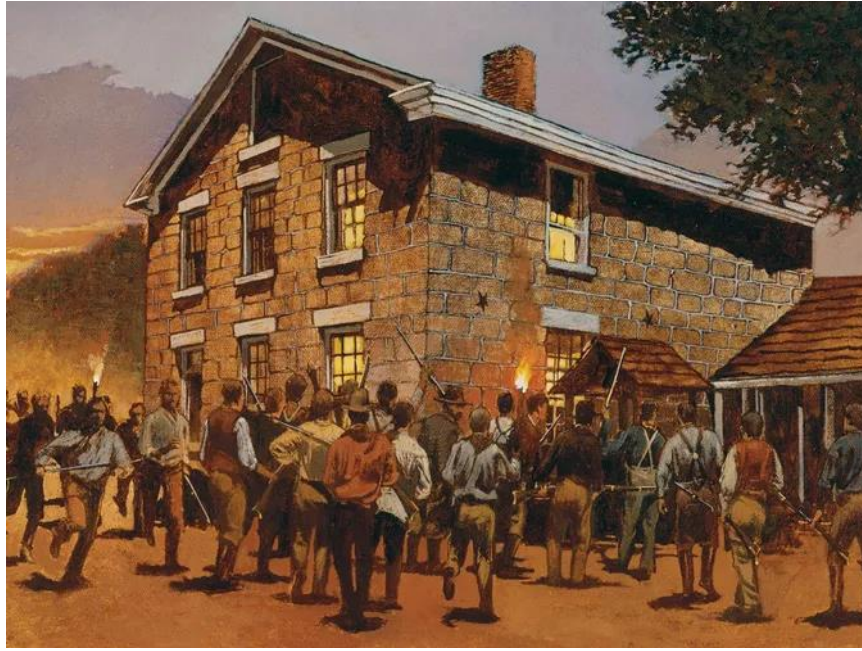


Knight Family Connections to Come Follow Me Doctrine and Covenants Sections 135-136



Mob at Carthage jail by William L. Maughan Drawing courtesy of the LDS church, found at <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/learn/history/sites/historic-nauvoo/carthage-jail?lang=eng>

Newel Knight's account of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and his tribute to them

June 23, 1844. Brother Joseph is at home and intends to go to Carthage to-morrow as the Governor has promised him protection, pledging his own honor and the faith of the state that no harm shall befall the brethren called for, but that they shall have an impartial trial under his protection.

June 24th. This morning the company started for Carthage. There is some excitement and many fear for the consequences, but the Governor has promised them protection.

June 25th. Yesterday evening brother Joseph returned with Capt. Dunn and delivered up the state arms held by the Legion.

It is reported that the Prophet has said he never expects to come back alive. This refers to the time when the Prophet Joseph used the memorable words "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offence toward God

and toward all men, my blood shall cry from the ground for vengeance, and it shall yet be said of me He was murdered in cold blood."

A gloom hangs over the city.

27th. The Governor accompanied by many others came to Nauvoo, and addressed the citizens. He reviewed the doings of the past few days, and found much fault with us, holding us accountable. He spoke as though the posse comitatus¹ had been unlawfully resisted and that we did wrong in not delivering up Joseph Smith at the first. He said that the destroying of the press of the Expositor was a great crime for which terrible vengeance would be taken. He acknowledged that there was a great prejudice against us for our religion, and feared that the consequences would be fearful, he seemed to have no compassion for the men but pities the women and children and hoped they will not be exterminated, but if anything happens to our enemies, the apostates, he could not promise but that our enemies would come upon us and destroy Nauvoo and everything belonging to us, and probably it would result in much bloodshed. He knew that the people around us would do all in their power to rid themselves of us, and gave advice to the Saints to submit to the law, meaning the mob violence which is being used against us and our beloved brethren.

I cannot help thinking but that the Governor entirely sides with the mob and has joined them against us, as he seems to blame us exclusively for what has happened, and apparently justifies the Carthage doings, thus throwing the burden upon our shoulders and making us the wrong doers.

The Governor and those with him carried themselves very rudely and indeed really insulted the whole city. I judge the governor will side with the popular party irrespectively of truth and justice.

About 6 ½ P.M. he and party returned to Carthage although solicited to stay with us awhile in the hope that better acquaintance would improve his opinion of us, and convince him that we were not in the fault, but that our enemies are acting through their prejudices and willfully seeking our destruction without a just cause.²

30 June 1844. It is almost impossible to describe the awful tragedy that has been enacted.

Joseph and Hyrum are dead, assassinated whilst in the jail at Carthage under the Governor's protection! And brother John Taylor is wounded in a dreadful manner, also under the Governor's protection! Yes! This is the protection that the vulture and the wolf will give to the lamb, or the vampire to the wary traveler taking his rest! O God of our fathers whose mighty outstretched arm delivered us from the bondage of tyranny, and gave freedom to the oppressed, who inspired our forefathers to declare liberty of conscience and religious

¹The literal meaning of posse comitatus is "the power of the county," a Latin phrase for the entire body of citizens who may be summoned by a sheriff to assist in maintaining public peace or executing legal duties. Historically, it refers to the group of able-bodied individuals called upon to help the local civilian law enforcement in an emergency, like suppressing a riot or apprehending a criminal.

² The time cited in Newel's journal for the visit of the Governor, suggests that the Governor was in Nauvoo speaking to the citizens at exactly the time the mob attacked the Carthage Jail.

toleration, look upon this cruel deed, demons in human form, and let the sting of conscious guilt gnaw their very vitals as a just retribution for their great crime.

The Particulars of the Horrid Deed

But I will give the particulars of this horrid deed, and the circumstances attending it, as they have been related to us by eye witnesses and participators in the trying events.

Brother Joseph and Company arrived in Carthage at midnight on the 24th, and as they passed the public square the Carthage Grey saluted them with dreadful oaths and imprecations, declaring that as they had got old Joe Smith now they would use him up and kill all the damned Mormon. They called loudly to see “old Joe Smith the Prophet of God’ and declared he had seen the last of Nauvoo.

The Governor upon hearing this quietly harangued the troops, promising them that they should see “Mr. Smith to-morrow morning.”

On the 25th, the brethren surrendered themselves on the old charge, and were immediately afterward arrested on a charge of treason on the complaint of Augustine Spencer and H.O. Norton, and soon afterward were invited by the Governor to pass before the troops.

All this time the apostates and others made no secret of the fact that they intended to kill Joseph and Hyrum, and quite a number informed the Governor of the threats which were being made, but he gave little or no heed to the warnings, or rather seemed to be perfectly indifferent to them.

In the afternoon the brethren were up before Justice R. F. Smith on the old charge, although Governor Ford had demanded that they should go before the Justice issuing the write, Justice Morrison, but the case was not made out, yet the brethren gave bail to appear at the Circuit Court of Hancock County at the next term.

In the evening about 8 o’clock, against all remonstrances from brother Joseph and his counsel he was committed to jail on the charge of treason without having a hearing.³

On the 26th the proceedings were of a keeping with the evening before and eminently illegal, although the Governor was there and had said he demanded of the brethren to go to Carthage that the supremacy of the law may be maintained. Yet now that brothers Joseph and Hyrum are in their hands all or nearly all their acts [referring to the government officials] are gross violations of the laws of the land.

³ An editor of the journal, probably Lydia inserted the note to “See Deseret News – Vol VII-pp. 273-4. This was illegal.”

After a mock examination the two brethren were remanded back to jail to await a trial at 12 on the 27th when it was expected their witnesses would arrive. And afterwards without consulting the prisoners or their counsel the time was extended to the 29th. The Governor again pledged them protection.

27th. Governor Ford disbanded the troops except those brought to Nauvoo, and the Carthage Greys whom he left to guard the jail. This is one of the worst acts the Governor has perpetrated, for it has all the time been the Carthage Greys who have threatened the Prophets with death and made no concealment of their intentions, and Governor Ford was constantly apprised of their proceedings.

The disbanded troops also shouted in the streets that they intended to return and kill the Prophets, and brother Dan Jones called the attention of Governor Ford to their shouts whilst they were in the act of doing so, yet he persisted in turned a deaf ear to their threats.

C.L. Higbee also told brother Jones they intended to kill Joseph and advised him, Jones, to leave to save himself.

At ½ past 10, with all this before Governor Ford came to Nauvoo, and as before stated, he insulted the people in their distress, leaving Joseph and Hyrum there, although he had repeatedly promised the brethren to bring them with him. His promise was in no wise sacred for after offering protection, he left them with their bitterest enemies to be guarded, the men who constantly asserted they would kill them. These men made an agreement with those who were disbanded that the disbanded should disfigure themselves, and return about the time the Governor was in Nauvoo, and also with the men on guard at the jail that they should make an appearance of resistance but be sure and have their muskets loaded with blank, and fire over the heads of the apparent assailants.

These arrangements were all completed, and the time appointed for the deed to be committed.⁴

The Attack

At about ½ past 5 P.M. the guards asked for some wine and Joseph gave them a dollar to get some. It was taken into the jail and the brethren after tasting it gave it to the guards who went out. Immediately afterward about one hundred armed men surrounded the door and called on the guards to surrender. The guards fired off their guns over the heads of the assailants as by agreement, and at once filled the stairs, and fire into the room, killing brother Hyrum, the rest of the brethren defended themselves as well as they could by beating aside the

⁴ Editor Lydia added here "There is now considerable evidence that Governor Ford was a party to these arrangements and went to Nauvoo, as a blind to be out of the way, and this explains his indifference at the time his attention was called to the threat to kill Joseph and Hyrum, which were being publicly made. See Deseret News, Vol. VII, p. 282 – affidavits of J.C. Wright, O.P. Rockwell and W.G. Sterrett."

muzzles of the guns and Joseph fired off several barrels of a revolving pistol wounding three of the men, finding themselves without any means of defense and Joseph seeing the danger they were in thought to save the lives of the brethren by jumping out of the window. At the instant he was on the sill for the purpose of jumping out he was struck by two balls from the door and one from the outside, he fell out the window exclaiming, "O Lord, my God!" As soon as he fell a man seated him against the well curb and Levi Williams, whose name has been mentioned before as taking an active part against the Saints, ordered four men to shoot him. A man then stepped up with a large knife intending to cut his head off, when a most brilliant light burst upon them from the heavens, paralyzing his arm and terrifying all who stood around. The four men who shot the Prophet were struck to the ground and had to be carried off by their comrades in their hasty disorderly retreat.

Brother John Taylor was struck by four balls and mangled in a most shocking manner, but his life was saved by Dr. Willard Richards who, whilst the excitement around Joseph's dead body was going on, carried him to the dungeon and laid him under a bed.

Through all this storm of flying bullets brother Richards passed unhurt in fulfillment of a promise that had been given him by the Prophet sometime before that he should not die by the hands of his enemies.

The excitement in Carthage was very great and the inhabitants, as well as those who were there from other places, fled and hid themselves fearing that we would go and avenge this horrid cruel deed of murder, but we did not get the word, or an account of the deed until the morning of the 28th. On that morning as soon as the citizens arose the rumor reached them, but it was generally discredited, for had not the Governor promised them protection and pledged the faith of the state in its support! And when the news was confirmed by Dr. Richards' letter that told us to be quiet for he had pledged the people on his faith in them, restrained, however difficult it might have been, it still restrained the Saints from visiting the false-hearted violators of their "sacred honor", the perpetrators of the murder, with direst vengeance, for it cannot be supposed that a powerful body of men could tamely submit to the deeds of violence that were enacted, that they could restrain feelings that stirred their very souls and caused their bosoms to swell with indignation, that they could bear to see those whom they loved so dearly ruthlessly torn from them by the fierce demoniac mob, to witness the consummation of so great a crime, and not visit the perpetrators with the just reward of their great demerits, but our leader had promised and to a man the Legion, and all the Saints determined that our plighted faith should be sacredly preserved.

Even yet the Saints had not felt the depth of grief at their loss, but when at about three in the afternoon the bodies of the murdered Prophets were brought to the city the fulness of their grief burst forth, until the very heavens were rent with their mournings and lamentations, and like Rachel of old weeping for her children, they refused to be comforted.

The bodies were taken to the mansion and the doors closed, and the bodies were laid out. I had the privilege of being in the room and saw the wounds which the Prophets received.

On the 29th the bodies were put in the coffins, and all who wished were allowed to see them, when about ten thousand passed through the room.

Near six in the evening the funeral services were performed, and I accompanied the hearse to the graves, there is a secret connected with this funeral which is not known to all the Saints, although it is generally suspected, and that is, that Joseph and Hyrum were not buried at that time, but the particulars will be made known at the proper time and place.

Newel's tribute to Joseph and Hyrum

I have taken up considerable space in telling you the circumstances under which two of the best men that ever lived lost their lives for the truth's sake. I have known them from boyhood, have been associated with Joseph from the time before he received the first revelation⁵ until the present, and Hyrum has been his constant companion since the Church has been organized.

I have shared in the blessings of the Gospel which they have enjoyed, and been a partaker of the sorrows and troubles and fierce persecutions which they have endured. I have seen them at home and abroad, in the discharge of their religious duties, and I have known them as the founders of a great city, and seen their administration of its government. In every circumstance of life they have ever been true men of God, humane, upright and just in all their dealings, they loved righteousness and taught it to their followers, their friends loved them for the good they did and their enemies hated them because they reprov'd their sins and wickedness.

They died as they had ever lived, faithful and true to that God who has now them as his servants to build up the Church and kingdom of the last days. In the hour of prosperity they taught the people humility and meekness, in the hour of persecution they practiced these virtues, and no men have done a greater work on the earth since the days of the Savior than they have, and their names will ever be held in honorable remembrance by all lovers of truth, virtue, integrity, justice and righteousness, whilst their persecutors will sink in shame, confusions and infamy until they will go down to the place prepared for all doers of wickedness.

Oh, how I loved those men, and rejoiced under their teachings! It seems as if all is gone, and as if my very heart strings will break, and were it not for my beloved wife and dear children, I feel as if I have nothing to live for, and would rejoice to be with them in the Courts of Glory. But I must live, and labor, and try to do good, and help to build up the kingdom of our God here on the earth. And I pray God my Father that I may be reconciles unto my lot, and live and die a faithful follower of the teachings of our murdered Prophet and Patriarch.⁶

⁵ Historian William Hartley suggests Newel is referring to Joseph's first visit from Moroni. Hartley, *Stand By My Servant, Joseph*, Deseret Book, 2003, p. 349.

⁶ Newel Knight Journal, Allen Typescript, pp. 139-142