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# Church Conferences

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## D&C 44:2

Before this revelation was received by the Prophet Joseph Smith in February 1831, three conferences of the Church had been held at the Peter Whitmer log home in Fayette, New York. At each of the three conferences, those who had joined the Church and those who were curious were invited to attend. The June 1831 conference to be held in Kirtland, Ohio, was to be different than the previous conferences. Only the elders of the Church were specifically invited to attend. It was later reported that about two thousand members were also in attendance.

The revelation called the elders from their various fields of labor, whether “from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south” (D&C 44:1). The reason for their call to assemble was the promise that when they returned to their fields of labor, the Spirit of the Lord would be poured out upon them and “many shall be converted insomuch that ye shall obtain power to organize yourselves according to the laws of man; That your enemies may not have power over you” (D&C 44:4–5).

In early June 1831, the elders began arriving in Kirtland in response to letters directing them to attend the conference (D&C 44:1). The minutes recorded by John Whitmer reveal that there were 44 elders present, 4 priests, and 15 teachers for the June 3–6, 1831 conference. The conference began with Joseph Smith “in exhortation” and a prayer by Sidney Rigdon. Four of the brethren were then ordained high priests by Joseph Smith, including Hyrum Smith, the brother of the Prophet Joseph. Several other brethren were ordained high priests by Sidney Rigdon. Bishop Edward Partridge blessed those who were ordained “in the name of the Church according to commandment.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Minutes of a general Conference held in Geauga County Ohio June 3, 1831,” in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 6–7.

At the conference, it was reported that “the Lord displayed His power to the most perfect satisfaction of the Saints. The man of sin was revealed, and the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood was manifested and conferred for the first time upon several of the Elders.” One elder wrote,

It was clearly evident that the Lord gave us power in proportion to the work to be done, and strength according to the race set before us, and grace and help as our needs required. Great harmony prevailed; several were ordained; faith was strengthened; and humility, so necessary for the blessing of God to follow prayer, characterized the Saints.<sup>2</sup>

Parley P. Pratt wrote,

In this conference much instruction was given by President Smith who spoke in great power as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and the spirit of power and of testimony rested down upon the Elders in a marvelous manner. Here also were some strange manifestations of false spirits which were immediately rebuked.<sup>3</sup>

The Spirit of the Lord fell upon the Prophet Joseph Smith—

He prophesied that John the Revelator was then among the Ten Tribes of Israel ... to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion, to again possess the land of their fathers. ... He saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Father, making intercession for his brethren, the Saints. He said that God would work a work in these last days that tongue cannot express and the mind is not capable to conceive. The glory of the Lord shown around.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “History of the Church” (manuscript), book A-1, 118. Joseph Smith Papers.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Facer Proctor and Marine Jensen Proctor, ed., *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt: Revised and Enhanced Edition* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 82.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:176; “The Papers of Zebedee Coltrin.” In E. Cecil McGavin, *The Record of the Spanish Fork Branch* (29 April 1866 to 1 December 1898), 250–251. Church History Library.