

Section 63

“The land of Zion,” says Joseph’s history, “was not the most important temporal object in view.” Satan hates Zion and works to undermine it from every angle. When Joseph and his companions returned to Kirtland, Ohio, from their trip to dedicate Independence, Missouri, as the center of Zion, they found “the exertions of Satan” had led many Saints into rebellion. Joseph and the faithful Saints were extraordinarily anxious about how to establish Zion.¹

When and how should they gather to Missouri? How should they fund Zion and the move there? What should they do with their property in Ohio, like Whitney’s store and the farms belonging to Isaac Morley and Frederick Williams? The revelations in Missouri commanded the Saints to purchase land there. How should they raise the money? Sidney Rigdon had been commanded to write an inspired description of Zion and God’s will concerning it (D&C 58:50). What did the Lord think of his first draft? Isaac Morley had already moved to Missouri, and the several families living on his farm planned to follow as soon as the Lord said to go. Since Joseph and Sidney Rigdon and their families lived on Morley’s farm, selling it would leave them homeless. Where should they live?

¹ “[History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 \[23 December 1805–30 August 1834\]](#),” p. 146, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 5, 2020.

Section 63 addresses the apostasy and these pressing questions related to literally building Zion. This revelation motivated much action. Joseph began discerning by the Spirit those who should move to Zion.² As commanded, Titus Billings and several other Kirtland Saints moved to Missouri in the spring of 1832. Sidney Rigdon humbled himself and rewrote a description of the land of Zion based very much on this revelation and previous ones.³

Oliver Cowdery and Newel Whitney used it to obey the command to go

from place to place, and from Church to Church preaching and expounding the Scriptures and Commandments [that is, the recent revelations] and obtaining moneys of the disciples for the purpose of buying lands for the Saints according to commandments and the disciples truly opened their hearts.

Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer took the money to bishop Partridge and Sidney Gilbert in Missouri, “and thus there has been lands purchased, for the inheritance of the Saints.”⁴

As commanded, Newel Whitney and Frederick Williams kept their property in Kirtland and consecrated it to the Church. As for Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, and their families, they moved south to Hiram, Ohio, in September 1831 where Elsa and John Johnson provided homes for them. Yes, there was apostasy—adultery, lying, hypocrisy, rebellion—in Kirtland when the Lord gave section 63. There was also substantial Zion-building in response to it.

² D&C 63:41. The Church History Library has an unpublished revelation in John Whitmer’s handwriting, dated August 31, 1831, which says: “Behold thus saith the Lord by the voice of the spirit it is wisdom in me that my servent John Burk David Eliot Erastus Babit should take their Journey this fall to the land of Zion.”

³ Sidney Rigdon Papers, Church History Library. Published in Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 99–101.

⁴ “[John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847](#),” p. 37, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 5, 2020.