

# *Joseph Smith: A Family Prepared for a Prophet*

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Was the family of Joseph Smith prepared for a son to come home one spring morning in 1820 and exclaim: “I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true”?

In order for them to be prepared, knowledge needs to be available and accessible to the family that such a prophet is to be born. Father Lehi while giving a blessing to his son Joseph spoke of Joseph of Egypt, Joseph Smith Sr. and Joseph Smith Jr. (2 Nephi 3:7–15)

A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins. . . . And he shall be great like unto Moses. . . . and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins. . . .

And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation.

Knowledge of Joseph Smith was given but not available or accessible to the family of Joseph Smith until the 1820s. Lehi's promise to his son Joseph was in the Hill Cumorah. Joseph of Egypt's writings were not had among men.

Is evidence available to show actual family preparation—when scriptural accounts are not available?

Brigham Young stated: “It was decreed in the councils of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that he [Joseph Smith] should be the man, in the last dispensation of this

world, to bring forth the word of God to the people, and receive the fulness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. The Lord had his eye upon him, and upon his father, and upon his father's father, and upon their progenitors clear back to Abraham, and from Abraham to the flood, from the flood to Enoch, and from Enoch to Adam. He has watched that family and that blood as it has circulated from its fountain to the birth of that man. He was foreordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation. . . .”  
(Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 7:289–90)

An example of one progenitor is John Lathrop. John was born 1584 in Elton, Yorkshire, England. He entered Queens College in Cambridge in 1601 and graduated with his bachelor of arts degree in 1605 and his masters of arts degree in 1609. In 1607, prior to receiving his master's degree, he was ordained a deacon by the bishop of Lincoln and became the curate of Bennington, Herefordshire, England, for the Church of England. After graduation, he was placed in charge of the Egerton Church in Kent, which is located approximately 50 miles southeast of London. He served in this capacity until 1623, a 14-year period. In 1623, he made a decision to leave the Church of England. A major reason for the break from the church was the dispute over whether authority for leadership of the church came from God to the church—in other words, who gave authority to act in the name of God?

His decision to leave the Church of England, at this time was considered a dangerous crime. The punishment for this crime was death; most often the method was burning at the stake. John's position became even more perilous when he accepted an appointment to be a minister of an illegal independent church. On 22 April 1632 his Independent Church was assailed by governmental officials. Of the 42 congregated in this meeting in 1632, only 18 were able to escape; the rest were thrown into the Clink Prison. By the spring of 1634, Lathrop was the only one of the 24 who was not released from prison. John was released only after he petitioned for liberty to go into foreign exile. The foreign exile he chose was America. He sailed on the ship *Griffiin* from London to Boston. Aboard ship, he was the only one who had a Bible. While he was reading the Bible, hot tallow from a dripping candle burned holes through several pages. He obtained paper and pasted it on the partially burned pages. He then printed from memory the passages of scripture which had been destroyed.

John Lathrop was the ancestor of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Wilford Woodruff, Parley P. Pratt, and Harold B. Lee.

With the family preparation, can it be assumed that the family was first to recognize Joseph as the Joseph of the Restoration?

The answer to this query is “No.” Joseph Smith was born on 23 December 1805. His mother records, “In the meantime we had a son whom we called Joseph after the name of his father; . . . The doctor present, Joseph Adam Denison, years later reported, ‘I delivered a son to Joseph Smith. If I had known how he was going to turn out I'd have smothered the little cuss.’ In other words, no outward manifestation that he was to be the prophet of our time was made apparent to the mother or doctor at Joseph's birth.

**John Lathrop** (1584–1653)→ Jane Lathrop→John Fuller→ Shubael Fuller→Lydia Fuller→Lydia Gates→Lucy Mack→**Joseph Smith Jr.** (1805–1844)

**John Lathrop** (1584–1653)→ Jane Lathrop→John Fuller→ Shubael Fuller→Lydia Fuller→Lydia Gates→Lucy Mack→**Hyrum Smith**→**Joseph F. Smith**→**Joseph Fielding Smith**

**John Lathrop**→Jane Lathrop→John Fuller→John Fuller→William Fuller→Rebecca Fuller Cowdery→**Oliver Cowdery** (1806–1850)

**John Lathrop**→Samuel Lathrop→Anne Lathrop→Hannah Hough→Christopher Pratt→Obadiah Pratt→Jared Pratt→**Orson Pratt** (1811–1881) and **Parley Parker Pratt** (1807–1857)

**John Lathrop**→Jane Lathrop→Mary Fuller→John Williams→Joseph Williams→ William W. Williams →**Frederick G. Williams**

**John Lathrop**→Samuel Lathrop→Elizabeth Lathrop→Martha Royce→Sarah North→Joseph Woodford→Dinah Woodford →Aphek Woodruff→**Wilford Woodruff** (1807-1898)

**John Lathrop**→Samuel Lathrop→John Lathrop→Ruth Lathrop→Ruth Post→Jeremiah Bingham→Jeremiah Bingham→Lucas A. Bingham→Levi Perry Bingham→Perry C. Bingham→Louisa E. Bingham→**Harold Bingham Lee** (1899–1973)

**John Lathrop**→Martha Lathrop→John Moss→Joseph Moss→Amos Morse→Wm. Amos Morse→Teressa Morse→Serial L. Chamberlain→Teressa A. Redd→**Marion G. Romney** (1897–1988)

