

“The King Follett Discourse”



Sunday afternoon, 3:15 pm, April 7, 1844, in a grove about one quarter mile east of the temple in Nauvoo, Illinois. The occasion was the second day of the General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith Jr. stood up and notwithstanding a strong wind blowing commenced to deliver one of the greatest sermons of his life to an estimated audience of some 10,000 people. He asked for the **prayers of the saints and then began to speak without notes. He said, “I do not intend to please you with oratory but with the simple truths of heaven edify you.”** Those truths flowed in a profusion of doctrine that is estimated to have lasted more than two hours.

The previous day he had promised that he would prove to his enemies that God was still with him and surely, he was for no man could know what Joseph knew unless God had taught him. The ideas were simply not of this world.



Joseph was the last speaker of the conference, and his talk came to be known as “**The King Follett Discourse.**” The sermon was not named for a king but was intended to remember and honor a Latter-day Saint named King Follett who had been killed by a falling tub of rock when digging a well near his home in Nauvoo. At the actual funeral Joseph had been asked to speak but for reasons unknown had said very little. The family asked him if he would take occasion sometime later and honor him again. Joseph chose to honor King Follett in a General Conference address before the entire church.

It seems altogether fitting to me that he did so. In this address, Joseph taught that mere mortals—ordinary men and women could become as God is—ordinary men and women—people just like King Follett, who never served in any prominent positions in the Church and yet was faithful to the Almighty in every trial from Kirtland to Nauvoo. It is as if King Follett the common ordinary saint represents all of us and our eternal possibilities.

Four scribes recorded portions of Joseph's sermon. Their accounts were later combined to create as comprehensive a representation of the sermon as can be obtained on this side of the veil.

There have been those who have felt that this sermon should be canonized as scripture; that its truths are so pure and foundational they should be a part of the holy books. Indeed, whether they realize it or not, most Latter-day Saints believe and teach its **doctrine, even when they don't know where it came from.**

The King Follett discourse represents Joseph at his finest, and yet, his enemies ridiculed its precepts while the faithful considered it the greatest sermon they had ever heard. So, it is today. That sermon, more than any other, has brought down the wrath of the world upon the saints, even while its teachings have lifted their sights to the highest heavens and the greatest possibilities.

If you would know who you are, where you **came from, and what you can be...** How long has it been since you studied the King Follett discourse delivered 178 years ago this April.



Source: <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/1>
<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWJY-2JB>

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