

D&C#32 "To Seal the Testimony"

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I. Introduction

On June 27, 1844, Joseph and his brother, Hyrum, were killed in the Carthage, Illinois jail while awaiting a legal hearing. They had been accompanied by Willard Richards and John Taylor. A mob came up the stairs to where they were being held, and began shooting through the door into the room where the prisoners were being held. John Taylor was injured by a ball fired from the door into the room. He was then knocked down by a second ball that struck his watch as he was standing by the upstairs window. He then rolled under the bed. Willard Richards, a big man, seemingly an easy target was also in the room. However, in response to prophecy, his life was spared. He would suffer no bodily injury. Both he and John Taylor lived to share their witness of the events that would culminate in the death of both Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

In order to better understand the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, we need to go back to June 7, 1844. On this day, apostates from the Church, who were united in a common desire to put the Prophet Joseph Smith to death. The apostates had previously published a newspaper entitled, the *Nauvoo Expositor*. It was full of lies and slander regarding Joseph and the Church. Its singular purpose was to enflame the countryside against the Church

and, Joseph in particular. Its first issue was so defamatory and full of falsehoods that action had to be taken. The city council met and determined that its continued publication posed a nuisance to the well being of the community. It was decided that the printing press of the Expositor must be destroyed. The city council authorized the Sheriff to carry out their decision which occurred on Monday, June 10, 1844. Immediately, Joseph Smith and other council members were arrested on the charge of destroying the printing press. They were tried before the municipal court of Nauvoo and were honorably acquitted. A letter was sent by Joseph Smith, as the mayor of the city, to Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois acquainting him with all the facts relevant to the decision of the city council. On Sunday, in a public meeting, a number of delegates were called to visit the different precincts in Hancock County to lay a truthful statement of the troubles in Nauvoo before the people.

On Monday, June 17, 1844, Joseph Smith and a number of others were arrested, on a complaint from W.G. Ware, for rioting and destroying the Expositor. They were tried before Judge Daniel H. Wells, and after a long and close examination, acquitted. In response to mobs beginning to gather in the surrounding countryside, threatening to drive the Saints from Nauvoo, Joseph Smith ordered out the Nauvoo Legion, and the city was declared under martial law. As the editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, Thomas Sharpe, a long time opponent of the Church and Joseph Smith, saw fit to flame the fires against the Mormons and published an extra edition of the paper. In this edition, he called upon all the "old citizens" to assist the mob in driving away the Saints.

As the mobs gathered to come against Nauvoo, the Prophet sent for the Twelve Apostles who were on missions to come home immediately. Late in the evening of June 22, 1844, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, along with Willard Richards, crossed the Mississippi River by boat with the intent to flee to the West and thus escape their enemies. Through the solicitation of Emma Smith and several supposed friends, Joseph Smith and his companions returned to Nauvoo.

On June 24, 1844, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, accompanied by seventeen friends started for Carthage, to submit to another trial, under pledge of protection from Gov. Thomas

Ford. On the way, they received a demand from the governor to surrender the State arms in possession of the Nauvoo Legion. Joseph returned and complied with the request and then proceeded to Carthage.

On June 25, 1844, Joseph Smith and his brethren surrendered themselves to a constable at Carthage and submitted to a trial after which they were, contrary to law, remanded to jail. The next day, June 26, Governor Ford had a long interview with the prisoners in Carthage jail. He renewed his promise of protection and said, if he went to Nauvoo, he would take them with him. On the morning of June 27, 1844, Governor Ford went to Nauvoo, leaving the prisoners in jail to be guarded by their most bitter enemies, the "Carthage Grays." (see *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events*. Compiled by Andrew Jenson. Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1898, [Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged, 1914], 25-26).

II. The Prophet Joseph Smith Sealed His Testimony With His Blood

During 1843 and 1844, animosity against the Church increased. Enemies both inside and outside the Church began trying to destroy it. It culminated with Joseph and Hyrum being martyred in the jail at Carthage, Illinois.

Doctrine and Covenants 135:4-5

4 When Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up to the pretended requirements of the law, two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. *I Shall Die Innocent, and It Shall Yet Be Said Of Me--He Was Murdered In Cold Blood.*"--The same morning, after Hyrum had made ready to go--shall it be said to the slaughter? yes, for so it was--he read the following paragraph near the close of the twelfth chapter of Ether, in the Book of Mormon, and turned down the leaf upon it:

5 *And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity. And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not*

unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness, thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father. And now I...bid farewell unto the Gentiles; yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. [B/M, Ether 12:36-38]. The testators are now dead, and their testament is in force.

Note: In the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 135 is attributed to Elder John Taylor. In the 2013 edition, no author is noted in the heading.

Jeffrey R. Holland states,

"Before closing the book, Hyrum turned down the corner of the page from which he had read, [B/M, Ether 12:36-38], marking it as part of the everlasting testimony for which these two brothers were about to die. I hold in my hand that book, the very copy from which Hyrum read, the same corner of the page turned down, still visible. Later, when actually incarcerated in the jail, Joseph the Prophet turned to the guards who held him captive and bore a powerful testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Shortly thereafter pistol and ball would take the lives of these two testators.

"As one of a thousand elements of my own testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, I submit this as yet one more evidence of its truthfulness. In this their greatest--and last--hour of need, I ask you: would these men blaspheme before God by continuing to fix their lives, their honor, and their own search for eternal salvation on a book (and by implication a church and a ministry) they had fictitiously created out of whole cloth?" ("Safety for the Soul," in *Ensign*, November 2009, 89).

*Why do you think the Prophet Joseph Smith could be as "calm as a summer morning" two or three days prior to when he knew he might be martyred at Carthage?

He had lived his life in accordance with the commandments of God and had obeyed the words of the Lord. He knew that

his life was acceptable to God. It brought him a peace that surpasses death.

*What comfort do you think Joseph and Hyrum would have received from Ether 12:36-38?

This scripture would have strengthened them during their hour of need. For the faithful, it confirms they will, after this life, inherit a place in the mansions of God that was beyond the reach of the pain and persecution to which they had been subjected by their enemies.

Doctrine and Covenants 135:1-2

1 To seal the testimony of this book [Doctrine and Covenants] and the Book of Mormon, we announce the martyrdom of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith the Patriarch. They were shot in Carthage jail, on the 27th of June, 1844, about five o'clock p.m., by an armed mob--painted black--of from 150 to 200 persons. Hyrum was shot first and fell calmly, explaining: *I am a dead man!* Joseph leaped from the window, and was shot dead in the attempt, exclaiming: *"O Lord my God!* They were both shot after they were dead, in a brutal manner, and both received four balls.

2 John Taylor and Willard Richards, two of the Twelve [Apostles], were the only persons in the room at the time; the former was wounded in a savage manner with four balls, but has since recovered; the latter, through the providence of God, escaped, without even a hole in his robe.

Willard Richards wrote the following account of the martyrdom,

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

"...A ball was sent through the door, which passed between us, and showed that our enemies were desperadoes...

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

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

"From the holes in his [clothing], it appears evident that a ball must have been thrown from without, through the window, which entered his back on the right side, and passing through, lodged against his watch...At the same instant the ball from the door entered his nose.

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

"Joseph continued snapping his revolver round the casing of the door into the space as before..., while Mr. Taylor with a walking stick stood by his side and knocked down the bayonets and muskets which were constantly discharging through the doorway...

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

"Mr. Taylor rushed into the window, which is some fifteen or twenty feet from the ground. When his body was nearly on a balance, a ball from the door within entered his leg, and a ball from without struck his watch...in his vest pocket near the left breast...the force of which ball threw him back on the floor, and he rolled under the bed which stood by his side...

"Joseph attempted, as the last resort, to leap [from] the same window from which Mr. Taylor fell, when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered his right breast from without, and he fell outward, exclaiming, 'Oh Lord, my God'...He fell on his left side a dead man." (*History of the Church*, Vol. 6. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 619-620).

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"Elder John Taylor was shot four times but recovered from his wounds. In fulfillment of a prophecy that the Prophet had made more than a year before, Elder Willard Richards received no wounds. Elder Richard recalled that in this prophecy, the Prophet had told him that 'the time would come that the balls would fly around him like hail, and he should see his friends fall on the right and on the left, but that there should not be a hole in his garment."

(*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 185; see also *History of the Church*, Vol. 6. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 619).

Doctrine and Covenants 135:6

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

*What are your feelings as you think about the sacrifice the Prophet and his brother Hyrum made for their testimonies of the gospel?

If I am ever called upon to give my life for the gospel I pray I will not waver. I desire to be valiant and willing as were Joseph and Hyrum. While I may not be ever called to give my life for the gospel, daily I have pledged to be faithful to the covenants I have made and to do my part in helping the kingdom of God go forward in these latter days.

Joseph Smith Sr, gave the following blessing to his son, Joseph Smith, Jr.

"You shall even live to finish your work...You shall live to lay out the plan of all the work which God has given you to do" (Lucy Mack Smith. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*. Edited by Preston Nibley. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1901, [1958], 309-310).

*From what you know about the Prophet Joseph Smith's life, what impresses you most about him?

I am amazed at the effort of Joseph to move the work forward even during times when there was great opposition. He knew whom he served, and whose will he sought to do, and he did not shirk, regardless of the challenges.

III. The Prophet Joseph Smith Did More For the Salvation of Men in this World than Anyone Except Jesus

During the thirty-eight and half years of his life, Joseph Smith was an instrument in the Lord's hand in bringing forth the restoration of His Church in these latter days. We will address six of these contributions.

Doctrine and Covenants 135:3

3 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 has ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. 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!

*In what ways did Joseph Smith do "more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it"?

His work blessed all those who now have the opportunity to receive all the blessings necessary for their salvation. Because of the restoration of the ordinances for the dead through the Prophet Joseph Smith, they also have the opportunity, in Holy Temples to perform by proxy the ordinances of the billions of people who have lived upon the earth, but did not have the opportunity to perform the work on their own behalf.

We will address six contributions of Joseph Smith. These include:

"a. Truths about the Godhead.

Doctrine and Covenants 130:22-23

22 The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.

23 A man may receive the Holy Ghost, and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him.

It is Joseph Smith's testimony that on that spring day in 1820, in response to prayer, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ appeared to him. As a result of his personal experience, he came to know important truths regarding the person of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. (see PGP, Joseph Smith--History 1:11-20).

At the time of Joseph Smith, many churches taught what has been referred to as the Holy Trinity. This doctrine teaches that God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost consist of one personage of Spirit, without bodies, parts, or passions. They are so great that they can fill the whole universe, but so small they can dwell in your heart.

At the time of his first vision, in the Spring of 1820, Joseph Smith came to know firsthand that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ are two separate personages with resurrected bodies of flesh and bones. He saw them with his own eyes and spoke to them and heard their voices. He also learned that the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit without a body. It was His presence in the grove that sacred day, that made it possible for the power of Satan upon Joseph to be broken and for him to be in the presence of deity.

Robert L. Millet states, [bold for emphasis]

"A vital lesson to be learned by Joseph Smith early in his prophetic training was a painful and poignant lesson but one that he needed to understand clearly: **The reality of Satan** and of his eternal hatred for God and His plan of salvation.

"Joseph learned by firsthand experience that **the power of God Almighty is greater than Satan's power**. [He stated an "unseen power [had] "entirely overcame me, and had such influence as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak...Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction...just at this moment of great alarm, I saw of pillar of light exactly over my head,..." (PGP, Joseph Smith-History 1:15-16).

"Joseph Smith learned firsthand of **life beyond the grave and of the immortality of the soul**;...for before him stood the resurrected Lord Jesus, attesting that indeed life did continue after death and that immortal life does come through the inseparable union of body and spirit. ["I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spoke unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other-*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (PGP, Joseph Smith-History 1:16-17).

"Joseph learned that **the Church of Jesus Christ**, as established by the Savior and his apostles in the meridian of time, **had not continued in its pristine purity through the centuries**. He was, therefore, instructed to join none of the churches. [Upon asking which church to join, "I [was told] I must join none of them...they teach for doctrine the

commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. (PGP, Joseph Smith–History 1:19.)” (*Precept Upon Precept: Joseph Smith and the Restoration of Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2016, 23-27).

Joseph Smith taught,

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,-- I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form--like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instructions from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another” (Funeral: Elder King Follett, 7 April 1844. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 345).

*Why are the truths about the Godhead that were restored through Joseph Smith important to us?

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Knowledge of God is the greatest truth in all eternity...Joseph Smith came to reveal God in a day of almost total spiritual darkness, in a day when men no longer knew the nature and kind of Being whom they should worship.” (“This Generation Shall Have My Word through You,” in *Ensign*, June 1980, 55).

New Testament, John 17:3

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

It is essential to our salvation we come to know the Personages whom we worship. It is the plan of salvation, established by God himself, that state the saving ordinances necessary for us to fulfill in order to become like them and to return to their presence. Without this

knowledge, we would remain in darkness as to their personages.

"b. The Authority of the Priesthood.

We learned through the Prophet Joseph Smith, heavenly messengers, sent by God, came to the earth for the purpose of restoring upon the earth the authority of acting in God's name. This authority had been lost. These messengers included: John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; Moses; Elias; Elijah. Without the restoration of priesthood authority and the keys to unlock its power, the actions of man, though sincere, would not be valid in the eyes of God and therefore not binding in heaven. (see D&C 13; 128:20; 110:11-16.)

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"As the Restoration unfolded, the Lord gave revelations about priesthood offices, organizations, covenants, ordinances, duties, and blessings. We would not understand the priesthood or how it operates without these revelations. [see prior lessons: D&C#8 and D&C#25 for further details.]

*What blessings do you have in your life because of the priesthood?

Without the priesthood, I would be unable to perform the ordinances of the sacrament on behalf of the church congregation or for those whom I home teach who are unable to attend their church meetings due to health issues. I would not have been able to baptize and then confirm and convey to gift of Holy Ghost upon my children. I would be unable to go to the home of a friend and give them a blessing of health and strength in accordance with the will of the Lord, to comfort them during their time of need. Most importantly, I was able to go to the Holy Temple and be married for time and all eternity to my wife. She is now deceased, but I am comforted by the confirmation that our marriage extends, because of the priesthood, beyond this life.

*How can we show our appreciation for the blessings of the priesthood?

I can strive each day to be worthy to exercise the authority of the priesthood as the need may arise. I can live a life that enables me to receive the promptings of the Holy Ghost so that I may know the Lord's will.

"c. Truths About Our Origin and Relationship to God.

Doctrine and Covenants 76:23-24

23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that is the Only Begotten of the Father--

24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.

In these two verses, we learn that the Only Begotten of the Father [Jesus Christ], held a position of glory, even before the world was created. He was on the right hand of God, the Father. The right hand is generally reserved for those who are in authority. We also learn that Jesus Christ, acting on authority from God, was responsible for the creation of the worlds which the sons and daughters of God inhabit. We may assume that the earth, we inhabit, was created by Jesus Christ and those who assisted him.

PGP, Abraham 3:22-23

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

23 And God saw these souls that were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

In these two verses, we learn that in a vision, Father Abraham saw the spirits that were organized [the spirit children of God the Father, before the world was created]. In this number of spirit children, were those who were

deemed to be "noble and great ones." This observation suggests that the opportunity of progression existed and not all spirits progressed in an equal manner.

PGP, Abraham 3:24-26

24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he [Jesus Christ] said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;
25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;
26 And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

In these verses, we learn one of the purposes for which the earth was created was so those who would inhabit it could be tried and tested. This further testing was in order to determine who, among God's children, would be obedient to God's commandments. Before their coming to earth, prior testing of the spirit's had resulted in some becoming more "noble and great" than others. It is likely this prior testing had also been determined by individual's choice and obedience to God's commandments as His Spirit children.

PGP, Abraham 3:27-28

27 And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first.
28 And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.

The keeping of the first estate was prerequisite to the keeping of the second estate. The keeping of the first estate involved accepting Heavenly Father's plan. Because of our faithfulness, we were given the opportunity to come to earth and receive physical bodies. This is the second estate. During our earthly probation, we would be subject

to temptation and sin. If we chose to accept Jesus Christ as their redeemer, and to be obedient to His commandments throughout their lives, we will then have glory added upon their heads.

We will learn through a vision given to Moses that the issue presented to those who were present was who shall serve as the redeemer of mankind, a necessary component of the Father's Plan of Salvation for his children. The first who volunteered to serve as the redeemer of God's children was Jesus Christ. He was willing to be the redeemer. None of God's Spirit children would be forced to be obedient to God's commandments, or to accept His atoning sacrifice. The glory would be to His Father's.

Satan was the other individual who offered to be the Father's redeemer, but his offer was conditional. He would force all to be obedient thereby destroying the agency of man. He also wanted the power of the Father. (see PGP, Moses 4:1-4.) His offer rejected the importance of free agency in the Father's plan. His desire for the power of the Father was a complete rejection of the Father himself, as Satan sought to displace the Father and to rule over all.

As we have noted in Abraham 1:27-28, when Jesus Christ was chosen as the redeemer, Satan became angry. He was cast out and many of God's spirit children chose to follow him. Having chosen not to keep their first estate, they were denied the opportunity of receiving a physical body. They came to the world's that had been created and, through the desire of Satan to add to his dominion, provided the force of evil and opposition to the Father's plan. In this manner, the agency of man continued as the choice for all the God's children was between obedience to the commandments of God and to accept the offering of Jesus Christ or rejection and joining the forces of Satan.

*How is the knowledge that you are literally a child of God a blessing in your life?

I marvel at the love and kindness of the Father in His willingness to provide a plan that if followed would lead us back to His presence. I am grateful for the willingness of Jesus Christ to serve as my redeemer and his gift of resurrection to all of God's children who chose to come to

earth and experience mortality. I am especially grateful for His gospel and teachings that if I am obedient, someday I may return to live with Him and His Father in the kingdom of God.

"d. Scriptures

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"[The Prophet Joseph Smith], has given to our present world more holy scriptures than any single prophet who ever lived." ("Joseph Smith--The Mighty Prophet of the Restoration," in *Ensign*, May, 1976, 95).

The scriptures brought forth through the Prophet Joseph Smith includes the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

Gordon B. Hinckley adds,

"[Joseph Smith] translated and published the Book of Mormon, a volume of 522 pages which has since been translated into [many] languages and which is accepted by millions across the earth as the word of God. The revelations he received and other writings he produced are likewise scriptures to these millions. The total in book pages constitutes the equivalent of almost the entire Old Testament of the Bible, and it all came through one man in the space of a few years." ("Joseph the Seer," in *Ensign*, May 1977, 65).

*How have the scriptures that were brought forth through the Prophet Joseph Smith been a blessing in your life?

I have read each of the scriptures, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. I have also read many of the scriptures found in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Each has served to strengthen my testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel. I know myself they contain the words of Jesus Christ as given through His prophets. They also serve as written witnesses of the truths of the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith as the Prophet of the latter day restoration. I invite all to read these scriptures and seek to know their truthfulness for themselves.

Note: For further information regarding each of the scriptures, see prior lessons: D&C#1, D&C#4, and D&C#13.

"e. Truths About the Plan of Salvation.

In D&C#19, we addressed the truths taught by Joseph Smith regarding three important questions. They are: Where did I come from? Why am I here?, and Where am I going?

1. Where did I come from? - Our Premortal Life.

We are sons and daughters of God, and we lived in a premortal existence as His spirit children. (see D&C 76:24; 93:29.)

Before the earth was created, Heavenly Father called a council in heaven and presented the plan of salvation to all His spirit children. (see B/M, 2 Nephi 2:24-26; Alma 34:8-9; and PGP, Abraham 3:24-25.)

Lucifer rebelled against the plan of salvation, seeking to destroy our agency and gain Heavenly Father's power. (see PGP, Moses 4:1, 3; D&C 29:36.) He became Satan and with his followers were cast out. (D&C 29:36-38; 76:25-27; PGP, Moses 4:4, and PGP, Abraham 3:26).

2. Why am I here? - Mortal Life.

We accept our Heavenly Father's Plan or we kept our first estate. We were given the opportunity to come to earth and receive a physical body or our second estate.

Because of the Fall of Adam and Eve, we are in a fallen state in mortality. We are subject to physical death and also to spiritual death, or separation from the presence of God. (see D&C 29:41-42 and B/M, Alma 42:9, 14.)

Some of the purposes of mortal life include: (a) To receive a physical body; (b) To prove our faithfulness through obedience to God's commandments (PGP, Abraham 3:25-26). This includes repenting of our sins and receiving the ordinances of salvation. (see B/M, Alma 12:24; D&C 29:42-43.) And, (c) To live in families and to have children sealed to their parents for all eternity through temple ordinances. (see PGP, Moses 2:28; D&C 93:40; 131:1-4; 138:48.)

3. Where am I going? - Life after Death.

When we die, our spirits will enter the spirit world. (see B/M, Alma 34:34; 40:11-14.)

People who do not receive the gospel on earth will have that opportunity in the spirit world. (see D&C 137:7-9; 138:30-34.)

The Fall of Adam and Eve, which affected each of us, brought physical and spiritual death. We are delivered from the physical death through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He paid for all our sins through His suffering in the garden of Gethsemane and the cross at Golgotha. (see B/M, Alma 11:42; D&C 88:14-16; 93:33.). It is a free gift from our Heavenly Father by His Son, Jesus Christ.

In order to also overcome the spiritual death, we must do our part. This is accomplished as we: (1) Accept Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Savior; (2) Make and keep specific covenants, including exercising faith in Jesus Christ; Repentance or forsaking our sins; (3) Be baptized by immersion by one who holds the proper authority; (4) Receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; and, (5) Endure in faithfulness as we strive to become like Jesus Christ. By striving to keep the commandments of God and through the application of the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, we have the privilege of returning to our Father in Heaven. However, our works alone would be insufficient to save us without the intervention of Jesus Christ. (see B/M, Alma 42:11-13, 15).

After our resurrection, we will return to the presence of God to be judged according to our works (see B/M, Alma 11:43-45; D&C 76:111). We will then be assigned to one of three kingdoms: The Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestial. Our place in one of the three kingdoms will be based on the manner in which we have "received the testimony of Jesus" (D&C 76:51). (see D&C 76:50-51, 79-82.)

"f. Truths About the Salvation of the Dead.

One of the greatest truths restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith involved the ordinance work for those who did not have the opportunity to do the ordinances necessary for

their salvation themselves. These include, but are not limited to, baptism, receipt of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and being sealed to their family.

The ordinances of salvation, including Baptism for the dead, were specifically addressed in lesson, D&C#30, "Building the Kingdom of God in Nauvoo." Here we came to understand the importance of baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost from the New Testament as Jesus taught Nicodemus. (see New Testament, John 3:5.) The question for many was what happened to those who did not have the opportunity to be baptized during their lifetime. Many churches then taught that without baptism by water and spirit, the individual was confined to hell.

Doctrine and Covenants 128:18

18 I might have rendered a plainer translation to this [referring to Malachi 4:5-6], but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers, and their children, upon some subject or other--and behold what is that subject? It is baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect...

The authority to perform this essential sealing work had been restored to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, April 3, 1836, by the Prophet Elijah himself. (see D&C 110:13-16.) The work began in the Kirtland Temple, however, the work of baptisms for the dead did not begin until the Saints were in Nauvoo, Illinois. Initially, they were done in the Mississippi River, until it was declared by the Lord, further baptisms were not to be performed until they could be done in the baptismal font in the Nauvoo Temple.

Through revelation to Joseph Smith we learned these ordinances can be accomplished by other than the person them self. A deceased individual could be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by one who is willing to stand proxy for them. In this manner the ordinances for the dead could be completed as one acts on behalf of the dead. As the early Saints were taught, this work on behalf of the

dead can only occur in the Holy Temple of the Lord. It is important to remember that all ordinances performed in the Holy Temple are valid only as the individual on the other side of the veil accepts the work done on their behalf.

"g. The Building of Temples and the Performance of Temple Ordinances

Brigham Young states,

"When the doctrine of baptism for the dead was first given this Church was in its infancy; and not capable of receiving all the knowledge of God in its highest degree; this you all believe...

"The Lord has led this people all the while in this way, by giving them here a little and there a little, thus he increases their wisdom, and he that receives a little is thankful for that shall receive more and more...

"Joseph in his lifetime did not receive everything connected with the doctrine of redemption, but he has left the key with those who understand how to obtain and teach to this great people all that is necessary for their salvation and exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our God." (Brigham Young Speech, April 6, 1845. *Times and Seasons* (July 1, 1845): 954-955).

Chart 1: Timeline: Ordinances in Temples

Date	Location/Ordinance	Reference
A. Mar. 27, 1836	Kirtland Temple: Ordinances of washing, anointing, and sealings	R. Bennett. <i>BYU Studies Quarterly</i> : Vol. 44, Iss. 3/4, 41.
B. Nov. 8, 1841	Nauvoo Temple: Baptisms for dead.	H.S. Swinton. <i>Sacred Stones</i> , 2001, 70.
C. May 4, 1842	Nauvoo: Joseph's Red Brick Store: First endowments for living.	<i>Teachings of the Presidents: Joseph Smith</i> , 2007, 414
D. Jan. 11, 1877	St. George Temple: First endowments for dead.	R. Bennett. <i>BYU Studies Quarterly</i> : Vol. 44, Iss. 3/4, 39.

It is important to understand that the ordinances that are part of the Temple today were not all found in the Temple

at Kirtland or Nauvoo. The authority restored to Joseph Smith, however, was given to each of the latter day prophets who have succeeded him.

Orson Pratt states,

"By and by we will have Temples, with a great many things contained in them which we now have not; for with them, as with all other things, the Lord begins little by little; he does not reveal everything all at once. He gave the pattern of these things in Kirtland, Ohio, as in the beginning; but there were not rooms for the washings; no rooms such as we have now, and such as were prepared in the Nauvoo Temple. Why? Because we had greater experience, and were prepared for greater things. There was no font in the basement story of the Kirtland Temple, for baptismal purposes in behalf of the dead? Why not? Because that principle was not revealed. But in the Nauvoo Temple this font was prepared, which was something in advance of the Kirtland Temple. We have, of later, constructed a Temple at St. George, [Utah]. Blessings have been administered in that Temple, that were totally unknown in the two former Temples, namely endowments for the dead. Again, by and by, we [will] build a Temple in Jackson County, Missouri. Will it be built according to the pattern of our present Temples? No. There will be, according to the progress of the people, and the knowledge they receive, and the greatness of the work that is before them, many things, pertaining to the pattern, that will then be given, which will differ materially, or will be, at least, in addition to that which is in these Temples now built." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 19. London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1878, [Eighth Reprint, 1974], 19).

The building of temples and the performance of temple ordinances began under the Prophet Joseph Smith. Through continued revelation from the Lord directs His sacred latter day work.

G. Other Contributions

Now follow several contributions that came through the Prophet Joseph Smith. You will recognize the blessings they have brought to many of those living in the latter days.

These include:

- "a. The Church was restored through him. [see lesson D&C 9 for details.]
- "b. He began the work in this dispensation of taking the gospel to all the nations [of the earth] and [the latter day] gathering of Israel. [see lesson D&C 12 for insight.]
- "c. The law of consecration was revealed through him. [see lesson D&C#14 for information.]
- "d. The Word of Wisdom was revealed through him. [see lesson D#C 20 for details.]
- "e. Information about the building of the latter-day Zion was revealed through him. [see lesson D&C#27 and D&C#46 for details.]
- "f. He wrote the Articles of Faith.

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Teacher's Manual states,

"[As noted, the Articles of Faith state many of the basic doctrines of the Church], They were written by the Prophet Joseph Smith as part of a letter to John Wentworth, a newspaper editor in Chicago who had requested a statement on the Church's history and beliefs. They were later canonized as scripture in the Pearl of Great Price." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 188).

Spencer W. Kimball asked,

"How many of you know the Articles of Faith?...Do you know them? Have you repeated them? You are always prepared with a sermon when you know the Articles of Faith. And they are basic, aren't they? I think it would be a wonderful thing if [we] learn them word-perfect. That means that you don't miss and you don't forget." ("The Privilege Of Holding The Priesthood," in *Ensign*, November 1975, 79).

*Why is it important that we know the Articles of Faith?

Within the thirteen Articles of Faith are found the simple truths of the gospel. By being able to quote them from memory, we have at our finger-tips a brief synopsis of the doctrine of the Church. We can then easily share with anyone who may be interested, an introduction to what we believe.

*Why is it important that we each have a testimony that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God?

Joseph Smith is the Prophet of the Restoration. Through him, the Lord Jesus Christ restored His Church upon the earth. If Joseph Smith is not a prophet of God, then he is speaking on his own behalf and without the authority of God. If he is a prophet of God, then as he stated, he is God's servant, by whose word and authority he is again revealing the word of God to His children. Then, his words and teachings have eternal significance to each of us for they contain the word of God to us in these latter days.

*How did your testimony of Joseph Smith's calling develop?

As a young man, preparing to serve a mission, I needed to know if the truths I would be teaching were true. I needed to know that I was speaking the words of God to the people I would be serving. I read the Book of Mormon and made it a matter of prayerful consideration. The Lord, through the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, answered my prayers.

*How has this year's study of the Doctrine and Covenants strengthened your testimony?

To again revisit, with increased effort, I have had my testimony strengthened regarding the truth of Joseph Smith being a prophet and of the truths that were revealed to him. I feel an increase in my appreciation for the Prophet Joseph Smith and all he experienced during his short life to bring about the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ upon this earth. How blessed I feel to live in the latter days when we have the full complement of the scriptures to guide and direct our lives, both ancient and modern.

*How can we show our gratitude for the life and mission of

the Prophet Joseph Smith?

Though our personal prayers; by living the restored teachings, and by sharing these truths with those who may be interested in knowing our beliefs. I can also speak up when others, less informed, speak against him and the truths he restored.

IV. Conclusions

I believe that in the future I will have the opportunity to meet the Prophet Joseph Smith. It will then be my privilege to thank him for magnifying his holy calling as the Prophet of the Restoration. I will express to him the great blessings that have come into my life because of all that he endured to bring these truths forth to the children of men. I pray, I too will have been faithful to my responsibility to help build the kingdom of God on the earth.

The Prophet Joseph Smith Sealed His Testimony With His Blood: To be willing to give your life for a cause you believe in takes great courage and devotion. Joseph Smith, along with his brother, Hyrum, met this challenge and, like the Savior, he did not falter. He was faithful to the testimony he had received as young boy in the sacred grove. He knew this work in which he was engaged was from God. He completed his work in bringing about the restoration. He bore his testimony by giving his life as a witness.

The Prophet Joseph Smith Did More for the Salvation of Men in this World than Anyone Except Jesus: The truths we have addressed were restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. These include: (a) Truths about the Godhead; (b) The Authority of the Priesthood; (c) Truths About Our Origin and Relationship to God; (d) Scriptures; (e) Truths About the Plan of Salvation; (f) Truths About the Salvation of the Dead; and, (g) The Building of Temples and the Performance of Temple Ordinances. These seven areas of church doctrine fit firmly into the foundation upon which the truths of the restoration have been built.

Six other contributions revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith include: (a) The restoration of the Church; (b) The spreading of the gospel to all the world and the commencement of the gathering of the tribes of Israel;

(c) The law of consecration; (d) The Word of Wisdom; (e) The building of latter day Zion, and, (f) The Articles of Faith. Each serve to strengthen the kingdom of God on earth. We are so blessed to be the recipients of the restoration of these latter day truths, commenced through the latter day work of Joseph Smith. Is it any wonder that while we do not worship Joseph Smith, we each stand upon his shoulders as we go forth to build the kingdom of God in these latter days?

Our next lesson [D&C#33] addresses the principle of succession in Church leadership and the role that Brigham Young played in preparing the Saints for the journey west.