

# Section 95

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Six months after the Lord told the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, to build a house of the Lord where they could learn his law, be endowed with his power, and come into his presence (see section 88), the Saints had not begun to build the Lord’s house. Joseph wrote to the Saints in Missouri. “The Lord commanded us in Kirtland to build an house of God,” he said “and we must—yea the Lord helping us we will obey, as on conditions of our obedience, he has promised us great things, yea even a visit from the heavens to honor us with his presence.”<sup>1</sup>

Joseph seemed to be the only one who sensed any urgency in the command. It was the dead of winter in 1833. In the spring the Saints got around to having a meeting about building the Lord’s house and appointed Jared Carter, Reynolds Cahoon, and Hyrum Smith to a committee to raise money for construction and oversee it.<sup>2</sup> The meeting ended after that and nothing more happened for a month. Then the Lord gave section 95.<sup>3</sup>

It is a revelation of God’s love, his conditional love. “Thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you” (D&C 95:1). Given the premise that God loves the Saints and chastens those he loves as a means to their forgiveness, the revelation’s

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<sup>1</sup> “[Letter to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833](#),” p. 18, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> “[Minute Book 1](#),” p. 20, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> “[Revelation, 1 June 1833 \[D&C 95\]](#),” p. 59, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020.

next passage is a predictable rebuke for what the Lord calls the “very grievous sin” of not building the temple.

Then the Lord reemphasizes the importance of the temple. It is the school for prophets, the way to “pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,” the way out of darkness, the venue for receiving an endowment of heavenly power. The Lord wanted the elders to remain in Kirtland to receive this endowment, but they were contentious, and he sent them into the field to be chastened—because he loved them.

Beginning in verse 11, the Lord promises the Saints power to build the temple *if* they keep his commandments. “If you keep not my commandments,” he emphasized, “the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness” (D&C 95:12). The revelation does not say that the love of God will not continue, only that it will not continue with those who choose to reject it, who “love darkness rather than light” (D&C 29:45). By juxtaposing his love with darkness, the Lord equates his love with light and the synonyms for it described in sections 88 and 93, including truth, glory, intelligence, power, and life. Why, the Lord seems to lament in section 95, would Saints choose to walk in darkness at noon when God’s loving light shines for all who choose to obey the conditions on which he offers it?

So what would be the wise course? “Let the house be built,” the Lord says, and gives the dimensions and a promise to reveal it to “three” (D&C 95:13). The building committee sent a letter to all the Saints the same day the revelation came, urging them to “make very possible exertion to aid temporally as well as spiritually in this great work,” and “it is as important as our salvation is that we obey this . . . command.”<sup>4</sup>

The Saints got the point. They went to work at enormous cost. The Lord revealed the building to the First Presidency (D&C 95:14).<sup>5</sup> Hyrum Smith broke ground on June 5, 1833, in a wheat field on the bluffs above the Chagrin River. Everyone helped. Saints consecrated funds, labor, and expertise, but “the project was far out of proportion to the Church’s pitiful resources.” They had to rely on the Lord’s promise of power to build it if they kept his commandments. Joseph borrowed money to finance the

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<sup>4</sup> “[Letterbook 1](#),” p. 37, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> “[Minute Book 1](#),” p. 12, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020; Truman Angell, Journal, typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Truman Angell to John Taylor, March 11, 1885, Church History Library.

construction, “but the economic realities gave Joseph no pause.” He understood the Savior’s “great and last promise” to be worth any cost, any sacrifice (D&C 88:68–69).

After receiving section 95, the Saints no longer walked in darkness at noon. “Beginning in Kirtland,” wrote historian Richard Bushman, “temples became an obsession. For the rest of his life, no matter the cost of the temple to himself and his people, [Joseph] made plans, raised money, mobilized workers, and required sacrifice” (see section 97).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 217–18.