**The Story of the Church of Christ**

**XI. Organizing the Restored Church of Christ**

 During the years 1828 and 1829 sixteen revelations were given providing for the establishment of the Church of Christ, in the Lord’s word, “like unto the church which was taught by my disciples in the days of old”. In a revelation received in June 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were instructed to choose twelve apostles even as there had been twelve apostles in Christ’s lifetime.

 When Joseph Smith was translating the writing on the plates in 1829, assisted by Oliver Cowdery, they learned baptism was necessary for the remission of their sins. They went into the woods to pray and ask the Lord’s guidance regarding baptism. As they were praying, a messenger came from heaven and laid his hands on them, ordaining them to the priesthood of Aaron. Those ordained to this priesthood could perform water baptism for the remission of sins but could not give the gift of the Holy Ghost. He told them that power would be given to them later. So Joseph and Oliver were baptized by each other according to the directions of the heavenly messenger. They enjoyed a wonderful gift of God’s Spirit following their baptisms. They had the gift of prophesy and could see the future of Christ’s restored church.

 After these things happened, ministers from other churches tried to discredit this work of God which was being accepted by many others. Soon, as Joseph and Oliver were engaged in prayer, they were instructed to ordain each other elders. They were to wait to do this, however, until the believers were gathered together and gave their approval. With endorsement of those met together, Joseph and Oliver were to ordain each other as elders and bless and serve the sacrament. Then they were to call and ordain other menn as indicated by God. They were also able to lay hands on all who had previously been baptized, thus conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost. All of this happened about the same time Joseph and Oliver were told to choose twelve apostles.

 On April 6, 1830, in the home of Peter Whitmer, all of the instructions were carried out, and the Church of Christ was formally organized in compliance with God’s command and, also, the laws of New York state. At this time, Joseph ordained Oliver Cowdery an apostle and Oliver ordained Joseph as apostle. Those who had previously been baptized received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands and became confirmed members

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of the Church of Christ. Those present were Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Samuel Smith, and David Whitmer.

 The first sermon preached for the newly organized church was by Oliver Cowdery on April 11, 1830. Following this a number of men were ordained and people were rapidly joining the church. Local branches of the Church were organized, and those who had been ordained started on missionary trips. Among those who were ordained were several men who had previously been leaders and ministers in other churches. A young man named Parley Pratt read a copy of the Book of Mormon and was immediately convinced of its truthfulness. At an early conference of the Church, he was baptized by Oliver Cowdery, confirmed, and ordained an elder that same day. In October 1830 he was told to go on a long mission for the Church.

 When the early elders realized the Book of Mormon was the record of those who had lived in the Americas long ago, they were anxious to take that message to the American Indians, who were actually descended from Lehi’s son, Laman.

 In accordance with a revelation, Parley Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Ziba Paterson, and Peter Whitmer started in October on a mission to the Indians. They stopped at Kirtland in the state of Ohio where they converted several families living under the direction of a man named Sidney Ridgon, who would become prominent in the early days of the restored Church.

 During the winter of 1830/1831 the little group who had left Kirtland traveled to Missouri. Today Missouri is a state in the middle of the United States. In those days Missouri was wild frontier country on the border of Indian Territory. The missionaries traveled in bitter cold weather and waded through deep snow. The small amount of food they had was frozen, and they had no way to cook it. In spite of all their difficulties they continued on through Missouri which was to be the place of Zion.

 Meanwhile persecution by enemies of the restored Church in New York state caused many to go to Kirtland, Ohio where there were already several hundred members. Joseph Smith and his wife Emma were among those who went to Kirtland.

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Soon after the missionaries reached the area of Independence, Missouri, the entire Church was told to go to Missouri. In June, 1831 Joseph Smith and several others left Kirtland, Ohio to go to Independence, Missouri. Along the way they were treated unkindly by some people because of their belief in the Book of Mormon. As always, other people were persuaded to believe and the Church continued to grow. A bishop had been chosen to oversee financial affairs of the Church and provision was made for a printer to print the message of the Church of Christ.