



The Saints built the beautiful city of Nauvoo along the banks of the Mississippi River. The Nauvoo Temple overlooked the city.

Sacrifice and Blessings in Nauvoo

The Latter-day Saints who made their way to Illinois received a warm welcome from generous citizens in the town of Quincy. Following the return of the Prophet Joseph Smith from his confinement in Liberty Jail, the Saints moved north up the Mississippi River about 35 miles. There they drained the large swamps in the area and began to build the city of Nauvoo beside a bend in the river. The city was soon a bustle of activity and commerce as Saints gathered there from all parts of the United States, Canada, and England. Within four years, Nauvoo had become one of the largest cities in Illinois.

Church members lived in relative peace, secure in the fact that a prophet walked and labored among them. Hundreds of missionaries called by the Prophet left Nauvoo to proclaim the gospel. A temple was constructed, the temple endowment was received, wards were created for the first time, stakes were established, the Relief Society was organized, the book of Abraham was published, and significant revelations were received. For more than six years, the Saints displayed a remarkable degree of unity, faith, and happiness as their city became a beacon of industry and truth.

Sacrifices of Nauvoo Missionaries

As the Saints began to construct homes and plant crops, many of them became ill with the ague, an infectious disease that included fever and chills. The sick included most of the Twelve and Joseph Smith himself. On 22 July 1839 the Prophet arose from his bed of sickness with the power of God resting upon him.

Using the power of the priesthood, he healed himself and the sick in his own house, then commanded those camping in tents in his dooryard to be made whole. Many people were healed. The Prophet went from tent to tent and from house to house, blessing everyone. It was one of the great days of faith and healing in Church history.

During this period, the Prophet called the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to go to England on missions. Elder Orson Hyde, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was sent to Jerusalem to dedicate Palestine for the gathering of the Jewish people and other children of Abraham. Missionaries were sent to preach throughout the United States and eastern Canada, and Addison Pratt and others received calls to go to the Pacific Islands.

These brethren made great sacrifices as they left their homes and families to respond to their calls to serve the Lord. Many members of the Twelve were struck with the ague as they prepared to depart for England. Wilford Woodruff, who was very ill, left his wife, Phoebe, almost without food and the necessities of life. George A. Smith, the youngest Apostle, was so sick that he had to be carried to the wagon, and a man who saw him asked the driver if they had been robbing the graveyard. Only Parley P. Pratt, who took his wife and children with him, his brother Orson Pratt, and John Taylor were free from disease as they left Nauvoo, although Elder Taylor later became terribly ill and almost died as they traveled to New York City.

Brigham Young was so ill that he was unable to walk even a short distance without assistance, and his companion, Heber C. Kimball, was no better. Their wives and families, too, lay suffering. When the Apostles reached the crest of a hill a short distance from their homes, both lying in a wagon, they felt as though they could not endure leaving their families in so pitiful a condition. At Heber's suggestion, they struggled to their feet, waved their hats over their heads, and shouted three times, "Hurrah, Hurrah, for Israel." Their wives, Mary Ann and Vilate, gained strength enough to stand and, leaning against the door frame, they cried out,

“Good-bye, God bless you.” The two men returned to their wagon beds with a spirit of joy and satisfaction at seeing their wives standing instead of lying sick in bed.

The families remaining behind demonstrated their faith as they sacrificed to support those who had accepted mission calls. When Addison Pratt was called to a mission in the Sandwich Islands, his wife, Louisa Barnes Pratt, explained: “My four children had to be schooled and clothed, and no money would be left with me. . . . My heart felt weak at the first, but I determined to trust in the Lord, and stand bravely before the ills of life, and rejoice that my husband was counted worthy to preach the gospel.”

Louisa and her children went to the dock to bid farewell to their husband and father. After they returned home, Louisa reported that “sadness took possession of our minds. It was not long till loud thunders began to roar. A family, living across the street, had a leaky house; frail and uncertain. Soon they all came over for safety through the storm. Thankful we were to see them come in; they talked comforting to us, sang hymns, and the brother prayed with us, and stayed till the storm was over.”¹

Not long after Addison’s departure, his young daughter contracted smallpox. The disease was so contagious that there was real danger to any priesthood brother who might come to the Pratts, so Louisa prayed with faith and “rebuked the fever.” Eleven little pimples came out on her daughter’s body, but the disease never developed. In a few days the fever was gone. Louisa wrote, “I showed the child to one acquainted with that disease; he said it was an attack; that I had conquered it by faith.”²

Those missionaries who left Nauvoo at such sacrifice brought thousands into the Church. Many of those who were converted also displayed remarkable faith and courage. Mary Ann Weston lived in England with the William Jenkins family while learning dressmaking. Brother Jenkins was converted to the gospel, and Wilford Woodruff came to the house to visit the family. Only Mary Ann was home at the time. Wilford sat by the fire and sang, “Shall I for fear of feeble man, the Spirit’s course in me restrain.”

Mary Ann watched him as he sang and remembered that “he looked so peaceful and happy, I thought he must be a good man, and the Gospel he preached must be true.”³

Through her association with Church members, Mary Ann was soon converted and baptized—the only member of her family to respond to the message of the restored gospel. She married a member of the Church, who died four months later, due in part to a beating he received at the hands of a mob intent on disrupting a Church gathering. All alone, she boarded a ship filled with other Latter-day Saints bound for Nauvoo, leaving her home, her friends, and her unbelieving parents. She never saw her family again.

Her courage and commitment eventually blessed the lives of many people. She married Peter Maughan, a widower, who settled Cache Valley in northern Utah. There she raised a large, faithful family, who honored both the Church and her name.

The Standard Works

During the Nauvoo period, some of the writings that later became the Pearl of Great Price were published. This book contains selections from the book of Moses, the book of Abraham, an extract from the testimony of Matthew, excerpts from Joseph Smith’s history, and the Articles of Faith. These documents were written or translated by Joseph Smith under the direction of the Lord.

The Saints now had the scriptures that would become the standard works of the Church: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. These books are of inestimable value to the children of God, for they teach the fundamental truths of the gospel and bring the honest seeker to the knowledge of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Additional revelations have been added to the modern-day scriptures as directed by the Lord through his prophets.

The Nauvoo Temple

Only 15 months after founding Nauvoo, the First Presidency, obedient to revelation, announced that the time had now come

“to erect a house of prayer, a house of order, a house for the worship of our God, where the ordinances can be attended to agreeable to His divine will.”⁴ Though poor and struggling to provide for their own families, Latter-day Saints responded to their leaders’ call and began donating time and means toward constructing a temple. More than 1,000 men donated every tenth day in labor. Louisa Decker, a young girl, was impressed that her mother sold her china dishes and a fine bed quilt as her temple contribution.⁵ Other Latter-day Saints gave horses, wagons, cows, pork, and grain to aid in the temple’s construction. The women of Nauvoo were asked to contribute their dimes and pennies for the temple fund.

Caroline Butler had no pennies or dimes to contribute, but she wanted very much to give something. One day while going to the city in a wagon, she saw two dead buffalo. Suddenly she knew what her temple gift could be. She and her children pulled the long hair from the buffaloes’ manes and took it home with them. They washed and carded the hair and spun it into coarse yarn, then knitted eight pairs of heavy mittens that were given to the rock cutters working on the temple in the bitter winter cold.⁶

Mary Fielding Smith, wife of Hyrum Smith, wrote to Latter-day Saint women in England, who within a year gathered 50,000 pennies, weighing 434 pounds, that were shipped to Nauvoo. Farmers donated teams and wagons; others sold some of their land and donated the money to the building committee. Many watches and guns were contributed. The Saints in Norway, Illinois, sent 100 sheep to Nauvoo to be used by the temple committee.

Brigham Young remembered: “We did much hard labor on the Nauvoo temple, during which time it was difficult to get bread and other provisions for the workmen to eat.” Still, President Young counseled those in charge of temple funds to give out all the flour they had, confident that the Lord would provide. Within a short time Joseph Toronto, a recent convert to the Church from Sicily, arrived in Nauvoo, bringing with him \$2,500 in gold, which

he laid at the feet of the Brethren.⁷ These life savings of Brother Toronto were used to replenish the flour and to purchase other much needed supplies.

Shortly after the Saints arrived in Nauvoo, the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith that baptisms could be performed for dead ancestors who had not heard the gospel (see D&C 124:29–39). Many Saints took great comfort in the promise that the dead might have the same blessings as those who accept the gospel here on earth.

The Prophet also received an important revelation concerning the teachings, covenants, and blessings that are now called the temple endowment. This sacred ordinance was to enable the Saints “to secure the fullness of those blessings” that would prepare them to “come up and abide in the presence of . . . Eloheim in the eternal worlds.”⁸ After receiving the endowment, husbands and wives could be sealed together by the power of the priesthood for time and all eternity. Joseph Smith realized that his time on earth was short, so while the temple was still under construction, he began giving the endowment to selected faithful followers in the upstairs room of his red brick store.

Even after the murder of the Prophet Joseph Smith, when the Saints realized they must shortly leave Nauvoo, they increased their commitment to completing the temple. The attic of the unfinished temple was dedicated as a part of the structure where the endowment would be administered. The Saints were so anxious to receive this sacred ordinance that Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and others of the Twelve Apostles remained in the temple both day and night, sleeping no more than about four hours a night. Mercy Fielding Thompson had charge of the washing and ironing of temple clothes, as well as overseeing the cooking. She too lived in the temple, sometimes working throughout the night to have everything ready for the next day. Other members were just as devoted.

Why would these Saints work so hard to complete a building they would soon leave behind? Almost 6,000 Latter-day Saints

received their endowments before leaving Nauvoo. As they turned their eyes toward their western migration, they were bolstered in faith and secure in the knowledge that their families were eternally sealed together. Tear-stained faces, ready to move on after burying a child or spouse on America's vast prairie, were resolute largely because of the assurances contained in the ordinances they had received in the temple.

The Relief Society

While the Nauvoo Temple was under construction, Sarah Granger Kimball, wife of Hiram Kimball, one of the city's wealthiest citizens, hired a seamstress named Margaret A. Cooke. Desiring to further the Lord's work, Sarah donated cloth to make shirts for the men working on the temple, and Margaret agreed to do the sewing. Shortly thereafter, some of Sarah's neighbors also desired to participate in the shirt making. The sisters met in the Kimball parlor and decided to formally organize. Eliza R. Snow was asked to write a constitution and bylaws for the new society.

Eliza presented the completed document to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who declared it was the best constitution he had seen. But he felt impressed to enlarge the vision of the women concerning what they could accomplish. He asked the women to attend another meeting, where he organized them into the Nauvoo Female Relief Society. Emma Smith, the Prophet's wife, became the society's first president.

Joseph told the sisters that they would receive "instruction through the order which God has established through the medium of those appointed to lead—and I now turn the key to you in the name of God and this Society shall rejoice and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time—this is the beginning of better days to this Society."⁹

Soon after the society came into existence, a committee visited all of Nauvoo's poor, assessed their needs, and solicited donations to help them. Cash donations and proceeds from the sale of food and bedding provided schooling for needy children. Flax, wool,

yarn, shingles, soap, candles, tinware, jewelry, baskets, quilts, blankets, onions, apples, flour, bread, crackers, and meat were donated to help those in need.

Besides helping the poor, Relief Society sisters worshiped together. Eliza R. Snow reported that in one meeting “nearly all present arose and spoke, and the spirit of the Lord like a purifying stream, refreshed every heart.”¹⁰ These sisters prayed for each other, strengthened each other’s faith, and consecrated their lives and resources to help further the cause of Zion.

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.”¹¹

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.¹² 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."¹³

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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ 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



The scene of the martyrdom at Carthage Jail. Hyrum Smith, lying in the center of the floor, was killed instantly; John Taylor, at the bottom left, was severely wounded; Joseph Smith was shot and killed as he ran toward the window; and Willard Richards, by the fireplace, remained unharmed.

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.¹⁶ 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."¹⁷ 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."¹⁸ 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, 6).

Succession in the Presidency

When the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered in Carthage Jail, many of the Quorum of the Twelve and other Church leaders were serving missions and were absent from Nauvoo. Several days passed before these men learned of the deaths. When Brigham Young heard the news, he knew that the keys of priesthood leadership were still with the Church, for these keys had been given to the Quorum of the Twelve. However, not all Church members understood who would replace Joseph Smith as the Lord's prophet, seer, and revelator.

Sidney Rigdon, First Counselor in the First Presidency, arrived from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 3 August 1844. In the year before this time, he had begun taking a course contrary to the counsel of the Prophet Joseph Smith and had become estranged from the Church. He refused to meet with the three members of the Twelve already in Nauvoo and instead spoke to a large group of the Saints assembled for their Sunday worship service. He told them of a vision he had received in which he had learned that no one could replace Joseph Smith. He said that a guardian to the Church should be appointed and that guardian should be Sidney Rigdon. Few Saints supported him.

Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, did not return to Nauvoo until 6 August 1844. He declared that he wanted only to know "what God says" about who should lead the Church.¹⁹ The Twelve called a meeting for Thursday, 8 August 1844. Sidney Rigdon spoke in the morning session for more than one hour. He won few if any adherents to his position.

Brigham Young then spoke briefly, comforting the hearts of the Saints. As Brigham spoke, George Q. Cannon remembered, "it was the voice of Joseph himself," and "it seemed in the eyes of the

people as if it were the very person of Joseph which stood before them."²⁰ William C. Staines testified that Brigham Young spoke like the voice of the Prophet Joseph. "I thought it was he," Staines said, "and so did thousands who heard it."²¹ Wilford Woodruff also recalled that wonderful moment and wrote, "If I had not seen him with my own eyes, there is no one that could have convinced me that it was not Joseph Smith, and anyone can testify to this who was acquainted with these two men."²² This miraculous manifestation, seen by many, made clear to the Saints that the Lord had chosen Brigham Young to succeed Joseph Smith as leader of the Church.

In the afternoon session, Brigham Young again spoke, testifying that the Prophet Joseph had ordained the Apostles to hold the keys of the kingdom of God in all the world. He prophesied that those who did not follow the Twelve would not prosper and that only the Apostles would be victorious in building up the kingdom of God.

Following his talk, President Young asked Sidney Rigdon to talk, but he chose not to. Following remarks by William W. Phelps and Parley P. Pratt, Brigham Young spoke again. He talked of completing the Nauvoo Temple, obtaining the endowment before going into the wilderness, and the importance of the scriptures. He spoke of his love for Joseph Smith and his affection for the Prophet's family. The Saints then voted unanimously in favor of the Twelve Apostles as leaders of the Church.

While a few others would claim a right to the Presidency of the Church, for most Latter-day Saints the succession crisis was over. Brigham Young, the senior Apostle and President of the Quorum of the Twelve, was the man God had chosen to lead his people, and the people had united to sustain him.