

# Section 111

## Historical Background

Salem, Massachusetts was a city of history, not just for New England, but specifically for Joseph Smith. At the age of 6, Joseph suffered an infection of typhus that settled in the bone of his leg. After experimental and providential surgery, Lucy sent her son to live with an uncle in Salem. After the surgery, “Joseph immediately commenced getting better, and from this onward, continued to mend until he became strong and healthy. When he had so far recovered as to be able to travel, he went with his uncle, Jesse Smith, to Salem, for the benefit of his health, hoping the sea-breezes would be of service to him, and in this he was not disappointed.” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*,58) How long young Joseph stayed in Salem is not clear, but the experience must have been influential for a boy who had thus far seen only the backwoods of New England.

What brought the Prophet back to Salem is not stated in the *History of the Church*. Financial pressures on the church leaders led to the expedition. In retrospect, one might argue, the trip to Salem was ill-fated.

“The revelation (D&C 111) put the best face on a misbegotten venture. Long after the event, Ebenezer Robinson, a printer in Nauvoo, remembered that a convert named Burgess had persuaded Church leaders that a large sum of money was hidden in the cellar of a Salem house. Perhaps Joseph believed he could identify the site... Less than encouraging, the Salem revelation opened with the words ‘I the Lord your God am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies,’ and tried to deflect the men to missionary work. ‘There are more treasures than one for you in this city.’ The ‘wealth pertaining to gold and silver’ could be obtained ‘in due time,’ implying that meanwhile they should concentrate on people. For two weeks, the men taught from house to house, taking time out to visit the famous east India marine Society museum like ordinary tourists. On August 20, Rigdon lecture on ‘Christianity’ at the lyceum. All the while they looked for the treasure-house. On August 19, Joseph wrote Emma that ‘we have found the house since Bro. Burgess left us, very luckily and providentially, as we had one spell been most discouraged.’ They were plotting how to get possession. ‘The house is occupied, and it will require much care and patience to rent or buy it.’ Joseph said

they were willing to wait months if necessary, but by September, the party was back in Kirtland with no treasure for their pains.

“The Kirtland leaders grasped at the slimmest hopes. The temple had left a debt of around \$13,000, and in the summer of 1836, the Church faced the additional expense of establishing a new stake of Zion in Missouri. At the June trial of two brethren accused of insufficient generosity, Frederick Williams put it bluntly: ‘The church [is] poor, Zion [is] to be built and we have not means to do it unless the rich assist, & because the rich have not assisted, the heads of the church have to suffer and are now suffering under severe embarrassments and are much in debt.’ In December 1836, elders in the branches were told to stop ‘sending their poor from among them, and moving them to this place, without the necessary means of subsistence,’ a policy Joseph must have lamented.” (Richard Lyman Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, [New York: Random House, 2005], 328-329)

## Joseph Smith

From New York we continued our journey to Providence, on board a steamer; from thence to Boston, by steam cars, and arrived in Salem, Massachusetts, early in August, where we hired a house, and occupied the same during the month, teaching the people from house to house, and preaching publicly, as opportunity presented; visiting occasionally, sections of the surrounding country, which are rich in the history of the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, in Indian warfare, religious superstition, bigotry, persecution, and learned ignorance.

The early settlers of Boston (the Emporium of New England), who had fled from their mother country to avoid persecution and death, soon became so lost to principles of justice and religious liberty as to whip and hang the Baptist and the Quaker, who like themselves, had fled from tyranny to a land of freedom; and the fathers of Salem from 1692 to 1693, whipped, imprisoned, tortured, and hung many of their citizens for supposed witchcraft; and quite recently,—while boasting of her light and knowledge, of her laws and religion, as surpassed by none on earth,—has New England been guilty of burning a Catholic convent in the vicinity of Charleston, and of scattering the inmates to the four winds; yes, in sight of the very spot where the fire of American Independence was first kindled, where a monument is now erecting in memory of the battle of Bunker Hill, and the fate of the immortal Warren, who bled, who died, on those sacred heights, to purchase religious

liberty for his country—in sight of this very spot, have the religionists of the nineteenth century, demolished a noble brick edifice, hurling its inhabitants forth upon a cold, unfeeling world for protection and subsistence.

Well did the Savior say concerning such, "by their fruits you shall know them." And if the wicked mob who destroyed the Charleston convent, and the cool, calculating religious lookers on, who inspired their hearts with deeds of infamy, do not arise, and redress the wrong, and restore the injured four-fold, they in turn, will receive of the measure they have meted out till the just indignation of a righteous God is satisfied. When will man cease to war with man, and wrest from him his sacred rights of worshipping his God according as his conscience dictates? Holy Father, hasten the day. (*History of the Church*, 464-465)

**DC 111:1 I, the Lord your God, am not displeased... notwithstanding your follies**

“Failing to secure the Salem treasure, and no demand for city lots, with their debts pressing heavily upon them, it evidently seemed necessary that some ways and means should be devised to extricate themselves from their present embarrassments. To this end a banking institution was organized, called the ‘Kirtland Safety Society,’ as we see by the following quotation from the history of Joseph Smith, Jr., as published on the 823rd page of the *Millennial Star*”

On the 2nd of November the brethren at Kirtland drew up certain articles of agreement, preparatory to the organization of a banking institution, to be called the ‘Kirtland Safety Society.’” (Ebenezer Robinson, *Autobiography, the Return, Writings of Early Latter-day Saints* 107.)

In retrospect, the Kirtland banking venture was a larger folly than the venture to Salem. In the next couple of years, the failure of this bank would try the faith of the saints. Many would leave the Church, and the Prophet would leave Kirtland, relocating church headquarters. The message of this section is that the Lord has mercy for the weaknesses of mortality. He forgives our pettiness, our near-sightedness, our failed financial ventures, and our mistakes. That is good news—not just for Joseph Smith—but for all of us!

**B.H. Roberts**

Here we have an opportunity of discerning the difference between the ways of God and the ways of men. Whereas these brethren had come seeking an earthly treasure, God directs their attention to spiritual things, telling them there are more treasures than one for them in that city; and instructs them to inquire diligently concerning the ancient inhabitants and founders of that city, doubtless having in view the securing of their genealogies and the redemption of the past generations of men who had lived there; so that if for a moment the weakness of men was manifested in this journey, we see that fault reprov'd and the strength and wisdom of God made manifest by directing the attention of his servants to the real and true treasures that he would have them seek, even the salvation of men, both the living and the dead. (*A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930], 1: 412)

**DC 111:2 I have much treasure in this city for you, for the benefit of Zion**

“This promise was at least partially fulfilled in 1841, when Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester were called to preach the gospel in Salem. They were given a copy of this revelation along with a charge to fulfill the prophecy to gather out many people for the benefit of Zion. ‘Snow and Winchester arrived in Salem in September of 1841. They preached at public meetings, published a pamphlet addressed to the citizens of Salem, and challenged the notorious Mormon apostate John C. Bennett to debate. Their efforts bore fruit. By March 1842 they had organized the Salem Branch with 53 members. By the end of that summer, the branch had 90 members.’ In his private journal, Erastus Snow indicated that he baptized more than one hundred people in Salem from September 1841 until he returned to Nauvoo on 11 April 1843.” (Stephen E. Robinson, H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2001] 4:75)

“At first Elder Snow had little success, but gradually more people came to listen to his message, and baptisms increased. Two of those who listened to Elder Snow and were baptized were Howard and Tamson Egan. In light of his later work in the Church, it is clear that Howard Egan's conversion was part of the direct fulfillment of the above prophecy. During the year of their baptism (1842), the Egan family immigrated to Nauvoo to join the Saints there...

“Egan opened a rope factory in Nauvoo. The factory no longer exists, but historians have deduced from records and the accounts of people who lived in Nauvoo during this period that the rope factory was built on Water Street, across the street from Joseph Smith's store. In addition to manufacturing rope, Egan became a city policeman in December 1843 as well as a member of the Nauvoo Legion, achieving the rank of major this explains why most writers refer to him as Major Howard Egan. Egan faithfully fulfilled his assignments and was highly commended by his superiors. Egan also became well known to the Prophet Joseph and was assigned to guard the Prophet's home on several occasions. Joseph Smith was impressed by Egan's abilities and said once that he "never feared when Howard Egan was on guard." When not on duty, Egan worked on the construction of the Nauvoo Temple...

“Egan's appreciated service to the Prophet Joseph Smith now continued in his service to Brigham Young. In 1846 he was asked to catch up with the Mormon Battalion at Santa Fe and carry mail and money from the men of the Battalion back to their families at Winter Quarters; this was his first job as a mail carrier, a career for which he would later become well known. Egan was also assigned to buy corn for the Church to distribute. He fulfilled his duties in a manner that caused Church leaders to appreciate his diligence and willingness to serve...

“Howard Egan's life was full of service. He performed many duties for the Church and its prophets without complaint, even when it meant losing time with his family. In serving others, he fulfilled many of the promises given him in his patriarchal blessing: he was ‘numbered with the called and chosen,’ he was endowed and blessed by the Spirit, he was a staunch defender of the Saints, and he assisted in the gathering of the people. In all ways, he honored the lineage of Judah through which he was blessed—and proved his worth as a descendant of Israel.” (H. Dean Garrett, ed., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint History: Illinois* [Provo: Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1995], 226-231)

**DC 111:5 Concern not yourselves about your debts, for I will give you power to pay them**

The Prophet's mission was to bring to pass the Restoration. Financial concerns pressed him frequently, but the Lord didn't want his time spent in such temporal concerns. He expected his saints to provide for the kingdom and was sometimes disappointed by their inability to sacrifice money for the

cause (D&C 105:3). In this particular instance, Joseph had gone in pursuit of money. Yet, in time, and perhaps partially through this experience, Joseph learned to let the money come to him.

## **Joseph Smith**

About January 16, 1838, being destitute of money to pursue my journey, I said to Brother Brigham Young: "You are one of the Twelve who have charge of the kingdom in all the world; I believe I shall throw myself upon you, and look to you for counsel in this case." Brother Young thought I was not earnest, but I told him I was. Brother Brigham then said, "If you will take my counsel it will be that you rest yourself, and be assured you shall have money in plenty to pursue your journey."

There was a brother living in the place who had tried for some time to sell his farm but could not; he asked counsel of Brother Young concerning his property; Brother Young told him that if he would do right, and obey counsel, he should have an opportunity to sell. In about three days Brother Tomlinson came to Brother Brigham and said he had an offer for his place; Brother Brigham told him that this was the manifestation of the hand of the Lord to deliver Brother Joseph Smith from his present necessities. Brother Brigham's promise was soon verified, and I got three hundred dollars from Brother Tomlinson, which enabled me to pursue my journey. (*History of the Church*, 3:2)

## **Philo Dibble**

When Joseph first came to Nauvoo, then called Commerce, a Mr. White, living there, proffered to sell him his farm for twenty-five hundred dollars, five hundred dollars of the amount to be paid down, and the balance one year from that time. Joseph and the brethren were talking about this offer when some of them said: "We can't buy it, for we lack the money."

Joseph took out his purse, and emptying out its contents, offered a half dollar to one of the brethren, which he declined accepting, but Joseph urged him to take it, and then gave each of the other brethren a similar amount, which left him without any. Addressing the brethren he then said: "Now you all have money, and I have none; but the time will come when I will have money and you will have none!"

He then said to Bishop Knight, "You go back and buy the farm!"

The bargain was closed and the obligations drawn up, but how the money was going to be raised neither Brother Knight nor the other brethren could see.

The next morning Joseph and several of the brethren went down to Mr. White's to sign the agreement and make the first payment on the land. A table was brought out with the papers upon it, and Joseph signed them, moved back from the table and sat with his head down, as if in thought for a moment. Just then a man drove up in a carriage and asked if Mr. Smith was there. Joseph hearing it, got up and went to the door. The man said, "Good morning, Mr. Smith; I am on a speculation today. I want to buy some land, and thought I would come and see you."

Joseph then pointed around where his land lay, but the man said: "I can't go with you today to see the land. Do you want any money this morning?"

Joseph replied that he would like some, and when the stranger asked how much, he told him, "Five hundred dollars."

The man walked into the house with Joseph, emptied a small sack of gold on the table, and counted out that amount. He then handed to Joseph another hundred dollars, saying: "Mr. Smith, I make you a present of this!"

After this transpired, Joseph laughed at the brethren and said: "You trusted in money; but I trusted in God. Now I have money and you have none." (Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, comps., *They Knew the Prophet* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974], 71-72)

### **DC 111:6 Concern not yourselves about Zion, for I will deal mercifully with her**

One of the Prophet's greatest trials during the first several years of the Church's history was the failure to redeem Zion according to expectations. The Lord's mercy invites the Prophet to let go of this concern. In Dec. 1833, he wrote the following:

#### **Joseph Smith**

I cannot learn from any communication by the Spirit to me, that Zion has forfeited her claim to a celestial crown... I have always expected that Zion would suffer some affliction, from what I could learn from the

commandments which have been given. But I would remind you of a certain clause in one which says, that after much tribulation cometh the blessing. By this, and also others, and also one received of late, 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; and when I inquire concerning this subject, the voice of the Lord is: Be still, and know that I am God! all those who suffer for my name shall reign with me, and he that layeth down his life for my sake shall find it again. (*History of the Church*, 1:453-454)

## **DC 111:7 Tarry in this place**

### **L. Tom Perry**

I remember a critical time in my life and how grateful I was when a still, small voice gave me direction to make an important decision. I had been with a retail firm for a number of years. We had enjoyed extraordinary success. We wanted to expand the business but needed a great deal of capital. In an attempt to raise the money, we contacted the best financial advisers we could find. They encouraged us to merge with a larger firm. The merger was successfully completed, and I was asked to sign a five-year contract to give continuity to management. Within a matter of months I found myself in a very difficult situation. The new owners wanted me to violate a trust that I felt I just could not do. After long discussions, they continued to insist and I continued to refuse. Seeing there was no way to break the deadlock, I agreed to leave the company. The timing for me was devastating. I had a wife who was seriously ill and required a lot of medical attention, a daughter away to college, and a son on a mission. I spent the next year just getting enough consulting work to pay my expenses.

After struggling for about one year, a company called me from California and invited me to come out and talk to them about working for them. I went out and negotiated a very good contract; I was delighted with the opportunity. I told them that I had to return home and discuss it with my family before I could give an answer. I returned home and after a careful discussion, I convinced my family that it was the right thing to do. In the process of calling the firm to accept the offer, a voice just as strong and powerful as I have ever heard came to me and said, "Say no to the offer." I could not ignore the voice, so I turned the offer down, but I was distressed. I could not comprehend why I had been told to do such a thing. I went upstairs to my bedroom, sat on the bed, opened the



scriptures, and they fell open to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 111. This was the only section given in the state of Massachusetts, where my home was at that particular time. These words literally jumped out of the page and met my eye:

Concern not yourselves about your debts, ... I will give you power to pay them. . . .

Tarry in this place, and in the regions round about (D&C 111:5, 7).

A great peace came to my soul. Within just a few days I was offered a fine position in Boston. A few months later I had the great privilege of hosting a conference in which President Harold B. Lee, then First Counselor in the First Presidency, was the featured speaker. The conference was a glorious success as we feasted on the words of President Lee. The following July, President Joseph Fielding Smith passed away and President Lee became the prophet. Three months later I was asked to come to Salt Lake, where I received a call to leave my profession and join the General Authorities.

I have often wondered what would have happened if I had not heeded the Holy Spirit in its counseling me not to leave Boston. (“That Spirit Which Leadeth to Do Good,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 69–70)

**DC 111:9 inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city**

“Several years ago, as I began to prepare my Sunday School lesson for that week, I was surprised to find that it included ten sections from the Doctrine and Covenants. ‘We can’t cover that much in the short lesson time,’ I thought. ‘We’ll have to skip over some of the sections.’

“Early in the week I decided that section 111 was one that could be skipped. The words *follies, treasure, gold and silver, ancient inhabitants* didn’t communicate clearly to me. Frankly, I didn’t understand what it was all about, and it didn’t seem particularly significant.

“Later in the week, I reread the section and wondered what was meant by the word *follies*. Maybe they had to do with what had taken the First Presidency to Salem, Massachusetts.

“As I read the superscription above the revelation and then studied more about the event, I learned that a man named Burgess had come to Kirtland, claiming that he knew of a large amount of money hidden in a house in Salem. The Prophet Joseph Smith and others had gone to Salem in hopes of finding that money and using it to relieve the Church’s debts. But the trip had proved to be folly when Burgess couldn’t decide which house contained the treasure.

“Even so, the Lord was ‘not displeased’ with the journey. (D&C 111:1.) The Lord reminded the Prophet that there were other treasures besides gold and silver for which they might search: ‘I have much treasure in this city for you, for the benefit of Zion, and many people in this city, whom I will gather out in due time for the benefit of Zion, through your instrumentality.’ (D&C 111:2.)

“As I studied, I discovered that missionary Erastus Snow turned out to be an important key. According to his journal, Elder Snow was returning home to Nauvoo in 1841 (five years after the revelation that produced Doctrine and Covenants section 111), when he met some other missionaries, including Hyrum Smith. Hyrum urged Elder Snow and his companion, William Law, to forgo their trip home and pursue missionary labors in Salem.

“They left us a copy of a revelation given about that people in 1836 which said the Lord had much people there whom he would gather into his kingdom in his own due time and they thought the due time of the Lord had come,’ Elder Snow wrote. He then went to Salem. (See *Erastus Snow Journal*, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, pp. 3–5.)

“The ‘insignificant’ scripture was becoming more and more intriguing to me. The manual indicated that Elder Snow had converted a number of people. But who were they? What contributions had they made?

“Suddenly, it hit me! Where were my Ashby genealogy sheets? I dug into the closet in the den. The pedigree chart provided the clue I needed. My great-great-grandfather, Nathaniel Ashby, was born in Salem in 1805. Perhaps he had been there when Elder Snow had preached the gospel. I searched for my history of the Ashby family, contained in a little brown book that I finally found at my brother’s home.

“Section 111, verse 9, of the Doctrine and Covenants said that the Prophet should ‘inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants’ of Salem. The coastal town of Salem was founded in 1626, only six years after the pilgrims landed at Plymouth. In 1663 Anthony Ashby was recorded as being in Salem. Anthony was the great-great-great-great-grandfather of Nathaniel Ashby. Since Anthony, six generations of Ashbys had lived in Salem. They had been shipwrights and shoemakers.

“The little brown book (Robert Ashby, *Ashby Ancestry*, 1941), explained that ‘in 1841, Elder Erastus Snow and others brought to this family the true gospel message which they gladly accepted.’ My ancestors were among the converts of Salem!

“As I read about Nathaniel and his family, I discovered that Elder Snow and his wife occupied one of Nathaniel’s homes in Salem for two years, rent-free. Perhaps for the missionary, that had been a treasure better than gold. In the fall of 1843, the Ashby family moved to Nauvoo, where they shared a large duplex home with Elder Snow’s family. The Ashbys donated their wealth to help build the temple.

“Members of the Ashby family were in Nauvoo on the day the Prophet Joseph was martyred. They lived only a short distance from the Prophet’s home, and one of Nathaniel’s sons wrote that he was in his father’s garden one morning in June of 1844 when the Prophet rode by on his way to Carthage. ‘Never shall I forget the look of deep sorrow that covered his noble countenance. That was the last time I saw him alive,’ wrote the son.” (Kim R. Burningham, “The ‘Insignificant’ Scripture,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1990, 47-48)

**DC 111:11 as fast as ye are able to receive them**

### **Wilford Woodruff**

In righteousness the kingdom of God will gain strength, for the heavens are full of knowledge, to be revealed for the use of the children of God as fast as they are prepared to receive it. We shall never see the time when we shall cease to progress and increase in knowledge, for we are the children of God, and if we are faithful in fulfilling the object of our creation, keeping the commandments of God as we are guided and directed to do, the knowledge is boundless that this people have yet to receive. (*Journal of Discourses*, 11:64)