



Hyrum Smith

(1800–1844)

D&C 11; 23; 52:8; 75:32; 94: Introduction; 111: Introduction; 115:1, 5, 6, 13; 124:15, 91–96, 124; 135:1, 6; 138:53

Hyrum stood by his brother Joseph in the best and worst of times. Contemporary Mary Ann Winters said, “One is not complete without the other—they were nearly always together, and are inseparably connected in my mind.”¹ Contemporary William Taylor observed, “No matter how often or when or where they met, it was always with the same expression of supreme joy. It could not have been otherwise, when both were filled to overflowing with the gift and power of the Holy Ghost!”²

Hyrum, son of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, was born in Tunbridge, Vermont. By March 1811 the Smith family moved to West Lebanon, New Hampshire. Within a year of their residency, a typhus fever epidemic swept through the rural community. Seven of the Smith children, including Hyrum, suffered from effects of the fever. Young Joseph suffered the most. Lucy Mack Smith wrote of Hyrum’s tender care for his brother: “We laid Joseph upon a low bed; and Hyrum, for some length of time, sat beside him almost

¹ Mary Ann Stearns Winters, “Joseph Smith: The Prophet,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 16 (December 1905), 557.

² William Taylor quote, in Marvin J. Ashton, “He Loveth That Which Is Right,” *BYU Devotional*, March 15, 1989.

day and night, holding the affected part of his leg in his hands; and pressing it between them in order that his afflicted brother might be enabled to endure the pain.”³

It was not until two years after the Smiths settled in Palmyra, New York, that they were confident good fortune had smiled upon them. Eighteen-year-old Hyrum helped his father build a log house 20 x 30 feet on contracted land and felled trees so they could farm that land.

Hyrum and his sister Sophronia, brother Samuel, and mother Lucy joined the Western Presbyterian Church in Palmyra. Their enthusiasm for Presbyterianism waned when truths of the gospel were revealed to young Joseph Smith. The family were “convinced that God was about to bring to light something that we might stay our minds upon . . . [and] rejoiced in it with exceeding great joy.”⁴

Hyrum was baptized in early June 1829 by his brother Joseph. A few days later, he was privileged to be one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He delivered the first twenty-four pages of the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon to the E. B. Grandin office in mid-August 1829. When his parents lost their home in Palmyra, Hyrum took them into his home—his father and mother and five siblings, ages seven to twenty-one, and Oliver Cowdery.

When believers met on Tuesday, April 6, 1830, in the Peter Whitmer log home in Fayette, New York, to attend the first meeting of what would become The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Hyrum was named one of six elders present. He later served as an assistant to Bishop Newel K. Whitney, on the Kirtland High Council, and on the Kirtland Temple Committee before being called into the First Presidency of the Church.

The Prophet Joseph said of his brother Hyrum,

I could pray in my heart that all my brethren were like unto my beloved brother Hyrum, who possesses the mildness of a lamb, and the integrity of a Job, and in short, the meekness and humility of Christ; and I love him with that love that is stronger than death, for I never had occasion to rebuke him, nor he me.⁵

³ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁴ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1844–1845, Page [1], bk. 4. Joseph Smith Papers

⁵ *Journal*, 1835–1836, 76. Joseph Smith Papers.

Hyrum's close relationship with Joseph and his leadership in the Church led to his imprisonment and incarceration in the Independence, Richmond, and Liberty jails. Of his imprisonment Hyrum said,

I had been abused and thrust into a dungeon, and confined for months on account of my faith, and the "testimony of Jesus Christ." However I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life. My confidence in God, was likewise unshaken.⁶

After escaping from bondage in Missouri, Hyrum co-signed notes with his brother Joseph to purchase the first plots of land in Commerce, Illinois. He was at his father's bedside when he was told by his father,

I now give you my dying blessing. You shall have a season of peace, so that you shall have sufficient rest to accomplish the work which God has given you to do. You shall be as firm as the pillars of heaven unto the end of your days. I now seal upon your head the patriarchal power, and you shall bless the people.⁷

The Lord confirmed that blessing in a revelation to Joseph Smith:

Whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed, that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph (D&C 124:93-94).

Hyrum gave dozens of patriarchal blessings before June 27, 1844, when a mob shot and killed the Smith brothers. Hyrum was the first to fall from an assassin's bullet. He fell to the floor exclaiming, "I am a dead man!" (D&C 135:1). As he fell to the floor, another bullet entered his left side. At the same instant a bullet from the door grazed his breast and entered his head by the throat. A fourth bullet entered his left leg. John Taylor, a witness to the murderous scene, wrote that Joseph and Hyrum

⁶ Hyrum Smith, "To the Saints Scattered Abroad," *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 2 (December 1839), 23.

⁷ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1844-1845, p. 5, bk. 18.

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. 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 (D&C 135:6).