

# Prophets in Mormonism – Part 20

by Marvin W. Cowan

Joseph Smith said *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 125 was a revelation given to him in March of 1841. Since there are only four verses in it we will quote all of it so that it may be seen in context. A question is raised in verse 1 “What is the will of the Lord concerning the saints in the Territory of Iowa?” The answer begins in verse 2:

Verily, thus saith the Lord, I say unto you, if those who call themselves by my name and are essaying to be my saints, if they will do my will and keep my commandments concerning them, let them *gather themselves together unto the places which I shall appoint unto them by my servant Joseph, and build up cities unto my name, that they may be prepared for that which is in store for a time to come.*

[v. 3] Let them build up a **city** unto my name upon the land opposite the city of Nauvoo, and let the name of *Zarahemla* be named upon it.

[v. 4] And let all those who come from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south, that have *desires to dwell therein*, take up *their inheritance in the same*, as well as in the *city of Nashville* [in Lee County, Iowa], or in the city of Nauvoo, and in all the stakes which I have appointed, saith the Lord.

In this revelation the Lord says it is His will for the LDS to *gather together* in the places He reveals through Joseph Smith. He said that the LDS were to *build up the cities of Zarahemla and Nashville*, which were small towns in Iowa across the Mississippi River west of Nauvoo, IL. The Lord also said all LDS who had the desire should take up their **inheritance** in those towns, so it *sounds like He was speaking of a permanent home*. But the last part of verse 2 says “that they may be **prepared for that which is in store for a time to come.**”

On page 312 of the *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* (used by LDS Seminaries and Institutes of Religion) it says this refers to the LDS in Iowa being ready to help the Nauvoo Mormons when they left for Utah. But the LDS in those two tiny Iowa towns *went with* the Nauvoo Mormons when they left, so any help they gave was brief and minimal.

Smith’s revelations *often* refer to the soon coming of Christ (as in *Doctrine and Covenants* 128:24) which is probably what he had in mind in this revelation. His only prophecy about the LDS going to the Rocky Mountains is recorded in the *History of the Church*, vol. 5, pages 85-86 and is dated August 6, 1842 which is a year and a half *after* *Doctrine and Covenants* 125 was given. Other LDS wrote about Smith’s Rocky Mountains prophecy but gave different dates for it and mention people who weren’t there, which raises questions about its reliability.

It seems inconsistent for the Lord to ask the LDS to “build cities” and claim their “inheritance” in Iowa if He planned to move them to Utah within five years. On August

7, 1841 the “city” of Zarahemla, Iowa had a population of 326 while Nashville was even smaller, so were they really “cities”? When Nauvoo Mormons left for Utah, LDS in both Zarahemla and Nashville went with them and those towns ceased to exist. So, was anything in this revelation actually done the way the Lord revealed it?

On September 1, 1842 Joseph Smith wrote an epistle to Mormons which became *Doctrine and Covenants* 127, so it is LDS scripture. In the first two verses Smith said that his enemies had persecuted him in Missouri and were now persecuting him in Illinois. At the end of verse two he said, “I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation; for to this day has the God of my fathers delivered me out of them all, and **will deliver me from henceforth; for behold, and lo, I shall triumph over all my enemies, for the Lord God hath spoken it.**” Smith was *not* writing about the persecution of the *LDS Church*, but about being persecuted *himself*. He said that God has “delivered **me**” out of **all** tribulation “and will deliver **me** from **henceforth.**” Yet, less than two years later, his enemies killed him, so *did the Lord really say Smith would triumph over all his enemies?*

Verse four begins, “And again, verily **thus saith the Lord:** Let the work of *my temple*, and all the works which I have appointed unto you be continued on and not cease.” Verse six says, “When any of you are baptized *for your dead*, let there be a recorder” who was to witness the event and record it. Verse nine goes on to say, “And again, 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.**”

Even though Smith wrote this epistle he claimed “The Lord” revealed its message. The temple Smith wrote about was the Nauvoo Temple which was under construction in 1842 but still wasn’t completely finished when the Mormons left Nauvoo in 1846. Yet, **the Lord said** the LDS records of their baptisms for the dead were to “*be put in the archives of my holy temple, to be held in remembrance from generation to generation.*”

But the Nauvoo Temple caught fire in February 1846 and in September that year a mob entered it and desecrated much of the interior. On November 19, 1849 it was set on fire and everything burned except the exterior stone walls which were knocked down by a tornado six months later, on May 27, 1850. All that remained of the Nauvoo Temple were scattered, scorched stones, so no archives existed where the *records of baptisms for the dead could be kept. Therefore, the LDS records of baptisms for the dead were “not put in the archives of my holy (Nauvoo) temple, to be held in remembrance from generation to generation” as “the Lord of Hosts” said. So, did the Lord make a mistake or did Smith’s revelation come from some source other than the Lord?*

Our next article will discuss Joseph Smith’s “three grand keys” by which one can distinguish between different kinds of heavenly beings. Anyone wanting more information on *Doctrine and Covenants* 125 can find it in the *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*.

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