**The Story of the Church of Christ**

**XIV Changes and Divisions**

There had been some changes in doctrine and structure in the Church during the fourteen years between the beginning in 1830 and 1844 when Joseph Smith was murdered. Immediately following his death serious problems developed as a power struggle for leadership was waged. Some felt there was a need for a “human leader” for the Church contrary to the way God had established in his Church in 1830.

A number of groups formed around men who claimed the right to lead. These “break-away” groups were called factions. The largest faction was led by Brigham Young to Utah and included the Twelve Apostles. The entire company of the Twelve were **rebaptized** and **reordained** on August 6, 1847, Two days later the remainder of the people with Brigham Young were rebaptised. By rebaptizing and reordaining, Brigham Young had formed an entirely **new** church -- totally separate from the Church of Christ established in 1830.

The Church of Christ, with its headquarters on the Temple Lot in Independence, Missouri, is the **only remnant** of the Church of Christ organized April 6, 1830. A remnant is a part of the **original** organization, while the break-away factions are in rebellion from the original organization. The Church of Church did not organize or reorganize after Joseph’s death, but it **continued** as the **same** organization formed in 1830 by Joseph Smith and those associated with him at that time.

At Bloomington, Illinois there was a branch of local congregation of the Church that reached back to the early 1830’s. After the death of Joseph Smith, the Bloomington branch was joined by the Crow Creek, Eagle Creek, and Half-Moon Prairie branches among others in continuing the organization of 1830. There was also a faithful branch at Vermillion, Indiana. In time this little group realized some of the practices and doctrines that had come into the Church were supported by **changes** made in the original revelations and not in accord with those faithful witnesses of Christs’ Gospel -- the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The changes were then rejected by the church of Christ as they reaffirmed the original teachings of the Church in 1830.

In 1864 the Illinois Church of Christ members received a revelation from God indicating they should sell their property and prepare to go to Independence, Missouri. There they would be able to buy the property where

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one day the Temple of the Lord will stand and His people will be gathered together in Zion before His Return to earth.

Although there was still potential danger because of bad feelings among some people living in Missouri, the Church members from Illinois obeyed the Lord’s command and came to Independence in 1867. Over the next few years they brought the property that is now knows as the Temple Lot. The church owns this property free and clear of all debt. Near the middle of the Temple Lot is the exact spot where the Temple is to be built. This site was marked by a stone when it was dedicated by Joseph Smith on August 4, 1831. Many years after the Church returned to Missouri that stone was discovered and can be seen at the Church of Christ building on the Temple Lot.

In addition to repossessing the Temple Lot, the little group from Illinois continued to engage in missionary work in Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and part of Kentucky. The Church also published several papers over the years that proved effective in spreading the gospel. May 15, 1922 marked the first issue of Zion’s Advocate which is still being printed monthly.

With the passing of time the Church of Christ has reached out in its missionary efforts to the British Isles, to Native American tribes in the United State, to Canada, the work in Yucatan, areas in Central America, and most recently in Africa and the Philippines. The recent growth in membership outside of this country has been a great encouragement as we face the future.

Today the Church of Christ has a quorum of Twelve Apostles as the highest earthly office in the Church. Apostles are elders who have been set aside for a special responsibility as were the Twelve Apostles chosen by Christ during his lifetime on earth. Elder is the highest priesthood office in the Church followed by priest, teacher, and deacon. There are also seventies who spend time in missionary work. The Church of Christ does not accept a First Presidency or the office of high priest as do some of the factions that have fallen away from the original teachings of the restored church. Christ, Himself, is the spiritual head of His Church----”the last and great high priest.” We can have confidence in the church that bears the name of Christ and its structure is like the Church in the days of Christ and the original Twelve Apostles and teaches His Gospel.

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In spite of difficult situations in the world around us today and prophesies of even more trying times ahead, we can look beyond those days in joyful anticipation of that bright day when our Lord will return to earth to claim his Church. May each of us remain faithful to the covenant made in baptism and be worthy to be counted one of His own.,