

Ezra Taft Benson & Hideous Tales of the Fate of Persecutors of the Prophet

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--Introduction: Getting the Carthage Low-Down on the Made-Up Stories on the Fate of Joseph Smith's Killers

During our Benson family reunion in the summer of 1979, our faithful clan took a reverent pilgrimage to the murder site of Joseph and Hyrum Smith at the Carthage, Illinois, jail.

During our visit to this hallowed place in Mormondum, I witnessed my grandfather's serious and skeptical reaction to tales describing the gruesome final chapters in the allegedly haunted lives of many of the members of the mob who participated in the murder of the Smith boys in June of 1844.

To my surprise, Ezra Taft Benson thought it was all a buncha bunk.

--Touring Carthage Jail and Shuffling Across Hyrum's Blood

Led by my grandfather, we managed to squeeze our sizeable Benson caravan into the small, brick jailhouse.

Our group was led up the narrow staircase from the first floor to the second-story jail cell (actually a bedroom) where Joseph and Hyrum bought the farm by a small, chatty tour guide—a man who stuck close to my grandfather's side and pointed him through the exhibits with a sober sense of earnestness.

At the top of the stairs, we entered the cramped room. I had heard that there were still blood stains from the Smiths somewhere on the floor and asked the guide where they were located.

Come to find out, the guide informed us that we were literally standing on top of them. He said that a blood stain was partially covered by a rug spread over the floorboards but was still visible if we looked carefully.

Peering down at my feet, I noticed a large, irregular, faded spot, outlined by a darker outer ring encased in the wood grain of the planks.

The guide said that this was Hyrum's blood, spilled when he was shot in the face and fell to the floor, exclaiming, "I am a dead man."

The guide then turned to my grandfather and informed him that the Church had removed a sheet of plexiglass that had previously been used to cover the blood stain because, he said, the Church did not want to encourage its members to "worship" the blood of the prophets.

The guide said that unless visitors to Carthage Jail specifically asked about the location of the bloodstains, the guides did not point it out and even allowed people to unknowingly walk on it.

My grandfather nodded somberly.

On the way down the stairs from our visit to the hallowed upper room where Joseph Smith had tried to save his own skin by jumping out a window while yelling a Masonic cry for help to Lodge members in the mob below, the tour guide began to solemnly speak to my grandfather about stories of ominous, horrible plagues supposedly visited by a wrathful God upon members of the murderous band who had killed the Lord's chosen prophets.

The guide emphasized to my grandfather in no uncertain terms that these graphic accounts supposedly detailing the fate of the Smiths' murderers were not to be believed.

To the contrary, the guide said that many of the members of the mob who were responsible for the death of Mormonism's two most prominent founders actually went on to very successful business and political careers.

Well, I'll be.

My grandfather again nodded approvingly, scowling slightly as he listened and voicing his agreement with the guide's views.

All of which I found quite interesting.

This was the same Ezra Taft Benson who believed unswervingly in the literal truthfulness of Book of Mormon tales vividly describing, say, the gruesome fate of a premier prophet persecutor named Korihor--who was struck dumb through the power of God, reduced to abject beggary and eventually trampled to death for his wickedness.

The same held true for the sinful Book of Mormon Lamanites who because of their wicked, adulterous and murderous ways, were said to have been relegated by a vengeful God to darkened loathsomeness, marked by the finger of an accusing Maker with the curse of a brown skin and consigned to wear loincloths, to shave their heads and to stare into a bleak and miserable future.

Woe, woe and double-whammy woe.

--Apostle Dallin H. Oaks Chokes on the Gruesome Revenge-Killing Fairy Tales Spread by Crazy Mormon Maniacs

Even Oaks debunked the nonsense spread by fanatical Mormons that the killers of Joseph Smith were punished by a vengeful Elohim with horrible deaths:

"A persistent Utah myth holds that some of the murderers of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

met fittingly gruesome deaths--that Providence intervened to dispense the justice denied in the Carthage trial. (endnote 1: See Lundwall, 'The Fate of the Persecutors,' 292-358) But the five defendants who went to trial, including men who had been shown to be leaders in the murder plot and others associated with them, enjoyed notably successful careers."

(Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, "Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith," 2nd printing, in "Afterword" [Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1976], pp. 217, 221)

--The Dastardly Details on the Reported Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith

By way of background, one web-wacko enthusiast of these post-martyrdom killer karma stories likened the fate of the doomed Carthage mob to that of plundering excavators who had violated the sanctity of the ancient tombs of the Pharaohs in search of treasure:

"The Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt were said to have mystic powers that surrounded them after death. When King Tut's tomb was discovered in the early 1900's, there was a curse that surrounded the tomb and brought death unto all who entered the tomb.

"So it was with Joseph Smith. A curse followed members of the mob that murdered Smith and his brother Hyrum.

". . . [M]any witnesses . . . swear that what they saw and heard is true concerning the sufferings of the mobocrats that participated in the murder of Smith and his brother Hyrum."

Gruesome accounts of mob members supposedly becoming marked men by a God who was a-gunnin' for 'em eventually appeared in a sensational book, compiled by N. B. Lundwall, entitled, The "Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith" [Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft Publishers, 1952, 365 pp.]

According to the claims in the book by a devout Mormon who supposedly encountered a doomed mob member who had participated in the killings of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the murderer was visited with horrific physical afflictions:

"I noticed that the lower part of one ear was gone, a part of the left side of his nose had rotted away, and there were other repulsive sores on his face. He showed me his hands. There was very little solid flesh on them. I expressed my sympathy for him and he said his feet were worse than his hands. I asked him what had caused all this trouble and he replied: 'I don't know unless it was a curse God had placed on me.' He said some men had told him that was it, because he was with the men who killed Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet. 'I guess that was the main reason I drifted out here; I wanted to know how the Mormons made out without Joe Smith to lead them'"

(Lundwall, "The Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith," pp. 297-98).

Another witness to the heavenly plagues that were said to have befallen Joseph and Hyrum Smith's assassins described the physical torture dished out upon another mob member:

"About the year 1892, when I was eighteen years of age . . . an old man by the name of Brooks moved into[our] neighborhood . . . The old man used to come to my father's home, sit on the porch and talk to my father . . . [about] Joseph Smith the Prophet. On one particular evening after my father had talked about Joseph Smith, the old man . . . said: ' . . . I saw the last bullet shot onto the old boy.' After Mr. Brooks had gone to his cabin, my father said: 'No wonder he is a miserable old soul. If he saw the last bullet shot into Joseph Smith, he was in that mob. If he was in that mob, it has been prophesied that he will suffer all kinds of torment, his limbs shall rot off of his body and he will not have the courage to take his own life.'

". . . [A]fter this conversation I took particular notice of the old man and how he suffered. The old man had a belt which he wore around his waist which the son would take off, then beat the old man with it just to hear him scream and when beating him, the son would laugh and profane and seemed to enjoy it. All of this I saw.

"The old man was crippled and could walk with only the aid of two sticks---one in each hand and without aid of these he was totally helpless and unable to walk. The cause of this crippled condition was unknown to me. The son would drive the old man up the coal mine dump about three or four hundred yards from their cabin like he would drive cattle and fill sacks with coal, tie the sacks on the old man's back and drive him back to the cabin. The old man would beg his son not to fill the sacks too full of coal. If he would not go fast enough the son would whip him with his belt which he had taken from the father before going for the coal.

"They . . . then moved to Coalville . . . While living here his toes rotted off his feet. Later, a Dr. Cannon . . . who owned a ranch in Weber canyon . . . made arrangements with this old man and his son to start a chicken ranch on Dr. Cannon's premises, on to which the father and son moved. . . . Dr. Cannon made inquiry concerning the disappearance of the chickens on the farm and the old man replied that 'The skunks had eaten them up.' To which Dr. Cannon replied: 'You are the biggest skunk.'

"The son would often leave his father for three or four days and sometimes a week without food. I was up to my brother-in-law's ranch one fall, in November, when an eight inch snow fell, the weather clearing up in the afternoon, and dropping to zero weather by night. My brother-in-law and I took over an extra quilt and some supper to the old man and also chopped wood which we piled close to the stove so that he could handily keep the fire going during the night without getting out of bed. After returning home later in the night, I heard him screaming. I awoke my brother-in-law and he said: 'Don't take notice of him; he always screams like that.' When we got up the next morning, we looked towards his cabin and saw that the house was gone. We immediately went to where his cabin had been and found it had burned to the ground during the night. All the old man's clothes had burned off of him and he was burned all over his body from his feet to the top of his head. He was alive and lay curled up in ashes of the burned cabin, trying to keep warm.

"We secured some quilts and with a team and sleigh we took him to Peoa where we found the son. The people of Peoa took up a collection which amounted to five dollars, gave it to the son and told him to go to Park City for the particular medicine he was directed to buy. With the money the son bought liquor and became drunk and did not return for four days. The old man died on the fourth day after he was burned, before his son returned . . . The son was ordered out of the county and he left immediately for parts unknown.

(ibid., pp. 292-93).

Finally, another devout Mormon laid out--in stark-and-hark detail--the supposed horrible fate prepared for yet another hapless prophet-murdering mob member:

"One man, a 'Jack Reed,' an old man who was respected in the valley . . . said that he was a member of the mob who martyred the prophet. He was about fifteen years old at the time. He said he took his gun and marched proudly to Carthage and took part in the killing of the two prophets . . .

"About the last of September I heard that Jack Reed was very sick of a strange ailment. He was taken ill in a few days after having made the statement that he took part in the affair at Carthage---but no one had told me of his sickness until I heard it from one of my Indian friends who said he had worms in his flesh. I determined to see him if I could and try to get him to verify the statement he had made . . .

"The man had no family I asked . . . if . . . Mrs. Whitmore and myself [would be allowed] to visit Mr. Reed. [I was told] that Mr. Reed was a sight that no white woman could be allowed to look upon.

"He was literally eaten alive by worms. His eyeballs had fallen out, the flesh on his cheeks and neck had fallen off and though he could breathe he could take nourishment only through an opening in his throat . . . and [I was told that] 'Pieces of flesh as large as my two hands have fallen off from different parts of his body.'

"The sick man's farm was given to the white men who attended him in the first of his ailment. Finally when they could no longer endure the ordeal the Indians were called in to pour water into his throat and give him whatever other attention they could and these received the sick man's bunch of horses for their pay. When he finally passed, the Indians carried out the awful remains by the four corners of the blanket upon which he had lain for weeks, and lowered that into the box the white had prepared. The blanket was tucked in over him and the box quickly nailed up and put into the deep grave as soon as possible. No funeral was held.

". . . [I gathered that a] bunch of enemies were heading a petition against me because I was a polygamist. . . .

"One called 'Jack Longstreet' became Reed's first attendant in company . . . To these men Reed confessed that his participation in the murder of the Prophets was the cause of his affliction. He said to Longstreet: 'It is the Mormon curse that is upon me. I cannot

live---I must utterly rot before I die.'

"He said that Brigham Young had pronounced that curse upon all that mob, and he had known thirteen of them to die just as he was dying. But he had lived so long and had passed the unlucky number thirteen, that he had thought to escape the curse. He charged his attendants to never do anything against the Mormons, to be their friends, or said he, 'You may suffer the Mormon curse.' Longstreet related . . . this confession of Reed's as a warning . . . and declared that he himself would not dare to raise a hand against them. I don't think he ever did."

(ibid., pp. 294-96).

--The Moral of the Story for Would-Be Prophet Killers

Thus saith the Mormon God, if you're going to kill the Lord's prophets and other anointed ones, you'd be much better off doing it in modern times--you know, when there is an actual, historical paper trail that can be used to document what actually happened in your life following your murderous deeds. Whatever you do, don't be unlucky or dumb enough to choose murderous, wicked ways in the hazy, distant past--whereafter spine-tingling scripture stories can be invented and passed down from generation to generation, describing to wide-eyed little children in Sunday School how you were horribly punished by God for what you did.

"Heh, heh, heh, cackle, cackle, cackle . . ."

(Lo, what's that? Behold, the creeped-out voice of Vincent Price, accompanied by Michael the "Thriller" Jackson and his Tap-Dancing Troupe of Bug-Eyed Corpses):

"Darkness falls across the land,
The Prophet's blood against you stands,
Your skin falls off, your sperm's a dud,
Your house is gone, God sent a flood.

"And whosoever shall be found
With gun in hand for shooting down my prophet
Shall face the hounds of Hell,
And rot a lot, with feet that smell.

"The foulest stench is in the air,
Your eyeballs gone, and so's your hair,
Your ears fall off, I curse your womb,
An unmarked grave will be your tomb.

"And even though it's all a lie,
Your body starts to shiver,
For no mere Mormon can resist
God messin' with your liver.

"Heh, heh, heh, cackle, cackle, cackle, HEH, HEH, HEH, CACKLE, CACKLE, CACKLE, HEH, HEH, HEH, CACKLE, CACKLE, CACKLE . . ."

"Creeak.

"SLAM!"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1pwhR75eQ0>

Amen.

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