

February 17-23, 2025

# Doctrine and Covenants 12–17; Joseph Smith–History 1:66-25

“UPON YOU MY FELLOW SERVANTS”

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**Summary:** *Doctrine and Covenants 12. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Joseph Knight Sr., at Harmony, Pennsylvania, May 1829. Joseph Knight believed the declarations of Joseph Smith concerning his possession of the Book of Mormon plates and the work of translation then in progress and several times had given material assistance to Joseph Smith and his scribe, which enabled them to continue translating. At Joseph Knight’s request, the Prophet inquired of the Lord and received the revelation. 1–6, Laborers in the vineyard are to gain salvation; 7–9, All who desire and are qualified may assist in the Lord’s work.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 13. An extract from Joseph Smith’s history recounting the ordination of the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic Priesthood near Harmony, Pennsylvania, May 15, 1829. The ordination was done by the hands of an angel who announced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. The angel explained that he was acting under the direction of Peter, James, and John, the ancient Apostles, who held the keys of the higher priesthood, which was called the Priesthood of Melchizedek. The promise was given to Joseph and Oliver that in due time this higher priesthood would be conferred upon them. (See section 27:7–8, 12.) The keys and powers of the Aaronic Priesthood are set forth.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 14. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to David Whitmer, at Fayette, New York, June 1829. The Whitmer family had become greatly interested in the translating of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet established his residence at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr., where he dwelt until the work of translation was carried to completion and the copyright on the forthcoming book was secured. Three of the Whitmer sons, each having received a testimony as to the genuineness of the work, became deeply concerned over the matter of their individual duty. This revelation and the two following (sections 15 and 16) were given in answer to an inquiry through the Urim and Thummim. David Whitmer later became one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. 1–6, Laborers in the vineyard will gain salvation; 7–8, Eternal life is the greatest of God’s gifts; 9–11, Christ created the heavens and the earth.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 15. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to John Whitmer, at Fayette, New York, June 1829 (see the heading to section 14). The message is intimately and impressively personal in that the Lord tells of what was known only to John Whitmer and Himself. John Whitmer later became one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. 1–2, The Lord’s arm is over all the earth; 3–6, To preach the gospel and save souls is the thing of most worth.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 16. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Peter Whitmer Jr., at Fayette, New York, June 1829 (see the heading to section 14). Peter Whitmer Jr. later became one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. 1–2, The Lord’s arm is over all the earth; 3–6, To preach the gospel and save souls is the thing of most worth.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 17. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, at Fayette, New York, June 1829, prior to their viewing the engraved plates that contained the Book of Mormon record. Joseph and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, had learned from the translation of the Book of Mormon plates that three special witnesses would be designated (see Ether 5:2–4; 2 Nephi 11:3; 27:12). Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris were moved upon by an inspired desire to be the three special witnesses. The Prophet inquired of the Lord, and this revelation was given in answer through the Urim and Thummim. 1–4, By faith the Three Witnesses will see the plates and other sacred items; 5–9, Christ bears testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon.*

*Joseph Smith—History 1:66–75. Oliver Cowdery serves as scribe in translating the Book of Mormon—Joseph and Oliver receive the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist—They are baptized, ordained, and receive the spirit of prophecy. (Verses 66–75.)*

### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### What is still familiar about writing on metal plates for Jews?

There is a delightful Jewish tradition of writing on metal plates, pendants and wall decorations. A marriage contract (*Ketuba*), a house blessing (*Birkat Habayit*), or a dedication (*Hakdasha*) is still popular in Judaica – for homes, and building decorations, as well as personal jewelry. To date, only twice has the ‘tetragrammation’ (spelling) of the name Jehovah (*Yahweh*) been found. They dated close to 600 BCE. One was found about 20-miles from Jerusalem in a cave, south and west of Jerusalem. The inscription at Khirbet Bet Lei, according to Dr. Frank Moore Cross Jr. (1921-20120), professor of Hebrew at Harvard University, included the name of the Lord; “Yahveh (is) the God of the whole earth; the mountains of Judah belong to him, to the God of Jerusalem. The (Mount of) Moriah Thou hast favoured, the dwelling of Yah, Yahveh. [Ya]hveh deliver (us).” Another discovery was on a small metal plate used as a pendant with scripture verses. It seems to suggest that the wearer was putting God’s name on themselves. It also dates to 600 BCE and was found in the Jerusalem area in a stone box in the Hinnom Valley. The verses include the repeated spelling of the word “Jehovah,” but were translated in modern times with the word, “Lord.” It was the Aaronic, priestly blessing; “Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the

children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” (**Numbers 6:24-27**) This pendant was a scroll-like metal plate that was worn as an ‘amulet’ around someone’s neck so that they could keep the Lord’s name upon them. Jews use “*Tfillin*” (Phylacteries, a Greek word for ‘amulet’), the Jew’s “*Tallith*” (prayer shawl or under-garment) and “*Mezuzah*” (small metal container holding the verses **Deuteronomy 6:4-14**) on the doorposts. They are still being used to keep the name of God close to the wearer or resident at all times. “It became the custom for people to wear amulets, which were pieces of paper or metal disks with inscriptions on them, which would protect the bearer from sickness, the “evil eye” and other troubles. The inscriptions commonly consisted of verses from the Bible or names of various angels. The use of writings as a way to keep off evil spirits came from the belief in the holiness and power of certain words.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

#### What purpose is served by repeated patterns of witnesses in the scriptures?

There is a Hebrew word pattern or what is linguistically referred to as a mnemonic. It is in identifying a subject once, twice, three times and sometimes four times for

importance or memory aid. An example would be a normal one repetition or witness; more importantly, two repetitions or witnesses; even more significantly; three repetitions or witnesses. More than three repetitions and/or witnesses are essentially a much higher magnitude of evidence level. At the Gethsemane atonement account, eight Apostles stayed a small distance separate, three Apostles continued closer, and then the Lord was alone – with two angels eventually coming to him. “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. **(Matthew 26:36-39)** The revealing of the Book of Mormon had a similar pattern of eight witnesses, then three witnesses, and Joseph Smith’s singular witness of the angel Moroni – repeated several times! “And the testimony of three witnesses will I send forth of my word. And behold, whosoever believeth on my words, them will I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit; and they shall be born of me, even of water and of the Spirit.” **(Doctrine and Covenants 5:15-16)** “And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established; and the testimony of three, and this work, in the which shall be shown forth the power of God and also his word.” **(Ether 5:4)** “. . . Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words.” **(2 Nephi 11:3)** “. . . three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides

him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.” **(2 Nephi 27:12)** There were eight witnesses, then another group of three witnesses to the Book of Mormon's golden plates. They were all members of the Whitmer or Smith families: Christian Whitmer; Jacob Whitmer; Peter Whitmer, Jr.; John Whitmer; Hiram Page; Joseph Smith, Sr.; Hyrum Smith; and Samuel Harrison Smith.

### **What can I learn about being a laborer in His vineyard?**

The scattering and gathering of this dispensation’s saints is very much a parallel to the experiences the Children of Israel had in Biblical times. It is also part of a pattern teaching the plan of life where we leave Father’s presence, come to this earth to be tried, tempered and taught and then have the opportunity to return to Father’s presence. Leading the Latter-day gathering of Israel is the tribe of Joseph. Anciently, Joseph, the son of Israel, was to lead Israel spiritually as the birthright son. Instead, he was sold as a slave, yet he became a servant that saved. He saved the people of Egypt (Gentiles) and he saved his family (Israelites). In modern times, the keys of the gathering and leading of Israel were given to Joseph Smith. He is a descendant of ancient Joseph. His role is summarized in the parable in **Doctrine and Covenants 101:44-62**. That section explains the destruction of the twelve olive trees and the scattering of the watchmen, the Lord instructed a gathering. The gathering is done by “laborers.” “Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” **(Matthew 9:37-38)** For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. **(1 Corinthians 3:9)** “And the lord of the

vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry . . .”

**(Doctrine and Covenants 101:55)** The verse can be viewed as an instruction of “gathering” activity by the young, the middle aged and the strength of older ones. In modern times, it includes Elders, Sisters, middle aged and Senior missionaries, (every member a missionary). The exception is that some, for the time being, are told not to do mission work—like in Israel, (the first shall be last and the last shall be first – (see **Matthew 20:16** and **Doctrine and Covenants 121:34-40**). In the end, the Lord would gather those that we have not been able to find. “. . . that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.” **(Doctrine and Covenants 101:58)**

### **How does Jewish and the restored true religion of description of ordination parallel?**

From the *Talmudic* period when the *Sadducees* and *Samaritans* were in dispute with traditional Judaism, disagreements have been frequent. “Purely *Halakhic* (legal) and rabbinic disputes were usually dealt within question-and-answer and other literary forms. However, battles over *Kabbalah* (Jewish mystical thought and discipline), ordination of rabbis and Maimonide’s ‘Guide to the Perplexed’ were more substantial.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** Jews readily accept the fact that ancient Joseph was blessed and authorized by his father, Jacob, when Jacob laid his hands on Joseph’s head. “In the same way that priests lift(ed) their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they

bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In *Talmudic* times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands (known as *semikhah*.)” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** “Ordination: appointment and solemn public dedication to the office of judge and teacher of the Law and to all the functions associated therewith. The custom of ordination is a very ancient one; Joshua was ordained by Moses, who thereby indicated him as his successor. **(Numbers 27:22-23)**. The ceremony was as follows: Moses placed Joshua before the priest Eleazar and the congregation and laid his hands upon him while giving him instructions. A portion of Moses’ spirit was transferred to Joshua through Moses’ hands **(compare verse 20, and Deuteronomy. 24:9)**. Moses ordained also the seventy elders who assisted him in governing the people **(Numbers 9:16-17, 24-25)**. It is not expressly stated that the elders were ordained by laying on of hands; it is merely said that some of Moses’ spirit was imparted to the elders. This transference of the spirit, however, could take place only by laying on of hands, as appears from the passage Deut. xxxiv. 9. Maimonides says that Moses ordained the elders in the same way as he ordained Joshua, (“*Yad,*” **Sanhedrin, 4: 1**). **(William Bacher, Jacob Lauterbach, <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11756-ordination>)** The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints simply states: “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.” **(Pearl of Great Price, Articles of Faith 1:5)**”The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek

Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church.” (**Doctrine and Covenants 107:18**)

.The Aaronic priesthood, “. . . is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances.” (**Doctrine and Covenants 107:14**)

### **What does “Eternal” in the term “eternal life” mean to me?**

In the scriptures the terms “endless” punishment and “eternal” punishment transcend the length of time people will suffer for their sins. The Savior said, “I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name.” (**Doctrine and Covenants 19:10**). Therefore, when He refers to endless or eternal life (and punishment), He is speaking of laws that He established, that He administers according to His divinity, rendering His requirements of justice, and His mercy.

### **What is the Spirit of prophecy?**

“Real prophecy — *nevu'a*, in the Hebrew — is what makes *Torah* and Judaism possible. Rabbi Judah Halevi (circa 1105) in his classic presentation, *The Kuzari*, places *nevu'a* as the distinctive mark between *Torah* and philosophy. Maimonides (1138-1204) counts the belief “that G-d causes human beings to prophesize” as one of the thirteen principles of the faith. And in a letter to the

Jews of Yemen, he wrote that shortly before the Messianic era the spirit of prophecy will return to the Jewish people.” ([https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/75574/jewish/Do-Normal-Jews-Believe-in-Prophecy.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/75574/jewish/Do-Normal-Jews-Believe-in-Prophecy.htm)) The Book of Mormon teaches clearly; “. . . Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me. And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God.” (**Alma 5:46-47**) The prophet Joseph Smith testified; “. . . I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation. Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of.” (**Joseph Smith—History 1:73-74**)