

CHAPTER FIFTY
JOSEPH IS KIDNAPPED AND
VICIOUSLY ATTACKED

By the spring of 1843, Joseph had a little more than a year to live. Day after day he imparted important gospel principles that would enrich the lives of the Saints after his death. The doctrines that flowed from the mouth of Brother Joseph were profuse and profound. He had learned many things through heavenly visions that he wanted to teach the Saints, but he was unable to teach them all of the things he knew because they were unprepared.¹

When he had sufficient time, he would travel throughout the city, giving priesthood blessings to the sick.² Although his enemies were actively seeking to capture him or murder him, Joseph courageously strode forward with confidence in the Lord. He knew that vicious men might harm his physical body, but they could not injure his immortal soul.

JOSEPH EXPOUNDS SOME OF THE DEEP
DOCTRINES OF THE RESURRECTION

On Sunday, April 16, 1843, Joseph spoke to the Saints at the temple about the death of Lorenzo Barnes, who had become sick and died on December 20, 1842, as he was serving a mission in England.³ Joseph took this opportunity to speak about the resurrection, and he described a vision he had seen of the exquisite joy that will be felt on the morning of the resurrection:

“So plain was the vision, that I actually saw men, before they had ascended from the tomb, as though they were getting up slowly. They took each other by the hand and said to each other, ‘My father, my son, my mother, my daughter, my brother, my sister.’ And when the voice calls for the dead to

¹ Heber C. Kimball, April 6, 1863, *Journal of Discourses* 10:166-167; June 27, 1863, *Journal of Discourses* 10:233.

² *History of the Church* 5:404.

³ *History of the Church* 5:207, 319.

arise, suppose I am laid by the side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them and they me. . . .

“The expectation of seeing my friends in the morning of the resurrection cheers my soul and makes me bear up against the evils of life. It is like they are taking a long journey, and on their return, we meet them with increased joy.”⁴

Joseph said that he had many more sacred doctrines and teachings to share with the Saints, but unfortunately, he could not do it:

“It is my meditation all the day, and more than my meat and drink, to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind. Oh, how I would delight to bring before you things which you never thought of! But poverty and the cares of the world prevent. But I am glad I have the privilege of communicating to you some things which, if grasped closely, will be a help to you when earthquakes bellow, the clouds gather, the lightnings flash, and the storms are ready to burst upon you like peals of thunder. Lay hold of these things and let not your knees or joints tremble, nor your hearts faint.”⁵

As Joseph approached the end of his life, he became increasingly concerned about sharing the many things he had learned from heavenly sources. Heber C. Kimball said of the Prophet Joseph:

“There were many things he desired to reveal that we have not learned yet, but he could not do it. He said sometimes that he felt pressed upon and as though he were pent up in an acorn shell, and all because the people did not and would not prepare themselves to receive the rich treasures of wisdom and knowledge that he had to impart. He could have revealed a great many things to us if we had been ready, but he said there were many things that we could not receive because we lacked that diligence and faithfulness that were

⁴ *History of the Church* 5:362.

⁵ *History of the Church* 5:362.

necessary to entitle us to those choice things of the kingdom.”⁶

“He used to say in Nauvoo that when he came before the people he felt as though he were enclosed in an iron case, . . . there was no room in the hearts of the people to receive the glorious truths of the gospel that God revealed to him.”⁷

JOSEPH ADDRESSES THE NAUVOO LEGION

On Saturday, May 6, 1843, the Nauvoo Legion gathered at the parade ground, which was located three miles east of Nauvoo by Joseph’s farm.⁸ They held a parade ceremony and Joseph noted that the Legion looked magnificent, “better than on any former occasion. . . . The men were in good spirits. They had made great improvements both in uniform and discipline.”⁹ At the conclusion of the parade, Joseph spoke to them



Joseph looked majestic in his full-dress uniform as lieutenant-general of the Nauvoo Legion.

about the inept political leaders who had been unable to protect the Saints in Missouri, and then he said:

“When they give me the power to protect the innocent, I will never say I can do nothing for their good [as the politicians of Missouri and Washington, D.C. had said]. I will exercise that power, so help me God.”¹⁰

⁶ Heber C. Kimball, April 6, 1863, *Journal of Discourses* 10:166-167.

⁷ Heber C. Kimball, June 27, 1863, *Journal of Discourses* 10:233.

⁸ *Sacred Places* 3:190.

⁹ *History of the Church* 5:383.

¹⁰ *History of the Church* 5:383-384.

Joseph also repeated the profound prophecy that he had shared in 1840 concerning the future fate of the Constitution, saying that “the time would come when the Constitution and government would hang by a brittle thread and would be ready to fall into other hands, but this people—the Latter-day Saints—will step forth and save it.”¹¹

JOSEPH GIVES ADDITIONAL PRECIOUS GOSPEL PEARLS TO THE SAINTS

The number of regions where missionaries served was increased on Thursday, May 11, 1843, when the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles appointed fourteen elders to serve missions in Wales, Ireland, Scotland, England and, for the first time, the Pacific Isles.¹²

Two days later, on Saturday, May 13th, Joseph traveled to Yelrome, a city located 25 miles south of Nauvoo that was founded by Church members in 1839. Almost 500 Saints lived there.¹³ In the Sunday meeting the next day Joseph preached to the Saints and taught them:

“Salvation is nothing more nor less than to triumph over all our enemies and put them under our feet. And when we have power to put all enemies under our feet in this world, and a knowledge to triumph over all evil spirits in the world to come, then we are saved.”¹⁴

Joseph also explained that for a man to be sealed up unto eternal life and have his calling and election made sure, he needed to receive the “more sure word of prophecy,” as Peter described,¹⁵ which Joseph said was a personal visitation from Jesus Christ.¹⁶

Two days later Joseph traveled to Ramus, Illinois, and while there, he continued to impart additional gospel pearls to the brethren who were with him. William Clayton and Joseph stayed at the home of Benjamin F. Johnson, and before retiring for the evening, the little

¹¹ *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 279; Brigham Young, July 4, 1854, *Journal of Discourses* 7:15.

¹² *History of the Church* 5:386.

¹³ *Sacred Places* 3:212-213.

¹⁴ *History of the Church* 5:387.

¹⁵ 2 Peter 1:10, 19.

¹⁶ *History of the Church* 5:388-389; D&C 131:5.

party of friends engaged in a discussion on a number of gospel topics.

The Prophet Joseph taught them that only those who are married for eternity under the new and everlasting covenant will be able to have children in the celestial kingdom. In addition, the celestial kingdom has three levels within it, and to obtain the highest level, a person must be married for eternity in the temple.¹⁷

Joseph also explained that the material which makes up our spirit bodies and all else in the spirit world is a tangible substance, but it is too pure and refined for us to see with mortal eyes. Someday when we are sufficiently refined, we will see that it is actually matter.¹⁸

JOSEPH WARNS JUDGE DOUGLAS WITH A PROPHECY

While Joseph was returning from Ramus on Thursday, May 18, 1843, he stopped to have dinner with Judge Stephen A. Douglas at Carthage, Illinois. After dinner, the judge asked Joseph to tell him of the persecutions the Saints had suffered in Missouri, which Joseph did, taking three hours. As the conversation then turned to the subject of the Saints receiving compensation from the government for the wrongs committed against them in Missouri, the Prophet Joseph gave Judge Douglas a prophetic warning. He said:

“Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if ever you turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of the Almighty upon you; and you will live to see and know that I have testified the truth to you; for the conversation of this day will stick to you through your life.”¹⁹

This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Judge Douglas remained friendly to the Saints for the next decade, and he ran unsuccessfully for the presidency in 1852 and 1856. In 1857 he turned against the Saints when he gave a speech in Springfield, Illinois, suggesting that the Saints in Utah should be expelled from that area as a “pestiferous, disgusting cancer which is gnawing into the very vitals of the

¹⁷ *History of the Church* 5:391; D&C 131:1-4.

¹⁸ D&C 131:7-8.

¹⁹ *History of the Church* 5:394.

body politic.” He lost in his bid for the presidency in 1860 when his Democratic party’s vote was split by two other candidates. Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate, was the victor.²⁰

Douglas was deeply concerned about the growing threat of secession in the South, and he drove himself to complete exhaustion after the election as he traveled throughout the Southern states, begging the people to not withdraw from the Union. He returned to his home in Chicago a few months later, where he died of broken health. He was only forty-eight years old.²¹

JOSEPH INSTRUCTS THE SAINTS AND
INVITES THEM TO LIVE MORE RIGHTEOUSLY

On Sunday, May 21, 1843, Joseph addressed the Saints within the unfinished walls of the temple. The Saints wanted to hear from their beloved Brother Joseph, and the crowd was so thick that Joseph had to press his way through to get to the stand.²² He began his speech by saying:

“I do not know when I shall have the privilege of speaking in a house large enough to convene the people. I find my lungs are failing with continual preaching in the open air to large assemblies. . . .

“Brethren, I am not a very pious [or self-righteous] man. . . . I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else . . . knocking off a corner here and a corner there. Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty.”²³

²⁰ *History of the Church* 5:396-397.

²¹ Bruce Van Orden, “Stephen A. Douglas and the Mormons,” *Church History Regional Studies—Illinois*, (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1995), pp. 372-375; *History of the Church* 5:396.

²² *History of the Church* 5:400.

²³ *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 206; *History of the Church* 5:401. Most of the “rough stone” quote was reconstructed a decade after it was given. It has been shortened here to be more representative of Joseph’s speaking style. See *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 282.

Joseph told the Saints how they will be able to tell that the last days are approaching:

“The inhabitants of the earth are asleep: they know not the day of their visitation. The Lord hath set the bow in the cloud for a sign that while it shall be seen, seed time and harvest, summer and winter shall not fail; but when it shall disappear, woe to that generation, for behold the end cometh quickly.”²⁴

As he continued his discourse, Joseph said that, once again, he would not be able to share some of the profound doctrines he had learned because the Saints were not prepared:

“I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision [recorded in D&C 76], were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them. . . .

“The design of the great God in sending us into this world, and organizing us to prepare us for the eternal worlds, I shall keep in my own bosom at present.”²⁵

Joseph concluded his inspiring talk with a challenge to the Saints, that they live their lives righteously so that each could have his calling and election made sure.²⁶

JOSEPH LOSES A DEAR FRIEND

On Thursday, June 8, 1843, Joseph lost one of his dear friends and loyal supporters, Elias Higbee, who died suddenly of cholera. Elias had been a great help to Joseph when they had visited Washington, D.C., and he had remained there for several additional months, continuing to plead for redress for the Saints.²⁷ Joseph noted with deep poignancy in his journal:

“He has left a large family to mourn his departure; but he is gone to his rest for a little season, even until the morning of the resurrection, when he will again come forth and strike

²⁴ *History of the Church* 5:402.

²⁵ *History of the Church* 5:402, 403.

²⁶ *History of the Church* 5:402-403.

²⁷ *History of the Church* 4:19, 80-87, 102.

hands with the faithful, and share the glory of the kingdom of God forever and ever.”²⁸

JOSEPH ENCOURAGES THE SAINTS TO WORK ON THE TEMPLE

Joseph addressed the Saints on Sunday, June 11, 1843, at the temple, and Eliza R. Snow testified that “he beautifully and in a most powerful manner illustrated the necessity of the gathering [of the Saints] and the building of the temple, that those ordinances may be administered which are necessary preparations for the world to come.”²⁹

Joseph knew that some of the weaker Church members would seek to destroy him because of the deep doctrines he had restored, including the temple endowment. In a foreshadowing of what would occur within a year, he said in this same discourse:

“Many men will say, ‘I will never forsake you, but will stand by you at all times.’ But the moment you teach them some of the mysteries of the kingdom of God that are retained in the heavens and are to be revealed to the children of men when they are prepared for them, they will be the first to stone you and put you to death. It was this same principle that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, and will cause the people to kill the prophets in this generation. . . .

“There are a great many wise men and women in our midst who are too wise to be taught; therefore they must die in their ignorance, and in the resurrection they will find their mistake. Many seal up the door of heaven by saying, ‘So far God may reveal and I will believe.’”³⁰

On another occasion Joseph told the Saints:

“Would to God, brethren, I could tell you who I am! Would to God I could tell you what I know! But you would call it blasphemy, and there are men upon this stand who would want to take my life.”³¹

²⁸ *History of the Church* 5:421.

²⁹ *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 216.

³⁰ *History of the Church* 5:424.

³¹ *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, p. 322.

As we will see in the next few chapters, Joseph's death was eventually caused by men who could not cope with what little he had revealed.

JOSEPH AND HIS FAMILY LEAVE FOR DIXON

On Tuesday, June 13, 1843, Joseph and Emma left Nauvoo with their children to visit Emma's sister who lived about 200 miles northeast in a small town near Dixon, Illinois. Five days after they left, an urgent message arrived in Nauvoo from Judge Adams who lived in Springfield. He had just learned that Governor Thomas Ford, to the utter amazement of the Saints, had issued a warrant for Joseph's arrest.³² Through the insistence of John C. Bennett, a grand jury had met in Missouri a few weeks before, and they had indicted Joseph for treason. Governor Thomas Reynolds of Missouri had asked Governor Ford to extradite Joseph, and amazingly, Ford had agreed to the entire nefarious plot.³³

William Clayton and Stephen Markham immediately rode from Nauvoo in great haste to warn Joseph of this new development. They covered 212 miles in 66 hours, and arrived in a state of sheer exhaustion.³⁴ Joseph realized that he was in a dangerous situation, far from home where he had friends who could protect him. He told his family "that if I started for home I might be arrested where I had no friends and be kidnapped into Missouri, and [I] thought it best to tarry [at Emma's sister's house] and see the result."³⁵

JOSEPH IS CAPTURED AND MERCILESSLY BEATEN BY TWO MEN

On Friday, June 23, 1843, Sheriff Joseph Reynolds of Missouri and Constable Harmon Wilson of Carthage arrived in Dixon. They had been promised a substantial reward for Joseph's capture,³⁶ and they came disguised as missionaries of the Church, asking where they could find "Brother Joseph." They arrived at the home where Joseph

³² *History of the Church* 5:431, 435.

³³ *History of the Church* 5:422.

³⁴ *History of the Church* 5:436-439.

³⁵ *History of the Church* 5:439.

³⁶ Kate B. Carter, "Autobiography of Louisa Barnes Pratt," *Heart Throbs of the West* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1947) 8:230.

was staying and when they saw him, they quickly grabbed him, punched him and pointed loaded pistols at his chest. With foul language they threatened to kill him if he tried to escape.

Joseph replied with conviction, “I am not afraid of your shooting. I am not afraid to die.” Baring his chest, he told them to go ahead and shoot, saying, “I have endured so much oppression. I am weary of life, and kill me, if you please. I am a strong man, however, and with my own natural weapons could soon level both of you. But if you have any legal process to serve, I am at all times subject to law, and shall not offer resistance.”³⁷

Without presenting any arrest warrant, they forced Joseph into their wagon, threatening to kill Joseph's friend, Stephen Markham, who held the horses until Emma could get Joseph's coat and hat. During the eight-mile journey to Dixon, Joseph's captors continued to mercilessly punch him on both sides of his chest with their pistols. This brutal treatment left an eighteen-inch circle of black and blue bruises on both sides of his ribs.³⁸

Arriving in Dixon, Joseph was taken to an inn and thrown into a room where he was heavily guarded while fresh horses were prepared for a journey to Missouri. Joseph demanded to see a lawyer, but this was repeatedly denied by Reynolds and Wilson. However, with the help of Stephen Markham who had followed on horseback, and through the insistent cries for help from Joseph, the local people soon become aware of what was occurring and grew properly incensed. Joseph reported:

“Mr. Dixon, the owner of the inn, and his friends, who gathered around the hotel door, gave Reynolds to understand that if that was their mode of doing business in Missouri, they had another way of doing it in Dixon. They were a law-abiding people and republicans, and gave Reynolds to understand that he should not take me away without giving me the opportunity of a fair trial.”³⁹

³⁷ *History of the Church* 5:440.

³⁸ *History of the Church* 5:440-442.

³⁹ *History of the Church* 5:442.

What a marked contrast to the unfair treatment Joseph had received in Missouri! Stephen Markham hurriedly swore out a writ against Reynolds and Wilson for threatening his life, and the sheriff of Lee County, Illinois took the two officers and their prisoner, Joseph, into his custody. Markham then swore out several other writs against Reynolds and Wilson for Joseph's false imprisonment, and they were held on bail of ten thousand dollars each, which caused them great consternation.⁴⁰

When speeding messengers reached Nauvoo two days later and told of Joseph's capture, the city arose with vigor. Hundreds of men volunteered to ride to Joseph's rescue, and Hyrum chose about 200 of the best, who immediately rode out in various groups.⁴¹ When one of these groups first met Joseph, he recorded that he "could not refrain from tears at seeing the first of my friends come to meet me, and then said to [his lawyer's son], Mr. Montgomery, 'I am not going to Missouri this time. These are my boys.'"⁴²

JOSEPH RETURNS TRIUMPHANTLY TO NAUVOO

With the complexity of the many writs and arrest warrants that were issued, it was eventually determined that Joseph's case should be heard in Quincy, Illinois. But as they continued their journey, it was then decided to change the venue to the municipal courts of Nauvoo, since it was on the way to Quincy.⁴³ The whole group of several sheriffs, Joseph and his brethren arrived in Nauvoo on the morning of June 30, 1843. They entered the city amidst the roar of guns and cannons and the cheers of citizens who had turned out in a parade when they had learned that Joseph would be arriving.⁴⁴ Joseph was allowed to ride his favorite horse, Old Charley, with Emma riding by his side. Wandle Mace was there and he later said:

"Language fails me to describe my feelings upon this occasion as Joseph, with his wife by his side, each on horseback, rode in triumph among his friends into his beloved city. Joseph looked upon the multitude of his friends whose every

⁴⁰ *History of the Church* 5:443-444.

⁴¹ *History of the Church* 5:446-447.

⁴² *History of the Church* 5:449.

⁴³ *History of the Church* 5:447-448, 456.

⁴⁴ *History of the Church* 5:459-460.

countenance beamed with joy inexpressible and said, ‘I am out of the power of the Missouriians again, thank God! And I thank you all for your kindness and love. I bless you all in the name of Jesus Christ. I will address you in the grove near the temple at four o’clock this afternoon.’”⁴⁵

After the crowd had dispersed, Joseph held a feast in his home where he insisted that Reynolds and Wilson sit at the head of the table. Emma served them a bounteous meal and they were entertained with great kindness, which Joseph noted, “contrasted strongly with their treatment to me when I was first arrested by them.”⁴⁶

JOSEPH TELLS THE SAINTS OF HIS HARROWING EXPERIENCE

That afternoon in the grove by the temple, Joseph addressed the Saints and said:

“I meet you with a heart full of gratitude to Almighty God, and I presume you all feel the same. I am well—I am hearty. I hardly know how to express my feelings. I feel as strong as a giant. I pulled sticks with the men coming along, and I pulled up with one hand the strongest man that could be found. Then two men tried, but they could not pull me up, and I continued to pull, mentally, until I pulled Missouri to Nauvoo. . . .

“My lot has always been cast among the warmest-hearted people. In every time of trouble, friends, even among strangers, have been raised up unto me and assisted me.”⁴⁷

Joseph expressed his gratitude for the Nauvoo charter, which had protected him several times now.⁴⁸ Many of the enemies of the Church wanted to abolish the charter⁴⁹ since it made it difficult for mobs to capture Joseph and haul him off to Missouri, where he would surely be killed. Joseph told the Saints all of the details of his capture, and then he concluded his talk by saying:

⁴⁵ Autobiography of Wandle Mace, typescript, BYU Special Collections, pp. 88-89.

⁴⁶ *History of the Church* 5:460.

⁴⁷ *History of the Church* 5:466, 467.

⁴⁸ *History of the Church* 5:469, 470.

⁴⁹ *History of the Church* 5:294-295.

“It did my soul good to see your feelings and love manifested toward me. I thank God that I have the honor to lead so virtuous and honest a people—to be your leader and lawyer, as was Moses to the children of Israel. Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna to Almighty God, who has delivered us thus from out of the seven troubles. I commend you to His grace; and may the blessings of heaven rest upon you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”⁵⁰

JOSEPH IS FREED BY THE MUNICIPAL COURT OF NAUVOO

Since the supreme court of Illinois had already found Joseph innocent of the Missouri charges just six months before,⁵¹ the municipal court of Nauvoo officially set him free.⁵² Moreover, on August 14, 1843, Governor Ford wrote the governor of Missouri affirming “that the laws of this state have been fully exercised in the matter,”⁵³ which put an end to the annoying Missourian requisitions. But until this final edict was issued, a Missouri mob had been waiting in Rushville, Illinois, 50 miles southwest of Nauvoo, hoping for another opportunity to kidnap Joseph and take him to Missouri.⁵⁴

Governor Ford’s vacillation in this case was especially disturbing. However, Joseph freely forgave him, saying that he felt it was “an error of the head, and not of the heart.”⁵⁵ Ford’s inability to stand for what was right under political pressure would be one of the major causes of Joseph’s martyrdom in less than a year.

Nevertheless, there was some good that came out of this ordeal. During Joseph’s trial and acquittal in the court of Nauvoo, many of the brethren came forward to testify about the atrocities that had occurred in Missouri. Many of these testimonies had not been officially recorded before this time, and an official, legal record was now made. In the process of bringing these horrible memories to light, Brigham Young reported:

⁵⁰ *History of the Church* 5:472.

⁵¹ *History of the Church* 5:223-231.

⁵² *History of the Church* 5:474.

⁵³ *History of the Church* 5:534.

⁵⁴ *History of the Church* 5:500.

⁵⁵ *History of the Church* 5:526.

“The recital of this part of the testimony was sufficient to curdle the blood in the veins of all who heard it; even the lawyers were shocked to the soul, and at the close of the testimony, in their speeches, before the court, exhorted the Saints to maintain their rights, ‘stand or fall, sink or swim, live or die.’”⁵⁶

To calm many of the citizens of Illinois concerning his arrest, Joseph told the Twelve Apostles to select elders who could be sent on missions to the various counties of Illinois to “preach the gospel and disabuse the public mind with regard to my arrest.”⁵⁷ Eighty-two elders were chosen and sent forth, and most of the Twelve also went out to preach. By the time they returned in October 1843, they had calmed the public, preached the gospel, baptized many, and collected contributions for the construction of the temple.⁵⁸

THE SAINTS CELEBRATE JOSEPH’S FREEDOM ON THE FOURTH OF JULY

On Tuesday, July 4, 1843, the Saints invited the people throughout the region to gather at Nauvoo to celebrate the Fourth of July in commemoration of Joseph’s liberation. Several steamboats arrived from St. Louis and Quincy in the afternoon, and the thousands of visitors were welcomed most cordially to the city. One of the Quincy citizens described his trip in *The Quincy Whig* newspaper:

“The kindness of the officers of the boat and the hearty welcome received from the citizens of Nauvoo on our arrival there induced me to return to each and all of them my own and the thanks of every passenger on board. . . . [The Saints] have been most grossly slandered, and they respect, cherish and love the free institutions of our country, and appreciate the sacrifice and bloodshed of those patriots who established them. I never saw a more orderly, gentlemanly and hospitable people.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ “Manuscript History of Brigham Young,” *Millennial Star* (1864) 26:186.

⁵⁷ *History of the Church* 5:485.

⁵⁸ *History of the Church* 6:60.

⁵⁹ *History of the Church* 5:491.

Joseph addressed a large crowd of about 15,000 people in the afternoon of July 4th, and he explained why he was innocent of the false charges from the governor of Missouri.⁶⁰ He then stated:

“As often as God sees fit for me to suffer, I am ready; but I am as innocent of the crimes alleged against me as the angels in heaven. I am not an enemy to mankind, I am a friend to mankind. I am not an enemy to Missouri, nor to any governor or people. . . .

“All the power that I desire or have sought to obtain has been the enjoyment of the constitutional privilege for which my fathers shed their blood—of living in peace in the society of my wife and children, and enjoying the society of my friends and that religious liberty which is the right of every American citizen, of worshiping according to the dictates of his conscience and the revelations of God.”⁶¹

At the conclusion of his remarks it was noted that “the multitude gave good attention and much prejudice seemed to be removed.”⁶²

JOSEPH TELLS OF HIS DESIRE TO HELP ALL MANKIND

The next Sunday, on July 9, 1843, Joseph addressed the Saints in the grove by the temple. He told them of his deep and abiding love for all of mankind, and his concern for the eternal welfare of their souls:

“Sectarian priests cry out concerning me, and ask, ‘Why is it this babbler gains so many followers, and retains them?’ I answer, It is because I possess the principle of love. All I can offer the world is a good heart and a good hand. The Saints can testify whether I am willing to lay down my life for my brethren. If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a ‘Mormon,’ I am bold to declare before heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination. . . .

⁶⁰ *History of the Church* 5:489.

⁶¹ *History of the Church* 5:489, 490.

⁶² *History of the Church* 5:490.

“If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear them down? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better; and I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do, only by the force of reasoning, for truth will cut its own way. . . . Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of union and friendship in their midst; and they will do it before the Millennium can be ushered in and Christ takes possession of His Kingdom.”⁶³

JOSEPH RECORDS THE REVELATION ABOUT
THE PATRIARCHAL ORDER OF MARRIAGE

On Wednesday, July 12, 1843, Joseph and Hyrum were in the upper room above Joseph's store discussing the principle of plural marriage. Joseph had known about this doctrine since 1831 when he had been revising the Old Testament and He had asked the Lord why some of the ancient patriarchs had received more than one wife. The Lord had told him that these righteous men had been commanded by Him to take these wives. The Lord also gave Joseph the startling information that he would be called upon to introduce this doctrine to the Church.⁶⁴

Joseph carried the weight of this unrecorded revelation on his heart throughout the rest of his ministry. Initially, the idea was simply repulsive. Joseph had always lived a moral and virtuous life. He deeply loved Emma, and she emphatically rejected the idea of sharing her husband with another woman. Joseph therefore postponed—as long as he dared—obeying the revelation which he knew would ignite a marital explosion.

However, he could not delay it forever. One day an angel appeared with a flaming sword and told Joseph that he would slay him if he did not obey this commandment of plural marriage.⁶⁵

⁶³ *History of the Church* 5:498, 499.

⁶⁴ *History of the Church* 5:xxix-xxx, xxxii; Joseph F. Smith, July 7, 1878, *Journal of Discourses* 20:29.

⁶⁵ *The Life of Heber C. Kimball*, p. 321; *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, pp. 69-70; Mary Lightner, address at BYU, April 14, 1905, typescript, BYU Archives and Manuscripts, pp. 1-2.

Dutifully, Joseph obeyed, and he was sealed to his first additional wife in April 1841.⁶⁶

In the beginning Emma had sustained her husband in this new and difficult requirement of raising up more than one family, but as time wore on, she hesitated. On July 12, 1843, Joseph was in his office discussing this situation with Hyrum. Hyrum said that he was certain he could convince Emma of the truth of plural marriage if Joseph could write the revelation down. Joseph agreed to have the revelation recorded, but said that Hyrum would not be able to convince Emma, because, “You do not know Emma as well as I do.”⁶⁷

As Joseph dictated the revelation, William Clayton, his scribe, recorded it carefully. After Joseph was done, he asked William to reread the revelation to him, and Joseph then pronounced it correct. William Clayton described what happened next:

“Hyrum then took the revelation to read to Emma. Joseph remained with me in the office until Hyrum returned. When he came back, Joseph asked him how he had succeeded. Hyrum replied that he had never received a more severe talking to in his life—that Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger.

“Joseph quietly remarked, ‘I told you [that] you did not know Emma as well as I did.’”⁶⁸

As we will discover in the following chapters, Emma became increasingly antagonistic about the doctrine of plural marriage in the remaining months of Joseph’s life. The Lord had warned her in 1830 to be meek and to avoid the spirit of pride,⁶⁹ but she went against this counsel as she began to grow hostile and jealous. Previous to this time, she had been a constant support to Joseph in his prophetic calling, but now, tragically, she wandered from that noble path as she started to turn against him.

This was a source of deep sadness and difficulty for Joseph. Obeying the Lord’s commandment to live the patriarchal order of

⁶⁶ *History of the Church* 5:xxx1.

⁶⁷ *History of the Church* 5:xxxii.

⁶⁸ *History of the Church* 5:xxxiii.

⁶⁹ D&C 25:14.

marriage was a great trial for him and other members of the Church. Brigham Young reported:

“Some of these my brethren know what my feelings were at the time Joseph revealed the doctrine. I was not desirous of shrinking from any duty, nor of failing in the least to do as I was commanded, but it was the first time in my life that I had desired the grave, and I could hardly get over it for a long time. And when I saw a funeral, I felt to envy the corpse [in] its situation, and to regret that I was not in the coffin, knowing the toil and labor that my body would have to undergo. And I have had to examine myself, from that day to this, and watch my faith, and carefully meditate, lest I should be found desiring the grave more than I ought to do.”⁷⁰

Even though less than 25 percent of the members ever practiced the patriarchal order of marriage,⁷¹ it brought the fires of derision and persecution down upon the Church. Obeying this commandment tried the faith of all of the members of the Church. The Lord told the Saints that it would be a sacrifice that would test all of them.⁷²

WHY THE LORD DIRECTED THE PROPHET JOSEPH TO RESTORE THE PATRIARCHAL ORDER OF MARRIAGE

Some have wondered why the Lord, through the Prophet Joseph, would reinstate the practice of plural marriage. As we study the final months of Joseph's life, it becomes obvious that several factors were necessary to bring about the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph so that he could seal his testimony with his own blood.⁷³ One of the most crucial factors was the doctrine of plural marriage.

When Joseph shared this doctrine with some of the principal Church leaders, most of them accepted it, but a few turned against him and worked tirelessly to bring about his death. In the final

⁷⁰ Brigham Young, July 14, 1855, *Journal of Discourses* 3:266.

⁷¹ Leonard J. Arrington and Dean L. May, “History of the Church,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 2:617; Danel Bachman and Ronald K. Esplin, “Plural Marriage,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 3:1095; Lowell Bennion, “The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy in 1880: ‘Dixie’ versus Davis Stake,” *Journal of Mormon History*, (1984) 11:38.

⁷² D&C 132:51.

⁷³ Brigham Young, July 31, 1864, *Journal of Discourses* 10:326.

analysis, Joseph humbly submitted to the will of the Lord in restoring the practice of plural marriage, even though he knew it would cause severe persecution and trials, within his own home and abroad.

Plural marriage also served another important purpose. When it was halted by President Wilford Woodruff in 1890, history shows that the persecution of the Church began to gradually diminish for the first time since its founding. The persecutors of the Church felt like they had gained a victory by “eliminating” this doctrine, and they began to quiet their antagonism. As a result, the Church enjoys much less mistreatment today than it did in the days of Joseph and Brigham.

Joseph had to be constantly vigilant that the Saints correctly understood and practiced this doctrine. Some of the brethren would hastily try to live this law before they were commanded. On October 5, 1843, Joseph noted in his journal, “I have constantly said no man shall have but one wife at a time unless the Lord directs otherwise.”⁷⁴ To remedy this misunderstanding, he instructed the Church leaders to bring members to trial “who were preaching or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives [without permission]; for according to the law, I hold the keys of this power in the last days; for there is never but one on earth at a time on whom the power and its keys are conferred.”⁷⁵

When Sarah Leavitt prayed for understanding concerning plural marriage, she had a dream one night that taught her an important principle. She said:

“My mind was carried away from the earth and I had a view of the order of the celestial kingdom. I saw that [plural marriage] was the order there and oh, how beautiful. I was filled with love and joy that was unspeakable. I awoke my husband and told him of the views I had and that the ordinance was from the Lord, *but it would damn thousands. It was too sacred for fools to handle, for they would use it to gratify their lustful desires.*”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *History of the Church* 6:46.

⁷⁵ *History of the Church* 6:46.

⁷⁶ Pulsipher, Juanita L., ed., *History of Sarah Studevant Leavitt*, (no publisher listed, 1919), p. 23; emphasis added.

In studying the practice of plural marriage in the early history of Utah, we sadly find that this was sometimes true. While many men lived the law of patriarchal marriage as the Lord had intended, others became fixated in gaining many wives and were not deeply concerned about them or the welfare of the children whom they were rearing.⁷⁷ Even today, there are those who refuse to obey Church leaders in halting the practice of the law of plural marriage, and they have been damned in their eternal progression by being excommunicated from the Church.

As we examine the remaining year of Joseph's life in the next few chapters, we will notice that several important factors eventually combined together to bring about his martyrdom. The primary factor was the introduction of patriarchal marriage, which would soon cause a cascade of other events. In just a short time Joseph would discover traitors and apostates in his midst—men who were leaders both in Nauvoo and of the Church. Among these traitors were some of his cherished friends.

⁷⁷ Danel Bachman and Ronald K. Esplin, "Plural Marriage," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 3:1094-1095. In his 1903 letter to George F. Gibbs, LDS Church Archives, Benjamin F. Johnson estimated that two-thirds practiced the law correctly and raised good families, but unfortunately, the other third were not successful fathers.