

Section 54

Newel Knight led the New York Saints to Thompson, Ohio, where they settled on Leman Copley's land and "commenced work in all good faith thinking to obtain a living by the sweat of the brow."¹ Then section 51 instructed Bishop Partridge to obtain a deed from Leman for the land "if he harden not his heart."² But after obeying section 49's command to preach the gospel to members of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, Leman forsook his faith in the restored gospel and returned to that Society.³ Then he ordered the Saints off *his* land.

Joseph Knight said they "had to leave his farm and pay sixty dollars damage for putting up his houses and planting his ground."⁴ Where should they go and what should they do to provide for themselves? Joseph's history says that the Saints in Thompson, "not knowing what to do, sent in their elders for me to inquire of the Lord for them." He did and the Lord answered with section 54.⁵

¹ Newel Knight Autobiography, 30.

² "[Revelation, 20 May 1831 \[D&C 51\]](#)," p. 86, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 30, 2020.

³ Dean C. Jessee, editor, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *BYU Studies* 17:1 (1976): 29–39.

⁴ Joseph Knight, Jr., *Incidents of History 1827–1844*, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

⁵ "[History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 \[23 December 1805–30 August 1834\]](#)," p. 121, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 30, 2020; "[John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847](#)," p. 29, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 30, 2020.

The eternal Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified for the sins of mankind spoke to Newel Knight, presiding elder of the Saints in Thompson: “You must stand fast in the office whereunto I have appointed you,” the Savior said. The Lord makes repentance and humility the conditions on which the Saints in Thompson will escape their enemies. Because Leman Copley broke his covenant to consecrate land, the covenant is null and void. The Lord blesses the Saints who have kept the covenant. He commands them to flee from their enemies by traveling to Missouri as a group, appointing a treasurer to pay fares and tolls along the way.

Western Missouri bordered on the territory recently set apart by the U.S. government for Native Americans to settle. The Lord commands the Saints to find ways to make a living after they arrive until Zion can be established and land provided for them to inhabit. He commands them to patiently endure hardships until the Lord's coming. He will reward those who seek him. The souls of these early converts will rest with the Lord.

As a result of section 54, the saints from Colesville, New York, continued their group trek all the way to Missouri. Led ably by Newel Knight, they became the nucleus of the Church in Jackson County and gave their lives to building Zion.