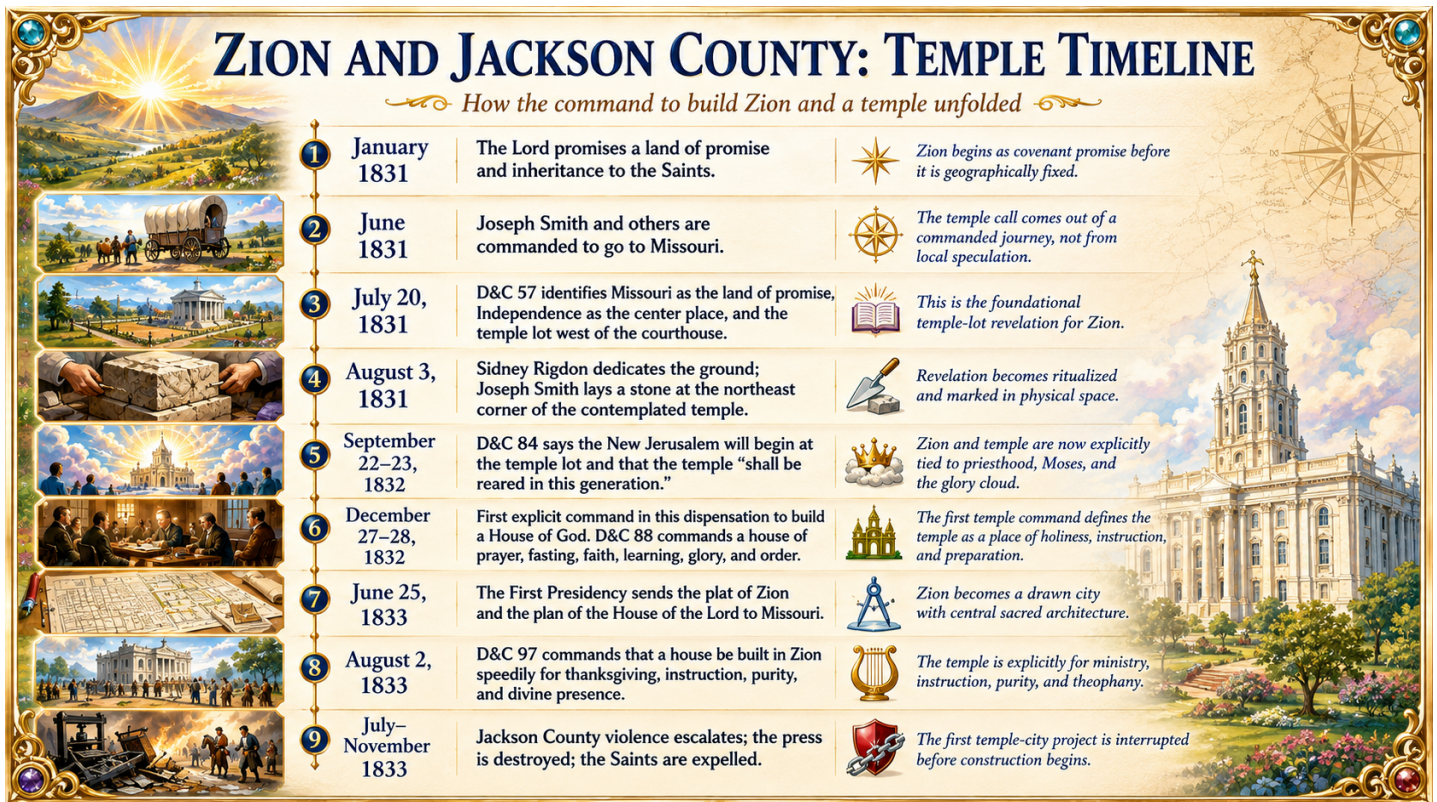


Persecution, Ineffable Revelation, and the Burden of Temple Knowledge



Welcome to Lesson Two, Zion and Jackson County. In this class, we are going to look at when the idea of Zion is revealed to Joseph and how it becomes the singular goal of him in the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith arrived in Jackson County with revelation already moving the Saints west, but the Lord then named the place, marked the temple lot, and began unfolding a vision of a city built around and leading up to the presence of God. Independence was a frontier town, it was vibrant, full of trade, uncertainty, and possibility. Joseph quickly received a command to build a house of the Lord and organize a covenant people around it.

As you work through the homework, watch how the pattern develops line upon line. The first revelation gives the place. Later revelations begin to reveal the structure, the purpose, and the sacred grammar behind it. We will look at the Plat of Zion, the twenty four houses of the Lord, the relationship between temple, city, school, storehouse, and courthouse, and the way ancient temple patterns return in a modern dispensation. We will also look honestly at the conflict in Jackson County and how the unfinished dream of Zion helped prepare the Saints for Kirtland, Nauvoo, and the later temple tradition. This lesson is a sad lesson of life for the early saints as this was to be a temple city that was never accomplished, but whose revealed pattern continued to teach the Saints how to move toward the presence of God. A lesson that should be very familiar to everyone in this class.



Spend some time internalizing this timeline for Joseph and the Saints. In less than three years, Joseph Smith moved from the revealed promise of what Zion can be to the exact location of where the saints could make that happen, they marked the temple lot, a dedicated sacred space for the Lord to dwell, and then an ambitious city plan with twenty four houses of the Lord at its center. The sequence of events is very important for us to see the pattern of line upon line revelation and the call and response of how God reveals truth to us. The Lord first revealed the place, then Joseph and the Saints had to learn the pattern. Jackson County was a frontier of wagon trade, commerce, land speculation, slavery, and stopping grounds for all moving westward. But now the Lord had instructed Joseph that it would become a Zion. One in which there would be a city where temples, schools, storehouses, courthouses, priesthood, and daily life all worked and taught together to lead a covenant people toward the presence of God. So as you study and ponder on that be mindful of the timeline, watch how quickly the revelation grows, and also how quickly conflict interrupts it.

Reading Assignment

Read Doctrine and Covenants 42 and look for the early foundation of Zion. Notice the law of consecration, the gathering of a covenant people, and the first language of inheritance. At this stage, Zion is still a promise before it becomes a place. [Doctrine and Covenants 42](#)

Read Doctrine and Covenants 52 and look for the command to travel west to Missouri. This matters because Joseph does not choose Zion by speculation. The Saints are sent on a commanded journey, and the location is revealed only after they move in faith.

[Doctrine and Covenants 52](#)

Read Doctrine and Covenants 54 and watch how the idea of Zion becomes connected to sacrifice, movement, and land. The Saints are learning that Zion requires obedience before they fully understand what Zion will look like.

[Doctrine and Covenants 54](#)

Read Doctrine and Covenants 57 and mark the language of place. This is the first major turning point in the timeline. The Lord identifies Missouri as the land of promise, Independence as the center place, and the temple lot as lying westward from the courthouse. Zion now has geography.

[Doctrine and Covenants 57](#)

Read the Joseph Smith Papers entry for the July 20, 1831 revelation. Look at how the revelation moves from general promise to specific location. This is the moment when the temple lot becomes the sacred center around which Zion will later be planned.

[Revelation, 20 July 1831, Doctrine and Covenants 57](#)

JOSEPH ARRIVES IN JACKSON COUNTY

The Center Place and the First Temple Revelation

Independence, Missouri—1831
A frontier county seat and outfitting town on the Santa Fe Trail—full of movement, trade, and possibility.

- 1 June 1831** Joseph Smith and others are commanded to travel to Missouri (Doctrine and Covenants 52).
- 2 June 1831** Independence in 1831 is a frontier county seat and outfitting town, full of movement, trade, and possibility.
- 3 June–July 1831** Joseph seeks the Lord concerning where the Saints should gather and where they should build.
- 4 July 20, 1831** Revelation names Missouri as the land of promise, Independence as the center place, and identifies the temple lot west of the courthouse (Doctrine and Covenants 57).
- Key Turning Point** The Lord reveals the place first, and the fuller temple pattern will come later.
- 6 August 3, 1831** The ground is dedicated and a stone is laid at the northeast corner of the contemplated temple.

INQUIRING OF THE LORD
Joseph earnestly seeks divine direction for the Saints. The Lord answers.

THE TEMPLE LOT WEST OF THE COURTHOUSE
Revelation identifies the exact place for the temple in Independence.

DEDICATION AND STONE-LAYING
The Saints dedicate the ground and lay a stone as a sign of faith.

When Joseph arrives in Jackson County, Zion moves from promise to place. The Lord marks sacred ground and begins the temple story in earnest.

When Joseph Smith was first commanded to build a temple and where that temple would stand, he was being asked to build something for which no one had any idea or framework for which they could model. But one thing was very clear in the revelation of July 20, 1831, the Lord would have this temple built in Zion that there would be a "center place" that the other temples and community centers would build up to. A clear model of how the Lord was going to teach the saints line upon line. Now while Joseph knew biblical temple language from scripture, and he knew the religious building of his time very well none of them provided a working model for the kind of temple that the Lord was beginning to reveal to him. Even local communities of the time that used temple language generally used their spaces for prayer, preaching, worship, sacraments, assembly or study. What was this building supposed to be if not that?

Reading Assignment

Preparing a People for Zion

Read Doctrine and Covenants 58 and look for what the Lord teaches the Saints after they arrive in Jackson County. Notice that the revelation was given in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, on August 1, 1831, shortly after Joseph and the first elders arrived. The section teaches that Zion will come after tribulation, that the Saints are to act with agency rather than wait to be commanded in all things, and that land, money, storehouses, inheritance, and gathering must be organized carefully. Pay special attention to verses 1 through 7, 26 through 29, 34 through 37, and 49 through 57. The Lord is teaching the Saints how to become builders of Zion before the city can be built. ([The Church of Jesus Christ Doctrine and Covenants 58](#))

Read the Joseph Smith Papers entry for the August 1, 1831 revelation. Use this as the historical companion to Doctrine and Covenants 58. This helps you see the revelation as a Jackson County document, given in the immediate setting of arrival, gathering, land questions, and the first attempt to organize Zion on the ground. ([Joseph Smith Papers Revelation, 1 August 1831, Doctrine and Covenants 58](#))

Read Doctrine and Covenants 59 and look for the spiritual rhythm of Zion. This revelation was given on August 7, 1831, shortly after the land was dedicated. It teaches the Saints how to live in the promised land through love of God, Sabbath worship, gratitude, rejoicing, and holy living. Focus especially on verses 1 through 8, 9 through 19, and 21 through 24. This section shows that Zion is not only a location. Zion is a disciplined way of life ordered around worship and covenant. ([The Church of Jesus Christ Doctrine and Covenants 59](#))

Read the Joseph Smith Papers entry for the August 7, 1831 revelation. Use this to place Doctrine and Covenants 59 in its historical moment. Joseph has reached Zion. The temple lot has been revealed. The land has been dedicated. Now the Lord begins teaching the Saints how to live in that holy place. ([Joseph Smith Papers Revelation, 7 August 1831, Doctrine and Covenants 59](#))



The Plat of Zion shows the point when Joseph Smith’s revelations about Zion moved from identifying a gathering place to describing how that gathering place would function. By June 1833, the Lord had already revealed Independence as the center place of Zion and designated the temple lot west of the courthouse. The next step was establishing a pattern for how the Saints would live together as a covenant community. The Plat of Zion provided that pattern. It placed temples at the center of the city and organized homes, streets, schools, worship, stewardship, and agricultural life around them. This was revelation that every aspect of life should be centered on God. The design created order and purpose, linking daily living with worship and community responsibility. The city itself became part of the Lord’s instruction to His people. The Saints would learn the polysemic lesson of temples through the structure of their community as they worked, worshipped, and lived together. Although the temple would eventually become the central symbol of this covenant relationship, the

original vision for Zion in Jackson County was a complete city designed to help prepare a covenant people to live in the presence of God.

Reading Assignments

1. **The Plat of the City of Zion (Joseph Smith Papers)**
<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/plat-of-the-city-of-zion-circa-early-august-1833/1>
2. **Letter from Joseph Smith to Church Leaders in Missouri, 25 June 1833 (includes instructions related to the Plat of Zion)**
<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-leaders-in-jackson-county-missouri-25-june-1833/1>
3. **Doctrine and Covenants 57 (Independence designated as the center place of Zion)**
<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/57>
4. **Doctrine and Covenants 58 (Instructions concerning the establishment of Zion)**
<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/58>
5. **Doctrine and Covenants 82 (The law of stewardship and Zion principles)**
<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/82>
6. **“Zion” Gospel Topics Essay**
<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/zion>
7. **The Plat of Zion (full text)**
<https://rsc.byu.edu/joseph-smith-prophet-man/joseph-smiths-concept-city-zion>

WHAT TO WATCH FOR BEFORE CLASS

How Zion moves from place, to people, to pattern.

1 WHAT TO NOTICE

Follow the story from the promise of Zion, to the revealed center place, to the temple lot, to the formation of a covenant people, and finally to the Plat of Zion. Joseph was learning that Zion was not just a destination. It was a revealed pattern for how a people could ascend into the presence of God.

2 WATCH THE ORDER OF REVELATION

- ★ The Lord names the place.
- ★ He forms the people.
- ★ He teaches covenant life.
- ★ He reveals the city pattern.
- ★ The Plat becomes a teaching tool.

Zion moves line upon line. The city itself becomes part of the lesson.

3 WHY THE PLAT MATTERS

The Plat of Zion places sacred temples, learning, stewardship, government, work, and family life around the house of the Lord. It is more than a map of a city. It is a map of God's process and teaching style.

4 STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What comes first in the Zion revelations: place, people, law, or architecture?
- 2 Why is the center place named before the full temple pattern is revealed?
- 3 What do Doctrine and Covenants 58 and 59 teach us as diachronic linguistic students?
- 4 Why does the Plat of Zion connect ordinary life with sacred life?
- 5 What does it mean for temples, schools, storehouses, homes, farms, and civic order to belong to one covenant system?
- 6 What part of Zion remains unfinished in Jackson County, and what continues into Kirtland, Nauvoo, and now?

TEMPLE
SCHOOL
STOREHOUSE
COURTHOUSE
FAMILY LIFE
WORK & STEWARDSHIP

SACRED ORDER

A Temple Lot (Center)
B 24 Houses of the Lord (First Circle)
C Public / Civic Blocks (Second Circle)
Residential Blocks (Third Circle)
Farms Beyond the City

★ BRING THIS QUESTION TO CLASS ★

If the Lord wanted to teach the Saints how to restore Zion, what does that entail from our historical linguistic study of the origin of Zion?

What to Watch For Before Class

At this point in the homework, you should have been able to follow the story from the promise of Zion to the revealed center temple, from the temple lot to the formation of a covenant people to restore Zion, and from that covenant people to the Plat of Zion. The next step is to slow down and ask what all of this was meant to teach. Joseph Smith was learning that Zion was a revealed pattern for how a people could live in a way to ascend to the presence of God. The Lord named a place, then began forming a people according to their willingness, then gave them a city design that placed sacred temples, learning, stewardship, government, work, and family life around the house of the Lord.

As you prepare for class, pay attention to the order of revelation. Look at the linguistic patterns in the theophonic texts. The Lord does not begin by giving Joseph a full architectural system. He begins with covenant life leading to the restoration of Lady Zion. He reveals gathering, consecration, inheritance, obedience, agency, Sabbath worship, gratitude, stewardship, and holiness. Then the city plan becomes the structure that gathers those principles into daily life. The Plat of Zion was a teaching tool. It showed the Saints how sacred temples could train a people line upon line. The temple would eventually become the concentrated form of this lesson, but in Jackson County the first form was so much more than a map of the city; it was a map of God's process and teaching style.

Study Questions

1. What does the Lord reveal first in the Zion revelations: the place, the people, the law, or the architecture?
2. Why does it matter that Independence is named as the center place before the full temple pattern is revealed?
3. What does the language of Doctrine and Covenants 58 and 59 teach us as diachronic linguistic students?
4. Why does the Plat of Zion connect ordinary life with sacred life?
5. What does it mean for temples, schools, storehouses, homes, farms, and civic order to belong to one covenant system?
6. What part of Zion appears unfinished in Jackson County, and what part of Zion continues forward into Kirtland and Nauvoo and now?

Bring This Question to Class

If the Lord wanted to teach the Saints how to restore Zion, what does that entail from our historical linguistic study of the origin of Zion?