

# Section 112

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Do you know someone who only hears the parts of a conversation that validate their thoughts or actions? Are you that person?

Apostasy swept through the Saints in Ohio in 1837, including the apostles. Thomas Marsh, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, tried to reconcile the struggling members of his quorum and prepare them for a mission to Great Britain under his leadership. Thomas had scheduled a July 24, 1837, meeting of the apostles in Kirtland. When he arrived, he discovered that Joseph had already called and sent apostles Heber Kimball and Orson Hyde to England.<sup>1</sup> After consulting with quorum member Brigham Young, Thomas went to Joseph for counsel and reconciliation.<sup>2</sup> In that meeting, Thomas wrote section 112 as Joseph dictated.

Aspiring and full of potential, Thomas and some of the apostles found themselves divided, unfulfilled, and undervalued. The revelation acknowledges the apostles' receipt of priesthood keys and the greatness of their calling, but it also implies pride, even blasphemy and apostasy among some, and the need for Thomas and his quorum to repent and then to preach repentance and baptism (D&C 112:23–26).

Though he wrote the Lord's words as Joseph spoke them, Thomas Marsh heard section 112 selectively. He took the revelation to Heber Kimball's wife, Vilate, and told her

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald K. Esplin, "The Emergence of Brigham Young," 287–92.

<sup>2</sup> Wilford Woodruff, Journal, June 25, 1857, Church History Library.

that Joseph had assured him that her husband’s missionary work in England would not be effective until Thomas said so.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Heber and his companions sent letters reporting their successful labors back across the Atlantic. As Heber put it, “It was all right to prepare the way for brother Marsh.”<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Marsh had an arrogance problem. He heard and self-servingly interpreted the passages of the revelation that reminded him of his high position, the greatness of his calling, his possession of powerful priesthood keys, and his impressive role in spreading the gospel to the nations. He did not hear the revelation’s command to be humble (D&C 112:10), to “exalt not yourselves,” or “rebel not against my servant Joseph” (v. 15).

Thomas returned to his home in Missouri as commanded in verse 5 and continued to serve as the Church’s publisher there. In the autumn of 1838, he exalted himself and rebelled against Joseph. He famously repudiated the decisions of Church councils to defend his wife in a domestic dispute with another sister.<sup>5</sup> Then he signed an affidavit charging Joseph Smith with treason, leading to his incarceration. Thomas was subsequently excommunicated in March 1839 and remained estranged from the Church for nearly two decades.

In May 1857 he wrote a humble letter to, of all people, Heber Kimball, then serving in the First Presidency. “I deserve no place among you in the church as the lowest member,” Thomas confessed, “but I cannot live without a reconciliation with the 12 and the Church whom I have injured.” In the same letter Marsh referred back to his apostolic commission affirmed in section 112. “A mission was laid upon me & I have never filled it and now I fear it is too late but it is filled by another I see, the Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, September 6, 1837, photocopy of original in private possession, Church History Library.

<sup>4</sup> Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, November 12, 1837, Church History Library.

<sup>5</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 3:283–84.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, May 5, 1857, Church History Library.

Don't be that person. Be humble, don't exalt yourself, and don't rebel against the Lord's servants, and the Lord will lead you by the hand and answer your prayers (D&C 112:10).