MARRIAGE RATES

See: Vital Statistics

MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

According to ancient and modern scripture, Jesus Christ, the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1–13), will host a "marriage supper" at his second coming when he symbolically claims his bride, the faithful members of his Church (Rev. 19:5–9; D&C 109:73–74).

In Jesus’ parable of the marriage of the king’s son (Matt. 22:1–14), “the king” represents God, and “his son” is Jesus. The guests first “bidden to the wedding,” are the house of Israel. Guests invited later from "the highways" are the GENTILES to whom the gospel went after most Jews rejected it in the MERIDIAN OF TIME (JC, pp. 536–40).

Latter-day Saints believe that by teaching and exemplifying the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world they are extending to all mankind the invitation to come to the marriage feast. “For this cause I have sent you . . . that the earth may know that . . . all nations shall be invited. First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; . . . then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord” (D&C 58:6–11).

After partaking of the sacrament with his apostles, Jesus said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29). In latter days, the Lord declared, “The hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you” (D&C 27:5–12). “There is to be a day when . . . those who have kept the faith will be . . . admitted to the marriage feast; . . . they will partake of the fruit of the vine,” or the sacramental emblems of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, and reign with him on the EARTH (TPJS, p. 66).

[See also Last Days; Millennium.]

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MARTYRDOM OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM SMITH

The violent deaths of the Prophet Joseph Smith at the age of thirty-eight and his brother Hyrum Smith (age forty-four), Associate President and Patriarch of the Church, dramatically ended the founding period of the LDS Church. On June 27, 1844, they were mobbed and shot while confined at Carthage Jail in Hancock County, in western Illinois. Climaxing more than two decades of persecution across several states, this event gave them an enduring place as Martyrs in the hearts of Latter-day Saints.

Nauvoo in 1844, gathering place for the Saints on the Mississippi River, contained elements of both greatness and dissension. Almost overnight, it grew from a village of religious refugees and new converts to the point where it rivaled Chicago as the largest city in Illinois. With Democrats and Whigs both vying for the Mormon vote, Nauvoo was granted one of the most liberal city charters in the state, an independent military force, and a strong judicial system (see Nauvoo Charter). However, as in Missouri during the 1830s, natural rivalry with older citizens in neighboring towns like Carthage (the county seat) and Warsaw (the next largest port city) turned to jealousy and hatred as Nauvoo’s economic and political power grew (see Nauvoo Economy; Nauvoo Politics).

These tensions coalesced around Joseph Smith. In addition to being prophet and President of the Church, he also served as mayor, commander of the Nauvoo Legion state militia, justice of the peace, and university chancellor. Non-Mormon fears of this concentration of powers were intensified by the Church’s belief in the theocratic union of spiritual, economic, and political matters under the Priesthood. This and other “unorthodox” doctrines, such as continuing revelation, temple ordinances for the living and the dead, new scripture, and plural marriage, further intensified political and economic rivalries.

Illinois anti-Mormons, perhaps assisted by old enemies from Missouri, joined with a handful of determined Mormon defectors within Nauvoo. Several had held high Church positions and, when excommunicated, fueled efforts to destroy Joseph Smith and the Church.
The Prophet’s life and his plans to resettle many of the Saints in the West (see Westward Migration) were cut short by a series of explosive confrontations with these conspirators. The igniting spark was the destruction of the defectors’ intemperate newspaper, the Nauvoo Expositor, as a public nuisance by the Nauvoo city marshal, under orders from Joseph Smith and the city council. Removal of this press came after the first and only issue had vilified Joseph Smith, pledged to cause repeal of the protective Nauvoo charters, and invited mob action against the Saints. Joseph Smith’s enemies countered the destroying of the press with criminal charges against him and his brother for inciting a riot. The brothers soon gained release from arrest on a habeas corpus before an LDS tribunal. Then, following the advice of a state circuit court judge, they appeared before a non-Mormon justice in Nauvoo and were exonerated of the charges against them.

However, threats of mob violence increased. In Warsaw and Carthage, newspapers called for extermination of the Mormons. On June 18, Joseph Smith mobilized his troops to protect Nauvoo. When Illinois governor Thomas Ford apparently sided with the opposition and ordered the Church leaders to stand trial again on the same charges, this time in Carthage, Joseph and Hyrum first considered appealing to U.S. President John Tyler, but then decided instead to cross the Mississippi and escape to the West. Pressured by family and friends who felt abandoned and who believed Joseph to be nearly invincible, he agreed to return and surrender; but he prophesied that he would be going “like a lamb to the slaughter” and would be “murdered in cold blood” (HC 6:555, 559). Joseph urged Hyrum to save himself and succeed him as prophet, but Hyrum refused and accompanied his brother to Carthage.

Despite his promises of protection and a fair trial, Governor Ford allowed the Smiths to be imprisoned by their enemies without bail and without a hearing on a wholly new charge of treason for having declared martial law in Nauvoo. Stating that he had to “satisfy the people,” the Governor ignored clear warnings of danger and disbanded most of the troops. He then left the hostile Carthage Greys to guard the jail and took the most dependable troops with him to Nauvoo.

During the governor’s absence, a mob of between one hundred and two hundred armed men—many of them from the disbanded Warsaw militia—

Death masks of Joseph Smith (right) and Hyrum Smith (left; chin reconstructed). From the collection of Wilford C. Wood. Courtesy Nelson Wadsworth.
gathered in late afternoon, blackened their faces with mud and gunpowder, and then stormed the jail. In less than two minutes, they overcame feigned resistance from the Greys, rushed upstairs, and fired through the closed door. Hyrum, shot first, died instantly. John Taylor, an apostle, tried to escape out a window and was shot five times, but survived to later become the Church’s third President. Only Willard Richards, another apostle, survived unharmed. Trying to go out the window to deflect attention from the two survivors inside, Joseph Smith was hit in the chest and collarbone with two shots from the open doorway and two more from outside the window. His final words as he fell to the ground outside the jail were, “O Lord, my God!” (HC 6:618). As rumors spread that the Mormons were coming, the mob dispersed.

Several times during his last days Joseph Smith told the Saints that while he had enjoyed God’s safekeeping until his mission was fulfilled, he had now completed all that God required of him and could claim no special protection. Early in his career, the Prophet had recorded that the Lord told him, “Even if they do unto you . . . as they have done unto me, blessed are ye, for you shall dwell with me in glory” (D&C 6:30). Church leaders then and now have taught that the shedding of these martyrs’ innocent blood was necessary to seal their testimony of the latter-day work that they “might be honored and the wicked might be condemned” (D&C 136:39).

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MARTYRS

The term “martyr” (Greek martyr, “a witness”) in Christianity refers to a person who has suffered death because of his or her Christian witness or commitment and who subsequently has been accorded honors by a church. While Latter-day Saints honor Joseph and Hyrum SMITH as martyrs, they do not venerate them in annual celebrations of their death dates, nor do they view them as heavenly intercessors for mortals.

The ancient use of the term “martyr” involves the legal environment—witnesses testifying in a legal proceeding. The basic idea relates to establishing facts or assertions that concern matters beyond the experience of the listeners. The meaning has reference to objective events or to personal testimonies. However, the usual scriptural use carries the additional meaning of revelation by the Holy Spirit, which would empower a witness to bear inspired testimony of religious truths.

OLD TESTAMENT. In the ancient usage, the name of the Mosaic tabernacle was “tent of testi-