

Section 105

As the Camp of Israel journeyed to Missouri in the summer of 1834, Governor Daniel Dunklin backed away from his promise to provide a militia force to assist the Saints' return to their Jackson County land.¹ Meanwhile, Joseph knew very well that the camp was “altogether too small for the accomplishment of such a great enterprise.” He repeatedly urged the eastern Saints to provide men and means to reclaim Zion, but they offered too little, too late.²

The camp was preceded by exaggerated rumors of its size and intentions. When it arrived, local citizens were already alarmed. Several hundred of them gathered, threatening attack. Joseph assured the sheriff and militia officers that the camp had come to defend, not to attack. “We are anxious for a settlement of the difficulties existing between us,” Joseph assured them, “upon honorable and constitutional principles.”³

¹ Peter Crawley and Richard L. Anderson, “The Political and Social Realities of Zion’s Camp,” *BYU Studies* 14:4 (1974): 406–20; History of George Albert Smith, Church History Library. Parley P. Pratt, Jr., editor, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1950), 115.

² “[Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834](#),” 56, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 13, 2020.

³ Letter From Cornelius Gilliam, Clay County, Missouri, 21 June 1834, and a statement of reconciliation, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

Wondering when and how, not if, Zion would be reclaimed, Joseph sought revelation to know what the Lord wanted the camp to do next. While encamped near Fishing River, he received the landmark revelation in section 105.⁴

“I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion,” the revelation said of the camp. It assured them that their prayers were heard, their offering accepted, and that they had been “brought thus far for a trial of their faith” (D&C 105:19). Because too few Saints had chosen to live the law of consecration and respond to the Lord’s will and Joseph’s repeated invitations to send men and means to redeem Zion, the Lord postponed Zion (vv. 1–10). He said it had to wait until the elders could be endowed with the necessary power. The power, it turned out, would come through a priesthood endowment in the House of the Lord being constructed back in Kirtland (D&C 105:11, 33).

The revelation is a document of *détente*. It calls for proclamation of peace now and foreshadows a future role for the army of Israel in redeeming Zion. It postpones Zion in Jackson County for an ambiguous “little season” (D&C 105:9). It commands Saints in the meantime to receive the anticipated endowment of power to help them gain experience, learn their duty and doctrine better, and increase in number and in holiness. In the “little season,” the Saints are to continue to purchase all the land in western Missouri but to avoid gathering in quantities perceived as threatening by neighbors.

Section 105 gives Joseph and his army orders to retreat. They were instructed to seek redress lawfully, but the war was far from over. These tactics would buy time “until the army of Israel becomes very great” while more and more land in Jackson and adjoining counties could be legally purchased. Once it was, the revelation said, “I will hold the armies of Israel guiltless in taking possession of their own lands, which they have previously purchased with their moneys, and of throwing down the towers of mine enemies that may be upon them.” Meanwhile, Latter-day Saints are to “sue for peace, not only to the people that have smitten you, but also to all people;

⁴ Autobiography of Joseph Holbrook, typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; Autobiography of Harrison Burgess in Kenneth Glyn Hales, ed. and comp., *Windows: A Mormon Family* (Tucson, Arizona: Skyline Printing, 1985).

and lift up an ensign of peace, and make a proclamation of peace unto the ends of the earth” (D&C 105:38–39).

Section 105 led Joseph to disband the camp and direct its members to return to their families or, if they had none, to remain in Missouri to assist the exiled Saints. The revelation reoriented Joseph Smith and the Church. Zion remained the ultimate goal, but the revelation declared that Zion would not be redeemed until the Saints were endowed with power. Now, having submitted to the trial of their faith, the brethren could understand section 103’s promise that Zion would be redeemed by power. They were to return to the House of the Lord in Kirtland, there be endowed with power on conditions of humility and faithfulness (D&C 105:12), and then spread out over the globe to gather Israel. Then, when the army became very great both numerically and by obedience to the law of consecration, they would regain Zion.

Joseph organized the Saints in Missouri and appointed many of them to return to Ohio to participate in the solemn assembly. Back in Kirtland, Joseph and the Saints finished the temple and received an endowment of priesthood power (see section 110). These were means to the end of Zion, and Joseph turned his attention back to regaining the promised land. He anticipated that the “little season” (D&C 105:9) leading up to Zion would end within a few months, and it could have if the Saints had done the specific things listed in verse 10.

We remain in the “little season,” perhaps in part because we have not acted on section 105’s specific instructions to learn obedience to the law of consecration and gain experience obeying it. Some commentators have suggested that D&C 105:34 rescinds, postpones, or suspends the law of consecration, but that is not what it says. It says that the specific commands for the bishop to give the Saints inheritances of the land in Zion, and to establish a storehouse and print the scriptures there, will necessarily need to wait until after the Saints reclaim the land on which to keep those commandments (see section 57).

Section 105 charts the way to Zion by obedience to the law of consecration. It declares that “Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself” (D&C 105:5). So Zion will be postponed as long as Latter-day Saints postpone fidelity to the law. Verse 34 cannot be to blame for that. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that “the law of sacrifice

and the law of consecration have not been done away with and are still in effect.”⁵ Just as when section 105 was given, however, “there are many who will say: Where is their God? Behold, he will deliver them in a time of trouble, otherwise we will not go up to Zion, and will keep our moneys” (vv. 8–9).

⁵ Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1997), 639.