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# David W. Patten

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(1799–1838)

## Testimony of the Twelve Apostles

D&C 114:1; 124:19, 130

“I was looking for the Church of Christ to arise in its purity, according to the promise of Christ,” David wrote.<sup>1</sup> A letter from his brother, John Patten, informing him of the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ caused David to journey over three hundred miles to Indiana to learn more from his brother. Convinced of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, he accepted baptism.

Following his baptism, David was ordained an elder on June 17, 1832, and returned home to southern Michigan to tell his neighbors about his new religion. “The Lord did work with me wonderfully,” David wrote,

in signs and wonders following them that believed in the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, insomuch that the deaf were made to hear, the blind to see, and the lame were made whole. Fevers, palsies, crooked and withered limbs, and in fact all manner of diseases common to the country, were healed by the power of God, that was manifested through his servants.<sup>2</sup>

When David moved from Michigan to Kirtland, the Prophet Joseph Smith asked him to continue on to Clay County, Missouri. The Prophet believed David would be a blessing

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<sup>1</sup> *Millennial Star* 26 (25 June 1864): 406.

<sup>2</sup> David W. Patten quote, in Lycurgus A. Wilson, *Life of David W. Patten: The First Apostolic Martyr* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1904), 16.

to the Saints in Missouri and penned, "O, may God grant it a blessing for Zion, as a kind angel from heaven."<sup>3</sup>

On February 15, 1835, David was called to be an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was blessed to "be like one of old, who bore testimony of Jesus."<sup>4</sup> David joined other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to serve a mission to the eastern states before serving a mission to the southern states. While preaching in Tennessee, he and his companion were arrested for promising the Holy Ghost to anyone who would accept baptism. They were held under a \$2,000 bond until their trial on June 22, 1835. At the trial, David

delivered a speech of about twenty minutes, holding them spell-bound while he told them of their wickedness and abominations that they were guilty of, also of the curse of God that awaited them, if they did not repent, for taking up two harmless, inoffensive men for preaching the Gospel of Christ.

The judge said to him, "You must be armed with secret weapons, or you would not talk in this fearless manner to an armed court." David replied, "I have weapons that you know not of, and they are given me of God."<sup>5</sup>

Following the trial, David was "warned in a dream to get up and flee, as a mob would soon be there." As he was attempting to flee, David recalled,

I became aware that a person [Cain] was on foot by his side keeping pace with the mule on which [I] rode. . . . His head was about even with my shoulders as I sat in my saddle. He wore no clothing, but was covered with hair. His skin was very dark. I asked him where he dwelt and he replied that he had no home, that he was a wanderer in the earth and traveled to and fro. He said he was a very miserable creature, that he had earnestly sought death during his sojourn upon the earth, but that he could not die, and his mission was to destroy the souls of men. About the time he expressed himself thus, I rebuked him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by virtue of the Holy Priesthood, and commanded him to go hence, and he immediately departed out of my sight.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]. Joseph Smith Papers.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes, Discourses, and Blessings, February 1835, 14–15. Joseph Smith Papers.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, *Life of David W. Patten*, 43–45.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, *Life of David W. Patten*, 43–45.

When David returned to Kirtland, he expressed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that he wished to die a martyr's death. Joseph replied, "When a man of your faith asks the Lord for anything, he generally gets it."<sup>7</sup>

On October 24, 1838, when news reached David that a mob had taken Latter-day Saint prisoners, he determined to rescue them. About seventy-five men volunteered to join him in the rescue attempt the next day. His biographer wrote,

With the watch-word 'God and Liberty' on his lips, David, ordering a charge, ran forward. The mob fled in confusion before the rush that followed . . . but as David led the pursuit down the river bank [of Crooked River], a mobber who had taken refuge behind a tree for a momentary pause before taking to the river, turned and shot him in the abdomen.

David was carried from the battle to the Stephen Winchester home. In that home he said, "I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me." He also said, "Brethren, you have held me by your faith, but do give me up, and let me go, I beseech you."<sup>8</sup> David died in the evening of October 25, 1838, at age of 38.

The Prophet Joseph wrote, "Brother David W. Patten was a very worthy man, beloved by all good men who knew him. He was one of the Twelve Apostles, and died as he lived, a man of God and strong in the faith of a glorious resurrection, in a world where mobs will have no power or place." At his funeral, the Prophet Joseph pointed to his lifeless body and said, "There lies a man that has done just as he said he would he has laid down his life for his friends."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Wilson, *Life of David W. Patten*, 53.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, *Life of David W. Patten*, 67–69.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, *Life of David W. Patten*, 70–71.