

The Stories behind the Verses: Knights in the Doctrine and Covenants

History Timeline

Oct. 1825 – Joseph Smith was hired to work for Josiah Stowell in Bainbridge, near Colesville I

Spring 1826 – Joseph Smith hired to work for Joseph Knight

Sept. 1826 – Joseph went to Palmyra to get the plates, but not allowed. He returned to work in Colesville.

Jan. 18, 1827 – Joseph and Emma Smith elope and then move to Palmyra

Sept. 1827 – Joseph Knight, Sr. went to Palmyra anticipating Joseph Smith receiving the gold plates

Dec. 1827 – Joseph Knight helped Joseph and Emma Smith move to Harmony, PA

Jan. 1828 to 1829 – Joseph Smith and the Knight family maintain frequent contact. Joseph Knight, Sr. took Joseph Smith food and paper so Joseph Smith could continue translating.

May 1829 – Joseph Knight visits Harmony

Section 12 – Given May 1829 in Harmony, Pennsylvania

Joseph Knight, anxious to do what the Lord would have him do, asked Joseph Smith to inquire of the Lord what was desired of him. This section of nine verses instructs Joseph Knight “now as you have asked, behold I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.”¹ The first verse of Section 12 is very similar to the first verse of sections 4, 11 and 18, which were directed to Joseph Smith, Sr., Hyrum Smith and David Whitmer. It reads, “A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.”²

June 1829 – Joseph Knight helped Joseph Smith get to Fayette

March 26, 1830 – The first printed copies of the Book of Mormon were sold

April 6, 1830 – The church was organized in Fayette, New York. Joseph Knight declined baptism that day because he wanted to read the Book of Mormon first.

Between April 6 and 10, 1830 – Five men, including Joseph Knight, Sr. are with Joseph Smith in Manchester

Section 23:6 – Given April 1830 at Manchester, New York

Given to Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr. and Joseph Knight, Sr., who were each seeking to know their respective duties. Joseph in verse 6 is told pray vocally in secret, among family and friends and in all places.³

June 27, 1830 – Joseph and Hyrum Smith go to Colesville for a baptism service of many of the Knight and Peck family. Some are baptized, but the service is disrupted by a mob. . On June 28, 1830 twelve people including Emma Smith and many Knight family members had been baptized in Colesville, but a mob disrupted the baptism. More would have been baptized had they been allowed to continue. A

¹ Doctrine and Covenants, 12: 1-9

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. 23:6

confirmation meeting later that night was not held because a mob came again and Joseph Smith was arrested for disturbing the peace. Those new members in Colesville were still in need of confirmation in July. ⁴

Section 24:3 – Given July 1830 in Harmony, Pennsylvania

Joseph Smith is commanded to go visit the members in Colesville (Joseph Knight home was frequent meeting place for neighbors and Knight family members,) in Fayette (Peter Whitmer farm and Whitmer family members,) and in Manchester (close to Palmyra and Smith family members.)

Summer 1830 – anger against the prophet Joseph smith remained strong in Colesville township, and the newly baptized members still had not yet been confirmed.

Section 26:1 - Given July 1830 in Harmony, Pennsylvania

Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer are told to study the scriptures and to preach and confirm in Colesville

Section 27 – Given early August 1830 in Harmony, Pennsylvania

Newel and Sally Knight visited Joseph and Emma in their home in Harmony, which was about 20 miles south of Colesville Township. The two couples along with John Whitmer decided to hold a small sacrament meeting and confirmation service, because Emma and Sally still had not been confirmed following their baptism. As Joseph Smith went out to find wine for the sacrament, a heavenly messenger appeared and told him not to partake of wine purchased from enemies, but only of his own making. The instructions Joseph received are in Section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph Smith recorded that “We partook together of the sacrament, after which we confirmed these two sisters into the church and spent the evening in a glorious manner. The spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us, we praised the Lord God and rejoiced exceedingly.” ⁵

August 1830 -Sally and Newel Knight returned to Colesville to tell the Saints that Joseph would be coming to visit and confirm them on Aug. 21.⁶ He did not make it that day, but as instructed in Section 26, Joseph Smith returned to Colesville. The prophet with his brother Hyrum and John and David Whitmer arrived in Colesville to visit the Saints on August 29th. Miraculously Joseph Smith was able to walk unnoticed past some of his most bitter enemies in Colesville. The church leaders held a confirmation and Sacrament meeting and were able to leave town safely undetected even though there were rewards offered for Joseph Smith's capture.⁷

Section 28 – Given at Fayette, New York, September 1830

As Newel Knight arrived in Fayette to attend the second conference of the church he found his friend Joseph Smith “in great distress.” Hyrum Page, one of the eight witnesses, came to the conference with pages of new revelations he had received about

⁴ William Hartley, *They are My Friends, a History of the Joseph Knight Family, 1825-185*, pp. 51-57; Grandin Book, Provo, Ut 1986

⁵ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church, Vol. 1*, p. 108; Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, 1951

⁶ Hartley, *They are My Friends*, p. 56

⁷ Smith, *History of the Church, Vol. 1*, p. 108-109

church government and other things, and Page was leading several to believe him. Joseph was perplexed. Newel and Joseph shared the same room the night before the conference and the two friends spent “the greater part of the night” in prayer and supplication. Just before the conference Joseph received the revelation that became section 28. Newel recorded in his journal that “much of the power of God was manifested among us,” and “The Holy Ghost came upon us and filled our hearts with unspeakable joy.”⁸

Section 29:7-8 – given September 1830, at Fayette, New York

Newel Knight and his sister Anna’s husband, Freeborn DeMille, attended the September 26, 1830 Church Conference in Fayette. They returned to Colesville and told their family that the members of the church were being commanded to gather together in one place, but that place was not yet determined. At the conference Newel was ordained a priest by Oliver Cowdery and Freeborn was baptized by Hyrum Smith and confirmed by Joseph Smith. The total membership of the church was now 62. Historian William Hartley concludes the Knight, Peck and Slade relatives from Colesville made up one-fourth of the Church.⁹

About Oct. 1, 1830 – Hyrum and Jerusha Smith came to Colesville and live with Newel and Sally Knight so Hyrum could preside over the Colesville Branch, the first formal unit of the church. Newel and Hyrum spent much time preaching in the area. Prayer meetings were held in several homes on Oct. 4, 6, and 10 and several were baptized, despite the strong anti-Mormon feelings in the area.

Sections 37: 1-4 and 38 – Given Dec. 1830 and Jan. 2 in Fayette, New York

Revelation revealed that the gathering place for the Saints would be in Ohio. In Section 38 a new economic system was introduced declaring that wealth was to be shared and the Church was to look after the poor. Both of these revelations had direct impact on the Knights and their extended family members in coming months.

Jan. 1831 - Joseph Smith came to Colesville with Sidney Rigdon and stayed with Joseph Knight. Some men in the community issued such severe threats against the three men that all three left immediately. Joseph and Polly Knight took their youngest daughter Polly and left by sleigh for Kirtland, never to return to their homes. They accompanied Joseph and Emma Smith and several others.¹⁰

March 1831 – Hyrum and Jerusha Smith left Colesville and moved to Kirtland. Newel was made presiding officer of the Colesville branch.

April 1833 - The six older Knight adult children and their families and all the members of the Church in Colesville sold their farms and left for Kirtland in April of 1831 under the leadership of Newel Knight.

Section 51 – given May 1831 at Thompson, Ohio

When the Colesville Saints arrived in Kirtland, they were asked to settle in the community near Kirtland called Thompson. Section 51 was announced generally but was

⁸ Hartley, *They are my Friends*, p. 58

⁹ Ibid. p. 59

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 65-66.

most applicable to the 60 Colesville Saints asked to live in Thompson the principles that would come to be known as the law of consecration.

Section 52:32 – given June 7, 1831 at Kirtland, Ohio

Joseph Smith held a church conference and announce the missionary assignments for many brethren, including Newel Knight who was to be ordained and to take up his journey.

Section 53 – given June 1831 to Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio

This revelation was for Newel Knight, president of the branch at Thompson. The land consecrated by Leman Copley where the saints had just built homes in Thompson had been withdrawn and Copley left the church. Much confusion ensued. The Saints were told to in Verse 8 “take your journey into the regions westward until the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the Lamanites.” They were also instructed to be “patient in tribulation.”¹¹

Section 56 – given June 1831 in Kirtland, Ohio

Newel’s mission call was revoked “in consequence of the stiffneckedness of my people which are in Thompson, and their rebellions. Wherefore, let my servant Newel Knight remain with them.”

Late June 1831 - Sixty members of the Colesville Branch left Thompson, Ohio for Jackson County Missouri. They traveled by wagon to the Ohio River where they boarded a steamer and traveled 10 days to St. Louis, Missouri. They then traveled up the Missouri for seven days to reach Independence. Polly Knight, wife of Joseph Knight, Sr. was sick enough for most of the journey that her son Newel left the ship at one point to buy lumber for Polly’s coffin. Her one dream was to live long enough to put her feet on the land of Zion.” Polly made it to Zion., barely.

August 1831 – Knights and all Colesville Saints build homes in Kaw Township, Missouri. On Aug. 3rd, Newel, Joseph Knight, Sr., Aaron Culver Hezekiah Peck and Freeborn DeMille are 5 of the 12 men who participated in the ceremony to lay the first logs that were the symbolic laying the foundation for Zion.¹²

August 7, 1831 – Polly Peck Knight died 11 days after she got to Kaw Township, Missouri at the age of 57. She was buried on August 9th, and Joseph Smith spoke at her funeral, and part of the his funeral speech were the words of the revelation given on the day of her funeral, known as Section 59. Polly as the first member of the church to die in Missouri, and Joseph’s first funeral sermon.¹³

Section 59 – given August 7, 1831 in Jackson County, Missouri

The first one for whom these words were applicable was Polly Peck Knight.

“2. For those that live shall inherit the earth, and those that die shall rest from all their labors, and their works shall follow them; and they shall receive a crown in the mansions of my Father, which I have prepared for them.

¹¹ Doctrine and Covenants 54:verses 8 and 10

¹² Hartley, *They are My Friends*, p. 79

¹³ Ibid. pp. 73-74 and pp. 78-81

3. Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my Gospel; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth and it shall bring forth in its strength.

4. And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time – they that are faithful and diligent before me.”¹⁴

Winter 1831-32 – Dreary times for the Knights and their relatives. Frontier life was new to them. They crowded into small cabins and shared meager rations of food. Work was hard to find, but Joseph Knight, Jr., built a mill and made furniture. Newel also became a miller. More Saints joined them in Missouri. In March Joseph Knight, Jr. married Betsey Covert.

March 1833 – A new revelation was called the “Word of Wisdom.” The First Presidency were still in Kirtland.

April 1833 – The Missouri Saints celebrated the church’s third birthday with a party at the ferry landing of the Big Blue River. Early in 1833 the church had five branches. There was enough growth to make ten branches in September, and Newel was assigned to preside over the First Branch, which was the Colesville group.

Summer 1833 – A mob burns the Evening and Morning Star printing office in Independence. In July 500 men entered Independence and the Elders were forced to promise the Mormons would leave, half by Jan. 1 and the rest by April, 1834.¹⁵

Oct. 1833, Joseph Knight Sr., married Phoebe Crosby Peck, the widow of his wife’s brother.

Section 100 – given October 12, 1833 at Perrysburg, New York

In Kirtland, a new convert named Freeman Nickerson approached Joseph Smith with a request to go with him to Mount Pleasant, Canada, about 100 miles from Buffalo, New York, to preach to his two sons. Both Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon agreed to join Brother Nickerson in traveling through northwest Pennsylvania, southwest New York and lower Ontario. By the time Joseph and Sydney got to Mount Pleasant, they were worried about their families left alone at home, and had other worries about the church generally. The revelation they received gave much assurance, and they were told, “I have suffered you to come to this place because it was expedient in me for the salvation of souls.”¹⁶

Joseph and Sydney preached in Mount Pleasant and surrounding communities. In the Nickerson home one person interested in their message was a visitor named Lydia Goldthwaite, later to become Lydia Knight. Lydia was among the 12 who were baptized after a meeting in the home. A few nights later, Joseph Smith recorded that a meeting was held and “one of the sisters got the gift of tongues which made the saints rejoice may God increase the gifts among them . . .” Lydia’s journal recorded that she was the sister who spoke in tongues that night.¹⁷ Two years later, in November of 1835, in

¹⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 59:2-4

¹⁵ Hartley, *They Are My Friends*, pp. 92-97

¹⁶ Ibid. 100:4

¹⁷ Susa Young Gates, *Lydia Knight History, Noble Women’s Lives Series*, p 22; 1883, reproduction 2011

Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith would perform the marriage that made Lydia Goldthwaite and Newel Knight husband and wife.

November 1833 - Persecution continued and raiders attacked the Whitmer settlement. Missourians shot Philo Dibble and the physician declared the wound fatal. Newel Knight gave Brother Dibble a priesthood blessing and he immediately recovered. November 7, fearing for their lives, most of the Knight clan fled their homes as armed men ransacked their homes in Jackson County, losing property and belongings.

December 1833 – The Colesville Saints made homes in Clay County. Joseph Knight, Jr. lingered three weeks grinding more flour and mill so they would have something to eat. By Spring of 1834, members of the Knight clan had to separate to find new land or employment.

March 29, 1834 – Newel purchased 20 acres of land in Clay County and Joseph, Jr., and Newel start to build a mill. By the summer of 1834 many Knight family members had fever and ague, probably malaria. In September Newel's wife Sally and newborn baby Eli both died.¹⁸ Esther Knight Stringham also passed away a few months earlier.

Early 1835 – Newel still not strong from his sickness, made good on a commitment to return to Kirtland to help build the temple. He boarded with old friends Hyrum and Jerusha Smith, where he met Lydia Goldthwaite. A friendship became romance and they were married in Kirtland by Joseph Smith. They stayed until April in Kirtland and attended the dedication before returning to Missouri.

July 1836 – When the governor of Missouri declared the citizens could rid themselves of the Mormons, the Mormons moved yet again to raw land in Caldwell County. Many moved to Far West and built a community. Within two years the mobs attacked again, and from the autumn of 1838 to April 1839, Mormons fled Missouri, most going to Nauvoo, Illinois.¹⁹

Section 124:131 – given January 19, 1841 at Nauvoo, Illinois

This lengthy section of 145 verses addresses a number of concerns in Nauvoo. Near the end of the section in verse 131, Newel Knight is named, with 9 other men, to be new members to the High Council in Nauvoo, which high council was to be “for the cornerstone of Zion.” Newel had previously served on the High Council in Kirtland while he was there in 1835-36.²⁰

¹⁸ Hartley, *They Are My Friends*, p. 102

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 127-135.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 108.