

President Brigham Young Leads the Saints

Lesson 33

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual,
Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lesson 33, pp 190-195.

Purpose: To help class members understand the process of succession in Church leadership and to show how Brigham Young began preparing the Saints for their journey west.

Preparation:

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:22-24.
2. Our Heritage, pages 66-71.
 - a. "Succession in the Presidency" (pages 66-67).
 - b. "Preparing to Leave Nauvoo"
 - c. "The Trials of a Winter Trek" (pages 69-70).
3. Pictures: Nauvoo Temple (62432; Gospel Art Picture Kit 501); Exodus from Nauvoo, February-May 1846 (62493; Gospel Art Picture Kit 410); and Exodus from Nauvoo (Gospel Art Picture Kit 411).

Attn Activity: With the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, many people predicted that the Church would cease to exist.

•What did such people fail to understand about the leadership of the Church? Read the following statement by **President Joseph Fielding Smith**:

"No man of himself can lead this church. It is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ; he is at the head...."

"He chooses men and calls them to be instruments in his hands to accomplish his purposes, and he guides and directs them in their labors. But men are only instruments in the Lord's hands, and the honor and glory for all that his servants accomplish is and should be ascribed unto him forever."

"If this were the work of man, it would fail, but it is the work of the Lord, and he does not fail" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 113; or Improvement Era, June 1970, 26).

Discussion and Application:

Following the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Brigham Young became the leader of the Church through an inspired process of succession that continues in the

Church today. This lesson discusses the process of succession in the Presidency of the Church and describes how Brigham Young began to prepare the Saints for their westward trek to the Salt Lake Valley.

1. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave the Twelve the keys of the kingdom and taught the principles of succession in the Presidency.

In Nauvoo in the winter of 1843-44, the Prophet Joseph Smith spent several days giving the Quorum of the Twelve their temple endowments and teaching them about their responsibilities. He told the Twelve that he had been concerned that he would soon die without having bestowed the keys of the kingdom on others. Wilford Woodruff, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time, recalled the following words from the **Prophet Joseph**:

"Now, brethren, I thank God I have lived to see the day that I have been enabled to give you your endowments, and I have now sealed upon your heads all the powers of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods and Apostleship, with all the keys and powers thereof, which God has sealed upon me; and I now roll off all the labor, burden and care of this Church and Kingdom of God upon your shoulders, and I now command you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to round up your shoulders, and bear off this Church and Kingdom of God before heaven and earth, and before God, angels and men" (in James R. Clark, comp., Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, 6 vols. [1965-75], 3:134).

•An important principle relating to succession in the Presidency is recorded in D&C 107:22-24. What do these verses teach about the relationship of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles? (The First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles each form a quorum. The two quorums are equal in authority and power, but the First Presidency is called to preside.)

•Why is it important to understand this relationship between these two presiding quorums of the Church?

President Harold B. Lee said: *"The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that 'where the president is not, there is no First Presidency.' Immediately following the death of a President, the next ranking body, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, becomes the presiding authority, with the President of the Twelve automatically becoming the acting President of the Church until a President of the Church is officially ordained and sustained in his office"* (in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 123; or Improvement Era, June 1970, 28).

2. After Joseph Smith's martyrdom, the Twelve presided over the Church until Brigham Young was sustained as President.

When Joseph Smith died, the First Presidency was dissolved, and the Quorum of the Twelve became the presiding authority in the Church. Ask the assigned class member to summarize the section "Succession in the Presidency" from Our Heritage, pages 66-67.

•What did Sidney Rigdon fail to understand about Church leadership? What was Brigham Young's initial response to the question of who would lead the Church? (See Our Heritage, page 66. He wanted to know the Lord's will concerning the matter.) What can we learn from Brigham Young's example?

•In the afternoon session of the meeting to discuss Church leadership, Brigham Young prophesied that those who did not follow the Twelve Apostles would not be successful and that only the Apostles would be able to build the kingdom of God (Our Heritage, page 67). How has this proved true in the history of the Church and in our own day?

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Saints voted unanimously to sustain the Quorum of the Twelve as the leaders of the Church (Our Heritage, page 67). The Quorum of the Twelve, with Brigham Young as President of the quorum, presided over the Church for three and one-half years. On 27 December 1847, the First Presidency was formally reorganized with Brigham Young as the President.

3. Before leaving Nauvoo, the Saints received temple ordinances.

Display a picture of the Nauvoo Temple. At the same time the Saints were preparing to leave Nauvoo, they worked hard to complete the temple. As soon as the temple was ready, they gathered in large numbers to receive their temple ordinances. The following entries from **President Brigham Young's** journal show how anxious the Saints were to receive these ordinances:

"This morning there was an immense crowd at the reception room waiting for admission.... One hundred twenty-one persons received ordinances" (History of the Church, 7:565).

"Such has been the anxiety manifested by the saints to receive the ordinances [of the Temple], and such the anxiety on our part to administer to them, that I have given myself up entirely to the work of the Lord in the Temple night and day, not taking more than four hours of sleep, upon an average, per day, and going home but once a week.

"Elder Heber C. Kimball and the others of the Twelve Apostles were in constant attendance but in consequence of close application some of them have had to leave the Temple to rest and recruit their health" (History of the Church, 7:567).

Persecution against the Saints increased in January 1846. Early in February 1846, President Young announced that ordinances in the temple would cease so the Saints could leave Nauvoo. However, those who had not yet received the ordinances were not willing to depart. **President Young** recorded the following on 3 February 1846:

"Notwithstanding that I had announced that we would not attend to the administration of the ordinances, the House of the Lord was thronged all day, the anxiety being so great to receive, as if the brethren would have us stay here and continue the endowments until our way would be hedged up, and our enemies would intercept us. But I informed the brethren that this was not wise, and that we should build more Temples, and have further opportunities to receive the blessings of the Lord, as soon as the saints were prepared to receive them. In this Temple we have been abundantly rewarded, if we receive no more. I also informed the brethren that I was going to get my wagons started and be off. I walked some distance from the Temple supposing the crowd would disperse, but on returning I found the house filled to overflowing.

"Looking upon the multitude and knowing their anxiety, as they were thirsting and hungering for the word, we continued at work diligently in the House of the Lord. Two hundred and ninety-five persons received ordinances" (History of the Church, 7:579).

•What can we learn from the Saints' eagerness to receive temple ordinances? Why do you think it was so important that the Saints receive the temple ordinances before beginning their journey from Nauvoo? (Answers could include that the added knowledge and strength would help them withstand the trials they would face.) In what ways is the temple a source of strength and guidance to you?

Temple work continued for the rest of the week, and the temple was then closed. All together, nearly 6,000 Saints received their endowments before commencing their westward journey.

4. The Saints experienced trials and miracles as they began journeying west.

Display a picture of the exodus from Nauvoo. Some of the Saints began leaving Nauvoo on 4 February 1846. Summarize the sections "Preparing to Leave Nauvoo" and "The Trials of a Winter Trek" from Our Heritage, pages 69-70.

Because the Saints began leaving Nauvoo in the winter and were forced to make hurried preparations, they had a very difficult journey. One notable experience occurred in early February at Sugar Creek, approximately seven miles from Nauvoo on the Iowa side of the Mississippi River. On the first night of encampment at Sugar Creek, nine infants were born. The weather was extremely cold, and the Saints did not have adequate shelter. **Eliza R. Snow** recorded:

"Mothers gave birth to offspring under almost every variety of circumstances imaginable, except those to which they had been accustomed; some in tents, others in wagons-in rain-storms and in snow-storms. I heard of one birth which occurred under the rude shelter of a hut, the sides of which were formed of blankets fastened to poles stuck in the ground, with a bark roof through which the rain was dripping. Kind sisters stood holding dishes to catch the water as it fell, thus protecting the new-comer and its mother from a shower-bath...."

"Let it be remembered that the mothers of these wilderness-born babes were not ... accustomed to roam the forest and brave the storm and tempest.... Most of them were born and educated in the Eastern States-had there embraced the gospel as taught by Jesus and his apostles, and, for the sake of their religion, had gathered with the saints, and under trying circumstances had assisted, by their faith, patience and energies, in making Nauvoo what its name indicates, 'the beautiful.' There they had lovely homes, decorated with flowers and enriched with choice fruit trees, just beginning to yield plentifully."

"To these homes ... they had just bade a final adieu, and with what little of their substance could be packed into one, two, and in some instances, three wagons, had started out, desertward" (in Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* [1877], 307-8).

•What impresses you about the Saints in this account?

By September 1846, most of the Saints had left Nauvoo and were scattered across Iowa in settlements they had prepared for the coming winter. Determined to drive the remaining Saints out of Nauvoo, mobs looted their homes and drove them down to the river. Some escaped across the river but were unable to take provisions or additional clothing. Those who were not able to escape were beaten or thrown into the river by the mob.

Refugee camps of five to six hundred homeless men, women, and children were scattered along two miles of the riverbank. Most had only blankets or brush for shelter and very little to eat. Many of them too sick to travel, and some died. Bishop Newel K. Whitney purchased some flour and distributed it as best he could, but this was not enough to sustain the people. Then the Lord provided for them in a

miraculous way:

On 9 October, when food was in especially short supply, several large flocks of quail flew into camp and landed on the ground and even on tables. Many of them were caught, cooked, and eaten by the hungry Saints. To the faithful it was a sign of God's mercy to modern Israel as a similar incident had been to ancient Israel. (See B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:135-36.)

•What similar miracle did the Lord perform for the ancient Israelites? (See Exodus 16:12-15.) How has the Lord provided for you in times of need?

Conclusion: As prompted by the Spirit, bear testimony of the truths discussed in the lesson.

Additional Teaching Ideas:

1. Additional information on succession in the Presidency of the Church

The process of succession in the Presidency of the Church has occurred many times and now follows the pattern outlined. If you feel that class members would benefit from a detailed description of this process, review the following steps with them.

1. A man who has been foreordained to preside one day over the Church is called by revelation to be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

2. He is trained for his future calling through his association with members of the Quorum and the First Presidency and through his assignments. As he outlives other members of the Quorum, he advances in seniority until he is President of the Quorum of the Twelve and only the President of the Church has been an Apostle longer than he has.

3. When a President of the Church dies, the First Presidency is dissolved. Counselors in the First Presidency return to their places in the Quorum of the Twelve (if they were members of the quorum). The Quorum of the Twelve becomes the presiding quorum in the Church. The President of the Twelve becomes the presiding authority in the Church.

4. Members of the Twelve assemble in the temple in a spirit of fasting and prayer. Guided by revelation, they come to a unanimous decision regarding the reorganization of the First Presidency. In accordance with this decision, they sustain the senior member of the Twelve as the President of the Church. They then lay their hands on his head and ordain him and set him apart as President of the Church.

5. The new President chooses two men (usually members of the Quorum of the Twelve) to be his counselors.

6. Vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve caused by the reorganization of the Presidency are filled.

For more information on the subject of succession, see "'The Kingdom of God Will Roll On: Succession in the Presidency,'" by Brent L. Top and Lawrence R. Flake, *Ensign*, Aug. 1996, pages 22-35.

2. The adversary's opposition to temple work

The Saints in Nauvoo experienced great opposition as they worked to complete the temple. In discussing the persecution of the Saints each time they tried to build a temple, **Elder Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve said:

"The opposition was leveled at the Saints because the adversary was afraid of the temple. He would do anything to prevent their construction of it" (The Holy Temple [1980], 175).

•Why is the adversary fearful of temples and temple work? What can we do to strengthen our resolve to attend the temple regardless of the obstacles we face?

3. "Come, Come, Ye Saints"

Prepare to have class members sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints" (Hymns, no. 30). Or ask a class member or a group of class members to prepare to sing it. After the hymn, summarize the events that inspired William Clayton to write it (Our Heritage, page 71).

Our Heritage, A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, pp 66-70.

Succession in the Presidency

When the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered in Carthage Jail, many of the Quorum of the Twelve and other Church leaders were serving missions and were absent from Nauvoo. Several days passed before these men learned of the deaths. When Brigham Young heard the news, he knew that the keys of priesthood leadership were still with the Church, for these keys had been given to the Quorum of the Twelve. However, not all Church members understood who would replace Joseph Smith as the Lord's prophet, seer, and revelator.

Sidney Rigdon, First Counselor in the First Presidency, arrived from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 3 August 1844. In the year before this time, he had begun taking a course contrary to the counsel of the Prophet Joseph Smith and had become estranged from the Church. He refused to meet with the three members of the Twelve already in Nauvoo and instead spoke to a large group of the Saints assembled for their Sunday worship service. He told them of a vision he had received in which he had learned that no one could replace Joseph Smith. He said that a guardian to the Church should be appointed and that guardian should be Sidney Rigdon. Few Saints supported him.

Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, did not return to Nauvoo until 6 August 1844. He declared that he wanted only to know "what God says" about who should lead the Church." The Twelve called a meeting for Thursday, 8 August 1844. Sidney Rigdon spoke in the morning session for more than one hour. He won few if any adherents to his position.

Brigham Young then spoke briefly, comforting the hearts of the Saints. As Brigham spoke, George Q. Cannon remembered, "it was the voice of Joseph himself," and "it seemed in the eyes of the people as if it were the very person of Joseph which stood before them." William C. Staines testified that Brigham Young spoke like the voice of the Prophet Joseph. "I thought it was he," Staines said, "and so did thousands who heard it." Wilford Woodruff also recalled that wonderful moment and wrote, "If I had not seen him with my own eyes, there is no one that could have convinced me that it was not Joseph Smith, and anyone can testify to this who was acquainted with these two men." This miraculous manifestation, seen by many, made clear to the Saints that the Lord had chosen Brigham Young to succeed Joseph Smith as leader of the Church.

In the afternoon session, Brigham Young again spoke, testifying that the Prophet Joseph had ordained the Apostles to hold the keys of the kingdom of God in all the world. He prophesied that those who did not follow the Twelve would not prosper and that only the Apostles would be victorious in building up the kingdom of God. Following his talk, President Young asked Sidney Rigdon to talk, but he chose not to. Following remarks by William W Phelps and Parley P Pratt, Brigham Young spoke again. He talked of completing the Nauvoo Temple, obtaining the

endowment before going into the wilderness, and the importance of the scriptures. He spoke of his love for Joseph Smith and his affection for the Prophet's family. The Saints then voted unanimously in favor of the Twelve Apostles as leaders of the Church.

While a few others would claim a right to the Presidency of the Church, for most Latter-day Saints the succession crisis was over. Brigham Young, the senior Apostle and President of the Quorum of the Twelve, was the man God had chosen to lead his people, and the people had united to sustain him.

CHAPTER SIX

Faith in Every Footstep Preparing to Leave Nauvoo

Leaders of the Church had talked since at least 1834 about moving the Saints west to the Rocky Mountains, where they could live in peace. As the years went by, leaders discussed actual sites with explorers and studied maps to find the right place to settle. By the end of 1845, Church leaders possessed the most up-to-date information available about the West.

As persecutions in Nauvoo intensified, it became apparent that the Saints would have to leave. By November 1845, Nauvoo was bustling with the activities of preparation. Captains of hundreds, fifties, and tens were called to lead the Saints on their exodus. Each group of 100 established one or more wagon shops. Wheelwrights, carpenters, and cabinetmakers worked far into the night preparing timber and constructing wagons. Members were sent east to purchase iron, and blacksmiths constructed materials needed for the journey and farm equipment necessary to colonize a new Zion. Families collected food and housekeeping items and filled storage containers with dried fruits, flour, rice, and medicines. Working together for the common good, the Saints accomplished more than seemed possible in so short a time.

The Trials of a Winter Trek

The evacuation of Nauvoo was originally planned to take place in April 1846. But as a result of threats that the state militia intended to prevent the Saints from going west, the Twelve Apostles and other leading citizens hurriedly met in council on 2 February 1846. They agreed that it was imperative to start west immediately, and the exodus began on 4 February. Under the direction of Brigham Young, the first group of Saints eagerly began their journey. However, that eagerness faced a great test, for there were many miles to be covered before permanent camps gave them respite from late winter weather and an exceptionally rainy spring.

To seek safety from their persecutors, thousands of Saints first had to cross the wide Mississippi River to Iowa territory. The perils of their journey began early when an ox kicked a hole in a boat carrying a number of Saints and the boat sank. One observer saw the unfortunate passengers hanging on to feather beds, sticks of wood, "lumber or any thing they could get hold of and were tossed and sported on the water at the mercy of the cold and unrelenting waves.... Some climbed on the top of the wagon which did not go quite under and were more comfortable while the cows and oxen on board were seen swimming to the shore from whence they came." Finally all the people were pulled onto boats and brought to the other side. Two weeks after the first crossing, the river froze over for a time. Though the ice was slippery, it supported wagons and teams and made the crossing easier. But the cold weather caused much suffering as the Saints plodded through the snow. In the encampment at Sugar Creek on the other side of the river, a steady wind blew snow that fell to a depth of almost eight inches. Then a thaw caused the ground to become muddy. Around, above, and below, the elements combined to produce a miserable environment for the 2,000 Saints huddled in tents, wagons, and hastily erected shelters while they waited for the command to continue on.

The most difficult part of the journey was this early stage through Iowa. Hosea Stout recorded that he "prepared for the night by erecting a temporary tent out of bed clothes. At this time my wife was hardly able to sit up and my little son was sick with a very high fever and would not even notice any thing that was going on." Many other Saints also suffered greatly.

Church History in the Fulness of Times, Religion 341-343, Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Chapter 23, pp 286-296.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE THE TWELVE TO BEAR OFF THE KINGDOM

Time Line

<i>Date</i>	<i>Significant Event</i>
8 July 1844	Parley P Pratt was the first of the Twelve to arrive in Nauvoo
16 July 1844	Brigham Young received confirmation of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum, but knew the keys of the kingdom were still on the earth
3 Aug. 1844	Sidney Rigdon arrived in Nauvoo from Pittsburgh claiming to be "guardian" of the Church
6 Aug. 1844	Most of the remaining members of the Twelve arrived in Nauvoo from the East
8 Aug. 1844	Brigham Young was transfigured before the people, and the Twelve were sustained as the presiding quorum in the Church

Thomas Ford (1800-50) was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Illinois, where he studied law. He served as Illinois state attorney, then as a circuit judge, and as a justice of the Illinois Supreme Court. He was governor of Illinois from 1842 to 1846.

WITH THE DEATH of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the First Presidency of the Church was dissolved. Mourning their slain leader, the Saints wondered who would now lead the Church. Sidney Rigdon, who had left Nauvoo earlier in 1844, reappeared in the city on 3 August and asserted that he should be appointed "guardian" of the Church. In the absence of most of the Twelve, who were still en route back to Nauvoo from their Eastern missions, Sidney made some inroads with his claim. A meeting was called for 8 August to consider his guardianship.

A MONTH OF GLOOM

When Joseph Smith was murdered, a deep gloom fell over the city of Nauvoo. As Saints in other branches of the Church learned of the Martyrdom, they grieved also. Only the arrival of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the firm direction they gave the Church gradually turned away this depressive spirit. The Twelve, except for John Taylor and Willard Richards, were in the East serving missions at the time of the Martyrdom. Although Joseph wrote them in June calling them home during the Expositor crisis, they did not receive these instructions until after the Martyrdom. Within three weeks, however, everyone had learned the tragic news and hurried back to Nauvoo.

The greatest achievement in Nauvoo between the Martyrdom and the return of the Apostles was the maintenance of peace. Although citizens in western Illinois feared reprisals, the Saints obeyed John Taylor and Willard Richards who instructed them

to stay calm and allow government officials to find the murderers. Three days after the Carthage tragedy, Elder Richards wrote to Brigham Young, "The saints have borne this trial with great fortitude and forbearance. They must keep cool at present. We have pledged our faith not to prosecute the murderers at present, but leave it to Governor Ford; ... vengeance is in the heavens."¹ The city council also instructed the residents: "Be peaceable, quiet citizens, doing the works of righteousness, and as soon as the Twelve and other authorities can assemble, or a majority of them, the onward course to the great gathering of Israel, and the final consummation of the dispensation of the fulness of times will be pointed out."²

Elder John Taylor, seriously wounded in the Carthage Jail, returned to Nauvoo on 2 July. Throughout the month he improved steadily, but remained bedfast. Notwithstanding his disability, he helped Elder Richards direct the Church until the rest of the Twelve returned. Together Elder Richards and Elder Taylor wrote to the many Saints in Great Britain and explained:

"The action of the saints has been of the most pacific kind, remembering that God has said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.'..."

"These servants of God have gone to heaven by fire-the fire of an ungodly mob. Like the Prophets of ancient days they lived as long as the world would receive them; and this is one furnace in which the saints were to be tried, to have their leaders cut off from their midst, and not be permitted to avenge their blood."³

William W. Phelps-Church publisher, city councilman, and scribe to the Prophet-helped immeasurably in keeping order in the city. Since his return to the Church in 1842, Elder Phelps had indefatigably sought to build up the kingdom and had helped the Prophet with a number of important projects, such as the publishing of the book of Abraham and the campaign for the presidency. He was the principal speaker at the funeral services of Joseph and Hyrum. Now he helped Elders Taylor and Richards during this critical interim period. As a poet, he memorialized the Prophet in lines which later became a favorite Church hymn:

*Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!
Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.
Blessed to open the last dispensation,
Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.
Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven!
Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vain.
Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren;
Death cannot conquer the hero again.⁴*

Within a month the Saints suffered another tragedy: the death of Samuel H. Smith, brother to Joseph and Hyrum. Samuel was one of the first Saints on the scene at Carthage following the Martyrdom. He had fled from the enemies of the Church to reach his brothers in Carthage only to find them slain. The stress weakened him physically. He contracted a serious fever; his health gradually failed, and he died on 30 July 1844. He was lauded in the Times and Seasons as one of the great men of this dispensation. His griefstricken mother, Lucy Mack Smith, had seen within four years the death of her husband and of four sons: Don Carlos, Hyrum, Joseph, and Samuel.

THE TWELVE RETURN

On the day of the Martyrdom, members of the Twelve were depressed and melancholic without knowing why. Elders Heber C. Kimball and Lyman Wight were traveling between Philadelphia and New York City when Elder Brigham Young, Orson Hyde, and Wilford Woodruff were in Boston.

Heber C. Kimball and Lyman Wight had left Philadelphia and were traveling to New York. William Smith at some point joined them, and they continued to Boston for an appointed conference that was held on 29 June. Seven members of the Twelve were present at the conference—Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, William Smith, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, and Lyman Wight.

Parley P Pratt was returning to Nauvoo and was on a canal boat between Utica and Buffalo, New York.

George A. Smith was staying with members of the Church near Jacksonburg, Michigan.

Amasa Lyman was in Cincinnati.

The location of Orson Pratt on 27 June is not known, but on 29 June he attended the conference in Boston, so he must have been fairly close to Boston on the day of the Martyrdom.

John E. Page had been in Pittsburgh, where he edited and published the Gospel Light from June 1843 to May 1844. His exact location is not known, but in all probability he was in Pittsburgh or the surrounding area.

John Taylor and Willard Richards were in Carthage.

Kimball felt mournful, as if he had just lost a friend. In Boston, Orson Hyde was examining maps in the hall rented by the Church when he felt a heavy and

sorrowful spirit come upon him. Tears ran down his cheeks as he turned from the maps and paced the floor. In Michigan, George A. Smith was plagued with a depressed spirit and foreboding thoughts all day long. When he retired to bed he could not sleep. He said that "Once it seemed to him that some fiend whispered in his ear, 'Joseph and Hyrum are dead; ain't you glad of it?'"⁵

Two days before the Martyrdom, Parley P. Pratt was moved upon by the Spirit to start home from New York State and coincidentally met his brother William on a canal boat on the day of the tragedy. Parley wrote that as they talked, "a strange and solemn awe came over me, as if the powers of hell were let loose. I was so overwhelmed with sorrow I could hardly speak... . 'Let us observe an entire and solemn silence, for this is a dark day, and the hour of triumph for the powers of darkness. O, how sensible I am of the spirit of murder which seems to preclude the whole land.'"⁶

Parley P. Pratt was the first Apostle outside of Nauvoo to learn of the Martyrdom. He was on a steamboat headed across the Great Lakes toward Chicago. At a landing in Wisconsin, boarding passengers brought news of the Carthage murders. There was great excitement on board, and many passengers taunted him, asking what the Mormons would do now. He replied that "they would continue their mission and spread the work he [Joseph Smith] had restored, in all the world. Observing that nearly all the prophets and Apostles who were before him had been killed, and also the Saviour of the world, and yet their death did not alter the truth nor hinder its final triumph."⁷

In sorrow Elder Pratt walked 105 miles across the plains of Illinois, hardly able to eat or sleep, wondering how he should "meet the entire community bowed down with grief and unutterable sorrow." He prayed for assistance. "On a sudden the Spirit of God came upon me, and filled my heart with joy and gladness indescribable; and while the spirit of revelation glowed in my bosom with as visible a warmth and gladness as if it were fire. The Spirit said unto me: . . . 'Go and say unto my people in Nauvoo, that they shall continue to pursue their daily duties and take care of themselves, and make no movement in Church government to reorganize or alter anything until the return of the remainder of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. But exhort them that they continue to build the House of the Lord which I have commanded them to build in Nauvoo.'"⁸ Arriving in Nauvoo on 8 July, Parley helped Elders Richards and Taylor keep order in the stricken community.

George A. Smith learned of the Martyrdom from a newspaper account in Michigan on 13 July. At first he thought it a hoax, but when the report was confirmed, he hastened home with his three missionary companions.

Overcome by worry and fatigue, he broke out in hives over his entire body. He could not even eat, but he traveled on, arriving in Nauvoo on 27 July. Soon he was meeting in council with the three Apostles already there.⁹

In Boston rumors of Joseph Smith's death began on 9 July.¹⁰ During the week before confirmation came from family letters and more complete newspaper accounts, Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and Orson Pratt struggled within themselves about what the terrible news meant. Brigham recorded in his journal, "The first thing which I thought of was, whether Joseph had taken the keys of the kingdom with him from the earth; brother Orson Pratt sat on my left; we were both leaning back on our chairs. Bringing my hand down on my knee, I said the keys of the kingdom are right here with the Church."¹¹

Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, and Lyman Wight contacted each other, joined together, and hastened home by railway, stagecoach, boat, and buggy. Subsequent events proved the wisdom of their haste. They arrived in Nauvoo the evening of 6 August. Wilford Woodruff recorded his feelings:

"When we landed in the city there was a deep gloom seemed to rest over the City of Nauvoo which we never experienced before.

". . . We were received with gladness by the Saints throughout the city. They felt like sheep without a shepherd, as being without a father, as their head had been taken away."¹²

THE SUCCESSION CRISIS

The arrival of most of the Apostles on 6 August was none too soon. A crisis had arisen as to who should lead the Church, and Willard Richards had nearly worn himself out trying to keep the Saints united. On Saturday, 3 August, Sidney Rigdon had returned from his self-imposed exile in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he had moved contrary to revelation (see D&C 124:108-9). Sidney returned with the expectation of taking over the Church. Not all of the Saints in Nauvoo realized that the Prophet had lost confidence in his first counselor quite a while before the Martyrdom.

Sidney avoided meeting with the four Apostles who were already in Nauvoo, choosing instead to speak to the assembled Saints at the grove on Sunday, 4 August. He asserted that he had received a vision:

"He related a vision which he said the Lord had shown him concerning the situation of the church, and said there must be a guardian appointed to build the church up to Joseph, as he had begun it.

"He said he was the identical man that the ancient prophets had sung about, wrote and rejoiced over, and that he was sent to do the identical work that had been the theme of all the prophets in every preceding generation."¹³ Elder Parley P. Pratt later remarked that Sidney Rigdon was "the identical man the prophets never sang nor wrote a word about."¹⁴ At the meeting, Sidney asked William Marks, Nauvoo stake president, who sympathized with Sidney's claims, to call a meeting of the Church on 6 August to sustain a new leader. President Marks changed the meeting to Thursday, 8 August, which proved providential since the remainder of the Twelve did not arrive until the evening of 6 August.

Sidney also met with William Marks and Emma Smith in Joseph Smith's home in order to appoint a trustee-in-trust for the Church. Emma wanted this done quickly to prevent loss of personal and Church property that was in Joseph Smith's name. Parley P. Pratt came into the meeting and immediately protested the move. He explained "that the appointment of a trustee in trust was the business of the whole Church, through its general authorities, and not the business of the local authorities of any one stake." Parley insisted that "dollars and cents were no consideration with me, when principle was at stake, and if thousands or even millions were lost, let them go. We could not and would not suffer the authorities and principles of the Church to be trampled under foot, for the sake of pecuniary interest."¹⁵ The meeting broke up without any decision being made.

On Monday, 5 August, Sidney Rigdon finally met with the Apostles who were in Nauvoo. He declared, "'Gentlemen, you're used up; gentlemen, you are all divided; the anti-Mormons have got you; the brethren are voting every way ... everything is in confusion, you can do nothing, you lack a great leader, you want a head, and unless you unite upon that head you are blown to the four winds, the anti-Mormons will carry the election-a guardian must be appointed.'

"Elder George A. Smith said, 'Brethren, Elder Rigdon is entirely mistaken, there is no division; the brethren are united; the election will be unanimous, and the friends of law and order will be elected by a thousand majority. There is no occasion to be alarmed. President Rigdon is inspiring fears there are no grounds for. "¹⁶

Under such circumstances the arrival of the Twelve from the East on the evening of 6 August was timely. They met the next morning in the home of John Taylor and rejoiced to be together again "and to be welcomed by the saints who considered it very providential for the Twelve to arrive at this particular juncture, when their minds were agitated, their hearts sorrowful, and darkness seemed to cloud their

path."¹⁷ Brigham Young took firm control of the meeting. After a discussion of all that had transpired, he announced there would be another meeting at 4:00 P.M., to be attended by the Apostles, the Nauvoo high council, and high priests, to discuss Sidney's claims made to the Saints the previous Sunday.

At the meeting Sidney Rigdon was invited to make a statement about his vision and revelations. He said, "The object of my mission is to visit the saints and offer myself to them as a guardian. I had a vision at Pittsburgh, June 27th [the day of the Martyrdom]. This was presented to my mind not as an open vision, but rather a continuation of the vision mentioned in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants [referring to the vision he and Joseph Smith had experienced that is recorded in D&C 76]."¹⁸ He went on to say that no one could take the place of Joseph as the head of the Church and that he, as the designated spokesman for the Prophet, should assume the role of guardian of the Church. Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal that Sidney's statement was a "long story. It was a kind of second class vision."¹⁹

Following Sidney's remarks, Brigham Young spoke:

"I do not care who leads the church ... but one thing I must know, and that is what God says about it. I have the keys and the means of obtaining the mind of God on the subject....

"Joseph conferred upon our heads all the keys and powers belonging to the Apostleship which he himself held before he was taken away, and no man or set of men can get between Joseph and the Twelve in this world or in the world to come.

"How often has Joseph said to the Twelve, 'I have laid the foundation and you must build thereon, for upon your shoulders the kingdom rests.'²⁰

President Young then designated Tuesday, 13 August as a special conference in which the people would be organized in a solemn assembly to vote on the matter. The next morning, however, the Apostles met privately and, "in consequence of some excitement among the People and a disposition by some spirits to try to divide the Church," decided to hold the solemn assembly that afternoon rather than wait until the following Tuesday.²¹

THE MANTLE FALLS ON BRIGHAM YOUNG

Thursday, 8 August 1844,²² stands as one of the most important days in the history of the Restoration. On that day a miracle occurred before the body of the Church—Brigham Young was transfigured before the people, and the succession crisis of the Church was resolved. A special meeting to choose a guardian was held that

morning at ten o'clock in the grove, according to the arrangements of William Marks. Sidney Rigdon spoke for an hour and a half about his desires to be the guardian of the Church, but he awakened no emotion and said nothing that marked him as the true leader. Brigham Young told the audience that he would rather have spent a month mourning the dead Prophet than so quickly attend to the business of appointing a new shepherd.²³ While he was speaking, he was miraculously transfigured before the people.

People of all ages were present, and they later recorded their experiences. Benjamin F. Johnson, twenty-six at that time, remembered, "As soon as he [Brigham Young] spoke I jumped upon my feet, for in every possible degree it was Joseph's voice, and his person, in look, attitude, dress and appearance was Joseph himself, personified; and I knew in a moment the spirit and mantle of Joseph was upon him."²⁴ Zina Huntington, who was a young woman twenty-one years old at that time, said "President Young was speaking. It was the voice of Joseph Smith—not that of Brigham Young. His very person was changed.... I closed my eyes. I could have exclaimed, I know that is Joseph Smith's voice! Yet I knew he had gone. But the same spirit was with the people."²⁶

George Q. Cannon, then a boy of fifteen, declared that "it was the voice of Joseph himself; and not only was it the voice of Joseph which was heard; but it seemed in the eyes of the people as though it was the very- person of Joseph which stood before them.... They both saw and heard with their natural eyes and ears, and then the words which were uttered came, accompanied by the convincing power of God, to their hearts, and they were filled with the Spirit and with great joy."²⁷ Wilford Woodruff testified, "If I had not seen him with my own eyes, there is no one that could have convinced me that it was not Joseph Smith speaking."²⁸

In view of these statements, Brigham Young's own record of the events that day is especially meaningful: "My heart was swollen with compassion towards them and by the power of the Holy Ghost, even the spirit of the Prophets, I was enabled to comfort the hearts of the Saints."²⁹ The meeting was then dismissed until 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

At 2 P.M. thousands of Saints gathered for what they knew would be a significant meeting. With the quorums of the priesthood seated in order, Brigham Young spoke frankly about the proposed guardianship of Sidney Rigdon and his alienation from Joseph Smith during the previous two years. He boldly prophesied, "All that want to draw away a party from the church after them, let them do it if they can, but they will not prosper."³⁰

President Young continued, and then turning to his main point declared, "If the people want President Rigdon to lead them they may have him; but I say unto you

that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have the keys of the kingdom of God in all the world.

"The Twelve are appointed by the finger of God. Here is Brigham, have his knees ever faltered? Have his lips ever quivered? Here is Heber and the rest of the Twelve, an independent body who have the keys of the priesthood-the keys of the kingdom of God to deliver to all the world: this is true, so help me God. They stand next to Joseph, and are as the First Presidency of the Church."³¹

He pointed out that Sidney could not be above the Twelve because they would have to ordain him to be President of the Church. Brigham urged everybody to see Brother Rigdon as a friend and stated that if he were to sit in cooperation and counsel with the Twelve, they would be able to act as one. Following President Young's two-hour speech, talks were delivered by Amasa Lyman, William W. Phelps, and Parley P. Pratt; each eloquently contended for the authority of the Twelve.

Brigham Young then arose and asked the basic question: "Do you want Brother Rigdon to stand forward as your leader, your guide, your spokesman. President Rigdon wants me to bring up the other question first, and that is, Does the church want, and is it their only desire to sustain the Twelve as the First Presidency of this people?" The vote was then taken, and all hands went up. Brigham then asked, "If there are any of the contrary mind, every man and every woman who does not want the Twelve to preside, lift up your hands in like manner." No hands went up.³²

Before concluding the conference, President Young called for the members' approval on the following issues: tithing the members to complete the temple, allowing the Twelve to preach to all the world, financing of the Church, teaching bishops in handling the business affairs of the Church, appointing a patriarch to the Church to replace Hyrum Smith, and sustaining Sidney Rigdon with faith and prayers. The conference was then adjourned. Once more the Church had a presidency-the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles-with Brigham Young as their president.

PREPARATION OF THE TWELVE FOR THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

For several years the Lord had carefully prepared the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to assume the leadership of the Church. When the Twelve were first called in 1835, their duties were restricted to areas outside the organized stakes, but in time their responsibilities were broadened to include authority over all the members of the Church. Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, and Brigham Young were called to lead the stake in Far West in 1838. And while Joseph and Hyrum were in

Liberty Jail in Missouri, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and John Taylor of the Twelve directed the exodus of the Saints from Missouri to Illinois.

The mission of the Twelve to Great Britain welded them into a united quorum under the direction of Brigham Young. When they returned to America, the Prophet Joseph increased their responsibilities in both temporal and ecclesiastical affairs. They were involved in raising funds for the Nauvoo House and the temple as well as constructing them, helping the poor, managing land, and directing the settlement of new immigrants into Illinois. They participated in decisions affecting Nauvoo business and economic development. The Twelve were among the first to receive instruction from Joseph Smith on plural marriage and the temple ordinances. Members of the Twelve were given responsibility over Church publishing, they directed the calling, assigning, and instructing of missionaries, they presided over conferences both in the field and in Nauvoo, and they regulated the branches abroad.

Most importantly, Joseph Smith, feeling that he might soon die, took great care during the last seven months of his life to carefully prepare the Twelve. He met with the quorum almost every day to instruct them and give them additional responsibilities. In an extraordinary council meeting in late March 1844, he solemnly told the Twelve that he could now leave them because his work was done and the foundation was laid so the kingdom of God could be reared.

Wilford Woodruff later recalled those days of 1844: "I am a living witness to the testimony that he [Joseph Smith] gave to the Twelve Apostles when all of us received our endowments from under his hands. I remember the last speech that he ever gave us before his death. It was before we started upon our mission to the East. He stood upon his feet some three hours. The room was filled as with consuming fire, his face was as clear as amber, and he was clothed upon by the power of God. He laid before us our duty. He laid before us the fullness of this great work of God; and in his remarks to us he said: 'I have had sealed upon my head every key, every power, every principle of life and salvation that God has ever given to any man who ever lived upon the face of the earth. And these principles and this Priesthood and power belong to this great and last dispensation which the God of Heaven has set His hand to establish in the earth. 'Now,' said he addressing the Twelve, 'I have sealed upon your heads every key, every power, and every principle which the Lord has sealed upon my head.' .. .

"After addressing us in this manner he said: 'I tell you, the burden of this kingdom now rests upon your shoulders; you have got to bear it off in all the world, and if you don't do it you will be damned.'"³³

On this same occasion, Joseph conferred the keys of the sealing power on Brigham Young, President of the Twelve. Brigham later explained that "this last key of the priesthood is the most sacred of all, and pertains exclusively to the first presidency of the Church."³⁴

FORMATION OF SPLINTER GROUPS

Even as the Twelve began to firmly exercise their authority, Sidney Rigdon and James J. Strang, a new convert to the Church, worked behind the scenes to try and wrest the leadership away. Rigdon claimed his authority was superior to that of the Twelve and, being unwilling to submit to their counsel, was excommunicated on 8 September 1844. He returned to Pittsburgh and the following spring organized a "Church of Christ" with Apostles, prophets, priests, and kings. This attracted a few people, those who opposed the Twelve and felt that Joseph Smith had been a fallen prophet. He published the Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate to promulgate his views. By 1847 this small organization disintegrated. Rigdon, however, hung on to a handful of followers for another thirty years as the self-appointed "President of the Kingdom and the Church." He finally died in obscurity in the state of New York in 1876.³⁵

James J. Strang was a more imaginative and charismatic leader. Following his baptism by Joseph Smith, four months before the Martyrdom, he returned to his home in Wisconsin. In August 1844 he presented a letter that he claimed had been written by Joseph Smith, appointing himself as the Prophet's successor and designating Voree, Wisconsin, as the new gathering place. Brigham Young and the Twelve correctly branded the letter a forgery and excommunicated Strang. He nevertheless convinced some to follow him to Voree, eventually winning over three former members of the Twelve who had lost their standing in the Church—William E. McLellan, John E. Page, and William Smith. For a time he also had the support of William Marks and Martin Harris. His church had some missionary success in the East. In 1849 he located his colony on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan and had himself crowned "king of the kingdom." The group eventually ran into numerous economic difficulties, and in 1856 Strang was murdered by disaffected followers and the movement virtually collapsed.

Some of Joseph Smith's own family did not follow the Twelve. The Prophet's widow, Emma, could not be reconciled with the Twelve on economic and theological matters. She became embittered and influenced her children against following the direction of the Twelve. When the Saints made their exodus to the West, Emma and her family stayed in Nauvoo. When William Smith belatedly returned to Nauvoo from the East, he was ordained Church Patriarch to replace Hyrum. After a few months, he advanced his own claims to be Church leader. He was consequently excommunicated. Following a short association with Strang,

William taught that Joseph Smith's eldest son should, by right of lineage, inherit the presidency and that he, William, was to be guardian and president pro tem until Joseph III was of age.

There were others who refused to follow the leadership of Brigham Young and the Twelve. A few members were disaffected over plural marriage; some isolated branches did not go west and became confused as to what course they should take. During the 1850s a "new organization" gradually emerged. In 1860 leaders of the new organization (among them William Marks) formed the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and succeeded in naming Joseph Smith III to be its president. Eventually it established its headquarters in Independence, Missouri.

THE TWELVE AND THE PROCESS OF SUCCESSION

The apostolic succession in 1844 established the principles and set the pattern for future reorganizations of the Presidency of the Church. Following the death of each President, the keys of the kingdom, which have been conferred upon each Apostle at his ordination, reside with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as a body (see D&C 107:23-24; 112:15).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball, in a general conference address in 1970, explained the process: "The moment life passes from a President of the Church, a body of men become the composite leader—these men already seasoned with experience and training. The appointments have long been made, the authority given, the keys delivered.... the kingdom moves forward under this already authorized council. No 'running' for position, no electioneering, no stump speeches. What a divine plan! How wise our Lord, to organize so perfectly beyond the weakness of frail, grasping humans."³⁶

The Lord controls succession in his church. President Ezra Taft Benson explained, "God knows all things, the end from the beginning, and no man becomes President of the church of Jesus Christ by accident, nor remains there by chance, nor is called home by happenstance."³⁷

ENDNOTES

1. In History of the Church, 7:148.
2. W. W. Phelps, Willard Richards, and John Taylor, in History of the Church, 7:152.
3. In History of the Church, 7:173.
4. "Praise to the Man," Hymns, no. 27.
5. History of the Church, 7:133; see also pp. 132-33.

6. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, Classics in Mormon Literature series (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), p. 292.
7. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 292.
8. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 293-94.
9. See Merlo J. Pusey, *Builders of the Kingdom* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1981), p. 52.
10. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985) p. 111.
11. Elden Jay Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801-1844* (Salt Lake City: Elden Jay Watson, 1968), p. 171.
12. Wilford Woodruff Journals, 6-7 Aug. 1844, LDS Historical Department, Salt Lake City; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization standardized.
13. *History of the Church*, 7:224.
14. *In History of the Church*, 7:225.
15. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 295.
16. *History of the Church*, 7:226.
17. *History of the Church*, 7:229.
18. *In History of the Church*, 7:229.
19. Wilford Woodruff Journals, 7 Aug. 1844; punctuation and capitalization standardized.
20. *In History of the Church*, 7:230.
21. Wilford Woodruff Journals, 8 Aug. 1844.
22. This section is derived from Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, pp. 114-16.
23. *Brigham Young's Journal 1837-45*, 8 Aug. 1844, LDS Historical Department, Salt Lake City, pp. 47-49.
24. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1947), p. 104.
25. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, p. 123.
26. In Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), pp. 326-27.
27. "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Juvenile Instructor*, 29 Oct. 1870, pp. 174-75.
28. *Deseret Weekly News*, 15 Mar. 1892, p. 3; see also Truman G. Madsen, "Notes on the Succession of Brigham Young," in *Seminar on Brigham Young*, 12 May 1962, Brigham Young University Department of Extension Publications Adult Education and Extension Services, Provo, 1963, p. 9.

29. *Brigham Young's Journal 1837-45*, 8 Aug. 1844, p. 48; spelling and punctuation standardized.
30. *In History of the Church*, 7:232.
31. *In History of the Church*, 7:233. 32. *In History of the Church*, 7:240.
33. *Deseret Weekly News*, 15 Mar. 1892, p. 406.
34. "P. P. Pratt's Proclamation," *Millennial Star*, Mar. 1845, p. 151; previous three paragraphs derived from Ronald K. Esplin, "Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity," *Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1981, pp. 311, 319-20.
35. Derived from James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), p. 202; Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, pp. 116-17, 119.
36. *In Conference Report*, Apr. 1970, p. 118.
37. Ezra Taft Benson, in *Korea Area Conference 1975*, p. 52.