

DOCTRINE & COVENANTS & CHURCH HISTORY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

✧ GREEN MOUNTAIN 1ST WARD ✧ LAKEWOOD, COLORADO ✧ 03/08/09 ✧ PAGE 1 ✧

Lesson 9: “The Only True and Living Church”, D&C 20:1–36, 68–69, 75–79; 21; 27; 115:1–4; *Our Heritage*, pp. 14–16

Next Week

#10 - “This Is My Voice unto All” (D&C 25)

Introduction



The Eternal Family Through Christ – Judith Mehr

President Gordon B. Hinckley: *“What a wonderful thing it is to belong to this Church. Have you ever stopped to think how empty your lives would be without it? How grateful we ought to be ... for the tremendous blessings that come through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank you ... for being faithful Latter-day Saints and for seeking to raise your children in light and truth, with a love for the Lord and His great and holy work”* (stake conference, West Valley City, Utah, Nov. 10, 2002).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30) not because all other churches are “false and dead,” but because the Lord has committed to this Church “the keys of my kingdom,” or the exclusive authority to bring souls unto its head—Jesus Christ (D&C 27:13).

“Those who receive it [this Church] in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life” (D&C 20:14). The purpose of this lesson is to help us to fulfill the promise of this verse—to be crowned with eternal life in the kingdom of God.

The Church is organized in the latter days.

1830 was a momentous time in the history of the world. The time had come for ancient prophecies to be fulfilled (Isaiah 11:11–12; 29:13–14; Jeremiah 31:31–33; Daniel 2:44–45).

After the Book of Mormon was published and the priesthood was restored, the next major step in the restoration of the gospel was the formal organization of the Church. **Doctrine and Covenants 20** contains instructions from the Lord to Joseph Smith about organizing the Church.

D&C 20:1; 21:3. The Church was organized on 6 April 1830 “by the will and commandments of God.” The heading to D&C 20 provides details on why this precise date was chosen.

Ten years passed between the First Vision and the organization of the Church. During this time, several events occurred to prepare the way for the organization of the Church and to prepare Joseph Smith to lead it.

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“This day of organization was, in effect, a day of commencement, the graduation for Joseph from ten years of remarkable schooling. It had begun with the incomparable vision in the grove in the spring of 1820, when the Father and the Son appeared to the fourteen-year-old boy. It had continued with the tutoring from Moroni, with both warnings and instructions given on multiple occasions. Then there was the translation of the ancient record, and the inspiration, the knowledge, the revelation that came from that experience.*”

Lesson Highlights

- The Church is organized in the latter days.
- The Lord commands Church members to follow the prophet.
- The Lord encourages Church members to meet together often to partake of the sacrament.
- The Lord explains the duties of Church members.

A study of this lesson will teach us about the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith, help us appreciate the blessings of Church membership, and encourage us to show the Lord our gratitude for membership in His Church.



"There was the bestowal of divine authority, the ancient priesthood again conferred upon men by those who were its rightful possessors—John the Baptist in the case of the Aaronic Priesthood, and Peter, James, and John in the case of the Melchizedek. There were revelations, a number of them, in which the voice of God was heard again, and the channel of communication opened between man and the Creator. All of these were preliminary to that historic April 6" ("150-Year Drama: A Personal View of Our History," *Ensign*, Apr. 1980, 11–12).

D&C 20:6–12. Both the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the priesthood were preparatory events and had to be accomplished for the following reasons:

- The Book of Mormon contains a fullness of the gospel
- The Book of Mormon proves the holy scriptures are true
- The Book of Mormon proves that God does inspire men and call them as prophets in all ages
- The Book of Mormon shows that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever
- Priesthood authority was necessary to govern the Church
- Priesthood authority was necessary to officiate in the ordinances of salvation



Peter Whitmer Home, Fayette, New York

Church Headquarters – June 1829-January 1830

The Lord commands Church members to follow the prophet.

D&C 21. During the meeting at which the Church was organized, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were sustained as the presiding officers of the Church (*History of the Church*, 1:77). The Lord also gave a revelation instructing members of the Church to follow Joseph Smith as the prophet.

D&C 1:38; D&C 21:4–5. Teach us how to regard the words of the living prophet (not just Joseph Smith). We find the words and counsel of the living prophets in the Church magazines and publications, official letters, and at General Conferences.



On 6 April 1830, Joseph Smith and more than 50 other people met at the log home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, for the organization of the Church. New York law required that a church have at least six members to be formally organized. So six men, all of whom had been baptized and had seen the gold plates, became the first official members of the Church. These men were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer Jr., Samuel H. Smith, and David Whitmer (see *History of the Church*, 1:76; for additional historical background, see *Our Heritage*, pages 14–16).

D&C 20:1. The Church was initially called the "Church of Christ."

D&C 115:4. The Church was also called by other names in its early years, but in April 1838 the Lord revealed the name by which His Church was to be known.

3 Nephi 27:8. It is important that the Lord's Church be called in His name.

The name *Mormon* is a nickname given to the Church because of the Book of Mormon. We prefer to call our Church by its complete name to emphasize our belief in the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Consider what counsel or teachings of latter-day prophets have been especially meaningful to you.

D&C 21:5. The Lord said we must give heed to the words of the prophet *"in all patience and faith."*

D&C 21:6 promises blessings for following the prophet. These promises are fulfilled in the lives of our members each day. These include:

- "...the gates of hell shall not prevail against you"
- "...the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and...
- "cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory."

David Whitmer affirmed that at that meeting the legal requirements of incorporating their religious society were a very practical consideration:

"The reason why we met on that day was this; the world had been telling us that we were not a regularly organized church, and we had no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc., and that we should organize according to the laws of the land. On this account we met at my father's house in Fayette, N.Y., on April 6, 1830, to attend to this matter of organizing according to the laws of the land."

(Larry C. Porter, "Organizational Origins of the Church of Jesus Christ, 6 April 1830," in *Regional Studies in LDS History: New York*, 149–162.)



In **D&C 21:9**, the Lord promised “a mighty blessing” to those who labor in His service.

One blessing of serving the Lord is that our testimonies of the words of the prophets are strengthened.

The Lord encourages Church members to meet together often to partake of the sacrament.



At the meeting in which the Church was organized, members partook of the sacrament (*History of the Church*, 1:78).

D&C 20:75–79. The Lord revealed information about how the sacrament should be administered.

D&C 20:75 teaches that the sacrament should be partaken “often”.

D&C 20:77, 79 contain promises that we make when we partake of the sacrament. Both prayers emphasize remembering Jesus Christ. We are to remember Him always. Promises are also made to us for partaking worthily.

D&C 27:2 also contained counsel to Joseph Smith about the sacrament.

The Lord explains the duties of Church members.

D&C 20:68–69 explain “the duty of members after they are received by baptism”. Verse 69 reveals some of the Lord’s expectations of us.

One of our duties is to show gratitude for Church membership.

Conclusion

The organization of the Church of Jesus Christ in 1830 was one of the great miracles of the latter days. Even though that small meeting in Fayette, New York, went unnoticed by most people, the events of that day have changed the world. Reflect upon the miracle of the Church’s worldwide growth from such humble beginnings.

President Wilford Woodruff told of a meeting in which the Prophet Joseph Smith prophesied of the Church’s growth. The meeting was in “a small house, perhaps 14 feet square. But it held the whole of the Priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were then in the town of Kirtland, and who had gathered together to go off in Zion’s camp.” After several of the men had borne their testimonies of the work, the Prophet said: “Brethren I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap. You don’t comprehend it. ... It is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 57)

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- In what ways have you been blessed because you have followed the prophet?
- How have you been blessed as you have served the Lord?
- How has partaking of the sacrament blessed your life?
- How do you show the Lord your gratitude for membership in His Church?

