Institute 05-5-20 Institute—16th Lecture Honoring 200 Anniversary of Joseph’s 1st Vision: **Law of Consecration—Misunderstood**

**Time Line of the Law of Consecration**

The Lord’s timing is once again miraculous. Everything fits line upon line, to prepare for the saints to receive this Law.

* Oct 1830: Four missionaries head to Kirtland and convert 130 people, most of whom had been “Disciples” or Campbellites.
* Dec 1830: Joseph received the account of Enoch and the definition of Zion, “no poor among us”.
* Dec 1830: receives D&C 37:1, “It is not expedient in me that ye should translate any more until ye shall go to the Ohio”.
* Jan 1831: Last time Emma sees her parents, Isaac and Elizabeth Hale, as she leaves in the wagon for Ohio.
* Feb 1-2, 1831: Joseph, Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge arrive in Kirtland (Emma, 5 months pregnant with twins, arrives with the wagon the day after Joseph).
* Feb 4, 1831: The Lord called Edward Partridge as “bishop unto the church” (D&C 41:9).The Bishop directed the Law of C.
* Feb 9, 1831: Twelve elders present in Ohio when Joseph receives the revelation known as: the Law, “Thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of their properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them . . .” (42:30-31).

It is the law of the celestial kingdom, no one will receive an inheritance unless they live this law.

* 1831-1839: Saints in Missouri and Ohio lived the Law of Consecration in various forms—some more some less.
* 1832: United Firm/Order business management to oversee land and companies for funding members’ needs (D&C 78, 82).
* Apr 23, 1834 United Order reorganized (D&C 104)
* July 8, 1838: *The term*tithing *meant all free-will offerings, or contributions, to the Church funds.* Revelation received as clarification: “I require all their surplus property . . . this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever” (D&C 119:1, 3-4).
* 1839-45: Nauvoo form of consecration seen especially in the building of the Nauvoo Temple.
* 1844: Joseph recorded: “I preached on the stand about one hour on the 2nd chapter of Acts, designing to show the folly of common stock [holding property in common]. In Nauvoo everyone is steward over his own” (*History of the Ch,* 6.37-38).
* 1860s: Church Cooperatives founded in some Utah cities the mid-1860s.
* 1874-1883: United Order established in Orderville, Brigham City, Utah, with remnants lasting until 1904.
* 1917: A political counterfeit of the Law of C, communism, was implemented without agency in the first country, Russia.
* 1974, April, Pres. Spencer Kimball on offerings: “[Give] much more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it.”
* 1975, 1977, and 1979 Marion G. Romney addressed the Law of Consecration or United Order in General Conference talks.
* 1996, April 10, Pres. Gordon B. Hinkley, “The law of sacrifice and the law of consecration have not been done away with and are still in effect.”
* 2002, April, Elder Neal A. Maxwell: “Many ignore consecration because it seems too abstract or too daunting. The conscientious among us, however, experience divine discontent.”
* 2008-19, Steven Harper, BYU Joseph Smith Papers Editor, “The Law of Consecration in the Doctrine and Covenants;” etc.

**Historical Introduction**

In Dec 1830, while translating the Book of Genesis for the “New Translation” (or JST), Joseph received three unique chapters on Enoch. In those chapters the prophet Joseph learned for the first time of Enoch’s city of holiness and the Lord’s definition of Zion: cooperate rather than compete.

Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them (Moses 7:18).

Following that section of translating the Bible, the Lord had Joseph stop until after he arrived in OH (D&C 37:1).

***Opposition to American Histo****ry*

The Law of Consecration was counter cultural in Jacksonian America. It was anti-private ownership. To cooperate rather than compete, to look to the poor and relieve suffering, and to be one. The Lord asks us to leave behind the covetous, individualistic world. The worldly currency gets in the road of spiritual treasures. Gain as an end in itself is wrong. In contrast to this, God’s Law of Consecration is all about loving God and loving your neighbor.

***Morley’s Farm-The Family 1828-1829***

Several of the one hundred or so new converts in Ohio had been part of the Campbellites or Disciples of Christ. A small group broke off around 1829 over issues of the Spirit. It was about a year before the four missionaries arrived (Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson, Peter Whitmer, and Oliver Cowdery). One of the leaders of this small splinter group was Sidney Rigdon. His group lived a communal lifestyle trying to follow the teachings of Acts 2:44 with “all things in common.” They all lived on Isaac Morley’s Farm, in the experiment referred to as “the Family.” There was no private property on the Morley Farm. Those involved said, “We truly began to feel as if the millennium was close at hand” (Karl R. Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtlan*d, 130). The well-known “watch story” demonstrates how it worked. Levi Hancock recalled:

 Hermon [Heman] Bassett [Basset] came to me and took my watch out of my pocket and walked off as though it was his. I thought he would bring it back soon but was disappointed as he sold it. I asked him what he had meant by selling my watch. “Oh,” said he, “I thought it was all in the family.” I told him I did not like such family doings and I would not bear it (*ibid.*).

The Lord’s revealed plan had no "common stock" as practiced by “the family” on the Morleys’ farm.

Now that Joseph was in a place where newly converted saints were prepared and open to ideas of a communal lifestyle, and the first Bishop was called, the timing was right for the Lord to reveal His higher the Law of Consecration.

(\*\****We too must prepare to be in the right place and frame of mind receive more revelation***!).

***Lectures on Faith*** *1834 (p. 58)*

**“**A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary [to lead] unto life and salvation.”

**Feb 9, 1832**—“**The Law”**

Eight days after Joseph’s arrival in Kirtland, and five days after the Bishop was called, the Lord revealed the promised “Law” (D&C 29:34; 41:3-5, 10; 42:2, 28, 52; 43:2-5, 8-9; etc.). Initially, the saints lived it by following D&C 42:54:

“If thou obtainest more than that which would be for thy support, thou shalt give it into my storehouse, that all things may be done according to that which I have said.”

Yet there are many ways that the Law of Consecration may be carried out. The D&C speaks of the Law of Consecration many times (see Table 1). Over the next two years, from 1831-1833, Bishop Edward Partridge served as the leader to implement the Law of Consecration. The Bishop and his wife, Lydia, were two of the first to consecrate their all. In their correspondence Joseph explained:

A man is bound by the law of the Church, to consecrate to the Bishop **before** he can be considered a legal heir to the kingdom of Zion, and this, too, without constraint, and unless he does this, he cannot be acknowledged before the Lord on the Church Book [see D&C 85]. . . . Every man must be his own judge how much he should receive and how much he should suffer to remain in the hands of the Bishop.

Bishop Partridge did not press people to give a certain amount. The definition of “all” was between God and each person.

When Joseph Smith was asked, “Who shall be the judge of what is surplus property?” he answered, “Let them judge.” Joseph and you and I will all be held accountable in heaven. God knows who are covenant breakers. Everyone who has been endowed needs to prepare a giving heart.

**Missouri 1831-1838**

In Missouri the Church established and bought a printing press and W.W. Phelps became steward. But a growing sense of ownership led him astray. The Prophet Joseph wrote a letter to W.W. Phelps:

You say “my press, my types &c.” W[h]ere our brethren ask, did you get them & how came they to be “yours”? No hardness, but a caution, for you know that it is We, not I, and all things are the Lord’s, and he opened the hearts of his Church to furnish these things, or we should not have been privileged with using them (Jessee, *Writings,* 338-39).

We too may fall into W.W. Phelps’ position. This was the beginning of fall—but fortunately he recovered within a year or two.

We still have the record of what and how some of the saints consecrated their goods. Titus Billings sheet of paper included: bedding, extra clothing, farming utensils, cow, calf, and furniture. Money for the purpose of purchasing land . . . Then Bishop Partridge gives him stewardship over each of the same items—but now they are to be used to build the kingdom.

**April 2017**

This reminds me of when our apostles visited Google in 2017, and told members of our faith: “You may receive your pay check from Google, but never forget that you work for the Lord. The Lord is your boss.”

**Consecration**

The word “consecration” means to make sacred. It has nothing to do with quantity, but means everything we give to a sacred purpose—our time, talents, work, and money, is consecrated. Consecration is not about money, but it is about our attitude and sacrificing what God asks. Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “Consecration is giving all we have for all the Father has. What an exchange rate!” (*Conference Report,* April 2002). The riches of eternity compared to a bike or car or 3-bedroom duplex? Consecration is not about receiving welfare or giving our stuff away—it is about how to make sacred. It changes work into holiness. Consecration is the opposite of self-serving materialism. Yet, philanthropy is not consecration either. Socialism and Communism are even further from consecration. The key words are love and all. To describe what the Law of Consecration is, I have adapted Steven Harper’s description into a four-legged stool:

1. **Agency**=Power to Act in obedience or disobedience to the Law. We have power to act independently of God’s will, influence for good or evil (D&C 104:17).
2. **Stewardship**= Everything belongs to the Lord the Creator. All he has given us is what we have to act upon. (D&C 38:17; 42:53; **104:11-14**)
3. **Esteem All Equally**=“Appoint unto this people their portions, every man equal according to his family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs” (D&C 51:3, 9; 38:24-27; 70:14; 78:6; 82:17)
4. **Accountable to God**=Responsibility to someday report our stewardship to God (D&C 70:4; 72:3; 78:22; 101:78; 104:13-18)

**Table 1: Revelations about the Law of Consecration / United Order / Zion**

(adapted from the Institute Manual, *Church History in the Fulness of Times,* 98)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DATE:** | **Where Received** | **Where Recorded** | **Content** |
| Feb 4, 1831 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 41:9 | Edwards Partridge appointed 1st Bishop |
| Feb 9, 1831 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 42:29-34 | Law of Consecration explained |
| Feb 1831 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 44:6 | Saints to administer to the poor |
| Mar 7, 1831 | Kirtland, OH | D&C45:64-75 | Call to gather Zion: prospect NewJerusalem |
| March 1831 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 48 | OH saints save $ for inheritance in Zion |
| May 1831 | Thompson, OH | D&C 51:3f | Bishop to appoint stewardships to family size and needs. Storehouse established |
| June 1831 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 56:16-20 | Rich and poor commanded to repent |
| July 20, 1831 | Jackson Co, MO | D&C 57 | MO appointed and consecrated as Zion |
| Aug 1, 1831 | Jackson Co, MO | D&C 58:1-9, 50-57 | Zion will come after tribulation, lay foundation by purchasing lands |
| Dec 4, 1831 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 70:1-8 | Elders stewards over printing revelations. Surpluses consecrated to the church |
| Mar 1832 | Hiram, OH | D&C 78 | Establish independent storehouses in Zion |
| Apr 26, 1832 | Jackson Co, MO | D&C 82:11 | United order established in Zion & Kirtland |
| Apr 30, 1832 | Jackson Co, MO | D&C 83 | Widows and orphans provided for by consecration of storehouse |
| Nov 27, 1832 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 85 | To receive an inheritance in Zion, must be willing to live the Law of Consecration |
| Aug 2, 1833 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 97:10-21 | House in Jackson Co, or Zion commanded. Zion is pure in heart |
| Apr 23, 1834 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 104:47-66 | Literary Order dissolved in MO |
| Jun 22, 1834 | Kirtland, OH | D&C 105 | Redemption of Zion postponed, until saints prepared. Literary Firm/ Order dissolved |

**Modern Misunderstandings of the Law of Consecration:**

There are many current misunderstandings on the Law of Consecration. Those saints who are endowed in the temple have covenanted to live the law. But some do not understand the Law. If we ignore the Law of Consecration, it is to disobey it. We have been repeatedly commanded to be anxiously engaged in bring to pass much righteousness. We decide how much love, money, and time we give to God. The method doesn’t matter—the Lord tells all who inquire and He will enlighten what more we can consecrate. Here are a few common misunderstandings:

* *The law was rescinded or revoked*. Some have interpreted certain verses, such as: D&C 58:28-32, or section 119, to say that. Yet a closer look describes the stopping of the literary firm, but not the Law of Consecration. We don’t stop the “Law of Chastity because we can’t live it. The Law was implemented differently, but it is still a Law. The doctrines stand.
* *It is only for the land of Missouri*. Some think it will return we return to build Zion in Missouri. But the Lord taught: D&C 105:3, 5, 13 “they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them . . . And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom . . . **13**Therefore it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion.”
* *It is my stuff, I earned it—*Deut 8:16-20; Ps 24; Luke 12:16-21; Mosiah 4:19-21 “Are we not all beggars? . . . impart of your substance one to another” (Mosiah 4:19, 21). Don’t forget, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” In the Summer of 1838, the bank has failed, the national economy has tanked. They are still trying to build the temple in Missouri, The Law of C. is not about giving away all your “stuff” but making our time, talents, and things as an offering to God.
* *We will live the Law of Consecration when we are asked*—We have been!
* *Why don’t church leaders require us?—*It has always been voluntary, but every person can treat their property as a stewardship, their job, and time as dedicated to God.
* *Tithing is a lower law, and Law of Consecration the higher law*.
* *It will only work in agricultural communities.* Perhaps “Orderville” was designed that way, but the Law is not so restrictive.
* *It is a law about giving to the poor*. Actually it is more a Law of work and giving all to God than receiving money. But we can still give more than you can spare. We should not think of our “ownership,” as stewardship.

For more see:

Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*; Neal A. Maxwell, Consecrate thy Performance: https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org /study/general-conference/2002/04/consecrate-thy-performance?lang=eng; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpXMbUI17ks>

D. Todd Christofferson: https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2010/10/reflections-on-a-consecrated-life?lang=eng; Marion G. Romney <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/generalconference/1973/10/church-welfare-some-fundamentals?lang=eng>