

Church History

for

Juniors

Published by

The General Sunday School Association

With approval of the Board of Publication

Church of Christ (Temple Lot)

Box 472
Independence, Mo.

January 1977



by Donna Moser

Church History For Juniors

Chapter 1

This is your own story of the Church of Christ. First of all, we'll tell about the one set up in this land by the first Nephi. That story has been given to us in the Book of Mormon. Nephi's parents, Lehi and Sariah, lived in old Jerusalem just before the Babylonian captivity, more than six hundred years before Jesus was born on earth. Both Lehi and Nephi were given dreams and visions and were spoken to by angels sent from God. They were told to leave their old home city, which had become very wicked and would be disciplined by a terrible punishment within a short time. Just nine years before the Babylonian attack the family left Jerusalem and started on their long journey to the new home God had promised them—here in the Americas. God had told Nephi that he was to be the ruler of these people because he was the most righteous of all the sons.

The two older sons, Laman and Lemuel, just couldn't bring themselves to accept this ruling. They had always thought that, as the eldest, Laman would be the head of the family (assisted by Lemuel) when Lehi was gone. So, just a little while after Lehi died, they took matters into their own hands. With murder in their hearts they made their plans. They would kill Nephi! Now, God could never let this happen; He had His own plans for Nephi and they included a full life of service. They were in the new country and Nephi, a husband and father now, was in his own tent one dark, dark night. He was warned in a dream that he must gather up all those who believed that his leadership was the will of God. They were to run—run for their very lives! Believing the warning, they did, that same black night.

A long way from the original settlement, out in a wild new country, they stopped running and settled down to build a new city. They named it Nephi, after their much loved leader. As soon as they had taken care of the bare necessities—homes, crops, defense against the Lamanites (their relatives and former friends were now their bitter enemies!)—they built a temple. It was exactly like Solomon's, except that the

4. Who was the strongest contending leader, and how many wagons went west under his leadership?
5. What did they call their new state and what is it now?
6. What was the second largest group and where did it organize?
7. What was the best known, continuously operating, local left in Illinois?
Who became its leader?

CHAPTER 15

1. Did the Woodford County locals go on in the practices that had crept into the church, the practices that led to so much trouble?
2. When they gathered together on August 16, 1863 what revelation came to them?
3. When were they told that it would be safe to return to Missouri?
4. What happened when they reached the Missouri River?
5. What was the first thing they started to do, once they were in their new homes?
6. Did they keep the temple lot from then on? What happened?
7. What did they do in 1915 which was again a step backward?

CHAPTER 16

1. What was the "Zion's Co-operative Industrial Association" and what happened to it?
2. When was the office of president abolished?
3. When was the last time the quorum was full?
4. Who was the man who received "angelic messages" that ended in splitting up the church?
5. Have we any indication that the quorum will be filled again someday?
How many do we have in it now?
6. When the Lamanites, or "remnant of Jacob" come to build the city, will we receive them with love in our hearts?
7. Will we be worthy to assist them? Shall we try?

CHAPTER 10

1. What evil had come into the church by the time the saints were driven out of Jackson County?
2. What foolish mistake did the people probably make that angered their neighbors?
3. What was the next attack after the destruction of the printing press?
4. Then what happened in November?
5. Where did they go when they left Jackson County?
6. Who was their influential non-member champion?
7. Through his work, what were they given next? What was its name and where was its seat?

CHAPTER 11

1. What was the new county set aside as a settlement and sanctuary for the saints?
2. What was the battle fought by the Caldwell County militia over in the neighboring county of Daviess?
3. Who made the fiery Independence Day speech that caused Gen. Lucas to order the state militia to go to Far West?
4. Who was the church member who offered, as a colonel in their county militia, to escort the church leaders to meet Gen. Lucas.
5. What happened on this encounter?
6. What orders did Gen. Lucas send to Gen. Doniphan?
Did he obey?
7. What happened to the settlement at Haun's Mill?

CHAPTER 12

1. What event marked the beginning of the end of their first occupation of the center place?
2. Had the church remained as simple and pure all this time as at the beginning?
3. How different was the second printing of the Book of Commandment revelations from the first?
4. What did the changes serve to cover?
5. Where did they cross over from Missouri to Illinois?
6. Did the individual saints buy property there by themselves?
7. What did they name the town that became their headquarters, and what did the name mean?

CHAPTER 13

1. What two things did the delegation to Washington hope to accomplish?
2. What new member did most to interest the church leaders in Masonry?
3. Does the Book of Mormon teach the benefits of secret societies?
4. To what offices did Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon try to win election?
5. What other dangerous doctrine did John Bennett teach and what did it lead to?
6. What was the secret band organized by Sampson Avard?
7. What happened to Joseph and Hyrum Smith in Carthage, Illinois?

CHAPTER 14

1. Did the saints unite to take vengeance upon the killers of the Smith brothers?
2. Was the temple at Nauvoo finished, and is it still standing?
3. Who was the third and remaining member of the presidency?

materials were different. They had different things to work with, here in this choice land. Here Nephi's people worshipped God through the lives of this generation and they were happy.

The Lamanites grew more and more wicked and became a savage, dark-skinned nation. (*Book of Mormon, pages 1-97*)

Many years passed and the descendants of Nephi gradually drifted away from the worship of God and obedience to His laws and became more wicked than their enemies, the Lamanites. Here and there among both peoples there were a few who still remembered what God had done for them; it was to a Lamanite named Samuel that He finally spoke. He told this bronze-skinned prophet that he was to go to the land of the Nephites and preach repentance, telling them of the Son of God, who would be born as a man in their old world. This was a difficult—and dangerous—thing to do but Samuel started right out to obey. He went to the border of the Nephite country, climbed upon a high wall surrounding one of their largest cities and began to preach. This was a curious sight and a crowd soon gathered to watch—and perhaps even listen. Christ would live and die like any mortal man but with a difference, Samuel said. He would come to life again! His giving up life in Heaven for a time and becoming a mere human, dying, would make up for man's mortal, sinful state and make possible eternal life—with God. There would be signs given in this part of the world, so that they would know when the blessed birth (and then death) took place.

The sign of His birth would be a day, followed by sunset and night, a night without darkness. In the morning the sun would rise again, but would not change the light that had been with them all night! The sign of His death would be a dreadful one. This land would be almost torn apart by a storm more terrible than any ever known! It would be followed by three days of thick darkness which could not be lightened. And more—Samuel warned that those who would not follow God's ways would be destroyed at this time by His fierce anger. As he stood up straight, there on that high wall, his coppery face shown with inspiration; his voice trembled with deep feeling.

(Book of Mormon, pages 586-597)

Of course the people were all very happy to hear the good news.

Or were they ?

Chapter 2

The Nephites had been in this land for almost six hundred years now. Their former relatives, the Lamanites, had turned away from God and had become a dark and savage people. Now the Nephites too had left the ways of their Lord and had become even more wicked than their enemies, the Lamanites, as often happens when a once-righteous people forget God. Among the brown-skinned Lamanites there was at least one good man, a prophet named Samuel. Samuel was given knowledge of the near coming of Jesus Christ and instructed to go and give the good news to the Nephites, preaching repentance. He did. On a high wall around one of their biggest cities he told them Who was coming and that they would be punished if they didn't believe and turn away from their evil living.

You can probably imagine what happened when he finished talking. Many of those who heard his words just laughed scornfully; others grew furious and drove him away, with hard-thrown rocks. They were angry enough to want to kill this dark-skinned Lamanite who had the nerve to come to their city and tell them they needed to repent! They thought they were good enough for anybody—for the Lamanites or for God! Still, there were a few who were struck by the passionate entreaty in his voice, the blazing fire of truth in his eyes. These listened thoughtfully; they wondered if—just maybe—he might be right; they opened their hearts. As always, when any man, woman or child does this, the Spirit of God came in—and they knew. The prophet spoke truth.

The people kept the faith in the next few years and waited hopefully for the signs of the Holy birth Samuel had told them about. They even preached the gospel themselves and many were converted and added to their numbers. I wish I could say that the entire country waited happily for the coming of the

6. Did the records stay hidden forever?
7. How did the religious life of the Smiths begin to change? (With what happenings, that is)

CHAPTER 5

1. After Joseph began to try to figure out which church he should join, what did he do?
What scripture did he read?
2. When he began to pray in the grove, what happened before he saw his vision?
3. Who was his attacker?
4. Who was he visited by then?
5. What was the instruction given him?
6. Who did he tell his story to, outside of his family?
7. How did the community react to the story he had told the minister?

CHAPTER 6

1. How long was it from the time Joseph had the first vision till the angel visited him?
2. Who was the visitor this time?
3. What did he tell Joseph about first?
4. What other items did he mention?
5. Did he quote scriptures? Were they exactly like the Bible versions?
6. Did he take Joseph to see these things then?
7. Did Joseph tell anyone else what had happened? Who?

CHAPTER 7

1. What did Joseph Smith find hidden with the golden plates?
2. What was this to be used for?
3. How long did Joseph wait before he was allowed to take the plates home?
4. Who was the first person to write while Joseph translated?
5. Who was the second?
6. Who was the third and last?
7. Who were the three witnesses?
Did they ever change their minds about what they had seen?

CHAPTER 8

1. How many revelations were given in the year before organization?
2. What happened when Joseph and Oliver prayed for guidance about baptism?
3. How many people met to organize the church? When?
4. How long did the original name last?
5. What was their first mission and who went?
6. Who was the leader of the community of Kirtland, Ohio? What happened there?
7. The church began to move west from New York. What was their first move?

CHAPTER 9

1. Where was the first headquarters of the growing church?
2. What dangerous new doctrine entered at the general conference in Kirtland in June, 1831?
3. In Kirtland a revelation came, telling them to move again. Where to?
4. When did they receive the revelation telling them where the temple was to be built?
Where was this place?
5. When was this spot dedicated?
6. Were there complete copies of the Book of Commandments finished when the press was destroyed?
7. What was the date of the last revelation given and included in this book?
Where is it found in the book?

CHAPTER 1

1. *Where did the first Nephites come from?*
2. *Was it according to custom for a younger son to become the family leader?*
3. *What other building was their first temple patterned after?*
4. *How was it different?* Why?
5. *Why did God send a Lamanite prophet to the Nephites, rather than one of their own leaders?*
6. *What was his message?*
7. *Would they know when this came to pass?* How?

CHAPTER 2

1. *How long were the Nephites in this country before they heard of the coming of Christ from a Lamanite?*
2. *Who did they hear it from?*
3. *Did all the people believe Samuel?*
4. *What did the wicked government leaders do to force the believers in Samuel's prophecy to give up their belief?*
5. *What did the prophet Nephi do when this happened?*
6. *What happened then?*
7. *Did it come?*

CHAPTER 3

1. *When did the Nephites start over again with the year 1, in their timekeeping?*
2. *What was the sign of Christ's death? How long did it last?*
3. *Which ones were left after this sign came to pass?*
4. *What came to them during the darkness?*
5. *When the light returned, where did the remaining people gather?*
6. *What, or Who, did they see and hear?*
7. *After He called Nephi to be the first disciple, how many others did He call?*

CHAPTER 4

1. *After Jesus ordained the disciples, what special thing did He do for the little children?*
2. *When He told the disciples to ask favors of Him, what was the strange request made by three of them?*
3. *How long did it take the Nephites to become more completely wicked than ever?*
4. *Then what happened to the Nephites as a people?*
5. *Who was the last writer of the Book of Mormon and what did he do with the record?*

Savior. Sadly, though, that isn't the way it happened. Those who refused to believe in the story were in the majority —and they were in the government! They grew increasingly impatient with the believers and finally did something which they thought would end the nonsense, once and for all. A certain date was set aside, by a government announcement. On this date, if the sign hadn't come (and of course it wouldn't, they thought) all those who refused to give up this silly belief would be killed.

The spokesman and prophet for the faithful minority, another man named Nephi, encouraged his people not to betray their belief. On the day before the mass execution was to take place he went to God in prayer, with fear and sorrow filling his heart. All day he prayed, refusing to give up without an answer. It worked! At the end of the day he heard a voice and he knew at once that he was hearing the Son of God.

"...Lift up your head and be of good cheer, for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world..." (3rd Nephi 1: 12-13).

That night the sun went down as always. There was a beautiful sunset followed by—a night filled with soft, clear light. In the morning the sun came up again, shining on a world already light.

As we all know, He was indeed born in Bethlehem; the sign had come to the people on these continents. Our friend Nephi preached to the people with happy enthusiasm after this marvelous experience. Before too long almost everybody in the Nephite land believed that Christ had come and that they must serve Him. It was a very good time. They even began a new period in their dating system, starting over again with the year 1 at the time of His birth. For twenty nine wonderful years there was peace and prosperity in the whole nation.

It was too good to last.

Pride in their possessions began to grow large and ugly in their hearts. There were some who were rich in the goods of the world, and some who were poor and didn't have enough to be comfortable. Each hated the other! By the year 33 almost all the people were sinful, as was the Lamanite nation. It didn't

take long, did it? This was the year of a very special event in the old world . It was time for the second sign foretold by Samuel the prophet from the land of the Lamanites. On the 4th day of the first month of the 34th year (33 A.D.) it came true.

Chapter 3

The Lamanites and the Nephites had been in this land for approximately 634 years. They had been given a sign that Jesus had been born as a human being, over in the old world. This had made a big difference in their lives—for awhile. Then in the year 33, by the new dating system they had started with the year of His birth, they had again grown wicked, both nations, more wicked than before. It was time for the second sign told of by Samuel the Lamanite, the sign of His death. It was to be a sign of great natural disaster, but the people had forgotten all about it.

Then it happened!

For what must have seemed the longest three hours of their lives there was a great storm, so terrible, so violent, that it changed the face of the land. Whirling winds, like our tornadoes, roaring, crashing thunder, jagged streaks of lightning that lit up the whole sky and set hugh cities afire...and earthquakes! These quakes dropped entire cities into the ocean, pushed others up from the plains, up, up, up, till they became mountaintops, swallowed some up in wide-gaping jaws of earth that closed over them!

Then came the dark. And, oh, how thick was that darkness! People felt their way through the horror of darkness and tried to build fires for warmth and for light. They could not kindle any fire and there was only blackness and the rumbling noises of still-heaving earth. How they mourned when they found that many, many of the people were dead. Only the more righteous still lived. They wailed, they wept, they knew terror and despair, and then...a voice, still and small, was heard by every living soul over the vast land.

“Many great destructions have I caused to come upon this people because of their wickedness. Oh all ye that are spared

called. The Fetting messages were rejected and another apostle resigned; in 1940 another quit. So much of good, so much of bad; the Book of Mormon says, “For it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things” (*2nd Nephi 1: 81*). In 1942 two more were called; the quorum was full. By 1950 two had died, two more were called to take their fallen comrades’ places. Since that time there have been deaths and new calls. Two were replaced by their sons. There are now (1975) eight. We wait hopefully for new calls. In the 1973 conference Elder August Schwegler told of a dream about this. He said that after praying over the great need he saw in his dream that we would lose more apostles, while God waits for us to become more righteous. Then, he saw calls coming to fill the quorum once more! Elder Maynard Case tells of a vision he had some time ago. He saw the congregation in the Temple Lot church waiting silently, expectantly. There were no elders at the front. Then—the doors at the back swung open! In they came...two by two...filing up to take their places. There were twelve. Clear and bright in his mind was the knowledge that this will take place when—and only when—the church has reached a high state of righteousness.

In the winter of 1950-51 Apostle Clarence Wheaton made the first missionary trip into Yucatan and established another “Lamanite” mission. After many fruitful years he left his labors there and was followed by Apostle Leon Yates and Elder Donald McIndoo. Today the small brown brothers and sisters there have what is perhaps the most vigorous, faith-filled churches in all the “land shadowing with wings.”

Our story began with the church in Book of Mormon days. Our ending shall be the prophecy in that book about the city to be built.

“But if they (the Gentiles, us!) will repent and hearken unto my words and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant, and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob (the Lamanites, or Indians), unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance, and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem” (*3rd Nephi 10: 1,2*).

turned out to be against such efforts. The cooperative was dead.

In 1919 the conference changed the title of “Presiding Elder” to “President.” No provision was made for ordination as such, or for counselors to the president. In 1920 Elder Andrew Himes was elected to the office.

Then in 1924 President Frederick M. Smith of the Reorganized Church set in practice what he called “Supreme Directional Control,” a high-sounding term which really meant that the presidency had authority to give spiritual and temporal orders to the membership. This caused much discontent and the trickle of membership flowing over into the Church of Christ became by 1929 a flood, subsiding after that into a ripple again.

In 1925 this dangerous era ended. The office of president was abolished. This probably added to the appeal the Church of Christ had for the rebellious R.L.D.S. people of the period. At the next conference in 1926 seven apostles were called, the first such since back in the Woodford County days. These all accepted and were ordained. One resigned soon; at the 1927 conference three more were added, a total of nine. In that year one died; there was a replacement at the 1928 conference, along with three new calls. The quorum was filled!

During these years many debates were held with R.L.D.S. elders. Also during that period came the series of supposed angel messages given to Elder Otto Fetting. Work on the temple was directed to begin without delay and got as far as excavation. During this, the stone markers on display now in the little white church on the Temple Lot were found. This work was marked by tragedy. During the sodbreaking ceremony Apostle T. J. Sheldon died very suddenly.

Fetting continued to receive messages. One brought in the idea of re-baptism and produced much dissention; Fetting and Apostle Gates were put out of the church and took about one third of the four thousand membership into a new church body. This almost ended the temple project.

In 1930 there were three more calls. Then the “One Person Godhead” theory was preached, and there was more dividing. By 1934 four more apostles were dismissed. But this distressing state of affairs didn’t last. In 1936 four more were

because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me and repent...that I may heal you?...I am Jesus Christ, the son of God. I created the heavens and the earth...I am in the Father and the Father in me...ye shall offer up unto Me no more...your sacrifices and your burnt offerings;...ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit...I have laid down my life and have taken it up again; repent and come unto me, ye ends of the earth, and be saved” (*3rd Nephi 4: 40-52*).

During three days of darkness the voice spoke to them, then the light, the beautiful light, came back and the noises came to an end at last. How glorious was the light, how peaceful the silence! Their mourning turned to joy and thanksgiving.

A big crowd gathered together around the temple in the land they called “Bountiful”. Marvelling, they talked together of the great changes in the landscape and the wondrous things the mysterious voice had said to them. Suddenly again a small voice, piercing to the heart’s center of every person there, was heard. It spoke three times before they realized that it came from the bright sky over their heads. As one they looked up and—understood for the first time the words: “...Behold, my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased...hear ye him” (*3rd Nephi 5:8*). Then, right there before their dazzled eyes, a man dressed in shining white, descended out of the blue, blue sky and stood in their midst. He smiled gently and spoke.

“Behold I am Jesus Christ, of whom the prophets testified...Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side and...feel the prints of the nails in my hands...and feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel and...of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world” (*3rd Nephi 5: 11-14*).

As they stood there spellbound He spoke on for hours, telling them all about salvation, about His Father’s will for Their people. He called the prophet Nephi out of the crowd and gave him authority to baptize and to minister to the rest. Here was the first disciple of the twelve in this new land. Then

He called eleven others, giving them the same authority. He told them how to administer baptism and—for the first time here—the sacrament. He gave the sacrament to them, there before the beautiful temple which their ancestors had built long before.

Chapter 4

When Jesus was crucified back in the old world, the people in this land had a sign. For three days and nights there was blackness over all the country, after a dreadful storm which destroyed whole cities and changed the surface of the land. Then Christ came here and met with these people, calling twelve disciples, giving them authority to baptize, administer the sacrament and take care of the other spiritual needs of the people. He told the ministry, especially, that they should seek first the kingdom of heaven and God would take care of their physical needs. This command really applies to every one of us too, you know. If we will put God first, then go about our daily business of living in the world, we will find that we have all we really need, plus abundant spiritual blessings. His teachings to these ancient people were the same as the ones He gave to His Jewish countrymen in the old world, but more complete than the Bible records. He established His church then and there and told them to call it in the name of Christ. Then He did a very special and wonderful thing.

He singled out the children, gathered them together and called angels to minister to them in the sight of their elders. As the parents watched they saw a ring of fire circling their little ones, and saw the angels put loving hands on their children's heads.

Then He told the disciples to ask whatever they would of Him before He left. Three of them wanted only to linger on earth until He came back, just as His beloved disciple and friend, John had asked. Like John they wanted very much to win more souls for Him. This wish, like John's, was granted. The Book of Mormon tells us that they were caught up into Heaven, where they saw things they could not tell and where their bodies were made, not quite immortal yet, but changed. They have stayed on earth and will be here till His second

met and wrote up a fourteen point agreement; in 1917 they compiled one with twenty four points of "Working Harmony." Committees of elders from the two have met occasionally over the years.

We have published several newspapers. There was "The Evening and Morning Star" (1832) and the "Truth Teller" (1864) in Illinois. For a few years after that one, the church couldn't afford to publish. In 1896 Elders John Haldeman, George Cole, George Frisbey and James Hedrick published "The Searchlight." In 1900 the familiar name of "The Evening and Morning Star" appeared in members' mailboxes, till 1916. Our present "Zion's Advocate" began its long career in 1922, printed by Elder Clarence Wheaton.

In 1915 something happened in the governing of the church which began a new era that was to last until 1925. Sad to say, the church was filled with quarrelling for a time, with various groups seeking leadership. In an effort to put a stop to this the church body elected a presiding elder once more. This led, almost inevitably, to changing the title to—"President."

Chapter 16

The Woodford County locals of the church had functioned continuously; their members had never gone to Nauvoo. In 1864 the Saints were promised by God that they could safely move back to Independence, Missouri in 1867. In 1915 they made the mistake of electing a presiding elder. The first one was Elder A. L. Hartley, with Elder Clarence Wheaton as assistant. In 1917, on Elder Hartley's death, Elder Wheaton became the presiding elder.

In 1916-17 a number of the members organized themselves into "Zion's Cooperative Industrial Association." They rented land south of the city; under the direction of A. O. Frisbey and Charles Denham, several of them farmed it. Others contributed cash, working at their regular jobs. They wanted to prove that consecration could be made to work if all were determined. In 1918 they turned their combined assets over to the church. Officers administering the project

the change of name. For years they had been the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a name the Utah Mormons still keep. Once more they called themselves, with beautiful simplicity, the Church of Christ.

As they were gathered together on August 16, 1863, a revelation came through Hedrick. They were told that they had been scattered because of sin, but soon—soon they could go back to the center place! On April 24, 1864 another dramatic revelation came. They were promised it would be safe to begin the return in 1867!

They prepared and were ready by winter of 1866-67. It was a cold one, but, in order to get there by 1867 they would have to start. They did. Once more a caravan of covered wagons set out, a smaller one this time, and going back to Missouri, not westward. They arrived in Independence in February. When they got to the Missouri River the “Big Muddy” was the big skating rink. Worse, the ice was covered with snow and slush; there was no way to gauge the thickness.

They were only human. Fear tightened their throats and made their hearts weak. Then—Elder George Frisbey in the lead shouted out that they had God’s promise to prepare the way. Whipping his team, he was onto the ice! Behind him the rest waited in anxious silence, united in silent prayer. On, on he lashed the horses, never stopping, straight and safe to the other side! With full hearts beating fast with thanksgiving, the others followed.

As soon as they were established in new homes they began to buy back several lots which became known as the “Temple Lot.” Unafraid now, they did not hide the fact that they were saints. By March 7, 1874 they had bought back the last one, and owned the plot once more. God had prepared the way.

By 1891 the Reorganized Church had also returned. They sued for ownership of the temple lot—and won! By 1894 we had appealed this decision and won. Again the Temple Lot was ours, but only to hold in trust.

In 1889 a small chapel was built on the lot; it burned down in 1898 and the present building was erected in 1902.

In 1897 the two restored gospel churches in Independence

coming.

Of the generation that Christ ministered to in person, every single one, even the little children, was converted to His worship and His church. They lived justly and happily together, having all things common among them and following Him through the rest of their lives.

Four hundred years passed. New generations came along, one after another. The Nephite people were almost completely wicked, more wicked than they had been before He came to them! Mormon, their last general and prophet, led them in battle against their old enemies, the Lamanites, until they were wiped out as a people. Any who may have escaped hid away in the wilderness, finally becoming part of the Lamanite nation. Before the last, terrible battle took place Mormon gave the record he had been keeping to his son Moroni. The young man added his own postscript, anxiously begging God to preserve the book for their brothers, the Lamanites, sometime in the distant future. Then he hid them away in a hill they called Cumorah ...and waited to die.

About one thousand four hundred years later an angel named Moroni came to this land to visit. He told another very young man, an eighteen year old named Joseph, where to find the precious book.

In the hilly farm country of New York State lived a family with the very common name of—Smith. Joseph and Lucy Smith had nine children; there were more large families than small ones in those days. The one we are most interested in is Joseph Jr. In 1820 he was just fifteen; there were three older and five younger children. The family had always been quite religious. The young ones were well taught by their mother and father.

In that year the family’s quiet life began to change—drastically! To begin with, there was a religious revival all over the country and their little home town of Manchester was no exception. Ministers, evangelists really, came there as

part of their travels over the United States holding “revival” meetings. Perhaps these were a little like our church reunions. Now, these people had no television, movies or any of the entertainments that the modern world is apt to depend upon. They only had each other. These meetings were the most exciting social life the town had seen for a long time and all the townspeople and farmers attended. The Smith family did too.

Chapter 5

In the year 1820 a family named Smith, living in the little town of Manchester, in New York State, found their quiet lives changing. As a part of a religious revival going on all over the country their town was visited by evangelists from various churches. The most active meetings there were held by Methodists and Presbyterians. Without any of our modern entertainments the townspeople and farmers around the countryside found these meetings the most exciting social events they’d seen for years. There was intense competition between the different church groups. Unfortunately, this led to bad feelings. There were bitter battles of words and opinions between former friends and among families. Of the Smiths, Mother Lucy and children Hyrum, Samuel and Sophronia were convinced by the Presbyterians and joined them. Young Joseph was more drawn to the Methodists but, due to the conflicting ideas constantly dinned into his ears, couldn’t quite make up his mind. Maybe some of you have had that problem. Here is how he met it.

He began to study the Bible for himself. One day, while feeling particularly confused and troubled, he came upon a verse in (*James 1: 5-6*) which seemed to have been written especially for him. Eagerly he read it again and the words seemed to burn themselves into his heart and mind.

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him.” He *knew* at that moment that the words were literally

had ordained his son, Joseph III, to be his successor. In 1860 “Young Joseph” became a member of the “New Organization” and its First President, at a conference in Amboy, Illinois.

And what about us? While all this was going on, there were several locals in and around Woodford County, Illinois. They had gone there straight from Missouri and stayed there till the return. Having formed themselves into locals, the most historic one being the Crow Creek local, they continued to function. Here, Granville Hedrick was baptized in 1843. Refugees from Nauvoo continued to come in. In 1857 Hedrick was set aside as the presiding elder of the church. From the beginning these Woodford County locals considered themselves a remnant of the original, around which others might gather and continue to rebuild the cause of the restored gospel. They were very hopeful for some time that the New Organization would join them.

This was not to be.

Chapter 15

The church was driven from Missouri, then from Illinois. The Smith brothers were killed in Illinois, and the church broke into groups. The largest group moved to Utah, becoming the “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.” The second largest group formed in Wisconsin, and was called the “Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.” A few small locals of the early church continued to function in Woodford County, never having moved to Nauvoo. They were joined by some of the remnant from Nauvoo and were led by Granville Hedrick as presiding elder later.

Best of all, they seem to have made a continuing effort to go back as closely as possible to the original faith. They took strong stands against polygamy, baptism for the dead and lineal priesthood. Sometime in the 1860’s someone discovered the many changes made in the Book of Commandment revelations as reprinted in the Doctrine and Covenants. So, though it may have tugged at their hearts, they gave up the presidency, the Doctrine and Covenants and

individual leadership. By far the strongest contender was Brigham Young; at a conference he made a good point. He insisted that they must not choose a new leader themselves. The word must come from God, he said; in the meantime they should consider the Apostles the head. Then, somehow, he felt that he had been called to take over the lead, and he began to gather his flock. On the 4th day of February, cold with winter's chill, four hundred wagons started west, their canvas tops flapping in the icy wind. Young was riding at the head of the caravan. They were westward bound, searching for a new Zion. When they reached the Great Salt Lake Valley in Utah he told them, "This is the place." There were honest seekers of truth in this largest group; God surely must have given them help even though many perished on their terrible trek through the wild country they had to cross. Young was a real leader, pioneer and planner too. The city was laid out with fresh water streams brought down from the mountains to irrigate the desert into abundance. They set up their own state of Deseret, with a government that would rival any modern fascist one for tyranny. Here they openly practiced polygamy and taught the belief that Adam became God—"As man is God was. As God is, man will be." They continued to perform baptism for the dead. Rebellions were punished by the Danites, the "avenging angels!" Later, of course, they abandoned the practices that were unlawful and became good citizens of the growing United States...now called "Mormons" by all the world.

After this largest group, under Young, had left in February, the remaining saints here grew more and more discouraged, and on September 7th another group left. Nauvoo, the "Beautiful Place", was left almost completely deserted. On October 9th 1848, the unfinished temple burned to the ground. It has been reported that it was struck by lightning. For a time, three broken stone pillars stood, a silent reminder of fallen pride. Then they too were gone.

The September migration led to Wisconsin. Here, the New Organization was put together in 1853. These good people put much stock in "lineal succession"; they said that Joseph

and simply true; he made up his mind to take them just that way.

A little way from the Smith home was a small grove of trees, quiet and peaceful, where he could be alone. Very early on this spring morning, with the birds just beginning to twitter awake, he walked out into the woods and knelt down under the newly green boughs of a big tree. There, with the soft morning light brightening around him, he began to plead with God for the answer to his dilemma.

Suddenly, shockingly, he felt himself seized! Though he could see nothing and nobody he felt that he was held by a force so powerful, so full of hate, that he was about to be physically destroyed! He was surrounded, weighed down, by a heavy darkness. He could neither speak nor move! He thought he must be dying. The only thing he could think of to do was to use all his willpower to cry out to God for help against this unseen but real being who had him in a death grip.

Right over his head, brighter than the rising sun, appeared a pillar of light. Instantly the terrible personage who held him faded away. The beautiful column of light came down, down, until it surrounded the boy. Spellbound, he looked upward and saw two Beings, bright and glorious beyond the wildest imaginings, standing just above him in the fragrant morning air. One of these pointed to the other and said, "Joseph, this is My beloved Son, hear Him."

Hardly able to speak, he managed to stammer out his desire to know which of the various churches he should join. The second personage told him that he should join none, that they were all wrong. He said, "They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrine the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof" (Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) page 16). Again He forbade Joseph to join any of them. Minutes passed. The boy found himself alone again, on his back, looking up at the empty sky.

Now, as you can imagine, this was the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to him! He hugged the beautiful

memory to himself as he went about his work, then one day, finding himself with one of the town ministers, a man he admired and trusted, he confided the exciting story. To his shock and hurt he found that his friend felt nothing but scorn! If this ridiculous experience were real, the minister said with a sneer, it could have come from nowhere but the devil! Visions and revelations had ended in the days after the early apostles, he told Joseph angrily.

From then on the boy found himself the target of harsh criticism and even active abuse from the “religious” community. It wasn’t easy for him to hear from all sides that he was—at the least, dishonest, at the most, crazy! He was only fifteen. Perhaps he was tempted, now and then, to say that the whole thing was his imagination. That would get his neighbors off the subject.

Somehow, he couldn’t do that. No matter what they said about him and even about his poor family—he *knew* he had seen a vision.

Chapter 6

Joseph Smith, as a fifteen year old, lived in Manchester, New York. When a religious revival swept the town, with each church striving to gain the most new members, he was confused and troubled. He went to the Bible to study one day and came upon the text, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him” (*James 1: 5-6*). He went to the woods to pray and was visited by God and Christ. He was told not to join any of the churches. When he told his experience to a town minister he found that the whole village turned against him and his family. Still, he knew that he could not deny the vision, or he would be denying his knowledge of God and would be condemned.

For the next three years he was an ordinary, imperfect boy, lonely because of the general public attitude of disgust toward him and all his family. Then, on the night of September 21st, 1823, he went to bed feeling very weak, very sinful and very, very alone. His earlier experience came back

Thomas Ford of Illinois to come to Carthage and give themselves up. He promised he would have them protected by the state militia. Joseph must have begun to wonder then about all that had been happening and to pray that God would help him undo some of the harm that had been done. He was shown in a dream that his life was about to come to an end.

On June 24, 1844 the two brothers Joseph and Hyrum, were taken under military escort to the Carthage, Illinois jail. There Apostles John Taylor and Willard Richards were soon imprisoned, too. There were only eight guards there, to face the angrily muttering crowds that increased with each day that passed. On the 27th, just at dusk, a howling mob of about two hundred frenzied men stormed up to the jail, their faces painted black and yellow, hideous and hidden from recognition. Swiftly they overpowered the handful of guards and thundered up the stairs to the second floor cell. Their guns cracked. Joseph, Hyrum and John Taylor fell. Of these, only Taylor lived and recovered.

Chapter 14

After being expelled from Missouri, the saints settled in Illinois and started to build a temple. First, though, they had finished a Masonic temple. There in Nauvoo they taught and practiced several doctrines that have since been repudiated. Once more they made enemies. Joseph and Hyrum Smith were imprisoned and shot by a mob in Carthage.

The shootings done, the brothers safely buried, everyone in the country round about seemed fearful. All were subdued in mourning for a few weeks. Many non-members feared that the saints would rise in a vast, vengeful body. Not so. Following the advice of their remaining leaders, grieving quietly, they left vengeance in the hands of God.

An uneasy peace at best, it was not to last. Hate, fear and violence came to the surface again. This was a time of great confusion. The first two members of the presidency were dead. The third one, Sidney Rigdon, was one of many who tried to gather the restless, frightened body of the church under

came onto their stage. He was John Bennett, politician, physician, military man—and high degree Mason. The leaders, including Joseph and Hyrum, were delighted when this prominent man decided to join the church. His influence on them was great. The Smiths became high Masons, and a splendid Masonic temple was built. The Book of Mormon has a great deal to say about secret societies, none of it good. We all know Masons today who are fine men; however, the secrecy is dangerous.

In 1844 they aimed at the temporal top. Joseph Smith and Sidney Ridgon became candidates for president and vice-president of the nation. In the church services they taught and practiced baptism for the dead; there was to be a font for this in the magnificent new temple they now started work on. They got the work well under way, but it was never to be completed.

Quietly, John Bennett taught a spiritual wife doctrine, which was later to become the problem-ridden practice of polygamy. Eventually the harried leaders realized that they had taken a wolf into the sheepfold and he was expelled. The damage had already been done. Then, Joseph himself introduced the idea that there were many gods.

Another sore developed on the body of the church. A man named Sampson Avard helped to organize a secret band, with oaths and passwords (secret societies again!); they called themselves the Danites, after the Israelite tribe of Dan. Avard too was put out of the church, but again it was too late. The Danites carried on.

In the new city then were: political intrigue, Masonic secrecy, a secret police group, new and strange doctrines and much discontent among those who wanted only to follow the original faith. Rebellion against Joseph arose, even in Nauvoo, the beautiful place. Is it any wonder that, among their surrounding neighbors, hostility began to grow again?

Joseph and Hyrum hurried to get over into Iowa when they found themselves the center of a rising fever of antagonism. However, they were persuaded by Governor

into his mind with extraordinary vividness; he began to pray earnestly for forgiveness. He became fully confident that his need would be met.

As he prayed the room began to grow light and still lighter, till it was brighter than noontime. Then, at his bedside, appeared a personage standing not on the floor but just above it. This being was dressed in a flowing robe that was whiter than any earthly white could be. His whole body had an other-worldly brilliance; his face shone like a bolt of lightning. The light in the room seemed to gather around him. For just an instant Joseph was afraid of his visitor, but soon felt a happy peace slide over him. This was a different being than either of the two who had come the other time. He spoke. He told the boy that he was Moroni and carried a message from God. He said that the Father had a work for Joseph and that his name should be spoken of both for evil and for good among all people!

Trembling with excitement, the boy heard the rest of the message—there was a book written on golden plates, a book telling about the former inhabitants of the Americas, their lives and their beginnings. Best of all, Moroni said that in the book was the fullness of the everlasting gospel, as it had been delivered personally to these people by Jesus Christ Himself! With the book, he said, were two stones set in silver bows and fastened to a breastplate. This instrument was called the interpreters and had been used by seers and prophets of ancient times. Now, once again they were to be used—to translate this precious book!

The angel also quoted a few Bible scriptures. Joseph had heard them and we have too, but with slight variations from our King James version. (*Mal. 4: 6*)

“And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers, if it were not so the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming” ((*Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)* p. 21, 22)). He went on to say that the fullness, or completion, of the time of the Gentiles would soon come. Then he showed Joseph in vision the place where the plates were hidden with the interpreters. They

must not be shown to anyone unless God commanded. If he disobeyed this order he would be destroyed!

Then—slowly—the light disappeared and with it the angel, only to come back two more times that same night. On each visit the angel gave more information about the work that was to be done. Sternly he warned that the plates were not to be used for personal or family benefit, only for the building of the kingdom of God in what had come to be the latter days. Then, just as the dawn light of September 22 was creeping into the sky, the angel departed for the last time.

These were poor people and there was work to be done. While helping his father in the field Joseph looked so weak and pale that he was sent back to the house to rest. Wearily he started back and began to climb the rail fence. This effort was too much for his tired body and he fell to the ground. Suddenly the angel was there, looking down at him. He told the boy to go and tell his father what had happened. A little worried, he did so. To his great relief and joy the good man accepted the story and warned him to obey the instructions very carefully.

Chapter 7

Young Joseph Smith had seen a vision! He was spoken to by Jesus Christ Himself, told that he was to be the instrument of restoring the gospel and the priesthood to the earth after a long, dark period. Then he was visited by the angel Moroni. The angel told the boy where he would find a set of golden plates written by the early inhabitants of this land. With the plates would be a translation device called the interpreters. As directed, Joseph went to the spot that had been shown him in vision, a hill located about halfway between Manchester and the nearby village of Palmyra, rising out of an almost level plain.

At the top of the hill, toward the north end, he found a stone box, its lid a flat stone that fitted closely, edges sealed with the sod of centuries. The stone parts of the box were cemented together, making it perfectly watertight. On the bottom there was a small rock in each corner. Laid over the

understand why he was no longer welcome, after what he had done to the other leaders in turning them over to Gen. Lucas, back in Far West. The others expelled seem to have been guilty mostly of being unwilling to follow some of the changes that had come into the church.

The little town of Commerce in Illinois that had been part of their newly purchased property began to grow mightily. The name was soon changed to “Nauvoo,” which Joseph said was a Hebrew word meaning “beautiful place.” It became headquarters of the church, then a real city. George Robinson was made the first postmaster and Don Smith and Ebenezer Robinson began to edit a newspaper; this one was called “Times and Seasons.” Over the water in England, Parley Pratt began to print a paper called “Millennial Star”; a mission was appointed to Palestine. Their world looked good.

Chapter 13

The church had settled in Independence and Jackson County, Missouri and had been driven out into Caldwell County, newly created for their benefit. Even there they began to be hounded by people in the neighboring counties, as well as outsiders who had also settled in this new county. Finally, they were driven out of Missouri entirely and bought property in Illinois, just over the border. They soon built a new city as church headquarters and called it “Nauvoo.”

In 1839 a delegation of ministers, headed by Joseph Smith, was sent to Washington, D.C. They were to petition the president and Congress for repayment of their financial losses. They looked forward to fulfilling a beautiful plan—getting the restored gospel before the very heads of the nation. What they did get was a collective headache from a prolonged struggle through red tape. One bureau sent them to another, this one to a third, and so on and on. In complete weariness, they gave up and went home.

The state did better by them. The city was granted a charter, held an election, organized the University of Nauvoo and a militia, the “Nauvoo Legion,” and even started work on a hotel for the visitors they hoped to entertain. A new star

Here we must face an unpleasant fact. The leading men among the saints had already allowed into the church certain changes that would cause division and contention in the years to come. The saints had as early as 1828 been warned that they “should have been faithful and He would have extended His arm and supported against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and He would have been with them, in every time of trouble” (*Book of Commandments 2: 2,3*). Back in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835 a new printing of the revelations in the Book of Commandments came out, supposedly containing all the original revelations. There were over a thousand changes! These changes made in the revelations conform to the changes that had been made in church structure, including the name. This book was called “The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints.”

But—included even in this book was a revelation which says, in part, “Your minds...have been darkened because of unbelief...you have treated lightly the things you have received...condemnation resteth upon the children...until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon...not only to say but to do...otherwise there remaineth a scourge and a judgment to be poured out...for, shall the children of the kingdom pollute My holy land” (*Doctrine and Cov. 83: 8*).

Even though the saints were led astray and their trials may have been at least partly for punishment, the fact remains that God has worked with the church and with individual members ever since that early day.

When they fled from Missouri they crossed the Mississippi River at Quincy, Illinois and were treated kindly there. The church bought three farm properties with a combined acreage of between twenty and twenty one thousand; the saints settled down and began to improve their land. The last of the imprisoned leaders, Parley Pratt, was released from jail in Richmond—on the 4th of July, 1839! In August, several members of the Apostles and Seventies were sent out on missions, one to England. Several of their leaders were expelled, among them George Hinkle. It's not hard to

rocks were the still-shiny golden plates and the interpreters, shaped like a pair of eyeglasses. Awestruck, Joseph crouched there in the dirt and studied these ancient and precious relics. He had been forbidden to take them out yet and was told to come back once every year for four more years. In a boy's life that seemed like a very long time. Finally the time came. On September 22, 1827 he went to the hilltop, his heart pounding, to meet Moroni. The angel handed the wonderful book into his trembling hands, with a stern warning. If he should lose things through carelessness he would be cut off from the presence of God. But there was a promise too. If he would guard these treasures with all his might, God Himself would see that they were kept safe until the work was finished and Moroni came back for them.

The actual translation began on April 15, 1828. Martin Harris, a well-to-do farmer neighbor wrote the words down as Joseph looked into the interpreters and read them. Martin's wife did not approve of this situation and may have made it very difficult for him to do the work. Finally, he persuaded Joseph to let him take the 116 pages that had been finished to show her and six of their friends, to prove the importance of his work. The translator agreed, foolishly; he had been warned! Somehow—this whole section just disappeared! Joseph was severely reprimanded by the angel. Even worse, the interpreters and plates were taken away from him. The work was over, it seemed. He spent several miserable months in penitent fasting and prayer, begging forgiveness. God's work cannot be stopped. The young man was given another chance.

Joseph was by now a family man. His young wife Emma now took over the job of writing as he translated. But she was needed in the home and it was hard. Then, just a year after the great work had begun, in April, a school teacher named Oliver Cowdery showed up at the Smith home. He announced that he had been sent to help. As always, God had used a willing soul to accomplish what He intended should be done. On the seventh day of the month they settled down to work.

All this time persecution had been going on; this included efforts to find and steal the plates. In June of 1829 another friend came to the rescue. David Whitmer came to the Smith

home with a team and wagon and helped Joseph and his family to move to the Peter Whitmer home at Fayette, N.Y. There, in a more peaceful atmosphere, the manuscript was finished. On the first of July the angelic messenger came back to take the plates away again.

Joseph had been promised that he should have three more witnesses to the plates, for as yet only Joseph had seen them. He told Martin, David and Oliver this. They began to dare to hope for the joy of being these three and asked Joseph to pray with them that, God willing, this be granted. The four went to the woods again and knelt in ardent prayer together. It happened! They looked up to see Moroni, holding out to them the marvelous golden plates. They held them, touched them!

After this wonderful experience these three men wrote and signed the "Testimony of Three Witnesses", which is printed at the beginning of the Book of Mormon. As long as they lived they insisted that they had seen an angel and that he had shown them the golden plates. Later, when the church began to change (and not always for the better) they left its membership. Still, each man continued to insist as long as he lived that he knew this work to be of divine origin.

The book went to the printer in August of 1829. The stage was laid for the church to be restored to earth.

Chapter 8

With the help of Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith's wife, Emma, the Book of Mormon had been written down in English, translated from the original reformed Egyptian used by the Israelites who lived here in this land long ago. Joseph Smith, using the interpreters, had read from the golden plates and most of the writing had been done by Oliver Cowdery.

These first eager converts had a total of sixteen revelations given during 1828 and 29. These messages from Heaven set up the foundation for the church soon to come. One busy day Joseph and Oliver had just finished translating a text which told God's people that baptism was necessary to

attack and escaped their fury.

Perhaps the most horrifying thing about the scattered attacks during those dark days was the fact that they were led by ministers, teachers, legislators. Misplaced religious zeal, becoming hate, does dreadful things to people.

Chapter 12

After the early saints had been driven out of Jackson County the state created two new counties, one, Caldwell, to be for the settlement of the church members. Persecution began again. Missouri's Governor Lilburn Boggs sent Gen. Lucas to Far West to do something to take care of the "Mormons." He ordered Gen. Alexander Doniphan to shoot Joseph Smith and several of the other leaders. Doniphan refused. A massacre at Haun's Mill was led by community leaders. Then, late in the fall of 1838, something happened which marked the beginning of the end—of the church's first occupation of Missouri, the center place of latter day revelation. A well-armed group of men rounded up and captured all the church leaders: Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt, Morris Phelps, Luman Gibbs, Darwin Chases, Norman Sherer, Lyman Wight, Caleb Baldwin and Alexander McRae. With showmanship worthy of any conquerors of history, these armed men escorted their captives to Independence and led them on a parade through the streets, with a dramatic stop at the temple lot. Then they were put away. Joseph and Hyrum, Wight (commander of their militia), Baldwin, McRae and Rigdon were herded into the old stone jail at Liberty. The others were imprisoned at Richmond in Ray County. Every man was sentenced to death by firing squad!

The saints gave up. Now they were only a band of terrified refugees, running for their lives to Illinois. After a terrible six months in Liberty Jail the prisoners there were deliberately allowed to escape. Painfully they made their slow way to what was left of their families, over in Illinois.

theirs; this was all he needed. He had already appointed another bitter opponent as commander of the State Militia. Now he sent Gen. S. D. Lucas and his troops to Far West to take care of "the Mormon threat."

Now the church had another bitter pill to swallow. George Hinkle, a member and a colonel in their county militia, volunteered to go with the leaders to meet Gen. Lucas and his officers. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, Parley Pratt and George Robinson accepted his offer of escort. Courageously they met the general's party, then were rocked by the shock of Hinkle's words!

"Gentlemen, these are the prisoners I agreed to deliver up to you."

The mob trailing along behind the party of church leaders was delighted. They were imprisoned in the Liberty Jail. Gen. Lucas called a court martial immediately. In a very short time a verdict of "Guilty" was handed down. As commander, Lucas sent written orders out to Gen. Doniphan.

"You will take Joseph Smith and the other prisoners into the public square at Far West and shoot them tomorrow morning."

Gen. Doniphan, bless his memory, sent the following reply:

"It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning at 8:00 o'clock; and if you execute those men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God!"

Gen. Lucas thought this over and cooled down into a cautious waiting. This particular emergency was over. There were more to come.

A few months later in October a church member named Jacob Haun lived on the outskirts of Far West. He operated a gristmill and blacksmith shop. A few families of the newly arrived saints had settled around his mill, some still living in their covered wagons or in tents. Riding pell-mell into this peaceful scene one day, their horses' hooves clattering in the quiet autumn air, came one of the local "militia" groups. These "protectors of the people" killed or wounded almost everyone living there; a pitiful handful hid during the frenzied

their salvation. Suddenly they felt, almost in unison, an urgent desire to do something about this for themselves. Leaving their work they walked swiftly out into the woods. There they knelt down in the dry leaves and asked ardently for whatever instructions God had for them. As they prayed an angel appeared, touched them and conferred upon these two the Aaronic priesthood. In solemn wonder they listened as he told them to baptize each other. They obeyed. Each one received a wonderful blessing from the Holy Spirit; they were even given the gift of prophecy.

On fire now, they began to tell the story to the Smiths and Whitmers, a word here, a few more there, till several became interested and asked for, and received, baptism. In June of 1829 a few of them met in the Peter Whitmer home for prayer. There the word of the Lord came to them. Joseph and Oliver were to ordain each other as elders, also to be ready to serve as apostles. The ordinations were to be postponed until a later date, when others would be called. They were told too that, as the Spirit moved, they were to call more apostles...till there were twelve, just as in the time of Christ! They were promised that this would restore the Melchisidec priesthood to the earth once more, with authority from God to perform the laying on of hands for spiritual and physical blessings.

So, on April 6, 1830 a very small group met in the Peter Whitmer Home. This was on a Tuesday—and a very important one it was to be. They prayed together earnestly and then, in keeping with the laws of the state of New York, they organized themselves into a church. They were only six but they were a church—the restored Church of Christ! They kept that simple name only four years. By a conference action in 1834, the name was changed to the "Church of the Latter Day Saints". Still later, supposedly by revelation from God, the name was again changed to "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints". We believe they had received the correct name in 1830, for this is the name Jesus gave to the Nephites when He came to America.

As they had been directed at the last meeting, they first took the sacrament, then voted on whether to accept the first

two elders' calls. Of course, they were accepted—unanimously. Then Joseph and Oliver delivered calls to the other four members in the room. They ordained each other next. Now they had the authority to ordain the others: Hiram Smith, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Samuel Smith and David Whitmer.

On Sunday they were ready. They had a real church service, there in the Whitmer home. Now they were ready to tackle the world! Ministerial work among their friends and neighbors became regular and successful. Converts to the restored church came in rapidly and more elders were ordained. Soon a revelation gave them their first mission—to the Lamanites. Peter Whitmer, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Ziba Peterson and Parley Pratt started west in October.

They stopped at Kirtland, Ohio in a small community made up of a religious group of thirteen families, under the leadership of pastor Sidney Rigdon. Living a quiet life with all things common among them, these hospitable people took our missionaries in and gave them permission to hold a series of meetings. The entire group was baptized before the elders went on!

From here the men traveled to Buffalo, New York where they visited a tribe of Indians, leaving them two Books of Mormon. Following the direction of their revelation, they were heading for—somewhere—“on the borders of the Lamanites.” Now, the church was organized in New York State; that's pretty far east. They could go a long way and still be going west. What they didn't realize was that “the borders of the Lamanites” then was also what is now called “the heart of America”—the center place! Just over the Kansas River in Kansas they spent a little while with a tribe of Delaware Indians, whose kindly old chief called his people together to hear what the white men had to say.

Meanwhile, back in New York, the rest of the church in Fayette were busy as beavers. They preached, they baptized, they tried to live with the persecution that hounded them. Finally, desperate, they prayed mightily for guidance, and in 1831 were told to move on to Kirtland, Ohio. They were heading west, too.

migration from the east increased the surrounding counties became more settled; some outsiders moved into Caldwell County. The new citizens (those who were not saints) got excited about the nearness of the dangerous “Mormons” and began to harass them. The saints organized a State Militia company (like our National Guard). This was the match in the firecrackers to their nervous neighbors. Isolated attackers organized themselves into military companies. The battle was on again!

Chapter 11

The early church was formed after young Joseph Smith was given divine aid in finding and translating the Book of Mormon. The saints settled in Independence, and the rest of Jackson County, Missouri, and were driven out by mobs who feared that they would take over the county, perhaps even the state. Their good friend, Alexander Doniphan, attorney and also a general in the Missouri State Militia, worked hard at the capital in Jefferson City and succeeded in having two new counties formed. One, Caldwell County, was set aside for the saints. They moved in, formed their own county government and a local militia of members. Some moved into the neighboring county of Daviess, while, of course, outsiders also moved into Caldwell. The persecution began again.

General Doniphan, while active with the State Militia, gave orders for the Caldwell County unit, under Col. Lyman Wight, to move into Daviess County and stop the robbing and plundering of homes of church members there. This became the “Battle of Crooked River” and cost the life of Capt. David Patten, one of the twelve apostles.

By Independence Day, July 4th, in the year of 1838, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon and their families had moved to Far West. The two were members of the first presidency by now. The saints made a big event of the day, as did all their neighbors in the country around them. Rigdon made a big mistake on this day. He gave a fiery speech in which he defied the mobs, even threatened them. Lilburn Boggs, the new governor of Missouri, was a declared enemy of

Gilbert and Whitney. Then in November another dreadful think took place.

The people in the area knew Edward Partridge as the man who had done most of the financial work for the hated "Mormons." One cold fall day a shouting crowd went to the Partridge home. A Brother Allen was visiting there. The mob decided that these two should be tarred and feathered. Try to picture in imagination just exactly what that means. A big pot of tar was placed over a roaring fire, heated to the melting point—that's hot!—and smeared with spoons or paddles over the stripped bodies of the victims. Then handfuls of loose feathers were tossed into the soft tar. This mess cooled and dried, leaving the burned flesh with a coating almost impossible to remove.

Then the harried saints were ordered to leave the county immediately. They asked for time to arrange their affairs. The mob was happy to grant this reasonable request; they were given fifteen minutes! They had earlier applied, first to the governor, then to Washington, for help, and had received only words. November brought an early winter that year. Twelve hundred people were driven from their homes to the banks of the Missouri River. There they made an overnight camp, no shelter overhead. The next morning they crossed over, finding temporary refuge in Clay County. What we would call now their "public image" followed them, an inescapable community shadow. They were soon asked to leave.

They had made one influential friend though. This was Alexander Doniphan, a colorful and courageous lawyer. The injustice of their treatment was enough to send Doniphan into action. He went to the state capital, Jefferson City, did some "lobbying"; a law was passed creating two new counties. One, Caldwell County was to be set aside for the "Mormons." The saints moved happily into this almost empty land, laid out a town called "Far West" for their county seat, and even elected their own county officials. This was frontier country; guns were a necessity; the state even replaced those taken away by the attackers.

Life began to look good to them, but not for long. As the

Chapter 9

The Church of Christ was organized in Fayette, New York on April 6, 1830. After trying to get along with their neighbors, and receiving a great deal of persecution in return, they began to move west. In answer to a fervent prayer, they were told to go to Kirtland, Ohio, where they had a recently converted church group, led by Sidney Rigdon. There were several hundred people in this group before the move west began; the faithful started to come in from other areas and Kirtland soon became the actual headquarters of the church. It was here that the people were first told in revelation that they needed someone to take charge of their financial affairs. Edward Partridge was made the first bishop.

In June of 1831, a general conference was held here and what was perhaps the first of several strange, new doctrines crept in. High Priests were set aside. But there was good, too. There in Kirtland they were first told that Missouri was the location of the latter day Zion—the center place. Twenty-six elders started out on a mission from there. Oliver Cowdery, faithful Oliver, reached a place called "Kaw Township," a spot somewhere between where Kansas City and Independence are now. From there he wrote back happy accounts of his missionary experiences. The whole church body began to glow with enthusiasm. Soon a revelation came, telling them to move to Missouri. Family by family, group by group, many made the long trip. They had indeed gone west to "the borders of the Lamanites." In those days the Independence area was the wild, western frontier! The hardships they endured on their various journeys—and, always, always the persecutions—gave these strong men and women a secure place as pioneers in American history as well as in the restored church.

Almost from the beginning the people of the Restoration felt that an actual, physical Zion was to come about someday in this land, with a New Jerusalem, or city of Zion, to be built here in the center place. The Book of Mormon tells us that such a city will be built up unto a remnant of the seed of Joseph. This Joseph was Jacob's (or, Israel's) son, the one who lived in Egypt. He was the ancestor of the man, Lehi, who brought his family here about 600 B.C. The Lamanites, or Indians of today, are Lehi's and Joseph's descendants. That makes them

Chapter 10

children of Israel. We have been told how we can be a part of the Israelite family. If we do God's will and try with all our might to be His people, we can become children of Israel.

They were in Independence now. In July of 1831 a revelation came, telling them just where the temple was to be built someday, repeating that Missouri was the land consecrated for the gathering of the saints, as they were called. Independence was to be the center of this land. On August 3, 1831 the Temple Lot was dedicated. Then a cornerstone was laid for the future temple and this spot of ground was pronounced wholly dedicated to the Lord forever. This stone is still on display in the little white church on the Temple Lot.

When the lot was first dedicated, it didn't even belong to our hopeful little colony, but to the State of Missouri. Hastily it was purchased by a man named Jones Flournoy, a non-member, with profit in mind. When Bishop Partridge approached him with an offer, he had acquired a plot of eighty acres, containing the saints' precious little lot. He refused to sell this lot alone. On December 19, 1831 Bishop Partridge purchased a little over 63 acres for the church.

By June of 1832 the church had a newspaper building and printing press ready, and W. W. Phelps became editor of our first newspaper, putting out the first issue of "The Evening and Morning Star" that month. He managed to get fourteen monthly issues printed before trouble hit again. In June of 1833 what we call the "Book of Commandments" was in the printer's possession and work had been started; the first few copies had been finished and distributed, mostly to members. This book consists of copies of revelations given to the early church, the last one dated September, 1831. The preface was the last given, in November that year.

On the twentieth of July, 1833 printing was going on busily on the newspaper, and more copies of the Book of Commandments. That night it happened again.

A screeching, swearing mob gathered around the print shop. They broke windows, smashed furniture and threw the press and printed matter out in the street. By November, mob rule came to a climax. The saints were driven out of Missouri.

By July of 1831 the church had moved to Missouri and was headquartered in Independence. They had been so commanded by revelation. Another revelation told them where the temple was to be built in the center place. The land was dedicated and purchased. A print shop was in operation in June of 1832, a newspaper being printed and, by June of 1833, the first few copies of the Book of Commandments were in the hands of some of the members. Then the print shop was wrecked by a howling mob.

It's true that God's people have been warned that they may sometimes have to suffer "all manner of evil for His sake"; still, perhaps they were partly to blame. By this time a presidency of three was at the head of the church, and perhaps other evils as well. Certainly they were unwise in talking too enthusiastically about the fact that they expected to inherit all the land around them someday. They believed that they would fill Jackson County, perhaps all Missouri. Their neighbors began to fear them. They were afraid that, if not stopped, the Mormons, so-called, would drive everyone else out. In reality, God had told the people to move in, with everything done lawfully and in order, buying land as they could, not attempting to force anyone out. Some of them may have hurried too fast and talked too much. At any rate, whatever the reason or reasons, they became the objects of hate and fear. The little newspaper of which they were so proud, "The Evening and Morning Star," seemed dangerous to the general public. A rival paper, "The Western Monitor," was started; its only purpose was to defeat the influence of the "Star."

And then, there was their insistence on believing that God would talk to His people, then and forever, as long as they remained righteous! Of course, it was the opinion of most of the rest of the religious world that He had been completely silent since New Testament times and would remain so.

A short while after the destruction of the print shop another mob wrecked a general store belonging to Brothers