



Type: Book Chapter

The Martyrdom/"Offering in June"

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Source: *Praising the Prophet: Joseph Smith and the Restoration in History and Verse*

Published: Orem, UT; Time-Lines Etc., 2005

Pages: 80-84

The Martyrdom

Joseph had declared, “I shall not be sacrificed until my time comes; then I shall be offered freely.”⁵⁸ Although plans had been carefully laid many times by evil men to take the Prophet’s life, the Lord preserved Joseph Smith until his mission was accomplished. That mission included not only the organization and the building of the Church, but the restoration of the keys of the kingdom and all the temple ordinances. Joseph did not rest until the Quorum of the Twelve had received all of the keys necessary to carry on the work after his death. Then he and his brother, Hyrum, dual witnesses of the Restoration, sealed their testimony with their blood.

John Taylor, who with Willard Richards, survived the tragedy at Carthage jail, described the martyrdom. His account, which later became section 135 of the Doctrine and Covenants, includes the following:

Joseph Smith the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith the Patriarch ... 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, exclaiming: 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 ...

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.”⁵⁹

Offering in June

How calm can a
summer morning be—
knowing that the
time is come, numbered
years are done?

Somewhere
near Carthage,
bees and snapdragons,
soothe the anxiety
of this cicada-smooth
afternoon.

Rabble-proud
conspirators,
faces smeared
with guilt and grime
black as their crime,
scuffle jail stairs.
In revel-rout
they sweat, shout,
discharge purulent
threats and fatal balls.

Satisfied to see
the slaughtered
limp and lifeless,
they disperse.

June swelters as
brothers' blood,
lamb-innocent,
freely spilled,
pools cold.

Bereaved, grieved
voices cry through
Illinois' darkest nights,
Hyrum, Joseph—
Oh, Joseph!

*...Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less;
therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you
forever and ever (D&C 122:9).*



Joseph Smith ... was set apart ... to introduce the principles of life among the people, ... God selected him for that purpose, and he fulfilled his mission and lived honorably and died honorably. I know of what I speak, for I was very well acquainted with him ... and was with him when he died. —John Taylor⁰¹