

## Lesson 43: D&C 121-123, "O God, Where Art Thou?"

### Overview

#### Persecutions while settling in Far West (1838)

##### Aug 6 - Election day battle at Gallatin

Missourians tried to prevent Saints in Daviess Co from voting. They began fighting. News of the fighting spread and was exaggerated.

##### Sep 12 - Saints driven from Dewitt

A mob drove all the Saints living in DeWitt out of the area  
Several women and children died from the effects of exposure and hunger

##### Oct 24 - Battle of Crooked River

Three men, including David W Patten, were killed in Ray Co. when a group of Saints tried rescue some who had been taken by the mob/militia. The defensive action of the Saints was reported to Governor Boggs as aggressive and hostile

##### Oct 27 - Gov. Boggs extermination order:

"The Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good. Their outrages are beyond all description."

Now the mob/militia was a legal arm of the State

Joseph admonished all the Saints in outlying areas to move to Far West for protection. The residence of Haun's Mill did not heed the Prophets admonition.

##### Oct 30 - Haun's Mill massacre

240 members of the mob/militia killed 17 men and boys. 15 were injured.

##### Oct 31 - Siege of Far West

The mob/militia forces continued to gather around Far West in preparation for an attack. The residence of Far West barricaded the city with wagons and timber. By 31 October, 1838 about 2,000 mob/militia forces had gathered just South of Far West.

Joseph Smith and 4 other leaders arrested when they are invited by the leaders of the militia to meet to discuss terms. When they arrived at the meeting they were taken prisoners

"In a secret and illegal court-martial held during the night, the prisoners were sentenced to be executed the next morning on the public square in Far West. When General Alexander Doniphan received the order from General Lucas, he was indignant at the brutality and injustice of the affair and replied, 'It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My

brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning, at 8 o'clock; and if you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God." (Church History In The Fulness Of Time, pg. 205)

The prisoners were first sent to Independence, then Richmond, then Liberty – all the time waiting for their trial

Dec 1838 to Apr 1839 - Joseph Smith confined in Liberty Jail for about 4 months – which is where he received the Sections that we will discuss today.

April 1839 – The prisoners escape Missouri and arrive in Illinois

How were Joseph and the other prisoners freed?

They were aloud to escape because the State didn't have a case against them. But this meant that Joseph was still and outlaw in Missouri and couldn't legally go back

(Church History in the Fulness of Times - Student Manual Religion 341 Through 343, pg. 193-207)

Sections 121, 122, and 123 were taken from an epistle that Joseph Smith and his fellow prisoners sent to the saints from Liberty Jail. It may be read in its entirety in The History of the Church, vol. 3. The epistle took the Prophet six days to write, it being composed between March 20th and March 25th

## Afflictions

D&C 121:1-4

1 O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

2 How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?

3 Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them, and thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them?

4 O Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven, earth, and seas, and of all things that in them are, and who controllest and subjectest the devil, and the dark and benighted dominion of Sheol—stretch forth thy hand; let thine eye pierce; let thy pavilion be taken up; let thy hiding place no longer be covered; let thine ear be inclined; let thine heart be softened, and thy bowels moved with compassion toward us.

What does Joseph Smith demonstrate that he knows to be true as he pleads to the Lord?

The power of Lord and His ability to deliver

The Lord hears all, He see's all, He loves us, He created all things  
All things are in His control, including the devil)

Marvin J. Ashton

Perhaps it would be good for our souls to build the understanding that He is there, even our loving and eternal Father, and that oftentimes, delays to our urgent pleas can be best for us. Who is to say it isn't more important to know He is there than to receive immediate answers? Oftentimes I think of the conditions under which Joseph Smith pled within the confines of the horrible prison.... The Prophet seemed to be sustained by the overruling knowledge that God was there, knew him, and loved him. While answers to his pleading and prayers were delayed, God was building a stronger prophet. ("Know He Is There," Ensign, Feb. 1994)

What is a reason that Elder Aston gives for the Lord delaying His response?

(Who is to say it isn't more important to know He is there than to receive immediate answers  
The Prophet seemed to be sustained by the overruling knowledge that God was there, knew him, and loved him.  
God was building a stronger prophet)

D&C 121:7-9

7 My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

8 And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

9 Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

What does the Lord promise Joseph Smith when it comes to his trials?

(thine afflictions shall be but a small moment)  
(if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high)

Joseph Smith

"Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God." (Lectures on Faith 6:5)

D&C 122:5-8

5 If thou art called to pass through tribulation; if thou art in perils among false brethren; if thou art in perils among robbers; if thou art in perils by land or by sea;  
6 If thou art accused with all manner of false accusations; if thine enemies fall upon thee; if they tear thee from the society of thy father and mother and brethren and sisters; and if with a drawn sword thine enemies tear thee from the bosom of thy wife, and of thine offspring, and thine elder son, although but six years of age, shall cling to thy garments, and shall say, My father, my father, why can't you stay with us? O, my father, what are the men going to do with you? and if then he shall be thrust from thee by the sword, and thou be dragged to prison, and thine enemies prowl around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb;

7 And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

8 The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?

First the Lord outlines a list of trial and afflictions. One commentary I read points out that Joseph Smith suffered all of these things

What reason does the Lord give that we need to go through afflictions?

(all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good)

Spencer W. Kimball

Being human, we would expel from our lives physical pain and mental anguish and assure ourselves of continual ease and comfort, but if we were to close the doors upon sorrow and distress, we might be excluding our greatest friends and benefactors. Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery. (Faith Precedes the Miracle, pg. 98)

According Pres. Kimball, how can suffering be for our good?

(Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery)

Wilford Woodruff

“In the dispensations and providences of God to man it seems that we are born to suffer pain, affliction, sorrows and trials; this is what God has decreed that the human family shall pass through; and if we make a right use of this probation, the experience it brings will eventually prove a great blessing to us, and when we receive immortality and eternal life, exaltation, kingdoms, thrones, principalities and powers with all the blessings of the fulness of the Gospel of Christ, we shall understand and comprehend why we were called to pass through a continual warfare during the few years we spent in the flesh.” (JD, 18:33)

“we are born to suffer pain, affliction, sorrows and trials.” We will understand why this important “when we receive immortality and eternal life, exaltation, kingdoms, thrones, principalities and powers”

Christ then uses Himself as an example – stating that He has suffered all things

Neal A. Maxwell

“As part of His infinite atonement, Jesus... has borne the sins, griefs, sorrows, and, declared Jacob, the pains of every man, woman, and child. Having been perfected in His empathy, Jesus thus knows how to succor us.... Nothing is beyond His redeeming reach or His encircling empathy. Therefore, we should not complain about our own life’s not being a rose garden when we remember who wore the crown of thorns!” (CR, April 1987)

I think of Joseph Smith when someone considers why good people suffer difficult trials. In addition to all the things that he suffered that are outlined in these verses, he and Emma lost 6 children while they were infants. Can you think of any mortal who suffered more, and endured more trials than Joseph Smith?

D&C 121:16-19

16 Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, saith the Lord, but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

17 But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves.

18 And those who swear falsely against my servants, that they might bring them into bondage and death—

19 Wo unto them; because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house.

What consequences face those who “lift up the heel against mine anointed”?

(because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house)

Dallin H. Oaks

The counsel against speaking evil of Church leaders is not so much for the benefit of the leaders as it is for the spiritual well-being of members who are prone to murmur and find fault. The Church leaders I know are durable people. They made their way successfully in a world of unrestrained criticism before they received their current callings. They have no personal need for protection; they seek no personal immunities from criticism—constructive or destructive. They only seek to declare what they understand to be the word of the Lord to his people. ("Criticism," Ensign, Feb. 1987)

Why was there then, and always will be, those who seek to tear down the gospel?

(It destroys their craft  
Evil men influenced by Satan to do his work)

Joseph Smith

"The enemies of this people will never get weary of their persecution against the Church, until they are overcome. I expect they will array everything against me that is in their power to control, and that we shall have a long and tremendous warfare. He that will war the true Christian warfare against the corruptions of these last days will have wicked men and angels of devils, and all the infernal powers of darkness continually arrayed against him". (TPJS, pg. 259)

Joseph F. Smith

"As a proof of this, we need only to open our eyes and see the energy and activity of the enemies of this people at the present time. When the wicked rage and the heathen imagine a vain thing relative to this people, we may set it down as a fact that the devil is not dead, and that the work of the Lord is not dead, either." (CR, April 1903)

The Lord has provided us with great blessings to help us get through trials and afflictions

D&C 121:26,33

26 God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now;

33 How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.

What does the Lord promise he will give us to help us through our afflictions?

(knowledge)

How can knowledge help us through afflictions?

Remember, knowledge of God and His ways is what help Joseph Smith get through his trials

Gordon B. Hinckley

"There is a promise, given under inspiration from the Almighty, set forth in these beautiful words: "God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost." (D&C 121:26.)

The humanists who criticize the Lord's work... have not heard the voice of the Spirit. They have not heard it because they have not sought after it and prepared themselves to be worthy of it. Then, supposing that knowledge comes only of reasoning and of the workings of the mind, they deny that which comes by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The things of God are understood by the Spirit of God. That Spirit is real. To those who have experienced its workings, the knowledge so gained is as real as that which is acquired through the operation of the five senses. I testify of this." ("The Continuing Pursuit of Truth," Ensign, Apr. 1986)

“the knowledge so gained is as real as that which is acquired through the operation of the five senses”

This reminds me of a passage from Alma

Alma 32:34-35

34 And now, behold, is your knowledge perfect? Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing, and your faith is dormant; and this because ye know, for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand.

35 O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea...