

# Sections 14, 15, 16

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Oliver Cowdery kept his acquaintance David Whitmer informed about the translation of the Book of Mormon. When antagonism against Joseph grew in Harmony, Pennsylvania, Oliver wrote to David to ask if he and Joseph could finish translating at the Whitmers' home in Fayette, New York. David himself came with a wagon to transport them, told them his parents would house and feed them for free while they were translating, and promised them all the help they might need.

By early June 1829, they commenced translating in Fayette. The Whitmers and their neighbors were friendly and supportive. Whitmer sons David, Peter, and John were about the same age as Joseph and Oliver, all in their twenties, and especially “zealous,” Joseph’s history says, “and being desirous to know their respective duties, and having desired with much earnestness that I should enquire of the Lord concerning them, I did so, through the means of the Urim and Thummim and obtained for them in succession the following Revelations.”<sup>1</sup>

Section 14 was for David. It repeats phrases and themes of the marvelous work about to be made known to mankind and the figurative field that is ready for harvest. It also repeats the emphasis on working for Zion and promises David that if he works to build Zion and endures to the end, God will give him the greatest possible gift: eternal life.

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<sup>1</sup> Dean C. Jessee, editor, *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Autobiographical and Historical Writings* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1989), 1:294.

The revelation foreshadows David's role as one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. David kept many of the revelation's commands. His testimony of the Book of Mormon, to which he remained faithful, is recorded in every copy. He assisted in the marvelous work. But in David's case the condition that he "endure to the end" (D&C 14:7) is especially notable. He may not have endured as the Lord intended. Having served for almost four years as president of the Church in Missouri, he was cut off from the Church in 1838. He lived for another five decades as a respected citizen of Richmond, Missouri, and made a conscious effort to affirm the Book of Mormon while finding fault with Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>2</sup>

The Lord gave essentially the same revelation to both John and Peter in sections 15 and 16, commanding both to hearken to his words as their Redeemer. They desired to know what would be of most worth to them. The Lord blessed them for this desire and told them the most valuable thing they could do is to "declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my father" (D&C 15:6; 16:6).

Like all of the revelations, these ones have an internal rationale. Declaring repentance is the most valuable thing for John and Peter to do, the Lord explains, because it will enable them to rest with the repentant in God's kingdom. Sections 18, 84, and 93 explain this logic further, but in these sections we are introduced to the truth that working for the salvation of others is eternally satisfying for ourselves.

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<sup>2</sup> Lyndon W. Cook, editor, *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem: Grandin, 1991).