

# The Twelve Apostles in Mormonism—Part Two

By Marvin W. Cowan

Mormons often point with pride to the fact that their Church has “Twelve Apostles” just like Jesus had. However, any church could ordain twelve men and call them “Twelve Apostles,” but would that make them true successors of Christ’s Twelve Apostles? Our last article showed that the prayers given at the ordination of Mormonism’s first Twelve Apostles were full of false prophecy. Can true apostles of Christ be ordained by men who are uttering false prophecy as they ordain those Apostles? In II Corinthians 11:13, Paul spoke of “false apostles” who transform themselves into the apostles of Christ. And in Revelation 2:2 Jesus was commending the Ephesian Church when He said, “thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” These texts clearly show that there are false apostles. Therefore, we should test the claims of those who say they are apostles as the Ephesian Church did.

Nevertheless, the tenth Mormon Prophet, Joseph Fielding Smith, wrote: “Christ chose twelve men and conferred upon them the apostleship, and these twelve men constituted the only Council of Apostles in the Church in that day, and there is but one Council of Apostles in the Church today. These twelve men are endowed with the power and responsibility to serve as the special witnesses for Christ” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, p. 146). James E. Talmage, Mormon apostle and theologian, also wrote: “Twelve men holding the apostleship, properly organized, constitute the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, also designated The Council of the Twelve. These the Lord has named as the twelve traveling counselors; they form the Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate under the direction of the First Presidency in all parts of the world” (*The Articles of Faith*, p. 210).

These LDS leaders claim there are only “twelve” men who make up the Council or Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who minister in all parts of the world. The Twelve Apostles, like the President of the LDS Church hold their offices until they die, unless they are called into the First Presidency. When an LDS President dies, “The senior apostle is always chosen and set apart as the President of the Church” (Mormon Doctrine, p. 49). The new LDS President selects a First and Second Counselor, usually from the Twelve Apostles, to serve with him in the First Presidency. New Apostles are chosen to replace those who moved into the First Presidency which means that there are usually 15 living men who have been ordained to the LDS “Quorum of Twelve Apostles.” Mormons claim that Peter, James and John made up the original First Presidency in the first century. But those three men were never called a “First Presidency” nor were there Twelve Apostles in addition to them! LDS claim that their Church is organized just like Jesus organized His Church, but that is not true with their Twelve Apostles.

There is another problem with the LDS claim that the true church has Twelve Apostles. In discussing the *Book of Mormon*, Joseph Smith said, “This book also tells us that our Savior made His appearance upon this continent after His resurrection; that He planted the gospel in all its fulness, its power, and blessing; that they had Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists...” (*History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith, vol. 4, p.538). And the *Book of Mormon* says that on the American continent Jesus chose Twelve disciples from the white Nephite people and authorized them to baptize believers into the church (III Nephi 12:1). Those Twelve men must be the Apostles Joseph Smith mentioned because no others are identified in the *Book of Mormon*. It records that the “Twelve” on the Ameri-

can continent experienced greater miracles than the Twelve Apostles in Palestine, so they must have been true Apostles. Otherwise, the church they built was false since LDS claim that the true church must be built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets! But the “Twelve” in America were contemporaries of the Twelve in Palestine which means that Jesus had twenty-four Apostles on earth at the same time! The Twelve in America were not under the authority of the Twelve in Palestine because they never had any contact with them!

In the *Book of Mormon*, Jesus promised three of the Nephite Apostles that they would not die, but remain on the earth and proclaim the gospel until His second coming (III Nephi 28:1-40). Their ministry was not limited to America but it was to “all nations, kindreds, tongues and people” (v.29). But that claim raises some obvious questions. If they were really doing what the *Book of Mormon* says, how could there have been hundreds of years of “universal apostasy” without a single Christian on earth as the LDS claim? Weren’t those Apostles and their converts Christians? Why would the gospel need to be a “restored” if the three Nephite Apostles were proclaiming it? And if it was deemed necessary to “restore” the true gospel, couldn’t these three Apostles have done it? But Joseph Smith said it was Peter, James and John from Palestine who restored the “authority” to proclaim the gospel (*Doctrine & Covenants* 128:20). And they did it here in America where the three Nephite Apostles lived! Since the *Book of Mormon* claims that the three Nephite Apostles are still ministering on earth and *Doctrine & Covenants* 7:1-6 says that the Apostle John would live and minister on earth until Christ returns, why do the LDS need Twelve more Apostles? Did those four Apostles of Christ lose their Apostleship? Thus Mormon scripture does not support the LDS claim of a universal apostasy. Nor does it support their claim that they have a Quorum of Twelve Apostles which shows that they are the true church.

For more information about LDS Apostles we suggest *The Mormon Hierarchy, Origins of Power* by D. Michael Quinn, published by Signature Books in 1994. This is a book dealing with historical problems and is not a Christian response to Mormonism. Next time we will discuss prophets and prophecy in Mormonism.