

THE SAINTS GO TO THE VALLEY OF THE SALT LAKE

In 1820, 14-year-old Joseph Smith reported a very unusual experience. A wave of revivals had spread across northern New York, and he had prayed for God to tell him which church he should join. He said a dazzling light had revealed God, and God had told him not to join any existing church. In 1823 the angel Moroni told him about stone caskets containing golden plates hidden in a nearby hill, but he was not allowed to take them from their hiding place until 1827. He then translated them from Egyptian into English using the Urim and Thummim (two crystals set in a silver bow). The translation was completed in 1830, and the *Book of Mormon* was published.



Joseph Smith

Believers formed the Church of Jesus Christ ("of Latter-Day Saints" was added later) in April and sent out their first missionaries in October. When protests against the Mormons became too intense in New York, Smith and his followers moved to Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831. At Kirtland, Smith organized a number of businesses, including a bank. When he did not receive a charter for the bank, he opened it as the "Kirtland Society Anti-banking Company." More missionaries were sent, including some to Missouri. New converts joining the church in Ohio included Brigham Young and Heber Kimball. A large temple was built, and it was dedicated in 1836.

However, the time in Kirtland was running out. The anti-banking society was already in trouble with Ohio state law, but the Panic of 1837 finished it off. Many Mormons who had put their money in the anti-bank were furious with Smith, who then read them out of the church. Feeling against Smith and the Mormons was so intense that in 1838, it was time to move again.

The new home for the Mormons was in Missouri. The Mormons' first plan was to build a city 12 miles west of Independence. In 1831 they started work on a new town, but a mob riding through the Mormon community in October made it clear they were not welcome. They moved to temporary quarters in Clay County. In 1836 the state legislature created Caldwell County, and the Mormons moved to this unsettled area northeast of present-day Kansas City. Their new town, Far West, grew quickly.

In 1838 they laid the cornerstone for a new temple, bigger than the one at Kirtland. Again, the Mormons found enemies who made many accusations against them, including the charge that they were planning to take over the state. The new governor of the state was Lilburn Boggs, one of their most bitter enemies from their days in Independence. When mobs attacked Mormon property, the governor offered no protection: "The quarrel is between the Mormons and the mob, and they can fight it out." Smith and some Mormon

leaders were arrested and held in jail for five months. The Mormons could not remain in Missouri, so Brigham Young led them to Illinois.

Crossing the Mississippi River to Quincy, Illinois, the Mormons waited there until Smith was released in April. They had spotted a small town called Commerce 45 miles north of Quincy. Commerce was nothing but a swamp, but they drained it, built a beautiful town there, and renamed it Nauvoo, meaning "beautiful location." Both political parties wanted the Mormon vote and were generous in giving a city charter that gave Nauvoo much self-rule.

Nauvoo grew into a city of 15,000, the largest in Illinois at the time. A beautiful temple was planned for a high hill overlooking the town. Missionaries brought in new converts. The Nauvoo Legion was the best militia unit in the state, and Smith was its lieutenant general.

Trouble was not far away, however. In May 1842 former-Governor Boggs was shot, and circumstantial evidence pointed to a Mormon, Orrin Rockwell, as the killer. Boggs recovered and demanded that Rockwell be turned over to Missouri officials for trial. The Nauvoo municipal court refused to cooperate.

A serious threat to the Mormon leaders came from a local newspaper, the *Nauvoo Expositor*, published by a group of former Mormons. It said that the city charter should be revoked by the state and accused Hyrum Smith of advocating plural marriage. The city council met and declared the newspaper a public nuisance. The city marshal destroyed the printing press and all copies of the newspaper that could be found. The editors escaped. Governor Thomas Ford requested that Smith meet him in Carthage, Illinois, the county seat. Smith feared that the governor could not keep his promise of safe conduct. When he got there, Joseph and Hyrum Smith and two other Mormon leaders were charged with treason. They were lodged in the county jail, supposedly protected by the Carthage militia. A mob gathered and broke into the jail. The Smiths were murdered June 24, 1844.

Most of the shocked Mormons turned to Brigham Young for leadership. He faced a terrible situation. Raids on Mormon property increased, and nothing was done by law enforcement to stop them. In the fall of 1845, the Mormons prepared to move again. Crossing the Mississippi by ferry and later on solid ice, the Mormons headed westward. Many died, but the spirit of these pioneers was strong. Young chose to travel north of the Platte River to avoid those going to Oregon. They met trappers Moses Harris and Jim Bridger, both of whom doubted the wisdom of going to Salt Lake, the place Young had decided the Saints would settle. Sam Brannan, an early Mormon settler of California, urged the Saints to move there, but Young looked down on the valley of the Great Salt Lake on June 21, 1847, and announced: "This is the place." The Saints had found a permanent home.

Activity:

No one wants to be the victim of persecution, but many around the world are willing to endure it because of their religious or political ideas. Why do people convert to a religion when they know they are going to suffer because of their decision?

Name _____ Date _____

POINTS TO PONDER

1. The Mormons had strong leadership during this time. Why was that necessary in order for them to survive?

2. What did you think of the remark by Governor Boggs? What do you think he should have said or done?

3. Was the Nauvoo city council wise in closing down the *Nauvoo Expositor* the way it did? Why or why not?

4. Why do you think Brigham Young picked a spot as isolated as Utah for a new Mormon homeland?

Name _____

Date _____

CHALLENGES

1. Who was the leader of the early Mormons?

2. What town did the Mormons establish in Ohio?

3. Who were two important converts joining the Mormons in Ohio?

4. Why didn't the Mormons stay in Independence?

5. What community did they create in Caldwell County?

6. What attitude did Governor Boggs take toward attacks on Far West?

7. Where did the Mormons settle in Illinois?

8. What charge did the *Nauvoo Expositor* bring against Hyrum Smith?

9. What happened to Joseph and Hyrum Smith at the Carthage jail?

10. Who led the Saints to Utah?
