

## CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

### THE FINAL WEEK OF JOSEPH'S LIFE

Joseph was now entering the last week of his life. These final days were filled with emotional highs and lows, as Joseph found himself free and fleeing to the safety of the Rocky Mountains, and then just a short time later, mocked by cowards and submitting to those who wished to cause his death. During the next seven days, a series of events would occur, one after another, until the right circumstances were put into place to bring about Joseph's martyrdom.

#### GOVERNOR FORD MAKES A SERIOUS MISTAKE

The first portentous event occurred on the morning of Friday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, when Governor Thomas Ford arrived from Springfield. Instead of traveling to Nauvoo to determine the true situation, he stopped in Carthage. This was a serious mistake, and the governor soon fell under the influence of the members of the mob,<sup>1</sup> with all of their infernal lies and distortions of the truth.

In an apparent attempt to hear both sides of the issue, Governor Ford wrote a letter to Joseph, asking him to send any men to Carthage who could give the Saints' version of events. Joseph immediately sent a delegation to Carthage that brought numerous affidavits explaining what had happened.<sup>2</sup>

The next morning, on Saturday, June 22, 1844, Joseph wrote to the governor and again invited him to visit Nauvoo, stating that it would be easier for him to make a full investigation in Nauvoo where witnesses could be easily called. That same day Joseph learned that a mob of 7,000 men from northern Missouri was ready to cross over into Illinois to assist the local mobs if an attack on Nauvoo began.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *History of the Church* 6:542.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Church* 6:520-524.

<sup>3</sup> *History of the Church* 6:525-527, 531.

In the meantime, the brethren who had gone to Carthage with the affidavits were shocked to discover that Governor Ford “was surrounded by some of the vilest and most unprincipled men in creation,” including the sworn enemies of Joseph. As the brethren tried to present their case, they were frequently interrupted and contradicted by this gang of ruffians. After listening to the brethren, the governor wrote a letter to Joseph in reply, which the brethren carried to Nauvoo, arriving about 9:00 P.M. Saturday night.<sup>4</sup>

This letter from the governor was threatening in its content, stating that the destruction of the *Expositor* press was “a very gross outrage,” and demanding that martial law cease and that Joseph submit to arrest so that he could be tried in Carthage—the den of the mob. The governor said he would send a company of soldiers to escort Joseph to Carthage. In his letter the governor also accused Joseph of other crimes which he had not committed, and it was obvious that the governor was accepting and relying heavily on the information he was getting from the mob.<sup>5</sup>

At midnight Joseph wrote to the governor in reply, stating that “we have never gone contrary to constitutional law, so far as we have been able to learn it.” As far as going to Carthage, he declared, “we dare not come, though your Excellency promises protection. Yet, at the same time, you have expressed fears that you could not control the mob, in which case we are left to the mercy of the merciless.”<sup>6</sup> It is astonishing how Joseph predicted exactly what eventually transpired.

Joseph also informed the governor in his letter that he had ceased the declaration of martial law as the governor had demanded, and “the city is left open and unprotected.” Joseph said he was planning to immediately travel to Washington, D.C. and present the facts to the federal government, where hopefully he could find some mercy.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *History of the Church* 6:543-545.

<sup>5</sup> *History of the Church* 6:533-537.

<sup>6</sup> *History of the Church* 6:538-540.

<sup>7</sup> *History of the Church* 6:540-541.

JOSEPH FLEES NAUVOO IN ORDER TO REDIRECT  
THE MOB'S FURY AWAY FROM THE SAINTS

After completing this letter, Joseph was given a revelation which altered his plan to travel to the nation's capital. He told the brethren in his office:

“It is clear to my mind what to do. All they want is Hyrum and myself; then tell everybody to go about their business, and not to collect in groups, but to scatter about. There is no doubt they will come here and search for us. Let them search; they will not harm you in person or property, and not even a hair of your head. We will cross the river tonight, and go away to the West.”<sup>8</sup>

Joseph knew that he was in a desperate situation. Before leaving Nauvoo that night, he noted: “I told Stephen Markham that if I and Hyrum were ever taken again we should be massacred, or I was not a prophet of God.”<sup>9</sup> However, Joseph was willing to sacrifice himself for the safety of the people. He knew that if he left the city—which would then make him more vulnerable to being caught by his enemies—it would draw the attention of the mob away from Nauvoo, leaving the Saints in peace.<sup>10</sup>

At 2:00 A.M. Joseph, Hyrum, Willard Richards and Porter Rockwell began to row across the Mississippi in a leaky boat that required continuous bailing to stay afloat. They arrived on the Iowa side at daybreak on Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, and went into hiding at William Jordan's house. A posse arrived in Nauvoo that morning to arrest Joseph, but returned to Carthage empty-handed.<sup>11</sup>

JOSEPH IS PERSUADED TO RETURN

In the meantime, as word spread through Nauvoo that Joseph had fled, some of the residents began to feel afraid. The posse that had arrived in Nauvoo that morning had threatened to place the city

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<sup>8</sup> *History of the Church* 6:545.

<sup>9</sup> *History of the Church* 6:546.

<sup>10</sup> Autobiography of Wandle Mace, typescript, BYU Special Collections, pp. 142-143.

<sup>11</sup> *History of the Church* 6:548-549.

under siege until Joseph and Hyrum were found.<sup>12</sup> Reynolds Cahoon and Hiram Kimball were especially concerned that their property would become worthless if the city was attacked or put under siege.<sup>13</sup>

These men went to the Nauvoo Mansion and met with Emma. They persuaded her to write to Joseph and ask him to return. They, along with Lorenzo Wasson, Emma's nephew, traveled across the river and delivered the letter to Joseph about 1:00 P.M., calling him a coward for leaving the people. Joseph meekly replied to their retort, "If my life is of no value to my friends, it is of none to myself."<sup>14</sup>

Joseph and his brethren consulted together about this new development. Hyrum suggested, "Let us go back and give ourselves up, and see the thing out." After thinking about this for a moment, Joseph stated, "If you will go back, I will go with you, but we shall be butchered." Hyrum told Joseph that he doubted it, and that all would be well. Sadly, he was wrong.<sup>15</sup>

From this moment on, the certainty grew within Joseph's heart and mind that the end of his life had now arrived.<sup>16</sup> He could have tried to run away or attempted to hide, but instead, he bravely faced what lay ahead.

Joseph wrote to the governor before returning to Nauvoo, asking for an armed company of soldiers to protect him as he went to Carthage the next day, as the governor had promised. As they were returning to Nauvoo, the brethren urged Joseph to quicken his pace, but he privately told Porter Rockwell, "It is of no use to hurry, for we are going back to be slaughtered."<sup>17</sup>

William Walker described the poignant scene when Joseph finally arrived at the Nauvoo Mansion:

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<sup>12</sup> Andrew F. Ehat, ed., "The Nauvoo Journal of Joseph Fielding," *BYU Studies* (Winter 1979) 19:2:150; Letter of Vilate Kimball, June 24, 1844, found in *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, pp. 340-341.

<sup>13</sup> Autobiography of Wandle Mace, typescript, BYU Special Collections, pp. 143-144; *History of the Church* 6:549.

<sup>14</sup> *History of the Church* 6:549.

<sup>15</sup> *History of the Church* 6:549-550.

<sup>16</sup> *History of the Church* 6:549, 551, 554, 555, 558, 601.

<sup>17</sup> *History of the Church* 6:551.

“About sunset, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, he and his brother Hyrum returned to the Mansion. I was at the time sitting alone in the private parlor. He was so overcome with grief he could hardly speak at first. As soon as he could control his feelings, he said he was going to give himself up for trial.”<sup>18</sup>

That evening a letter from the governor arrived in which he backed out of his promise to provide a company of soldiers to escort Joseph to Carthage. The governor demanded that Joseph appear in Carthage at 10:00 A.M. or he threatened that “Nauvoo would be destroyed, and all the men, women and children that were in it.”<sup>19</sup> A demand like this from the governor of a state is simply atrocious, and frankly, barbaric in nature. Here we can sense that Governor Ford was beginning to indulge in the spirit of the mob with which he had surrounded himself.

#### JOSEPH DEPARTS FOR CARTHAGE WEIGHED DOWN WITH SORROW

Joseph and his friends began the fateful journey to Carthage at 6:30 A.M. on Monday, June 24, 1844. Benjamin Ashby watched them leave, and he said:

“I was in my father’s garden one morning, the memorable June 1844, when [Joseph] rode past on his way to Carthage. Never shall I forget the look of deep sorrow that covered his noble countenance—that was the last time I saw him alive.”<sup>20</sup>

As the group reached the top of the hill near the temple, Joseph looked out over the majestic, half-finished Nauvoo Temple and the beautiful and peaceful city. Taking in the view, with his emotions brimming near the surface, he told the brethren with him, “This is the loveliest place and the best people under the heavens; little do they know the trials that await them.”<sup>21</sup>

By 10:00 A.M. the group was four miles west of Carthage when they met a group of sixty militia men. These men had an order to

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<sup>18</sup> Autobiography of William Holmes Walker, typescript, BYU Special Collections, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> *History of the Church* 6:552.

<sup>20</sup> Autobiography of Benjamin Ashby, typescript, BYU Special Collections, pp. 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> *History of the Church* 6:554.



On the way to Carthage, Joseph paused to gaze at his beloved city of Nauvoo.

retrieve all of the guns that had been loaned to the Nauvoo Legion by the state, and the captain of the militia asked Joseph to return with his men to Nauvoo so that they could recover the weapons without causing a disturbance. It seems that the governor thought that the Saints might harm these men, and once that happened, he would have a perfect excuse to attack Nauvoo.<sup>22</sup>

Joseph saw through the plot and therefore wrote to the governor informing him that he was returning to Nauvoo to help the state militia fulfill his order. Before returning to Nauvoo, Joseph prophetically told his friends:

“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 toward God and toward all men. If they take my life, I shall die an innocent man, and my blood shall cry from the ground for vengeance, and it shall be said of me, ‘He was murdered in cold blood!’”<sup>23</sup>

The militia, with Joseph and his friends, arrived in Nauvoo at 2:30 P.M., and by 6:00 P.M. all of the guns had been gathered. As the

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<sup>22</sup> *History of the Church* 6:554-556.

<sup>23</sup> *History of the Church* 6:555.

guns were being collected, Joseph turned to the captain of the militia and said there was only one fault with the Nauvoo Legion: “They were too good, too pure to live in this ungodly generation.”<sup>24</sup> He then spoke to the Legion members gathered around him and told them prophetically:

“You will be called the first elders of the church and your mission will be to the nations of the earth, you will gather many people into the fastness of the Rocky Mountains as a center for the gathering of the people and you will be faithful because you have been true. . . .

“This I will promise you, that *when I come again I will lead you forth*, for I will go to prepare a place for you so that where I am you will be. I now dismiss you with my blessing to go home. Amen.”<sup>25</sup>

This last paragraph has deep significance, which we will discuss in the next chapter.

#### JOSEPH LEAVES NAUVOO FOR THE FINAL TIME

As Joseph prepared to leave the city for the final time, he was completely heartbroken. He returned twice to tell his family goodbye.<sup>26</sup> Edwin Rushton was standing at the gate of the Nauvoo Mansion, and he noted Joseph's parting conversation with Emma:

“Joseph said to his wife, ‘Emma, can you train my sons to walk in their father's footsteps?’ She answered, ‘Oh, Brother Joseph, you are coming back.’ Joseph asked the same question three times and Emma gave the same answer each time. The Prophet then rode away to Carthage and his death.”<sup>27</sup>

This was a promise that Emma never kept. Even though Brigham Young and the other Apostles helped Emma financially after Joseph's death and tried to appease her in all of her demands, she obstinately

<sup>24</sup> Autobiography of George Laub, typescript, BYU Special Collections, pp. 21-22.

<sup>25</sup> Autobiography of William Pace, typescript, BYU Special Collections, pp. 3-4; also compare to Autobiography of Wandle Mace, typescript, BYU Special Collections, pp. 131-132; emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> *History of the Church* 6:557-558.

<sup>27</sup> “Edwin Rushton, Bridge Builder and Faithful Pioneer,” *Pioneer Journals*, p. 3.

refused to follow their counsel. She remained in Nauvoo, remarried a questionable stranger, and established a splinter church with her son as the president.

Leaving Nauvoo that evening, Joseph and his friends arrived in Carthage shortly before midnight. As they entered the town, the Carthage Greys were hysterical with excitement and filled the air with profanity. Amidst the yelling and jeering, Joseph and his friends made their way to the Hamilton Hotel, where they stayed that night.<sup>28</sup>

### JOSEPH AWAITS HIS TRIAL

On the morning of Tuesday, June 25, 1844, Joseph allowed himself to be arrested, as he had promised, for the trial regarding the destruction of the *Expositor* press. However, less than an hour later, he was placed under another arrest warrant that charged him with treason. This had been concocted by the group of apostates, who said that Joseph had committed treason when he declared martial law in Nauvoo.<sup>29</sup> This was simply ludicrous. Joseph was merely acting dutifully in his office as mayor, trying to protect the city from its enemies. Since treason is a non-bailable offense,<sup>30</sup> Joseph's enemies knew that he would be unable to leave the city once his trial for treason began. They didn't want him to slip out of their hands like he had a month ago when he was in Carthage.<sup>31</sup>

That same morning Governor Ford addressed the troops, who were gathered near the courthouse, and he spoke very rudely about Joseph and his friends. The governor then demanded that Joseph and Hyrum be presented to the troops, walking past the soldiers with them so that the uniformed mob could see them at close range. Joseph and Hyrum were then returned to the Hamilton Hotel, where they waited most of the day for the lawyers to prepare for their preliminary hearing in the *Expositor* case.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *History of the Church* 6:559-560.

<sup>29</sup> *History of the Church* 6:561-562.

<sup>30</sup> Gordon A. Madsen, "Joseph Smith and the Missouri Court of Inquiry," *BYU Studies* (2004) 43:4:122.

<sup>31</sup> *History of the Church* 6:413-414.

<sup>32</sup> *History of the Church* 6:562-565.

As they waited, the officers of the state militia came to see them to satisfy their curiosity. Joseph asked them if he looked like a desperate character, and they replied, “No, sir, your appearance would indicate the very contrary, General Smith; but we cannot see what is in your heart, neither can we tell what are your intentions.” To this Joseph replied, “Very true, gentlemen, you cannot see what is in my heart and you are therefore unable to judge me of my intentions; but I can see what is in your hearts and will tell you what I see. I can see that you thirst for blood, and nothing but my blood will satisfy you.”<sup>33</sup>

#### JOSEPH IS UNLAWFULLY SENT TO JAIL

In the late afternoon Joseph and his friends appeared in court concerning the *Expositor* case, and they were released on bonds which totaled \$7,500 (about \$120,000 in today's money). The judge had hoped to set the bail so high that the brethren would be unable to pay it, and thus throw them in jail, but Joseph was able to raise the sum.<sup>34</sup> When this scheme had failed, the judge ordered Joseph and Hyrum jailed that evening for the charge of treason, which was patently illegal since they had not yet appeared before the judge concerning this new charge.<sup>35</sup>

Despite Joseph and Hyrum protesting this, with their lawyers also complaining to the judge and governor, they were taken from the hotel and committed to the jail. They would have probably been murdered while walking to the jail if John Taylor had not quickly paid some friendly troops to protect them.<sup>36</sup>

The mob now had Hyrum and Joseph where they wanted them, in the Carthage jail, and they began to move forward with their plans to perpetrate their foul deed. Illegal trials and the miscarriage of justice were being used to expedite Joseph's and Hyrum's death, just as had happened to the Savior. Wicked men wanted them dead.

Joseph and Hyrum were joined in the jail by their friends, and they spent the night in the debtor's room on the first floor, where

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<sup>33</sup> *History of the Church* 6:566.

<sup>34</sup> *History of the Church* 6:568.

<sup>35</sup> *History of the Church* 6:569-572.

<sup>36</sup> *History of the Church* 6:573-574.



Carthage jail—where Joseph and Hyrum were illegally incarcerated and then murdered by a mob.

they “had amusing conversations on various interesting subjects, which engaged them till late.”<sup>37</sup>

#### THE DUPLICITY OF GOVERNOR FORD

On the morning of Wednesday, June 26, 1844, Joseph insisted on meeting with the governor, who came to the jail at 9:30 A.M. As Joseph explained the true situation, it soon became obvious to the governor that Joseph was innocent, and he readily admitted it. He stated that the mob had already assembled as a militia, without his orders, before he arrived in Carthage. To appease them, he was going to let them go to Nauvoo the next day and look over the situation.<sup>38</sup> It is obvious that Governor Ford, a professional politician, was merely trying to please as many people as possible, without standing for what was right.

As some of Joseph's friends went through the town, they often overheard the mob say that Joseph and Hyrum would be killed before they could leave Carthage. These threats were even made in

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<sup>37</sup> *History of the Church* 6:574.

<sup>38</sup> *History of the Church* 6:577-579.

the governor's presence, but he ignored them with indifference. Even when one of Joseph's friends confronted the governor, saying that the soldiers were determined to kill Joseph and Hyrum, he said, "If you know of any such thing, keep it to yourself."<sup>39</sup> The apostates and the mob knew that Joseph and his friends were innocent and could not be convicted, for many of them were heard to say, "The law will not reach them, but powder and ball must."<sup>40</sup>

In the late afternoon of June 26<sup>th</sup>, Joseph and Hyrum appeared in court for the charge of treason. After much legal wrangling, their case was postponed until the next day at noon so that witnesses could be brought from Nauvoo. Joseph and his friends would spend another night in the jail, sleeping upstairs in the jailor's bedroom.<sup>41</sup>

To the end, Joseph continued to bear a faithful testimony. Before and after the trial he told the guards with great power and conviction of the truth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the Church. The guards in the jail had to be changed often because they would become convinced of the innocence of the brethren, and wished to stop fighting and return home.<sup>42</sup>

The evening of June 26<sup>th</sup> Governor Ford held a private council with his military officers. It was here that they concocted a scheme whereby Joseph could be murdered and they could still appear innocent. The governor, and those troops who had faithfully protected Joseph, would be sent to Nauvoo. The remaining troops would be disbanded, and then they would then be free to perpetrate their hellish deed. Only a small force of 50 would guard the jail. In the end, there were less than ten men protecting the jail, and they put up little resistance to the mob. The judge secretly and illegally changed the court date from June 27<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup>.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *History of the Church* 6:586, 594, 602-604.

<sup>40</sup> *History of the Church* 6:594; Autobiography of Wandle Mace, typescript, BYU Special Collections, p. 146.

<sup>41</sup> *Sacred Places* 3:207.

<sup>42</sup> *History of the Church* 6:592, 600.

<sup>43</sup> *History of the Church* 6:599-600, 602-603, 615. Evidence that Governor Ford and his staff knew in advance of Joseph's planned death can be seen in the affidavits of Jonathan Wright, Porter Rockwell and William Sterrett in *History of the Church* 6:587-590.

### THE FATEFUL DAY ARRIVES

Joseph arose on Friday, June 27, 1844, at 5:30 A.M. to an overcast day with scattered rain showers.<sup>44</sup> As Joseph's friends went through the town on various errands that morning, the mob told them that they had better be out of Carthage before sundown, or they would be killed along with Joseph and Hyrum. When they reported this to the governor, he dismissed it as a wild rumor.<sup>45</sup>

Joseph wrote a final letter to his wife that morning, and in a tender postscript he wrote:

“Dear Emma, I'm very much resigned to my lot, knowing I am justified and have done the best that could be done. Give my love to the children and all my friends. . . . May God bless you all. Amen.”<sup>46</sup>

Later that morning, a private meeting was held in Carthage with Governor Ford and other political leaders from the area, and it was determined that Joseph was becoming too popular in his presidential run. His views on government were being widely circulated and were becoming quite popular. They concluded that if he happened to lose the election for President in 1844, he surely would win in the next election. They therefore decided it was time to end Joseph's public career by assassination.<sup>47</sup>

Those troops who were not going to Nauvoo were disbanded that same morning, and they withdrew to the outskirts of the city, waiting for the governor to leave so that they could accomplish their nefarious plan.<sup>48</sup> The governor left with the troops at about 10:30 A.M. and by 1:00 P.M. the town of Carthage was under mob rule. All of Joseph's friends were forced to leave the town at the point of bayonet, leaving only Joseph, Hyrum, Willard Richards and John Taylor in the jail.<sup>49</sup> Stephen Markham, Joseph's close friend, refused to leave until the mob surrounded him, forced him on a horse, and

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<sup>44</sup> *History of the Church* 6:607.

<sup>45</sup> *History of the Church* 6:602-603.

<sup>46</sup> *History of the Church* 6:605.

<sup>47</sup> *History of the Church* 6:605-606.

<sup>48</sup> *History of the Church* 6:602-604.

<sup>49</sup> *History of the Church* 6:612-614.



To ease their sense of foreboding, Hyrum asked John Taylor to sing “A Poor, Wayfaring Man of Grief.”

drove him away by thrusting their bayonets into his legs until his boots were filled with blood. He carried these scars to his grave.<sup>50</sup>

Feelings were heavy among the brethren throughout the afternoon. Staying in the jailor’s upstairs bed-

room,<sup>51</sup> they prepared letters asking for witnesses to appear at their upcoming trial. The guard protecting the jail was ominously reduced in the late afternoon to eight men. John Taylor reported that their “spirits were all depressed, dull and gloomy, and surcharged with indefinite, ominous forebodings.”<sup>52</sup> To lift their moods, Hyrum asked John to sing “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” which he did, singing all seven verses.<sup>53</sup>

The brethren read and meditated. They had opened the windows for ventilation on that hot and muggy evening. Hyrum then requested John to sing the song again, but he replied, “Brother Hyrum, I do not feel like singing.” Encouraging him, Hyrum said, “Oh, never mind; commence singing, and you will get the spirit of it.”<sup>54</sup> John proceeded to sing again.

### THE HELLISH MOB ATTACKS

It was about 5:15 P.M. when a disturbance was heard downstairs as the guards defending the jail were forced to surrender. The brethren glanced out the front window and their hearts sank as they

<sup>50</sup> *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia* 3:676.

<sup>51</sup> *Sacred Places* 3:209.

<sup>52</sup> John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), p. 359.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Hicks, “Strains Which Will Not Soon Be Allowed to Die. . .”: The Stranger and Carthage Jail,” *BYU Studies* (Fall 1983) 23:4:399.

<sup>54</sup> *History of the Church* 7:101-102.

saw a mob of 100-200 men, with their faces painted black, rushing into the front door of the jail.



When Hyrum was fatally shot, Joseph rushed to his side, exclaiming, "Oh my poor, dear brother Hyrum!"

The mob charged up the stairs, firing their guns at the bedroom door to the

right of the top landing. The door had no lock, and the brethren had initially barricaded the door with their bodies. But when a shot came through the hardwood door, they backed away. At that instant, another bullet came through the door, hitting Hyrum to the left of his nose and entering his brain. A bullet also came through the open window and hit him in the back, passing through his body, and shattering his pocket watch. He fell to the floor, groaning, "I am a dead man!"<sup>55</sup>

In shock and horror Joseph knelt at Hyrum's side, moaning, "Oh my poor, dear brother Hyrum!" Certain that Hyrum was dead, Joseph quickly sprang to his feet and ran to the left side of the door by John Taylor. Having been secretly given a six-shooter by Cyrus Wheelock, Joseph fired it into the hallway, attempting to defend his life and defend the lives of his brethren. Several men were hit by the shots, none of them fatally, and the mob briefly stopped firing.

When Joseph ran out of ammunition, the mob returned to their deadly work again, moving up the stairs, onto the top landing, and shooting into the bedroom with a continual volley of fire. A hail of bullets was coming through the door and through the windows, showering the room with lethal lead. As the guns began to protrude through the doorway, John Taylor and Willard Richards, on opposite

<sup>55</sup> *History of the Church* 6:617, 619.



As the mob surrounded and attacked, bullets and gunfire filled the room from both the door and from the windows.

sides of the door, used their walking sticks to beat them down. As the bullets whistled about them and the guns belched their fatal fire into the room, the brethren were trapped, and felt certain to die.<sup>56</sup>

Acting purely out of instinct, John Taylor ran across the room to leap out the east window. He was hit by a bullet from the door, and stunned, he fell across the windowsill. Another bullet came from the outside, hitting his pocket watch, which saved his life, and throwing him back inside and onto the floor. He immediately rolled under a nearby bed, and was hit by three more bullets, wounding him severely, and spattering his blood on the wall.<sup>57</sup>

To draw the attention of the mob away from John and Willard, Joseph also ran to the same east window.<sup>58</sup> He was immediately hit by two bullets from the door and one from the outside, and he fell out the window, exclaiming, “Oh Lord, my God!”<sup>59</sup> He was dead.

Since Joseph had fallen out the window, the mob rushed down the stairs, leaving Willard Richards unscathed except for a bullet that had grazed the tip of his ear. Joseph had promised Willard a year earlier that one day the bullets “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.”<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *The Gospel Kingdom*, pp. 360-361.

<sup>57</sup> *The Gospel Kingdom*, pp. 361.

<sup>58</sup> *Sacred Places* 3:208.

<sup>59</sup> *History of the Church* 6:618, 7:173.

<sup>60</sup> *History of the Church* 6:618-619.

Willard glanced out the second-story window and noticed sadly that Joseph was indeed dead. Willard took John Taylor into the adjoining room, which was the “dungeon” or confinement room, and hid him under a mattress. Hiding behind the dungeon doorway, Willard expected to be shot by the mob when they returned. Some of the mob did return, rushing up the stairs to the scene of the crime. But finding no one but Hyrum's dead body, they left. As they were descending the stairs, a loud cry of false alarm was heard, “The ‘Mormons’ are coming!” and the mob fled in fear of their lives.<sup>61</sup>



“In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!” (D&C 135:3)

In less than two minutes, the deadly deed had been done.<sup>62</sup>

It was over. Joseph had now sealed his testimony. He was finally free from the grasp of traitors, tyrants, mobs and evil men. Together, he and Hyrum could now majestically return to the spirit world, there to meet their Savior, who would embrace them each and declare, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”<sup>63</sup>

#### THE NEWS OF THE MARTYRDOM CAUSES PANIC AND MOURNING

As word of what had happened spread through the town of Carthage, almost all of the citizens fled for their lives, expecting an attack of reprisal from the Saints. When messengers met Governor Ford on his return from Nauvoo with the news, he also quickly fled

<sup>61</sup> *History of the Church* 6:621.

<sup>62</sup> *History of the Church* 7:173.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew 25:21.

from the area, expressly forbidding the messengers to go to Nauvoo until the next day.<sup>64</sup>

Several of the Nauvoo Saints noted that a spirit of darkness seemed to cover the city that evening. Even the livestock and animals were affected. Zina H. Young testified of that dark night:

“I exclaimed to a neighbor who was with me, ‘What is the trouble! It seems to me that the trees and the grass are in mourning!’ A fearful silence pervaded the city, and after the shades of night gathered around us it was thick darkness. The lightnings flashed, the cattle bellowed, the dogs barked and the elements wailed. What a terrible night that was to the Saints, yet we knew nothing of the dark tragedy which had been enacted by the assassins at Carthage.”<sup>65</sup>

When the news of the martyrdom arrived in Nauvoo on the morning of Friday, June 28, 1844, it spread like a devastating wildfire. It left the people in a state of severe shock, numbness and deep mourning. None of them had expected that Joseph would die. He had escaped from his enemies so many times before that the Saints were certain he would be delivered again.<sup>66</sup> But now, instead, he was dead. Wandle Mace described the utter anguish of the Saints:

“Who can depict the scene? What pen describe the sorrow and mourning manifested by all? Strong men wept like children; women moaned as they gathered their little children around them and told them of the fearful crime that had taken place at Carthage. . . .

“Brave men, who would willingly have sacrificed their lives to save the lives of their beloved Prophet and Patriarch, were now as helpless as babes.”<sup>67</sup>

Each of the Apostles who were campaigning for Joseph throughout the United States received an impression from the Spirit that

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<sup>64</sup> *History of the Church* 6:624-625, 7:108-109.

<sup>65</sup> Autobiography of Zina Huntington Young in Edward W. Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom* (New York, 1877), p. 325.

<sup>66</sup> *History of the Church* 6:587-588.

<sup>67</sup> Autobiography of Wandle Mace, typescript, BYU Special Collections, pp. 149-150.

something deeply troubling had happened at the same moment that Joseph and Hyrum had fallen.<sup>68</sup> Brigham Young noted in his journal:

“Spent the day in Boston with Brother Woodruff, who accompanied me to the railway station as I was about to take cars to Salem. In the evening, while sitting in the depot waiting, I felt a heavy depression of spirit, and so melancholy I could not converse with any degree of pleasure. Not knowing anything concerning the tragedy enacting at this time in Carthage jail, I could not assign my reasons for my peculiar feeling.”<sup>69</sup>

THE BODIES OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM  
ARE BROUGHT TO NAUVOO

Joseph's and Hyrum's bodies were brought to the city on the afternoon of Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, as the terrible news was still settling upon the community. After preparing the bodies, they were laid in state in the Nauvoo Mansion and the Smith family was allowed to view their bodies that evening.<sup>70</sup> Mother Smith described the heart-rending scene:

“I had for a long time braced every nerve, roused every energy of my soul and called upon God to strengthen me, but when I entered the room and saw my murdered sons extended both at once before my eyes and heard the sobs and groans of my family and the cries of ‘Father! Husband! Brothers!’ from the lips of their wives, children, brothers and sisters, it was too much; I sank back, crying to the Lord in the agony of my soul, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken this family!’ A voice replied, ‘I have taken them to myself, that they might have rest.’

“Emma was carried back to her room almost in a state of insensibility. Her oldest son approached the corpse [of Joseph] and dropped upon his knees, and laying his cheek against his father's, and kissing him, exclaimed, ‘Oh my father! My father!’ . . . As I looked upon their peaceful,

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<sup>68</sup> *History of the Church* 7:132-133.

<sup>69</sup> “Manuscript History of Brigham Young,” *Millennial Star* (1864) 26:343.

<sup>70</sup> *History of the Church* 6:626-627.

smiling countenances, I seemed almost to hear them say, 'Mother, weep not for us, we have overcome the world by love; we carried to them the gospel, that their souls might be saved; they slew us for our testimony, and thus placed us beyond their power; their ascendancy is for a moment, ours is an eternal triumph.'<sup>71</sup>

Sadly, Mother Smith would face the tragedy of losing her son, Samuel, on July 30, 1844, less than five weeks later. Shortly after the martyrdom, the mob had discovered Samuel returning to Carthage, and he had been forced to ride his horse at top speed for two hours to outrun them, injuring himself internally and eventually bringing about his early death.<sup>72</sup>

On Saturday, June 29, 1844, over 10,000 people came to view the two martyrs as they lay in state in the Nauvoo Mansion. That evening a public funeral was held, but the coffins were actually filled with sand. Because of threats from the mob to dig up their bodies and desecrate them, Joseph and Hyrum were secretly buried in the basement of the unfinished Nauvoo House at midnight that same night. Their graves were carefully concealed. Later that fall, they were moved and reburied by the Nauvoo Mansion.<sup>73</sup>

#### THE LASTING LEGACY OF BROTHER JOSEPH

Joseph left a remarkable legacy of profound doctrines which continue to touch the world today. Through the power and teachings that he received by the revelations of God, Joseph inaugurated a work that is preparing the way for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Joseph restored the original Church that Christ had founded during His mortal ministry, and he brought forth the saving ordinances that will redeem the earth and seal the righteous to their ancestors in an unbroken chain of priesthood power, creating eternal families that will live forever in celestial glory on the resurrected earth.

The work that he initiated is now spreading over the earth. Millions of people today revere Joseph as a chosen prophet of God,

<sup>71</sup> Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), pp. 324-325.

<sup>72</sup> *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 324-326.

<sup>73</sup> *History of the Church* 6:627-628.

called and raised up in the latter days to perform an important and sacred mission. As the poetess Eliza R. Snow has written:

Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.

Blessed to open the last dispensation,

Kings shall extol him and nations revere.

Praise to his memory he died as a martyr;

Honored and blest be his ever great name!

Long shall his blood, which was shed by assassins,

Plead unto heaven while the earth lauds his fame.

Great is his glory and endless his priesthood.

Ever and ever the keys he will hold.

Faithful and true, he will enter his kingdom,

Crowned in the midst of the prophets of old.

Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven;

Earth must atone for the blood of that man.

Wake up the world for the conflict of justice.

Millions shall know "Brother Joseph" again.

Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven!

Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vain.

Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren;

Death cannot conquer the hero again.<sup>74</sup>

As we contemplate the breadth and depth of the life and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, it is with a spirit of deep reverence and gratitude that we acknowledge his magnificent mission here in mortality.

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<sup>74</sup> "Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 27. This hymn was erroneously credited to William W. Phelps. See Eliza R. Snow, "Praise to the Man," *Times and Seasons*, August 1, 1844, 5:14:607; and Keith and Ann Terry, *Eliza*, (Santa Barbara: Butterfly Publishing, 1981), pp. 67-68.