Lesson 32
Doctrine and Covenants 135

This section is not a revelation in the usual sense of the word. In what sense might we consider it a revelation?

What is the history leading up to the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith?

Reading the Doctrine and Covenants we have watched the Prophet learn and grow line upon line and precept upon precept. (The gradual unfolding of the temple ordinance, beginning with baptism for the dead and culminating in the endowment and in celestial marriage is a good example of this.) How does Joseph Smith’s death fit into this growth? Was it a catastrophe for the Church? Why or why not, and in what ways?

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Verse 3: John Taylor says that Joseph Smith has done more than anyone but Jesus for the salvation of men. Is this literally true or is it hyperbole (quite justifiable under the circumstances)? If it is literally true, how would you show that it is true? What evidence does Taylor cite for his claim? How do those things compare to the things done by other prophets, such as Lehi or Moses?

Verse 4: Given the many people who were angry with Joseph Smith at the time of his death—many of them members and
former members of the Church and some of them members of his own family—how can we understand what he is saying when he says that his conscience is void of offense toward all men? Does it have anything to do with the fact that he has a conscience void of offense toward God? How can we have consciences void of offense toward God and men?

Verse 5: What is a testator? Of what were Joseph and Hyrum testators? What does it mean that their testament is now in force? Is John Taylor depending on the language of Hebrew 9:16–17? If so, what do you make of the implicit comparison of Joseph and Hyrum to Christ? Why isn’t Taylor being blasphemous in making that comparison?

Verse 7: An escutcheon is a shield or shield-shaped emblem that bears a coat of arms. An older idiom in English speaks of “a blot on one’s escutcheon,” referring to something that dishonor’s one’s reputation. Is it significant that Taylor uses the word stain rather than blot? What does it mean that the escutcheon of the state of Illinois is stained with the blood of the martyrs? What point is John Taylor making?