

# Joseph Smith

## President of the Church, 1830–44

On a spring morning in 1820, God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to answer the prayer of the 14-year-old Joseph, who recorded: “I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

So great was his mission that holy prophets foresaw his ministry thousands of years before his birth. Joseph of Egypt prophesied: “A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer. . . . Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded. . . . And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father” (2 Nephi 3:6, 14–15).

“Happiness,” Joseph Smith taught, “is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God” (in *History of the Church*, 5:134–35).

After the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Elder John Taylor was inspired to testify, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3).

- 1805 Born on December 23 to Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith in Sharon, Vermont
- 1820 Age 14, visited by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in a grove of trees near Palmyra, New York
- 1823 Age 17, visited by the angel Moroni; Moroni instructs him at least four times in the years 1824–27
- 1827 Age 21, marries Emma Hale on January 18; begins to translate the golden plates
- 1829 Age 23, baptized by Oliver Cowdery near Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the Susquehanna River; ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist on May 15
- 1829 Age 23, receives the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John
- 1830 Age 24, publishes the Book of Mormon; organizes the Church on April 6
- 1832 Age 26, sustained as president of the high priesthood on January 25 in Amherst, Ohio
- 1835 Age 29, publishes the Doctrine and Covenants and begins work on the book of Abraham
- 1836 Age 30, dedicates the Kirtland Temple on March 27 and is visited by Jesus Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah
- 1842 Age 36, introduces the full endowment to individuals at Nauvoo
- 1844 Age 38, martyred with his brother Hyrum on June 27 at Carthage Jail in Illinois

## Summary

Joseph Smith was chosen in the premortal existence to translate the Book of Mormon and to organize The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The work that he did while he was alive was so great that prophets long ago knew who he was, knew what his

name would be, and knew what he would do. Men who helped Joseph Smith with his work testified that he had done more for the people on this earth than anyone other than Jesus Christ.

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS