

Prophets in Mormonism – Part 7

by Marvin W. Cowan

Mormons take great pride in being a “temple building people.” They now have more than 120 temples where they baptize for the dead and perform eternal marriages as well as seal children to their parents. The two latter temple rites are performed for the dead as well as for the living. LDS Temple building began with Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith, who claimed the Lord told him to build temples in four specific locations. Those four temples, which are the only ones mentioned in LDS scripture, were to be built in Kirtland, Ohio, Independence, Missouri, Far West, Missouri and Nauvoo, Illinois. Were they built? If so, are they among the Temples which LDS use today?

Smith founded the Mormon Church in New York State on April 6, 1830 and then moved it to Kirtland, Ohio, eight months later. While he was in *Independence, Missouri*, six months later on July 20, 1831, Smith said the Lord commanded him to build a temple there. *Doctrine & Covenants* [D. & C.] 57:3-5 says, “Behold, the place which is now called *Independence* is the center place; and a spot for the *temple* is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse. Wherefore, it is wisdom that *the land should be purchased* by the saints...for an **everlasting inheritance**.”

Smith claimed *Doctrine & Covenants* 69 was a revelation given to him in November of 1831. Verse 8 says ***the rising generation “shall grow up in the land of Zion, to possess it from generation to generation forever and ever.*** Amen.”

Smith also said *Doctrine & Covenants* 84 was revealed to him on September 22 and 23, 1832. Verses 3-5 declare that the temple in Independence, Missouri, shall be built in “*this generation*. For verily *this generation* shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord.”

However, conflicts between Missouri residents and the Mormons forced the LDS to agree to leave Independence on July 23, 1833. Smith, who was in Kirtland, Ohio at that time, didn’t know that the Mormons in Independence had agreed to leave the area, so on August 2, 1833, he said the Lord declared, “Surely *Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place*, for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there” (*D. & C.* 97:19).

Even after the LDS left Independence, Missouri, Smith claimed the Lord revealed,

*Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered. They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, **they and their children**, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion...**there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed for the work of the gathering my saints.** (D. & C. 101:17-20)*

The generation living in 1832 all passed away long ago without building an LDS Temple in Independence, Missouri, and none of the above “revelations” happened either.

Doctrine & Covenants 109 shows that the first LDS Temple actually built was located in Kirtland, Ohio, and dedicated by Joseph Smith on March 27, 1836. Doctrine & Covenants 110:10 says, “The fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands.”

But in November *that year* Smith and other LDS leaders established the Kirtland Safety Society Bank which went bankrupt in 1837, causing many Mormons to apostatize. So many Mormons were angry with their leaders because of the Bank’s failure that Smith and other LDS leaders fled to Missouri by January 1838 and never returned to Kirtland. After Smith’s death the Kirtland Temple became the property of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now called the Community of Christ Church. Mormons consider that Church to be “apostate,” so the prophecy about the fame of that Temple can’t be fulfilled now.

Soon after Smith arrived in Missouri in 1838 he claimed the Lord said,

*Let the city, Far West, be a holy and consecrated land unto me...Therefore, **I command you to build a house unto me for the gathering together of my saints**, that they may worship me...And **let the beginning be made on the fourth of July next**, and from *that time forth* let my people labor diligently to build a house unto my name; and one year from this day let them re-commence laying the foundation of my house. Thus let them **from that time forth labor diligently until it shall be finished**, from the corner stone thereof unto the top thereof, **until there shall not anything remain that is not finished.** (D. & C. 115:7-12)*

But, the Mormons were forced to leave Missouri in April of 1839, so *none of this was done*. There is no city of Far West today and no LDS temple was ever built there.

After leaving Missouri, the Mormons settled in Commerce, Illinois, in May 1839 and renamed it Nauvoo. On January 19, 1841, Smith again claimed that the Lord said,

*I command you, all ye my saints, to build a house unto me; and I grant unto you sufficient time to build a house unto me; and during this time your baptisms shall be acceptable unto me. But, behold, at the end of this appointment your baptisms for your dead shall not be acceptable unto me; **and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church**, with your dead, saith the Lord your God. (D. & C. 124:31-32)*

A temple was under construction at the time of Smith's death on June 27, 1844, but according to Brigham Young it was never finished and it burned to the ground in 1848.

In the *Journal of Discourses* volume 18, pages 303-304, Young said,

Joseph (Smith) located the site for the Temple Block in Jackson County Missouri...also laid the corner stone for a temple in Far West, Caldwell County, MO. **These temples were never built.** *We built one in Nauvoo...and they got it nearly completed before it was burned, but the Saints did not enjoy it.*

Thus out of four temples that Smith said the **Lord commanded** him to build, two were never built, one was partly completed but burned before the LDS could enjoy it and the only one completed in Kirtland, Ohio is owned by an apostate church! So, did the *Lord* really command Joseph Smith to build those temples?

More can be read about Mormon temples in *Temple Manifestations* by Joseph Heinnermann, published by Magazine Printing and Publishing of Salt Lake City, UT, in 1974. We will continue our discussion of Prophets in Mormonism next time.