

The Calling of the Restoration's Original Apostles

On February 8, 1835, Joseph Smith asked brothers Brigham and Joseph Young to sing to him. The Prophet then received a revelation that it was time for the Twelve Apostles to be called.¹

Joseph Smith asked Brigham to send out a notice that a conference would be held the following Saturday. He told Brigham that he would be one of the Twelve.²

Six days later, the Saints gathered. Joseph Smith said that one of the primary purposes of the meeting was for the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris—“to choose twelve men from the church as Apostles.”³ Oliver and David had previously received that assignment in June 1829, but although they had “sought the Lord by fasting and prayer” to identify the Twelve, the time had not yet been right.⁴ Now, Joseph said, the time had come.

The Twelve (in the order presented at the meeting) were Lyman Johnson, age 23; Brigham Young, 33; Heber C. Kimball, 33;

Orson Hyde, 30; David W. Patten, 35; Luke Johnson, 27; William E. McLellin, 29; John F. Boynton, 23; Orson Pratt, 23; William Smith, 23; Thomas B. Marsh, 34; and Parley P. Pratt, 27. All had previously served missions. Eight had accompanied Joseph Smith on the Zion's Camp expedition the previous summer.⁵

After their designation, each of the Apostles was ordained.⁶ Their ordination blessings were filled with promises of missionary success. Heber C. Kimball later remembered that the blessings “predicted many things which should come to pass, that we should have power to heal the sick, cast out devils, raise the dead, give sight to the blind, . . . remove mountains, and all things should be subject to us through the name of Jesus Christ.”⁷

Oliver Cowdery also emphasized the difficulties they would face: “Be prepared at all times to make a sacrifice [*sic*] of your lives, should God require them in the advancement and building up of his cause.” Oliver encouraged the Apostles to seek personal knowledge of Jesus Christ so

that they could testify of His existence with surety: “Never cease striving until you have seen God, face to face.”⁸

Beginning in May 1835, the Apostles undertook several proselyting missions for the Church, and their general leadership also blessed many individuals. ■

NOTES

1. See “History, 1838–1856 (Manuscript History of the Church), volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838],” addenda, note A, page 1, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838/304.
2. See Joseph Young, *History of the Organization of the Seventies* (1878), 1.
3. “Minutes, Discourse, and Blessings, 14–15 February 1835,” in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, 224–28.
4. “Minutes and Blessings, 21 February 1835,” in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, 242, 243.
5. The four who were not part of the camp were David W. Patten, Thomas B. Marsh, William E. McLellin, and John F. Boynton.
6. Only nine of the Twelve were present at the meeting on February 14, 1835. Parley P. Pratt was ordained on February 21, 1835, while Thomas B. Marsh and Orson Pratt were both ordained on April 26, 1835.
7. “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 15, 1845, 868.
8. “Minutes and Blessings, 21 February 1835,” in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, 244.

To learn more about the calling of the original Twelve Apostles in this dispensation, visit history.lds.org.