
April 26, 1839

D&C 118:4–5

On July 8, 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation “in response to the supplication: ‘Show us thy will, O Lord, concerning the Twelve’” (D&C 118: Introduction). The Lord revealed to Joseph that “next spring [1839] let them [the Twelve] depart to go over the great waters, and there promulgate my gospel” (v. 4). The Twelve were told to “take leave of my saints in the city of Far West, on the twenty-sixth day of April next, on the building-spot of my house” (v. 5).

On April 17, 1839, just one month after the first Church conference in Quincy, Illinois, Brigham Young called a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the revelation given to Joseph Smith about departing “over the great waters” and taking their “leave of my saints in the city of Far West” on April 26, 1839. The expected date of departure was only nine days later.

The question that needed an answer was “Should the Twelve fulfill the revelation?” Brigham Young asked each member of the Twelve to express an opinion about the revelation. He listened attentively to their reasoning before saying, “The Lord God had spoken and it was our business to obey, and the Lord would take care of us.”¹ All in attendance agreed. The meeting was then dismissed.

The next day, only five of the Twelve left Quincy and crossed the Mississippi River on their way to Far West. Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, and Wilford Woodruff rode in one carriage. John Taylor, George A. Smith, and Alpheus Cutler rode in the other. Nothing impeded their 200-mile journey, not even the disaffected who knew of the revelation of the Twelve taking their leave from Far West.

¹ Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young, American Moses* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 71.

In the pre-dawn hours of April 26, 1839, five members of the Twelve joined by two more—John E. Page and Heber C. Kimball—stood together on the Far West Temple site. There, they held a conference. Their pre-dawn conference was attended by apostles, high priests, elders, and priests, with Brigham Young presiding. The first order of business was to excommunicate dissidents. Alpheus Cutler, who had previously been appointed to construct the Far West Temple, was then invited to place the “foundation of the Lord’s House, agreeably to revelation, by rolling up a large stone near the southeast corner” with the help of others.

Next the Twelve offered prayers in the following order—Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, John E. Page, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and George A. Smith. They then sang “Adam-ondi-Ahman,” a hymn composed by William W. Phelps. After singing, the Twelve departed from Far West, having fulfilled a revelation from God.

They traveled by carriage across the state of Missouri to the Mississippi River and then on to Quincy. When they reached Quincy, they learned that the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum had been in Quincy over a week waiting for them. Of seeing Joseph and Hyrum again as free men having escaped from their oppressors, Brigham said,

It was one of the most joyful scenes of my life to once more strike hands with the Prophets, and behold them free from the hands of their enemies. Joseph conversed with us like a man who had just escaped from a thousand oppressions, and was now free in the midst of his children.²

² Elden J. Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846–1847* (Salt Lake City, UT: Elden Jay Watson, 1971), 40.