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How Can First Nephi 3:7 and Doctrine and Covenants 84:4 Be Reconciled?

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Abstract: This article discusses Matthew 12:39 to show that there are no contradictions between 1 Nephi 3:7 and D&C 84:4. The author concludes that the injunction of the Lord to build a temple was hampered by such opposition that the plan of the Lord was merely postponed—"the purposes of the Lord will prevail."

**"HOW CAN FIRST NEPHI 3:7
AND DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 84:4,
BE RECONCILED?"**

QUESTION: *"How can we reconcile 1 Nephi chapter 3, verse 7, in which Nephi states that the Lord gives 'no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he com-*

ANSWER: There is no conflict whatever in these two passages even if some such contradiction seems to some to be apparent. Usually a generation is considered to be, "The ordinary period of time at which one rank follows another, or from father to son in succession." However when the Savior said to the Jews: "... An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, . . ." (Matt. 12:39.) He evidently set no definite time limit, but referred to a condition which could prevail indefinitely as long as wickedness endured, though it should extend through several generations from father to son. It may be reasonable to assume that in giving this revelation to the Prophet the Lord did have in mind the generation of people who would still be living within the one hundred years from the time of the announcement of the revelation, and that they would enjoy the blessings of the temple, and a glorious cloud would rest upon it. It is also reasonable to believe that no soul living in 1832, is still living in mortality on the earth. Notwithstanding this there is nothing in the commandment given to Nephi, neither in his assurance that the Lord would bless him in

YOUR QUES- TION

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mandeth' them,' with the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein the Saints were commanded to build a temple in Independence in that generation, which temple was not built according to the commandment which was given?"

obtaining the plates that were so essential to the welfare spiritually and temporally of the descendants of Nephi, that in any sense is in conflict with the commandment or promise that was made by the Lord in the revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. We read in another revelation given to the Church in January 1841, where the Lord absolves the members of the Church from the obligation of building the temple, in the following words:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their might and

with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings.

"And the iniquity and transgression of my holy laws and commandments I will visit upon the heads of those who hinder my work, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord God.

"Therefore, for this cause have I accepted the offerings of those whom I commanded to build up a city and a house unto my name, in Jackson county, Missouri, and were hindered by their enemies, saith the Lord your God.

"And I will answer judgment, wrath, and indignation, wailing, and anguish, and gnashing of teeth upon their heads, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord your God.

"And this I make an example unto you, for your consolation concerning all those who have been commanded to do a work and have been hindered by the hands of their enemies, and by oppression, saith the Lord your God.

"For I am the Lord your God, and will save all those of your brethren who have been pure in heart, and have been slain in the land of Missouri, saith the Lord." (D&C 124:49-54.)

This should be a sufficient answer to the question. The Lord accepted at the hands of the members of the Church their efforts and absolved them. It is an interesting thing to know that during the Civil War, that section of Missouri suffered, and the wrath of the Lord was poured out upon it, and some of the people who hindered the work of the Lord partook of this wrath in fulfilment of that prediction.

It should also be remembered that the Lord opened the way for Nephi because the obtaining of the plates was an absolute necessity as Lehi has pointed out. It was a matter of spiritual life or death to have in their possession the sacred records which Nephi was sent back to Jerusalem to obtain. Therefore the Lord overruled all opposition and made it possible for Nephi to accomplish the work assigned to him. Some critics may arise and say why then, could not the Lord overrule all opposition in the day of the Prophet Joseph Smith and make it possible for the building of

the house of the Lord according to what had been written? It is a sufficient answer to such a question to say, that the real time for the building of that temple had not arrived, therefore the Lord postponed the day. The building of the temple under all the conditions was not an essential requirement in the year 1832. Surely the Lord would have overruled all opposition had there been the necessity at that time for such a magnificent building to be built. To the contrary he absolved the Saints and postponed the day. When considering the word of the Lord concerning the efforts of the members of the Church, it is wrong to think that the members were not diligent in their duties in that day, and that the Lord had been overruled by wicked men, and his commandments had failed.

A similar incident of apparent failure occurred in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon when through the persistent pleading of Martin Harris the manuscript of the Book of Mormon was permitted to be taken to exhibit to Mrs. Harris and some of her friends. The manuscript was stolen and no doubt those who stole it made changes in it as the Lord indicated that they would. The Prophet and Martin Harris felt that irreparable error had been done, and they at first wondered why the Lord would permit such a serious thing to happen. The truth is that the Lord knew what would happen from the very beginning and had made provision for such a serious blunder. The loss of this manuscript was felt to be a great lesson to the Prophet, which lesson perhaps he greatly needed. The result thereof, however, was that the Lord had in store a better account of the same historical events, far richer in detail. The apparent evil therefore turned out to be a blessing for all who read the Book of Mormon. Surely the Lord knows the end from the beginning, and no matter what the actions of men may be the purposes of the Lord will prevail.