

Why James J. Strang was the legal successor to Joseph Smith

Throughout this article we will be bringing forth the following as the main reasons why James J. Strang was the true successor to Joseph Smith.

1. James J. Strang was the only man who received an appointment from Joseph Smith to be his successor.
2. James J. Strang was the only man who claimed an Angelic ordination.
3. James J. Strang was the only man who continued to receive multiple revelations during his administration.
4. James J. Strang was the only man who was given the Urim and Thummim as Joseph Smith did in order to translate other records. (The Book of the Law)
5. James J. Strang was the only man who did not usurp authority by elevating themselves above others who were higher in authority than themselves. (The First Presidency)
6. James J. Strang was the only man who continued to teach the gospel in accordance with the written law and scriptures.
7. James J. Strang was the only man who taught and practiced the true Saturday Sabbath.

There is a pattern and order to be followed pertaining to the things of God that have been established from the beginning. Isaiah 8:20. "To the law and to the testimony; and if they speak [or do] not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." "For verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate [the authorized way] and be ordained as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed." Doctrine and Covenants 43:7.

Since God's laws cannot fail, and it is an immutable fact that they do not change (since our God is an unchangeable God), it follows that his laws on Priesthood cannot change. It was established even in our pre-existent spiritual state, that men were called or chosen, and *pre-ordained* in heaven to hold the Melchizedek priesthood in life. The following quotes are such examples:

Jer. 1:5 - "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

Alma 13:1-3, 5, 7-9. ... "I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.

2. And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.

3. And this is the manner after which they were ordained – being called and

prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works. . .

5. "Thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared"

7. "This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, *being prepared from eternity to all eternity*, according to his foreknowledge of all things. "

8. "Now they were ordained after this manner – being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end ."

"9. Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years..."

In 2nd Tim. 1:9, Paul tells Timothy - ". . . and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Abraham 3:23 – "And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born."

The same pattern of being called and ordained exists on the earth as it did in heaven. In the New Testament, the example is given in Hebrews which states that a man must be called and ordained as was Aaron in order for his priesthood to be legal: Hebrews 5:4 - "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

Leviticus 8:4, 12, clarifies how God called and ordained Aaron through Moses: "And Moses did as the Lord commanded him... And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him."

Please note that even our Lord and Savior had to be called and ordained;

Heb. 1:8-9 "8. But unto the Son he [Almighty God] saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. 9. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy Fellows."

Hebrews 5:5-6 - "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Acts 17:31 also states Christ was ordained by God...“he will judge the world in righteousness by him whom he hath ordained; . . .”

1st Tim. 2:4. “Christ Jesus, who is the Only Begotten Son of God, and ordained to be a Mediator between God and man; . . .”

1st Peter 1:20) - “Who [referring to Christ] verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”

Since Jesus is our perfect example, and he needed to be called and ordained, it should be expected that all persons must be called and ordained to the office they hold. When a man is elevated to a higher priesthood, he must be ordained by the laying on of hands by someone who has equal or higher authority for his priesthood to be legal. Hebrews 7:7. "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better". For example, Christ was ordained by God, and the twelve Apostles by Christ. Peter, James, and John [each Lawgiver Prophets during their lifetimes] ordained Joseph Smith to be a Lawgiver Prophet.

It is also true that there isn't any precedence in the scriptures where a man is ordained to any of the offices within the Melchizedek Priesthood who has the rights to all the various keys and priesthood offices *except* the Prophet Lawgiver. The Prophet Lawgiver is the only one who can write a revelation or establish written law for the Church. Members of the priesthood may speak as they are moved by the Holy Ghost, or receive knowledge from the Holy Ghost, but they cannot make laws.

Nor is there any precedent where the keys and priesthood offices lay dormant within the Melchizedek Priesthood, and then when the need arises, that office is assumed and those keys possessed.

As stated before, the Prophet Lawgiver must be called and ordained to that higher office by someone who has the same office or higher. Therefore, the only way a man can become a Prophet Lawgiver is by angelic ordination. It cannot be done by seniority or by vote. The keys to the Prophetic office are held by only one man at a time, and can only be bestowed by God or angels who held that office while they were upon the earth.

Doctrine & Covenants 132:7 explains the pattern or law of God regarding the Prophetic office. “. . . by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and **there is never but one on the earth at a time** on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred . . .” (Emphasis mine)

To give an example in the scriptures on the law of succession, or the making of a Prophet Lawgiver, we can follow the pattern of how Moses became a Prophet Lawgiver. Besides Christ, the best example from the Bible is Moses. Moses was called by the voice

of God and ordained under the hand of the angel who appeared to him at the burning bush. Let's look at the elements that are necessary to be a legal Prophet Lawgiver.

First, called by or chosen by God –

“God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said Moses, Moses. . .
“Come now therefore, and *I will send* thee unto Pharaoh, that thou; mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Ex. 3:4&10).

“Who made thee a ruler and a judge? The same did God *send* to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush” (Acts 7:35).

“And there arose not a *prophet* since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10).

Second, a proper ordination –

“...to Moses, who was *ordained by the hand of angels* to be a mediator of this first covenant” (Gal. 3:19)

Since Joseph Smith was a Lawgiver Prophet, it was equally important for him to be called and ordained to the Prophetic office – just like Moses, as explained in Doctrine and Covenants 28:2. “But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith Jun., for he receiveth them as Moses.”

When Peter, James and John conferred the keys of the kingdom upon *both* Joseph and Oliver, it says nothing about the keys of mysteries and revelations (D&C 27:12-13). As stated above, it can only be held by one man at a time. Joseph's ordination to the Prophetic office was a separate ordination involving only him.

It is important to notice that every time it mentions where the keys are given to multiple people in the same era, it is always the keys of the kingdom which are given. But when it comes to the keys of mysteries and revelations, it is only given to the Prophet Lawgiver. The keys of the kingdom and the keys of mysteries and revelations are two separate types of keys, and they are completely different from each other.

Doctrine and Covenants 27:12-13 – "12. And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them; 13. Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth".

Now, let's look at what special keys and gifts Oliver Cowdery possessed. We can

see from reading Section 6:25, 27-28 of Doctrine & Covenants, that Oliver also received the right and keys to help translate the Book of Mormon. 25. “And, behold, I grant unto you a gift, if you desire of me, to translate, even as my servant Joseph. 28 And now, behold, I give unto you, and also my unto my servant Joseph, the keys of this gift, which shall bring to light this ministry; and in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” Doctrine and Covenants Section 8 tells us even more concerning the gifts and keys that Oliver possessed:

“1. Oliver Cowdery, verily, verily, I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your redeemer, even surely shall you receive knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart... 2. Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. 3. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; [or inspiration] behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground. 4. Therefore this is thy gift; apply unto it, and blessed art thou, for it shall deliver you out of the hands of your enemies, when, if it were not so, they would slay you and bring your soul to destruction. 5. Oh, remember these words, and keep my commandments. Remember, this is your gift. 6. Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron; behold, it has told you many things; 7. Behold, there is no other power, save the power of God that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you. 8. Therefore, doubt not, for it is the gift of God; and you shall hold it in your hands, and do marvelous works; and no power shall be able to take it away out of your hands, for it is the work of God. 9. And, therefore, whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, and you shall have knowledge concerning it. 10. Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not. 11. Ask that you may know the mysteries of God, and that you may translate and receive knowledge from all those ancient records which have been hid up, that are sacred; and according to your faith shall it be done unto you. 12. Behold, it is I that have spoken it; and I am the same that spake unto you from the beginning. Amen” (D&C 8:1-12).

In Section 28 of the Doctrine and Covenant, it explains the differences between the keys and separate offices that Joseph and Oliver held. “1. Behold, I say unto thee, Oliver, that it shall be given unto thee that thou shalt be heard by the church in all things whatsoever thou shalt teach them by the Comforter, concerning the revelations and commandments which I have given. 2. But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, **no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith Jun., for he receiveth them as Moses.** 3. And thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him, even as Aaron, to declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations, with power and authority unto the church. 4. And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the church, thou mayest do it. 5. But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom. 6. And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church; 7. **For I have given him the keys of mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead.**”

It is clear from this passage that they were not of the same degree of authority, and that the Prophet Lawgiver has keys, responsibilities and privileges that his counselors do not have. Also, please note the word “another”. Another is in the singular text, so therefore it means there was only ONE person that Joseph could appoint to succeed him in the prophetic office. The dictionary meaning of “another” is: “one more, one of the same kind.”

It further explains this in Section 107:91-92 of the Doctrine and Covenants. “91. And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses. 92. Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.” Notice the head of the church is the only one who receives all of the gifts or keys from God. In Section 124:125 it states - “I give unto you my servant Joseph to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be a translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet.”

One of the most important passages concerning this subject is contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 43:1-7: “1. O hearken, ye elders of my church, and give ear to the words which I shall speak unto you. 2. For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church, through him whom I have appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations from my hand. 3. 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. 4. 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. 5. And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments; 6. And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me. 7. For verily I say unto you, that **he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before**; to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed” (emphasis mine). Joseph sealed his testimony with his blood and was taken up to God to receive his crown of glory, but before his death he wrote the “Letter of Appointment,” appointing James J. Strang as his successor and the moment Joseph left this earth, angels ordained him to the Prophetic office.

In the Book of the Law, James J. Strang writes on page 166:6, "Consequently God called him (Joseph) by his own voice, and sent Peter, James and John to ordain him to the priesthood, because they, having been duly called and set apart, and filled an acceptable ministry on earth, had entered into life, capable of ministering in heaven and on earth, as God should send them." Also on page 173:4, it speaks concerning the prophecy regarding Joseph Smith in the Book of Mormon in 2nd. Nephi 2:2: "These prophecies were fulfilled in the Prophet Joseph, whom God called by his own voice to the Apostolick and Prophetick office, in 1829, and ordained to that calling by the hands of Peter, James, and John, who held that Priesthood in their times of life, and were sent expressly to confer it on him." See Doctrine & Covenants, Sections 1 & 3. Note: All of the Doctrine and

Covenants references cited by James J. Strang are from the 1835 edition.

What is the purpose for giving men the keys of the kingdom? When we examine Doctrine & Covenants 27:12-13, we can see that the keys of the kingdom pertain to the preaching of the gospel and its ordinances, and bearing witness of Jesus Christ. I quote in part - “confirm you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them. 13. Unto whom I have committed the keys of the kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times.” Notice verse thirteen mentions nothing in regard to the keys of mysteries and revelations.

Let us compare the story of Peter receiving the keys of the kingdom in Matthew 16:20 - “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven”. This, of course, is referring to the sealing powers, which is one of the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Peter would have been given the keys to the dispensation of the gospel at some point later in time, as well as the keys of mysteries and revelations after Jesus' death. Notice that Peter is still an Apostle shortly after Jesus' death. (See Acts 1:13-26).

Later, Paul takes Peter's place among the Twelve. James succeeded Peter as the Prophet after his death, and John would have succeeded James after his death, but they all conjointly held the keys of the Kingdom at the same time as Apostles to Christ (who was the Lawgiver Prophet). Doctrine & Covenants 128:20 states: “declaring themselves [Peter, James and John] as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times.” They carried those keys with them into the afterlife, but only one at a time can hold the keys of mysteries and revelations on the earth. That office is sole, only one can hold those keys at a time.

The most important thing to understand regarding this issue is that there is a difference between the keys of the kingdom and the keys of mysteries and revelations. Let us turn to James J. Strang's writings on this subject in the Prophetic Controversy, page 24.

“Crandall Dunn who was also at the conference in a letter to Mr. Appleby, dated two years afterward, accuses me of claiming the prophetic office at first by virtue of the appointment alone, and subsequently taking another position, and claiming it by the angelic ordination alone (Millennial Star, 1846, Vol. Viii, p. 93).

“I commend to you the reading of that letter in which Mr. Dunn complacently congratulates himself on having won a victory over me, in an encounter of logic, by showing that, though I had been duly appointed prophet, I could no more act in that calling than a justice of the peace can act in the office after being elected, until he is commissioned and has taken the oath of office.

“Not infrequently have I seen a blundering logician brought up by his own argument, which, like a two-edged sword, cuts both ways. Dunn's case is worse. If by this argument, he had shown I was no prophet, what does he show of Brigham, who does

not pretend to have been appointed or ordained?

“Dunn's logic is good. Orson Hyde and John Taylor, by the pains they have taken to publish it, have indorsed it. He has shown that a prophet must be both appointed and ordained, or he is no prophet. I am the only one that pretends to an ordination. If I have been ordained, Dunn's a false witness. If I have not, the words of God to Joseph, “I have given to Joseph the keys of the mysteries and revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead,” (D.&C. 28:7. 1844 Ed.) has fallen to the ground, and Joseph is a false witness of God, when he gives as the word of God, and this ye shall know assuredly, that there is *none other appointed* unto you to receive commandments and revelations, until Joseph be taken, if he abide in God (D&C, 43:3. 1844 Ed.).

“This last text binds the Almighty to his people, not only that he will send no other to teach by revelation and commandment while Joseph remains, but it binds him also to appoint another in his stead, whenever Joseph was taken, or, failed to abide in God.

“So Dunn's argument, though not a two-edged sword is held with the edge the wrong way and cuts home. Joseph has been taken. If I have not been appointed according to my claim, no one has been appointed in fulfillment of this law, or no other one pretends it. Let Joseph be true, though Dunn be a liar. We will lay him away among false witnesses, by the side of Harvey Green.

“But, though done with him as witness, I am not done with his argument. In the same letter he embodies an argument common to the Brighamites. The argument is, that I could not receive the keys of the kingdom from Joseph, because he holds them in the world to come; and thus I could not receive them from an angel, because last on earth before Joseph, they were held by Peter, James and John, and they gave to Joseph, who alone holds them forever.

“All the force of this argument is in the false assumption that no one can impart the keys of the kingdom without divesting himself of them; and that but one can hold them at a time. The falsity of the assumption is apparent in the fact that Peter, James and John were all possessed of the keys when they conferred them on Joseph.

“Jesus Christ conferred the keys of the kingdom on Peter. By this Brighamite argument, though he is king of kings, and the prince of the kings of the earth, and has all power in heaven and on earth, he has not the keys of the kingdom. By the same rule of reasoning, as John held them subsequent to Peter and James, they had no business with them, and no power to confer them on Joseph, and their assuming to do so was a false pretense. Thus the Brighamite, not having the spirit by which Joseph was guided, make his revelations folly, in order to forge an argument against me.

“And that they may succeed by means of so flimsy pretenses, they have a custom of darkening counsel by words without knowledge, in which the keys of the kingdom, and the keys of mysteries and revelations are referred to, as though they were one and the same thing.

“Now the keys of the kingdom represent the power in its several degrees, belonging to those who attain to a Royal Priesthood on earth, which, if faithfully used, ever survives and is exercised in the resurrection and everlasting life, and may be held by ten or ten thousand each in his several rank or place.

“But the keys of mysteries and revelations represent that power by which a prophet and seer on earth obtains from God commandments and revelations, and

knowledge of mysteries to communicate unto men. It therefore cannot survive this life, for in another state of existence it has no office work to perform.

“Starting with this position, it is easy to see how Joseph may appoint a successor to hold the keys of mysteries and revelation, and yet himself, as well as the worthies before and after him, hold the keys of the kingdom in this world and also in the world to come.”

Another aspect to this subject that people misunderstand, is that they think the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood gives them the right to elevate a man as a Prophet Lawgiver without an angelic ordination. The lesser priesthood cannot ordain a man to be a Prophet who has a higher degree of priesthood than they possess. A Prophet Lawgiver while on the earth cannot ordain his successor because there would be two Prophets on the earth at the same time, which is against God's order. Therefore, the ordination must come from God or angels who held that office while they were on the earth.

The following verses lay out Priesthood order and the various offices contained within the Melchizedek Priesthood. But, however, no one can function in any office without being ordained.

Doctrine and Covenants Section 107:8-11. 8. “The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all of the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things. 9. The Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek; have a right to officiate in all of the offices in the church. 10. High priests after the order of the Melchizedek Priesthood have a right to officiate in their own standing, under the direction of the presidency, in administering spiritual things, and also in the office of an elder, priest (of the Levitical order), teacher, deacon, and member. 11 An elder has a right to officiate in his stead when the high priest is not present.”

You will also notice that the various offices are not of the same degree of authority. The lesser priesthood act under the direction of the higher, and the lesser cannot usurp authority over the higher priesthood. The above passages are explaining to the church how to conduct meetings; and shows God's order of how the highest degree of priesthood present has the right to take the lead of a meeting. It does not give anyone the right to assume a higher degree of priesthood in the event that the higher priesthood is not present or is dead – as was the case after the death of Joseph Smith.

A passage used by the Brighamites to justify the practice of someone in the Melchizedek Priesthood assuming the office of Prophet by voting instead of an angelic ordination, is in Doctrine and Covenants 107:22. It states, “22. Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church; form a quorum of the Presidency of the church.”

Some people have mistaken this verse, 107:22, as to referring to the First

Presidency instead of the Presidency of the quorum of the High Priests. In the older Doctrine and Covenants (as contained in the 1974 edition), that passage has footnote referring to Section 124:133-136, which clarifies what this passage was really referring to - it has since been taken out of the newer editions.

Note Section 124:133-136: “133. And again, I give unto you Don C. Carlos to be a president over a quorum of high priests; 134. Which ordinance is instituted for the purpose of qualifying those who shall be appointed standing presidents or servants over different stakes scattered abroad. 135. And they may travel also if they choose, but rather be ordained for standing presidents; this is the office of their calling, saith the Lord your God. 136. I give unto him Amasa Lyman and Noah Packard for counselors, that they may preside over the quorums of high priests of my church, saith the Lord.”

As we can see, it has nothing to do with the First Presidency, but pertains to the quorum of High Priests. Also, it takes away the idea that you can vote a Prophet of God into that office.

In regard to Brigham Young's voice and face appearing to look and sound like Joseph Smith's, it is interesting to note that there is no record of this ever happening in that meeting held on Aug. 8, 1844, as recorded in church history.

It is also an interesting fact that Brigham Young has this to say seven days later in a meeting held on Aug. 15, 1844.

“You are now without a Prophet present with you in the flesh to guide you; but you are not without Apostles,” In the same meeting Brigham goes on to say, “Let no man presume for a moment that his place will be filled by another, for, remember, he stands in his own place, and always will; and the twelve apostles of this dispensation stand in their own place and always will, both in time and in eternity, to minister, preside and regulate the affairs of the whole church.”

Brigham Young never claimed a call from God or an angelic ordination. We should believe Brigham's own words as recorded in the Utah Mormon history, the Journal of Discourses on June 3, 1860. Brigham Young made the following remarks in the Tabernacle at Salt Lake City, “The brethren testify that brother Brigham is brother Joseph's legal successor. **YOU NEVER HEARD ME SAY SO.** I say I am a good hand to keep the dogs and wolves out of the flock. I do not care a groat who rises up. I do not think anything about being Joseph's successor. . .” Journal of Discourses, Vol. 8, p. 69, (emphasis mine)

Later, it is also recorded that Brigham Young stated: ...“ People are always telling me that I am a Prophet, so I guess I am.” See Journal of Discourses Vol. 5, page 176. If such a miraculous occurrence of Brigham's face appearing like Joseph's really happened, why didn't Brigham Young, himself, know that he had been called to be the next Prophet? And why didn't the people who were present at that meeting record such a miraculous event in their private journals on that day, so that they could remember and cherish it

forever? The people's testimonies of this occurrence, was not recorded in their journals until a much later date. Brigham Young University proved that some of these testimonies were false, because some of the people who made those claims weren't even present on that day. A true prophet of God would know exactly what day, where, and who ordained him a Prophet of God.

James J. Strang has this to say regarding Brigham Young's claims. In the Book of the Law, pages 221–223:10-13. “10. In the present dispensation twelve apostles were called and ordained to the ministry. In 1837 a great falling away took place at Kirkland; and the twelve assumed authority in governing the church, in derogation of the right of Joseph the Prophet; but God rebuked them, saying, “Rebel not against my servant Joseph, for, verily I say unto you, I am with him, and my hand shall be over him.” “See to it that ye trouble not yourselves concerning the affairs of my church in this place, but purify your hearts before me, and then go ye into all the world and preach my gospel unto every creature; for unto you (the twelve) and those (the First Presidency) who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders is the power of this Priesthood given, for the last days, and for the last times.

“Notwithstanding this, at the death of Joseph, Brigham Young claimed, in behalf of the twelve, to supersede the entire First Presidency and stand at the head of the church. [By virtue of his superior priesthood Sidney Rigdon had the legal right to be at the head of the church as a counselor, if it would not have been that James J. Strang was called and ordained to fill Joseph's office.] urging upon the Saints that such was the true order, and that the twelve had not been suffered to fill their proper place during the life time of Joseph; and in this claim was sustained by an immense meeting of the saints, hurriedly assembled together at Nauvoo, the 8th of August, 1844. 12. One week later Brigham put forth an epistle to the whole Church, vindicating this claim, and it was generally acceded to in the church. A very few followed the Prophet James, and as the twelve could not stand against the arguments presented by his followers, they finally changed their position, acknowledged their error, and attempted to patch it up by electing Brigham Young First President, and H.C. Kimball and Willard Richards Counselors, which they accomplished at Winter Quarters, Dec. 24, 1847. 13. This did not help their case in the least; for the same Law which placed the Twelve under the direction of the First Presidency, made it necessary that the successor of Joseph should be appointed by revelation of God, through him, [Joseph] (Doctrine and Covenants Xi,4. Xiv. 1,2. Li, 2.) and that he should be ordained by an angel. They only succeeded in bringing Brigham Young into the Prophetick office by a revelation of the will of man, and no ordination at all.” [For a conversion into the 1844 edition: Section Xi 4. Is Section 35:18, Section Xiv.1,2. is Section 43:1-8, Section Li,2. is Section 28:2-3.]

In regard to Joseph Smith “rolling the kingdom upon the shoulders of the twelve,” James J. Strang has this to say in the pamphlet entitled the Prophetic Controversy, pages 6-8: “The Prophet said to the Conference, ‘I now roll the kingdom upon the shoulders of the Twelve, and they must bear off the kingdom.’

“Either this gave the Twelve the power they exercised from the death of Joseph till the exodus into the wilderness, or it did not. If it did not, there is an end of your

argument, and for that period they were usurpers.

“But if it did give that power, it gave it from the very time the words fell from the Prophet's lips. It is in the present tense, and very empathic, “I now roll the kingdom,” etc. Whatever new responsibilities these words placed upon the Twelve, whatever new powers they gave them, they took from the moment the words were spoken.

“Hence if these words gave Brigham Young or the Quorum of the Twelve the power which he and the power which he and they exercised, as the chief rulers on earth of the Church, they gave that power in presenti; and they became at that time the chief rulers, and superseded Joseph in his office as chief ruler. If the words made Brigham Young Prophet, Seer, Revelator, or anything else, they made him so then, and so far turned Joseph out.

“There is no escaping this conclusion. The language is not as the case of Christ to Peter, ‘I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom,’ but, ‘I now roll the kingdom upon your shoulders.’

“So if these words put Brigham in the prophetic office, they put him in the presenti, and turned Joseph out. And if they do not put him in the presenti and make Joseph a usurper and an impostor from then to the end of his life, they do not give him the office at all; and Brigham has been a usurper and an imposter from the time he assumed ‘to dictate all the affairs of the Church in all the world,’ until elected to the prophetic office by the Conference at Council Bluffs, subsequent to the exodus from Nauvoo; and he stands now just as much a prophet of God, as men can make him; inducted into office by as sacerdotal forms as popular election, instead of a call of God, and an evening dance instead of the anointing by the hands of Angels. . . .

“I am fully persuaded that you will agree with me, that Joseph did not, by that simple remark, set aside the revelations of God; change the constitution of the Church; abolish the prophetic office; turn himself out of the priesthood, and raise up the Twelve to the supreme headship on earth. Unless he did all these things, there is a full end of Brigham Young's pretensions.

“And if he did do all or any of these things, how strangely blind you and I and all the rest of the Church were, that we continued to look to Joseph as our Prophet and leader, who was to dictate all the affairs of the Church in all the world. How blind Joseph and Brigham were, that Joseph continued to act as Prophet; and Brigham to take missions under his direction.”

What Joseph was saying to the Twelve was that the keys of the Kingdom had been given unto them for the purpose of spreading the gospel to the world, not conferring upon them any higher office than they already held, and certainly not unto the Prophetic office. At this time, Joseph had called the Twelve back from their missions to Nauvoo because he knew that the gospel had been rejected. See Book of Mormon, 3Nephi 16:10. There are many recorded statements made by Brigham Young and the Twelve that the gospel had been rejected. The original duties of the Twelve was to be sent to other nations – they had no duties in regulating the affairs of the branches of the church. But once Joseph declared that the gospel had been rejected, he called the Twelve back to Nauvoo. He told them they would take their place among the stakes of Zion as Apostles of the church, and they would now help regulate the affairs of the church. However, they would not supersede him or the others of the First Presidency

Additionally there is no precedence or scriptural references that allows for the removal of the members of the First Presidency after the death of the Prophet, and then re-appointing new members or counselors to the next Prophet that succeeds him. The putting aside of Sidney Rigdon was not proper, or legal, his office is above the Twelve.

It is also worth addressing the issue of some people's understanding that all of the offices of the Melchizedek Priesthood are equal to one another in authority because of what it says in Section 107:22-37. What these verses are indicating is that when the various Quorums meet to discuss church business and vote as a Quorum of that branch of the Priesthood, their vote is equal to the vote of another Quorum. As Quorums they are equal to each other, but not individually as priesthood members. For example, an Elder is not equal in authority to a High Priest, and so forth. Every member of the priesthood acts under the direction of the priesthood above them. Not all members of the Melchizedek Priesthood have the right to act in every function pertaining to the gifts and keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. For example, an Apostle cannot translate, receive a revelation, or make Laws for the church.

It is interesting that virtually all revelations from God written unto the church ceased to be given to the men who took leadership of the church except for James J. Strang. He is also the only one who received the Urim and Thummim to translate other records. He translated the lost Book of the Law which was translated from the plates of Laban. One of the most important teachings within the Book of the law was the bringing forth the understanding of the true Saturday Sabbath. See Genesis 2:2-3. Exodus 31:13-18. This and many more teachings brought forth by James J. Strang mark him as a true Prophet lawgiver. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

I would like to close by using James J. Strang's own words in defending his claim as the legal successor to Joseph Smith. Prophetic Controversy, page 38:

"As prophet, I have foretold in the name of God, the ills that were coming on men, and directed all who received the word of the Lord how and where to come out from among the wicked, that they receive not of their plagues.

"I have obtained covenants and promises of God and at his hand obtained an everlasting inheritance for the Saints, which I have divided among them by lot, without cost or price. God is our God and we are his people forevermore.

"As a Seer, I have seen the visions of the Almighty and as a Revelator have received knowledge of his purposes and commandments, and made them known among the children of men.

"As a translator, I have brought forth hidden treasures, and revealed the old record to all who love the truth, and seek unto it. The visions of the past and the hidden lore of future ages are laid by the side of present hopes and future knowledge.

"As an apostle, I have borne a faithful testimony of the kingdom and the coming of the Lord Jesus. I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. In the treasure-house of the Almighty there is laid up for me a crown of glory richer than all diadems or earthly kings.

“Of all that dwell on earth, God has made me the most happy. From men I fear no evil. May God bless you abundantly with the same blessings, and especially with the love of the truth.

Truly and sincerely,
James J. Strang”

Appendix:

Testimonies for James J. Strang

In the pamphlet entitled *The Prophetic Controversy* on pages 8 and 9, James has this to say in regard to Brigham Young’s claims to lead the church -

“If Brigham received any such appointment as you [the Brighamites] claim, why did not all the Saints from Nauvoo to Manchester, or at least those present at the conference, know that he was established a Prophet of the Lord? Why did nobody learn it till some months later, and several weeks subsequent to Joseph's martyrdom. Yes, tell me, why did the Apostles, returning from their eastern missions by different routes, encourage all the Saints, saying ‘fear not, for if Joseph is taken, he has appointed another to take his place, and the appointment will be proclaimed as soon as we reach Nauvoo...’ Why were all the Saints in and out of Nauvoo assured, by the few men left in authority there; that Joseph had left important documents in their hands, under seal, which were to be opened on the return of the Apostles, and would show who was to lead the Church.”

What happened to those sealed documents? If the contents of those documents would have been read to the Saints there would not have been any doubt who had been called and appointed leader of the church. The contents of the sealed documents contained the “Letter of Appointment”, appointing James J. Strang as the next Prophet after the death of Joseph Smith. See pages 3-5 of the pamphlet entitled *The Diamond*.

Here are some of the testimonies of Joseph Smith's family and other members of the church that can be found in the *Gospel Herald*, and on pages.19-21 of the pamphlet entitled *The Revelations of James J. Strang*.

The testimony of William Smith and family: “I have, since I returned to Nauvoo last, been apprised for the first time of an appointment made by Brother Joseph to James J. Strang.

“On hearing this I took pains to gather all the evidence that could be adduced, to see if there was any foundation at all for the claims of Mr. Strang. I called in to see Sister Emma to inquire concerning the appointment. Sister Emma says that Joseph received a letter from Mr. Strang. Hyrum was present, and he called in John P. Green; at first Joseph thought all was not right, but Hyrum thought otherwise. They talked over matters awhile and came to the conclusion that Joseph would write a letter; so Joseph and Brother Green went out for that purpose.

“Emma also states that her son Joseph saw a man come into a room in Far West, Mo. and told him this church would go to Voree; the boy was only eight years old.

Joseph, his father, was in jail at the time. The boy remembers the vision, etc. Joseph, before he was martyred, when on his way from the temple hill home, saw a vision, and his mother recollects that when he came home he put his hands upon his eyes and prayed that the vision might pass, and that he stated that he heard as it were music in the heavens, but notes were low and sad as though they sounded the requiem of martyred prophets.

“I remember myself that Joseph said: 'My work is almost done; I feel that I shall rule a mighty host, but not in this world; the wolves are on the scent,' etc. Joseph bid his wife and mother farewell, saying: 'I am going as a lamb to the slaughter'; this was his impression. And I further state that Joseph did not appoint the Twelve as his successor, and I was in the last council with him and had an opportunity of hearing and knowing his sentiments in regard to these things.

“I also heard Joseph say that should that time ever come that Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimbal would lead this church, that they would lead it to hell. This was said in the hearing of Sister Emma Smith. The whole Smith family of the Joseph stock joins in sustaining J. J. Strang.

“It is to be remembered that, soon after Joseph and Hyrum's death, Brother Green died, and he was heard by numerous individuals to say that Joseph had appointed Strang. William Smith.

“This is to certify that the Smith family does believe in the appointment of James J. Strang.

William Smith, Patriarch,
Lucy Smith, Mother in Israel,
Arthur Milliken,
Nancy Milliken,
W. J. Salisbury,
Catherine Salisbury
Sophronia McClerie.
Nauvoo, March 1, 1846.”

Testimony of Johnathan Sumner:

“I Johnathan Sumner; do hereby testify that I was present at the conference held at Nauvoo soon after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, which was called by those who sought to place Sidney Rigdon at the head of the church. While in conversation with a number of elders, talking on the question of Sidney Ridgon's right to lead, John P. Green, marshal of the city, said: '*They need not trouble themselves about it, for Joseph had appointed one to stand in his stead.*' I asked him why he was not here to take his place. He said he was not ready, but would be here 'after a time' I asked him where he lived, and he said, 'Up north a considerable distance.' I asked his name and he said, 'Strang, James J. Strang.' I asked, what sort of man and he said, 'A young man,' I then asked whether he had ever been in Nauvoo, and he said he had been, and that Joseph baptized him.”

“Johnathan Sumner.

“Voree, June 30, 1846,'

“Signed in the presence of
“Benjamin C. Ellsworth,
“George Ebersson,
“Phineas Wright.”

Note —“John P. Green [who was the marshal of Nauvoo] died very mysteriously a few days after the above statement.” -*Voree Herald, No. 8, Vol.1*

Mrs. Lucy Smith's Testimony. Nauvoo, May 11, 1846.

“My Dear Son-For so I must call you; as the church has passed through much affliction, and it pains my heart that it should suffer more. The Twelve [Brighamites] have abused my son William, and trampled upon my children, and have also treated me with contempt. *Now mark it, these men are not right.* God has not sent them to lead this kingdom. I am satisfied that Joseph appointed James J. Strang. *It is verily so.* Now, Brother Reuben, I exhort you for the love you have for the truth, to hear my voice, and warn the saints concerning these things, and your reward shall be doubled in the heavenly world. This from your mother; Lucy Smith, “Mother in Israel.”

“This is to certify that we, the undersigned, members of the Smith family, fully accord with the sentiments expressed above. “W. J. Salisbury,

“Catherine Salisbury,

“Arthur Milliken,

“Lucy Milliken.”

John E. Page's Testimony:

“My former letter to Brother Strang, acknowledging the theory of his claims, having been published in the *Herald*, [Voree] I wish to add this testimony to all the faithful; that having visited and traveled with him, and minutely investigated all the evidences produced in his favor, as well as against him, I have been compelled to acknowledge him as a prophet of God placed at the head of this dispensation.

“First—Because he alone claims the authority according to the law of God.

“Second—Because his conduct is fitting to that high calling.

“Third—Because his teachings carry with them the witness of the spirit.

“Fourth—Because he produces the proper works of a seer.

“Fifth—Because the evidence that he receives revelation from God is stronger than can be produced to the like fact in favor of any other man from the beginning of the world to this present moment...

“John E. Page [was an apostle under Joseph Smith and James J. Strang]

“Voree, May 1, 1846.”

Another testimony as found in the Gospel Herald:

“We visited the Prophet Joseph's Mother, found her recovering in health and firm in the gospel, living in her own house with her children at Nauvoo. Many reports have

gone abroad that she was going west, but she told us she had no thought of going. We visited Emma Smith (the Prophet's widow) and found her firm in the faith; that her husband wrote or dictated the writing of the letter of James J. Strang's appointment to the Prophetic office, and has not changed her mind. She believes in the Bible, the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and the established claims of Joseph, and also of James J. Strang to be beyond successful contradiction. All who investigate these matters thoroughly must admit them to be true. We visited the Temple and found it much injured in many parts, and the letters on the pulpits broken off. The report has gone abroad that the Temple was sold to the Roman Catholics, but on enquiry we found that it had only been offered for sale to them by the Brighamite agents, but not sold. We visited many of the citizens and showed them that those agents mentioned had no power to give a legal title to it, as time will clearly show, by the law of the land.

“We arrived in Voree on the 17th inst., with a company of 22 souls, 7 wagons, 50 head of cattle and 5 head of horses. There are many more families expected soon from that quarter.

With due respect,
Uriel C. H. Nickerson.
John Shippy.”

(Gospel Herald pages 131 & 132)