

Doctrine and Covenants 18

“THE WORTH OF SOULS IS GREAT”

Summary:

Doctrine and Covenants 18. Revelation given through Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer, given at Fayette, New York, June 1829. According to the Prophet, this revelation made known “the calling of twelve apostles in these last days, and also instructions relative to building up the Church.”

1–5, Scriptures show how to build up the Church;

6–8, The world is ripening in iniquity;

9–16, The worth of souls is great;

17–25, To gain salvation, men must take upon themselves the name of Christ;

26–36, The calling and mission of the Twelve are revealed;

37–39, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer are to search out the Twelve;

40–47, To gain salvation, men must repent, be baptized, and keep the commandments.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What administrative instructions did God give to Moses

Consider the ancient leadership of the children of Israel, there was a council of three, with Moses, Aaron & Hur, a Council of Twelve Elders and a Council of Seventy. Moses had a governing leadership of three persons, Moses and his two assistants, Aaron and Hur. And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have matters to do, let him come unto them.” (**Exodus 24:14**) Moses had a governing body of twelve elders, one from each tribe. “These are those that were numbered . . . and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers.” (**Numbers 1:44**) This order was continued after Moses as well. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. (**Joshua 3:12**) “And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.” (**Exodus 24:1**) This

system partially continued to exist in other Jewish traditions up to and at the time of Jesus.

How did the leadership system begin to change before Jesus’ time?

In the Manual of Discipline of the preserved Qumran Dead Sea scrolls we read that even an off shoot of the biblical Jewish system had a sort of doctrine and covenants document called “The Manual of Discipline.” It describes their organization that included a teacher of righteousness with two assistants. There was also a council of twelve overseers. Their priestly system included two castes, one of a higher authority that connected with an order of the *Melech Zedek* (righteous king), and another of lesser authority that was a likely echo of a *Levitical*, or *Aaronic* order. They were bound by a strict mandate of unity. An *Essene’s* membership in a kibbutz-like united order came into effect only after a two-year trial period. The *Essenes* replicated and kept (1) copies of the scriptures, (2) interpretations of the scriptures, and (3)

their own scrolls of doctrines and covenants. Some people suggest that this governing system was copied by Jesus, and that he may have studied with this sect. That seems scripturally highly unlikely. The Qumran community did not follow the Mosaic governmental pattern completely. Jesus did.

What leadership restoration did Jesus bring?

Jesus used the same system of government that was given to Moses almost 1000-years previously. The “first three” leadership names include Peter (given name was Simon Son of Jonas), James (name changed from Jacob in the English translation), and John. “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees. . . . And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” **(Luke 5:8-10)** There was a leadership council of Twelve, (initially, the first three, Peter, James, and John were part of it, as well), “And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; **(Luke 6:13)** “After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. **(Luke 10:1)**

How did the latter-day restoration follow the original leadership pattern?

It is historically analogous to the governance of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that the latter-day Israelites are led now by the tribe of Ephraim (Joseph) are also organized with a First Presidency of three, “Unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom, which belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood.” **(Doctrine and Covenants 81:2)**; “President Joseph

Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught that the forerunner for our latter-day Quorum of the First Presidency is found in the New Testament organization of the Church of Jesus Christ: “The fact that Peter, James, and John were separated from the other apostles and given special authority, was the forerunner of the quorum of the First Presidency in our day. It should be perfectly clear from what is written that **these three apostles formed such a presidency**. It is very apparent to Latter-day Saints that these three were a Presidency due to the fact that all three came to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood” <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-of-the-living-prophets-student-manual-2016/chapter-4?lang=eng>) **(Seek Ye Earnestly [1970], 207–8; emphasis added)**. Then there is a Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and a Council of the Seventy. The Lord guides His covenant people today through the President of the Church, whom members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sustain as prophet, seer, and revelator. “The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the Church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews. The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews.” **(Doctrine and Covenants 107:33-34)**.

How do I recognize family traits that tie me to God?

The Latter-day restoration includes such comforting counsel, “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. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!" (**Doctrine and Covenants 18:10-13**) The part of the family that once had living prophets and revelation still echo a yearning "to return" (same word as to repent in Hebrew – *LaShuv*). "A basic tenet of the Jewish faith is the belief that those who have died will again be brought to life. In fact, *Techiat HaMeitim*, "Vivification of the Dead" is one of the thirteen cardinal principles, or "foundations," of Judaism (Articles of Faith - Maimonides' 1138-1204). ". . . It would, therefore, follow that the soul is eternal and invincible, while its physical vessel, the body, is finite, temporal and destined to dust." https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2626/jewish/The-Resurrection-of-the-Dead.htm) "If a person transgresses any of the *mitzvot* (commandment/blessings) of the *Torah*... when he repents, and returns from his sin, he is obligated to confess before G-d,

blessed be He, as it states: "If a man or a woman commits any of the sins of man... they must confess the sin that they committed." (**Numbers 5:6.**) This refers to a verbal confession. This confession is a positive command." (**Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah, 1:1**)

How does immersion for forgiveness of sin reflect the rebirth of a soul?

Water and sins do have a connection and a place in covenant traditions. The religious Jew still follows a practice of "washing sins away." "On the afternoon of the first day of *Rosh Hashana* (New Years), it is customary to walk to the nearest body of running water and there symbolically 'cast' one's sins into the water. The ceremony may be based on a verse in the biblical book of Micah: 'And Thou (referring to God) shall cast all their sins into the depths of the seas' (**Micah 7:19**). This practice, to which there is no reference in the Talmud, is generally called *Tashlikh*, probably after the Hebrew word meaning 'cast' (*va-tashlikh*) in the verse from Micah." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)