

GETTING SET FOR A POSSIBLE MODERN DAY REPEAT OF HAUN'S MILL

We all know the tragic story of Haun's mill.

Joseph Smith had counseled all of the Church members living around Far West to drop everything and come into Far West for safety. It wasn't a commandment...it was simply a request and counsel. Almost all the members of the Church immediately followed the counsel of the prophet. However, brother Jacob Haun, upon hearing this counsel, came and argued with the Prophet about the counsel at least 3 times during one day. Brother Haun's point was that he did not see the reason for it and he felt that he and his people could defend themselves if necessary. According to John Lee who was present for the conversations, on 26 October 1838 The Prophet said,

"Move in, by all means, if you wish to save your lives." Haun replied that if the settlers left their homes all of their property would be lost and the Gentiles would burn their houses and other buildings. Joseph replied, "You had better lose your property than your lives, but there is no danger of losing either if you will do as you are commanded."

Again, brother Haun thought he and his neighbors could protect and defend themselves, and Smith finally gave them permission to remain, and is recorded as saying;

"they would consider him a tyrant if he **forced** them to leave and abandon their property and come to Far West."

Years later, on 8 June 1867 John Lee reaffirmed in his diary that;

"Jos. permitted Haun to gather the Brethren and defend their Mill but stated at the same time that they would be massacred & sure enough it was done."¹

Four years later after the incident Joseph himself recounted:

"Up to this day God had given me wisdom to save the people who took Council. None had ever been killed who abode by my Council. At Haun's Mill the brethren went contrary to my Council; if they had not, their lives would have been spared."²

The lesson here for us to learn from is that brother Haun, the righteous local leader of a group of good saints...felt he knew better than to obey all of the counsel of the living prophet. After all, Joseph hadn't made it an enforced commandment...he phrased it as counsel and advice. In fact, it is important to note that Joseph **REFUSED** to make it a **COMMANDMENT** and force the people to gather, even though he knew it would save their lives. Many of the good and righteous people who trusted in their own wisdom and their local leader and refused to give full heed to the

¹ Regional Studies, Missouri, Benson—Haun's Mill, p.107

² Ehat & Cook, Words, Manuscript History of the Church: 29 August 1842 (Monday Morning), p.127–129

words of the prophet, sadly, paid the terrible price four days later. That they were good people who were righteous and had great faith is not disputed as some of them performed miracles later even in the very day of their distress. But it was to help alleviate some of the suffering their disobedient actions had brought down upon them. The problem was they thought it was a little more important to try and save their material positions in the world, than to obey the suggestions of a living prophet. This brings up another point of discussion.

LABORING UNDER A FALSE DOCTRINE

[Does personal spiritual righteousness and gospel zeal guarantee the temporal protection of the Lord and excuse an individual from obeying counsel of the Prophets and Apostles?](#)

On the face of it the answer would seem obvious...absolutely not. We must obey all of the counsel of the Lord's anointed...all of the time. We can't pick and choose without facing the resulting consequences. But throughout history and even today many of the saints and their local leaders believe, work under and teach this false doctrine in an important aspect of their lives.

Let me rephrase this question in another way. Can a member or a leader be trying so hard in so many areas and be doing a tremendous amount of good while yet at the same time ignore counsel given again and again by prophets...and then suffer terrible consequences because of his lack of obedience in something very small he personally did not see the benefit of?

The answer is of course...yes. Let me use one more famous historical example of this very issue. The Martin and Willey handcart experience is again, like Haun's mill, a story of a group of good, righteous individuals and their local leaders ignoring counsel from Prophets and Apostles and suffering the consequences. They specifically, and falsely, applied the idea that their personal righteousness would protect them in their disregard for following the counsel of the Apostles. In fact they actually used as an excuse their gospel enthusiasm, zeal, faith and obedience as some of the primary reasons in their arguments to disobey the advice of the brethren.³ After all, it wasn't a commandment that was enforced...it was just counsel. Again, history proved them to be tragically wrong.

“The decision to send out the Willie and Martin companies so late in the season was extremely reckless and based upon false doctrine. That decision cost the lives of nearly one-fourth of the entire group; about 220 people died before the rescue party sent by President Young could reach them.”⁴

Of course we have the story of those who survived the Willie and Martin experience who drew closer to the Lord. But, according to Brigham Young, it wasn't what the Lord wanted:

“In mid-November President Brigham Young angrily reproved those who had authorized the late start or who had not ordered the several parties back to Florence when they still had the opportunity, charging "ignorance,"

³ See B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church, Vol.4, Ch.98, p.91

⁴Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.2, HANDCART COMPANIES

"mismanagement," and "misconduct." Though terrible, the suffering could have been far worse. Had the rescue effort not been launched immediately—well before the storm struck—the handcart companies would probably have been totally destroyed.”⁵

SETTING UP A MODERN DAY REPEAT

Are too many of us as members and local leaders setting ourselves up for another Haun’s Mill and Willie and Martin handcart disaster...only on a tremendously much larger scale?

I can’t tell you how many times I have talked with people who are wonderful, faithful members of the Church, some even who are ward and stake leaders, who don’t have enough food storage to last more than a week or so. Often this is because they have been well blessed in material possessions and income. In our discussions about how the counsel for food storage has been repeated by every prophet for over 60 years they commonly respond that with all of the other issues that they are dealing with, it just isn’t very high on the priority list. Temple work, family history, missionary work are all much more important than food storage. However, some explain that if the Prophet made it a commandment, like they did with the Word of Wisdom by including it on the temple recommend interview, instead of just counsel, then they would move it up on the priority list.

These people, and I am convinced they represent a very large portion of the membership of the Church, believe the very same false doctrines as did the members of the two ill fated groups mentioned above. First, they falsely believe that their personal righteousness will save them. After all, they are busy going to the temple, fulfilling Church callings, sending missionaries out, etc. in other words...doing the works of the righteous. Surely, the Lord will be merciful to them and take care of them despite their lack of attention to this small item. They discount what president Benson taught on this point:

“Should the Lord decide at this time to cleanse the Church—and the need for that cleansing seems to be increasing—a famine in this land of one year's duration could wipe out a large percentage of slothful members, including some ward and stake officers. Yet we cannot say we have not been warned.”⁶

Additionally, they commonly believe and have heard it actually taught over the pulpit by others that those terrible things that have been prophesied won’t happen to the righteous and so they need not prepare for them. Many prophets, including President Lee and President Kimball addressed this terribly false notion, but President Benson said it best in his “Rue The Day” statement:

⁵Ibid

⁶Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.265

“Too often we bask in our comfortable complacency and rationalize that the ravages of war, economic disaster, famine, and earthquake cannot happen here. Those who believe this are either not acquainted with the revelations of the Lord, or they do not believe them. Those who smugly think these calamities will not happen, that they somehow will be set aside because of the righteousness of the Saints, are deceived and will rue the day they harbored such a delusion. The Lord has warned and forewarned us against a day of great tribulation and given us counsel, through His servants, on how we can be prepared for these difficult times. Have we heeded His counsel?⁷

It is hard for me to understand why or how so many good and wonderful people can discount what the prophets have said, again, and again, and again, and again concerning what will suddenly happen to the world in the future. President Benson said:

“The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.”⁸

It is important to note that the people who didn’t get on the ark, suffered and died by the very calamity that for 300 years had been prophesied would come upon them. People, including members of the Church, have always had a habit of believing that things won’t change drastically, or that terrible things could happen to them. It is a part of human nature.

However, the scriptures are very clear that these terrible cataclysmic events, some perhaps 20-30 years prior to the actual return of the Savior in power and great glory, will come suddenly upon the heart of the Church, and then be poured out upon the rest of the world.

“Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord.

“And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord;

“First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord.”⁹

It is noteworthy that President Hinckley quoted from this scripture in his famous Sunday morning talk given in General conference following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack and

⁷Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.706

⁸ (CR October 1980, Ensign 10 [November 1980]: 33.) Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.266

⁹ D&C 112:24-26

subsequent beginning of the war in Iraq.

Additionally, this scripture was supposed to have been discussed in great detail recently throughout the Church as it was contained in the Priesthood/Relief Society manuals when we studied Joseph F. Smith. A few quotes from that lesson:

“The many eruptions, earthquakes and tidal waves which have occurred...are signs which the Savior declared would foreshadow his second coming, although he said his advent should be as thief in the night...The wise and prudent will heed the warning and prepare themselves that they be not taken unawares.”

“I...testify, that [the Latter-Day Saints]...will be the first to fall beneath the judgments of the Almighty, for his judgments will begin at his own house.”¹⁰

Wilford Woodruff commented that he believed that the dreadful calamities described in the second half of the third Chapter of Isaiah is a direct description of some of the aftermath of this and other unpleasant prophetic fulfillments specifically upon the Church members because of their participation in the fashions of Babylon which showed where their hearts really were:

“There are some prophecies pertaining to these latter days that are unpleasant to contemplate. President Young has been calling upon the daughters of Zion day after day, now, for years, to lay aside these Babylonish fashions. I have been reading the third chapter of Isaiah, and I have been hoping, all the days of my ministry, that the sayings contained in that chapter would never apply to the daughters of Zion in our day; but I believe they will, and inasmuch as they will not listen to President Young and to the prophets, apostles and elders of Israel with regard to throwing off these nonsensical things, I hope they will hasten the lengthening out of their skirts and drag them in the streets; that they will increase their round tires like the moon, increase their hoops, and their headbands, increase their Grecian bends at once and carry it out until they get through with it, so that we can turn to the Lord as a people. Some of the daughters of Zion do not seem willing to forsake the fashions of Babylon. I to such would say hasten it, and let the woe that is threatened on this account come, that we may get through with it, then we can go on and build up the Zion of God on the earth.”¹¹

Imagine what he would say if he saw the fashions of today that include the nose rings, the leg ornaments, the tinkling ornaments about the feet that were not present during his day, but are now very prevalent in ours, even among many of our members?

¹⁰ President Joseph F. Smith quotes from Lesson 44 Preparing For The Second Coming of Christ, page 393

¹¹The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, p.226 - p.227

BUT WHAT ABOUT A YEARS SUPPLY OF BASIC FOOD STORAGE?

I believe that every prophet over the last 60 years has talked about having the Church members get a bare minimum of at least a one year's supply of basic food items. Though it is not addressed directly in every conference, it is published in a tremendous amount of Church literature, pamphlets, Church handbook of instructions, monthly messages for home teachers and visiting teachers, instruction manuals, etc.

Again, after 9/11, in the following October General Conference, President Hinckley talked about food storage.

“We cannot provide against every contingency. But we can provide against many contingencies. Let the present situation remind us that this we should do. As we have been continuously counseled for more than 60 years, let us have some food set aside that would sustain us for a time in case of need. But let us not panic nor go to extremes. Let us be prudent in every respect.”¹²

Three months later, the First Presidency then took the unprecedented step of issuing a special letter (January 20, 2002) clarifying his remarks so that there would be no mis-understanding, asking that food storage preparation, specifically concerning having minimally a one year supply for every member in the world where ever possible, be taught in every branch, ward, district and stake in the Church. In it, for the first time, it outlined the minimum of basic food items to be included in such storage. Unfortunately, it is estimated that 25% of the membership in North America, still have never even heard of the letter because it was not taught to them by their local leaders. Quoting from the letter (underlining is mine):

“Priesthood and Relief Society leaders should teach the importance of home storage and securing a financial reserve. These principles may be taught in ward councils or on a fifth Sunday in priesthood and Relief Society meetings.

“Church members can begin their home storage by storing the basic foods that would be required to keep them alive if they did not have anything else to eat. Depending on where members live, those basics might include water, wheat or other grains, legumes, salt, honey or sugar, powdered milk, and cooking oil. ... When members have stored enough of these essentials to meet the needs of their family for one year, they may decide to add other items that they are accustomed to using day to day.

“Some members do not have the money or space for such storage, and some are prohibited by law from storing a year's supply of food. These members should store as much as their circumstances allow. Families who do not have the resources to acquire a year's supply can begin their storage by obtaining supplies to last for a few months. Members should be prudent and not panic

¹² Oct 6, 2002 Sunday morning Session, President Hinckley

or go to extremes in this effort. Through careful planning, most Church members can, over time, establish both a financial reserve and a year's supply of essentials."¹³

Following this, the Church made a major change at the Bishops storehouses, creating monthly survival food storage boxes for one person at tremendously low prices. A person could purchase 12 of these boxes and have a years supply of food storage...allowing the step by step completion of President Hinckley's counsel by almost any member.

The preparedness message was also echoed by other Church leaders as well. In a Jan 31, 2002 letter by President Packer, acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, to General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, Stake, Mission and District Presidents part of the emphasis for 2002 stake conference training was "please instruct members of the importance of reducing debt, living within their means, and storing food and other essentials that enable them to remain self-reliant in times of need."

A year later to re-emphasize the importance of obtaining a years supply of food storage, it was the main topic for the visiting teaching message for January 2003, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear."

And so we get to the heart of the matter:

ARE TOO MANY MEMBERS, INCLUDING LOCAL AND STAKE LEADERS, IGNORING THE COUNSEL TO TEACH AND ENCOURAGE THAT EVERY MEMBER SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST A 1 YEAR SUPPLY OF BASICS?

Is there a chance that because of their lack of attention in this one small area...that they and their trusting members might one day in the future suffer terrible consequences such as watching their families and friends slowly starve to death? President Kimball said:

"How often do Church members arise early in the morning to do the will of the Lord?... How often do we say, "Yes, I will obey the commandment to store food and to help others, but just now I have neither the time nor the money to spare; I will obey later"? Oh, foolish people! While we procrastinate, the harvest will be over and we will not be saved. Now is the time to follow Abraham's example; now is the time to repent; now is the time for prompt obedience to God's will."¹⁴

It is important to note that many of the prophets, including President Kimball in the preceding quote, call it THE COMMANDMENT to store food.

¹³Jan 20, 2002 First Presidency Letter

¹⁴The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.174

As one reads the scriptures, the talks, the manuals and all that has been said upon the subject, it isn't a matter of **IF** the famine comes, it is a matter of only **WHEN** the famine comes. President Benson stated:

“Not only should we have strong spiritual homes, but we should have strong temporal homes. We should avoid bondage by getting out of debt as soon as we can, pay as we go, and live within our incomes. There is wisdom in having on hand a year's supply of food, clothing, fuel (if possible), and in being prepared to defend our families and our possessions and to take care of ourselves. I believe a man should prepare for the worst while working for the best. Some people prepare and don't work, while others work but don't prepare. Both are needed if we would be of maximum service to our God, our family, and our country.”

“We must do more to get our people prepared for the difficult days we face in the future. Our major concern should be their spiritual preparation so they will respond with faith and not fear. "If ye are prepared, ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:21). Our next concern should be for their temporal preparation. When the economies of nations fail, when famine and other disasters prevent people from buying food in stores, the Saints must be prepared to handle these emergencies. This is a matter of concern for area, region, and stake councils.”¹⁵

What do we do after we have a basic year's supply of food for ourselves and our family? Simply, we have been counseled to think about going beyond just the basics of food and extend the principle to clothing, fuel, seeds, tools, shelters (tents) and other items necessary to sustain ourselves and our families for a year.

“A man should not only be prepared to protect himself physically, but he should also have on hand sufficient supplies to sustain himself and his family in an emergency. For many years the leaders of the Mormon Church have recommended, with instructions, that every family have on hand at least a year's supply of basic food, clothing, fuel (where possible), and provisions for shelter. This has been most helpful to families suffering temporary reverses. It can and will be useful in many circumstances in the days ahead. We also need to get out of financial bondage, to be debt-free.”¹⁶

Some believe falsely that when things get bad...the Church has stored enough for all of the members. The Church leadership has been very clear on this issue:

¹⁵ Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.264

¹⁶ President Benson, God, Family, Country, p. 331.)

“Our bishop’s storehouses are not intended to stock enough commodities to care for all the members of the Church. Storehouses are only established to care for the poor and the needy. For this reason, members of the Church have been instructed to personally store a year's supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel. By following this counsel, most members will be prepared and able to care for themselves and their family members, and be able to share with others as may be needed.”¹⁷

Finally, in summary:

“You do not need to go into debt to obtain a year's supply. Plan to build up your food supply just as you would a savings account. Save a little for storage each paycheck. Can or bottle fruit and vegetables from your gardens and orchards. Learn how to preserve food through drying and possibly freezing. Make your storage a part of your budget. Store seeds and have sufficient tools on hand to do the job. If you are saving and planning for a second car or a television set or some item which merely adds to your comfort or pleasure, you may need to change your priorities. We urge you to do this prayerfully and do it now. I speak with a feeling of great urgency.”¹⁸

"When we really get into hard times," said President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "where food is scarce or there is none at all, and so with clothing and shelter, money may be no good for there may be nothing to buy, and you cannot eat money, you cannot get enough of it together to burn to keep warm, and you cannot wear it."¹⁹

“For more than a hundred years, Church leaders have taught the members to store grain and other essentials that would sustain life in times of drought or famine. The current guidelines for home storage are intended to apply internationally. They include having a supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, the fuel necessary to sustain life for one year. Church guidance states, "We have never laid down an exact formula for what anybody should store. Perhaps if we think not in terms of a year's supply of what we ordinarily would use, and think more in terms of what it would take to keep us alive in case we didn't have anything else to eat, that last would be very easy to put in storage for a year".²⁰

President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

¹⁷Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.263-264, 267

¹⁸ President Benson, CR October 1980, Ensign 10 [November 1980]: 33.)

¹⁹Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.268

²⁰Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.2, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

“The distress and perplexity, bloodshed and terror, selfish ambition of despotic rulers, such as the world has never before seen, all indicate that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is very near, even at our doors. We have been warned by the prophets from the beginning of time. They have declared, by revelation from the Lord, that in this present day, confusion, bloodshed, misery, plague, famine, earthquake, and other calamities, would cover the face of the earth. The Lord told his disciples of these dreadful scenes and said men's hearts would fail them because of these things coming upon the earth. . . .”²¹

“President Wilford Woodruff and the Prophet Joseph Smith declare that it was their duty and should be the duty of every righteous man to raise the warning voice and proclaim the fact that these calamities are at our doors, and I have been condemned because I have done that. I heard one good man say, "There are too many good things to think about without talking about these troubles, these plagues, or worrying about the coming of the Lord." Here is what the Lord says in Section 45 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses 39 to 43.

"And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man.

"And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath.

"And they shall behold blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke.”

“Now, when the Lord says that, don't you think I am justified in raising my voice and do you think I am doing wrong when I am...watching the signs of the times and these calamities and troubles that are coming? Am I doing wrong? And yet one good brother said that. Too many things to do. We haven't time to worry about the coming of Christ. I hope he is here. Now, here is something from President Brigham Young.

"Do you think there is calamity abroad now among the people?...All we have yet heard and all we have experienced is scarcely a preface to the sermon that is going to be preached. When the testimony of the Elders ceases to be given, and the Lord says to them, 'come home; I will now preach My own sermons to the nations of the earth,' all you now know can scarcely be called a preface to the sermon that will be preached with fire and sword, tempests, earthquakes, hail, rain, thunders, and lightnings and fearful destruction. What matters the destruction of a few railway cars? You will hear of magnificent cities, now idolized by the people, sinking in the earth, entombing the inhabitants. The sea will heave itself beyond its bounds, engulfing mighty cities. Famine will spread

²¹Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.3, p.19

over the nations, and nation will rise up against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and states against states, in our own country and in foreign lands; and they will destroy each other, caring not for the blood and lives of their neighbors, of their families, or for their own lives. They will be like the Jaredites who preceded the Nephites upon this continent, and will destroy each other to the last man, through the anger that the devil will place in their hearts, because they have rejected the words of life and are given over to Satan to do whatever he listeth to do with them. You may think that the little you hear of now is grievous; yet the faithful of God's people will see days that will cause them to close their eyes because of the sorrow that will come upon the wicked nations. The hearts of the faithful will be filled with pain and anguish for them."

"Why is the Lord angry? Why are all these things coming upon the world? President Young said in this article that I read and the Lord says in the revelations I have read to you, it is because they have turned away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because they have rebelled against God, and because they have refused to hear the testimony of those who have been sent to preach the Gospel to them. That is why. They have rejected the message. The nations are full of iniquity."

"Now, there is our danger. We must not forsake God. If we are not on His side, you may be sure He is not going to be on our side. He will leave us to ourselves. Now, these calamities are here. They are upon us. The whole world is in commotion. I have had to leave unsaid about two-thirds of what I have prepared to say, but next week, which will be the concluding talk, I am going to turn to these Scriptures and show you what the old prophets have said in regard to our day. I have told you now what the Lord said and what the prophets of our own day have said. I have shown you the fulfillment of the prediction by President Wilford Woodruff, that the angels are sent forth to reap the earth. They are on that mission. This I have presented to you tonight, and we will get the other things next time."²²

"if ye are prepared ye shall not fear."²³

²² Joseph Fielding Smith, The Signs of the Times, p.124-137

²³D&C 38:30