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Mormonbasics.com is humbled to bring you a commentary on the hymns published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This commentary is presented in a two-column format. The original text, as presented in the hymnbook published by the LDS Church, is in the left column. The comments on the right are provided by mormonbasics.com. We have even changed the color of the text so there won't be any question as to who wrote what.

**Personal note from the commentator:**

The hymns of the Church are sacred text. The Lord has made it very clear to us through his prophets that the singing of hymns is a form of prayer, and as such is sacred communication. Much of the sacred Spirit and reverence we experience in our meetings, especially Sacrament Meeting, comes from the Spirit that accompanies the singing of the hymns.

The hymns are written in poetic form, and as such are able to take certain licenses and liberties with the English language that cannot normally be expressed in any other way. It is certainly not the aim of this commentary to improve on the beauty of the poetic expressions found in our sacred hymns. As a teacher of English to those who speak other languages, I have found that many of the hymns have expressions that are difficult for some people to understand.

Because hymns are written to fit a set rhythmic pattern or meter, often the expression has to be condensed to fit in a small space, but still convey its intended meaning. It is the combination of the rhythm, text, and music that create such a powerful Spiritual experience when singing the hymns. My attempts to explain some of the meaning behind the text should not detract from the original meaning, nor should it replace the original meaning. Hymns, like parables, take on different meanings as the circumstances of our lives change. My commentary is only a starting point for (hopefully) a better understanding of the overall meaning of the hymn in this work. Anyone else writing this same commentary would have different perspectives and points to make. That is the nature of a commentary. I pray that what I say will, in some way, help in your understanding of this hymn. Since this is a personal study of the hymns, I will sometimes use the first person when writing the commentary.

Kelly P. Merrill

## Praise to the Man

1. Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!  
 Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.  
 Blessed to open the last dispensation,  
 Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.

(Chorus]

Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven!  
 Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vain.  
 Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren;  
 Death cannot conquer the hero again.

2. Praise to his mem'ry, he died as a martyr;  
 Honored and blest be his ever great name!  
 Long shall his blood, which was shed by assassins,  
 Plead unto heav'n while the earth lauds his fame.

3. Great is his glory and endless his priesthood.  
 Ever and ever the keys he will hold.  
 Faithful and true, he will enter his kingdom,  
 Crowned in the midst of the prophets of old.

4. Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven;  
 Earth must atone for the blood of that man.  
 Wake up the world for the conflict of justice.  
 Millions shall know "Brother Joseph" again.

MUSIC

Scottish folk song

TEXT

William W. Phelps, 1792-1872

This hymn is one of the "sacred cows" of the latter-day hymns. I will endeavor to treat it with the respect it deserves.

Jehovah is the Old Testament name for Jesus Christ. We sing praise to this man who spoke personally with Christ. Christ, himself, set Joseph Smith apart from the rest of humanity to be the Prophet and Seer who was to open the last dispensation. The promise was that Kings would extol or sing his praises, and that nations would revere or highly respect him. This has not happened yet, but will happen in the future.

Hail has many meanings, but a couple of them include to cheer or to acclaim (shout praises). This man whom we cheer has gone up to heaven. Now those who were villains to him in this life cannot hurt him any longer. In heaven he can walk among the Gods and make plans for the exaltation of his brethren, his loved ones, the saints of the Church. Death got him once, but will never conquer him again.

Joseph died for his beliefs, as a martyr. We praise his memory and give honor to his great name. Until the Savior judges those assassins who spilled his innocent blood, his blood will continue to cry to heaven for justice, while the earth sings praises to Joseph's name.

It is an important principle to understand that those whom the Father put in positions of authority in mortality, those to whom he granted keys, will always hold those positions of authority within the family of God. Adam still presides as the father of the human race at the head of his family, and Joseph does and always will be the holder of the keys of this dispensation.

Because Joseph was faithful and true to the calling he was given he will enter the kingdom prepared for him and will be crowned with glory among all the great prophets old.

The prophet Joseph started something, the great conflict of justice. With his first vision he introduced to the world one last time the true nature of God. With the subsequent visits of angels and messengers, visions and inspiration, he opened the gates for all to pass back to our Father in Heaven through the ordinances of the gospel of Christ. The sacrifices he made and the sacrifices we do and will make will always bring the blessings of heaven. Someday millions will once again know the man we lovingly refer to as "Brother Joseph."

## SCRIPTURES

Doctrine and Covenants 135, 2 Nephi 3:14-15