

# A Glorious Doctrine

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*May we all feel  
the excitement  
that Vilate Kimball  
felt when she  
learned she could  
be baptized for  
her ancestors.*



In October 1840, 34-year-old Vilate Kimball wrote a letter to her husband, Elder Heber C. Kimball of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “President [Joseph] Smith has opened a new and glorious subject . . . which has caused quite a revival in the church,” Vilate wrote to Heber, who was serving his second mission to Great Britain. The subject of Joseph Smith’s teaching on this occasion was baptism for those who hadn’t had the opportunity in their lifetimes.

“Joseph has received a more full explanation of it by Revelation,” she reported. “It is the privilege of this church to be baptised for all their kinsfolks that have died before this Gospel came forth.” Vilate celebrated the revelation that in doing these

proxy baptisms for deceased family members, “we act as agents for them; and give them the privilege of coming forth in the first resurrection.”

The Kimballs had moved from New York to be with the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, and then moved to Far West, Missouri. Just a year later, in 1839, they had to flee Missouri with thousands of other Latter-day Saints to escape persecution at the hands of violent mobs. They made their home in Nauvoo, hundreds of miles from where their journey had started.

Although their arrival in Nauvoo had been under trying circumstances, Vilate’s October 1840 letter to her husband was teeming with excitement. “I want to be baptised for my Mother,” she exclaimed. “I calculated

to wait until you come home, but the last time Joseph spoke upon the subject, he advised every one to be up and a doing, and liberate their friends from bondage as quick as possible. . . . Thus you see there is a chance for all. Is not this a glorious doctrine?”

Vilate was one of the first women to be baptized for the dead in Nauvoo. ■

*Quotations come from Vilate Kimball’s letter to Heber C. Kimball, Oct. 11, 1840, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; spelling and punctuation modernized.*

Go to the digital version of the October 2021 *Liahona* in the Gospel Library app or at [liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) to read more about how Vilate Kimball’s letters to her husband give insight into Church history.