

Wilfrid Street Rooms

Preston, England

Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, members of the LDS Church and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, along with five other missionaries, arrived in Preston, England on July 22, 1837. One of the missionaries, Joseph Fielding, had a brother, Reverend James Fielding, who allowed the missionaries to preach to his congregation in the Vauxhall Chapel. It was the missionaries' first public speaking opportunity in England.

The early missionaries took up residence in rooms on Wilfrid Street. They held three successful meetings in Vauxhall Chapel. Several individuals believed their testimonies and petitioned them to be baptized. Reverend Fielding, worried that these missionaries would draw away his congregation, no longer allowed them to preach in his chapel.

Nevertheless, the missionaries decided to hold a baptismal service in the River Ribble on July 30, 1837. Heber C. Kimball described that "by this time the adversary of souls began to rage, and he felt determined to destroy us before we had fully established the kingdom of God in that land, and the next morning I witnessed a scene of satanic power and influence which I shall never forget."¹

The night before the service, the missionaries were attacked by a host of evil spirits. Elder Kimball described them as "men of full stature, possessing every form and feature of men in the flesh, who were angry and desperate; and I shall never forget the vindictive malignity depicted on their countenances as they looked me in the eye; and any attempt to paint the scene which then presented itself, or portray their malice and enmity, would be vain."² After a time, the spirits were rebuked and the baptismal service was conducted as planned later that morning.

After returning from his mission, Heber C. Kimball inquired of the Prophet Joseph Smith as to the reason for the manifestation and if there was anything wrong with him. The Prophet replied, "No, Brother Heber, at that time you were



Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, and other early missionaries stayed in rooms in this building

Photo courtesy of Alexander L. Baugh

nigh unto the Lord; there was only a veil between you and Him, but you could not see Him. When I heard of it, it gave me great joy, for I then knew that the work of God had taken root in that land. It was this that caused the devil to make a struggle to kill you. The nearer a person approaches the Lord, a greater power will be manifested by the adversary to prevent the accomplishment of His purposes."³

Since that time, the Preston region has remained an area of strength and the Preston England Temple was dedicated by President Gordon B. Hinckley on June 7, 1998.

SOURCES

¹ Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Kimball Family, 1888), 129.

² *Ibid*, 130-131.

³ *Ibid*, 131-132.



ACCOUNT OF EARLY ENGLISH MISSIONARIES

Heber C. Kimball¹

“Sunday, July 30th (1837), about daybreak, Elder Isaac Russell (who had been appointed to preach on the obelisk in Preston Square, that day), who slept with Elder Richards in Wilfred Street, came up to the third story, where Elder Hyde and myself were sleeping, and called out, ‘Brother Kimball, I want you should get up and pray for me that I may be delivered from the evil spirits that are tormenting me to such a degree that I feel I cannot live long, unless I obtain relief.’

I had been sleeping on the back of the bed. I immediately arose, slipped off at the foot of the bed, and passed around to where he was. Elder Hyde threw his feet out, and sat up in the bed, and we laid hands on him, I being mouth, and prayed that the Lord would have mercy on him, and rebuked the devil.

While thus engaged, I was struck with great force by some invisible power, and fell senseless on the floor. The first thing I recollected was being supported by Elders Hyde and Richards, who were praying for me; Elder Richards having followed Russell up to my room. Elder Hyde and Richards then assisted me to get on the bed, but my agony was so great I could not endure it, and I arose, bowed my knees and prayed. I then arose and sat up on the bed, when a vision was opened to our minds, and we could distinctly see the evil spirits, who foamed and gnashed their teeth at us. We gazed upon them about an hour and a half (by Willard’s watch). We were not looking towards the window, but towards the wall. Space appeared before us, and we saw the devils coming in legions, with their leaders, who came within a few feet of us. They came towards us like armies rushing to battle. They appeared to be men of full stature, possessing every form and feature of men in the flesh, who were angry and desperate; and I shall

never forget the vindictive malignity depicted on their countenances as they looked me in the eye; and any attempt to paint the scene which then presented itself, or portray their malice and enmity, would be vain. I perspired exceedingly, my clothes becoming as wet as if I had been taken out of the river. I felt excessive pain, and was in the greatest distress for some time. I cannot even look back on the scene without feelings of horror; yet by it I learned the power of the adversary, his enmity against the servants of God, and got some understanding of the invisible world. We distinctly heard those spirits talk and express their wrath and hellish designs against us. However, the Lord delivered us from them, and blessed us exceedingly that day.

Years later, narrating the experience of that awful morning to the Prophet Joseph, Heber asked him what it all meant, and whether there was anything wrong with him that he should have such a manifestation. “No, Brother Heber,” he replied, “at that time you were nigh unto the Lord; there was only a veil between you and Him, but you could not see Him. When I heard of it, it gave me great joy, for I then knew that the work of God had taken root in that land. It was this that caused the devil to make a struggle to kill you.” Joseph then related some of his own experience, in many contests he had had with the evil one, and said: “The nearer a person approaches the Lord, a greater power will be manifested by the adversary to prevent the accomplishment of His purposes.”

Orson Hyde²

“Every circumstance that occurred at that scene of devils is just as fresh in my recollection at this moment as it was at the moment of its occurrence, and will ever remain so. After you were overcome by them and had fallen, their awful rush upon me with knives, threats, imprecations and hellish grins, amply convinced me that they were no friends of mine. While you were apparently senseless and lifeless on the floor and upon the bed (after we had laid you there), I stood between

you and the devils and fought them and contended with them face to face, until they began to diminish in number and to retreat from the room. The last imp that left turned round to me as he was going out and said, as if to apologize, and appease my determined opposition to them, ‘I never said anything against you!’ I replied to him thus: ‘It matters not to me whether you have or have not; you are a liar from the beginning! In the name of Jesus Christ, depart!’ He immediately left, and the room was clear. That closed the scene of devils for that time.”

SOURCES

¹ Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Kimball Family, 1888), 129-132.

² *Ibid*, 131.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Address:

St. Wilfrid Street & Fox Street
Preston, England PR1 2

FURTHER READING RESOURCES

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P. F. Smart, “The History of the Early Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Preston, Lancashire, England,” 1989.

