
School of the Prophets

D&C 88:127–141

The Lord commanded the early Saints to “teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom” (D&C 88:77). The reason for the command was so the Saints “may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God” (v. 78). The Lord admonished the Prophet Joseph Smith and his followers to learn “of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass” (v. 79).

Wanting to implement these directives, Joseph instructed his followers to establish private schools to educate the children of the Church. In response, Latter-day Saints in Ohio opened their homes, shops, and barns for academic instruction. Eliza R. Snow taught the basics—reading, writing, and arithmetic. Orson Hyde taught English grammar, oration, and writing. M. C. Davis opened a singing school.

As for Joseph Smith, he started the School of the Prophets for men in Kirtland in response to this revelation given on December 27, 1832. The School of the Prophets was held each winter from 1833 to 1836. During the winter months, participants were offered courses that were spiritual in nature as well as secular—history, languages, current events, reading and writing, mathematics, and doctrinal teachings.

The first sessions of the school were held in an upper room of the N. K. Whitney & Company store. Those in attendance reported having spiritual outpourings, such as manifestations of the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues. At the 1835 school sessions, Joseph Smith and his counselor Sidney Rigdon gave lectures on theology, later known as the Lectures on Faith. In the 1836 session, Joshua Seixas, a teacher at Oberlin College, taught a course in Hebrew.

Through the years, the Church has used the basic model of the School of the Prophets to begin other schools, such as the University of the City of Nauvoo, University of Deseret,

and Brigham Young University. The Church has also established seminaries, institutes of religion, and missionary training centers.

With such emphasis on education, it was not surprising that President Henry B. Eyring shared this story at the April 2011 general conference:

One young man left his little Welsh village in the early 1840s, heard the Apostles of God, and came into the kingdom of God on earth. He sailed with the Saints to America and drove a wagon west across the plains. He was in the next company after Brigham Young coming into this valley. His priesthood service included clearing and breaking ground for a farm.

He sold the farm for pennies on the dollar to go on a mission for the Lord in the deserts of what is now Nevada to take care of sheep. He was called from that to another mission across the ocean in the very village he had left in his poverty to follow the Lord.

Through it all, he found a way to learn with his priesthood brethren. Bold missionary that he was, he walked down the lane in Wales to the summer estate of a man who was four times the prime minister of England to offer him the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The great man let him into his mansion. He was a graduate of Eton College and of Oxford University. The missionary talked with him about the origins of man, the central role of Jesus Christ in the history of the world, and even the fate of nations.

At the end of their discussion, the host declined the offer to accept baptism. But as they parted, that leader of one of the great empires of the world asked the humble missionary, "Where did you get your education?" His answer: "In the priesthood of God."¹

¹ Henry B. Eyring, "Learning in the Priesthood," *Ensign*, May 2011.