

The World of Joseph Fielding: Chapter 5

Parley P. Pratt is Prepared for a Mission to Canada

At the same time the Charleton settlement was growing, Joseph Smith, Jr., the young prophet and leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was building up a Zion people in Kirtland, Ohio, about two hundred miles southwest of Toronto, across Lake Erie.

In 1834, Joseph led two hundred men on a thousand-mile march to Missouri to defend a second body of members of the Church whose



Parley P. Pratt traveled with Joseph Smith and others on the march from Kirtland to Missouri to protect members of the Church who were being attacked by Missourians.

1830, had marched with Zion's Camp to Missouri and returned in late 1834. At the end of that year he settled with his wife Thankful in New Portage, Ohio, about sixty miles south of Kirtland where a large group of Saints lived. Thankful was a frail woman who suffered from tuberculosis. Although she greatly desired to have children, this had not happened.

In February of 1835, Joseph Smith called twelve apostles, the first time this quorum was established in this dispensation, although the revelation authorizing this had been received in 1829.¹ Nine of the twelve men called to be apostles had marched with him to Missouri the previous year. Parley P. Pratt's ordination occurred a week later than most of the other Twelve, on February 21st.

All of the Twelve were counseled to begin serving missions in the surrounding areas and to their extended families, even if they lived a distance away.

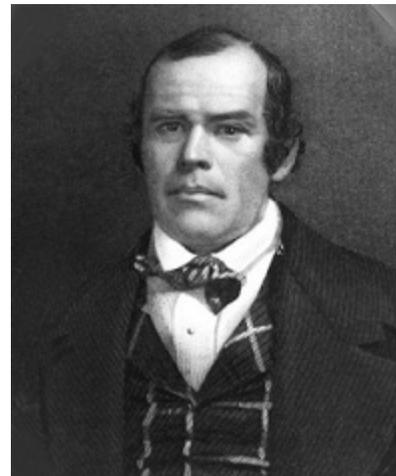
Elder Pratt wrote:

I now returned home to New Portage, and began to make preparations for my mission,

In 1830, Joseph Smith moved the body of the LDS Church from Palmyra, New York to Kirtland, Ohio. Another body of the Church had settled in Missouri.

homes and lives were under attack by the Missouri militia. This march was hampered by cholera, which had spread from New York to the interior. This disease afflicted almost seventy members of the camp, ultimately killing fourteen.

Parley P. Pratt, a member of the Church since



Parley Parker Pratt, 28 years old, was the 10th apostle ordained.

but the state of my affairs was such that it seemed almost impossible for me to leave home; my wife was sick, my aged mother had come to live with me. . . . I was also engaged in building a house. . . while at the same time I was somewhat in debt, and in want of most of the necessaries of life.

Under these embarrassed circumstances, I hesitated for a while whether to attempt to perform the mission assigned me, or stay at home and finish my building and mechanical work. While I pondered these things, with my mind unsettled, and continued my work, with a feeling of hesitation whether it was a duty to sacrifice all the labor and expense to which I had been in my preparations and unfinished work, or whether it was a duty to stay and complete it, I was called very suddenly, to administer to a brother by the name of Matthews, who was taken suddenly and dangerously ill.²

During Elder Pratt's blessing upon his neighbor, they were interrupted by the shouts of, "Fire! Fire!" Upon running outside, they saw Parley's home, "an unfinished, two story frame building, open to the fresh breeze and full of shavings, lumber, shingles," burning. After rescuing his family members, "all were consumed in a few moments. Thus closed all my hesitation; my works of that nature were now all completed, and myself ready to fill my mission. One gave me a coat; another a hat; a third, house room; a fourth, provisions; while a fifth forgave me the debts due to them; and a sixth bade me God speed to hasten on my mission."

After traveling with the other apostles throughout the Eastern States, Elder Pratt returned home to New Portage in the fall and moved his wife and mother to Kirtland. He spent the winter of 1835-1836 receiving instruction and attending classes with other leaders of the Church.

That winter was a busy time for the young church. The Kirtland Temple was nearing completion after being under construction for three years. Poverty and persecution had plagued the Saints there, and at one point Elder Heber C. Kimball recorded that the workmen had slept in their clothes at the temple site, "and were obliged to lay with our fire locks in our arms."³



Members of the Church built the Kirtland Temple between 1833 and 1836 amid great poverty and persecution.

However, miracles and faith provided enough stimulus to keep the work on the temple focused. Although still in an unfinished state, sacred ordinances had been completed in the upper story during one summer day in 1835.

That evening, with the temple empty. several men on the street, including Brigham Young, his brother-in-law Truman Angel, and W. W. Phelps, saw the room filled with light, and "many personages did appear clothed in white" at the windows looking out.⁴

Kirtland Temple is Dedicated in March 1836

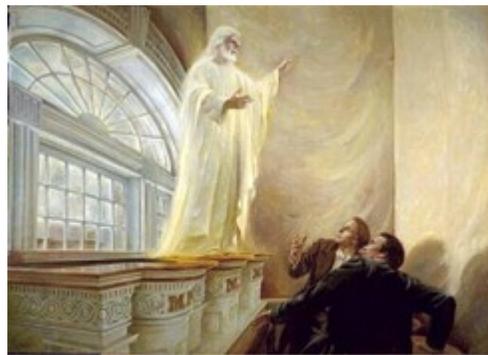
As the temple was being prepared for dedication, including the plastering of the exterior, the members of the Church enjoyed many spiritual experiences. Toward the end of March 1836, converts from Missouri and the eastern states crowded into Kirtland in anticipation of the dedication of the temple. On Sunday, March 27th, over a thousand members managed to fit into the small temple for the dedication, with hundreds more still outside, while Joseph Smith read the dedicatory prayer. Two verses from the prayer hinted of the British missionary work which was soon to come”

That the Lord’s servants may go forth from this house armed with power . . . And from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth. . . .⁵

The dedicatory service lasted seven hours.⁶ Robert Blashel Thompson, although still in Canada, would later describe the temple as a “glorious” structure.⁷

The following week, after the ordinance of the sacrament in the temple, Joseph Smith recorded that he “saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit. . . .” The passage of scripture states that the Savior had “accepted this house. . . .” and that:

The hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out And the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us, and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the Ten Tribes from the land of the north.⁸



This beautiful painting by Walter Rane depicts the Savior’s appearance in the Kirtland Temple the week after its dedication.

Elder Pratt wrote:

The ordinances of the Priesthood were revealed to a greater extent than had been known among men since the prophets and Apostles of old fell asleep; and many were anointed to their holy calling, and were instructed in principles which were great and glorious in themselves, and calculated to enlarge the mind and prepare the chosen servants of God for the great work before them.

Parley P. Pratt Called to Serve a Mission to Canada

After the temple dedication, Elder Pratt struggled with whether to go on a second mission or stay at home and “sustain my family and pay my debts.”⁹

One evening, early in April, while “pondering my future course . . . there came a knock at the door Elder Heber C. Kimball and others entered my house, and being filled with the spirit of prophecy, they blessed me and my wife, and prophesied as follows:

Brother Parley, thy wife shall be healed from this hour, and shall bear a son, and his name shall be Parley; and he shall be a chosen instrument in the hands of the Lord to inherit the priesthood and to walk in the steps of his father. He shall do a great work in the earth in ministering the word and teaching the children of men. Arise, therefore, and go forth in the ministry, nothing doubting. Take no thoughts for your debts, nor the necessaries of life, for the Lord will supply you with abundant means for all things.

Thou shalt go to Upper Canada, even to the city of Toronto, the capital, and there thou shalt find a people prepared for the fulness of the gospel, and they shall receive thee, and thou shalt organize the Church among them, and it shall spread thence into the regions round about, and many shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth and shall be filled with joy; and from the things growing out of this mission, shall the fulness of the gospel spread into England, and cause a great work to be done in that land.

Elder Pratt wrote, “This prophecy was the more marvelous, because being married near ten years we had never had any children; and for near six years my wife had been consumptive, and had been considered incurable. However, we called to mind the faith of Abraham of old, and . . . took courage.”

Missionaries Leave Kirtland in the Spring of 1836

Several missionaries departed Kirtland that spring. Joseph Smith and his older brother Hyrum left to preach in western New York and were joined in Buffalo by Apostle Orson Hyde, who had joined the LDS Church in Kirtland in 1831.¹⁰

Within a few days Elder Pratt departed for Canada with his companion, Eleazar Freeman Nickerson, a Canadian convert of four years who was able to pay Parley’s expenses. Brother Nickerson’s parents had been baptized in the LDS Church six months before he and his brother Moses and other siblings had joined. Elder Pratt wrote:

After a long and tedious passage in a public coach (the roads being very bad and the lake not open), we arrived at the Falls of Niagara sometime in the month of April, 1836. As this was my first visit to this place it made a deep and awful impression on my mind. We halted a short time to view this wonder of nature, and to adore that God who has formed a world so sublimely grand.

Elder Pratt and Brother Nickerson walked for two days, making appointments. Brother Nickerson then departed ways with Elder Pratt, filling the appointments as he made his way home, seventy miles west of the falls.¹¹

Elder Pratt wrote:

I preached to the people, and was kindly entertained [housed] till Monday morning, when I took leave and entered Hamilton, a flourishing town at the head of Lake Ontario; but my place of destination was Toronto, around on the north side of the lake. If I went by land I would have a circuitous route, muddy and tedious to go on foot. The lake had just opened, and steamers had commenced plying between the two places; two dollars would convey me to Toronto in a few hours, and save some days of laborious walking; but I was an entire stranger in Hamilton, and also in the province; and money I had none. Under these circumstances I pondered what I should do The Spirit seemed to whisper to me to try the Lord, and see if anything was too hard for him, that I might know and trust Him under all circumstances. I retired to a secret place in a forest and prayed to the Lord for money to enable me to cross the lake.



In 1836, Elder Pratt traveled 240 miles by stage coach from Kirtland to Hamilton. After a humble prayer, means were provided for him to travel to Toronto by boat instead of by foot.

Parley returned to Hamilton and began talking with people on the street. “I had not tarried many minutes before I was accosted by a stranger, who inquired my name and where I was going.”

John Taylor’s biographer stated that this stranger to Elder Pratt was Moses Nickerson, the oldest son of Freeman Nickerson and the brother to Eleazar who had accompanied Elder Pratt to Niagara. Moses was a tinsmith and had a business in Port Dover, where a harbor there served Lake Erie.¹²

Elder Parley P. Pratt Meets John and Leonora Taylor

Elder Pratt continued,

He also asked me if I did not want some money. I said yes. He then gave me ten dollars and a letter of introduction to John Taylor, of Toronto, where I arrived the same evening.

Mrs. Taylor received me kindly, and went for her husband, who was busy in his mechanic shop [where John worked as a turner building furniture]. To them I made known my errands to the city, but received little direct encouragement . . . and sought lodgings at a public house.

Many years later John Taylor spoke to members of the LDS Church and said:

About this time Parley P. Pratt called on me with a letter of introduction from a merchant of my acquaintance. I had peculiar feelings on seeing him. I had heard a great many stories of a similar kind [about the Mormons] to those that you have heard, and I must say that I thought my friend had imposed upon me in sending a man of this persuasion to me. I, however, received him courteously as I was bound to do. I told him, however, plainly,

my feelings, and that in our researches I wanted no fables. I wished him to confine himself to the scriptures. We talked for three hours of upwards, and he bound me as close to the scriptures as I desired, proving everything he said therefrom.¹³

Elder Pratt wrote of this time:

In the morning I commenced a regular visit to each of the clergy of the place, introducing myself and my errand. I was absolutely refused hospitality, and denied the opportunity of preaching in any of their houses or congregations. Rather an unpromising beginning, thought I, considering the prophesies on my head concerning Toronto. However, nothing daunted, I applied to the Sheriff for the use of the Court House, and then to the authorities for a public room in the market place; but with no better success. What could I do more? I had exhausted my influence and power without effect. I now repaired to a pine grove just out of the town, and, kneeling down, called on the Lord, bearing testimony of my unsuccessful exertions; my inability to open the way; at the same time asking Him in the name of Jesus to open an effectual door for His servant to fulfil his mission in that place.

As Elder Pratt was preparing to leave Toronto, he called again at the Taylor household to say good-bye. After picking up his bag to depart, Leonora stopped him to ask a question.¹⁴ John, from his turning shop in the adjacent room¹⁵ soon began asking questions, and those questions, Parley wrote, “were inspired by a degree of curiosity or anxiety.” Elder Pratt stepped into John’s shop.

These questions caused a delay, and during that interim, forty-four-year-old Isabella Russell Walton stopped by. From the adjoining room Leonora spoke with her friend, and Elder Pratt and John paused to eavesdrop on their conversation, as it solved Parley’s dilemma.

Leonora addressed her friend and said:

Mrs. Walton, I am glad to see you; there is a gentleman here from the United States who says the Lord sent him to this city to preach the gospel. He has applied in vain to the clergy and to the various authorities for opportunity to fulfil his mission, and is now about to leave the place. He may be a man of God; I am sorry to have him depart.

Isabella Walton Invites Elder Pratt to Preach

Isabella responded with surprise, saying:

Indeed! I now understand the feelings and spirit which brought me to your house at this time. I have been busy over the wash tub and too weary to take a walk, but I felt impressed to walk out. I then thought I would make a call on my sister, the other side of town, but passing your door, the Spirit bade me go in; but I said to myself, I will go in when I return, but the Spirit said: go in now. I accordingly came in, and I am thankful that I did so. Tell the stranger he is welcome to my house . . . I have a spare room and bed, and food in plenty.

He shall have a home at my house, and two large rooms to preach in just when he pleases. Tell him I will send my son John over to pilot him to my house, while I go and gather my relatives and friends to come in this very evening and hear him talk; for I feel by the Spirit that he is a man sent by the Lord with a message which will do us good.

Elder Pratt wrote, "The evening found me quietly seated at her house, in the midst of a number of listeners who were seated around a large work table in her parlor, and deeply interested in conversation."

Mrs. Walton spoke to Elder Pratt, saying:

Mr. Pratt, we have for some years been anxiously looking for some providential event which would gather the sheep into one fold, build up the true church as in days of old, and prepare the humble followers of the Lamb, now scattered and divided, to receive their coming Lord when He shall descend to reign on the earth. As soon as Mrs. Taylor spoke of you I felt assured, as by a strange and unaccountable presentiment, that you were a messenger, with important tidings on these subjects, and I was constrained to invite you here; and now we are all here anxiously waiting to hear your words.

Elder Pratt then spoke freely, telling those assembled of Joseph Smith, the visit to him by the angel Moroni and Joseph's translation of the Book of Mormon. He also spoke of the organization of the Church and restoration of the priesthood. He then said:

I was also directed to this city by the Spirit of the Lord, with a promise that I should find a people here prepared to receive the gospel, and should organize them in the same. But when I came and was rejected by all parties, I was about to leave the city; but the Lord sent you, as a widow, to receive me. . . and thus I was provided for like Elijah of old.

He then addressed them as an apostle and said:

Now I bless your house, and all your family and kindred in His name. Your sins shall be forgiven you; you shall understand and obey the gospel, and be filled with the Holy Ghost; for so great faith have I never seen in any of my country.

"After conversing with these interesting persons till a late hour," the group desired baptism, but Elder Pratt said, "wait yet a little while till I have an opportunity to teach others, with whom you are religiously connected, and invite them to partake with you of the same blessings."

Elder Pratt wrote that the next morning:

Mrs. Walton requested me to call on a friend of hers, who was also a widow in deep affliction, being totally blind with inflammation in the eyes. She had suffered extreme pain for several months, and had also been reduced to want, having four little children to support. She had lost her husband, of cholera, two years before, and had sustained herself and family by teaching school until deprived of sight, since which she had been dependent on the Methodist society, herself and children being then a public charge.

Isabella's twelve-year-old daughter Mary Ann directed Elder Pratt to the widow's home. He continued:

I called on the poor blind widow and helpless orphans and found them in a dark and gloomy apartment, rendered more so by having every ray of light obscured to prevent its painful effects on her eyes. I related to her the circumstances of my mission, and she believed the same. I laid my hands upon her in the name of Jesus Christ, and said unto her, 'Your eyes shall be well from this very hour.' She threw off her bandages, opened her house to the light, dressed herself, and walking with open eyes, came to the meeting that same evening at Sister Walton's, with eyes as well and as bright as any other person's.

The Methodist society was now relieved of their burden in the person of this widow and four orphans. This remarkable miracle was soon noised abroad, and the poor woman's house was thronged from all parts of the city and country with visitors, all curious to witness for themselves, and to inquire of her how her eyes were healed.

The dialogue Elder Pratt related between visitors from the Methodists to this healed widow followed a pattern described in John 9. The Toronto widow was told that she was forsaking a Christian church for imposters and threatened that if she was baptized she would not only lose any financial support, but she would also lose her job. Their words were effective, and Elder Pratt wrote, "she shrank back into the net of sectarian delusion, and was seen by the Saints no more."

As the week progressed, Elder Pratt continued to reside with Mrs. Walton, teaching in her home and eventually moving outside to accommodate those interested.

Elder Pratt is Invited to Speak to the Toronto Study Group

On Sunday, sensing significant opposition from the Methodists, Elder Pratt chose not to publicly speak. However, a new friend invited him to hear "a preacher in a certain chapel." Elder Pratt wrote:

After the discourse, I was introduced to the speaker by my friend, who invited us both to [have lunch] at his house. After much interesting conversation, I was invited to accompany them to another meeting [that afternoon], held at the residence of a Mr. Patrick, a wealthy, aristocratic gentleman, who held an office in the government.¹⁶

In a large apartment, well furnished, was soon convened a solemn, well-dressed, and, apparently, serious and humble people, nearly filling the room. Each held a Bible, while Mr. Patrick presided in their midst, with a Bible in his hand and several more lying on the table before him. With one of these I was soon furnished, as was any other person present who might lack this apparently necessary article. In this manner these people had assembled twice each week for about two years, for the professed purpose of seeking truth, independent of any sectarian organization to which any of them might nominally belong.

Here had assembled John Taylor, his wife, Mrs. Walton and some others who now knew

me, although to the president and most of the congregation I was entirely unknown, and, from my appearance, was [presumed] to be some farmer from the country who had dropped in by invitation.

Elder Pratt described the meeting in detail, which began with a hymn and a fervent prayer. The practice was for a member of the group to introduce a subject, and that day it was John Taylor who arose.

He read the account of Philip in chapter eight of Acts, who preached the gospel to the Samaritans, “who received the Word with joy and were then baptized . . . after which . . . Peter and John came from Jerusalem, and laid their hands on them in the name of Jesus, and prayed that they might receive the Holy Ghost.”

John Taylor then asked aloud:

Where is our Philip? Where is our receiving the Word with joy, and being baptized when we believed? Where is our Peter and John? Our apostles? Where is our Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands?

We are told that we were sprinkled in our infancy, but this was not baptism, and if it was, we neither believed nor rejoiced at the time, nor did we act in the matter at all, but were acted upon . . . Again, Peter and John were commissioned as apostles, and they administered the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands in the name of Jesus. Instead, we have had ministers commissioned by the King and Parliament of England, or by John Wesley and his successors, without any pretense of a word from the Lord or his angels to commission them.

John spoke at length on this topic, which “gave rise to a most candid investigation.” The preacher Elder Pratt had listened to that morning vocally observed that there was “a stranger present who, perhaps, might wish to speak.”

The chairman kindly responded that “he was not aware of the presence of a stranger, but if such was the case he [referring to Elder Pratt] was at liberty . . . to make remarks.”

Elder Pratt arose and said he “was a stranger from the United States, but not a stranger to the great principles under investigation. . . .” He asked if he could speak later when there was more time, and they agreed, “with tears and sobs attest[ing] their sincerity.”

Elder Pratt’s Themes of Discourse

When Elder Pratt stood to speak that evening in Mr. Patrick’s rooms, they “were crowded to excess with anxious listeners.” Elder Pratt, who had served as a missionary with the Disciples of Christ in Ohio with Sidney Rigdon before joining the LDS Church, knew their concerns, for he had dealt with them himself.

His remarks covered five points concerning principles which existed in New Testament times, and

“were acted upon and enjoyed, [which] constituted the Christian Church.” The first was “an inspired priesthood or apostleship, authorized to administer salvation in the name of Jesus.”

The second was faith in the words of the apostles. The third principle was “Reformation of life,” or repentance. The fourth and fifth principles covered “obedience to certain ordinances, as baptism and the laying on of hands and. . . spiritual gifts.”

Elder Pratt suggested that in comparing the “modern pretenses with this ancient model [from the New Testament],” they could “judge of them at once.” He continued by saying:

All agree that the gospel was a perfect system, an unchangeable and everlasting covenant, never to be changed or altered by the Lord, and only perverted or altered by man under a severe penalty In physical matters men are not easily deceived or duped.

Elder Pratt then described a man in the days of Socrates which had a head, eyes, ears and other body parts:

Can an imposter impose upon that man in this age? Can he introduce a wild beast, a fowl, a serpent . . . ? Could he pass any of these upon his fellow men as constituting . . . the model or pattern answering to the former description? No, he could not. He would be considered out of his senses and would be laughed to scorn for attempting such a thing. Why, then, are we at a loss in judging of the various systems which, in modern times, claim to be the Church of Christ? Why do we not compare them with the model and reject or receive at once?

Elder Pratt discussed this for a time, and then said:

Suppose . . . we shut our eyes to these truths, and hug to our bosoms those systems of falsehood and error, which claim to be of Christ, but are not? The result will be a continuance on our part to build up that which the Lord purposes in due time to tear down, and to oppose that which the Lord will send into the world to accomplish his purposes. We would in this case be his enemies, and be found fighting against him.

After a lengthy and interesting discourse on the history of the Jews and the primitive church, Elder Pratt then said:

As Protestants, we can make no pretenses to a successive line of apostleship Nothing short of a new dispensation – a new revelation to commission apostles as at the first, could give any religious body a claim . . . to be the Church of Jesus Christ, or entitle them to the spiritual gifts.

He ended his sermon by saying,:

I have now reviewed the past, my friends, and have shown by what means the Jews and Gentiles have lost the peculiar blessings which characterize the Church of God. I have detained you long, and am, as yet, only on the threshold of the great subject before me. In

another discourse I might draw a brighter picture by setting before you the great and precious promises which ensure to the world a new dispensation, in which all these things will be restored, and the Church of the Saints grow, flourish and triumph in the earth.

As Elder Pratt finished speaking, “the unanimous voice was for another meeting, which was finally given out for the next evening.”

Elder Pratt’s Succeeding Sermons

A large crowd gathered for Elder Pratt’s Monday night sermon. Parley wrote of his remarks, where he:

. . .went into detail with a chain of prophecy, beginning with Moses and the prophets, and ending with John’s revelations, showing that the latter-day glory was to be ushered in by a new dispensation revealed from heaven, by the ministration of angels, and sustained by the marvelous power and gifts of God, till it resulted in the overthrow of all mystery, darkness, ignorance and corruption, and the ushering in of the universal reign of peace and truth.

This prophetic review occupied some two or three hours. . . I then closed by saying that had I time I would give them the details of the commencement of this restoration by a new dispensation revealed from the heavens by the angels of God, and in exact and detailed fulfilment of some of the prophecies which I had been reviewing. All cried out for another meeting, which was appointed for the next night.

In the third evening I related the visions, manifestations and many of the details of the organization and movements of the Church of the Saints. The truth was now plainly before this people, who had been in so wonderful a manner prepared for its reception, as predicted by Brother Kimball on my head before leaving home.

John Taylor spoke of his associates and said:

[They] were delighted with his preaching. . . All this, and much more that he taught, was in strict harmony with what they themselves believed; but what he had to say about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon perplexed a great many, and some of their members even refused to investigate the Book of Mormon, or examine the claims of Apostle Pratt to having divine authority to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

John addressed those assembled:

We are here, ostensibly in search of truth. Hitherto we have fully investigated other creeds and doctrines and proven them false. Why should we fear to investigate Mormonism? . . . We have prayed to God to send us a messenger, if He has a true Church on earth. Mr. Pratt has come to us under circumstances that are peculiar, and there is one thing that commends him to our consideration, he has come amongst us without purse or scrip, as the ancient apostles traveled, and none of us are able to refute his doctrine by

scripture or logic. . . .I desire to investigate his doctrines and claims to authority, and shall be very glad if some of my friends will unite with me But if no one will. . . be assured I shall make the investigation alone. If I find his religion true, I shall accept it, no matter what the consequences may be, and if false, then I shall expose it.¹⁷

Despite John's pleas for unity, Mr. Patrick rejected Elder Pratt's words and discontinued the meetings. Elder Pratt continued teaching at the home of Isabella Walton and soon she and many in her household were baptized.

John Taylor later wrote:

I afterwards wrote down eight sermons that he preached, in order that I might compare them with the word of God. I found nothing contrary. I then examined the Book of Mormon, and the prophecies concerning that. That was also correct. I then read the Doctrine and Covenants; found nothing unscriptural there. He called upon us to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and we should receive the Holy Ghost. 'But what is that?' we inquired. 'The same,' he answered, 'as it was in the apostles' days, or nothing.'¹⁸

Elder Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor Seek Out Joseph Fielding

Joseph Fielding wrote of this time, "While I was thus searching the Scriptures and crying to the Lord, it pleased God in answer to Prayer to send his word to us." Joseph did not mention that his seventy-six-year-old father John had died in early March.¹⁹ Most likely Joseph and his sisters received news of their father's passing within two months. This might have been one reason why he was crying to the Lord. While Joseph had been part of Mr. Patrick's study group, it appears that he had not traveled into Toronto for the recent meeting.

In late April 1836, Elder Pratt and John Taylor rode on horseback to visit the farming settlement of Charleton after receiving an invitation to preach from John Dawson,²⁰ Isabella Walton's brother-in-law. Elder Pratt wrote:

[They first called] at a Mr. Joseph Fielding's, an acquaintance and friend of Mr. Taylor's. This man had two sisters, young ladies, who seeing us coming ran from their house to one of the neighboring houses, lest they should give welcome, or give countenance to 'Mormonism.' Mr. Fielding stayed, and as we entered the house he said he was sorry we had come, he had opposed our holding meeting in the neighborhood, and, so great was the prejudice that the Methodist meeting house was closed against us, and the minister refused, on Sunday, to give out the appointment sent by the farmer.²¹

Joseph Fielding wrote of Elder Pratt's visit:

We had before heard some few evil reports of some people called Mormons, but as there had been several others bringing something new and strange, for which I had no relish, I thought it not best to encourage anything of that kind. At this time it was that Elder Parley P. Pratt came over to Toronto about 10 miles from my home. He was said to be a

Mormon preacher, and Isabella Walton, who was the first to receive him into her house in that town (a faithful widow woman also formerly of the Methodist Society), she having relations living by me, invited him to come out and preach to us, but so great were our prejudices that we sent him word not to come. He however determined that as he had accepted the invitation he would come. When he came we received him with great coolness. We had determined not to go near him, but as an old friend (Bro. Taylor) brought him to my house, I could not refuse to hear²²

Elder Pratt asked Joseph why the people opposed Mormonism. Joseph replied, "I don't know, but the name has such a contemptible sound, and, another thing, we do not want a new revelation, or a new religion contrary to the Bible."

"Oh!" said I, "if that is all, we shall soon remove your prejudices. Come, call home your sisters, and let's have some supper. Did you say the appointment was not given out?"

Joseph answered, "I said, sir, that it was not given out in the meeting house, nor by the minister, but the farmer by whom you sent it agreed to have it at his house."

Elder Pratt replied:

Come then, send for your sisters. We will take supper with you, and all go over to the meeting together. If you and your sisters will agree to this, I will agree to preach the old Bible gospel and leave out all new revelations which are opposed to it.

Elder Pratt continued:

The honest man consented. The young ladies came home, got us a good supper, and all went to meeting. The house was crowded. I preached, and the people wished to hear more.²³

At the end of Elder Pratt's remarks, Isaac Russell stood and "announced himself ready for baptism, saying that 'this was the Gospel he had been looking for and was ready to live or die by.'"²⁴

Joseph Fielding wrote:

I soon discovered that he had the Spirit and Power of God and such Wisdom as none but God himself could have given to man, by which he could explain those prophecies of which the preachers of the day were ignorant, showing the great design and connection of the Scriptures throughout.

He also spoke of and introduced the Book of Mormon. . . .He spoke also of the present state of the Gentile Church, saying that they were in a fallen condition, that they had all departed from the Truth, that there were none with whom the Lord was well pleased, that they had transgressed the law, changed the ordinances and broken the everlasting covenant, and it was necessary that the Covenant should be renewed before a pure Church

could be built up, to have the ordinances, gifts and blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ as established by himself, also that the Day of the Lord was nigh at hand, that those prophecies which speak of that great and dreadful day, which the wicked should be cut off and the Earth purified by fire, to prepare it for the coming of Christ to reign thereon with his Saints, was nigh at hand. . . . Elder Pratt laid before us the ordinances of the Gospel, which were very plain, being perfectly in accordance with the Scripture, being still more clearly expressed in the Book of Mormon.²⁵

Mary Fielding's Study of the Scriptures Prepared Her For Elder Pratt's Words

In addition to Joseph Fielding's reception of Elder Pratt's message, his sister Mary had been spiritually prepared. Mary Fielding had been a diligent student of the scriptures and prophecies. She was herself a fulfillment of the prophecy given in Acts 2, that "it shall come to pass in the last days. . . your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit. . . ."

While still in England, Mary had written in a letter to her younger sister Mercy:

The time is perhaps not far distant when the desire of our hearts will be granted and we shall together adore and praise our heavenly Bridegroom in his Kingdom of peace righteousness & joy on this Earth, not in its present but in its renewed state wherein nothing shall be found that can offend or intercept our purity of joy.

The more we read and study the sacred word the more are we convinced that the time is near at hand when the Son of Man in all his Glory, with that of the holy Angels, shall again make his appearance in the Clouds of Heaven where all shall be destroyed who have not obeyed the voice of that prophet.

Mary, ever the teacher, continued:

I must here refer you to the 20th verse . . . of the 3 Chap of the Acts. I should like to direct your attention to very many other passages which have a direct reference to that all important subject. But I have not room & must therefore earnestly beg of you seriously & attentively to read & study all the holy Prophets which speak not only of sufferings of Christ but also are full of the Glory that should follow when the Lord of hosts shall reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. . . My dear Mercy let the World be only a secondary thing with us.²⁶

Charleton Settlement Residents Accept Elder Pratt; Orson Hyde Arrives

The farmers who had built the Methodist chapel in their settlement opened the building for further meetings so their neighbors could hear Elder Pratt, who had been joined by Apostle Orson Hyde in response to Elder Pratt's appeal to the Twelve for assistance.²⁷

Before the end of April, Isaac Russell and his wife Mary were baptized in Black Creek, just a half mile away. After confirming Isaac, Elder Pratt ordained him an elder at the water's edge. Several

of Isaac's relatives were also baptized, including his sister Fanny Dawson and three of her daughters.²⁸

On Monday the 9th of May, 1836, John and Leonora Taylor were baptized, along with a number of others. John later wrote:

We realized those blessings according to his word. The gifts and power of God were in the church, the gift of tongues and prophecy; the sick were healed, and we rejoiced in the blessings and gifts of the Holy Ghost.²⁹

Shortly after his baptism, John Taylor was ordained an elder in the Church and began his labors in the ministry. He was now preaching the gospel in America in fulfillment of the revelation he received in his youth.³⁰ One month later John baptized both of his parents, John and Agnes Taylor, who, with several of his siblings, remained faithful in the LDS Church.³¹

Also baptized on this day, by Orson Hyde, were Mary Isabella Hales and her new husband Joseph Horne, both British immigrants. They would later endure all the trials of the saints, and Mary Isabella would serve twenty-six years as president of the Salt Lake Stake Relief Society.³² Dying in 1905, she was the mother of fifteen children. Her husband Joseph fathered ten more children with a second wife.

Robert Blashel Thompson and the Three Fielding Siblings were Baptized

Twelve days later, on Saturday, May 21st, Elder Pratt "baptized brother Joseph Fielding and his two amiable and intelligent sisters, for such they proved to be in an eminent degree. We also baptized many others in that neighborhood, and organized a branch of the Church, for the people there drank in truth as water, and loved it as they loved life."

Among those baptized were John Goodson and John Snider. Robert Blashel Thompson was also baptized in May by Elder Pratt.³³

Joseph Fielding later wrote:

Many strongly opposed the work, false reports were raised, etc. Sometimes our faith was shaken, but the Word preached came with great Power, in demonstration of the Spirit, so that we could not reject the testimony but to our own condemnation. I therefore with my two sisters then with me embraced it, and entered the Church of Latter day Saints by baptism. . . . I soon found that the Spirit of God was imparted unto me in a greater measure than I had before experienced, and instead of its leaving me. . . I found it increasing, giving me more Light and more Power.³⁴

Isaac Russell, filled with the spirit of a new convert, traveled a hundred miles northwest where he preached to his brothers John and William, and his sister Ann, who were all raising families in a new settlement called Durham. They rejected his message, but undaunted, Isaac returned to the Toronto area and taught about sixty people who were baptized, sometimes preaching with Elder Pratt.³⁵

John Taylor Ordains Robert Thompson and Joseph Fielding

John Taylor, serving in his office of elder, began ordaining others. In a conference held on the 22nd of July, John Taylor ordained Robert Blashel Thompson an elder.³⁶ Joseph Fielding was ordained a teacher and he wrote, “All the members in my neighborhood met at my house, as their sanctuary. . . .”³⁷

Elder Pratt wrote:

After ministering in and about Toronto for about two months I found it necessary to return home, as some of my debts were pressing, and we needed a supply of our printed works to circulate among the people. I accordingly gave our word, in a meeting in Toronto one Sunday evening, that I should take [a] boat for home next morning. Now all this time I had asked no man for money, nor had I explained my circumstances. However, on shaking hands at the close of the next meeting, several bank bills were secretly shaken into my hands, amounting in all to several hundred dollars – including subscriptions for books, periodicals, etc. I thanked the Lord God of Israel for the fulfilment of the first instalment of Brother Kimball’s prophecy, and went on my way rejoicing. On my arrival in Kirtland I was enabled to meet my most urgent debts, and to get time on the remainder.³⁸

Chapter 5 Endnotes, Pages 70 to 85:

1.D&C 18:26-28, “And now, behold, there are others who are called to declare my gospel, both unto the Gentile and unto Jew; Yea, even twelve; and the Twelve shall be my disciples, and they shall take upon them my name; and the Twelve are they who shall desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart. And if they desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart, they are called to go into all the world to preach my gospel unto every creature.”

2.Quotes by Parley P. Pratt come from his autobiography. I have a paperback copy, but this is easily available online.

3.This comment by Elder Kimball originally came from the *Times and Seasons*, but was recorded in *The History of the Church*, Volume II, page 2, in the footnote.

4.Journal History, 8 November 1857, image 124.

5.D&C 109:22-23.

6.”Faith and Devotion in Building the Kirtland Temple,” by Dr. Richard O. Cowan, a talk given at the Kirtland Temple on 25 June 2004 and easily found online.

7.Journal of Heber C. Kimball, Preface, page iv, “The temple of the Lord likewise attracted by observation; it being too glorious a structure to escape notice.”

8.Doctrine and Covenants Section 110:2-11.

9.Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, pages 108-133.

10. Autobiography of Orson Hyde, 1805-1842, Published in the Millennial Star 1864, also easily found online at www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/OHyde.html.

11. I have tried to piece together which member of the Freeman family accompanied Elder Pratt. I was already familiar with the Nickersons, as the first wife of my ancestor Thomas Grover was Caroline Nickerson, the daughter of Freeman Nickerson who was baptized in April of 1833. Two of Freeman's sons, Moses and Eleazar Freeman, and other siblings as well, including Caroline, joined the Church six months later. Because Eleazar had children born in Mount Pleasant, seventy miles west of Niagara, I have assumed this was the man who accompanied Elder Pratt. It might have been a random occurrence that Elder Pratt ran into Moses Nickerson on the street, but it is more likely that Parley left his name out of his account because Moses did not remain faithful to the Church. Moses wrote his own biography, and it can be found on his page in Family Tree, his ID being LZP4-VXQ. There I learned that Moses was a tin smith and involved with "merchandising and building" on a harbor in Lake Erie.

12. Moses wrote, "About this time [1834] I purchased property at the north of Patterson's Creek, called Port Dover, Mr. Powell, my brother-in-law became interested with me in the property. I laid out the town in 1835. We organized a company for building a harbor in Lake Erie, and commenced merchandising and building, I taking the lead by building the first house."

13. The Gospel Kingdom, page 368.

14. Cannon Family Historical Treasury, page 33.

15. The Life of John Taylor, pages 29-30. John's turning room or mechanical shop is clearly stated to be part of his house, but a separate room.

16. Parley P. Pratt described Mr. Patrick as a wealthy Toronto aristocrat and in whose home the study sessions were held. An autobiography by Samuel Thompson written in 1884, "Reminiscences of a Canadian Pioneer," page 116, (easily found online) states that William P. Patrick was a long-time clerk of the Legislative Assembly for Upper Canada. Land records show that Mr. Patrick was involved with seven land purchases between 1801 and 1824, indicating some wealth. Another source, with had inaccurate footnotes which made them difficult to verify, stated that William Poyntz Patrick was "a wealthy young man, a licensed preacher, and a member of the York Methodist Establishment."

17. The Life of John Taylor, pages 37-38.

18. This quote by John Taylor came from a pamphlet he published in Liverpool in 1850, titled, "Three Nights' Public Discussion Between the Reverends C. W. Cleeve, James Robertson and Philip Carter, and John Taylor of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, at Boulogne-Sur-Mer, France." This is easily found online. A similar quote is found in a transcription of a talk by Elder Kimball on 13 September 1857, Journal History, image 146. "In my researches I examined things very carefully and critically. I wrote down six of the first sermons I heard preached by Parley P. Pratt, in order that I might compare them with the bible, and I could not find any difference. I could easily controvert any other doctrine, but I could not overturn one principle of 'Mormonism.'"

19. I was pleased to find the burial record for John Fielding in a record of Colmworth baptisms, Family History Library film #1066906, page 26. It reads, "John Fielding, [of] Bedford. [Burial date:] March 9th [1836.] [Age] 76 years."

20. Samuel Russell stated that the home of his uncle John Dawson was the location where Elder Pratt first preached, and Elder Pratt stated that he preached that first night in the home of the farmer who invited him to Charleton.

21. Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, page 128.

22. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 2.

23. Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, page 128.
24. Samuel Russell's biography of his father.
25. Joseph Fielding Diary, pages 2-3.
26. 18 March 1833, Letter from Mary Fielding to Joseph and Mercy Fielding.
27. Autobiography of Orson Hyde, "In the spring of 1836, I took a mission to the state of New York, in company with several others of the Apostles. I labored in the vicinity of Rochester. Fell in with Joseph and Hyrum at Buffalo, on their way to Canada, and took dinner with them at a hotel. I next proceeded to Canada to join Elder Parley P. Pratt, who had previously gone there, and had called for help. Elder Pratt and myself labored in company for a season.
28. Samuel Russell's biography of his father.
29. Three Nights' Public Discussion.
30. The Life of John Taylor, page 39.
31. Biography of Agnes Taylor Taylor, found on her page in Family Tree.
32. Encyclopedia of Mormonism, page 657. In a biography of Mary Fielding Smith published in the Relief Society Magazine, March 1916, Sister Gates mentioned that Mary Isabella Horne and her husband were among those who joined the Church in the Charleton settlement. Mary Isabella and her husband Joseph were baptized by Orson Hyde.
33. Joseph Fielding Papers, Letter from Parley P. Pratt dated 24 October 1841 to Joseph Smith.
34. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 2.
35. Samuel Russell's biography of his father states, "Isaac Russell entered the field proclaiming the Gospel, first to his brothers John and William and sister Ann Gardiner, at Millbrook in Durham. They rejecting it, then he preached in Toronto, Scarboro, Esquisine, Churchville and other places, baptising some sixty members, among whom were Jacob Scott and family, Theodore Turley, William and Wilson Law, Edward Lawrence, father of Henry Lawrence, James Standing, and others." William Law would later become a threatening apostate. Theodore Turley's diary, easily found online, states he was baptized by Elder Pratt. I have concluded that Isaac Russell and Parley P. Pratt taught together in the Toronto area. Ann Russell Gardiner's husband was the nephew to William Russell's wife Mary Gardiner. John Gardiner and his wife Hannah Forster were both from Durham, England and likely were original settlers of the Millbrook-Durham area, although the new settlement wasn't officially organized until 1842.
36. Biography of Robert Blashal Thompson by Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, "Was ordained an Elder by Elder John Taylor, at a conference held in Upper Canada, July 22nd, 1836."
37. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 3.
38. Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, pages 128-129.