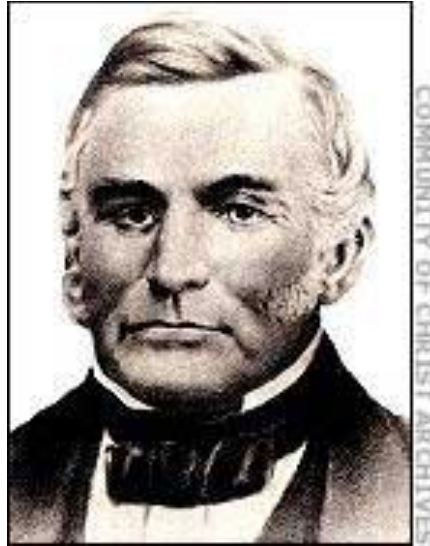


Doctrine and Covenants 101

“Be Still and Know That I am God,” Expulsion from Jackson County and Legal Appeals



*Lilburn B. Boggs.
Lieutneant Governor of the Jackson County Militia,*

When the revelation that is D & C 101 was recorded December 16, 1833 in Kirtland, the Saints in Missouri had suffered for more than six months from the aggression and hostility from the Gentiles in Jackson County.

Church leaders in Missouri had made an agreement with the angry Missouri local agitators that if the Saints left by January 1st, they could go peacefully to Clay County, where they would be welcomed. That didn't happen. In late November, while under attack, many fled for their lives across the Missouri River to river bottoms in Clay County.

Many like Newel Knight presumed it would be a temporary move because the government and the courts would force the aggressors to restore their property and losses. Newel's journal includes more than two dozen typed pages where he has recorded the letters back and forth between church leaders and government leaders, and a lengthy letter from Joseph Smith to the Saints in Missouri.

Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin told the Saints in October to go to the courts and sue for redress for their losses after he read their petition that outlined their grievances. Newel wrote "The brethren in Independence did their best to follow the advice of the Governor's letter." But

Newel continued to describe how when several men rode to Lexington to see the circuit judge and get a warrant, the judge would not issue one for fear of the mob. Another time when a warrant was obtained, Newel Knight wrote, “The mob declared that no warrant should be served, for they would kill the man that dared attempt it.”¹ Newel continued:

“On one occasion when the brethren tried to sue out a peace warrant, and the justice of the peace refused, the Governor’s letter was read to him, and he replied “I don’t care a damn for that.” Thus were the courts of law closed against us, and justice descended from her lofty seat to mourn in sackcloth and ashes.

But what more could be expected? For at the head of the mob were found the judges, lawyers, justices of the peace, sheriffs and their deputies and their constables, jail keepers and county clerk with but few exceptions.”²

Much of the trouble was accelerated by the rumor that reached Independence about the battle on November 4th at the Big Blue Ferry where two men from the mob were killed. The rumor had it that 20 of the men in a mob had been killed and wounded.

“The news flew through the county as if on wings of the wind, and men who were peaceable before, rushed to Independence, determined to massacre the whole of the saints. Indeed, it was a scene of wild confusion,”³ wrote Newel Knight.

Historian William Hartley explained that at the same time, five LDS leaders⁴ had been jailed on trumped up charges. When news of the rumors hit the courtroom, chaos ensued, and the only way to keep the five Church men safe was to put them in the jail. Lieutenant Governor Lilburn W. Boggs called out the Jackson County militia that same night to suppress the supposed insurrection. In response the Saints put out a call for arms.

On Tuesday, November 5th, 150 “poorly armed Saints” went to Independence to free the prisoners in jail. Bloodshed was avoided only when both sides gave up their arms, and the Saints promised to leave the county in ten days. Hartley noted that it left only the church members unarmed. The church leaders were released from jail and they urged the Saints to quickly evacuate across the river.⁵

One of the Saints, Levi Jackman wrote,

“No sooner were we disarmed than they, without fear, went from house to house, plundering, whipping and insulting whom they pleased, threatening the women and children with death, and everything that was calculated to spread horror and dismay.”⁶

¹ Newel Knight Journal, Allen typescript, p. 26.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴ The five men were A.S. Gilbert, John Corrill, Isaac Morley, William McLellin, and William Phelps.

⁵ William G. Hartley, *Stand By My Servant Joseph*, Deseret Book 2003, p.177-8.

⁶ Ibid.

Some Saints left Jackson County within a day as their homes were destroyed. For others it took a few weeks to find the means to leave. Joseph Knight, Jr., wrote, that he remained three weeks longer in Missouri than the rest of the family, "I kept grinding for and feeding the Saints till the first of December 1833, when I left. . . I went to Clay County with meal and flour which the Saints used 'till all got houses where I was."

The mobs burned down 203 homes that November. Collectively the Knight families lost thousands of dollars' worth of property in Jackson County.

Parley Pratt wrote about the first days of departure from Jackson County as:

"Hundreds of people were seen in every direction. Some in tents and some in the open air around their fires, while the rain descended in torrents. Husbands were inquiring for their wives and wives for their husbands; parents for children, and children for parents. Some had good fortune to escape with their families, household goods and some provisions; while others knew not the fate of their friends, and had lost all their goods. The scene was indescribable., and, I am sure would have melted the hearts of any people on the earth, except our blind oppressors, and a blind and ignorant community."⁷

Emily Coburn of the Colesville Branch wrote that "We lived in tents until winter set in, and did our cooking out in the wind and storms. . . Log heaps were our parlor stoves and the cold wet ground our velvet carpets." Her husband made a floor of boards and put a buffalo robe on it to make the sleeping tent more comfortable.⁸

Newel wrote:

"The Colesville Branch as usual kept together, and formed a small settlement on the Missouri bottoms, building themselves temporary houses and a few other families settle with us, and the Saints all around built themselves places of shelter for the winter, But the scenes that ensued, at the river's side immediately after the flight beggars description."⁹

On November 5th, as the attacks on the Saints were still unfolding, Newel wrote that Brothers Phelps, Gilbert and McLellin went to Clay County to again leave an affidavit of the tragedy that was taking place in Jackson County, and they reported that the Governor ordered a court inquiry into the violence.¹⁰

Judge John Ryland soon responded that the violence was an outrage but he needed to know if the Mormons were ready to take legal steps to regain their property, and he needed to see the persons who were injured and know of their intent. Not a very viable option for people huddled in tents on the river bank. Although in due time, many did draw up affidavits of their losses and submitted them to the court.

⁷ Parley P. Pratt Autobiography, Deseret Book, 1972, p. 102.

⁸ Hartley, *Stand by My Servant*, p.188.

⁹ Newel Knight Journal, p. 27.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 28.



Wonderous Natural Phenomenon

On the night of November 13, 1833, just the time when the Knights and other Missouri refugees were huddled in tents outdoors on the river bottoms, the night sky was filled with a meteor shower more intense than has ever been recorded, later known as the night the stars fell. It was seen from the East Coast to the Rocky Mountains. In Clay County people went tent to tent to wake up others to see the heavenly display. Joseph Smith in Kirtland wrote, "All heaven seemed enwrapped in splendid fireworks, as if every star in the broad expanse had been suddenly hurled down from its course. . . The appearance was beautiful, grand and sublime."

Joseph Smith wrote that Brother Davis came at 4 a.m. to wake him to see the heavens. "I arose and to my great joy beheld the stars fall from heaven like a shower of hailstones; a literal fulfillment of the word of God, as recorded in the holy scriptures, and

a sure sign the coming of Christ was at hand."¹¹

Telling the world of the injustice

Still convinced that other citizens who believed in the rule of law would support their cause, on December 12, 1833, Parley Pratt, Newel Knight, and John Corrill wrote and printed a circular that outlined the aggressions against the members of the Church in Missouri and documented their expulsion county in great detail. It stated that 1200 people were driven by force of arms from Jackson County and were persecuted because of their belief in the Book of Mormon, and the Articles and Covenants of their Church. The Church sent the circular to newspapers, handed it out locally and to the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson.¹²

A letter from Joseph Smith to the church leaders in Missouri dated December 10th in Newel's journal expresses the Prophet's enormous distress over the news of the Saints expulsion from Jackson County. "I know that Zion in the due time of the Lord will be redeemed, but how many will be the days of her purification, tribulation and affliction, the Lord has kept hid from my eyes."¹³

Nonetheless, the prophet also states "This is my counsel, that you retain your lands, even unto the uttermost and employ every lawful means to seek redress of your enemies."

¹¹ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 1, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1951, p 439.

¹² Hartley, *Stand By My Servants*, p. 179

¹³ Newel Knight Journal p 31.

Joseph Smith's very lengthy letter continues to describe his anguish over not understanding how he was instructed to call people by commandment to go to Missouri to build a gathering place, a Zion, a place of refuge, when such destruction has come upon it. The letter closes with a prayer that the Saints may be blessed with food, clothing and shelter, and the Holy Spirit to sustain them. Newel said the people found some comfort in those words.¹⁴

The revelation of Section 101 soon followed, with the words:

And they that have been scattered shall be gathered.
And all they who have mourned shall be comforted.
And all they who have given their lives for my name shall be crowned.
Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in my hands; Be still and know that I am God.

D. & C. 101:13-16.

The revelation also came with the instructions:

And again I say unto you, those who have been scattered by their enemies, it is my will that they should continue to importune for redress, and redemption, by the hands of those who are placed as rulers and are in authority over you, according to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh according to just and holy principles.

D & C 101:76-77

Newel Knight wrote about the opening of the new year in his journal, with a tone of resignation.

"The year 1834 opened upon the church in Missouri with no flattering prospects. The Saints were scattered in every direction, awaiting the action of the government and courts to settle their difficulties with Jackson County. On the first of January a conference was held, Bishop Partridge presiding, when all that could be done was done to comfort the hearts of the distressed and help them in their afflictions."¹⁵

Families tried to build homes and buy land in Clay County even as the letters, meetings and discussions between church leaders and government officials continued on for many months. One historian wrote that on April 10, 1834, the Missouri Saints sent a petition to the President of the United States with 114 signatures asking redress for the Jackson County expulsion. Between January 9 and May 15, 1834, the Saints sent literally dozens of petitions and letters to various U.S. Government officials" in accordance with the instructions received in D & C 101:79-90.¹⁶

Diane Mangum – August 2025

¹⁴ Ibid., p 31-33.

¹⁵ Newel Knight Journal, p. 33.

¹⁶ J. Christopher Conkling, *A Joseph Smith Chronology*, BEI Productions 1979, p 55.