

## Doctrine and Covenants Section 37



*The Susquehanna River at dusk in Broome County New York, photo 2023, D. Mangum  
A mob waited all night at a bridge in this vicinity in January 1831, hoping to capture  
Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon.*

### **D. & C. 37:3: “Assemble together at the Ohio”**

**Joseph Knight, Sr. left for Ohio with his wife and daughter in January of 1831, just weeks after the revelation was given.**

At the end of December of 1830, the revelation in Section 37 was dictated by Joseph Smith and it was learned that the church should gather in Ohio. The Prophet had sent missionaries out in previous months to seek out the spot of the New Jerusalem. Along the way they stopped in Ohio and converted several dozen people in Kirtland, mostly among Sidney Rigdon’s restorationist congregation.<sup>1</sup>

The gathering place was announced on January 2, 1831 at the third conference of the Church of Christ in Fayette. But the commandment also mentioned they must first strengthen up the various branches of the church.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/doctrine-and-covenants-historical-resources-2025/17?lang=eng>; Doctrine and Covenants Historical Background, Section 37,

No minutes were kept of this third conference of the Church, but Newel Knight recorded the events in his journal:

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 1831, the third Conference of the Church assembled. It was opened by singing and prayer. Many of the Saints came together from the region around and much good instruction was given. The Saints manifested unshaken confidence in the great work in which they are engaged and all rejoiced under the blessings of the Gospel. Considerable business was transacted for the church. It was at this conference that we were instructed as a people to begin the gathering of Israel and a revelation was given to the Prophet on this subject.<sup>2</sup>

Newel then continues:

Having returned home from conference, in obedience to the commandment which had been given, I, together with the Colesville Branch, began to make preparations to go to the Ohio.<sup>3</sup>

While the Knights were making plans to move Joseph Smith felt the weight of their divine instruction to visit and strengthen the members in the various branches. The last of the three mentioned groups they visited were the Knight home and the Colesville Branch. Joseph brought with him the new convert, Sidney Rigdon, who preached several powerful sermons during his stay.

Joseph Knight, Sr. reported that Sidney particularly irritated his Colesville neighbors because “he was too smart for them.”<sup>4</sup> Sidney and Joseph Smith left the Knight home to go and take care of some business in Harmony, Pennsylvania, traveling in the “fifty-dollar sleigh” that had recently been purchased by Joseph Knight, Jr.<sup>5</sup>

Father Knight reported that when the mob discovered that the two church leaders were gone, they worked to learn when they would return, so they could make plans to capture Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, and Joseph Knight, Sr. as well. Joseph Knight made immediate plans to leave Colesville. He wrote:

And the day we expected them [Smith and Rigdon] I sent my son down to meet them and told them of their [mob's] plan, and they turned across to Chenango Point [Binghampton] and so went to the Lakes [Finger Lakes]. And I loaded up what I could carry [on a horse drawn sled] and went away that night for the Lakes. I also took my wife and daughter [Elizabeth], for we weren't calculating to go soon, for we a little before had the revelation to go to Ohio. So, the mob watched all night at the bridge. But behold we

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<sup>2</sup> Newel Knight Journal, page 12 Allen typescript

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> William G. Hartley, *Stand By My Servant, Joseph*, Deseret Book, 2003, p. 103

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

all came up missing, and the poor mob lost all their trouble. Now Joseph and I went right on to Kirtland, Ohio [by the first of February].<sup>6</sup>

Once they left Colesville on that cold January night Joseph, Polly, and their 13-year-old Elizabeth never returned to their Colesville home. Joseph Knight, Jr. wrote in that the rest of the family stayed on until spring trying to sell whatever property they could and that Hyrum Smith stayed with them until March.<sup>7</sup>

Diane Mangum – January 2025

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 104

<sup>7</sup> William Hartley, *They Are My Friends, a History of the Joseph Knight Family*, Grandin Book, 1986, p. 215.