

LESSON 32
“To Seal the Testimony”
D&C 135, Our Heritage, p. 62-66

OVERVIEW:

The Prophet Joseph Smith sealed his testimony with his blood. The Prophet Joseph Smith did more for the salvation of men in this world than anyone except Jesus.

(Even when he began his ministry, the Prophet Joseph Smith knew he might have to die for his religion. While Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon the Lord promised him eternal life if he was “firm in keeping the commandments... even if you should be slain” D&C 5:22. A month later the Lord again spoke of possible violent death. “And even if they do unto you even as they have done unto me, blessed are ye, for you shall dwell with me in glory” D&C 6:30. The Prophet also received some important assurances, however, regarding his earthly mission. Several years later in Liberty Jail the Lord promised him: “Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever” D&C 122:9. In 1840 his father’s dying blessing promised him, “You shall even live to finish your work.” At this Joseph cried out, weeping, “Oh! My father, shall I?” “Yes” said his father, “you shall live to lay out the plan of all the work which God has given you to do.” Joseph Smith, heeding the Spirit’s promptings, valiantly completed his mission, suffered martyrdom, and qualified for a glorious reward; thus these prophecies were fulfilled. Church History in the Fulness of Times, p. 273)

(This is a historical account of the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. It was penned by John Taylor who, with Willard Richards, survived that event. Joseph Smith, who stood at the head of the Church and kingdom of God, and his brother Hyrum, who held the office of assistant or associate president of the Church, both holding all the keys of the kingdom, sealed their testimonies with their blood. Two men sealed their testimonies with their lives, and two men—all ordained apostles of the Lord—survived to tell the story. In the providence of the Lord, the ancient law of witnesses had been complied with perfectly. The martyrdom took place in the jail at Carthage, Illinois, on 27 June 1844. This document is a testimony of the Prophet and his brother and a brief commentary on the greatness of their lives. Written by the spirit of revelation, it will ever stir the souls of all who are of the household of faith. Briefly, the events leading to the martyrdom were as follows: Monday, 24 June 1844: "Joseph and Hyrum Smith, accompanied by seventeen friends, started for Carthage, to submit to another trial, under pledge of protection from Gov. Thos. Ford. On the way they received a demand from the governor to surrender the State arms in possession of the Nauvoo Legion; Joseph returned and complied with the request, and then proceeded to Carthage." Tuesday, 25 June: "Joseph Smith and his brethren surrendered themselves to a constable at Carthage and submitted to a trial, after which they were, contrary to law, remanded to prison." Wednesday, 26 June: "Gov. Thos. Ford had a long interview with the prisoners in Carthage jail. He renewed his promises of protection and said, if he went to Nauvoo, he would take them with him." Thursday, 27 June: "Gov. Thos. Ford went to Nauvoo, leaving the prisoners in jail to be guarded by their most bitter enemies, the 'Carthage Greys.' About 5:20 p. m. an armed mob with blackened faces surrounded and entered the jail, and murdered Joseph and Hyrum Smith in cold blood; Apostle John Taylor was severely wounded, while Apostle Willard Richards only received a slight wound on his ear" (Jenson, Church Chronology, 25-26). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1125)

(Orson F. Whitney: "Two Minutes in Jail")

"A shower of musket balls were thrown up the stairway against the door of the prison in the second story, followed by many rapid footsteps.

"While Generals Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Mr. Taylor and myself, who were in the front chamber, closed the door of our room against the entry at the head of the stairs, and placed ourselves against it, there being no lock on the door, and no catch that was useable.

"The door is a common panel, and as soon as we heard the feet at the stairs head, a ball was sent through the door, which passed between us, and showed that our enemies were desperadoes, and we must change our position.

"General Joseph Smith, Mr. Taylor and myself, sprang back to the front part of the room, and General Hyrum Smith retreated two-thirds across the chamber, in front of and facing the door.

"A ball was sent through the door, which hit Hyrum on the side of the nose, when he fell backwards, extended at length, without moving his feet.

"From the holes in his vest (the day was warm, and none had their coats on but myself), pantaloons, drawers and shirt, it appears evident that a ball must have been thrown from without, through the window, which entered his back on the right side, and passing through lodged against his watch, which was in his right vest pocket, completely pulverizing the crystal and face, tearing off the hands, and mashing the whole body of the watch. At the same time the ball from the door entered his nose.

"As he struck the floor he exclaimed emphatically, 'I'm a dead man.' Joseph looked towards him and responded, 'Oh, dear, Brother Hyrum!' and opening the door two or three inches with his left hand, discharged one barrel of a six shooter (pistol) at random in the entry, from whence a ball grazed Hyrum's breast and entering his throat passed into his head, while the other muskets were aimed at him, and some balls hit him.

"Joseph continued snapping his revolver round the casing of the door into the space as before, three barrels of which missed fire; while Mr. Taylor, with a walking stick stood, by his side, and knocked down the bayonets and muskets which were constantly discharging through the doorway, while I stood by him ready to lend any assistance, with another stick, but could not come within striking distance without going directly before the muzzles of the guns.

"When the revolver failed, we had no more firearms, and expected an immediate rush of the mob, and the doorway full of muskets half way in the room, and no hope but instant death from within.

"Mr. Taylor rushed into the window, which is some fifteen or twenty feet from the ground. When his body was nearly on a balance, a ball from the door within entered his leg, and a ball from without struck his watch, a patent lever, in his vest pocket, near the left breast, and smashed it into 'pie,' leaving the hands standing at 5 o'clock, 16 minutes and 26 seconds; the force of which ball threw him back on the floor, and he rolled under the bed which stood by his side, where he lay motionless, the mob continuing to fire upon him, cutting away a piece of flesh from his left hip as large as a man's hand, and were hindered only by my knocking down muzzles with a stick, while they continued to reach their guns into the room, probably left-handed, and aimed their discharges so far round as almost to reach us in the corner of the room, to where we retreated and dodged, and then I recommenced the attack with my stick.

"Joseph attempted, as the last resort, to leap the same window from whence Mr. Taylor fell, when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered the right breast from without, and he fell outward, exclaiming, 'O Lord, my God!' As his feet went out of the window, my head went in, the balls whistling all around. He fell on his left side, a dead man.

"At this instant the cry was raised, 'He's leaped the window!' and the mob on the stairs and in the entry ran out.

Inserted here is the account from George Q. Cannon: Joseph saw that there was no longer safety in the room; and thinking that he would save the life of Willard Richards if he himself should spring from the room, he turned immediately from the door, dropped his pistol and leaped into the window. Instantly two bullets pierced him from the door, and one entered his right breast from without, and he fell outward into the hands of his murderers exclaiming: "Oh, Lord, my God!" When his body struck the ground he rolled instantly upon his face—dead. As he lay there, one of the mob, barefooted and bareheaded, wearing no coat, with his trousers rolled above his knees and his shirt sleeves above his elbows, seized the body of the murdered Prophet and set it against the south side of the well curb. Colonel Levi Williams then ordered four men to shoot Joseph. Standing about eight feet from his body they fired simultaneously. The body slightly cringed as the bullets entered it, and once more Joseph fell upon his face. He had smiled with sweet compassion in his countenance as he gazed upon his murderers in the last moment of his life; and this was the expression when his face was set in death. (Life of Joseph Smith, 1907, pp. 517, 524 ff.)

"I withdrew from the window, thinking it of no use to leap out on a hundred bayonets, then around General Smith's body.

"Not satisfied with this I again reached my head out of the window, and watched some seconds to see if there were any signs of life, regardless of my own, determined to see the end of him I loved. Being fully satisfied that he was dead, with a hundred men near the body and more coming round the corner of the jail, and expecting a return to our room, I rushed towards the prison door, at the head of the stairs, and through the entry from whence the firing had proceeded, to learn if the doors into the prison were open.

"When near the entry, Mr. Taylor cried out, 'Take me.' I pressed my way until I found all the doors unbarred; returning instantly, I caught Mr. Taylor under my arm, and rushed by the stairs into the dungeon, or inner prison, stretched him on the floor and covered him with a bed in such a manner as not likely to be perceived, expecting an immediate return of the mob.

"I said to Mr. Taylor, 'This is a hard case to lay you on the floor, but if your wounds are not fatal, I want you to live to tell the story.' I expected to be shot the next moment, and stood before the door awaiting the onset."

Nothing is said here of "warding off the bullets with a consecrated wand." Willard Richards never made such a statement, nor did any friend of his ever make it in his behalf. It is a fair sample of anti-Mormon unfairness; one of the hearsays adopted by Mr. Hay as a fact; one of the fictions with which his narrative is filled.

What Dr. Richards expected and awaited almost happened. While the heroically cool and self-possessed man was caring for his wounded friend in the inner part of the prison, a portion of the mob again rushed up stairs to finish the fiendish work already more than half done. Finding only the dead body of Hyrum Smith in the front apartment, and supposing the other prisoners to have escaped, they were again descending the stairs when a loud cry was heard, 'The Mormons are coming!' Thinking the inhabitants of Nauvoo were upon them to avenge the murder of the Prophet, the whole band of assassins broke and fled, seeking refuge in the neighboring forest. Their grotesque fear was shared by the people of Carthage in general, who abandoned their homes and fled pell mell, terrified by the vain thought of a wrathful visitation from the City of the Saints.

Equally groundless with the assertion relative to Dr. Richards, is the one attributing "terror and despair" to the betrayed and stricken community at Nauvoo. There was no terror; there was no despair. It was a God-fearing people, possessing their souls with characteristic patience and resignation, leaving vengeance to Him who has said, "I will repay." Had the Mormons wanted blood for blood,- though a hecatomb of such lives as had robbed them of their Prophet and their Patriarch would have been no compensation,-the murderous wretches would have bit the dust, though it had taken the whole power of the dreaded Legion to bring them low. Had there been any "Danites," they would have done their destructive work then and there. If the Mormons had been the "bad neighbors," turbulent and troublesome, that they were falsely represented as being, all Hancock County would have been devastated by them in a reckless fury of retaliation. But as Mr. Hay says, "nothing of the kind took place. The appalling disaster that had fallen upon the Church gave rise to no spirit of revenge." And there is nothing that so successfully confutes the lying stories of the rascally banditti who slandered the Church and its leaders in order to make more easy the horrid murder they had planned, than the god-like self-control exhibited by the Latter-day Saints in that supreme hour of trial.

Just here will be a good place to insert another paragraph from Ford's History of Illinois, in which the author speaks of the cunning tactics of the villainous conspirators, who found it necessary to blacken the fair fame of the Mormon people, as a prelude to the assassination of their Prophet.

"A system of excitement and agitation was artfully planned and executed with tact. It consisted in spreading reports and rumors of the most fearful character. As examples:-On the morning before my arrival at Carthage, I was awakened at an early hour by the frightful report, which was asserted with confidence and apparent consternation, that the Mormons had already commenced the work of burning, destruction and murder; and that every man capable of bearing arms was instantly wanted at Carthage, for the protection of the county. We lost no time in starting; but when we arrived at Carthage we could hear no more concerning this story. Again: During the few days that the militia were encamped at Carthage, frequent applications were made to me to send a force here and a force there, and a force all about the country, to prevent murders, robberies, and larcenies, which, it was said, were threatened by the Mormons. No such forces were sent; nor were any such offenses committed at that time, except the stealing of some provisions, and there was never the least proof that this was done by a Mormon. Again: On my late visit to Hancock County, I was informed by some of their violent enemies, that the larcenies of the Mormons had become unusually numerous and insufferable. They indeed admitted that but little had been done in this way in their immediate vicinity. But they insisted that sixteen horses had been stolen by the Mormons in one night, near Lima, in the County of Adams. At the close of the expedition, I called at this same town of Lima, and upon inquiry was told that no horses had been stolen in that neighborhood, but that sixteen horses had been stolen in one night in Hancock County. This last informant, being told of the Hancock story, again changed the venue to another distant settlement, in the northern edge of Adams." History of the Church, 6:619-20. Mormon Prophet's Tragedy.)

SCRIPTURES:

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS SECTION 135

Martyrdom of Joseph Smith the Prophet and his brother, Hyrum Smith the Patriarch, at Carthage, Illinois, June 27, 1844. HC 6: 629—631. This document was written by Elder John Taylor of the Council of the Twelve, who was a witness to the events.

1—2, Joseph and Hyrum martyred in Carthage Jail; 3, Preeminent position of the Prophet acclaimed; 4—7, Their innocent blood testifies of the truth and divinity of the work.

1 **TO seal the testimony** (No man complied more perfectly with the law of witnesses than did the Prophet Joseph Smith. He gave us the Book of Mormon to stand as a second witness of the Bible. He gave us a modern volume of scripture to stand as a second witness of the truths taught by ancient prophets. As they entertained angels, he entertained angels. As they performed miracles, he performed miracles. As they saw visions and penned revelations, he saw visions and penned revelations. As they spoke in the name of the Lord and performed the ordinances of salvation, so he spoke in the name of the Lord and performed the ordinances of salvation. As they sealed their testimonies with their blood, so he sealed his testimony with his blood. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1127) **of this book** (The Doctrine and Covenants) **and the Book of Mormon, we announce the**^a **martyrdom** (The word martyr comes from a Greek word meaning "to bear witness," "to be a witness," or "to testify." In a theological sense, it is generally held to mean one who voluntarily submits to death for the Christian faith, but in a broader sense it is used to describe one who has experienced great suffering or death on account of loyalty to the gospel. Critics of the Church like to argue that Joseph Smith was not a martyr because he made an effort to defend himself when he was killed. The purpose of the argument is to avoid giving credence, honor, or respect to the Prophet, who willingly submitted himself to arrest on false charges and went to Carthage knowing he would die there (v. 4). The idea that a true martyr cannot resist an attempt to take his or her life grows out of the false zeal associated with the early Christian era. Many of the so-called martyrs of that day sought death. Their efforts grew out of the apostate notion that the body was to be eschewed, that it was a prison in which the spirit had been confined by the fall of Adam, and that to rid themselves of it was a matchless good. Latter-day Saints reject such theological travesty while granting the title of martyr to those who have experienced great suffering and dangers associated with being true to the faith and who have eventually lost their lives in that cause. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1127-28) **of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith the Patriarch** (Hyrum was assistant president or associate president. He took the position after Oliver Cowdery apostatized from the Church. There has not been an assistant president of the Church since Hyrum. If Oliver still had been associate president, he probably would have died with Joseph and not Hyrum. In compliance with the divine law of witnesses, it was necessary for the two men who jointly held all of the keys of the kingdom and who stood at the head of the Church to seal their testimonies with their blood. Joseph was the prophet, seer, and revelator and stood at the head. Hyrum stood next to him as the assistant or associate president of the Church. Had the wisdom of God called for Hyrum to survive Carthage, the presidency of the Church would have rested with him. Explaining these principles, President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "The Prophet Joseph Smith conferred upon Hyrum Smith all the keys, authority and gifts of the priesthood which he, the Prophet, held, and which were formerly held by Oliver Cowdery. The Lord also revealed to Hyrum Smith all that was necessary to make him completely and to the full degree, a witness with his brother Joseph, as a prophet, seer, revelator and president of the Church, and to stand through all time and all eternity at the head of this dispensation with his brother Joseph, a witness for Jesus Christ." Thus, we see, Hyrum Smith became a president of the Church with Joseph Smith, which place Oliver Cowdery might have held had he not wavered and fallen from his exalted station. I am firmly of the opinion that had Oliver Cowdery remained true to his covenants and obligations as a witness with Joseph Smith, and retained his authority and place, he, and not Hyrum Smith, would have gone with Joseph Smith as a prisoner and to martyrdom at Carthage. "The sealing of the testimony through the shedding of blood would not have been complete in the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith alone; it required the death of Hyrum Smith who jointly held the keys of this dispensation. It was needful that these martyrs seal their testimony with their blood, that they 'might be honored and the wicked might be condemned'" (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:218-19). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1128-29)). They were shot in Carthage jail, on the 27th of June, 1844, about five o'clock p.m., by an armed mob—painted black—of from 150 to 200 persons. ^bHyrum was shot first and fell calmly, exclaiming: *I am a ^cdead man!* Joseph leaped from the window, and was shot dead in the attempt, exclaiming: *^dO Lord my God!* They were both shot after they were dead, in a brutal manner, and both received four balls. (Joseph prophesied at

least 17 times that he was going to be killed.)

2 John Taylor and Willard Richards, two of the Twelve, were the only persons in the room at the time; (In the providence of the Lord, as it was necessary for two men to seal their testimonies with their blood at Carthage, so it was necessary for two men to escape. Had Joseph and Hyrum been alone then, the only accounts that we would have of the events of that day would have been those written by men with the blood of the Lord's anointed on their hands. Had but one man survived, his testimony would have been refuted. So it was, in the wisdom of him who foreknows all things, that two men, whose reputation for truth was such that it could not be refuted, survived to tell the story. "Dr. Richards' escape was miraculous; he being a very large man, and in the midst of a shower of balls, yet he stood unscathed, with the exception of a ball which grazed the tip end of the lower part of his left ear. His escape fulfilled literally a prophecy which Joseph made over a year previously, that the time would come that the balls would fly around him like hail, and he should see his friends fall on the right and on the left, but that there should not be a hole in his garment" (Smith, History of the Church, 6:619). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1129) the former was wounded in a savage manner with four balls, but has since recovered; the latter, through the providence of God, escaped, without even a hole in his robe. (John Taylor had to live through this so he could be one of the two witnesses of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum.)

3 Joseph Smith, the ^aProphet and ^bSeer of the Lord, has done more, ^csave Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. (Joseph F. Smith: Joseph Smith was martyred in Carthage, Illinois, on the 27th of June, 1844—14 years after the organization of the Church. What did he accomplish in these 14 years? He opened up communication with the heavens in his youth. He brought forth the Book of Mormon, which contains the fullness of the Gospel; and the revelations contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants; restored the Holy Priesthood unto man; established and organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an organization which has no parallel in all the world, and which all the cunning and wisdom of men for ages has failed to discover or produce and never could have done. He founded colonies in the States of New York, Ohio, Missouri and Illinois, and pointed the way for gathering of the Saints into the Rocky Mountains; sent the Gospel into Europe and to the islands of the sea; founded the town of Kirtland, Ohio, and there built a temple that cost about a quarter of a million of dollars; he founded the city of Nauvoo in the midst of persecution; gathered into Nauvoo and vicinity some 20,000 people, and commenced the building of the temple there, which when completed cost one million dollars; and in doing all this he had to contend against the prejudices of the age, against relentless persecution, mobocracy and vile calumny and slander, that were heaped upon him from all quarters without stint or measure. In a word, he did more in from 14 to 20 years for the salvation of man than any other man save Jesus only, that ever lived, and yet he was accused by his enemies of being an indolent and worthless man! Where shall we go to find another man that has accomplished the one thousandth part of good that Joseph Smith accomplished? . . . And yet no man in the nineteenth century, except Joseph Smith, has discovered to the world a ray of light upon the keys and power of the Holy Priesthood or the ordinances of the Gospel either for the living or the dead. Through Joseph Smith, God has revealed many things which were kept hid from the foundation of the world in fulfillment of the Prophets—and at no time since Enoch walked the earth has the Church of God been organized as perfectly as it is today—not excepting the dispensation of Jesus and His disciples—or if it was we have no record of it. And this is strictly in keeping with the objects and character of this great latter-day work, destined to consummate the great purpose and designs of God concerning the dispensation of the fulness of times. The principles of baptism for the redemption of the dead, with the ordinances appertaining thereto, for the complete salvation and exaltation of those who have died without the Gospel, as revealed through Joseph Smith, is alone worth more than all the dogmas of the so-called Christian world combined. [Sec. 128.] Joseph Smith is accused of being a false prophet. It is, however, beyond the power of the world to prove that he was a false Prophet. (JD, October 29, 1882, 24:14-15.)) In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he

translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the ^dfulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents (The Pearl of Great Price, the letter to John Wentworth, the History of the Church.) and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. (How Joseph Smith ranks among the prophets, both past and future, we know not, nor do we think there is any particular merit in weighing the faithful labors of one servant of the Lord against those of another. However, we know that among all those chosen of God to labor in his name, none have been privileged to do a labor that would have a greater effect on more of our Father's children than that of the prophet Joseph Smith. Illustrating this point, President Wilford Woodruff commented, "Why, did he [the Lord] call him [Joseph Smith] into the spirit world? Because he held the keys of this dispensation, not only before he came to this world and while he was in the flesh, but he would hold them throughout the endless ages of eternity (D&C 90:3). He held the keys of past generations— of the millions of people who dwelt on the earth in the fifty generations that had passed and gone who had not the law of the gospel, who never saw a prophet, never saw an Apostle, never heard the voice of any man who was inspired of God and had power to teach them the gospel of Christ, and to organize the church of Christ on earth. He went to unlock the prison doors to these people, as far as they would receive his testimony, and the Saints of God who dwell in the flesh will build temples unto the name of the Lord, and enter these temples and perform certain ordinances for the redemption of the dead. This was the work of Joseph the prophet in the spirit world" (Conference Report, April 1880, 8-9). Joseph Smith stands at the head of the gospel dispensation that may include the majority of the premortal host. More people will learn of Christ and his gospel by missionaries who trace both their commission to teach and their understanding of Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith than will be the case in any other dispensation or with any other prophet who ever lived. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1129-30) He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; (Joseph F. Merrill: . . . you may be interested to hear what a nationally-known writer and publicist and once mayor of Boston, Josiah Quincy, wrote about Joseph Smith. In May 1844, Mr. Quincy and his cultured friend, Charles Francis Adams, son and grandson, respectively, of two United States Presidents, happened to make a two-day visit to Nauvoo. Being well-known, prominent men they were entertained at the Mansion House, Joseph Smith's residence. An account of this visit is given by Mr. Quincy, in the last chapter of his book entitled Figures of the Past, published in 1880. I quote the following from this twenty-four page chapter: It is by no means improbable that some future textbook for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace to their descendants. History deals in surprises and paradoxes quite as startling as this. The man who established a religion in this age of free debate, who was and is today accepted by hundreds of thousands as a direct emissary from the Most High,—such a rare human being is not to be disposed of by pelting his memory with unsavory epithets. Fanatic, impostor, charlatan, he may have been; but these hard names furnish no solution to the problem he presents to us. Fanatics and impostors are living and dying every day, and their memory is buried with them; but the wonderful influence which this founder of a religion exerted and still exerts throws him into relief before us, not as a rogue to be criminated, but as a phenomenon to be explained. The most vital questions Americans are asking each other today have to do with this man and what he has left us. . . . Joseph Smith, claiming to be an inspired teacher, faced adversity such as few men have been called to meet, enjoyed a brief season of prosperity such as few men have ever attained, and finally, forty-three days after I saw him, went cheerfully to a martyr's death. Born in the lowest ranks of poverty, without book-learning, and with the homeliest of all human names, he had

made himself at the age of thirty-nine a power upon earth. Of the multitudinous family of Smith . . . none had won human hearts and shaped human lives as this Joseph. His influence, whether for good or evil, is potent today, and the end is not yet. . . . Mr. Quincy concludes his chapter with these words: "I have endeavored to give the details of my visit to the Mormon prophet with absolute accuracy. If the reader does not know just what to make of Joseph Smith, I cannot help him out of the difficulty. I myself stand helpless before the puzzle." (CR, April 1947, pp. 134-35.) Brigham Young: Joseph Smith holds the keys of this last dispensation, and is now engaged behind the veil in the great work of the last days. . . . No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the Celestial Kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith. I cannot go there without his consent. He holds the keys of that kingdom for the last dispensation. Should not this comfort all people? They will, by and by, be a thousand times more thankful for such a man as Joseph Smith, Junior, than it is possible for them to be for any earthly good whatever. It is his mission to see that all the children of men in this last dispensation are saved, that can be, through the redemption. You will be thankful, every one of you, that Joseph Smith, Junior was ordained to this great calling before the worlds were. JD 7:289) and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!

4 When Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up to the pretended requirements of the law, two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I SHALL DIE INNOCENT, AND IT SHALL YET BE SAID OF ME—HE WAS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD."—The same morning, after Hyrum had made ready to go—shall it be said to the slaughter? yes, for so it was—he read the following paragraph, near the close of the twelfth chapter of Ether, in the Book of Mormon, and turned down the leaf upon it:

5 *And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity. And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness, thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father. And now I . . . bid farewell unto the Gentiles; yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. The testators are now dead, and their testament is in force.*

(A testator is one who leaves a will or testament. The will is valid only after the testator's death. While the testator lives, the will has no legal power. In the gospel context a testator is someone who provides to mankind a witness of God's covenants. The Prophet Joseph Smith's testament was that God had revealed through him the sealing power by which all covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, shall be in force and recognized as valid in the eternal worlds. The death of the testator places a seal of truth on the testament. The Lord revealed to President Brigham Young that it was necessary for the Prophet to seal his testimony with his blood. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "The shedding of their blood also bound that testimony upon an unbelieving world and this testimony will stand at the judgment seat as a witness against all men who have rejected their words of eternal life." Improvement Era, June 1944, p. 365. D&C Student Manual, p. 350. D&C 136:39 Many have marveled because of his death; but it was needful that he should seal his testimony with his blood, that he might be honored and the wicked might be condemned.)

6 Hyrum Smith was forty-four years old in February, 1844, and Joseph Smith was thirty-eight in December, 1843; and henceforward their names will be classed among the martyrs of religion; and the reader in every nation will be reminded that the Book of Mormon, and this book of Doctrine and Covenants of the church, cost the best blood of the nineteenth century to bring them forth for the salvation of a ruined world; and that if the fire can scathe a green tree for the glory of God, how easy it will burn up the dry trees to purify the vineyard of corruption. They lived for glory; they died for glory; and glory is their eternal reward. From age to age shall their names go down to posterity as gems for the

sanctified. (George Q. Cannon: I would not have you indulge in man worship. God forbid. To Him be the glory always. We cannot glorify Joseph [Smith] without glorifying our Father in heaven. We must glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot indulge in any worship that will detract from or lessen our worship of our Great and Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ. But we can reverence the man of God; we can love him; we can emulate his example; we can cherish his memory; we can perpetuate this in our children; and we can seek to comprehend the truths that he taught, so that by comprehending and by practicing them we may be prepared to dwell with him, and dwell with our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ in eternity. (MS, May 23, 1895, 57:326.))

7 They were innocent of any crime, as they had often been proved before, and were only confined in jail by the conspiracy of traitors and wicked men; and their *innocent blood* on the floor of Carthage jail is a broad seal affixed to “Mormonism” that cannot be rejected by any court on earth, and their *innocent blood* on the escutcheon of the State of Illinois, with the broken faith of the State as pledged by the governor, is a witness to the truth of the everlasting gospel that all the world cannot impeach; and their *innocent blood* on the banner of liberty, and on the *magna charta* of the United States, is an ambassador for the religion of Jesus Christ, that will touch the hearts of honest men among all nations; and their *innocent blood*, with the innocent blood of all the martyrs under the altar that John saw, will cry unto the Lord of Hosts till he avenges that blood on the earth. Amen.

Our Heritage, p. 62-66

The Martyrdom

While the years in Nauvoo provided many happy times for the Saints, persecution soon began again, culminating in the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. This was a dark and mournful time never to be forgotten. Recording her feelings upon hearing of the martyrdom, Louisa Barnes Pratt wrote: “It was a still night, and the moon was at the full. A night of death it seemed, and everything conspired to make it solemn! The voices of the officers were heard calling the men together and coming in the distance made it fall on the heart like a funeral knell. The women were assembled in groups, weeping and praying, some wishing terrible punishment on the murderers, others acknowledging the hand of God in the event.”

Like Louisa Barnes Pratt, many Latter-day Saints remembered the events of 27 June 1844 as a time of tears and broken hearts. The martyrdom was the most tragic event in the Church’s early history. However, it was not unexpected.

On at least 19 different occasions, beginning as early as 1829, Joseph Smith told the Saints that he would probably not leave this life peacefully. While he felt that his enemies would one day take his life, he did not know when. As the spring of 1844 became summer, enemies both within and without the Church worked toward Joseph’s destruction. Thomas Sharp, editor of a nearby newspaper and a leader in Hancock County’s anti-Mormon political party, openly called for the Prophet’s murder. Citizens’ groups, apostates, and civic leaders conspired to destroy the Church by destroying its prophet.

The governor of Illinois, Thomas Ford, wrote to Joseph Smith, insisting that the city council members stand trial before a non-Mormon jury on a charge of causing a civil disturbance. He said that only such a trial would satisfy the people. He promised the men complete protection, although the Prophet did not believe he could fulfill his pledge. When it appeared that there were no other alternatives, the Prophet, his brother Hyrum, John Taylor, and others submitted to arrest, fully aware that they were guilty of no crimes.

As the Prophet prepared to leave Nauvoo for the county seat of Carthage, about 20 miles away, he knew that he was seeing his family and friends for the last time. He prophesied, "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am calm as a summer's morning."

As the Prophet started out, B. Rogers, who had worked on Joseph's farm for more than three years, and two other boys hiked across the fields and sat on the rail fence waiting for their friend and leader to pass by. Joseph stopped his horse beside the boys and said to the militiamen who were with him: "Gentlemen, this is my farm and these are my boys. They like me, and I like them." After shaking each boy's hand, he mounted his horse and rode on to his rendezvous with death.

Dan Jones, a Welsh convert, joined the Prophet in the Carthage Jail. On 26 June 1844, the last night of his life, Joseph heard a gun fire, left the bed, and lay on the floor near Jones. The Prophet whispered, "Are you afraid to die?" "Engaged in such a cause I do not think that death would have many terrors," Jones replied. "You will yet see Wales and fulfill the mission appointed you before you die," Joseph prophesied. Thousands of faithful Latter-day Saints enjoy the blessings of the Church today because Dan Jones later served an honorable and successful mission to Wales.

Shortly after five o'clock in the afternoon of 27 June 1844, a mob of about 200 men with painted faces stormed the Carthage Jail, shot and killed Joseph and his brother Hyrum, and seriously wounded John Taylor. Only Willard Richards remained unharmed. Upon hearing shouts of "the Mormons are coming," the mob fled, as did most of Carthage's residents. Willard Richards cared for the wounded John Taylor, both of them mourning their slain leaders. Hyrum's body was inside the jail, while Joseph, who had fallen from a window, lay beside the outside well.

One of the first Latter-day Saints to arrive on the scene was the dead martyrs' brother Samuel. He and others helped Willard Richards prepare the bodies for the long, sorrowful journey back to Nauvoo.

Meanwhile, in Warsaw, Illinois, the James Cowley family, who were members of the Church, prepared for their evening meal. Fourteen-year-old Matthias heard about some unusual excitement in town and joined a gathering crowd. The principal speaker saw young Cowley and ordered him to go home to his mother. Boys who were not Church members followed, pelting him with rubbish before he escaped by running through a neighbor's yard.

Believing that things had quieted down, Matthias started for the river to get a pail of water. Members of the mob spotted him and paid a drunken tailor to throw him into the river. When Matthias stopped to dip the water, the tailor caught him by the back of his neck and said, "You ... little Mormon, I'll drown you." Matthias said, "I asked him why he would drown me, and if I ever did any harm to him? No, says he, 'I won't drown you. ... You're a good boy, you may go home.'" That night mobsters unsuccessfully attempted three times to set fire to the Cowley home, but through faith and prayers the family was protected. Matthias Cowley grew and remained faithful in the Church; his son Matthias and grandson Matthew later served in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Illinois Governor Thomas Ford wrote of the martyrdom: "The murder of the Smiths, instead of putting an end to ... the Mormons and dispersing them, as many believed it would, only bound them together closer than ever, gave them new confidence in their faith." Ford also wrote, "Some gifted man like Paul, some splendid orator who will be able by his eloquence to attract crowds of the thousands, ... may succeed in breathing a new life into [the Mormon church] and make the name of the martyred Joseph ring ... loud and stir the souls of men." Ford lived with a fear that this would happen and that his own name would, like the names of Pilate and Herod, be "dragged down to posterity." Ford's fear came true.

President John Taylor recovered from his wounds and later wrote a tribute to the slain leaders that is now section 135 of the Doctrine and Covenants. He said: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. ... He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord’s anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated! ... They lived for glory; they died for glory; and glory is their eternal reward” (**D&C 135:3, D&C 135:6**).