

Summary Handout

The Law of Consecration

Lesson

14

Summary

Scripture Summary:

Doctrine and Covenants 42:30–42; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, February 9, 1831. HC 1: 148–154. It was received in the presence of twelve elders, and in fulfillment of the Lord’s promise previously made that the “law” would be given in Ohio; see Section 38: 32. The Prophet specifies this revelation as “embracing the law of the Church.” 30–39, Laws governing the consecration of properties are set forth;

Doctrine and Covenants 51; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Thompson, Ohio, May 1831. HC 1: 173–174. At this time the saints migrating from the eastern states began to arrive in Ohio, and it became necessary to make definite arrangements for their settlement. As this undertaking belonged particularly to the bishop’s office, Bishop Edward Partridge sought instruction on the matter, and the Prophet inquired of the Lord. 1–8, Edward Partridge is appointed to regulate stewardships and properties; 9–12, The saints are to deal honestly and receive alike; 13–15, They are to have a bishop’s storehouse and to organize properties according to the Lord’s law; 16–20, Ohio is to be a temporary gathering place.

Doctrine and Covenants 78; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Hiram, Ohio, March 1832. The order given of the Lord to Joseph Smith for the purpose of establishing a storehouse for the poor. HC 1: 255–257. It was not always desirable that the identity of the individuals whom the Lord addressed in the revelations should be known by the world; hence, in the publication of this and some subsequent revelations the brethren were referred to by other than their own names. When the necessity had passed for keeping the names of the individuals unknown, their real names were thereafter given in brackets. Since there exists no vital need today to continue the code names, the real names only are now used herein, as given in the original manuscripts. 1–4, The saints should organize and establish a storehouse; 5–12, Wise use of their properties will lead to salvation; 13–14, The Church should be independent of earthly powers; 15–16, Michael (Adam) serves under the direction of the Holy One (Christ); 17–22, Blessed are the faithful, for they shall inherit all things.

Doctrine and Covenants 82; Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, in Jackson County, Missouri, April 26, 1832. HC 1: 267–269. The occasion was a general council of the Church at which Joseph Smith the Prophet was sustained as the President of the High Priesthood, to which office he had previously been ordained at a conference of high priests, elders, and members, at Amberst, Ohio, January 25, 1832 (see heading to Section 75). Formerly unusual names were used in the publication of this revelation to conceal the identity of the persons named (see heading to Section 78). These unusual names have now been dropped, except in cases where the identification is not known (see verse 11). 1–4, Where much is given, much is required; 5–7, Darkness reigns in the world; 8–13, The Lord is bound when we do what he says; 14–18, Zion must increase in beauty and holiness; 19–24, Every man should seek the interest of his neighbor.

Doctrine and Covenants 104:11–18; Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, April 23, 1834, concerning the United Order, or the order of the Church for the benefit of the poor. HC 2: 54–60. The occasion was that of a council meeting of the First Presidency and other high priests, in which the pressing temporal needs of the people had been given consideration. The United Order at Kirtland was to be temporarily dissolved and reorganized, and the properties as stewardships were to be divided among members of the order. 11–16, The Lord provides for his saints in his own way; 17–18, Gospel law governs the care of the poor;

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

First Modern Kibbutz: There is a significant difference between the “United Order” and the “Law of Consecration.” The United Order is more like the modern version of the Jewish Kibbutz, communities reflecting similar cooperative efforts as was done anciently. “Zionism . . . began in 1897, when Theodor Herzl founded the World Zionist Organization . . . groups established agricultural settlements all over the country, revived the Hebrew language, and created their own Watchman Society to guard their members from Arab attack. In 1909, on land purchased by the Jewish National Fund, the first kibbutz, Deganyah, was established. By 1914, the *yishuv*, as the Jewish community was called, numbered some 85,000.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

A United Order Prior to Jesus’ Time: Just prior to Jesus’ time, a legislated, cooperative community arose that used similar governance. The Essenes wrote a Qumran scroll called *The Manual of Discipline*. It describes their organization that included a Teacher of Righteousness and two assistants. There was also a council of twelve overseers. An Essene’s membership in a kibbutz-like united order came into effect only after a two-year trial period. The Essenes kept copies of the scriptures, interpretations of the scriptures, and their own scrolls of doctrines and covenants.

A United Order After Jesus’ Time: A similar unity and community bond can be seen in the scriptures. “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple . . . did eat . . . with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God . . .” (*Acts 2:44-47*) (*Acts 4:32*) “And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another.” (*3 Nephi 26:19*)

Unity with Faith In the Lord: The valuable lesson that we can learn is that unity represented in the scriptures is always connected with a central belief and faith in the Lord. That focus assures a unity because His directive powers are the same for everyone. “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (*Proverbs 3:6*) “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good . . .” (*Alma 37:37*)

Coming Together to be Saved: “. . . you would not criticize a group of people who sought the same high ground in the midst of a flood; you would not see their presence in one place as an unintelligent act, for they came together in order to be saved. So it is here. Life here is life in a large, affectionate, and unified family. Love in a family does not diminish the freedom of each member thereof; our unity does not jeopardize our individuality. Undivided, we are multiplied.” (*Neal A. Maxwell, Of One Heart, p.51*)

Unity in Jewish Prayer: A beautiful principle of Jewish unity can be sensed in the repeated prayers said when a “prayer circle” (*minyan*) is formed in Jewish ritual. The request for forgiveness should include all. “Almost all prayer, for example, was written in the first person plural—‘Forgive us,’ ‘Teach us,’ ‘Bring us to our Land.’ Although private prayer was certainly permitted, the individual was urged to join a congregation (*minyan*) when he prays and to incorporate the needs of the *minyan* in his prayers.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

How to Reach Consecration: The Latter-day Saints’ concept of focusing on the Lord has promoted a unified way of community life that can still be expressed individually. The law of consecration, in a celestial sense, is a stewardship of doing without being instructed to do so. Those that have to ask, “What must I do to inherit life?” must grasp the opportunity to reach higher so that the spirit can dictate the “Law of Consecration.”

Consecration Evidence in Early Church: In the days of the Savior, all believing members committed their time, talent and even their lives to “the kingdom.” I participated in an archaeological survey close to Jericho where we were discussing the odd nature of a beautiful synagogue floor of the first century. What was odd about it was the signature. Almost every ancient mosaic floor found in Israel has the signature of the donor with his family name and title. This one simply had an inscription that indicated that the “entire community” had done this work. I had the distinct feeling we were standing on the remains of a worship center used by early saints, “former-day Saints,” people who committed themselves first to the building of the Kingdom of God.

Stewardship Instead of Ownership: As a discipline and behavioral structure, the early Saints gave everything to the Lord. By consecrating their resources to the Kingdom of God, they were learning stewardship instead of ownership. Stewardship is an eternal principle also given before Jesus’ time. “For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD . . . that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.” (*Exodus 32:29*)

The Lord Answers Rich Man, Lawyer: In Jesus’ day, two men asked what they should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus gave each one an answer that applied to him because each had to learn a principle he needed most. The rich young man was told to keep the commandments and when he answered that he observed them all, he was told to sell what he had and give to the poor. On the other hand, a lawyer was asked a question and when he answered correctly Jesus told him to follow his own answer. In other words, “Do it.” **Rich Man:** “. . . go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven . . .” (*Mark 10:17-20*) **Lawyer:** “. . . And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.” (*Luke 10:25-28*)

Wholeness of Consecration: The Law of Consecration includes more than a guideline on riches, wealth or worldly aspects. It is a guideline in stewardship, humility, and a fervent purpose of service to others guided by mercy, piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and understanding.

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