**DC 18                                     Historical Background**

The Prophet Joseph did not include a record of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood in his history. Therefore, the exact date of the angelic visit is unknown (it is generally presumed to have occurred between May 15 and early June of 1829). It would appear from the available evidence that section18 was given prior to the receipt of the Melchizedek Priesthood since the section represents the Lord’s response to their petition regarding the higher priesthood. Herein, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer are called to be apostles of the Lord before they had received the Melchizedek priesthood. This should not surprise us, for we are all called before we are set apart, and Oliver and David were merely called before they were ordained to the office of Apostle. **B. H. Roberts**said that DC 18 was given “previous to their ordination to the Apostleship under the hands of Peter, James and John; and is to be regarded as instruction to them as to how they should proceed in the matter of ordaining each other, and calling and ordaining others to the same ministry, after they themselves should have received the keys of this Melchizedek Priesthood.” (*History of the Church*, 1:61, footnote)

**Joseph Smith**

We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the angel that conferred upon us the Aaronic Priesthood had given us, viz., that provided we continued faithful, we should also have the Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the chamber of Mr. Whitmer's house, in order more particularly to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired; and here, to our unspeakable satisfaction, did we realize the truth of the Savior's promise—“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”—for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the word of the Lord came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office; and then to ordain others, as it should be made known unto us from time to time. We were, however, commanded to defer this our ordination until such times as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together, when we must have their sanction to our thus proceeding to ordain each other, and have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers or not … The following commandment will further illustrate the nature of our calling to this Priesthood, as well as that of others who were yet to be sought after. (*History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951], 1: 60 - 62.)

The student should not miss the remarkable manner in which this revelation was received. While most revelations were received through the Urim and Thummim or by direct revelation through the Spirit, this one seems to have come as an audible voice from the Lord. Note the Prophet’s language, “the word of the Lord came unto us in the chamber.” In the *History of the Church,***B. H. Roberts** suggests that this incident is the one mentioned in DC128:21 in which the Prophet declares, “And again, what do we hear?…the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county.” (DC 128:20-21)

Indeed, this time was one of great revelations for Joseph and his companions. In the span of only two or three months, many miraculous visions occurred. In DC 128, the Prophet Joseph recounts some of these amazing events—all of which likely occurred in the spring and early summer of 1829:

   And again, what do we hear? … A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!

   And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! (DC 128:20-21)

**DC 18:2 you know that they are true**

Oliver Cowdery *knew* that the Book of Mormon was the word of God. He had seen angels. He had seen the plates. He had heard the voice of the Lord from heaven declaring its truthfulness. Now the Lord holds him accountable for what he knows. The words of Alma apply to Oliver, “your knowledge is perfect in that thing, and your faith is dormant; and this because you know” (Alma 32:34).

Oliver Cowdery didn’t just *believe* that the Book of Mormon was true; he *knew* it. This knowledge was later tested when Oliver was out of the church.

**Brigham Young**

[**Oliver Cowdery**] left the Church because he lost the love of the truth; and after he had travelled alone for years, a gentleman walked into his law office and said to him, “Mr. Cowdery, what do you think of the Book of Mormon now? Do you believe that it is true?” He replied, “No, sir, I do not.” “Well,” said the gentleman, “I thought as much; for I concluded that you had seen the folly of your ways and had resolved to renounce what you once declared to be true.” “Sir, you mistake me: I do not *believe*that the Book of Mormon is true; I am past *belief*on that point, for I KNOW that it is true, as well as I know that you now sit before me.” “Do you still testify that you saw an angel?” “Yes, as much as I see you now; and I know the Book of Mormon to be true.” (Eldin Ricks, *The Case of The Book of Mormon Witnesses* [Deseret News Press, 1971], 8.)

**DC 18:4 in them are all things written concerning the *foundation*of my church, my gospel, and my rock**

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

The Lord has stated a number of times that the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the Gospel, or “all things written concerning the foundation” of the Church and Gospel. Some people have wondered in regard to this, when in the Book of Mormon there is nothing recorded pertaining to the eternity of marriage and baptism for the dead. A careful reading will show that the Lord does not say that it contains all of the principles in their fulness, but the fulness necessary for the foundation of his Church and his Gospel. Or as stated in another place: “The fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also” (DC 20:9).(*Church History and Modern Revelation,* 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1949], 1: 76 - 77.)

**DC 18:6 Behold, the world is ripening in iniquity**

**F. Burton Howard**

Unfortunately, ours is also an age when the most potent weapons and snares of the adversary have converged in a monumental effort to thwart the work of the Lord and frustrate the great plan of happiness. Our day is the time of Satan’s greatest power. We live in a world “ripening in iniquity” (D&C 18:6). If it was ripening when the Lord made that statement to Joseph Smith in 1830, it is surely ripening now. (“Overcoming the World,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 15)

**Dean L. Larsen**

In a world that is ripening in iniquity (see D&C 18:6), members of the Church face the challenge of sustaining a pattern of obedience to gospel principles that will result in their being increasingly different from the general behavioral trends of the world. This will require all of the spiritual reinforcement that can be drawn upon. Prayer, scripture study, participation in worship services, and the giving of service will become increasingly essential. The influence of the temple will be important as a part of this spiritual undergirding. (“The Importance of the Temple for Living Members,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, 12)

**DC 18:8 marvel not that I have called him**

Why would the Lord counsel Oliver to ”marvel not” if he had not already wondered why the Lord had chosen Joseph? Certainly, it must have been somewhat surprising to Oliver that this backwoods boy had been called to bring forth the last great dispensation. At this time, Oliver excelled Joseph in education and in social refinement. But the Lord would “call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thrash the nations by the power of my Spirit” (DC 35:13; 124:1).

**DC 18:9 you are called with that same calling with which he was called**

You can’t be an apostle without the Melchizedek Priesthood. When David and Oliver received the promise of apostleship they were also promised the great power of the ancient patriarchs. This was what they had been diligently praying for. The ordination to that office and priesthood, at least for Joseph and Oliver, would come at the hands of Peter, James, and John:

Regrettably, there exists no detailed first-hand account of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood other than to mention that it was restored by the two resurrected beings Peter and James, together with John the Beloved who had been translated. An interesting secondhand description of what transpired comes from Addison Everett in a letter he wrote in 1881. Brother Everett relates that he overheard a conversation between Joseph and his brother Hyrum a few days before their martyrdom in which Joseph told how he and Oliver had been arrested at Colesville for preaching and were being held at the home of the Justice of the Peace. Their attorney, Mr. Reid, helped them escape through a window as a mob had begun to gather in front of the house. Everett goes on to say, “it was night and they traveled through brush and water and mud, fell over logs, etc., until Oliver was exhausted; then Joseph helped him along through brush and water, almost carrying him. They traveled all night, and just at the break of day Oliver gave out entirely and exclaimed, ‘O Lord! Brother Joseph, how long have we got to endure this thing?’ They sat down on a log to rest and Joseph said that at that very time Peter, James, and John came to them and ordained them to the Apostleship. They had 16 or 17 miles to go to get back to Mr. Hales, his father-in-law's, but Oliver did not complain any more of fatigue.”

Elder Erastus Snow gave a similar account of Joseph and Oliver's experience in a conference address delivered in 1882: “It was at a period when they were being pursued by their enemies and had to travel all night, and in the dawn of the coming day when they were weary and worn who should appear to them but Peter, James, and John, for the purpose of conferring upon them the Apostleship, the keys of which they themselves had held while upon the earth, which had been bestowed upon them by the Savior.” (Charles R. Harrell, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 1: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. by Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989], 94.)

**DC 18:10 Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God**

**LeGrand Richards**

When I was laboring as president of the Southern States Mission … **President [Rudger] Clawson** told us the Lord had created the earth and the fulness thereof, and then he described at some length the marvelous creations of the Lord. Then he said, ‘But, brethren, I say unto you that the soul of one of His children is more precious in His sight than all the earth and the things He has created.’

How precious are the souls of the sheep of the flock among whom you brethren are called to labor!(*Conference Report, April 1943*, Second Day—Morning Meeting 48.)

**Thomas S. Monson**

Early in my service as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, I was attending a conference in the Monument Park West Stake in Salt Lake City. My companion for the conference was a member of the General Church Welfare Committee, Paul C. Child. President Child was a student of the scriptures…[He] took the Doctrine and Covenants and left the pulpit to stand among the priesthood to whom he was directing his message. He turned to section 18 and began to read: “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. … And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!”

President Child then raised his eyes from the scriptures and asked the question of the priesthood brethren: “What is the worth of a human soul?” He avoided calling on a bishop, stake president, or high councilor for a response. Instead, he selected the president of an elders quorum—a brother who had been a bit drowsy and had missed the significance of the question.

The startled man responded: “Brother Child, could you please repeat the question?” The question was repeated: “What is the worth of a human soul?” I knew President Child’s style. I prayed fervently for that quorum president. He remained silent for what seemed like an eternity and then declared, “Brother Child, the worth of a human soul is its capacity to become as God.”

All present pondered that reply. Brother Child returned to the stand, leaned over to me, and said, “A profound reply; a profound reply!” He proceeded with his message, but I continued to reflect on that inspired response.

To reach, to teach, to touch the precious souls whom our Father has prepared for His message is a monumental task. Success is rarely simple. Generally it is preceded by tears, trials, trust, and testimony. (“Tears, Trials, Trust, Testimony,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1997, 2)

**DC 18:11 he suffered the pain of all men**

Jesus Christ suffered the pains of all men who have ever lived, or ever will live, upon the earth. This concept is incomprehensible to the mortal mind. Comprehending it is like trying to conceptualize the never-ending expanse of the universe:

How can we begin to comprehend the cumulative suffering of all mankind, or as taught by **Elder Orson F. Whitney**, “the piled up agony of the human race”? What is thrown on the scale of remorse, as observed by Truman Madsen, when we aggregate “the cumulative impact of our vicious thoughts, motives, and acts”? What, as **Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone** inquired, is the “weight and immensity of the penalties of all broken laws crying from the dust and from the future—an incomprehensible tidal wave of guilt”? How many searing consciences has this world produced and to what depths of depravity has this earthly sphere sunk? Can anyone possibly fathom the horrendous consequences of such sin? Not only did the Savior fathom it—he felt it, and he suffered it. (Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 134)

The chronicles of history are replete with individual tragedies. A man is forced to watch as his wife and children are killed before his eyes. Jesus felt their pain. A mother holds her child as the last breath of life escapes his tiny lips. Jesus knows her sorrow. A once faithful man commits a grave sin, is excommunicated, stripped of his priesthood and temple blessings, and loses the love of his family. Jesus experienced the same dark withdrawal of the Spirit (Mark 1:34). A soldier is captured, interrogated, and tortured until his flesh succumbs to the trauma. The Savior felt his pain. A mother buries her face in her hands when she finds out her husband has been abusing their teenage daughter for years. Jesus felt her pain.  He has felt the emotional pain of the deepest depression, the mental pain and utter frustration of the most perplexing mental illness, the spiritual darkness of the most heinous sins, and the physical pain of the most cruel torture and crucifixion. Yet, in all its infiniteness, the atonement remains both intimate and individual:

Merill J. Bateman [said]: “The Savior’s atonement in the garden and on the cross is intimate as well as infinite. Infinite in that it spans the eternities. Intimate in that the Savior felt each person’s pains, sufferings, and sicknesses.” (Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 141)

“The results of childhood abuse, whether sexual, physical, or emotional, can be devastating…Truly the Atonement plays the crucial role in the healing process as people with broken hearts and scarred spirits realize they are not alone in their pain and that the Savior has provided a way for them to find peace.

“’In October 1995 I was sitting in a chapel listening to general conference,’ remembers one woman. ‘**Elder Jeffrey Holland** spoke on remembering the Lord during the passing of the sacrament…he said, `To those who stagger or stumble, he is there to steady and strengthen us. In the end he is there to save us, and for all this he gave his life` (“This Do in Remembrance of Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 69).

“’I was amazed. I knew Jesus Christ had given his life to pay for the sins of the world. But I did not know the Savior had given his life for the pains, abuse, and tearful suffering we all have to endure in this life, oftentimes as innocent victims of terrible circumstances far beyond our own control.

“’I raced home after conference in order to look up scriptures about this aspect of the Savior’s Crucifixion. I found a wonderful scripture:Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

“’For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him (D&C 18:10–11). He did not suffer just for people’s sins; he also suffered their pains. What a powerful message that was to my heart to learn he had suffered for those of us who had been abused. I can honestly say that my healing began on that day.’” (“The Journey to Healing,”*Ensign*, Sept. 1997, 19–20)

**DC 18:13 how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth**

   I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need norepentance.

   Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it?*

   And when she hath found *it,* she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

   Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke 15:7-10

“God feels great joy when one of his children puts off the natural man of sin and is born again a new creature in the Lord. (D&C 18:13; Mosiah 3:19; Mosiah 27:25–26.) It follows that all the forces and resources of heaven would be brought to bear in support of such a repentant soul.” (William J. Bohn, “Three Other New Testament Temples,” *Ensign*, July 1991, 22)

**DC 18:14 you are called to cry repentance unto this people**

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

Great is our work, tremendous is our responsibility in helping to find those to teach. The Lord has laid upon us a mandate to teach the gospel to every creature. This will take the very best efforts of every missionary—full-time and stake. It will take the very best efforts of every bishop, of every bishop’s counselor, of every member of the ward council. It will take the very best interests of every stake president and his council, and particularly the Member Missionary Coordinating Councils. (“Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 107)

**DC 18:15 how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father**

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

The most satisfying experience I have is to see what this gospel does for people. It gives them a new outlook on life. It gives them a perspective that they have never felt before. It raises their sights to things noble and divine. Something happens to them that is miraculous to behold. They look to Christ and come alive. (“Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 48).

**DC 18:16 how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!**

Ammon and his brothers were perhaps some of the greatest missionaries in scriptural history. What joy will they have with the Lamanites who converted? Ammon tried to describe some of the joy he felt:

   Blessed be the name of our God; let us sing to his praise, yea, let us give thanks to his holy name, for he doth work righteousness forever.

   For if we had not come up out of the land of Zarahemla, these our dearly beloved brethren, who have so dearly beloved us, would still have been racked with hatred against us, yea, and they would also have been strangers to God.

   …Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love, and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not great reason to rejoice?

   …Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full; yea, we will praise our God forever. Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel. (Alma 26:7-16)

**Ezra Taft Benson**

My beloved [missionaries], you face the happiest years of your lives. I know whereof I speak. I have been there. I have tasted the joy of missionary work. There is no work in all the world that can bring an individual greater joy and happiness. I pray your joy will be full, and like Ammon of old. (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 213)

**Heber J. Grant**

Think of the joy of President [George Q.] Cannon in bringing three thousand souls to a knowledge of the Gospel! Think of the joy that has come to Wilford Woodruff and Orson Pratt, who brought nearly that same number into the Church.

I rejoice beyond my power of expression in the pleasure that has come to me in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Mexico, Hawaii, and far-off Japan, in lifting up my voice in all humility, proclaiming that I know, as I know I live, that God lives; that I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Redeemer of the world, and the Savior of mankind. (*Conference Report, October 1935*, 11 - 12.)

**DC 18:20 Contend against no church, save it be the church of the devil**

When a missionary serves in an area dominated by a certain Christian denomination, he may view them as the competition. His door approaches may be cut short because people declare their membership to this church. Armed with superior doctrine and new revelations, he becomes frustrated that his message is repeatedly rejected. At length, he may harbor resentment, conclude that the church is the enemy, and begin to focus on their doctrinal errors. The Lord is not pleased with this approach. When the apostles found a certain outsider that was performing miracles, they complained. But Jesus replied, “he that is not against us is on our part.” (Mark 9:40)

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

When we are commanded to “contend against no church save it be the church of the devil,” we must understand that this is instruction to us to contend against all evil, that which is opposed to righteousness and truth. James declares, that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” and the scriptures also teach “for there is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord; and that which is evil cometh from the devil.” (Omni 25.) All who go forth to teach should do so in wisdom and not contend with the churches or engage in profitless debates, but teach in the spirit of kindness and try to persuade people to receive the truth. (*Church History and Modern Revelation,* 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1949], 1: 78.)

**DC 18:23-25 there is no other name given whereby man can be saved**

**Dallin H. Oaks**

King Benjamin told his people, “There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.” (Mosiah 3:17; see also 2 Ne. 31:21.) Peter proclaimed “the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth” to the leaders of the Jews, declaring that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:10, 12; see also D&C 18:21.)

The scriptures proclaim that the Savior’s atoning sacrifice was for those who “believe on his name.” Alma taught that Jesus Christ, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, would come “to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name.” (Alma 5:48; Alma 9:27; Alma 11:40; Hel. 14:2.) In the words of King Benjamin, “Whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ.” (Mosiah 5:9.)

Thus, those who exercise faith in the sacred name of Jesus Christ and repent of their sins and enter into his covenant and keep his commandments (see Mosiah 5:8) can lay claim on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Those who do so will be called by his name at the last day.

When the Savior taught the Nephites following his resurrection, he referred to the scriptural statement that “ye must take upon you the name of Christ.” He explained, “For by this name shall ye be called at the last day; And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day.” (3 Ne. 27:5–6.) That same teaching is repeated in a modern revelation, which adds the caution that “if they know not the name by which they are called, they cannot have place in the kingdom of my Father.” (D&C 18:25; see also Alma 5:38.)

…Finally, our willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ affirms our commitment to do all that we can to be counted among those whom he will choose to stand at his right hand and be called by his name at the last day. In this sacred sense, our witness that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ constitutes our declaration of candidacy for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. (“Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 81-83)

**DC 18:24-25 if they know not the name by which they are called, they cannot have place**

Temple themes are found throughout the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. Herein, the Lord tells us that we must be called by the name of Christ and we must know the name by which we will be called. Endowed members know that they are identified not only by the name of Christ but by the new name as well. King Benjamin taught the same doctrine:

   …I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ…whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ

   …I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you. (Mosiah 5:8-12)

Hence, we will be called by the name of Christ, but we must also know the new name, written always in our hearts, in order that we can “walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels.” (Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young,* selected and arranged by John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954], 416.)

**DC 18:26-27 there are others who are called to declare my gospel…even twelve; and the Twelve shall be my disciples**

The Lord revealed his will to establish a quorum of twelve apostles in June of 1829. The realization of this blessing would not come for years:

It was not until the 14th day of February, 1835, (five years and eight months afterwards,) in a special meeting of the brethren who constituted the membership of Zion's camp, that the subject of choosing the twelve was considered. Upon this occasion, Joseph asked the brethren if they were willing that the Spirit of the Lord should dictate in the choice of the elders to be apostles. All expressed an anxious desire to have it so. The three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, viz: Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, each prayed in turn; they were then blessed by the laying on of hands by the presidency. Then, according to the revelation given in June, 1829, they made choice of the following persons: Lyman E. Johnson, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, David W. Patten, Luke Johnson, William E. McLellan, John F. Boynton, Orson Pratt, William Smith, Thomas B. Marsh, Parley P. Pratt. The first one ordained was Lyman E. Johnson. The history of Joseph Smith, of February 14, 1835, gives the words of the blessing received, also the solemn charge which was given to them upon this occasion. Thomas B. Marsh and Orson Pratt were absent on missions, at this time; they returned the following April, and were then ordained apostles. (“Priesthood—What Is It?—Its Restoration.” by Elder Joseph E. Taylor, *Improvement Era, 1901*, Vol. Iv. September, 1901. No 11)

**DC 18:35 the scriptures are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them**

Consider the centuries that the Bible has been available. Some have read it out of historical interest. Others have read it as a piece of literature. Still others have read it to understand religious movements and motives. A small few have read it as it was designed to be read—by the power of the Spirit. The Lord tells us that the scriptures are given by the Spirit and can be read by his power. We have heard the maxim, “if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (DC 42:14). This verse teaches the corollary, “if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not read.” In other words, if you don’t read the scriptures by the Spirit, you might as well not read them at all. If you do read the scriptures by the Spirit, it is as if the Lord is speaking directly to you.

**M. Russell Ballard**

When we read and study the revelations, the Spirit can confirm in our hearts the truth of what we are learning; in this way, the voice of the Lord speaks to each one of us.  As we ponder the teachings of the gospel and apply them in daily living, we become better prepared to receive additional light and truth. (“Marvelous Are the Revelations of the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 32)

**DC 18:36 you can testify that you have heard my voice and know my words**

Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer heard the literal voice of Jehovah when this revelation was received. **Joseph Smith** declared, “the word of the Lord came unto us in the chamber” (*History of the Church*, 1:60), “And again, what do we hear? … the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county” (DC 128:20-21). Certainly, these three men could testify that they had heard the Lord’s voice and know his words.

But more importantly, the scripture teaches that if we read and understand by the power of the Spirit, then we, too can testify that we have heard his voice and know his words. Is our testimony any less valid if received by the Spirit?

**Elder S. Dilworth Young**

Back in 1829 the Lord, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, said there would be appointed twelve disciples, which of course we know as apostles, and he appointed two of the three witnesses to choose them. And then he did a thing which to me is remarkable. He began to instruct the Twelve before they were chosen, and after having instructed them he then gave them this verse. In 1835 the Twelve were chosen, as you know, and on one occasion they were called together and given their instructions. Oliver Cowdery was the spokesman; and after having given them some very powerful and heartwarming instruction, so moved was he, himself, that he had to stop two or three times to weep. He finally read the revelation to which I refer and this verse.

Brigham Young was so impressed by it that he copied it in his laborious handwriting into his diary. I am impressed by it likewise. These are the words:

”These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man;

“For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; (now this is six years later that they are hearing it) for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another; and save it were by my power you could not have them”; And this is the verse—“Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words." (D&C 18:34-36.)

The thing that impresses me about this is, and I have never thought of it before, when I read a verse in the Doctrine and Covenants I am hearing the voice of the Lord as well as reading his words, if I hear by the Spirit.

Now I have heard it said many times by men that they have often asked the Lord for a special testimony and oftentimes haven't had it. They seem to want to hear the voice of the Lord. I confess I have often wanted to hear the voice of the Lord, without knowing that all these years I have been hearing it with deaf ears. This woke me up. (*Conference Report, April 1963*, Afternoon Meeting 74.)

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“Think of that: By the power of his Spirit you may hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ [speaking] to you by reading the Doctrine and Covenants. That voice of enlightenment will usually come into your mind as “thoughts” and into your heart as “feelings” (see D&C 8:1-3). The promise of that witness is not limited to the Brethren or a select few, but is a promise available to every worthy man, woman, and child who prayerfully seeks for such a witness. Should not each of us resolve to read, study, ponder, and pray over these sacred revelations? (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter,*edited by Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 56.)

**DC 18:37-38 you shall search out the Twelve…And by their desires and their works you shall know them**

“[**David Whitmer**] had been promised by the Lord in Doctrine and Covenants 18:37, almost six years before, that he and his brother-in-law Oliver Cowdery would have the great privilege of choosing, for the first time in almost 1800 years, the twelve men who would become the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. We get a little insight into how David must have felt about this heavy responsibility as we read Oliver Cowdery’s words about their feelings:

‘The Lord gave us a revelation that, in process of time, there should be twelve men chosen to preach His Gospel to Jew and Gentile. Our minds have been on a constant stretch, to find who these twelve were; when the time should come we could not tell; but we sought the Lord by fasting and prayer to have our lives prolonged to see this day, to see you [the Twelve], and to take a retrospect of the difficulties through which we have passed.’

“We can feel the solemnity of the occasion on 14 February 1835, when Joseph Smith called upon the three witnesses to select the members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Joseph Smith stated that ‘the meeting had been called, because God had commanded it; and it was made known to him by vision and by the Holy Spirit.’ After some lengthy discussions, the Prophet asked the three witnesses to pray in turn and then select the twelve special witnesses of the Lord to all the world. After prayer, the three were blessed by the laying on of hands of the First Presidency. They then selected the first twelve men in this dispensation to stand in this important office, ordaining the first three immediately thereafter and the rest during the next two months.

“It is significant that most men, if not all, holding the Melchizedek Priesthood today trace their right to that priesthood back to this original ordination by the three witnesses.” (Keith W. Perkins, “True to the Book of Mormon—The Whitmers,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1989, 39–40)