



DOCTRINE & COVENANTS

& CHURCH HISTORY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

* GREEN MOUNTAIN 1ST WARD * LAKEWOOD, COLORADO * 6 SEPTEMBER 2009 * PAGE 1 *

Lesson 33: President Brigham Young Leads the Saints, D&C 107:22-24; *Our Heritage*, pp. 66-71.

Next Week
#34 *Faith in Every Footstep* (D&C 136; *Our Heritage*, pp. 71-77)

Introduction

When the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, many expected the Church to disintegrate and scatter because they thought that the Church was simply a group of Joseph Smith's followers. They failed to understand important principles pertaining to the leadership of the Church.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

"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).

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.

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



Brigham Young, ca. 1846

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.

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 Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965-75], 3:134).

Lesson Highlights

- The Prophet Joseph Smith gave the Twelve the keys of the kingdom and taught the principles of succession in the Presidency.
- After Joseph Smith's martyrdom, the Twelve presided over the Church until Brigham Young was sustained as President.
- Before leaving Nauvoo, the Saints received temple ordinances.
- The Saints experienced trials and miracles as they began journeying west.

A study of this lesson will help us understand the process of succession in Church leadership show how Brigham Young began preparing the Saints for their journey west.



D&C 107:22-24 contains an important principle of succession in the Presidency. While the authority and power of the quorum of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve is equal, the quorum of the First Presidency is designated as the presiding quorum. It is important to understand this relationship between the Quorums.

President Harold B. Lee said: "*The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that 'where the president is not, there is no First*

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. (See "*Succession in the Presidency*", pages 66-67, *Our Heritage*.)

Sidney Rigdon failed to understand Church leadership. While Bro. Rigdon wanted to assume leadership, Bro. Young was only interested in knowing the will of the Lord on the matter. This should be an example for us to note and follow. We should always be willing to seek and follow the Lord's guidance rather than seeking to promote and gain acceptance of our opinions.

Before leaving Nauvoo, the Saints received temple ordinances.

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 ordinance.



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).

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" (Improvement Era, June 1970, 28).

Following an afternoon discussion session on Church leadership, Brigham Young prophesied that only the Apostles would be successful in building the Kingdom of God, but those who did not follow the Twelve Apostles would fail. This has proven true through the years.

As the meeting concluded, the Saints unanimously voted to sustain the Quorum of the Twelve as the leaders of the Church. The Quorum presided until the 27th of December in 1847, some three and one-half years later, when the quorum of the First Presidency was formed under President Young.

"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

Eliza R. Snow wrote this poem in her diary at the time of the February 1846 exodus:

Let us go—let us go to the wilds for a home

Where the wolf and the roe and the buffalo roam

Where beneath our own vines, we may...enjoy, The rich fruits of our labors, with none to annoy.

(Diary of Eliza R. Snow, Feb. 1846, LDS Church Archives)



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.

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



Some of the Saints began leaving Nauvoo on 4 February 1846. (See “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

“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).

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).*

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.)

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- In what ways is the temple a source of strength and guidance to you?
- How has the Lord provided for you in times of need?
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