

HEARKEN YE
& GIVE
EAR TO HIM

Revelations on the Isaac & Lucy Morley Farm



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Chapter 1

THE FULNESS OF THE GOSPEL COMES TO KIRTLAND

Chronological Summary

- 1630—Charles II dedicates northeast Ohio to the colony of Connecticut
- 1796—The Connecticut Land Company buys 1.2 million acres
- 1798—Moses Cleveland leads an initial survey of acreage
- 1799—Turhand Kirtland is given a portion of acreage, which becomes Kirtland Township
- Early 1800s—The Morleys and Whitneys are among the early Kirtland settlers
- 1826—Sidney Rigdon is the pastor of the Reformed Baptist congregation in Mentor, Ohio
- September 1830—Parley P. Pratt travels to New York and is baptized
- October 1830—Parley P. Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Ziba Peterson, and Peter Whitmer Jr. embark on a mission to the Lamanites (Doctrine and Covenants 28, 30, 32)
- November 1830—The first missionaries in the Kirtland area convert 127 people, including Sidney Rigdon
- December 1830—Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge travel to New York (Doctrine and Covenants 35–36)
- January 1831—The Lord commands the Saints to go “to the Ohio” (Doctrine and Covenants 37–39), and John Whitmer is the first to move to Kirtland
- February 1831—Joseph and Emma Smith arrive in Kirtland
- March 1831—Joseph and Emma move to the Morley farm

- September 12, 1831—Joseph and Emma move to the Johnson farm

The Land of Kirtland

Long before the Prophet Joseph Smith received the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 37 calling for the Saints to gather “to the Ohio” (verse 1), King Charles II of England in 1630 deeded four million acres to the colony of Connecticut—land that would eventually become Ohio. The state of Connecticut acquired substantial debt during the American Revolution, but following the war, they exchanged acreage for federal assumption of that debt, and the remaining 3,366 acres became known as the “Western Reserve.” In 1796 a portion of the reserve was sold to a group of private speculators known as the Connecticut Land Company, and in 1798, a man named Moses Cleveland led an initial surveying expedition that was sponsored by the company. One of his associates, Turhand Kirtland, surveyed an area east of what became Cleveland, and he received a portion of the land as payment for his work. He sold parcels the following year to settlers in the area that would become known as Kirtland Township.

Conversions of Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt

The Prophet described “an unusual excitement on the subject of religion” (Joseph Smith—History 1:5) in the early 1800s that swept through northern Ohio along with western New York and northern Pennsylvania. Sidney Rigdon, a Reformed Baptist preacher, perpetuated this excitement as he preached restorationist Christianity among several of his congregations in settlements around Kirtland. Sidney’s proselytes included Parley P. and Thankful Pratt, Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney, and Isaac and Lucy Morley.

Parley P. Pratt felt impressed to sell his home in Amherst, Ohio, in the summer of 1830 and travel with his wife, Thankful, to New York on a self-appointed preaching mission. While traveling on the Erie canal, Parley felt prompted to leave the canal boat at Newark, New York, ten miles east of Palmyra, leaving Thankful to travel on to their final destination alone. Shortly thereafter, he was introduced to the Book of Mormon by a Baptist deacon named Hamblin, and he was instantly enthralled by it. He later wrote, “I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep. . . . I knew and comprehended that the book was true. . . . My joy was now full.”⁰² Parley then traveled to Palmyra, New York, where he was taught by the Prophet’s brother Hyrum and baptized by Oliver Cowdery on September 1, 1830. Ultimately, Parley’s conversion led to the conversion of Sidney Rigdon and the subsequent gathering of the New York Saints to Kirtland.

Missionary Success in Kirtland

During the month of Parley’s baptism, the Lord revealed to Joseph that Oliver Cowdery should “go unto the Lamanites” to “the borders by the Lamanites” (Doctrine and Covenants 28:8–9), the area where the western border of the new state of Missouri met the unincorporated Indian territory that later became the state of Kansas. (The Lord also revealed the general location of the city of Zion.) Three other brethren were called to

serve as Oliver's companions in sections 30 and 32—Peter Whitmer Jr., Ziba Peterson, and Parley P. Pratt. The Lord promised, "I myself will go with them" (Doctrine and Covenants 32:3), and the four missionary companions left New York in early October.

While traveling through northern Ohio near the end of October, Parley suggested they visit his former religious mentor, Sidney Rigdon. Although Sidney was "very much prejudiced" at the suggestion that another book of scripture, the Book of Mormon, should be accepted along with the Bible, he generously gave the missionaries permission to present their message to his congregants in Mentor, a town just north of Kirtland. Probably feeling the Spirit, he told the congregation that the missionaries' message "was of an extraordinary character, and certainly demanded their most serious consideration." Sidney himself said, "I will read your book, and see what claims it has upon my faith," assuring them he would "give it a full investigation."⁰³ Sidney soon received his own confirming vision: he was shown the corruption of the common religious teachings of his time, then, in contrast, he saw the Book of Mormon, as "pure as an angel."⁰⁴

After a short time, Parley related, "The people thronged us night and day, insomuch that we had no time for rest and retirement. . . . Thousands flocked about us daily; some to be taught, some for curiosity, some to obey the gospel, and some to dispute or resist it."⁰⁵ During the three weeks the missionaries were in the area, 127 people were baptized, eventually including Sidney Rigdon and about 100 members of his Mentor congregation.⁰⁶ Missionary work also continued as the new converts preached the gospel in northern Ohio, some without formal mission calls. By February 2, a total of about 400 people had joined the Church.

Sidney and an interested investigator and friend, Edward Partridge, traveled to New York in December 1830, desiring to meet Joseph Smith. Edward was baptized the day after, and Joseph received two revelations, one for Sidney and one for Edward. Addressing Sidney, the Lord honored his pre-baptismal preaching. "Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah which should come, and thou knewest it not" (Doctrine and Covenants 35:4). Many of the early Ohio converts had been followers of Sidney Rigdon who had taught them "restoration doctrine," thus preparing the way for the Lamanite missionaries' success.

Gathering

Concerned with the constant and vicious persecution he and the Saints were facing in New York and northern Pennsylvania, and hearing of the missionaries' success in Ohio, Joseph petitioned the Lord in prayer in December 1830 and received a revelation that the Saints "should assemble together at the Ohio" (Doctrine and Covenants 37:3). He received two additional revelations in early January wherein the Lord reiterated His command to "go to the Ohio" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32), promising that "inasmuch as my people shall assemble themselves at the Ohio, I have kept in store a blessing such as is not known among the children of men" (Doctrine and Covenants 39:15).

John Whitmer was the first to move, and Joseph left for Kirtland by sleigh soon thereafter with his wife, Emma, who was pregnant with twins. They arrived sometime in early February, traveling with Sidney Rigdon, Edward Partridge, Ezra Thayre, Joseph Knight Sr., and a wagon full of copies of the Book of Mormon. They were joined by most of the New York Saints who began preparations to move to Ohio in response to the command to gather.

Joseph's first stop in Kirtland was Newel K. Whitney's store, where Joseph entered and greeted him, saying, "Newel K. Whitney, thou art the man,"⁰⁷ to which Newel replied, "I could not call you by name as you have me." Joseph answered, "I am Joseph the Prophet; you have prayed me here, now what do you want of me?"⁰⁸ Joseph had seen in vision Newel on his knees praying for the Prophet to come.

In September 1831 the Lord revealed that He would "retain a strong hold in the land of Kirtland, for the space of five years" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:21). During that five-year period, nearly half of the current Doctrine and Covenants was revealed, and most of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible was completed. Most of the priesthood offices and quorums were formalized and filled; missionaries were sent into the eastern United States, Canada, and England, bringing thousands into the kingdom; and a temple was built wherein priesthood keys were restored and the initiatory portion of the endowment was administered. Evidence suggests there may have been as many as sixty-one Church branches in the area surrounding Kirtland by the time the Saints left.⁰⁹

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- [02.](#) Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1985), 36–37.
 - [03.](#) “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 19: 289–290.
 - [04.](#) Ezra Booth, “Letter IX,” in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: s.n., 1834), 217.
 - [05.](#) *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 38.
 - [06.](#) *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 50.
 - [07.](#) Orson F. Whitney, “The Aaronic Priesthood (Newel K. Whitney),” *Contributor* 6, no. 4 (Jan. 1885): 125. Although commonly cited, there is some concern among historians about the authenticity of the phrase “Thou art the man.” See Mark Lyman Staker, “Newel K. Whitney: Thou Art the Man,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (2003): 131.
 - [08.](#) Elizabeth Ann Whitney, “A Leaf from an Autobiography, Continued,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 7 (Sept. 1878): 51.
 - [09.](#) Karl Ricks Anderson, “The Western Reserve,” in *Mapping Mormonism*, ed. Brandon S. Plewe, S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2012), 28–29.

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