

Section 44

Shortly after he relocated to Kirtland, Ohio, as commanded (D&C 37 and 38), Joseph wrote an urgent letter to Martin Harris, still living in New York: “Inform the Elders which are there that all of them who can be spared will come here without delay if possible this by Commandment of the Lord,” the prophet said.¹

Section 44 was Joseph’s motivation—the commandment he mentioned to Martin.² The rationale of the revelation goes like this: The Lord explains that it is *expedient*, or a means to a highly desired end. Often, as in section 44, the Lord says something is “expedient in me,” meaning that the thing is a vital means to accomplish his purposes. The means, in the case of section 44, is to gather all the elders of the Church who can possibly attend. At least that is the first premise of the means, or what is expedient.

Here is a paraphrase of the rest of the Lord’s rationale in section 44:

- Gather all the elders.
- If they are faithful they will have the Lord’s Spirit poured out upon them when they assemble.
- That will make them powerful preachers of repentance.
- That will lead many people to convert.

¹ “[Letter to Martin Harris, 22 February 1831](#),” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 28, 2020.

² “[Revelation, February 1831–B \[D&C 44\]](#),” p. 70, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 28, 2020.

- That will give the Saints power to organize economically in ways that are legal (and so not vulnerable to suits by enemies).
- That will give the Saints power to organize economically in ways that are also legal in terms of the Lord's law of consecration.

Meanwhile, the Lord explains, "You must visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief" (D&C 44:6).

That all makes more sense when you know that Ohio law demanded that twenty members of a church meet to elect officers and have their organization recorded by the county clerk in order for that church to have legal recognition and be able to own property.³ The gathering of the Saints in Ohio led prominent and powerful men, including Eber Howe and Grandison Newell, to oppose the church economically, in the press, and in the courts. Foreseeing the need to organize and the antagonism the Saints would experience, the Lord revealed section 44.

Joseph wrote to his brother Hyrum, "I think you had better come into the country immediately for the Lord has commanded us that we should call the elders of this Church together unto this place as soon as possible."⁴ There was a "special meeting of the Elder[s] of the Church of Christ held at Kirtland" on April 9, 1831, but it seems like the meeting that best fulfills the command and prophesied blessings in section 44 was held in early June.⁵

³ "Act for the Incorporation of Religious Societies," *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, Vol XII (Chillicothe, Ohio: Office of the Supporter, 1819), chapter LIV.

⁴ "Letter to Hyrum Smith, 3–4 March 1831," p. [2], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 28, 2020.

⁵ "Minute Book 2," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 28, 2020. "Minutes, circa 3–4 June 1831," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 28, 2020.