



Lesson Thirteen: The Golden Years

Inquiry Questions:

- What thoughts and images do “The Golden Years” bring to mind?
- Do these words give you any expectations?

Historical Context:

At the semiannual conference during the fall of 1862, a proposal was passed to send Jason W. Briggs, Samuel Powers, and Charles Derry on a mission to England. Joseph Smith III’s youngest brother David Hyrum Smith was deeply moved and penned the following poem for the first foreign missionaries of the church:

TO THE THREE MISSIONARIES.

Chosen Messengers of glory,
O’er the ocean swiftly go,
And to England tell the story,
Of the light and truth you know.

Go and preach to them repentance;
Point them to the narrow way,
For the gifts, and for the blessings,
Teach the meek in faith to pray.

Go and tell them of baptism;
We must all be born again;
Warn them of the bitter scourges,
Coming ere the King shall reign.

Some may heed, and some will scorn it;
It will matter naught to you;
Mighty is the name you go in,
And the tale you tell is true.

Go in faith and God will bless you,
Jesus will your guardian be:
Go ye messengers of glory,
O’er the dark blue rolling sea.

-David Hyrum Smith (*True Latter Day Saints Herald* (No. 11, Volume 3) p.163.



Pre-Class Reading:

Joseph Smith III: A Pragmatic Prophet by Roger Launius, Chapter Thirteen: The Golden Years

Discussion Questions:

In the 1890s, Joseph gradually altered relations between his and other churches “toward the common ground of understanding rather than contention.”

- What were some reasons other churches behaved contentiously towards the Reorganization?
- What were some causes of contention from the Reorganized Church toward others?
- What new doorways do the approach of mutual understanding open?

Discuss the founding of Graceland College.

- What were some earlier arguments against it?
- Why was Joseph such a staunch proponent of the cause?
- Who was the first person to graduate in 1898?

The author argues that 1886-1906 was the most productive and rewarding years Joseph had in the church.

- Do you agree with Launius’ statement?
- List some of the accomplishments during those twenty years. Is this time deserving of the title, “The Golden Years?”

Class Activity:

List any changes you can recall, from this and previous chapters, which took place in the church between 1860 and 1906.

- Under Joseph’s leadership so far, what had been the impact of some of these changes?

As of 1906, do you think Joseph III had steered the Reorganization in the right direction for the future?

- Jot down any tasks or objectives that you believe he still needed to finish at that point. Discuss.

Reading Assignment:

Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet, Chapter Fourteen: Joseph at Home

Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet by Roger Launius and a variety of historical reprints are available at www.redbrickstore.com. All Red Brick Store purchases help preserve Community of Christ historic sites.

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