kingdom. Although rebuked for their ambition, they averred their willingness to share in his trials and suffering, and Jesus affirmed that they would do so.

John describes himself as “leaning on Jesus’ bosom” during the Last Supper (John 13:23); later, when Jesus was bound and taken to the high priest, John (who “was known unto the high priest”) and Peter followed along (John 18:15). John continued to follow the Savior through the ensuing events and was the only one of the Twelve recorded as being present at the Crucifixion. Jesus asked him to take care of his mother, Mary, and John took her to his own home (John 19:25–27).

Following the resurrection of Christ, Peter and John ran to the tomb when told by Mary Magdalene that the covering stone had been removed. John ran faster and arrived first at the empty tomb (John 20:1–8). Later, the Lord told Peter that John would remain (on earth) until the Lord’s second coming (John 21:20–23), giving rise to the early Christian tradition that John did not die. The Prophet Joseph Smith confirmed and corrected that tradition in a revelation that states that John, having been given “power over death,” remains on earth “as flaming fire and a ministering angel...for those who shall be heirs of salvation” until the Savior returns (D&C 7; see TRANSLATED BEINGS). The resurrected Christ also mentioned John’s continued earthly ministry during his visit to the people of the Book of Mormon (3 Ne. 29:6–8).

Peter and John appear together in many events of the early chapters of Acts, and some time after James’ death (Acts 12:1–2) these two apostles were joined by another James, the “brother of the Lord” (Gal. 1:19), in a presiding responsibility over the Church; James, Peter, and John were the recognized “pillars” (Gal. 2:9).

After Peter’s death (traditionally dated about A.D. 67), John would have been the senior and presiding apostle. Many sources state that years later John lived at Ephesus, was exiled to Patmos (c. A.D. 90) by the Emperor Domitian, and returned to Ephesus during the reign of Nerva (A.D. 96–98), Domitian’s successor. During his exile to Patmos, John received the Revelation, which he was directed to send with cover letters to seven churches of Asia Minor. The importance of the Revelation to the Latter-day Saints is underscored by the vision of NEPHI in the Book of Mormon, where that prophet was told by an angel not to write all he had seen, for the record of the last days would be made for the world by John, an apostle of the Lord (1 Ne. 14:18–27; cf. Ether 4:16).

After returning to Ephesus, John wrote the three letters that bear his name in the New Testament. Some think he also wrote his Gospel in Ephesus at this late date, but others date it earlier. Other writings have been ascribed to John, including the apocryphal Acts of John, and various versions of the Apocryphon [secret writing] of John, but none of these has been generally considered an authentic writing of the apostle.

In May–June 1829 the three ancient apostles, Peter, James, and John, appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, ordained them to the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, and gave to them the same keys they had received on the Mount of Transfiguration (see D&C 27:12–13). Joseph Smith later received a revelation, parts of which paralleled the prologue to the Gospel of John, and was told that “the fulness of John’s record” would be given at some future date (D&C 93:6, 18).

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JOINING THE CHURCH

Converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have various motivations for their initial interest in the Church, and many factors influence them in the conversion process. However, they generally share three common experiences as they seek BAPTISM and membership in the Church. First, most of those interested in joining the Church meet with missionaries for a series of brief lessons on basic LDS beliefs and religious practices. Second, all prospective converts must demonstrate in a prebaptism interview with a Church representative that they are making an informed decision of their own free will and that they willingly fulfill the baptismal requirements. Third,
every convert must receive the ordinances of baptism and confirmation as performed by authorized representatives of the Church and be accepted as a member of the local ward or branch by the common consent of the members.

LDS converts come from a wide age range and from all socioeconomic groups. Often they have friends or acquaintances who are already members, but sometimes they are located by missionary contacting. They typically have a desire to improve their lives by learning correct gospel principles and by uniting themselves with others having similar needs and attitudes. Thus, the common essential in most conversions to the Church is obtaining a personal conviction that the Church today is authorized by God to teach and administer the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All who are interested in joining the Church must know and understand the responsibilities that Church membership will bring. To this end, they receive a series of lessons from LDS missionaries or from members of the Church. At this stage, prospective converts are called “investigators,” because they are investigating or studying the Church. The lessons are called the missionary “discussions,” because although they cover standardized topics, missionaries are encouraged to present them in an informal, conversational manner. For example, missionaries typically share their personal experiences and feelings about the topics discussed, and encourage investigators to do likewise, asking questions and giving reactions to LDS teachings. These lessons are usually taught in a home setting, to individuals or to a small group.

The lessons teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, including the nature of the godhead, the plan of salvation, keeping the commandments, and living a Christlike life. They also discuss the life and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the coming-forth of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood, and the importance of following the prophets living today.

Investigators are asked to make various commitments during their course of study, which may last a few weeks or several months, depending on their individual rate of preparation toward baptism. For example, they are challenged and encouraged to engage in daily prayer and scripture study, especially prayerful study of the Book of Mormon. Those who wish to join the Church are urged to begin living an LDS lifestyle. This includes striving for Christlike attitudes and behaviors in all circumstances; attending Church meetings; abstaining from harmful substances, including tobacco, alcoholic beverages, coffee, tea, and drugs; beginning to tithe; living a moral and chaste life (see chastity); and laboring to serve those in need.

In the interview customarily conducted by an authorized Church representative prior to baptism, the interviewer determines the candidate’s willingness and worthiness to enter into the baptismal covenant. During this interview, baptismal candidates are asked whether they have a heartfelt testimony of the fundamental doctrine of the Church. All baptismal candidates also must declare whether they currently keep, and will continue to keep, God’s commandments through their lives.

Baptism is required for Church membership. It represents a covenant with God whereby the candidate agrees to follow Christ and live his commandments. The requirements for baptism are described in the Doctrine and Covenants as follows: “All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be
received by baptism into his church” (D&C 20:37). Baptism symbolizes the washing away of sins as well as a rebirth and the beginning of a new life on earth leading to eternal life with God.

Baptism is followed by confirmation into the Church by the laying on of hands of one holding the Melchizedek Priesthood. During this ordinance, the new convert is confirmed a member of the Church and receives the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is typically a momentous and joyous occasion for all involved. Following his confirmation the convert is presented for acceptance by the local membership as a member in full fellowship and embarks on a life of spiritual growth through obedience to the laws of God and activity and service in the Church.

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JOSEPH OF EGYPT

[This entry consists of three articles:
Joseph, Son of Jacob
Writings of Joseph
Seed of Joseph]

Latter-day Saint scripture portrays a broader interest in Joseph of Egypt than the Bible does. The article Joseph, Son of Jacob deals with the resulting wide sweep of LDS interests in Joseph, including the promises of the Lord about the latter-day importance of Joseph’s posterity and his ancestral relationship to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The article Writings of Joseph treats specifically the matter of the writings of Joseph preserved in LDS scripture. The article Seed of Joseph focuses on the ancestral connection between Book of Mormon peoples and Joseph, son of Jacob.]

JOSEPH, SON OF JACOB

The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, said of Joseph, son of Jacob, “He truly prophesied concerning all his seed. And the prophecies which he wrote, there are not many greater” (2 Ne. 4:2). Latter-day Saints hold Joseph to be a progenitor of a branch of the house of Israel, including certain Book of Mormon peoples about whom he prophesied. Additionally, he is honored as an ancestor of the Prophet Joseph Smith and many Church members and as one who prophesied concerning the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith.

The current Bible text preserves little scripture attributed to Joseph of Egypt. However, some writings of Joseph were recorded on the plates of brass, a scriptural record brought to the Western Hemisphere from Jerusalem by the prophet Lehi, and known among the Book of Mormon people. Another prophecy, restored by Joseph Smith, is now found in the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) Genesis 50. In this text, the ancient Joseph prophesied the bondage of his father’s family in Egypt and their eventual deliverance by Moses, and specifically names him and his brother, Aaron. Moses was to deliver Israel from Egypt, have power over the Red Sea, receive commandments from God, and be assisted by Aaron as his spokesman (JST Gen. 50:24, 29, 34–35).

The same source indicates that the Lord visited Joseph, promising him a righteous posterity, a branch of which would be separated from their kindred and taken to a distant country (JST Gen. 50:25–26). According to the Bible, Jacob had already prophesied that Joseph’s branches—Ephraim and Manasseh—would inherit the “utmost bound of the everlasting hills” (Gen. 49:26). Moses described the new land of their inheritance as containing riches of both heaven and earth (Deut. 33:13–15). The Book of Mormon records the partial fulfillment of these prophecies with the exodus of the families of Lehi, a descendant of Manasseh (Alma 10:3), and Ishmael, a descendant of Ephraim (JD 23:184), to the western continents. The Book of Mormon is called “the stick of Ephraim” in modern revelation (D&C 27:5) and both “the stick of Ephraim” and “the stick of Joseph” (Ezek. 37:15–19, esp. verses 16 and 19).

Notwithstanding Israel’s anticipated deliverance from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, Joseph of Egypt also foretold that the Israelites would eventually be scattered. Still he was assured that they would be remembered by the Lord and that he would bring their descendants out of “bondage” in the last days. A “choice seer” was to be raised up, a descendant of Joseph, who would bear his name and whose father would also bear the same name. The prophecy stated that this latter-day Joseph would be highly esteemed by Joseph’s descendants and would bring them knowledge of their progenitors. Moreover, he would be like both Joseph and Moses. As the ancient Joseph gathered his father’s family in Egypt