

Section 111

The revelation of section 111 on August 6, 1836, reoriented Joseph and his companions. They had been preoccupied with paying their debts to the point of pursuing an unwise strategy. The revelation taught them to think of treasure in terms of human lives (“people . . . whom I will gather”) and to not be overly concerned about their debts (Doctrine and Covenants 111:2, 5). It is a comforting revelation.

Just as the Saints in Missouri were being asked to leave another county there, Joseph and the Saints in Ohio finished the House of the Lord in Kirtland at great expense. The resulting blessings far surpassed the value of every penny, but the process left Joseph indebted around \$13,000, with more expenses looming.

Under these circumstances Joseph took a risk. A man named Jonathan Burgess had told him that there was a lot of money buried in the cellar of a house in Salem, Massachusetts. He said he knew where it was, and that he was the only living person who did. Joseph, his brother Hyrum, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon set out for Salem in July, planning to meet Burgess, locate the house, and hopefully find the treasure. They eventually found the house, but it was not for sale or rent, and they left Salem without getting access to it.⁴⁶⁸

Church historian B. H. Roberts wrote that “while in Salem the Prophet received a revelation in which the folly of this journey is sharply reproved.”⁴⁶⁹ Elder Roberts may have been overly sensitive to the emphasis antagonistic writers placed on Joseph’s youthful treasure-seeking (see Joseph Smith—History 1:55–57).⁴⁷⁰ The Lord does not sharply reprove Joseph in section 111. He says, in fact, that he is not displeased with the prophet, despite his follies, by which he meant “a weak or absurd act not highly criminal; an act which is inconsistent with the dictates of reason, or with the ordinary rules of prudence.”⁴⁷¹

In this and other revelations that respond to Joseph or other Saints being in anxious, high-pressure situations, the Lord’s response is cool and in control. Joseph is overwhelmed with debt to the point of taking

unsound risks. The Lord replies that he will gather Salem's treasures and souls for Zion in due time. Joseph and his companions responded by seeking out the place the Lord wanted them to stay, a house on Union Street not far from where Nathaniel Hawthorne was writing tales of buried treasure in Salem and the local newspaper was reporting similar rumors.⁴⁷² They visited from house to house and did some preaching. On August 19, they visited the East India Marine Society Museum, comparatively relaxed in their efforts to obey the revelation and stop being too concerned with their debts and with things they could not control in Zion and focus instead on souls both past and present.

These efforts led to some of the "treasures" the Lord mentioned in verse 10. Returning from another trip to Salem in 1841, Hyrum Smith met with Erastus Snow, gave him a copy of section 111, and urged him to go there and harvest the "many people" the Lord promised to gather in due time (Doctrine and Covenants 111:1). At great sacrifice to himself and his family, Elder Snow went. He and Benjamin Winchester started the harvest and others followed. In 1841 the *Salem Gazette* announced that "a very worthy and respectable laboring man, and his wife, were baptized by immersion in the Mormon Faith." Six months later the *Salem Register* noted that "Mormonism is advancing with a perfect rush in this city."⁴⁷³ The Church has inquired into Salem's early inhabitants too. The early records of Salem and surrounding areas have been preserved and are accessible for genealogical research leading to the sacred ordinances of the House of the Lord.

With section 111, the Lord transformed folly into treasures in his own due time.

Section 112

Do you know someone who only hears the parts of a conversation that validate their thoughts or actions? Are you that person?