Sections 121, 122, and 123 are each part of a letter written by Joseph Smith from Liberty Jail to the Church leaders in Quincy, Illinois. Read about that experience in a good Church history.

**Doctrine and Covenants 121**

This revelation can be divided into three parts: Joseph’s plea (verses 1–6), the Lord’s reply of peace (verses 7–33), and instructions on the use of power (verses 34–46). We will focus only on the first two parts, but you might ask yourself what the last part has to do with the first two, if anything. The first two parts and the last were not contiguous in the original letter. Does that permit us to ignore their contiguity in the Doctrine and Covenants when we read this section? Why or why not?

**Verse 1:** What does this verse tell us about Joseph’s emotional state? What is it like to feel that God is hidden? What causes such experiences? Is the cause always sin?

Does the fact that *the* prophet of the last dispensation feels abandoned by God say anything to us about our own experience and lives? Does it offer us hope?

Does this verse tell us anything about why modern Latter-day Saints place so much emphasis on persecutions in
Missouri, although they could have emphasized so many others, some equally as or perhaps more difficult?

**Verse 2:** Why is it significant to Joseph’s plea that God’s eye is pure?

**Verse 3:** Why does he assume that the Lord’s heart has been hardened toward the Saints? What does it mean to say that God’s heart is hardened toward someone?

**Verse 4:** Why is it important to Joseph’s plea that the Lord is the Creator?

**Verses 5–6:** Is Joseph offering a “deal”: take vengeance on our enemies and we will honor you forever? If not, what is he saying?

What is he asking for in verse 5? Does that tell us anything about the place of verses like verse 37 and verses 41–43 in this revelation?

**Verses 7–10:** Compare section 122 to these verses. What does that section add to our understanding of them? What does the comparison to Job teach Joseph? The comparison to the Savior? What does each of them teach us?

**Verses 11–15:** Does the first part of verse 13 explain the calamities that will come on those who have charged Joseph with corruption? Why is the Lord talking about those people rather than the Missouri mobs?

Does it help to remember that there had been a major apostasy in Kirtland not long before this, as well as a significant apostasy in Missouri? The latter included members and former members, some of them prominent, who came to
the aid of the Missourians. How might that be relevant to what the Lord says here?

Verse 15 uses an odd phrase that I think is a paraphrase of a biblical phrase, “not one of them is left to stand by the wall.” (Compare 1 Samuel 25:22, 34; 1 Kings 2:21; 4:10; and 2 Kings 9:8.) Why do you think the Lord uses that particular phrase, one that we are likely to find mildly offensive? Whether this phrase is an implicit reference to that one, the contextual meaning seems the same: absolute destruction. What do we make of such a threat? Is it a threat to destroy the males of a community or everyone? Did the threat come to pass? If not, why not? If so, in what sense?

**Verses 16–25:** Why does the Lord rehearse this long list of calamities?

Who are the “little ones” referred to in verse 19? Are they the children of the Saints, or are they the Lord’s children, in other words, the Saints as a whole?

How do we understand verse 21?

**Verses 26–32:** What is the Lord promising Joseph in these verses? What knowledge was he yet to receive at this point in his life (e.g., the complete Book of Abraham, the ordinance of sealing, and so on)? Can you explain specifically what verses 28–30 promise?

In verse 32, what does “that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof” modify?

**Verse 33:** Joseph has asked the Lord to stop people from persecuting the Saints, but here the Lord speaks of people trying to stop the Saints from getting knowledge. Has the
Lord changed the subject? Is he taking a different perspective than that Joseph took? How do you explain this difference between Joseph’s concern and the Lord’s?

Is the answer merely that verse 33 is part of a larger letter that contains all of what became this section, and more? If so, does that mean that we ought to assume that the selection, ordering, and editing of the parts of the D&C were not inspired?

**Doctrine and Covenants 122**

In Joseph Smith’s original letter, from which both sections 121 and 122 were taken, there is no break between the last verse of section 121 and the first verse of section 122. What do you make of the decision to divide what he wrote into two distinct revelations? Does that decision put more focus on section 122? If so, why?

**Verses 1–2:** In the midst of suffering, how would this be a comfort?

**Verses 5–7:** Is there any pattern to the possible tribulations that the Lord describes? Consider each one individually. Had all of them already happened to Joseph or were some yet to come? Did some never occur?

Why is it a blessing to have experience? How can all of the kinds of things that the Lord names be for someone’s good?

**Verse 8:** Is this a rebuke?

**Verse 9:** Given that this was received in Liberty Jail, what could “hold on thy way” have meant to Joseph? What does the promise “thy priesthood shall remain with thee” mean?