

## **Apostolic Coup d'etat by: Radio Free Mormon** **or How the Twelve Apostles, in a Breathtaking Power Grab, Assumed Absolute and Complete Control of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

Today's situation in the LDS church is known to all Mormons. The power structure is: at the top we have a First Presidency; the president of the church and his two counselors. Beneath them is the Quorum of the Twelve apostles. Beneath them is the Quorum of the Seventy and other Quorums of the Seventy, and then there's some mid-level management with area authorities and area seventies. And then we get down to the local level, with stake presidents and bishops.

But something is odd in this situation. And the thing that's odd is that even though we have a Quorum of Twelve Apostles, yet we don't just have twelve apostles; we have *fifteen* apostles. Because the members of the First Presidency are also apostles.

Although most members of the church are aware of this fact, it's not very often commented on. But the fact we have 15 apostles at the head of the church is a strange element in church administration that points to the power grab the apostles have conducted for authority over the entire church that began in 1844. Over the next 150 years the apostles took over or got rid of any competing power structures, to emerge today as the sole authorities in the LDS Church. Any other authorities are under their administration and must do as they direct.

This podcast will give a brief overview of the different power grabs the apostles did in order to arrive at their position today of absolute supremacy. We will look at the way the Quorum of Twelve took over the First Presidency; the way the Quorum of Twelve took over the First Quorum of Seventy.

Yes, the Quorum of the Twelve wasn't always *over* the Quorum of the Seventy. We'll look at the way the Quorum of the Twelve did away with the church Patriarch, which in Joseph Smith's day was the highest office in the church, even higher than that of church president. And we'll also look at the way the twelve apostles took over all the stakes of the church. Because believe it or not, in the original church that Joseph Smith organized pursuant to the revelations Joseph Smith received, the Quorum of Twelve Apostles had no authority over stake presidents. In fact, they had no authority in any of the stakes of Zion. They were purely a missionary force that had power only where stakes were not organized. In other words, they have power in the mission field only.

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles was not organized until 1835, five years after the church itself was organized in 1830. The First Presidency itself had been organized several years before that. So obviously the First Presidency was not composed of apostles. The apostles themselves were not chosen by the First Presidency. If you remember your history the apostles were chosen by the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. So going with the basic premise that a lesser power cannot select and ordain a greater power, it would appear that in 1835 the three witnesses who chose and ordained the first twelve apostles were considered to be greater in authority than the apostles.

One year later, in January of 1836, in the almost completed Kirtland temple prior to the temple dedication, which would happen several months later, all the different church offices and quorums were anointed on January 21st of that year 1836, in the Kirtland temple. Guess where the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

was in this list of eight?

If you guessed number one, you're wrong. If you guess two you're wrong. If you guess three, four, or five, you're wrong, wrong, and wrong. The Quorum of twelve apostles was sixth in the list of quorums and officers anointed January 1836 in the Kirtland Temple. We will return to that list of eight later in this podcast.

### **Succession (Manufactured) Crisis**

When Joseph Smith died unexpectedly in June of 1844, there was immediately a succession crisis. Who would now lead the church? The problem when Joseph Smith died was not that he had left no successor to the church. The problem was that he had left an *over-abundance of successors* to leadership in the church.

In other words, there were multiple people, in multiple quorums, who could, based upon the revelations and statements of Joseph Smith, claim leadership of the church. And this is what led to the succession crisis.

The first person we're going to talk about who had a good claim to taking over leadership of the church was Sidney Rigdon. Sidney Rigdon was the only remaining counselor in the First Presidency. Joseph Smith, being the president, had just died, and the other counselor, William Law, had been excommunicated by Joseph Smith only a couple of months before Joseph Smith died. So only Sidney Rigdon remained.

But, some might ask, isn't it a fact that when the president dies, the two counselors thereafter lose any ability to have any power or control in the church?

No, that's not a fact, at least it wasn't the fact back in Joseph Smith's day. In 1834, Joseph Smith himself established that his first counselor would preside in his absence. That can be found in [History of the Church, Volume 2, page 51](#), that the first counselor would preside in his absence. Sidney Rigdon was the first counselor, and you can't get much more absent than Joseph Smith was after he was assassinated. Therefore there was a basis for Sidney Rigdon to preside in the absence of Joseph Smith. His claim to being the leader of the church was much stronger than you might know if you only attended Sunday School.

Nowhere did Joseph Smith ever foreclose the idea that a counselor in the First Presidency could succeed him upon his death. In contradiction to this idea some might point to another entry in the *History of the Church*.

Now the *History of the Church* is a six volume work, published after Joseph Smith's death and after *History of the Church* had to get the approval of the Quorum of the Twelve apostles. And it appears that not only did it get their approval, in many instances it was changed. Words were added, words were omitted, in order to make it justify the leadership claims of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. So going back to the *History of the Church*, there is such a denial in the officially published History of the Church. These are in the published minutes of an 1836 meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.

the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had assumed leadership of the church. Anything that was published in

In the *History of the Church*, it reads "also the Twelve are not subject to any other than the First Presidency, ie. Myself" said the prophet -that would be Joseph Smith- i.e. "myself," said Joseph Smith, "Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, who are now my counselors; and where I am not, there is no First Presidency over the Twelve." ([History of the Church Vol 2, pg 374](#))

If Joseph Smith had actually said this, the statement would have removed the possibility that a senior counselor, ie. Sidney Rigdon, could have succeeded him at his death.

But wait a second. There is Tom Foolery going on. The last part of this quote is *not in* the original minutes of Joseph Smith's statement! In other words, the actual minutes from the 1836 meeting state (these are the words of Joseph Smith): "also the Twelve are not subject to any other than the First Presidency viz. myself S. Rigdon and F. G. Williams." Period. (See minutes, 16 January 1836, [The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals Volume 1](#), pg 158; Also available on the Joseph Smith Papers site is a [photographic facsimile of the original journal, pg 123.](#))

The words after that, that are now in the official history of the church, "who are now my counselors; and where I am not, there is no First Presidency over the Twelve" were added *later* to the official version. They are not in the original minutes. They were added later, and presumably they were added in order to take away any claim that Sidney Rigdon might've still had in the hearts of Latter Day Saints, after he lost the election for who it should be who would lead the church in 1844 after Joseph Smith died.

Aside from his altered document, there is no record that Joseph Smith ever nullified the right of presidential succession by the senior counselor in the First Presidency. This can be found in D. Michael Quinn's, [Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power](#), page 161. (See also Quinn, [The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844, BYU Studies Vol 16:2, pg 188](#))

Additionally, the [History of the Church, Volume 6, pages 592 to 93](#) quotes Joseph Smith on the eve of his assassination in Carthage Jail as expressing gratitude that Sidney Rigdon would not lead the church. Here's a quote from the history: "During the day Hyrum encouraged Joseph to think that the Lord for his church's sake would release him from prison. Joseph replied could my brother Hyrum but be liberated it would not matter so much about me. Poor Rigdon, I am glad he is gone to Pittsburgh out of the way. Were he to preside he would lead the church to destruction in less than five years."

This is another statement put into the mouth of Joseph Smith right before he dies which is designed to delegitimize Sidney Rigdon's claim to leadership in the church. There are no original minutes of this

meeting; this is simply a conversation that is alleged to have occurred in Carthage Jail. There are no minutes of a meeting to compare with what is in the *History of the Church*, as there are for the prior altered document. But D. Michael Quinn states this is certainly a retrospective addition.

So what we have are documents being altered in order to delegitimize Sidney Rigdon, who is the person who may have had the strongest claim to preside over the church. We will see this pattern again and again and again with the *History of the Church*, which is printed and published under the authority of the twelve apostles. Adding statements, taking statements away, altering statements, in order to delegitimize others with leadership claims and buttress their own leadership claims. This reminds me of the quote from Ben Franklin "History is written by the winners as an excuse for hanging the losers."

### **The Reorganized Church (Of Brigham Young)**

Because we are talking about the First Presidency right now, we're going to continue this thread of thought up to the present day and go to the reestablishing and the reorganizing of the First Presidency which occurred in December of 1847. Bear in mind that Brigham Young was not elected to be president of the church; rather he put forth the idea that in the absence of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles should now lead the church as a quorum.

But three and half years later, Brigham Young got it into his head that he wanted to reorganize the First Presidency, with himself as the new president of the church. As you will recall, in 1847 Brigham Young led the vanguard expedition of the saints to the Salt Lake Valley, and then at the end of the summer, he came back to join the saints once again in Winter Quarters. Once he was there in October he began to bring up this idea to the other apostles.

Wilford Woodruff, himself an apostle, recorded his uneasiness about Brigham Young's suggestion. He wrote "I thought it would require a revelation to change the order of that Quorum." ([Wilford Woodruff's Journal, entry for October Twelve, 1847.](#))

Now today we're so used to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles choosing the First Presidency after the president dies, this may seem an unusual idea to us. This was a completely new idea that Brigham Young was proposing. There is nothing in the revelations that gives the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles authority to create a First Presidency. This is why Wilford Woodruff thought it would require a revelation to change the order of the Quorum of the Twelve. Brigham Young wanted the Twelve to appoint an apostle, i.e. himself, to be an independent president of the church with two counselors. But there was no authorization in Joseph Smith's teachings or revelations for this administrative act.

In Wilford Woodruff's view, the Twelve had no authority to organize a separate First Presidency without a new revelation, presumably written and canonized. Other apostles shared Wilford Woodruff's misgivings. So, in other words, Brigham Young is getting a lot of push-back from the apostles. Wilford Woodruff recorded on 15 November 1847 "I return to Winters Quarters with Brother Potter and met in council with the Twelve. Orson Pratt introduced the subject of the standing and rights of the president and also the Quorum. Orson Pratt was followed by George Albert Smith, Wilford Woodruff and Amasa Lyman." ([ibid.](#))

It is apparent that here or elsewhere Orson Pratt was challenging Brigham Young's and the Twelve's ability to reconstitute the First Presidency because Young later said that Orson Pratt led the opposition to

his reconstituting the First Presidency. A man named T.B.H. Stenhouse, who was a former confidante and associate of Brigham Young, and others of the hierarchy accurately identified Wilford Woodruff and Orson Pratt as opposing the organization of the First Presidency. ([Stenhouse, \*The Rocky Mountain Saints\*, pg 263](#))

Also in opposition were apostles John Taylor and Parley P. Pratt, who were not present for the consultations. Minutes of Quorum meetings show that George A. Smith was the 5th dissenting apostle.

So here comes Brigham Young back to Winter Quarters with this great idea about reconstituting the First Presidency, and he's getting major league push-back from five members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. You will note that Brigham Young first brought up this idea in October 1847, and had to keep bringing it up and bringing it up in repeated meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve until December, when finally he was apparently able to wear resistance down to the point that he got the apostles to agree with this plan in spite of the fact that there apparently was no revelation ever given, as Wilford Woodruff thought there should be.

On November 30th, 1847, at another of these meetings, Orson Pratt focused on how much autonomy Brigham Young would have in a First Presidency. Now, this is interesting when you consider Orson Pratt's position. Orson Pratt is a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. They have the leadership over the church and what Orson Pratt is saying is how is it that we can have a Quorum of Twelve, and in order for us to make a decision we have to have a majority? Which means seven members have to vote one way in order for us to have a majority and make a decision.

But out of this Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we're going to pick three apostles who are going to now become a "Super Quorum." And these three apostles can have authority over us and can overturn any decision that we make. That didn't make sense to Orson Pratt and when you think about it, he had a good point. Could the presidency of three apostles set aside the will of the rest of the apostles?

This is not the first time Orson Pratt butted heads with Brigham Young. Ultimately, in this case, he would lose in the sense that Brigham Young would have his way and reorganize the First Presidency on December 5 1847. However, as the years went by, [Orson Pratt would repeatedly butt heads with Brigham Young](#) over issues of doctrine; over issues of Adam-God; over issues of whether God is a progressing being; and ultimately it was Orson Pratt's position that became adopted by the church.

But Orson Pratt had to pay a price for this and the basic price he had to pay was that he never became president of the church. Orson Pratt was in line to become president of the church; he was the next apostle in line after Brigham Young when Brigham Young died in 1877.

You will recall that when the apostles were originally organized in 1835 they were organized according to their age. Brigham Young was a few months older than Orson Pratt and therefore he became the president. But in 1875, two years before Brigham Young died, Brigham Young reorganized the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in order to avoid having Orson Pratt become the next president. And instead of making seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles by age, he changed it and added the condition that it was determined on the basis of the length of time of continuous service in the Quorum of the Twelve.

This made it so Orson Pratt was no longer next in line. Because in 1842 Orson Pratt has left the church for a short period of time mainly because when he got back from England his wife Sarah told him that while he'd been gone Joseph Smith was hitting on her. He didn't take this too well. He ended up leaving the church briefly, was reconciled to Joseph Smith before Joseph Smith's death. But this period of time removed his continuous period of service, pushed him back, and John Taylor then became the next in line to become president of the church. And indeed John Taylor became president of the church when Brigham Young died. Orson Pratt would continue to live for several years beyond that, but only as an apostle and never became president of the church. That was the price Orson Pratt had to pay for butting heads with Brigham Young.

### **Wonder Of Wonders, Miracle Of Miracles!**

At this December 5, 1847 meeting in Winter Quarters, there is no contemporaneous record of any miracle happening. However, years later, Orson Hyde and Brigham Young began talking about a "miracle" that had happened, that there was a divine manifestation. In April conference 1860 (so this is 13 years later), Brigham Young claimed at Orson Hyde's "the power came upon us, a shock that alarmed the neighborhood." This is where the story comes from that there was an earthquake that signaled the divine approval of the decision that the apostles made in order to reconstitute the First Presidency.

Six months later Orson Hyde expanded on what Brigham Young had said. This is October 1860 General Conference; he affirmed that the apostles organized the First Presidency because the voice of God declared "let my servant Brigham step forth and receive the full power of the presiding priesthood in my church and kingdom."

So in 1860, now Orson Hyde says the voice of God was heard by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the voice of God said "let my servant Brigham step forth and receive the full power of the presiding priesthood in my church and kingdom," and associated with this was an earthquake. By contrast, Wilford Woodruff later said he did not remember any particular manifestations at the time of the organization of the presidency. His diary mentions nothing unusual about the December 5 1847 meeting, and the minutes of the meeting mentioned nothing extraordinary. This appears to be a miracle that was seen to be needed to confirm that God approved of this step that was taken to reorganize the First Presidency. And this miracle was created later and was then inserted back into the narrative.

This is how the story gets told today. This is from an [August Ensign](#) magazine from 2002. The article is titled "Pushing on to Zion." This part of the article is titled Reestablishing a First Presidency, December 1847. Here is how the Church portrays what happened, today:

Earlier, on 5th December, nine of the Twelve had met at Elder Hyde's home. [Now remember, this is in Winter Quarters.] Elder Hyde later reported, [the article does not say how much later but we know it was from October 1860 and was in fact thirteen years later] Elder Hyde reported the voice of God came from on high and spake to the council saying "let my servant Brigham step forth and receive the full power of the presiding priesthood in my church and kingdom." He affirmed it was the voice of the Almighty unto us. I am one who was present and did hear and feel the voice from heaven and we were filled with the power of God.

It was moved and approved that president Brigham Young be sustained as president of the church. They approved his choice of counselors, Elders Heber C Kimball and Willard Richards. Outside, people came to the Hyde's door and knocked, worried because they felt houses shake and the ground tremble and thought there had been an earthquake. It was the Lord speaking to his leaders, Elder Hyde assured them.

Let me read that part again. "Outside, people came to the Hyde's door and knocked, worried because they feel houses shake and the ground tremble and thought there had been an earthquake."

Why did they go to Orson Hyde's door? That seems like a very, very specific epicenter for an earthquake. But apparently, according to the story, everybody feels the earthquake and everybody knows it's coming from Elder Hyde's house. But Elder Hyde assured them that was the Lord speaking to his leaders and apparently that satisfied their question. I'm not going to read this whole article but I have to go on to the next line because it is very interesting in what it admits.

At the December 1847 conference (now this is a conference of the church, this is after the apostles have been persuaded by Brigham Young to support him in his idea about reconstituting the First Presidency. Now it is put before the general conference in Winter Quarters). Going on with the article:

At the December 1847 conference, without saying anything about the revelation, the Twelve put before the people the proposal that the First Presidency be reestablished, consisting of Elders Young, Kimball and Richards.

That is fascinating to me that even in this article in the Ensign from August 2002 it admits that at the general conference, the Twelve put before the people the proposal that the First Presidency be reorganized, but they don't say anything about the revelation. What revelation? The revelation that 13 years later Elder Hyde said they received when the voice of God was heard.

Think about this. You are the Quorum of the Twelve apostles, you received a revelation from God. You heard his voice commanding that Brigham Young become the president of the church and the First Presidency be reorganized. And yet later the same month when you present this proposal to the general conference of the church, you don't say anything about the revelation. This also suggests that the revelation that Elder Hyde says was received was not received at the time, otherwise he would've mentioned it to the church. Instead, it's a later creation that Elder Hyde comes up with thirteen years later, and first mentions it in October 1860, and then said oh, this happened.

Because they needed a miracle.

This is a very, very, significant change in church administration, and as such it requires a miracle. And it appears that in retrospect they also thought that maybe a revelation would be a good idea and so they produced a revelation retroactively saying that the voice of God came from on high and said let Brigham Young be the president of the church. Again at the time, and according to Wilford Woodruff, no revelation was received as was thought proper by him. Only a general feeling that this was the right thing to do.

Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley in 2005 gave a talk titled "[The Quorum of the First Presidency](#)" in which he talked about the government of the church and the leadership structure. This is in the December 2005

issue of the Ensign.

He starts off by saying the place of the President of the church and that of the Quorum of the First Presidency, in having responsibility for the entire church in all the world, "is clearly set forth in these revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants."

Now the problem is that they are not clearly set forth in the revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. In fact, the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants actually say something quite different.

But going on with President Hinckley:

"At the same time, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is spoken of as being equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned. (D&C 107: 24.) The Seventy likewise form a quorum equal in authority to that of the twelve special witnesses or apostles just named."

Now, Gordon B. Hinckley is right when he says that section 107 states the different Quorums are equal in power and authority. But he is about to controvert that statement from the scriptures, by a quote from Joseph F. Smith which says yes, D&C 107 says they are equal in power and authority but they really aren't.

In other words, the Quorum of the Twelve is only equal with the First Presidency when the First Presidency ceases to exist. Which is not really equality at all. If we read the actual revelation itself we can see that Joseph Smith had something very different in mind than a simple top-down hierarchy as we have today. What Joseph Smith is doing here in section 107 is creating different quorums in the church, all of whom are equal in authority and power to each other.

In fact, if we go further into section 107, we'll find that the idea was that if one of the quorums started making decisions or coming up with ideas that were completely out of harmony with the will of the Lord, then all the other quorums would sit in judgment upon them. They would be brought before a Common Council of the church and therefore any erring quorum could be brought back in line by the other councils. This was seen by Joseph Smith as a way to have a balance of power. What Joseph Smith sets forth in section 107 is not a hierarchy; it is more a balance of power.

The other critical thing that's missing from doctrine and covenants 107 is the idea that any quorum can reconstitute another quorum. Specifically, nothing in section 107 says the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has the power to reconstitute the First Presidency as they ended up doing in 1847 -which is one of the reasons that there's so much push-back from the other apostles. Gordon B. Hinckley goes on to ask this question:

"The question arises: how can they be equal in authority? Speaking to this question, Pres. Joseph F. Smith taught 'I want here to correct an impression that has grown up to some extent among the people and that is that the Twelve Apostles possess equal authority with the First Presidency in the church.'"

Now that is what the revelation says. And notice that Pres. Joseph F. Smith is the president of the church; he is also the senior apostle in the church by this time and what president Joseph F. Smith is going to do now is he's going to actually contradict Doctrine and Covenants 107.

Once again he says "I want here to correct an impression that is growing up to some extent among the people." So people are asking this question. There are still people around at the turn of the 20th century who were alive when Joseph Smith walked the earth, who know the revelations, and still for some reason believe that the Twelve Apostles possess equal authority with the First Presidency in the church.

In other words, they believe the revelation.

Here's what President Joseph F. Smith says. Remember again he is being quoted by Gordon B. Hinckley:

"This is correct when there is no other presidency but the Twelve apostles. But so long as there are three presiding elders who possess the presiding authority in the church, the authority of the Twelve apostles is not equal to theirs. If it were so there would be two equal authorities and two equal quorums in the priesthood running parallel and that could not be because there must be a head."

So once again the ruling apostle in the church, President Joseph F. Smith in 1906 says that there is an issue that has grown up to some extent among the people that the Twelve Apostles possess equal authority with the First Presidency in the church; and now Joseph F. Smith says that's correct when there is no other presidency but the Twelve Apostles. But so long as you've got the three presiding elders who possess the presiding authority in the church, the authority of the Twelve Apostles is not equal to theirs.

Joseph F. Smith just contradicted Doctrine and Covenants 107.

Because *in his mind there must be a hierarchy*. We must by this time, 1906, have the First Presidency, who is over the Quorum of the Twelve, who is over the entire church. There *has* to be a hierarchy. This is not what Joseph Smith contemplates in Section 107, as I mentioned before.

And also notice that Joseph F. Smith does not quote to any revelation. He certainly doesn't quote to Doctrine and Covenants Section 107 in support of his position. All he does is make the conclusory statement that "there must be a head" and if we had two equal authorities and two equal quorums in the priesthood ruling parallel there would not be a head, so that can't be what it means.

So from this quote from Joseph F. Smith we find out that it took until 1906 for an answer to come to this question and this answer actually denies the language of the revelation itself.

Now we're going to look more in-depth at the revelation here. This is [section 107](#) and was given in 1835 after the selection of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles by the three witnesses. Once again nowhere does it say that one quorum is above the other; rather that all are equal.

Joseph Smith appears to contemplate a balance of power. Verse 22 talks about the calling of the First Presidency. Verse 23 talks about the Twelve Apostles, also known as the traveling high council, that they

form a quorum equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned.

See, it says “equal in authority and power.” It does not say anything about they are only equal when there are not three presiding high priests in the First Presidency. Verse 25, the Seventy, are also called to preach the gospel and they form a quorum equal in authority to that of the twelve special witnesses or apostles just named.

Nothing about “they are only equal if there is no Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.”

Then in verse 27 we start seeing how it is that Joseph Smith conceives of a balance of power between these different equal quorums:

"And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other."

So here's this method of checks and balances coming in. Skipping down to verse 32:

“and in case that any decisions of these quorums is made in unrighteousness, it may be brought before a general assembly of the several quorums which constitute the spiritual authorities of the church; otherwise there can be no appeal from their decision.”

And then in verse 81:

“There is not any person belonging to the church who is exempt from this council of the church.”

In other words, this common council. “And inasmuch as a president of the high priesthood ( i.e. Joseph Smith, the president of the church himself), “and inasmuch as the president of the high priesthood shall transgress, he shall be had in remembrance before the common council of the church, who shall be assisted by twelve counselors of the high priesthood.”

This is Joseph Smith's way of making sure that there is nobody in the church who is over everybody else, but that if any person, including the president of the church or any quorum goes out of the way and makes decisions in unrighteousness or unholiness, that decision and that Quorum on that issue can be brought before all the other quorums assembled in what is called the common council of the church, and be corrected.

So as you can see, this is a very different system of church government set forth in 1835, section 107, than we have today in the church, which is strictly hierarchical.

Now it is very common today for people who are discussing the authority of the apostles, and that they are just under the First Presidency, and then under them is the Quorum of the Seventy, to point to section 107 and say this shows the authority and the hierarchy of the church because it talks first about the First Presidency, then it talks about the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and then it talks about the first Quorum of the Seventy. And even though it says they are equal to each other, the argument is usually made nowadays that this means they are in order of seniority; in order of power. And as Joseph F. Smith

said, they are not equal in authority unless the Quorum above them has been disassembled in some way. In other words, the Quorum of Twelve Apostles does not have authority equal to the First Presidency unless the First Presidency has been dismantled, which we understand today means by the death of the president.

The pattern that is followed today is that upon the death of the president, the other two counselors who are selected from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles now assume their position in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in order of seniority. With the death of the president, there are now fourteen apostles left, and the apostle that is the senior apostle becomes the next president of the church. In fact, at any given time the president of the church is the most senior apostle.

So, every time a church president dies, the apostles go into a quorum of fourteen now instead of twelve, and the apostles reconstitute the First Presidency. They recreate what it is Brigham Young did in 1847 that caused so much controversy and was contrary to the revelation that had been received through Joseph Smith. As I say, its very common for people today to look to section 107 as an argument for the fact that the Quorum of the Twelve should succeed as leaders of the church once the First Presidency was dissolved upon the death of Joseph Smith.

The amazing thing is that in 1844, when the Quorum of the Twelve apostles was vying for leadership of the church, none of them cited to Doctrine and Covenants section 107 as authority for their position. It is rather singular. The History of the Church notes that in 1844, no defender of the Quorum of the Twelve succession gave an adequate unfolding of the relationship of the respective presiding councils of the church based on the published revelation of 1835; in other words, Doctrine and Covenants Section 107.

There was good reason for why they did not do this, because, as D. Micheal Quinn says, "Everyone in 1844, especially Brigham Young, knew the 1835 revelation did not mean what modern Mormons think it means concerning the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles."

Now, we've gone through some of those reasons already, and we'll go through a few more as we proceed. Going back to President Hinckley's talk in 2005 published in the Ensign, he notes that in the early days of the church sometimes lengthy periods of time went between the death of the president of the church and the reorganizing of the First Presidency. Here's what he says:

"There have been lengthy periods when there was no Quorum of the First Presidency. Following the death of the Prophet Joseph the presiding authority rested in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles with Brigham Young as president. This continued for three and a half years."

We've already talked about this, those three and a half years between the death of Joseph, and Brigham Young reorganizing the First Presidency. Going on with the article:

"Following the death of Brigham Young, the authority again reverted to the Quorum of the Twelve and continued so for three years and two months."

In other words, between Brigham Young dying and John Taylor becoming president of the church, reconstituting the First Presidency was three years and two months. That's significant. The reason it's significant is because it was John Taylor who became president. And as you will recall, John Taylor was

among the original five apostles who, in December of 1847, were not in favor of Brigham Young reconstituting the First Presidency.

So it may be significant that once Brigham Young died, John Taylor, now being next in line for the presidency, doesn't see this as a pressing issue. May even not like the idea so much. But regardless, he waits for three years and two months before the First Presidency is reorganized with himself as president of the church. During the three year and two month period the church was led by the Quorum of the Twelve apostles. Going on, following the death of John Taylor, one year and nine months passed before the First Presidency was reorganized. (See [Edward Leo Lyman, Succession by Seniority: The Development of Procedural Precedents in the LDS Church, \*Journal of Mormon History\* vol 40 No. 2, 2014.](#))

Well, who became president after John Taylor? That was Wilford Woodruff. And Wilford Woodruff, you may recall, was also among those apostles who in December of 1847 at Winter Quarters were opposed -or at least not really enthusiastic about the idea- of Brigham Young reconstituting the First Presidency. In fact, he was the one who said that he thought that they should at least have a revelation in order to change the church government and the powers of the Quorum of the Twelve.

President Hinckley concludes here:

“Since that time the reorganization of the presidency has occurred within a few days following the death of the president. In every case the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve apostles has become president of the church. Seniority is determined by the date of ordination to the apostleship.”

So that's the end of the quote from that talk. What is interesting to me is that every step of this seizure of power by the apostles of the First Presidency in the church has been marked by a “miracle.” And that miracle is supposed to signify God's approbation of the steps being taken.

In other words, God is totally on board, and signifying it by open miracles that this is what He wants to have happen. But, in each and every case it also appears that these miracles were not noticed by anybody at the time they are claimed to have happened, but were made up long after the fact. Or at least what we can say from the historical record, we can't say they are made up; what we *can* say is that nobody said it at the time and they don't end up being said until many, many years after the event was supposed to have happened, and then retroactively claimed to have happened.

The first “miracle” is Brigham Young being transfigured into Joseph Smith. Either he looked like Joseph Smith or he sounded like Joseph Smith in August of 1844 when he was presenting his case to the saints as to why the apostles should lead the church.

The fact is, there is no contemporaneous record that Brigham Young looked like Joseph Smith, or sounded like Joseph Smith, or that anything miraculous happened while Brigham Young was speaking to the saints that day. It is only many, many years after the fact that people start “recalling” that this transfiguration occurred.

In fact, it became so popular for Mormons to claim that they were present in Nauvoo to witness the

transfiguration of Brigham Young into Joseph Smith that Orson Hyde, who was an apostle in the church in 1869, claimed,

“We went among the congregation, he [Brigham] spoke and his words went through me like electricity. This is my testimony; it was not only the voice of Joseph but there were the features, the gestures and even the stature of Joseph before us in the person of Brigham.”

Orson Hyde's testimony is remarkable. It is remarkable not only for the miracle it claims to have witnessed, but it is also remarkable because he was not even in Nauvoo on August 8th. Instead, he arrived in the city 5 days later! (For two excellent academic studies on this topic, see [Richard S Van Wagoner, \*The Making of a Mormon Myth: The 1844 Transfiguration of Brigham Young\*](#), and [Reid L. Harper, \*The Mantle of Joseph: Creation of a Mormon Miracle\*](#). See also [Why Mormon History Is Not What They Say](#).)

This goes to show how popular it was for Mormons to claim that they were in Nauvoo present to see Brigham Young be transfigured into Joseph Smith, and verify the miracle that showed that God approved the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taking control of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

And it is hard to overlook the fact that it is Orson Hyde, the same apostle who claimed that he was present to see Brigham Young transfigured into Joseph Smith in August of 1844 when he was not even present in Nauvoo to see it, who is the same apostle who claimed that three and a half years later, in his cabin in Winter Quarters in December of 1847, the voice of God was heard commanding that the First Presidency be reorganized and Brigham Young be president.

The second miracle that was talked about was that the December 1847 reorganization of the First Presidency, at the meeting of the apostles, when Brigham Young finally persuaded them all in Orson Hyde's cabin at Winter Quarters after two months of meetings, to reorganize the First Presidency. And we have seen that nothing unusual happened there that day, but thirteen years later Brigham Young starts talking about an earthquake and Orson Hyde starts talking about the voice of God coming to them and all of them hearing it, and God said make Brigham Young the president, I am totally on board with reorganizing the First Presidency.

The third miracle that happens is the almost certainly apocryphal story of Jesus appearing to Lorenzo Snow in the Salt Lake City temple. Now, we probably know this story, and we've heard it from time to time, but we know about Lorenzo Snow with his granddaughter in the Salt Lake temple and they are walking through the temple and its nighttime and Lorenzo Snow says to his granddaughter “Hey, see that spot right there? That's where Jesus appeared to me and I saw him and he was standing above the ground and it was a wonderful experience.” And this is frequently trotted out as probably the most recent apostle that we can go to, or the most recent president of the church, who says he saw Jesus.

Now this is probably largely apocryphal, because there is no contemporaneous record of Lorenzo Snow saying it to anybody else at the time, and it doesn't show up until many years later through a third party source.

But the reason that is given for Jesus appearing to Lorenzo Snow is of interest even though it is probably an apocryphal story. Because the reason that is given is that Jesus has something very important to tell

Lorenzo Snow. And the thing that Jesus makes a special point of appearing to Lorenzo Snow in the Salt Lake temple in order to say is that the First Presidency should be organized immediately upon the death of President Wilford Woodruff.

Now, when I read that today I look at that and say “why does Jesus have to appear for a message like that?” That seems rather pedestrian; that doesn’t seem very special. It doesn’t seem like something that requires Jesus to appear in order to give it.

But look at in context of the fact that Brigham Young reorganized the First Presidency with a lot of push-back in the quorum: Brigham Young dies in 1877 and over three years go by before the First Presidency is reorganized with John Taylor as the new president. Then when John Taylor dies, a year and nine months goes by before the First Presidency is reorganized with Wilford Woodruff as the president. This may be significant. It will be remembered that both John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff were among the apostles who were not thrilled with the idea of Brigham Young reorganizing the First Presidency. They were among the five apostles who pushed back against the idea. And it is those apostles who, before they became the president of the church, there was an extended period of time where they felt they didn’t need to be the president of the church and the First Presidency did not need to be reorganized immediately.

At a minimum it shows they were comfortable with the idea of the Quorum of the Twelve apostles continuing to lead the church. And possibly it also shows their discomfort with the idea of being president of the church in a newly constituted First Presidency. Now we begin to see why it is that organizing the First Presidency immediately upon the death of the prior president is something that might provoke some controversy and might require a miracle in order to sanction it.

So, just as a miracle was retroactively invented that Brigham Young transfigured into Joseph Smith in order to sanction the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles leading the church; and just as the voice of God and an earthquake were created after the fact and used in order to show divine sanction for the reorganization of the First Presidency in 1847 under Brigham Young; even so it appears that the story about Jesus appearing to Lorenzo Snow in the Salt Lake City temple fits the same pattern: to show divine sanction on the First Presidency being organized immediately upon the death of the former president.

### **Westward Ho The Fictions**

Finally, before leaving this part of the podcast, I have to address a story that we hear frequently in the church that the apostles gained the experience to lead the saints west because of their experience supervising the mass exodus from Missouri to Illinois in 1838 and 1839, during the winter of ’38, ’39. This story we hear all the time and it's sort of a *post hoc* justification for why it is and how it is the apostles were prepared to lead the church west when that time came a number of years later.

This whole story, though, appears to be a canard. Brigham Young and other apostles had only peripheral involvement in directing the exodus from Missouri. And if I understand my history correctly, there were actually only two apostles of the entire Quorum of Twelve who were active at the time. And those two were Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball. You'll recall that there was a mass disaffection from the church in late 1838 during the Missouri wars. A separate committee of seven was appointed by John Smith (not Joseph Smith, John Smith) to superintend “the business of our removal.”

Not a single apostle was on this committee, or on the expanded removal committee of eleven men. It was this group of non-apostles, not Brigham Young, who directed the Missouri exodus. In fact, Brigham Young was compelled to flee from Missouri to Illinois in February of 1839 while this non-apostolic committee on removal continued its work for thousands of Mormons still in Missouri.

So not only are “miracles” created and then retroactively inserted into the historical narrative in order to show divine sanction of these changes in leadership and, frankly, these power grabs; but also stories about how it is “the apostles were prepared to lead the church” were created. And this is an example of that kind of story; the idea that the apostles supervised the saints when they were expelled from Missouri, preparing them for supervising the saints going out to Utah, when actually that was not the case at all.

The apostles had little to no role in supervising the saints who were fleeing from Missouri to Illinois. Once again history is written by the winners as an excuse for hanging the losers.

### **The King Follett Distancing**

It's becoming obvious to me at this point that I have too much information for one podcast. I don't want to overstay my welcome so I am going to save everything else that I was going to be saying now, for a Part Two episode which hopefully will be coming out in the near future. But before I conclude this part of the episode, I need to make it very clear that when I'm talking about Joseph Smith's vision and the revelation in section 107 for the different quorums, there is obviously some way in which the First Presidency is in control and yet all the Quorums are equal in power and authority.

So even though there is some way in which the First Presidency is “in charge” in some kind of loose way, there is also a very important component of the government where all the quorums are equal in power and authority.

Some of that can be explained by the fact that different Quorums had different jobs within the church, and so they were in charge of different areas and had different spheres of influence; and yet the Quorums themselves were all considered to be equal in power and authority.

The reason I want to come back to that is because this is something that shows up in the King Follett Discourse. Not only did Joseph Smith see the different Quorums as being equal in power and authority, he also saw the same kind of relationship between God, and between the eternally existent spirits, one of which is you and one of which is me. He gave the King Follett discourse only a few months before he died, but in that discourse he talks about the eternal nature of spirit. He says that we have no beginning and we have no end, just the same way as God has no beginning and God has no end.

And Joseph Smith and the recorded notes of his sermon -there were four people present who transcribed notes from the sermon and those were all amalgamated into what we know today as the King Follett discourse- but the word that they recorded that Joseph Smith used when talking about the comparison between these eternally existent spirits and God, was that they are “co-equal” with God. That is what the record shows that Joseph Smith said about us and our eternally existent spirits and God. That we are co-equal with God.

Now, the LDS church, ever since that was written down, has distanced itself from that idea.

B.H. Roberts, who initially did a lot of work with the King Follett discourse, wrote a number of footnotes. You can find those footnotes incorporated into the [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#) (pg 352, note 8). Those footnotes are there; they were written by B.H. Roberts, and he insists that when Joseph Smith said co-equal he actually said a very archaic and unusual term called "coeval." Now that's C-O-E-V-A-L, not E-V-I-L.

"*Coeval*." You probably never heard of it. I would never have heard of it in my life, except that I read the footnotes that B.H. Roberts wrote in the King Follett discourse. But "coeval" is an archaic word that means "coextensive with." So, in other words, it is basically saying the same idea that when Joseph Smith says that spirits have existed from all time past to all-time future, they are from eternity to eternity; there is no creation about them, the same as God.

But the actual word Joseph Smith used was not coeval. It was *co-equal*. "Spirits are co-equal with God."

B.H. Roberts doesn't like that. He wants it to be *coeval* with God; not that we're equal with God, but just that we're coextensive with God.

This is something that the LDS Church continues to do as recently as 1971, in an Ensign article about the King Follett discourse, when in a two-part series it was reproduced. Yes, there was a time when the church actually talked about the King Follett discourse, and that time was back in 1971. And there, where they're quoting this part of the discourse they say this. This is quoting from the discourse itself: "The mind or the intelligence which man possesses is co-equal with God himself." That's from the King Follett discourse.

But they're not satisfied to leave it here. They can't just say it's co-equal with God. They have to put in brackets right after "co-equal," the word "co-eternal." You see, Joseph Smith really can't be trusted. He really doesn't mean co-equal when he says co-equal; he actually means co-eternal because the Church is more comfortable with co-eternal.

This is what it reads in the Ensign article. This is [May of 1971](#):

"The mind or the intelligence man possesses is co-equal [co-eternal] with God himself."

The *co-eternal*, being an addition by the editor to make sure the reader does not think Joseph Smith meant "co-equal" when he said "co-equal." Because Joseph Smith, apparently like the bible, is true only insofar as he is translated correctly.

The point I am trying to get at is that Joseph Smith's vision of the relationship of spirits and God is similar to his vision of the relationship of the different leadership quorums in the church. Certainly God, in some meaningful way, is superior to the other spirits. He is in charge in some way. He is more intelligent than all of them (going back to the Book of Abraham quote). But in a very important way the spirits -our spirits- are all also co-equal with God himself.

And similarly, Joseph Smith seems to have seen the quorums in the same way: that the First Presidency

in some meaningful way is in charge, but also in a very meaningful way -and no less important way- all the Quorums, including the Quorum of the First Presidency, are co-equal. None is above the other. This idea that our intelligences are co-equal with God himself, is a fascinating idea and suggests the wide-ranging democracy of Joseph Smith's vision not only of his church, but also of the cosmos and the beings that reside in it.

### **To Be Continued**

Well, that's all we have time for today. Next episode, Part Two of *Apostolic Coup D'etat*, we will get into the nitty and the gritty of how Brigham Young disassembled the Quorum of the Seventy because he perceived it as a threat. Because Brigham Young, yes, understood section 107 as meaning that the quorums are equal in power and authority, and that even the Quorum of the Seventy, which we typically think of as being obviously beneath the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young saw as a threat to his power and leadership, so it had to be dismantled. We'll go into the details of that.

We'll also talk about what happened to the church Patriarch, which was considered to be the highest office in the church -at least by Joseph Smith, who did know a thing or two about that church that he established. Then we'll talk about how Brigham Young disassembled and dismantled the Nauvoo Stake High Council which, believe it or not, according to section 107 says is equal in authority to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as well as to the First Presidency. Nobody in the church ever reads that part; they always stop when they get to the Quorum of the Seventy. You actually have to read on to find out that the high council in Nauvoo was equal in power and authority to the Seventy, and to the Twelve Apostles, and to the First Presidency.

So we'll talk about how Brigham Young dismantled that, and ultimately put the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as *the* top dog in a strict, top-down hierarchy with no equality of power between the different quorums in the modern Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And finally we will touch on the sad and tragic fate of Samuel Smith, the brother of Joseph Smith, who died mysteriously, and some would say suspiciously, in Nauvoo one month after Joseph Smith was murdered.

In the last episode, we talked about when Joseph Smith was murdered in June of 1844, the problem was not that there was nobody who could lay claim to being the next leader of the church; the problem was that there was an overabundance of people and groups who could feasibly lay claim to being the next leader of the church.

We talked about how Brigham Young, who on behalf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was able to convince a majority of the Latter-Day Saints to accept the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the leaders of the church in place of Joseph Smith and the First Presidency. We also talked about how three and a half years later at Winter Quarters, Brigham Young, over substantial pushback from five of the other apostles, managed to win acceptance for his proposal to reorganize the First Presidency with himself as president, and apostles Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as his counselors.

We also talked about how miracles appeared to have been created and then retroactively inserted into the historical narrative to show that Brigham Young had been transfigured into Joseph Smith at the August 8, 1844 meeting in which he spoke to the saints and argued that the apostles should lead the church. We also talked about the retroactive "miracle" at Winter Quarters on December 5th, 1847 at the meeting with the apostles.

Actually, only eight of the twelve apostles were present for this meeting when Brigham Young said that there was an earthquake and Orson Hyde amplified on that, saying not only was there an earthquake, but also the voice of God was heard by the apostles, saying it was time for Brigham Young to step forward and become president of the church.

These stories, however, surfaced many, many years after the events they allege to portray. And in fact, in both instances, people who were present at the time and made contemporaneous records mention nothing unusual or miraculous occurring. So both of these stories appear to be late fabrications that were inserted into the historical record in order to buttress the claims of leadership. The purpose of the stories is to show that God sanctions, God approves, God *commands* these changes in leadership; God approved of Brigham Young and the apostles leading the church. That's why Brigham Young was transfigured into Joseph Smith. Later on, God ordered, by his own voice from heaven, that Brigham Young should become president of the church and reorganize the First Presidency.

The purpose of these "miracle stories" is to confirm that this is the way God wanted things to happen. And it's also interesting to note that the only reason for creating miracle stories and applying them backward in history at these critical junctures of leadership transition is because the people who created them felt their claims needed buttressing. In other words, they felt their claims were not strong enough to stand on their own, and therefore needed an extra miracle in order to solidify their case.

We delved a bit into [Section 107](#), given in 1835, which describes the different quorums of leadership in the church: the Quorum of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, which is said to be equal in power and authority to the First Presidency. We talked about the Quorum of Seventy, which is described in the revelation as being equal in power and authority to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We talked about the fact that this revelation does not say two things that modern-day Latter-Day Saints like to ascribe to it.

The first thing it does *not* say is that any quorum has the power to reconstitute a higher quorum. Specifically, it does not say that the Quorum of the Twelve has the power to reconstitute the First Presidency. The second thing this revelation does not say is that one quorum is above another in power and authority. That's the way it's become to be interpreted nowadays. And we quoted from Joseph F. Smith in 1906 to that effect in the last episode, instead of a strict hierarchy at the top, First Presidency, next Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, next Quorum of the Seventy, as we have it today.

Section 107 is extremely clear and repetitive on the point that each of these quorums are equal in power and authority one to the other. Going on with a little bit more study in the Doctrine and Covenants, there is only one section in the Doctrine and Covenants that appears to contemplate the appointment of a successor to Joseph Smith and the way in which that would be done. That is [Section 43](#) of the Doctrine and Covenants, which says in verses 2-4:

"For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church, through him (that's Joseph Smith) whom I have appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations from my hand.

"And this ye shall know assuredly—that there is none other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations until he be taken, if he abide in me.

Verse four is the critical verse here:

"But verily, verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him; for if it be taken from him he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead."

So here is the reference in the Doctrine and Covenants, in the published revelations of the church, to how a successor to Joseph Smith will arise and that is through direct appointment. That is the word used here, "appointed" -direct appointment by Joseph Smith- which would presumably be prior to his death. He would have to appoint somebody.

And what we are going to see as we touch on this part of the history of the church is that there were a number of people coming forward who claim to have appointments by Joseph Smith. And they even use that word - *appointments* - by Joseph Smith to be the next president.

For example, Brigham Young himself in this August 8, 1844 meeting expressed his belief that if Hyrum Smith had lived and not died at the same time as Joseph Smith, that Hyrum Smith would have been the next leader of the church. In other words, he had the idea that Hyrum Smith had this appointment. Here's the quote: "If Hyrum had lived he would not have stood between Joseph and the Twelve but he would have stood *for Joseph*.-Did Joseph ordain any man to take his place? He did. Who was it? It was Hyrum. But Hyrum fell a martyr before Joseph did." ([Conference Minutes, Times & Seasons, Oct 15, 1844, pg 683.](#))

So here's this expression by Brigham Young that he knew of this idea, that a person had to be appointed by Joseph Smith in order to be the next president. Not only does this quote show Brigham Young understood this principle, it also indicates that Brigham Young understood that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles did not have this specific appointment. Brigham Young himself did not have this specific appointment. There was no basis that Brigham Young could claim, based upon Section 43, that he or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles should become the leaders of the church. He argued it on different grounds and ultimately won the day with the majority of the Latter-Day Saints.

But to give you an idea, there was another fellow named James Strang who you may have heard of. And he came forward with a letter that he claimed was mailed to him prior to Joseph Smith's death, written by Joseph Smith, in which Joseph Smith appointed William Strang to become the next president of the church when Joseph Smith died. And it was generally understood even by Brigham Young that Joseph Smith's son, Joseph Smith III, was appointed by Joseph Smith to become the next president of the church. Joseph Smith III was very young when Joseph Smith died, and Brigham Young held open the idea that the apostles would lead the church until Joseph Smith III was old enough to become its rightful president.

Joseph Smith III, however, had no intention of joining with the church in Utah. He was a member of the church to which his mother belonged. That would be Emma Smith, that would be Joseph Smith's wife. And ultimately, Joseph Smith III became president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which ended up putting him out of contention for being president as far as Brigham Young was concerned.

And not only did Hyrum Smith and Joseph Smith III have appointment claims along with James Strang; Samuel Smith, Joseph Smith's brother, appears in Nauvoo in July, a couple of weeks after Joseph Smith is murdered and he claims Joseph Smith appointed *him* to be the president of the church in case Joseph and Hyrum were killed at the same time. We'll talk more about Samuel Smith later because he came to a tragic -and somewhat suspicious- end.

One more example of Joseph Smith acting on Section 43's instructions is the ordination of David Whitmer on July 7, 1834. So that's pretty early on. But David Whitmer left the church a few years later. He was no longer a member of the church in 1844 when Joseph Smith died. But on July 7, 1834 Joseph Smith ordained David Whitmer "to be a leader or a prophet to the church, which ordination was on condition that he, Joseph Smith, did not live to God himself."

So, the idea there being, that if Joseph Smith fell away, David Whitmer now, by this ordination, would become the leader or prophet of the church. I mention all these examples to show that this was a commonly understood idea in the early church, in Joseph Smith's time, that for a person to become the leader of the church, they had to be appointed to that office by Joseph Smith. And as I have indicated there were a number of people who came forward to claim that appointment upon Joseph Smith's death. It was a little like in the 1970's when Howard Hughes died, and people started coming out of the woodwork claiming to have wills written by him that gave them all of Howard Hughes' money. The same sort of thing happened in Nauvoo shortly after Joseph Smith's death.

### **The Highest Authority In The Church Is Not The Prophet**

Now let's go back and talk about how Brigham Young solidified the position of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the leaders of the church. First under this heading we are going to talk about the office of the presiding patriarch, the Church Patriarch. Now Joseph Smith's father, Joseph Smith Sr. was the first Church Patriarch. After Joseph Smith Sr. passed away the office went to Hyrum Smith, Joseph Smith's brother.

This is an office that no longer exists in the LDS Church. And that's interesting to me because I was baptized in 1978 and we're all perhaps familiar with the centerfold in the General Conference issues of the Ensign. And by centerfold, I mean the middle section that opens up and there's all the different pictures of all the different general authorities: they have the First Presidency pictures at the top and the Quorum of the Twelve next and all the hierarchy is spelled out with names and little photographs off all the different people who occupy those positions. Well, way back when I joined the church in 1978, when the church Ensign came out, there was a picture in that centerfold that no longer exists, and that was the picture of the church patriarch.

Yes, the church patriarch appeared on the church centerfold. His name was Eldred G. Smith, and he had his own picture up there, though I can't quite recall at this point where he fell on this chart. I can

guarantee you, however, his picture was not above the First Presidency. And that might have been a surprise to Joseph Smith. Because Joseph Smith clearly thought, at least as of the time of his death, that the patriarch was the highest office in the church.

Let's look at Doctrine and Covenants, [Section 124](#). Section 124 was given January 19, 1841; so that is about three and a half years before Joseph Smith dies. And here we have, starting in verse 91, the Lord talking about Hyrum Smith being appointed to the office of Patriarch. Verse 91:

Joseph Smith, Senior

"And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant William (that's William Law) be appointed, ordained, and anointed, as counselor unto my servant Joseph, in the room of my servant Hyrum, that my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch, (now that's an interesting expression, the office of Priesthood and Patriarch) which was appointed unto him by his father (that's Joseph Smith, Sr.), by blessing and also by right;

This was a hereditary office; nobody got to ordain anybody to be the patriarch. That was theirs by blessing and also by right. The blessing being from the patriarch before you, which would be your father if you were the patriarch. It goes on in verse 92 to talk about this office:

"That from henceforth he shall hold the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people,"

Now today, when we think of patriarchal blessings, we think of a nice older man, usually, who we make an appointment with; we fast 24 hours before we go, we have a once in a lifetime, generally, appointment to get a patriarchal blessing. He lays his hands upon our head, he pronounces some very nice things about us, tells us how wonderful we were in the pre-mortal existence. Admonishes us to obey the commandments and follow the prophet, and then promises us eternal blessings and rewards based upon our obedience to the commandments. So, based upon what stake patriarchs do today, it's possible to get a wrong idea about what the church patriarch used to do in Joseph Smith's day. Not only did the church patriarch give patriarchal blessings "upon the heads of all my people," going to verse 93,

"That whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Hyrum Smith

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, that is the *sealing* power. This is why the church patriarch was a big freaking deal in Joseph Smith's day. It was the church patriarch who had the power to seal people up to eternal life. But we will see, of course, that over time that power was taken over by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as well, who exercise it today. There is no revelation giving them that power to my knowledge. They simply took it over once they got rid of the Church Patriarch. Verse 94 goes on about Hyrum as the patriarch:

"And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be (that's Hyrum) a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph;

Now there are only two individuals and two positions in the entire Doctrine and Covenants that are referred to by the title Prophet, Seer and Revelator. One of them is Joseph Smith, the other one is Hyrum Smith. Now, skipping to verse 123 in Section 124, the Lord now introduces the different offices and the different positions in the leadership of His church, quoting from Section 124.

"*First*, I give unto you..."

Now, who's going to come there? Who's going to come first in this list that the Lord is giving of his priesthood offices in the church? Well, naturally we would think Joseph Smith is president of the church, possibly the First Presidency; but it's got to be somebody at the very top because the Lord is saying *first* I give unto you. The surprise is that the answer is *not* Joseph Smith and it's *not* the First Presidency. Section 124 verse 124 (an easy reference to remember), says this:

"*First*, I give unto you Hyrum Smith to be a patriarch unto you, to hold the sealing blessings of my church, even the Holy Spirit of promise..."

See, I wasn't kidding when I said earlier that the patriarch had the sealing keys, the Holy Spirit of Promise. The power to seal people up to eternal life, to have their calling and election made sure, was the power of the Patriarch. That's why he comes first in the list. Once again from the revelation:

"First, I give unto you Hyrum Smith to be a patriarch unto you, to hold the sealing blessings of my church, even the Holy Spirit of promise whereby ye are sealed up unto the day of redemption, that ye may not fall notwithstanding the hour of temptation that may come upon you."

I'm going to stop reading Section 124 at this point, and I want to make another note. It appears from this revelation that the office of Church Patriarch is the highest in the church because it comes first in the Lord, and the Lord says it's first in the revelation. But I want to add additional evidence to that.

On May 27, 1843, Joseph Smith said "the patriarchal office is ***the highest office in the church***. And Father Smith conferred this office on Hyrum Smith on his deathbed."

The context of this quote by Joseph Smith saying that the patriarchal office is the highest office in the church arose because Joseph Smith and some of the other brethren were sitting in judgment on a wayward Mormon whose last name was Winchester. We don't hear about him much in the church, but Winchester was having problems with the church. He was making certain claims, and one of the claims he made was that there was a conflict between the Patriarch and the Quorum of the Twelve. Joseph Smith is saying, no there's no conflict. The patriarchal office is the highest office in the church. It's *over* the Twelve. No conflict.

This little-known episode with Winchester is found in the *History of the Church, Vol 5, pp. 411*. But the *History of the Church omits* the statement that Joseph Smith made about Hyrum's patriarchal office being the highest in the church. That statement *is* found in the minutes of the meeting that Joseph Smith had with Hyrum Smith, James Adams, Newell K. Whitney, and others in Nauvoo on May 27, 1843 in the LDS Archives. This is found in D. Michael Quinn's *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, pp. 306, footnote 70. It is in the minutes of the meeting, but ***when those minutes got reproduced and published in the History of the Church, that line was taken out.***

Once again, the *History of the Church* is a multi-volume production that was created *after* Joseph Smith's death, *after* the apostles took over leadership, *after* Brigham Young became president. And even though it was based upon the original minutes of certain meetings, the apostles who had to give approval for the *History of the Church* to be published made sure that there was nothing in the *History of the Church* that could compromise their claims to leadership.

This is an example. Joseph Smith said the patriarchal office is the highest office in the church. Sorry, that's not going to make it into the *History of the Church*. We are going to delete that. We'll still have the story about Winchester, only it's going to be missing this critical passage.

### **Get Back In Line, Brigham**

So now I would like to go back to something I mentioned at the beginning of the last episode, which was the anointing of the different offices and quorums in the church in the Kirtland Temple January 21, 1836. I mentioned in the last episode that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was not first, was not second, was not third, fourth, or fifth. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was *sixth* in the list.

The important thing for purposes of this subject is that Number One leading the list was presiding Patriarch, Joseph Smith, *Senior*. He was anointed first in the Kirtland Temple. After that, the First Presidency, and then down number six, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

For those of you who want to know the rest, I will state them quickly: Number three were the regional bishops of Kirtland and Zion (or Missouri) with their counselors; number four was the Stake President in Kirtland where the temple was then located; number five was the stake president in Zion (Missouri); six was the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as I said; number seven was the presidency of the Seventy; and number eight was the president of the High Priests Quorum.

So you can see where the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles ranked when the anointing of the officers occurred 21st of January, 1836 in the Kirtland Temple:

No. 1: Presiding Patriarch

No. 6: Quorum of the Twelve

But after Joseph Smith died and Hyrum died along with him, there was some controversy over who would be the next patriarch. I don't have the time to go into it now, but there is an excellent book on the subject. That book is called [\*Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch\*](#). If you are interested in the subject you can get that book and read through it; we are just going to touch on a couple of points.

The first point is that immediately after Hyrum Smith died, the church patriarch was no longer the highest office in the church. As you can imagine, Brigham Young did not have anybody above the apostles. The apostles were top dog in the New Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. But the office of Church Patriarch was allowed to continue. And over time, and over decades, and after the church got into Utah, more and more responsibility and authority and power was taken away from the office of the Church Patriarch until eventually he was just a figurehead who had his picture printed with the other officers of the church in the General Conference *Ensign*.

The church grew, and as part of the church growth, patriarchs were called in every stake to administer the patriarchal blessings. The apostles at some point took away from the patriarch the power to seal up unto eternal life, the power to make one's calling and election sure. And once that power was taken away, the Church Patriarch largely became a figurehead.

Ultimately, Eldred G. Smith, the last patriarch of the church, was put on emeritus status in 1979. What that means is, he was put out to pasture. That happened in the October General Conference 1979. On October 4th, Eldred G. Smith was put on emeritus status. Up to that point he had been sustained as Prophet, Seer and Revelator, as he is denominated in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 124.

However, after he was put on emeritus status he was no longer called that. And most importantly, no new Church Patriarch was called, which would have been his eldest faithful male child. But because no new Church Patriarch was called to take his place and Eldred G. Smith was simply put on emeritus status, he continued to live for many more years until he passed away on April 4, 2013.

Once he passed away, the office of Church Patriarch, the office that Joseph Smith called "the highest office in the church," went out of existence. And with the removal of the Church Patriarch from the church hierarchy, the apostle's coup d'état was complete. So in summary, the Quorum of the Twelve have now taken over the First Presidency and ultimately eliminated the highest office in the church, that of Church Patriarch.

### **Not With A Bang But With A Whimper**

Let me try to express this in an analogy. Most of us are familiar with how the United States government is constructed. There are three bodies, the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judiciary. Suppose with me that the President and the Vice President were assassinated at the same time. And further suppose with me that the Constitution makes no provision for who should become president in that eventuality; that the President and the Vice President are gone in one blow.

Now in my analogy, the Legislature picks a new President and a new Vice President and the Legislature picks them out of the Senators. So now two Senators become the President and the Vice President. In that way, the Legislative branch has taken over the Executive branch. But then they want to take care of the Supreme Court, too. Well somebody gets a good idea: we don't have to fire all nine of the justices on the Supreme Court. All we have to do is fail to appoint new ones when the old ones die out. And eventually all nine of the Supreme Court justices die and there is no more Supreme Court. This is similar to what the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles did in taking control over the LDS Church.

In my analogy let me ask a couple of questions: What allegiance would an American citizen have to the Federal Government if such a usurpation of power occurred?

Here's the Legislative branch; they've taken over the Executive branch. They've appointed of their own number a President and a Vice President, so they've got control of that. Now they've done away with the Judicial branch by letting the Supreme Court die out. The Legislative branch has assumed complete control of the entire government of the Executive and the Legislative. They have all the power. What allegiance would an American have to a federal government if such a usurpation of power occurred?

And similarly, I've got to ask the question: what allegiance does a Mormon have to a church government if such a usurpation of power occurred? That is a question that every Mormon must answer for him or herself.

So that's how Brigham Young and the apostles took control of the leadership of the LDS Church.

But that's not the end of it. Brigham Young also took control over the *entire* church. He took control over the *stakes* of Zion, and that is a place where the apostles never had authority until Brigham Young seized it in contravention and contradiction to the revelations that God gave to Joseph Smith.

We touched on this earlier; we'll go more in-depth on it here in a second. But now I've got to use another analogy. If we want to understand what the church was like in Joseph Smith's day we have to get rid of our presuppositions about the way the church is now. It was not First Presidency over the entire church at the top, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles over the entire church next, Seventy over the entire church next. It wasn't this type of General Authority Hierarchy in Joseph Smith's day.

Instead, let me use this analogy: I'm going to compare this to a county prosecutor's office. Now in a county prosecutor's office there are two divisions of prosecutors. Usually when we think of it, we think of the criminal division of the prosecutor's office, with the criminal deputies. There are deputy prosecutors in the criminal division; they prosecute cases. They get most of the news stories. That's how we tend to think of them first.

But there is another equally important division in the county prosecutor's office, and that is called the civil division. They don't prosecute crimes; that's the other division. In the civil division they have deputy prosecutors who represent the county against claims and lawsuits made by other people against the county. So that's why it's the civil division. The civil division is a completely separate division from the criminal division, but they're all part of the same prosecutor's office. The elected prosecutor, the guy that gets voted into office, is the head of the office and he is over both the criminal division and the civil division. So that's how a county prosecutors office is set up.

Now, going back to the church in Joseph Smith's day, there were two completely separate divisions of the church. There was one division where Stakes of Zion were organized. Wherever there is a stake, there is a Stake President and a Stake High Council that was part of the organization. In places where there was a Stake High Council, the Stake High Council had authority for governing what happened inside the Stake. That's why they're there, that's what they do.

Now everywhere there isn't a Stake, that's the mission field. That's *outside* the Stakes of Zion. And outside the Stakes of Zion, that's where the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy have authority. That's where they go. That's where they go out and preach the gospel; that's why they're the Traveling High Council, because they travel. That's why the Stake High Councils are Standing High Councils, because they stay in one place in their Stake and govern there.

Now, going back to Section 107, we talked about how it says the First Presidency is a quorum, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is equal in power and authority to the First Presidency, and the Seventy is equal in power and authority to the Quorum of the Twelve.

But it goes on. When we hear about it in church, that's where the speaker stops. Like the talk from President Hinckley that I quoted in the last episode; he gave a General Conference talk, but that's where he stops. He talks about the First Presidency. He talks about the Quorum of the Twelve. He talks about the Quorum of the Seventy, that they're all equal in power and authority, but he *stops* there. He doesn't go on any further in Section 107.

And there's good reason for that. Because Section 107 goes on to say that not only those three quorums have equal power and authority but ***also the Stake High Councils are equal in power and authority to the Seventy, to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and also to the First Presidency.***

So you can understand why that doesn't get mentioned very often in church.

### **Ignoring God's Clear Instruction**

Let's go to section 107 starting with verse 33, where once again the Twelve are referred to as a *Traveling Presiding High Council*.

"The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews."

There's that missionary aspect of their calling. Next,

"The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews—

It's the same calling as the Twelve.

"The Twelve being sent out, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ,

See how this makes so much more sense when you understand the Twelve are not over the entire church, but they're over the missionary effort *outside* the places where Stakes of Zion have been organized.

"The Twelve being *sent out*, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, first unto the Gentiles and then unto the Jews."

Now we get to the money quote about the high Councils. Verse 36,

"The standing high councils, at the stakes of Zion, form a quorum equal in authority in the affairs of the church, in all their decisions, to the quorum of the presidency, or to the traveling high council."

*They are equal in authority* to the First Presidency *and* to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Then verse 37 says the high council in Zion, that's in Missouri, this is 1835 remember, when the Mormons were still in Missouri:

"The high council in Zion form a quorum equal in authority in the affairs of the church, in all their decisions, to the councils of the Twelve at the stakes of Zion."

Now, when it talks about the councils of the Twelve at the Stakes of Zion, that's talking about the additional Stakes *other than* the Stakes that were formed In Zion. There's a High Council in the Stake of Zion Missouri; there's also a high Council in Kirtland at the time this is being written, and there are other High Councils that are anticipated that will be created in the future, and that indeed were created in the future in Nauvoo as the church expanded and more Stakes were organized.

What verse 37 says is the High Council in Zion form a quorum equal in authority in the affairs of the church to the councils of the Twelve at the Stakes of Zion. So in other words, the High Council in Zion is equal in authority to the other High Councils in the other Stakes of Zion.

Every place the church is organized into a Stake there is a High Council; the High Council is in charge of running the affairs in that Stake. The only person over the High Council is the First Presidency. The Quorum of the Twelve is over here *outside* the Stakes, running the missionary work. Under them is the Seventy. And the only person over the apostles is the First Presidency, but that is solely and exclusively in the mission field, not in any Stake where the church is organized. Verse 98 kind of sums it up after talking about all the other different officers in the church and how they are standing quorums and standing high councils. Verse 98 of Section 107 states:

"Whereas other officers of the church, who belong not unto the Twelve, neither to the Seventy, are not under the responsibility to travel among all nations, but are to travel as their circumstances shall allow, notwithstanding they may hold as high and responsible offices in the church.

So, it's only the Twelve and the Seventy who are under the responsibility to travel among all nations. The reason they are under that responsibility is because their responsibility is to preach the Gospel and open the door to the proclamation of the gospel in all the nations.

This 1835 revelation about the High Council having equal authority to the Quorum of the Twelve was reinforced when Joseph Smith told the High Council after he organized them, "If he should now be taken away, that he had accomplished the great work which the Lord had laid before him, and that which he had desired of the Lord." Joseph Smith added "he now had done his duty in organizing the High Council through which counsel the will of the Lord might be known on all important occasions in the building up of Zion and establishing truth in the earth."

It appears from this that the central High Council may have had the succession right to Joseph Smith if he should now be "taken away," as he put it in the quote. Not only do the revelations indicate strongly that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have jurisdiction in the mission field, whereas the Stake High Councils have jurisdiction in the Stakes; at a meeting on May 2, 1835, Joseph Smith instructed the Twelve that they had "no right to go into Zion or any of its Stakes and there undertake to regulate the affairs thereof where there is a standing High Council."

That's how clear it was. Let me read that again. "Joseph Smith told the Twelve in 1835, May 2nd, that ***they had no right to go into Zion or any of its Stakes and there undertake to regulate the***

***affairs thereof where there is a standing High Council.***" Instead, their jurisdiction extended only to the areas *outside* Zion (the church's center place in Missouri), or any of its Stakes.

In another instance of the apostles monkeying with the history of the church, a meeting was held February 27, 1835 at which Joseph Smith proposed the following question: "What importance is there attached to the calling of these twelve apostles *different* from the other callings or officers of the church?"

This was a huge question at the time. There was already a high council of twelve individuals which was very high up in the church. What was the difference between the calling of the Twelve Apostles and other callings or officers in the church?

After this question was discussed by several present, Joseph Smith, Jr. gave the following decision: "they are the twelve apostles who are called to the office of the Traveling High Council, who are to preside over the churches of the saints among the Gentiles where there is a presidency established."

Now pay attention to that quote, because that's where the history of the church changes it from the original minutes. Once again it says "who are to preside over the churches of the saints among the Gentiles (that's the apostles), where there is a presidency established."

So, it sounds from this quote in church history that the apostles are to preside over the church where there is a presidency established. In other words, where there is a stake

presidency established, they are to preside. If that were correct that would mean the apostles were over the Stake Presidencies, because it says they preside over the churches of the Saints among the gentiles, where there is a Presidency established.

Now the problem is when you look at the actual [Kirtland Council Minute Book](#), **one word in this quote was changed**. And instead of the *Church History* version where it says "where there is a presidency established," it actually said "where there is **no** presidency established."

The minutes in the Kirtland minute book make it clear just what I've been saying all along, which is that the apostles have no authority to preside where there is a presidency established. In other words, where there is a stake presidency established, *they have no authority in the Stakes of Zion*.

But this was considered damning enough that when the History of the Church was published, this language was changed so it did not challenge the authority of the apostles over the Stake Presidents. And again, this language had to be changed by the apostles in order not to completely undercut the authority they had already assumed over the Stakes of Zion.

Interestingly, this incorrect quote from the minutes of the meeting is perpetuated in the [MormonWiki](#) link on the subject of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They use the language from the *History of the Church* "where there is a presidency established." We wouldn't want MormonWiki undercutting the authority of the Twelve Apostles by accurately quoting the church documents.

Now, the quotes we have been using from Joseph Smith regarding the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles having authority *outside* the stakes of Zion versus the Stake High Council's having authority *inside* the Stakes of Zion have come from 1835. So it's important to note that as late as 1843- May 27, 1843, that is a year before Joseph Smith died- Joseph Smith is quoted as making the same point. What he said was "the High Council was to try cases that belonged to the Stake and the Twelve to regulate the churches and elders abroad in all the world."

Now that last expression he says, "in all the world," is the phrase that Joseph Smith used to talk about the fact that the apostles had authority *outside* the stakes of Zion. When he says "in all the world" he means in all the world outside the Stakes of Zion where there is no Stake organized. Let me repeat that quote once again "the High Council was to try cases that belonged to the Stake, and the Twelve to regulate the churches and elders *abroad* in all the world."

That is significant because in Section 107 we frequently hear the verse cited regarding the apostles being special witnesses of Christ and, more specifically, "special witnesses of the name of Christ." What we tend to focus on today is the fact that they are special witnesses. Does that mean that they have seen Jesus? Or does that mean that they are special witnesses of the name of Jesus as the verse states?

But the verse in Section 107 says the Twelve are to be special witnesses of the name of Jesus, in all the world. And I think that at the time it was written, the emphasis there was *in all the world* equal to, if not more so, than emphasis on their being special witnesses of the name of Jesus, because it is followed up immediately by saying the Quorum of the Seventy are also to be especial witnesses of the name of Jesus *in all the world*.

Those expressions "in all the world" in their historical context, and comparing it with other usages by Joseph Smith, means in all the world in places where there are not Stakes organized.

So, when Section 107 says the apostles are to be special witnesses of Jesus in all the world, it means their witness is to be limited to places where the Stakes are not organized. They are missionaries in the mission field. That is their exclusive dominion. That is where they have authority, and that was repeated once again by Joseph Smith as late as one year before his death, May 27, 1843: "The High Council was to try cases that belonged to the Stake, and the Twelve to regulate the churches and elders *abroad in all the world*." That citation can be found in the [History of the Church, Vol 5, pp. 410](#).

### **Eliminating The Competition**

The stake president of Nauvoo at the time was a man named William Marks. That's another name we don't hear very often in Sunday School class. William Marks was the president of the Nauvoo Stake at the time of Joseph Smith's assassination, and as such he had a major league claim to leadership of the church. But William Marks was not ambitious; he did not want to claim leadership of the church. So instead of making his own bid for leadership of the church, he backed Sidney Rigdon's claim to leadership of the church.

Sidney Rigdon, as we talked about last episode, did not get very far in his bid to become leader -or in his words, "guardian"- of the church. But that was not so much because he didn't have a good claim on it, being the sole remaining member of the First Presidency; but mainly because of his personality and his

somewhat wishy-washy performance in the church for a number of years preceding that. So Sidney Rigdon was excommunicated by Brigham Young on September 8, 1844, mainly because Rigdon did not back Brigham Young.

We have to get used to this in Mormon history when we're talking about the real history at the time of the succession crisis. Brigham Young brooked no opposition. And after the apostles took over leadership of the church, anybody who was not on board with the apostles was going to have to be taken care of in one way or another. So Sidney Rigdon was excommunicated on September 8, 1844. Within four weeks of Sidney Rigdon's excommunication, Brigham Young took a number of steps to solidify his power and he did this by dismantling the other competing power structures.

Brigham Young first eliminated the potential threat of the Seventy. Yes, I said of the Seventy. Isn't the Seventy beneath the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles? Well yes, they are in today's church, and they were in some sense back then too. But remember Section 107 says what? That the Quorum of the Seventy is equal in power and authority to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

So Brigham Young, seeing the Quorum of the Seventy as a threat, or at least a competitor to the power and authority of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, took steps to dismantle them. How did he do that? Well really quite brilliantly if you think about it. What he did was this. First off, we have to review the organization of the Quorum of the Seventy. It was organized the same then as it is today: there are seven presidents of the Quorum of the Seventy. Those seven presidents are not in addition to the Seventy, they are part of the number of Seventy.

So, there are actually seven presidents of the Seventy who are members of the quorum of the Seventy themselves, and then there are beneath them in that Quorum sixty-three other members of the Seventy. There's 63, plus the 7 who are in leadership, which makes a total of 70 if I'm doing my math right.

What Brigham Young did on September 29th, was he took all the Seventy out of the Quorum of the Seventy except for the presidency of seven. So he took all sixty-three of the Seventy out of the Quorum of the Seventy. What did he do with them? Well, he decided that he would create nine more *subordinate* quorums of the Seventy; subordinate to the original First Quorum of the Seventy. Because it was this *First* Quorum of the Seventy that was seen as having power equal in authority to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Well, what does Brigham Young do about that? He takes all of them away except for their leadership, creates nine new subordinate Quorums of the Seventy, and he takes those 63 previous members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and he makes them the Presidents of nine new Quorums of Seventy. 63 divided by 9 is 7.

So that's the division on how he created nine new presidencies for Quorums of the Seventy. What he did by this means was he took away sixty-three of the members of the original Quorum of the Seventy. So now that quorum could not come anywhere near to having a majority present, which was necessary in order for them to make any kind of a decision. He completely stripped them of all their power and authority.

Now, this part has to be emphasized: Why did Brigham Young do this? We have to look behind this and recognize the fact that Brigham Young would not have done this unless he saw the Quorum of the Seventy as a competitor. And the reason he saw the Quorum of the Seventy as a competitor is because he understood Section 107 as meaning what people back then thought it meant; which is that these Quorums are equal in power and authority one with another. He saw the revelation as saying what it means, and because of that, he felt he needed to get rid of the Quorum of the Seventy and denude it of its membership.

Now Brigham Young had to deal with the competition from the Stake High Council in Zion. Remember Section 107 says that they are also equal in power and authority to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. And not only that, Brigham Young knows that the Stake High Council has authority in the stakes of Zion; he does not. He's going to have to find a way to grab control over the Stake High Council.

And this is what he does: On October 8, 1844, Brigham Young ordained more than *four hundred men* to the office of Seventy. On that single day. Now remember, he's just created these nine subordinate Quorums of Seventy by creating their presidencies out of the original Quorum of Seventy; now he's going to fill up those quorums. How is he going to do it? Well, basically he's going to take all the priesthood holders he can that live in the Nauvoo Stake and he's going to call them as Seventies to fill up these additional Quorums of Seventy he has created. Why is he going to do this? So, he can strip virtually all priesthood holders out of Nauvoo Stake and diminish the power of the Stake High Council.

Again, the details are that on October 8, 1844, Brigham Young ordained more than 400 men to the office of Seventy. This included all deacons, teachers, and priests that existed in the Nauvoo Stake. It also included every elder under the age of 35. The Seventy had suddenly become the most numerous office in the church, accounting for about 80% of Nauvoo's males who held priesthood office. So suddenly on October 8, 1844, 80% of Nauvoo's males suddenly become Seventies. And they are in subordinate Quorums of Seventy.

The reason for this was the ambiguity of succession that Brigham Young was trying to overcome. This mass ordination of Nauvoo's males to the office of Seventy removed them from the jurisdiction of the Stake High Council. The Stake High Council had authority over elders, and also the other Aaronic priesthood offices. So when Brigham Young took 400 of them and ordained them to the office of the Seventy, he took them out from under the jurisdiction of the Stake High Council and was stripping the Stake High Council of its priesthood membership.

Believe it or not, by the time of the exodus from Nauvoo -and that was early in 1846- guess how many quorums of Seventy Brigham Young had filled up? The answer is *thirty-five*. In less than a year and a half, Brigham Young had filled up thirty-five Quorums of Seventy. This accounted for most of the males who received the endowment in the Nauvoo Temple, and transferred nearly two-thousand and five hundred men out of the jurisdiction of the Stake High Council. This is how Brigham Young overwhelmed by sheer numbers the revealed equality of authority which Section 107 says the High Council at Nauvoo shared with the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

Now in addition to this, Brigham Young used another administrative technique to remove most High Priests from the jurisdiction of the High Council. Remember, he's gotten rid of most of the elders, the

deacons, the teachers and the priests. Now he's going to get rid of most of the high priests from the High Council.

Here's how he does it: On the same day he depopulated the quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood and the elders through the mass ordination of Seventies, Brigham Young selected eighty-five of Nauvoo's high priests. To do what? To go abroad in all the congressional districts of the United States to preside over the branches of the church.

He made them Branch Presidents.

He took eighty-five of the High Priests and made them Branch Presidents. And why did he do that? Who has authority in the mission field where there are not Stakes organized? If you remembered the answer is the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, you're correct.

So this is another way Brigham Young took priesthood officers out of the Stake and put them under his jurisdiction. In addition to those eighty-five High Priests, three months later Brigham Young called another fifty High Priests as missionaries. Also outside the jurisdiction of the High Council and under the jurisdiction of the Quorum of the Twelve.

In this way Brigham Young completely circumvented the Nauvoo High Council, which only three years before had been given the revealed designation in [D&C 124:131](#), as "the cornerstone of Zion."

Well, what happened to William Marks, the President of the Stake? Here is what happened to William Marks: First, William Marks was released by Brigham as the Nauvoo Stake President. Then Brigham Young tried to have him excommunicated. But the High Council would not go for it. On December 7, 1844, Brigham Young accused William Marks of apostasy.

Some things never change, do they? His tactic was to accuse William Marks of apostasy because he refused to sign a statement repudiating Sidney Rigdon's claims, and those were Sidney Rigdon's claims that he should be the guardian of the church and not the Twelve Apostles.

William Marks barely preserved his membership in the church, and he did so by signing a statement on December 9th that condemned Sidney Rigdon and acknowledged the authority of the Quorum of the Twelve. So he kissed the Quorum of the Twelve's ring and he was allowed to stay a member of the church. The apostles published his statement, but never bothered to take any further action against him.

For most Mormons, that was really not necessary. One Mormon even regarded the humiliating release of Marks as Stake President as the equivalent of excommunication. "President Marks has been cut off and Uncle John Smith is put in his place." That's from the Nauvoo High Council minutes, December 7, 1844. (See [Dinger, Ed., \*The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes\*](#), pg 535-536).

So really, he is pretty much out of the way. But that wasn't quite good enough for Brigham Young. William Marks ended up leaving Nauvoo in the latter part of February 1845. Things were made very hot by Brigham Young for any dissenters. And by dissenters, I mean Mormons who did not support fully the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the leaders of the church. Remember, there had just been a huge

succession crisis; not everybody voted for Brigham Young and the apostles. Many voted for other people. There was Sidney Rigdon, there was James Strang, and there were several others to boot.

### **Getting Down and Dirty**

So now that the majority voted for Brigham Young and the apostles, what to do with the people who would not get in line with Brigham Young and the apostles? And believe me, if you had voted against Brigham Young and the apostles back in August, it really didn't make that much difference what you said. You were going to be under suspicion that you still did not support Brigham Young and the apostles.

As I say, things were made very hot for any dissenters. And things were made hot by various means, including the activities of a certain group of men called "the whittling and whistling brigade."

Many of us in the church have heard of this whittling and whistling brigade. However, in church art and church stories this is typically represented as a bunch of young boys who wander around the streets of Nauvoo and they have pocket knives out and they whittle on sticks, and while they whittle they whistle. The idea being, that if they see a stranger in Nauvoo or someone who looks like they mean harm, then they are supposed to follow them and whittle and whistle; not only to annoy them, but also to notify others that there's a problem going on so that more boys will show up and eventually this person who's in town, this stranger who means no good, will get fed up and he'll leave town just because it's so annoying and bothersome that all these boys are whittling and whistling.

That, as I say, is the Church presentation of what the whittling and whistling brigade was. The reality was something completely different. The reality was much more threatening. The reality was that these were not young boys, but in fact they were young men and adults. Not only are they not little boys, they're also not whittling with pocket knives. They're whittling with Bowie knives.

They were armed with knives from ten to fourteen inches long. And what would happen is, a dozen young men and adults would press close to a dissenter or a suspicious non-Mormon. And their incessant whittling with those large knives was enough to strike terror to the hearts of the victims, and they would get out of town as quick as their legs would carry them.

Now you can understand there's quite a difference between a bunch of kids with pocket knives whittling, and grown men with Bowie knives whittling and whistling and getting very close to you. One would be an annoyance; the other would be an implicit death threat. And that is how a number of dissenters were gotten rid of out of Nauvoo. Because they were no longer welcome in town and Brigham Young made sure that they knew they were not welcome in town so that they would leave as soon as possible.

One witness in Nauvoo saw a dissenter to Brigham Young going out of town "whittled" by about 20 men with long Bowie knives kicking him down and pushing him in the mud for three quarters of a mile. As to William Marks specifically, the humiliated and released former Stake President of Nauvoo? the hostile environment in the city and his place in the church now was enough to induce him to leave town voluntarily. In other words, William Marks spared himself the repressive tactics which the Twelve and their supporters were using against suspected dissenters. Brigham Young himself wryly observed that "Brother William Marks had gone without being whittled out." This was the verb that was used for people who were run out of town by the whittling and whistling brigade: being "whittled" out.

## Was A Third Smith Brother Assassinated?

Now we come to the sad and tragic tale of Samuel Smith. You will remember that Samuel Smith was Joseph Smith's brother. Pretty much the only thing we hear about Samuel Smith in church is that he was the first missionary in the LDS Church. He was the one who took a bunch of newly printed copies of the Book of Mormon, put them in his knapsack, and traveled throughout the countryside handing them out to different people and different families. And sometimes we hear about the impact that missionary work had on members in the church and the new members that that missionary effort by Samuel Smith brought in.

What we don't hear in church about Samuel Smith is what happened to him after Joseph Smith died. And there's probably good reason for that.

Samuel Smith was in Nauvoo July 10, 1844. His brothers Hyrum and Joseph had just been killed on June 27, 1844, thirteen days before. But on July 10th Samuel Smith shows up, and he has a remarkable claim to make. Remember we talked about all the people who came forward saying they had appointments by Joseph Smith to be the President of the Church? And how, according to the Doctrine and Covenants, a specific and personal appointment by Joseph Smith to be the next president seems to be required in order to qualify for that office of President? Well, Samuel Smith had such a claim. Samuel Smith claimed he had an appointment by his brother Joseph Smith and that appointment was to become President of the Church if Joseph and Hyrum Smith both died.

Now that may sound a little convenient from this point of view, considering the fact that Joseph and Hyrum Smith *had* both died. But remember, Joseph was a Prophet, Seer and Revelator, so presumably his followers would believe that Joseph Smith could predict such an outcome. We find this fact in the diary of William Clayton for July 12, 1844. And in his [July 12, 1844, entry](#) he talks about the meeting that he had with Samuel Smith two days before on July 10, 1844. Also present at this meeting was Willard Richards, W.W Phelps, and John Smith.

Now, Willard Richards was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He was also a cousin of Brigham Young, and Willard Richards wanted to put the brakes on Samuel Smith's claim that he should now be President due to this appointment from Joseph Smith. And Willard Richards wanted to put the brakes on it until at least August, because the other apostles were out in different parts of the country. They had been sent there to stump for Joseph Smith's candidacy for President. And they had to take time to get back to Nauvoo, that's why it took till August for all the apostles to get back in Nauvoo. Willard Richards wanted to delay Samuel Smith's claim until August.

There was enough talk about Samuel Smith's succession claim that the newspaper in Springfield, Illinois reported "a son of Joe Smith," (apparently Joe Smith Sr.) -"a son of Joe Smith, it is said, had received the revelation that he was to be the successor of the Prophet." So apparently this news was getting bandied about to the point where the newspaper in Springfield, Illinois even reported on it. But after Samuel Smith made his claim to church leaders on July 10, but before the apostles all returned to Nauvoo in August, Samuel Smith died.

It is the circumstances of his death that are of interest. Samuel became violently ill and died on July 30, 1844. Now this seemed highly coincidental, and perhaps suspicious to a number of people that Samuel

Smith should come into town, claim that he is the next successor to Joseph Smith by direct appointment, and then shortly after making that claim Samuel becomes violently ill and dies twenty days after making that claim. John M. Bernhisel, who is a physician and also a member of the Council of Fifty, told William Smith that his brother Samuel had somehow been poisoned by anti-Mormons.

So John Bernhisel may have thought it was poisoning, but he attributed it to anti-Mormons. Other people, however, thought it was poisoning, but not anti-Mormons who did it; but rather the most true and faithful Mormons -at least the most true and faithful Mormons to Brigham Young and the apostles.

William Smith learned from Samuel's widow that Hosea Stout had acted as his brother's nurse while he was sick and given him "white powder" for medicine every day until Samuel Smith died. Now as I said, Samuel became ill within days of the discussion of his succession right; and by July 24, which was 14 days later, was already very sick. He would die six days after that, on July 30th.

William Smith eventually concluded that apostle Willard Richards -remember, Willard Richards was the one who wanted to delay the discussion of Samuel Smith's appointment until all the apostles got back, including his cousin Brigham Young- William Smith eventually concluded that apostle Willard Richards asked Hosea Stout to murder Samuel Smith. The motive was to prevent Samuel from becoming Church President before the full Quorum of the Twelve arrived in Nauvoo.

William Smith had some basis for this belief. First, Hosea Stout was a Missouri Danite and a senior officer in the Nauvoo police. Additionally, you will remember that William Clayton was the scribe at the July 10, 1844, meeting at which Samuel Smith claimed he had the right of succession from Joseph Smith.

Well, later on, William Clayton believed that Hosea Stout was out to murder *him*. This is an amazing story. This is three years later; it's 1847. You'll remember that it was in 1847 the first company of saints headed west from Winter Quarters. Well, before that happened, William Clayton went to Brigham Young and asked him for a special favor. William Clayton asked Brigham Young if William Clayton could be in the first company of saints to go West. The reason why he asked him this is reflected in William Clayton's own journal. It was because William Clayton claimed that Hosea Stout -once again there's Hosea Stout- William Clayton claimed that Hosea Stout had threatened to murder him as soon as the apostles left. So, it appears William Clayton at least regarded Hosea Stout as capable of murder. William Clayton in his diary did not record any attempt by Brigham Young to dispute this assessment. In other words, Brigham Young didn't try and argue with him and say no Hosea Stout's not trying to murder you. Instead, Brigham Young granted William Clayton's request to go west with the first company of saints.

So this appears to be the type of person that Hosea Stout was. Was he capable of murder? Well, he was certainly capable of threatening William Clayton with murder in 1847. And yet there seems to be more evidence along this line. Samuel's daughter also believed her father was murdered. What she wrote was this: "My father was undoubtedly poisoned." She also wrote that her uncle, who's name is Arthur Milliken, was poisoned at the same time, and she notes that "the same doctors were treating my father" -that's Samuel Smith- "the same doctors were treating my father and Uncle Arthur at the same time."

So you've got the same doctors treating them, they both have these same symptoms, they both get violently ill. Then she adds this: "Uncle Arthur discontinued the medicine" -you know, the medicine that was supposed to be making them get better- "Uncle Arthur discontinued the medicine without letting them know that he was doing so. Father continued taking it until the last dose." And according to Samuel's daughter, Samuel Smith spit it out and said he was poisoned. But it was too late. He died.

In what would be the modern-day equivalent of a death certificate, Nauvoo's sexton recorded that Samuel Smith died of Bilious Fever. Now, Bilious Fever did cause the death of people from time to time, and in fact, Bilious Fever caused the death of two children that summer, the summer of 1844. But no other adults. So Samuel Smith is on record as being the only adult to die of Bilious Fever in the summer of 1844.

This troubling allegation, that Samuel Smith was poisoned because of his claim that Joseph Smith had appointed him to be the next President cannot be ignored, but also it cannot be verified. Nevertheless, William Clayton's diary confirms the efforts of Willard Richards to avoid the appointment of a successor before his first cousin Brigham Young arrived in town. And it will be recalled that Willard Richards was put into the reorganized First Presidency as a counselor to Brigham Young in December of 1847.

Turning back to [Hosea Stout's own diary](#), Hosea Stout describes several occasions when Brigham Young and other apostles seriously discussed having Hosea Stout "rid ourselves of various church members considered dangerous to the church and the apostles." Stout referred to this as, "cut him off behind the ears according to the law of God in such cases." Many years later Hosea Stout would be tried for attempted murder by the Salt Lake Municipal High Court. In that proceeding, Hosea Stout protested that "It has been my duty to hunt out the rotten spots in the kingdom." He added that he had "tried not to handle a man's case until it was right."

Evidence does not exist to prove conclusively whether the Prophet's brother, Samuel Smith, was such a case that Stout handled. So, although we cannot say with certainty that Samuel Smith was murdered, we can say that members of his family believe that he was murdered. That the allegation of Hosea Stout murdering him is not inconsistent with Hosea Stout's known character and the circumstances surrounding Samuel Smith's death are suspicious at best.

### **So Here We Are Today**

This is going to conclude part two of the podcast, Apostolic Coup d'état, wherein we have set forth the evidence of how it is that Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles, in a breathtaking power grab, assumed absolute and complete control of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. First, Brigham Young got rid of all the competition for leadership of the Twelve. He got rid of the First Quorum of Seventy; he got rid of the Stake High Council; he got rid of the Stake President; he excommunicated Sidney Rigdon; and he made the office of Church Patriarch a mere figurehead. Brigham Young thereafter reconstituted the First Presidency with three apostles in it and took over control of the church.

George Q. Cannon was a later apostle in the church. He was a counselor to Brigham Young at the time of his death in 1877, and George Q. Cannon made a statement shortly after Brigham Young's death which is of interest here and which we will use to conclude this podcast. He may have been alluding to Brigham

Young's autocratic usurpation of power when George Q. Cannon recorded in his journal this, after Brigham Young's death:

"Some of my brethren, as I have learned since the death of President Brigham Young, did have feelings concerning his course. They did not approve of it, and felt oppressed; and yet they dared not exhibit their feelings to him. He ruled with so strong and stiff a hand, and they felt that it would be of no use. In a few words, the feeling seems to be that he transcended the bounds of the authority which he legitimately held."

George Q. Cannon concludes his journal entry by saying "I have been greatly surprised to find so much dissatisfaction in such quarters."

So everything that this podcast has been talking about, the way that Brigham Young transcended the bounds of his authority in order to do a coup d'état on the church -that feeling was held by other leaders of the church at the time of President Brigham Young. Only they dared not say it to him because they were scared of him.

That's how much they didn't want to cross him. That's how much they just said, we'll let it slide. But after he died they started talking to each other, as will happen when a person dies. And George Q. Cannon, though he was surprised to find so much dissatisfaction in such quarters, nevertheless made a notation of it in his journal entry so that we can have it today.