
Conference in Missouri

D&C 52:2

On June 7, 1831, the Prophet Joseph Smith revealed that the next conference would convene in Missouri “upon the land, which I will consecrate unto my people.”¹ The revelation called for twenty-eight pairs of men to attend the conference and to preach and baptize as they traveled to their destination.

Twelve days later, on June 19, 1831, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Edward Partridge, and other elders left Kirtland to attend the Missouri conference. They traveled by wagon, canal boat, and stagecoach to Cincinnati, where they boarded a steamer bound for Louisville, Kentucky. From Louisville they traveled to St. Louis. A few Church leaders, including Joseph Smith, then crossed Missouri on foot. After walking some 240 miles, they arrived in Independence on July 14, 1831.

Their first Sabbath in Independence, William W. Phelps preached to an audience

composed of specimens of all the families of the earth; Shem, Ham and Japheth; several of the Lamanites or Indians—representative of Shem; quite a respectable number of Negroes—descendants of Ham; and the balance was made up of citizens of the surrounding country, who fully represented themselves as pioneers of the West.²

During the two weeks before the conference was to convene, the Prophet Joseph declared Missouri as “the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion.” Independence was pronounced the “center place” of Zion and land west of the courthouse as the site for the House of God (D&C 57:2–3). On Monday, August 2, 1831, twelve elders representing the

¹ Revelation, 6 June 1831 [D&C 52]. Joseph Smith Papers.

² Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:190–191; compare, Joseph Smith, Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, 128.

Twelve Tribes of Israel, laid the first log for a house of worship and schoolhouse in Kaw Township, twelve miles west of Independence. Sidney Rigdon placed those present under a solemn obligation:

Do you receive this land for the land of your inheritance with thankful hearts from the Lord? Answer from all we do. Do you pledge yourselves to keep the laws of God on this land, which you never have kept in your own lands? We do. Do you pledge yourselves to see that others of your brethren who shall come hither do keep the laws of God? We do. After prayer he arose and said, I now pronounce this land consecrated and dedicated to the Lord for a possession and inheritance for the Saints (in the name of Jesus Christ having authority from him). And for all the faithful servants of the Lord to the remotest ages of time. Amen.³

The next day, Sidney Rigdon dedicated the ground where a community of Saints would build their homes, and the Prophet Joseph Smith “laid a stone at the Northeast corner of the contemplated Temple in the name of the Lord Jesus of Nazareth.”⁴

On August 4, 1831, at the home of Joshua Lewis, the first conference of the Church in Zion was held with fourteen elders and thirty-one members present. (Note: although the brethren waited for all pairs of missionaries to arrive for the conference, few were in attendance.) The conference began by singing “Glorious Things, etc.” and a prayer by Bishop Edward Partridge. Sidney Rigdon then spoke of being “planted in their inheritance in the Land of Zion.” Joseph Smith spoke on “keeping the commands of the Lord with promise of blessings.” After partaking of the sacrament, the closing prayer was offered by Oliver Cowdery.⁵ The conference in Missouri was then adjourned.

³ John Whitmer, *History*, 1831–circa 1847, 32. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁴ Whitmer, *History*, 32.

⁵ “Minutes of a special Conference held in Kaw township Jackson County Missouri by special commandment of the Lord, August 4, 1831,” in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 9–10.