**The Story of the Church of Christ**

**XIII. Nauvoo and The Martyrdom**

In July 1837, while the Church members were still in Missouri, four men had gone on a missionary trio to England where they gospel was preached for the first time. Missionary work proved very successful and spread very rapidly throughout the British Isles. Most of the apostles were involved in this work. In addition to the work in the British Isles, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Apostle Thomas Marsh established a mission in Canada. Orson Hyde visited the Holy Land and dedicated it to the return of the Jews who had been scattered throughout the world.

When the members of the Church were driven out of Missouri, they crossed the Mississippi River at the town of Quincy, Illinois. They were sadly in need of help, and the people of Quincy treated them kindly, supplying food, medical care, and inviting the church members to stay in the area. Even offers of work were made. Among those refugees who had made it to Quincy in the frozen winter were Emma Smith, wife of Joseph and their children.

After Joseph Smith escaped from Liberty jail in Missouri and made his way to Illinois, it was decided the Church members would settle about fifty miles from Quincy at a little community named Commerce. They purchased property in the town of Commerce and two farms in the neighboring area. The town was renamed Nauvoo, a Hebrew word meaning beautiful. The Illinois legislature gave the city of Nauvoo a charter. The city grew rapidly and soon became the largest city in the state of Illinois. Church members from England and other countries came to Nauvoo in large numbers. These were difficult times in early Nauvoo as the people struggled with the problems of obtaining food and shelter. They also needed to drain swampy ground to lesson the chills and fevers that were common in the area.

A printing press that had been buried at Far West for safe keeping now appeared at Nauvoo. The paper titled ***Times and Seasons*** was soon being printed. The city of Nauvoo also had a company of armed militia, as provided by law. It was known as the Nauvoo Legion. In 1840 the legion had a membership of more than one thousand. Some of the refugees had settled across the Mississippi River on the Iowa side in the town on Montrose.

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Soon the building of a temple engaged the efforts of nearly everyone in

Nauvoo. The first mayor of Nauvoo was a man named John C Bennett. His

moral conduct caused him to be expelled from the Church, and Joseph Smith became the second mayor of Nauvoo. John Bennett because a bitter enemy of the Church.

The rapid growth in numbers and in power of the Church in Nauvoo once more aroused envy in the communities around Nauvoo. Trouble makers from Missouri were involved in creating problems, and John Bennett joined in inflaming public opinion against Joseph and the Church. There were several others in Nauvoo that joined together in opposing Joseph. They printed a newspaper called the *Nauvoo Expositor.*The only issue of this paper carried serious charges against Joseph and others who were close to him. The city council met and called the paper a nuisance and ordered the mayor to suppress it. Since Joseph was the mayor and the attacks were against him, it was poor judgment by the city council to order Joseph to stop the publication. The town marshal carried out the order and totally destroyed the newspaper and it’s equipment.

The destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* caused so much excitement that soon mobs were gathering, and Joseph and Hyrum went over to the Iowa side of the river to get away from the mobs. Illinois Governor Ford told them he would have the militia at Carthage, Illinois protect them. They returned to Illinois and went to Carthage where they surrendered to the law officers there. It had been made known to Joseph by God that he would die.

It was on June 24, 1844 that Joseph and Hyrum appeared before the judge. Governor Ford ordered al the state arms held by the Nauvoo Legion surrendered. Joseph and Hyrum accompanied the soliders back to Nauvoo where the Legion’s weapons were peacefully given up. Next morning they returned to Carthage where the Governor assured them again the state would protect them. Joseph and Hyrum, with John Taylor and Willard Richards of the twelve apostles, were all held in an upper room of the jail.

Governor Ford went back to Nauvoo to try to convince the citizens there that the prisoners in Carthage jail were safe. However he had only left eight men guarding them, and these men were among their enemies.

On the afternoon of June 27, 1844 a mob of two hundred men attacked the jail. When they reached the second floor, they started shooting. A shot fired through the door killed Hyrum instantly. Joseph reached the window before he was shot and fell through the window to the ground. There the

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mob shot him several more times. John Taylor was seriously wounded, and only Willard Richards escaped injury. After the murder of Joseph and Hyrum, the members of the mob fled as far as Missouri for safety.

Joseph Smith was only thirty-eight years old when he died. The work he accomplished could easily have filled a long lifetime. He translated the Book of Mormon, corrected the Bible by inspiration, organized the Church according to the pattern given in the days of Christ and the Apostles. The Church had 200,000 members at the time of his death. Much of his life he was hounded by enemies of the Church who wanted to take his life. In spite of all opposition, the Gospel in its purity and the true Church of Christ have been restored to his earth.

Following the murders the people of Carthage fled the city in great fear. The bodies of Joseph and Hyrum were returned to Nauvoo, where they were buried in hidden graves. Even in death their bodies were not safe. No efforts were made by Church members to get revenge. For a short time they were able to grieve in peace. Soon the mob grew bold and violence broke out again. Before long members of the Church would have to seek safety elsewhere.