
“Planted in Their Stead”

D&C 114:2

On April 17, 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation admonishing Elder David W. Patten, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, to “settle up all his business as soon as he possibly can, and make a disposition of his merchandise, that he may perform a mission unto me next spring, in company with others, even twelve including himself” (D&C 114:1). On that mission, Elder Patten was “to testify of my name and bear glad tidings unto all the world” (v. 1). The mission referred to was England, and the “twelve, including himself” was a reference to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

In this same revelation, the Lord told the Prophet Joseph, “Inasmuch as there are those among you who deny my name, others shall be planted in their stead” (D&C 114:2). Before the spring mission of 1839, some of the members of the Twelve lost their faith in the Restoration—Thomas B. Marsh, Lyman Johnson, Luke Johnson, John F. Boynton, and William McLellin. As for David W. Patten, he had begun to make the necessary preparations for the mission to England. But in October 1838, threats against Latter-day Saints in Missouri turned his attention from preparation to defending “not only the property of the Saints but also their lives.” Elder Patten led “seventy-five volunteers against the mob of thirty or forty, hoping to rout them without bloodshed.” During the ensuing fray at Crooked River, Elder Patten was shot. He died the next day. Joseph Smith said of him, “[David W. Patten] died as he had 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.”¹

As promised in this revelation “others shall be planted in their stead.” Among those planted in the stead of the Twelve were John Taylor, George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards. These men were ordained to the apostleship and served the mission to England.

¹ Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:171.

Elder M. Russell Ballard was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on October 6, 1985, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Elder Bruce R. McConkie. Elder Ballard said on that occasion,

My brothers and sisters, I am deeply humbled at the confidence of the Lord and my Brethren and pledge to you that I will do the very best I know how. The past nine and a half years, as I have been sent on errands for the Lord throughout the earth, have caused me to know that this Church is filled with righteous, good, dedicated men. Each of us obediently learns that we will come forth as we are called, to try to do the very best we can in our callings, whether it be home teacher, whether it be stake president, or whether it be General Authority.

I understand the source of the call. I have learned during the past nine and a half years that this is our Heavenly Father's church. The errands that I have been sent on to act in the name of the Lord enable me to witness to you today that I know, as I know that I stand before you, that Jesus is the Christ, that He lives. He is very close to this work and very close to all of us who are asked to perform the work throughout the earth in His name.

I would like also to bear witness that in my particular case the veil between here and the hereafter is rather thin. I acknowledge that it has been a great blessing in my life to be born of goodly parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents who have given everything they have been asked to give to the building of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Now, my brothers and sisters, I would ask for an interest in your faith and prayers. I express my affection to my wife and my children, who sustain me in whatever the Lord might ask me to do. I am grateful for this abundant blessing and pray humbly that I might serve you, the membership of this Church, in a way that would be pleasing and acceptable unto our Heavenly Father, and ask this prayer humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.²

² M. Russell Ballard, "In Response to the Call," *Ensign*, November 1985.