18-20* - “Christ . . . went and preached unto the spirits in prison.”

C. *1 Pet. 4:6* - “For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

D. *Rev. 20:12-15* - “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: another book was opened, which is the book of life: . . . and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” See *D&C 128:6-9*.

E. *Heb. 11:40* - “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” See *D&C 128:15-18*.

2. The Lord revealed the doctrine of priesthood ordinances for the dead to the Prophet Joseph Smith

A. He began teaching Joseph about work for the dead very early in the Prophet’s ministry:

1. *JS-H 1:36-39* - Moroni quoted Malachi 4:5-6 to Joseph on September 21, 1823.

2. *D&C 27:9 [5-14]* - “I will drink the fruit of the vine with you on the earth, and with . . . Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the

fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, . . .” August, 1830.

3. *D&C 110:13-16* - Elijah the prophet restored the keys of this dispensation to Joseph and Oliver Cowdery on Sunday, April 3, 1836.

B. “On 15 August 1840, the Prophet Joseph preached at the funeral of a Church member named Seymour Brunson. As part of his sermon, he read extensively from 1 Corinthians 15, which includes a reference to baptism for the dead (verse 29). ***Then he announced that the Saints could be baptized in behalf of their friends and loved ones who had died without receiving the gospel.*** He declared that the plan of salvation was intended to save everyone who was willing to obey the requirements of the law of God. After this sermon, members began performing baptisms for the dead in the nearby Mississippi River.” (See *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 15 Aug. 1840.)” [*Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, pp. 171-72]

C. *D&C 124:28-31* - “A baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead—for this ordinance belongeth unto my house. . . .” It was in this revelation, given on January 19, 1841, that the Lord commanded the Saints to build the Nauvoo temple [vv. 25-31].

D. “On 3 October 1841, the Prophet Joseph announced that ‘there shall be no more baptisms for the dead, until the ordinance can be attended to in the Lord’s house’ (*History of the Church*, 4:426). On 8 November 1841, Brigham Young dedicated a temporary but carefully crafted wooden baptismal font in the basement of the unfinished temple (*History of the Church*, 4:446-47). Today all ordinances for the dead must be performed in temples.” [*Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, p. 173]

E. On September 1, 1842, while away from Nauvoo, Joseph wrote instructions to the Church concerning baptism for the dead in a letter, based on revelation he had received from the Lord:

1. *D&C 127:5-6* - “Let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms; let him hear with his ears, that he may testify of a truth, saith the Lord.”

2. *D&C 127:9* - “Let all the records be had in order, that they may be put in the archives of my holy temple, to be held in remembrance from generation to generation, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

3. *D&C 127:8* - “I am about to restore many things to the earth, pertaining to the priesthood, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

F. A week later, on September 6, 1842, he wrote further instructions which he had received by revelation, concerning baptism for the dead, in another letter to the Saints:

1. *D&C 128:2-3* - A recorder should be called from each ward in the city, to serve as a witness and to make and submit a history of the vicarious baptisms performed.

2. *D&C 128:4* - There is to be a general church recorder who is to enter the records of baptisms performed for the dead in the “general church book,” and testify of their authenticity.

3. Other “pearls” from D&C Section 128

A. *D&C 128:7* - (Commenting on *Rev. 20:12*) “The books spoken of must be the books which contained the record of their works, and refer to the records which are kept on the earth. The . . . book of life is the record which is kept in heaven.”

B. *D&C 128:18* - “The earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other—and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect. Neither can they without us be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also.”

C. *D&C 128: 24* - “Let us, therefore, as a church and as a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, . . . a book containing

the records of our dead, . . . worthy of all acceptance.”

Copyright © August 2001 by Duane S. Crowther