

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY OF THE CHURCH IS ORGANIZED

We begin our study of the second part of Joseph's life with the commencement of the year 1833. The Church, which now numbered about 2,500 members,<sup>1</sup> was growing steadily, with its headquarters based in Kirtland, Ohio. Many of the Saints had also settled in the sacred land of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, where the Lord had promised that the city of the New Jerusalem would someday be built. Joseph and Emma, who had now been married for almost six years, lived above the Newel K. Whitney store in Kirtland<sup>2</sup> with their young children, Julia, eighteen months old and Joseph, a two-month-old infant.

This was a delightful period for the young Church, but Joseph had many mixed feelings at this time. At the very moment when a veritable avalanche of new knowledge had been revealed from heaven for the welfare of the Saints and all humanity, many signs seemed to indicate that troubling times were approaching.



Emma with her children, Julia and Joseph, in the fall of 1833, in their bedroom above the Whitney store.

<sup>1</sup> 1997-1998 *Church Almanac*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News), p. 529.

<sup>2</sup> LaMar C. Berrett, ed., *Sacred Places*, 4 vols., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999-2004) 3:12.

The Lord had recently revealed that the United States would someday be involved in a desolating civil war.<sup>3</sup> He had also warned that there were many serious afflictions which would be unleashed throughout the world in the last days.<sup>4</sup> But Joseph's greatest concern was the faulty performance of the Saints in Missouri. The Spirit warned him in the early weeks of January 1833 that the whole stake of Zion in Missouri was bordering on complete rejection by the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

#### JOSEPH IS GIVEN ADDITIONAL PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE LAST DAYS

Many of the recent revelations from the Lord concerning the last days contained warnings that were not only addressed to members of the Church but to the entire world. Joseph therefore felt compelled to reach out to a wider audience, and on Friday, January 4, 1833, he wrote a letter to N. C. Saxton, the editor of the *American Revivalist and Rochester Observer*, a religious newspaper printed in Rochester, New York.<sup>6</sup> As Joseph wrote this letter to Mr. Saxton, he was enveloped by the Holy Spirit, and he wrote those things that the Lord commanded him.<sup>7</sup> Joseph began the letter by saying:

“For some length of time I have been carefully reviewing the state of things, as it now appears throughout our Christian land, and have looked at it with feelings of the most painful anxiety. . . . I think that it is high time for the Christian world to awake out of sleep, and cry mightily to that God, day and night, whose anger we have justly incurred.

“And now what remains to be done, under circumstances like these? . . . Repent of all your sins, and be baptized in water for the remission of them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and receive the ordinance of the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power, that ye may receive the Holy Spirit of God; and this is according to the holy scriptures, and the Book of

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<sup>3</sup> D&C 87.

<sup>4</sup> D&C 88:86-94.

<sup>5</sup> *History of the Church* 1:316-317.

<sup>6</sup> Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), p. 294 note 1.

<sup>7</sup> *History of the Church* 1:312 note 2.

Mormon; and the only way that man can enter into the celestial kingdom.”<sup>8</sup>

As the Spirit flowed through him, Joseph then predicted with a voice of authority:

“The city of Zion, spoken of by David in the one hundred and second Psalm, will be built upon the land of America,<sup>9</sup> ‘And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads;’<sup>10</sup> and then they will be delivered from the overflowing scourge that shall pass through the land.<sup>11</sup> But Judah shall obtain deliverance at Jerusalem. . . .

“And now I am prepared to say by the authority of Jesus Christ, that not many years shall pass away before the United States shall present such a scene of *bloodshed* as has not a parallel in the history of our nation; pestilence, hail, famine and earthquake will sweep the wicked of this generation from off the face of the land, to open and prepare the way for the return of the lost tribes of Israel from the north country.”<sup>12</sup>

Joseph concluded this powerful epistle with these humble words:

“Remember these things; call upon the Lord while He is near, and seek Him while He may be found, is the exhortation of your unworthy servant.”<sup>13</sup>

#### JOSEPH TRIES TO CORRECT THE MISSOURI SAINTS

After sending this letter, Joseph turned his attention to a most pressing matter. The disintegrating situation in Missouri was occupying his thoughts almost continually. Most of the members in Missouri were converts of eighteen months or less. Many of them were striving valiantly to live according to the strict requirements of the law of consecration, but some of the Church leaders had recently

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<sup>8</sup> *History of the Church* 1:312-315.

<sup>9</sup> D&C 84:2-4.

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 35:10.

<sup>11</sup> See D&C 45:31-32.

<sup>12</sup> *History of the Church* 1:315; emphasis in original.

<sup>13</sup> *History of the Church* 1:316; emphasis in original.

written caustic and defiant letters to Joseph and the brethren in Kirtland.<sup>14</sup> This arrogant spirit threatened to spread among all of the Church members in Missouri.

In a spirit of concern and warning, Joseph wrote to William W. Phelps in Missouri on Monday, January 14, 1833:

“Let me say unto you, seek to purify yourselves and also the inhabitants of Zion, lest the Lord’s anger be kindled to fierceness. Repent, repent, is the voice of God to Zion; and strange as it may appear, yet it is true, mankind will persist in self-justification until all their iniquity is exposed, and their character past being redeemed, and that which is treasured up in their hearts be exposed to the gaze of mankind. I say to you (and what I say to you I say to all), hear the warning voice of God, lest Zion fall, and the Lord swear in His wrath that the inhabitants of Zion shall not enter into His rest. The brethren in Kirtland pray for you unceasingly, for, knowing the terrors of the Lord, they greatly fear for you.”<sup>15</sup>



William W. Phelps

When this letter was received by the Church leaders in Missouri, they held a meeting to discuss Joseph’s concerns. A spirit of humility and sincere repentance pervaded the meeting, and a conciliatory letter was written to Joseph.<sup>16</sup> When Joseph received their letter a few weeks later, his heart was full of joy and he was grateful to see that the brethren had responded in humility.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of this effort at repentance, there were still many problems in Missouri that did not please the Lord. The site for a temple in Independence had been dedicated a year and a half earlier on August 3, 1831, and yet the Saints had done nothing to build this temple. Only a small schoolhouse had been built on the temple lot.<sup>18</sup> Instead of being a righteous and pure-hearted people, the Lord knew that they had polluted the land of Zion with bickering,

<sup>14</sup> *History of the Church* 1:317.

<sup>15</sup> *History of the Church* 1:316.

<sup>16</sup> *History of the Church* 1:327, 335-336.

<sup>17</sup> *History of the Church* 1:340-341.

<sup>18</sup> *Sacred Places* 4:21, 116.

jealousy and fault-finding.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, they were a self-centered people who were unwilling to obey the commandment of the Lord to build a temple in Zion. The hand of divine justice hung over them, as they would soon discover in the summer and fall of 1833.

#### JOSEPH CONTINUES HIS REVISION OF THE BIBLE

It had now been two and a half years since Joseph was commanded by the Lord in June 1830 to revise the Bible and remove any errors that it contained.<sup>20</sup> Joseph and Sidney had initially worked on the Old Testament until the Lord directed them in March 1831 to begin working on the New Testament.<sup>21</sup> They had completed the revision of the New Testament in July 1832, and then returned to their work on the Old Testament.<sup>22</sup>

During the winter months of 1832, Joseph decided to review his previous work on the New Testament so that it could be prepared for publication. He continued this work throughout the month of January 1833.<sup>23</sup>

#### JOSEPH ORGANIZES THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

In the waning days of 1832, Joseph had also been commanded by the Lord to organize a School of the Prophets.<sup>24</sup> On Tuesday, January 22, 1833, Joseph met with thirteen of his brethren in an upstairs room of the Newel K. Whitney store to fulfill this commandment. As they met together to organize the school, they had a wonderful, spiritual meeting that was filled with the gifts of the Spirit. Joseph recorded:

“I spoke to the conference in another tongue and was followed in the same gift by Brother Zebedee Coltrin, and he by Brother William Smith, after which the Lord poured out His Spirit in a miraculous manner, until all the elders spoke in tongues.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> D&C 101:6.

<sup>20</sup> *History of the Church* 1:98.

<sup>21</sup> D&C 45:60-62.

<sup>22</sup> Kent P. Jackson and Peter M. Jasinski, “The Process of Inspired Translation,” *BYU Studies* (2003) 42:2:35-36.

<sup>23</sup> *History of the Church* 1:322.

<sup>24</sup> D&C 88:117-141.

<sup>25</sup> *History of the Church* 1:323.

The next day each of the school participants received the cleansing ordinance of the washing of feet, just as the Savior had done for His Apostles.<sup>26</sup> After Joseph taught them about the importance of this ordinance, they closed the meeting by partaking of the sacrament.<sup>27</sup>

The School of the Prophets continued to meet regularly throughout the winter months until the end of March 1833.<sup>28</sup> Even though the school began with this small group of fourteen men, in later years it grew to include about a hundred members.<sup>29</sup> In the initial years they met to study the scriptures and doctrines of the Church, but later the curriculum was expanded to include secular topics like reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar and learning the Hebrew language.

Joseph, who was only 27 at the time, directed the school, but he brought in the most capable people he could find to teach secular subjects.<sup>30</sup> He was breaking new ground. This was the first organized adult education in America.<sup>31</sup>

But there was a serious problem with the School of the Prophets. As Brigham Young later recalled:

“The first School of the Prophets was held in a small room situated over the Prophet Joseph’s kitchen, . . . the room in which the Prophet received revelation and in which he instructed his brethren. The brethren came to that place from hundreds of miles to attend school in a little room probably no larger than eleven by fourteen. When they assembled together in this room after breakfast, the first thing they did was to light their pipes, and, while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom and spit all over the room, and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken.

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<sup>26</sup> D&C 88:139-140; John 13:1-17.

<sup>27</sup> *History of the Church* 1:323-324.

<sup>28</sup> *History of the Church* 1:334; Lyndon W. Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), pp. 186-187.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Ricks Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), p. 116.

<sup>30</sup> Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration*, (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1973), pp. 219-221.

<sup>31</sup> John A. Widtsoe, *Conference Report*, October 1944, p. 48 and April 1949, p. 149.



The School of Prophets met in an upstairs room in the Whitney store.

“Often when the Prophet entered the room to give the school instructions he would find himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean so filthy a floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter, and he inquired of the Lord relating to the conduct of the elders in using tobacco, and the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom was the result of his inquiry.”<sup>32</sup>

#### A WORD OF WISDOM FROM THE LORD

In this revelation, which was given to the Prophet Joseph on Wednesday, February 27, 1833, the Lord recommended a new pattern of life for the Saints.<sup>33</sup> Even though the frontier was not a place of refined habits and polished ways, the Saints were laying the foundation for the restoration of the Kingdom of God, and He expected them to live a higher law.

The Lord said that the Saints should not partake of tobacco, strong drinks, wine and hot drinks.<sup>34</sup> In recent times it has become widely recognized that tobacco is the principal cause of emphysema and lung cancer. In spite of conclusive medical studies in recent years

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<sup>32</sup> Brigham Young, February 8, 1868, *Journal of Discourses* 12:158.

<sup>33</sup> D&C 89:1-3.

<sup>34</sup> D&C 89:5-9.

proving how deadly tobacco can be, wealthy tobacco companies are still willing to pay out billions of dollars in damages to their victims rather than abandon the manufacture of their addictive and fatal product.

The Lord also told the Saints to not consume “wine or strong drinks,” such as alcoholic beverages of all types and forms.<sup>35</sup> “Hot drinks” were also forbidden. Ten years after this revelation was given, Joseph’s brother, Hyrum, explicitly told the Saints that the forbidden “hot drinks” were tea and coffee.<sup>36</sup>

In spite of these specific instructions from the Lord, however, it eventually took the passing of two generations before most Church members could consistently obey the Word of Wisdom. Because the Word of Wisdom was given as a “greeting; not by commandment or constraint,”<sup>37</sup> many of the original Saints excused their behavior and were not fully committed to obeying this revelation from God. It was only through diligent teachings from many Church leaders, urging the Saints to be obedient, and reminding them of the economic cost of their addiction, before there was consistent adherence to the Word of Wisdom.<sup>38</sup>

Once the entire membership of the Church had subscribed to these ideals, they proved tremendously valuable to the health and general well-being of the people. It also freed them from the grasp of secret combinations of evil men who seek to make vast fortunes by seducing others to try and then regularly consume their habit-forming products.<sup>39</sup> This same warning also applies to other addictive habits that have been discovered by mankind in recent times, such as illegal drugs and pornography. Today, conspiring men are making billions of dollars from those who are addicted to their products.

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<sup>35</sup> D&C 89:5-7.

<sup>36</sup> Hyrum Smith, “The Word of Wisdom,” *Times and Seasons* (June 1, 1842) 3:18:800.

<sup>37</sup> D&C 89:2.

<sup>38</sup> Paul H. Peterson and Ronald W. Walker, “Brigham Young’s Word of Wisdom Legacy,” *BYU Studies* (2003) 42:3&4:29-56.

<sup>39</sup> D&C 89:4.

### IMPORTANT RULES FOR GOOD HEALTH

The Word of Wisdom, however, was not just a list of forbidden substances. The Lord wanted the Saints to enjoy good health by partaking of wholesome herbs and fruits.<sup>40</sup> Scientific research has shown that the generous consumption of fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of cancer and improve our health. In addition, it has been known for centuries that certain herbs were not only healthful, but they have been used as remedies for different kinds of illnesses. Today there are thriving businesses that specialize in the production of natural herbs for both preventive and healing purposes. Many of the pharmaceutical medicines we have today originally came from herbs and their derivatives.

The Lord counseled the Saints to eat meat, but to use it sparingly.<sup>41</sup> The Lord recognized that in time of drought or famine the people may need to consume meat in order to survive, but He said that the exclusive dependence on meat was not a good thing.<sup>42</sup> Instead, the Lord appointed grain to be the staff of life for humankind.<sup>43</sup>

The Lord concluded His Word of Wisdom with a sacred promise. He said that those who honor its principles would be blessed, and they would be given:

“Health in their navel and marrow to their bones; and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.”<sup>44</sup>

The Lord also promised that whenever the destroying angel was sent forth, he would pass over those who obeyed the Word of Wisdom, and spare their lives.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> D&C 89:10-11.

<sup>41</sup> D&C 89:12-13.

<sup>42</sup> D&C 89:13, 15.

<sup>43</sup> D&C 89:14, 16.

<sup>44</sup> D&C 89:18-20.

<sup>45</sup> D&C 89:21.

## THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS RECEIVES MANY OPEN VISIONS



Zebedee Coltrin

As Joseph met with the School of the Prophets during the winter months of 1833, the brethren were blessed with many spiritual manifestations. Many of them spoke in tongues during the meetings, and open visions were a common occurrence. A few weeks after the school commenced, the brethren were blessed with a very sacred experience. Zebedee Coltrin, who was present, later described what happened:

“When we were all together—Joseph having given instructions, and while engaged in silent prayer, kneeling, with our hands uplifted each one praying in silence, no one whispered above his breath—a personage walked through the room from east to west, and Joseph asked if we saw Him. I saw Him and supposed the others did, and Joseph answered that is Jesus, the Son of God, our Elder Brother. Afterwards Joseph told us to resume our former position in prayer, which we did. Another person came through; He was surrounded as with a flame of fire. I experienced a sensation that it might destroy the building as it was of consuming fire of great brightness. The Prophet Joseph said this was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“He was surrounded as with a flame of fire, which was so brilliant that I could not discover anything else but His person. I saw His hands, His legs, His feet, His eyes, nose, mouth, head and body in the shape and form of a perfect man. He sat in a chair as a man would sit in a chair, but this appearance was so grand and overwhelming that it seemed I should melt down in His presence, and the sensation was so powerful that it thrilled through my whole system and I felt it in the marrow of my bones.

“The Prophet Joseph said: ‘Brethren, now you are prepared to be the Apostles of Jesus Christ, for you have seen both the

Father and the Son and know that they exist and that they are two separate personages.”<sup>46</sup>

This marvelous experience had a deep impact on these brethren. John Murdock reported that “it left on my mind the impression of love, for months, that I never felt before to that degree.”<sup>47</sup>

#### JOSEPH COMPLETES HIS FINAL REVISION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

On Saturday, February 2, 1833, Joseph completed his review of the work he had done in correcting and revising the New Testament.<sup>48</sup> The brethren in Missouri were anxious to begin printing excerpts of this work in the Church newspaper, *The Evening and Morning Star*, but Joseph told them in a letter on April 21, 1833 that this was not the will of the Lord.

Instead, Joseph wanted to publish the Book of Mormon and the corrected version of the New Testament in a single volume.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, this plan was never realized during Joseph's lifetime because of heavy persecution, annoying distractions from frivolous lawsuits, incarceration on false charges, and the necessity of relocating the Saints several times.

#### NEW AND INEXPERIENCED CHURCH LEADERS REQUIRE GREAT PATIENCE FROM THE LORD

The Lord knew the Church was now entering a very critical stage of its development. During the next two years relatively new and inexperienced converts to the Church would be appointed to some of its highest offices. This would include the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorum of the Seventy, presidents of stakes, members of high councils and bishops.

The men who were given these high offices were subject to severe temptations. Satan put snares in their paths with elements of pride,

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<sup>46</sup> Statement of Zebedee Coltrin taken from the minutes of the Salt Lake City School of the Prophets, 3 Oct 1883, p. 57; text modernized and corrected.

<sup>47</sup> John Murdock Journal, typescript, BYU Archives and Manuscripts, p. 13, found in Milton V. Backman and Keith W. Perkins, comp., *Writings of Early Latter-day Saints*, (Religious Studies Center, BYU).

<sup>48</sup> *History of the Church* 1:324.

<sup>49</sup> *History of the Church* 1:341.

high-mindedness, arrogance and unrighteous dominion over those they had been ordained to serve.<sup>50</sup> Of course, the Lord knew many of them would fail this supreme test of being ordained to a high office with tremendous authority. Some of them would stumble through their years of service and receive numerous reprimands or even humiliating demotions before they gained a proper state of humble devotion required by the Lord.

The Lord knew that in the next few years he would lose His brilliant and formerly faithful Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. None of them would ever deny their testimonies of seeing the angel Moroni and the gold plates, but they would become offended by minor matters, leave the Church, and go braying off into the wilderness. Eventually two of them would return to the Church and plead for rebaptism before they died.

Nevertheless, the early history of the Church demonstrates a remarkable degree of love and patience by the Lord. In every instance of apostasy by a Church leader, the Lord treated him as a permanent fixture in the kingdom right up to the time he fell. Furthermore, if those who had fallen away deeply repented and asked the Lord for forgiveness, He usually gave them at least one more chance, though rarely in any important calling.

#### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY IS ORGANIZED

With all of this in mind, the Prophet Joseph was given a revelation on Friday, March 8, 1833 directing him to organize the First Presidency of the Church. The Lord began this revelation with the heartwarming news that Joseph's prayers had been heard, and his sins were now forgiven.<sup>51</sup>

Even though several high-minded and haughty members in Missouri had said that Joseph had fallen from his calling as a prophet, the Lord said that he would not lose the keys of the kingdom either in this life or in the world to come.<sup>52</sup> It is a sacred privilege to have a living prophet to guide the people, and the Lord wanted the Saints to take His revelations seriously and follow the

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<sup>50</sup> D&C 121:39-44.

<sup>51</sup> D&C 90:1.

<sup>52</sup> D&C 90:2-4.



The First Presidency: (l to r) Sidney Rigdon, first counselor, Joseph Smith, President of the Church, and Frederick G. Williams, second counselor.

counsel of the Prophet Joseph. If not, He warned, they would lose the Spirit, apostatize and lose the anchor of faith that could support them in the adversity of the coming storms of life.<sup>53</sup>

The Lord appointed Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams to be equal with Joseph in holding the keys of the kingdom.<sup>54</sup> The three of them would constitute the First Presidency of the Church, and they were assigned to oversee the administration of the Church and coordinate the missionary labors of the elders.<sup>55</sup>

Under their leadership the gospel message would go forth to the ends of the earth—first to the Gentiles, and then to the Jews.<sup>56</sup> The Lord predicted that someday His arm would be revealed with such manifestations of power that it would convert the honest in heart among the Gentiles, the heathens and the house of Joseph.<sup>57</sup> The Lord also prophesied concerning the day when the gospel would be taught to all the peoples of the world in each of their own languages.<sup>58</sup> This prophecy has been fulfilled with the translation of the Book of Mormon into over a hundred different languages, and the broadcast of Church general conferences throughout the world in a multitude of different languages.

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<sup>53</sup> D&C 90:5.

<sup>54</sup> D&C 90:6.

<sup>55</sup> D&C 90:7-10.

<sup>56</sup> D&C 90:9.

<sup>57</sup> D&C 90:10.

<sup>58</sup> D&C 90:11.

The Lord asked these three men of the First Presidency to diligently fulfill their callings and preside over the Church for the rest of their lives.<sup>59</sup> The Lord not only expected great leadership from the First Presidency, but He also required them to avoid high-mindedness and pride.<sup>60</sup> Their family life was also to be exemplary.<sup>61</sup>

The Lord told the Saints in Missouri that in due time the First Presidency would govern their affairs in Missouri as well as those in Kirtland.<sup>62</sup> The Lord concluded this revelation with a warning that He was not pleased with many things that were occurring in Missouri.<sup>63</sup> Some of the Saints had begun to repent, but by and large there were many things that needed to be improved.<sup>64</sup> In a premonition of what the future held, He warned:

“Verily I say unto you, that I, the Lord, will contend with Zion, and plead with her strong ones, and chasten her until she overcomes and is clean before me.”<sup>65</sup>

Time was running out for the Saints in Missouri.

#### THE LORD WARNS JOSEPH ABOUT THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE APOCRYPHA

The day after receiving this revelation, as Joseph returned to his task of revising the scriptures, he was uncertain if he should take the time to revise and correct the Apocrypha—the writings that were not included in the Bible because of their doubtful authorship. He approached the Lord in prayer and learned by revelation that the Apocrypha contains many things that are true,<sup>66</sup> but there are some elements in these books that are untrue because of additional text that has been inserted by wicked men.<sup>67</sup>

The Lord did not consider these books to be a trustworthy or a necessary part of the standard works of His latter-day church, and He

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<sup>59</sup> D&C 90:12-16.

<sup>60</sup> D&C 90:17.

<sup>61</sup> D&C 90:18-19.

<sup>62</sup> D&C 90:32-33.

<sup>63</sup> D&C 90:35.

<sup>64</sup> D&C 90:34-37.

<sup>65</sup> D&C 90:36.

<sup>66</sup> D&C 91:1.

<sup>67</sup> D&C 91:2.

therefore instructed Joseph not to revise them lest they become intermingled with revelations from the Lord.<sup>68</sup>

However, the Lord promised that if students of the Apocrypha are guided by the Spirit, they will be able to discern which parts of the Apocrypha are true, and thereby benefit from the knowledge they can gain.<sup>69</sup>

#### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY IS SET APART

On Monday, March 18, 1833, the School of the Prophets met together and during the meeting Joseph laid his hands upon the heads of Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams and set them apart as members of the First Presidency. Joseph then addressed the brethren, and promised them that they should see a heavenly vision. After bowing their heads in fervent prayer, a wonderful spirit began to fill the room:

“Many present had the eyes of their understanding opened by the Spirit of God, so as to behold many things. . . . Many of the brethren saw a heavenly vision of the Savior, and concourses of angels, and many other things.”<sup>70</sup>

The additional help Joseph would receive from these two able counselors would greatly assist him in his ever-increasing burden as the leader of the growing Church. Significantly, another major step had now taken place in restoring the original ecclesiastical organization of the Church of Jesus Christ.

#### THE SAINTS IN MISSOURI CELEBRATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHURCH'S RESTORATION AND THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE SAVIOR'S ATONING SACRIFICE

On Saturday, April 6, 1833, the Saints in Missouri celebrated the anniversary of the founding of the Church by holding a commemorative meeting:

“It was an early spring, and the leaves and blossoms enlivened and gratified the soul of man like a glimpse of paradise. The day was spent in a very agreeable manner, in giving and

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<sup>68</sup> D&C 91:3.

<sup>69</sup> D&C 91:4-6.

<sup>70</sup> *History of the Church* 1:334-335.

receiving knowledge which appertained to this last kingdom—it being just 1800 years since the Savior laid down His life that men might have everlasting life, and only three years since the Church had come out of the wilderness, preparatory for the last dispensation.”<sup>71</sup>

Even though this was the third anniversary of the Church's founding, it was the first time that any of the Saints had ever celebrated an anniversary of the Church.

#### PREPARING TO BUILD THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE

By April 1833 it had been over three months since the Lord had commanded the Saints to build a house of the Lord in Kirtland.<sup>72</sup> Joseph felt great urgency to start this project because He knew that it would bring great spiritual blessings to the Saints. In January 1833, he had written to William W. Phelps in Missouri:

“You will see that the Lord commanded us, in Kirtland, to build a house of God, and establish a School for the Prophets. This is the word of the Lord to us and we must, yea, the Lord helping us, we *will* obey; as on conditions of our obedience He has promised us great things, yea, even a visit from the heavens to honor us with His own presence. We greatly fear before the Lord lest we should fail of this great honor, which our Master proposes to confer on us.”<sup>73</sup>

Since the first step in building a house of the Lord was to acquire some land, on Saturday, March 23, 1833, a council of elders met with Joseph to appoint a committee to purchase some land near the town of Kirtland. After meeting with three local farmers, they decided to buy the farm from Peter French for \$5,000 (about \$80,000 in today's money).<sup>74</sup>

This farm contained the western half of the present-day city of Kirtland, including the hill to the south which overlooked the “flats” of Kirtland, where the Whitneys' store and home were already located. Much of the future development in Kirtland occurred on the

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<sup>71</sup> *History of the Church* 1:337.

<sup>72</sup> D&C 88:119.

<sup>73</sup> *History of the Church* 1:316-317; emphasis added.

<sup>74</sup> *History of the Church* 1:335.

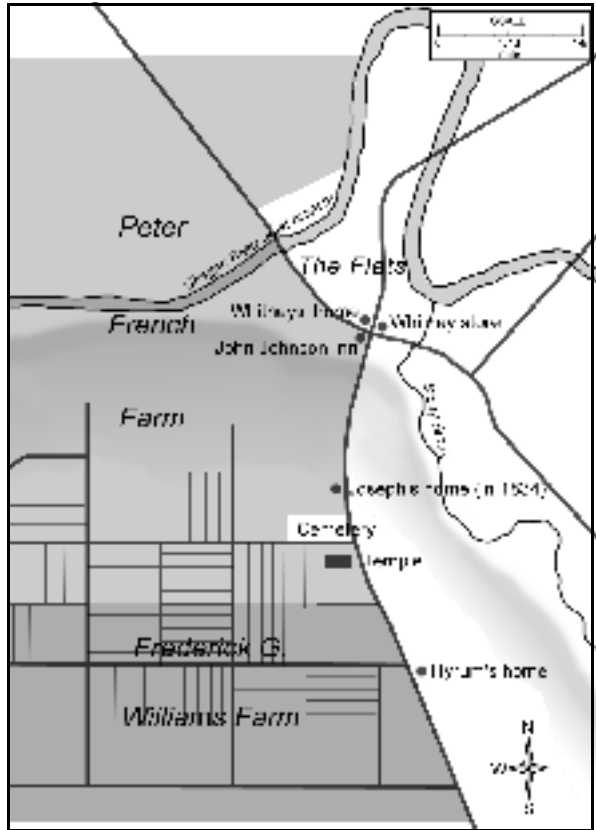
Peter French farm, including the temple and homes of many of the Saints. The Frederick G. Williams farm, located south of the French farm, was donated to the Church as well, and many homes were also built there.<sup>75</sup>

In spite of this land purchase, however, for several months not much else was done to begin construction of the Kirtland Temple because of other pressing matters.

In fact, it would only be a few more months before the Saints would lose

their sacred land of Zion in Jackson County. To replace this loss, the Lord needed the Saints to prepare the city of Kirtland to be a stronghold for the Church, and to complete the Kirtland Temple. This was a work that needed to be done quickly, before problems in Missouri slowed the work.

The Lord would soon have to reprimand the Church leaders in Kirtland, and remind the Saints that they needed to move forward in great haste, even though their numbers were few and financial resources were limited. The Lord knew that the construction of the Kirtland Temple would stretch the members to the depths of their personal reservoirs of strength.



The Church acquired two farms in Kirtland which were located on the hill south of “the flats.” Many of the Saints later settled there.

<sup>75</sup> *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, p. 647 map.