

06-30-20 Institute 1840-1841: Apostolic Mission to Great Britain, Baptism for Dead, Death of Joseph Sr

Time Line 1840-1841

1839	April	Joseph and Hyrum released from Liberty Jail and join the saints in Quincy
	April 26	New Apostles ordained set apart for British Mission from Far West Temple site
	May	Joseph led the saints to Commerce / Nauvoo, Illinois.
	Sept-Dec	Apostle missionaries arrive in England (Queen Victoria had reigned for two years, industrial revolution slowing down, Tchaikovsky born next year, etc.) 16,464 total members in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
1840	Jan 31	Brigham Young and Heber Kimball arrive in NYC to sail to England
	Feb	Joseph Smith Jr. left Washington, D.C., for home
	March 4	Joseph Smith Jr. arrived home to Nauvoo
	April	Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball arrive in England to join other apostles
	May	Missionaries in Britain publish first issue of the newspaper: <i>Millennial Star</i>
	Aug 15	Joseph first taught on "Baptism for Dead" at Seymour Brunson's funeral
	Sept 14	Death of Father Joseph Smith, Sr.
	Nov 7	William Henry Harrison defeated Martin Van Buren as US President
	Dec 16	Nauvoo Charter Signed
1841	Feb 1	Joseph Jr. Elected to Nauvoo city council.
	April 6	Joseph Jr. Laid cornerstone for Nauvoo Temple
	June 4	Joseph Jr. Arrested on old Missouri charges
	June 9-10	Joseph Jr. Trial before Jude Colas at Monmouth, Illinois; acquitted
	Nov 8	Dedicated baptism font in the unfinished Nauvoo temple

Apostles' Mission to England

July 8, 1838, the Lord instructed Joseph by revelation to call four new apostles: John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards (D&C 118:6). They were ordained Dec 19, 1839 by Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball. The same revelation also called the apostles to leave on a second mission to Great Britain on April 26, 1839—starting from the Far West Temple site in Missouri. Even with the extermination order written six months before, Brigham Young felt the command had been given and should be fulfilled exactly, rather than move ahead just from Illinois.

In early April as Joseph was leaving Missouri, Brigham, and a few other saints sneaked back into Missouri, and secretly made their way across the state to the Far West Temple Site. Divinely, they happened upon Elder John F. Page and family; Elder Page joined the other apostles. In Far West, they met up with Heber C. Kimball and a few other saints who were still in Missouri. (Other members of the Twelve were in prison and Willard Richards was already preaching in England.)

On April 25, 1839, they arrived in Far West and talked all night. At sun rise on April 26, 1839, the small band of saints gathered at the Temple site. There the five members of the Twelve, ordained two more: Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith. Each Apostle prayed out loud, they all sang a hymn, and set the temple foundation stone in the SE corner. The small group were blessed to meet up with the last saints leaving Missouri and helped travel hundreds of miles back through enemy territory to meet up with the saints who were now in Commerce / Nauvoo (*Saints*, 394-395).

When the Apostles gathered with their families and the struggling saints, they were too sick to leave directly for England. They built their families log homes and recuperated a bit. But the summer brought malaria onto the weakened immune systems. One or two at a time, they were able to begin their trip for England. Brigham and Heber and their families were still very sick through September, but they decided to leave anyway. Their departure from Nauvoo to Great Britain is well known. With their sick families in bed, "Brigham and Heber, standing in the back of the wagon and leaning on each other for support [called:] 'Hurrah! Hurrah!' . . . waving their hats in the air. 'Hurrah for Israel!'" (ibid., 406).

As Brigham and Heber began their travel with \$5 by wagon. Someone gave them more money so they had \$13.50 to help pay for a stage coach while they were still so sick. Miraculously the trunk continued to supply

their travel clear to Kirtland. Brigham estimated that he paid \$87.00 from his trunk. Brigham recorded, “There was not a healthy man among us, and some more fitted for a hospital than a journey” (*Manuscript History of BY*). They also traveled on steam boat across portions of Lake Erie. A storm arose one night and on November 26, 1839, Brigham recorded:

I went upon deck and I felt impres in spirit to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus for a forgiveness of all my sins. And then I set to command the winds to sees [cease] and let ous [us] goe safe on our Jorney. The winds abated and Glory & ouner [honor] & prase be to that God that rules all things (ibid.).

By Jan 31, 1840, after 3½ months of travel from Nauvoo, Brigham and Heber reached the NYC harbor. Some apostles had already arrived in England by this time, and others were met Brigham and Heber as they were working to pay for their passage. Once the monies were earned, they set sail.

As the missionaries soon learned, the Lord had prepared many people to receive the missionaries’ message of the restoration in England.

- John Taylor and Joseph Fielding labored in Liverpool
- William Clayton in Manchester
- Elder Theodore Turley in Birmingham
- Wilford Woodruff started out in Staffordshire, but from there, the Lord led him to Herefordshire to Mr. John Benbow’s hill farm on March 3, 1840.



“I found Mr. Benbow to be a wealthy farmer . . . He and his wife received me with glad hearts and thanksgiving . . . I also rejoiced greatly . . . there was a company of men and women—over six hundred in number—who had broken off from the Wesleyan Methodists, and had taken the name United Brethren. . . [They] were searching for light and truth, but had gone as far as they could, and were calling upon the Lord continually to pen the way before them and send them light and knowledge, that they might know the true way to be saved.” Brian and Petrea Kelly, *History of the Church of JCLDS (UT: Covenant, 2000)*, 233.

Two days later, on March 5, Elder Woodruff recorded that after preaching, he baptized over six hundred people in one day.

On April 6, 1840, Brigham Young, Heber Kimball, George A Smith Parley and Orson Pratt, landed in Liverpool—the capital of the industrial revolution (1760 to 1840). It was also the largest emigration port in the world at the time. A few days later, 2,000 saints gathered for a Conference in Preston (30 miles north). By June the first saints from England gathered in Nauvoo. That year, the apostle-missionaries preached in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland and assisted with 8,000 convert baptisms.

Ann Booth’s Vision

One story from a convert highlights how intimately the Lord prepared the saints and the timing for the building of His kingdom. bridges the history from England to baptisms for the dead. Shortly after the missionaries found Ann Booth, in Manchester, she had a vision in March 1840. She saw the spirit world and there an apostle who had died in America taught and baptized the founder of the Methodist faith, John Wesley. Ann also saw her deceased family be baptized. She later learned that the deceased apostle was David W. Patten.

On May 26, 1840, while in Manchester, Brigham Young wrote down Ann’s vision and mailed it to Nauvoo. He asked his wife, to share it with the widow of Elder Patten, Ann Bentley Patten. The vision became well known in Nauvoo when the Prophet Joseph Smith mentioned it in a sermon in October 5, 1840. He corrected the information by explaining that the dead may be taught the gospel, but that they will be baptized vicariously on earth, not in the spirit world (*BYU Studies*, 56.2, Christopher James Blythe, “Ann Booth’s Vision and Early Conceptions of Redeeming the Dead among Latter-day Saints” <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/ann-booths-vision-and-early-conceptions-redeeming-dead-among-latter-day-saints#footnote-033>)

Baptism for Dead Introduced—Aug 15, 1840

Seymour Brunson, one of Joseph's bodyguards and dear friends, was brought into Joseph and Emma's home when he became ill in hopes that they might provide the peace and healing he needed, but that was not the Lord's will. The account was recorded by Vilate Kimball who wrote of his death to her husband Heber while he served a mission in England about Brunson's death on Aug 10, 1840.

Before he died, he told Joseph not to hold him any longer, I have seen David Patten and he wants me and the Lord wants me and I want to go. They then gave him up. At one time as Joseph entered the room there was a light encircled him above the brightness of the sun. He exclaimed, the room is filled with angels. They have come to waft my spirit home. He then bid his family and friends farewell and sweetly fell asleep in Jesus." Ferron A. Olson, *Seymour Brunson: Defender of the Faith*, 2nd ed.(SLC: 1999), 142. His funeral was held on Nov 15, 1840. He was so beloved that the procession to the graveyard was one mile long.

While preaching the funeral sermon for Colonel Seymour Brunson in Nauvoo, Illinois, the Prophet Joseph Smith introduced the doctrine of proxy baptism for the dead. Joseph's funeral sermon was not recorded, but we have at least three journal entries of people who were there who recorded what happened.

"Jane Neymon states that Joseph preached Seymour Brunson's funeral sermon and then first introduced the subject of baptism of the dead and said to the people: 'I have laid the subject of baptism for the dead before you, you may receive it or reject as you choose.' . . . She then went and was baptized for her son Cyrus Livingston Neymon, by Harvey Olmstead. Joseph on hearing it at table in the evening asked what he said, on his telling what the ceremony was it proved that father Olmstead had it right. Vienna Jaques witnessed the same by riding into the river on horseback to get close so as to hear what the ceremony would be." The first was recorded in the "History Office Nov 29. 1854 at 10:00 a.m. (Olson, Seymour Brunson, 151).

Another record was written by Simon Baker:

"I was present at a discourse that the Prophet Joseph delivered on baptism for the dead August 15, 1840. He read the greater part of the 15th Chap of Cor. And remarked that the Gospel of Jesus Christ brought glad tidings of great joy, and then remarked that he saw a widow in the congregation that had a son who died without being baptized, and this widow in reading the sayings of Jesus, 'Except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven,' and that not one joy or tittle of the Savior's words would pass away, but all should be fulfilled. He then said that this widow should have glad tidings in that thing. He also said the Apostle was talking to a people who understood Baptism for the dead, for it was practiced among them. He went on to say that people could now act for their friends who had departed this life, and that the plan of salvation was calculated to save all who were willing to obey the requirements of the law of God. He went on and made a very beautiful discourse."

While the apostles were all away in on missions in England, the Prophet Joseph wrote them a letter about the restored doctrine of vicarious baptism for the dead, dated 15 December 1840.

Let the saints remember that great things depend on their individual exertion, and that they are called to be co-workers with us and the holy spirit in accomplishing the great works of the last days, and in consideration of the extent, the blessings, and the glories of the same let every selfish feeling be not only buried, but annihilated, and let love to God and man, predominate and reign triumphant in every mind, that their hearts may become like unto Enoch's of old so that they may comprehend all things, present, past, and future, and "come behind in no gift waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ". The work in which we are unitedly engaged in, is one of no ordinary kind, the enemies we have to contend against are subtle and well skilled in maneuvering, it behoves us then to be on the alert, to concentrate our energies, and that the best feelings should exist in our midst, and then by the help of the Almighty we shall go on from victory to victory and from conquest unto conquest, our evil passions will be subdued, our prejudices depart, we shall find no room in our bosoms for hatred, vice will hide its deformed head, and we shall stand approved in the sight of heaven and be acknowledged "the Sons

of God” Let us realize that we are not to live to ourselves but to God by so doing the greatest blessings will rest upon us both in time and in Eternity.

. . . I first mentioned the doctrine in public while preaching the funeral sermon of Bro [Seymour] Brunson, and have since then given general instructions to the Church on the subject. The saints have the priviledge of being baptized for those of their relatives who are dead, who they feel to believe would have embraced the gospel if they had been priviledged with hearing it, and who have received the gospel in the spirit through the instrumentality of those who may have been commissioned to preach to them while in the prison. Without enlarging on the subject you will undoubtedly see its consistancy, and reasonableness, and presents the the gospel of Christ in probably a more enlarged scale than some have received it. But as the performance of this right is more particularly confined to this place it will not be necessary to enter into particulars, at the same time I allways feel glad to give all the information in my power, but my space will not allow me to do it. [p. [6]] "Letter to Quorum of the Twelve, 15 December 1840," p. [6], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 26, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-quorum-of-the-twelve-15-december-1840/6>

The saints embraced the doctrine with great enthusiasm. This was one of the most wonderful doctrines taught in Nauvoo. In contrast to the Christian misunderstanding of damning all who have not been baptized, this extension of the Savior’s atonement made the restoration the most inclusive, inviting, ecumenical faiths of all Chrstianity.

The Lord added more parameters the following year in 1841 when he announced the new temple to be built in Nauvoo (see D&C 127 and 128). After the first wave of zeal before knowledge, the saints learned that witnesses must be present, a record kept, women are baptized for women, and men for men (D&C 128:3, 8).

Theology underlining Baptism for the Dead

The NT apostle Paul described baptism for the dead as evidence of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:29; also see D&C 128) The apostle Peter also spoke of Christ preaching in the spirit world was for the benefit of those who had died without hearing the gospel (1 Peter 4:6). Initially the saints eagerly baptized their kindred in the Mississippi River, but the Lord revealed that He preferred temples (D&C 124:29-35).

The recited words for the baptismal prayer are the same for the living and the dead—with the addition: "for and in behalf of _____." Three sections in the D&C add to the saints’ understandings (124, 127-8)

Death of Father Smith—Sept 14, 1840

Despite’s Lucy’s efforts to nurse her 69-year-old, 6’2”, 200-pound husband back to health over year of 1839 through 1840, Joseph Sr. did not return to full strength and activity. Fortunately, the Lord restored him enough to give all his children and wife beautiful blessings on his death bed. Lucy recorded that after he finished the blessings, he said to her:

Do you <not> know that that you are one of the most singular women in the world— I said No I do not— Well said he I do— You have brought up my children for me by the fireside . . . We often wished that we might bothe die at the same time but you must not desire to die when I do for you must stay to comfort the children when I am gone so do not mourn but try to be comforted and your last days shall be your best days as to being driven for you shall have more power if over your enemies than you have had and now be comforted— Pause— Why I can see and hear as well as ever I could.— Pause <and i have> my senses as <perfectly> well as ever &c Pause of some minutes— I see Alvin [Smith] Pause I shall live 7 or 8 minutes— he then straightened him self and laid his hands together and began to breathe shorter and shorter untill [sic] at last his breath stopped without a struggle or even a sigh (<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/225>).

Not only were most of his children close by, but also his brother, John, had been there shortly before and his church family honored him for his service as a father, missionary, and patriarch. The next day at a funeral— see *History of the Church*, 2.191-197.

John Bennett in Nauvoo 1840-1842 (Aug 3, 1804–Aug 5, 1867)

With the apostles gone and his father's illness (and later death)—the founding of Nauvoo placed an even greater administrative burdens upon Joseph. He was both revelator and organizer of approximately 16,000 refugees. By June 1840, Joseph asked the Nauvoo high council to appoint someone else to attend to "the temporalities of the Church." The prophet "wanted to free himself for 'the spiritualities'—translation and revelation—but his appeal went unheeded. The high council supplied another clerk, leaving Joseph responsible for the debts and the final disposition of land. He oversaw the business [of the Church] for another year, until the Twelve Apostles returned" (Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 417).

When Joseph received a letter from a very qualified and sincere convert (at least by all outward signs, that he claimed about himself) Joseph embraced him warmly—as he did all converts. John Bennett's offer for help showed, over time, to be self-serving. He was a wolf in sheep's clothing. Even so, his skills were helpful for a time in assisting with the Nauvoo Charter (submitted Nov 28, approved Dec 16, 1840). But the damage he caused Joseph, and the Nauvoo saints who trusted him, outweighed his help. The following article on Bennett is taken from: https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Polygamy_book/John_C_Bennett/Rise_and_Fall_of_Bennett#cite_ref:22

It is far more likely that Bennett recognized that the Mormons were "an untapped political potential in Illinois," which "he could exploit...for his own gain. He likely believed from the onset [sic] that Smith was a charlatan and Mormonism a fraud. Neither of these circumstances would have particularly mattered to him," since he had repeatedly resorted to lies and misrepresentation for his own aggrandizement. . . .

Source and degree of Bennett's prominence

According to William Law, Bennett "was more in the secret confidence of Joseph than perhaps any other man in the city." How did a newcomer become mayor, a member of the First Presidency, and a military leader so quickly? . . .

Sidney Rigdon, a counsellor in the First Presidency, was frequently ill. On April 8, 1841, "John C. Bennett was presented, with the First Presidency, as Assistant President until President Rigdon's health should be restored." Modern readers should be cautious in projecting the role of the current First Presidency on Joseph's day. In the modern Church, the First Presidency is almost always composed of two apostles called to serve with the President, and have extensive experience in ecclesiastical affairs. In Joseph's day, this was not the case. Most of Joseph's counsellors in the First Presidency were to betray his trust, including Jesse Gause, Frederick G. Williams, Sidney Rigdon, William Law and John C. Bennett. While some of these counsellors received keys, Bennett did not.

Bennett often acted as Joseph's proxy in political and secular matters, and "appears to have officiated at few public religious activities. He occasionally preached, and as mayor of Nauvoo he performed a few marriage ceremonies," though given Joseph's introduction of sealing ordinances, this is more a secular than religious function. With few exceptions, Bennett "played little role in church conferences. There might have been an unofficial division of labor between Bennett and Smith. Smith handled church affairs; Bennett took the lead in secular matters." In Bennett, Joseph had found the secular aide-de-camp he sought in vain from the high council.

Following his break with Joseph, Bennett made much of his insider status. He claimed that his role in the First Presidency "gave me access to all their secret lodges and societies, and enabled me to become perfectly familiar with the doings and designs of the whole Church." It is difficult to know whether Bennett was lying or mistaken. Despite his claim, he was never part of the inner circle which received the highest temple ordinances introduced by Joseph. Bennett and Rigdon "were conspicuously absent "when Joseph Smith spoke to those who would be among the first to receive the full endowment necessary "to finish their work and prevent imposition" by Satan.

Thus, wrote one author, the considerable embarrassment to Joseph Smith and Mormonism which some have inferred from Bennett's alleged duping of the Mormons is cast in a new light because Bennett himself so effectively refutes his own claim that he was a close confidant of Joseph Smith. Unwittingly, Bennett indisputably demonstrates that he was neither directly involved with the endowment, eternal marriage, nor plural marriage—the most significant private theological developments during Bennett's stay in Nauvoo.