

ALEXANDER L. BAUGH

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1834

*Joseph Smith and  
the Redemption of Zion*

*I*n 1834, the Church was still young—less than four years old. Membership was probably between 2,000 and 2,500, with approximately 1,200 Saints living in Missouri and another six to eight hundred living in Kirtland and northeastern Ohio. The remaining three to four hundred resided in scattered branches primarily in Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, and Ontario, Canada.

Joseph Smith himself was young—a youthful twenty-eight; his wife Emma, twenty-nine. Their children were young. Julia Murdock Smith, their adopted daughter, was almost three. Joseph III, his namesake, was just over a year.

When I began to write this sketch of Joseph Smith's life in 1834, I tried to put myself in the place of Joseph

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Smith. What would he think were the highlights or major events of his life during that year? Based on the available historical records, I have sincerely tried to piece together a one-year narrative of his life that would be representative of the Prophet of the Restoration. I did the best I could. I hope Joseph would approve.

### *Kirtland Stake High Council Organized*

With the growth of the Church and other advances came the need to expand Church organization and widen its leadership. During the first three years of the Church (1830–33), Church councils composed of elders, bishops, and high priests had been attending to problems in the Church. But a higher governing body was needed to resolve “important difficulties . . . which could not be settled by the church or the bishop’s council” (Doctrine and Covenants 102:2). Such responsibilities included the formulation of rules and policies and the disciplining of errant members.

On February 17, 1834, Joseph Smith told a body of priesthood brethren and others who were assembled that he “would show the order of councils in ancient days as shown to him by vision.”<sup>1</sup> He then proceeded to organize a new council, known as the stake high council, or in more familiar terms, the Kirtland Stake. The creation of the Kirtland Stake marked the first time a formal ecclesiastical subunit of the Church was established. The council was to comprise a presidency of three high priests with twelve additional high priests selected as councilors with responsibilities to govern in local administrative and judicial matters. Significantly, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, who were serving at the time as the Church’s First Presidency, were also chosen to serve as the presidency of Kirtland Stake.<sup>2</sup> The minutes of the

first meeting of the Kirtland stake presidency and high council were recorded in the Kirtland Council Minute Book and later canonized as section 5 in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Today, the minutes make up Doctrine and Covenants section 102.

*The Zion's Camp Revelation, Recruitment, and Preparation*

With a governing body in place in Kirtland, Joseph turned his attention to a far weightier matter. On November 25, 1833, Orson Hyde and John Gould arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, after having traveled from Missouri, bringing word of the forced removal of some 1,200 Latter-day Saints from Jackson County during the first week of November.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Missouri Church leaders informed state officials of the events surrounding their expulsion and requested assistance. R. W. Wells, Missouri's attorney general, was the first to respond and was sympathetic. Two weeks after the expulsion, he wrote to David Rice Atchison and Alexander W. Doniphan, two Liberty lawyers who had been secured as legal counsel by the Church, informing them that if the Mormons "desire to be replaced in possession of their property . . . an adequate force will be sent forthwith to effect that object." Furthermore, he believed the Mormons had the legal right to "organize themselves into regular companies, or a regular company of militia, either volunteers or otherwise."<sup>4</sup> Based upon Wells's conjecture, on December 6, the leading Missouri elders petitioned Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin directly, requesting they be restored to their "lands, houses, and property, and protected in them by the militia of the state, if legal, or by a detachment of the United States Rangers."<sup>5</sup> Writing to Oliver Cowdery in December 1833, John Corrill expressed hope that the governor would take action in their behalf. "The Governor had manifested a willingness to

restore us back, and will if we request it,” he wrote, “but this will be of but little use unless he could leave a force there to help protect us.”<sup>6</sup> Later, Dunklin reiterated this position in a formal reply. He fully acknowledged the Mormons had a right to organize a military body; “indeed it is [your] duty to do so,” he wrote. However, “as to the request for keeping up a military force to protect your people, and prevent the commission of crimes and injuries,” he believed such a request did not warrant the use of state troops since in his opinion it was not, under militia law, an “emergency.”<sup>7</sup> Based upon what they were told by Missouri officials, Mormon leaders in Missouri believed the following would transpire. First, the state would render assistance by mustering a militia force which would help reinstate the displaced Saints back in Jackson County. Second, the Latter-day Saints were authorized to organize their own independent military unit, which body would join forces with the state militia in helping restore the Saints to their lands. And third, after the Jackson Saints were reinstated, the Mormon contingent would remain for a time to provide protection and maintain order until peace was restored.

A revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith the previous December (1833) intimated the Church would respond to the Missouri difficulties with an organized military body. The revelation summoned “all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house . . . [to go] straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:55–56). When Elders Parley P. Pratt and Lyman Wight arrived in Kirtland on February 22, 1834, following a lengthy midwinter journey from Missouri, the two men informed Joseph Smith of the latest developments in connection with

the exiled members. The two men delivered a letter written by William W. Phelps informing the Prophet that “the Governor is willing to restore us, but . . . the constitution gives him no power to guard us when back.”<sup>8</sup> Clearly the Missouri Saints were asking for the Kirtland members to come to their assistance. On February 24, two days after the arrival of Pratt and Wight, Joseph Smith received a revelation reiterating the previous one (see Doctrine and Covenants 101), calling for five hundred men but settling for no less than one hundred recruits to make up the company (see Doctrine and Covenants 103:32–34). The revelation instructed the Saints to organize companies of tens, twenties, fifties, and hundreds (see Doctrine and Covenants 103:30) and called for Joseph Smith to take command of the entire operation (see Doctrine and Covenants 103:21–22, 35). Seven additional men—Parley P. Pratt, Lyman Wight, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, Frederick G. Williams, Orson Hyde, and Orson Pratt—were instructed to obtain supplies and money, recruit volunteers, and organize the companies (see Doctrine and Covenants 103:29–34, 37–40). Later that same day the Prophet met with the Kirtland high council and told them he was going to Missouri and asked for volunteers to head up the expedition later known as Zion’s Camp.<sup>9</sup> May 1, 1834, was set as the departure date for the company.<sup>10</sup> For eight months Zion’s Camp occupied the Prophet’s attention, and it was the primary focus of his activity during the months preceding the journey (January–April), during the expedition (May–July), and ending with his return to Kirtland (August).

One can only imagine the weight of responsibility Joseph Smith felt. The task must have been formidable and daunting. He was young, only twenty-eight years old, and inexperienced in military activities and affairs. Furthermore, the expedition would entail traveling over nine hundred miles (one way)

through four states over rough roads and sometimes uncharted terrain. In addition, two months of food, provisions, and supplies would be needed for more than two hundred individuals. Perhaps most significant, however, was the fact that he would ultimately be responsible for the overall day-to-day operations and activities and the physical safety and well-being of the participants. For Joseph Smith, Zion's Camp tested his leadership skills at an early stage in his prophetic ministry.

Joseph Smith wasted no time in moving forward with his plans to organize Zion's Camp. On February 26, only two days after the receipt of Doctrine and Covenants section 103, he left Kirtland in company with Parley P. Pratt to recruit volunteers. The two leaders traveled east, visiting Church branches and recruiting men and means primarily in northeastern Ohio and western New York. The Prophet was absent from Kirtland for over a month, returning on March 28.<sup>11</sup> On that date, his journal includes the following entry written in his own hand: "Came home found my Family all well and the Lord be praised for this blessing."<sup>12</sup> Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt made rounds in Pennsylvania; Lyman Wight and Sidney Rigdon visited congregations in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York; and Frederick G. Williams and Hyrum Smith labored in the East for a period of time. In late April, Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight went to Michigan to recruit volunteers.

Recruiting men for Zion's Camp proved to be difficult. Many expected there would be armed conflict and that their safety could be in jeopardy. To Brigham Young and his older brother Joseph, the Prophet promised: "If you will go with me in the camp to Missouri and keep my counsel, I promise you, in the name of the Almighty, that I will lead you there and back again, and not a hair of your heads shall be harmed."<sup>13</sup> Family and work responsibilities caused others to be reluctant or to

not heed the call altogether. On the other hand, the prospects of participating in an extended overland adventure to western Missouri proved exciting for the more adventuresome type, such as sixteen-year-old George A. Smith, younger cousin of the Prophet. Although underage, he was permitted to go and was placed under the care and keeping of the Prophet. His responsibilities included taking care of Joseph's arms and assisting Zebedee Coltrin, one of the camp's cooks.<sup>14</sup> Other Smith family members also enlisted, including Joseph's younger brother William Smith (age twenty-three); Wilkins Jenkins Salisbury (age twenty-three), the Prophet's brother-in-law; and Jesse J. Smith (age twenty-five), another younger cousin.

*Joseph Smith v. Philastus Hurlbut*

April 1834 was an extremely busy time for Joseph Smith as he was putting final plans in place for the departure of Zion's Camp. However, during the first week of April the Mormon leader was also involved in a highly publicized court hearing involving Philastus Hurlbut (his first given name was actually "Doctor"), a disgruntled ex-Mormon. Hurlbut had joined the Church in Kirtland in March 1833, but his membership in the Church was short lived when he was excommunicated the following June on the charge of adultery. Following his dismissal, Hurlbut traveled to Palmyra, New York, where he collected sixteen affidavits from individuals in the community who claimed to have associated with the Smith family. The subjectively gathered affidavits contained negative and derogatory reports about Joseph Smith and the entire Smith family. Hurlbut's affidavits and a series of nine letters written by Ezra Booth, also an ex-Mormon, were used as the basis for the first anti-Mormon book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, published later in 1834 in Painesville, Ohio, by Eber D. Howe, editor of

the *Painesville Telegraph*.<sup>15</sup> But Hurlbut had also personally threatened Joseph Smith's life, resulting in the charges that culminated in a court hearing. The hearing convened in Geauga County, Court of Common Pleas in Chardon, Ohio, on April 2 and concluded on April 7. At the conclusion of the hearing, Hurlbut was found guilty and ordered to pay a two-hundred-dollar bond and to keep the peace for six months. He was also ordered to pay the court cost, which amounted to \$112.59. In his journal dated April 7, Joseph notes that Hurlbut's conviction "was in answer to our prayer for which I thank my heavenly father."<sup>16</sup>

#### *Medina Conference—Vision of Adam and Eve*

On April 18 the Prophet, accompanied by Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, and Zebedee Coltrin, left Kirtland to attend a conference in Medina County, situated fifty miles south of Kirtland, near present-day Akron, Ohio. The Kirtland Council Minute Book contains a summary of the Prophet's remarks on the occasion of the first day of the conference, April 21. Among other subjects, he recounted how he obtained and translated the Book of Mormon, the occasion when he and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods, and the events associated with the organization of the Church. Returning to the significance of the Book of Mormon and modern revelation, he told his hearers, "Take away the book of Mormon, and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none."<sup>17</sup>

During the course of the two-day conference, Joseph, Oliver, and Zebedee experienced a most unusual vision. The Prophet asked Oliver and Zebedee to walk with him "to a place where there was some beautiful grass, and grapevines," Coltrin



later recounted. The Prophet then requested they each pray in turn. After praying, Joseph said, “Now breth[r]en . . . we will see some visions.” Joseph laid on the ground, and Oliver and Zebedee rested their heads on his outstretched arms. “The heavens gradually opened,” Coltrin recalled, and the brethren “saw a golden throne, on a circular foundation, something like a light house, and on the throne were two aged personages, having white hair, and clothed in white garments.” These personages were “the two most beautiful and perfect specimens of mankind” Coltrin had ever seen. Joseph called them “our first parents, Adam and Eve.” Coltrin remembered Adam as a “large broadshouldered man, and Eve as a woman . . . large in proportion.”<sup>18</sup>

*Dissolution of the United Firm—Doctrine and Covenants 104*

On April 23, 1834, two days after returning from Medina County, Joseph was directed by revelation to dissolve the Church’s business-holding company, called the United Firm, and to distribute its assets to the directors of the firm. The United Firm had been established in 1832 to assist the poor in the Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 78), but because of the firm’s heavy debt, its dissolution was advisable. The revelation, which makes up what is today Doctrine and Covenants 104, is often ignored simply because its detailed directives primarily discuss the distribution of the assets of the firm.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, on April 28, 1834, five days after the receipt of Doctrine and Covenants 104, the Prophet received another revelation concerning the United Firm. It is not well known, primarily because it was never canonized. It comprises only three sentences, consisting of a total of eighty-eight words.<sup>20</sup>

*Prophecy regarding the Future Size of the Church*

One of those who responded to the call-up of Zion's Camp was none other than twenty-seven-year-old Wilford Woodruff. On December 29, 1833, while living at Richland, Onondaga County, New York, Wilford and his older brother Azmon first heard the restored gospel preached by Zera Pulsipher and Elijah Cheney. Two days after being introduced to Mormonism (December 31), the two brothers were baptized and became part of the newly formed Richland Branch. In early April 1834, Parley P. Pratt visited Richland recruiting volunteers for Zion's Camp. Azmon, who was married, declined the invitation, but Wilford, who was single, signed on, and on April 11, he left Richland to journey to Kirtland, where he arrived two weeks later on April 25.<sup>21</sup> Shortly after his arrival, he met Joseph Smith for the first time. Wilford's recollections of that meeting were as follows:

I first met Joseph Smith in the streets of Kirtland. He had on an old hat, and a pistol in his hand. Said he, "Brother Woodruff, I've been shooting at a mark, and I wanted to see if I could hit anything." And, said he, "Have you any objection to it?" "Not at all," said I. "There is no law against a man shooting at a mark, that I know of." He invited me to his house. He had a wolf skin, which he wanted me to help to tan; he wanted it to sit on while driving his wagon team. Now, many might have said. "You are a pretty [interesting] prophet; shooting a pistol and tanning a wolf skin." Well, we tanned it, and used it while making a journey of a thousand miles. This was my first acquaintance with the Prophet Joseph.<sup>22</sup>

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On April 27, three days before the scheduled departure of Zion's Camp, Wilford heard Joseph Smith preach for the first time. The meeting took place in a small log schoolhouse in Kirtland. The Prophet's remarks left a profound impression on Wilford, especially a prophecy made by the Mormon leader at the close of the meeting about the future size of the Church. Wilford wrote:

On Sunday the 27 of April the saints met together and held a testamony meeting, and many of the elders spoke and bore their testamony; among the number was . . . Joseph Smith the Prophet who closed by saying "Brothering [brethren] we are laying the foundation of a great work and you know it not, you comprehend it not. The work we are engaged in will grow, spread, and increas[e] untill it will fill the land: it will go from sea to sea it will fill the Rocky Mountains: all nations will hear it: it will fill its destiny; It is the work of Almighty God, and he will maintain and defend it."<sup>23</sup>

Speaking in general conference in April 1898, Woodruff reflected upon the April 1834 meeting and remarked:

On Sunday night the Prophet called on all who held the Priesthood to gather into the little log school house they had there. It was a small house, perhaps 14 feet square. But it held the whole of the Priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were then in the town of Kirtland, and who had gathered together to go off in Zion's camp. . . . When we got together the Prophet called upon the Elders of Israel with him to bear testimony of this work. When they got through the Prophet said, "Brethren, I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church

and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it." I was rather surprised. He said, "It is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world." Among other things he said, "It will fill the Rocky Mountains. There will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will be gathered in the Rocky Mountains, and there they will open the door for the establishing of the Gospel among the Lamanites, who will receive the Gospel and their endowments and the blessings of God. This people will go into the Rocky Mountains; they will there build temples to the Most High. They will raise up a posterity there, and the Latter-day Saints who dwell in these mountains will stand in the flesh until the coming of the Son of Man. The Son of Man will come to them while in the Rocky Mountains."<sup>24</sup>

### *New Name for the Church*

On May 1, the scheduled date of departure of Zion's Camp, the first group consisting of twenty men left Kirtland.<sup>25</sup> Joseph Smith may have purposely delayed his departure to preside at a conference scheduled for May 3. It appears that the main purpose for this conference was to discuss and adopt a new name for the Church. The conference minutes read:

MINUTES of a Conference of the Elders of the church of Christ, which church was organized in the township of Fayette, Seneca county, New-York, on the 6th of April, A.D. 1830. The Conference came to order, and JOSEPH SMITH JR. was chosen Moderator, and FREDERICK G. WILLIAMS and OLIVER COWDERY, were appointed clerks.

After prayer the Conference proceeded to discuss the subject of names and appellations, when a motion was made

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by SIDNEY RIGDON, and seconded by NEWEL K. WHITNEY, that this church be known hereafter by the name of THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS. Appropriate remarks were delivered by some of the members, after which the motion was put by the Moderator, and passed by unanimous voice.<sup>26</sup>

At the time of the organizational meeting in April 1830 the Church was simply called the Church of Christ (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:1). However, to distinguish themselves from other Christian denominations having similar titles, particularly Alexander Campbell’s Disciples of Christ, and because members believed the establishment of the Church was a restoration of the ancient order of the New Testament Christian Church under the leadership of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, members began identifying themselves as “Saints” living in the days preceding the second coming, or the Saints in the latter days. The adoption of the name The Church of the Latter Day Saints therefore marks the second of three names by which the Church has officially been known. The name remained in place for nearly four years (May 1834–July 1838). By revelation (see Doctrine and Covenants 115:4), on April 26, 1838, the former and latter names of the Church were essentially merged into one to form the current name of the Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (albeit a hyphen has been added between “Latter” and “Day,” and “Day” is no longer capitalized).

### *Joseph Marches at the Head of Zion’s Camp*

On Sunday, May 4, the day previous to the departure of Joseph Smith and the main company of Zion’s Camp from

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Kirtland, the Prophet gave some remarks and counsel. George A. Smith reported Joseph Smith's words on the occasion:

He impressed upon them the necessity of being humble, exercising faith and patience and living in obedience to the commands of the Almighty, and not murmur at the dispensations of Providence. He bore testimony of the truth of the work which God had revealed through him, and promised the brethren that if they all would live as they should before the Lord, keeping his commandments, and not like the children of Israel murmur against the Lord and his servants, they should all safely return, and not one of them should fall upon the mission they were about to undertake; for if they were united and exercised faith, God would deliver them out of the hands of their enemies; but should they, like the children of Israel, forget God and his promises, and treat lightly his commandments, He would visit them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.<sup>27</sup>

On Monday, May 5, the main company of Zion's Camp, consisting of eighty-five men under the leadership of the Prophet, pulled out of Kirtland. Wagons were loaded with supplies, provisions, armaments, munitions, and "clothing and other necessities to carry to [those] who had been robbed and plundered of nearly all their effects."<sup>28</sup> Coincidentally, the same day the Prophet's company left Kirtland, a smaller group consisting of seventeen persons left Pontiac, Michigan, under the direction of Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight, with intentions of joining with the main body en route.<sup>29</sup> Significantly, at least twelve women and nine children are known to have traveled with the two divisions.<sup>30</sup>

For over a month, additional men and volunteers fell in with the company, increasing their ranks and numbers. Parley P.

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Pratt was the main recruiter. "I was chiefly engaged as a recruiting officer," he wrote, "and, not being much with the camp, can give but little of its history. I visited branches of the Church in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri, and obtaining what men and means I could, fell in with the camp from time to time with additional men, arms, stores, and money."<sup>31</sup>

On Sunday, May 18, less than two weeks into the journey, near Richmond, Indiana, Joseph Smith wrote a heartfelt letter to his wife, Emma. The letter, written by his own hand, reflects his love of family, his concern for others, and his optimism:

My Dear Wife

meeting being over I sit down in my tent to write a few lines to you to let you know that you are on my mind and that I am sensible of the dut[i]es of a Husband and Father and that I am well and I pray God to let his blessings to rest upon you and the children and all that are a round you untill I return to your society the few lines you ~~roa~~ wrote and sent by the ha[n]d of Brother Lyman [E. Johnson] gave me satisfaction and comfort and I hope you will continue to communicate to me by your own hand for this is a consolation to me ~~that~~ to converse <with> you in this way in my lonely moments which is not easily discribed I will indeavour to write every Su[n]day if I can and let you know how I am <and> Brother Fredrick [G. Williams] will write to Oliver [Cowdery] and give him the names of the places we pass through and a history of our jou[rn]ey from time to time so that it <will> not be nessary for me to endevou[r] to write it but feel a satisfaction to write a few lines with my own hand in this way I can have the privelege to communicate some of my feelings that I should not dare to reveal as you know that <my> situation is a very critacal one Brother Jinkins [Salisbury] and William [Smith] Jese [J. Smith] and Jeorge

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[A. Smith] are all well and are humble are detirmined to be faithful and finally all the Kirtland Broth[r]en are well and cannot fail I must close for I cannot write on my knees sitting on the ground to edification O may the blessings of God rest upon you is the prayre of your Husband until death

[Joseph Smith, Jr.]<sup>32</sup>

Zion's Camp was a long-distance march, and most company members walked the entire distance from Ohio to Missouri and back. Most days the expedition covered between twenty and thirty miles; however, on occasion they traveled as many as forty. Hot, humid days, torrential rains, mud, uncomfortable sleeping conditions, broken equipment, and food shortages, in addition to unhealthy food, added to their suffering. Surviving records clearly reveal that physical fatigue, discomfort, sickness, hunger, and thirst proved to be the most trying of their ordeals.

One might expect that Joseph Smith, being the officer in charge, would have fared better than the others. However, he took few, if any, privileges. "The Prophet Joseph took a full share of the fatigues of the entire journey," George A. Smith reported. "In addition to the care of providing for the Camp and presiding over it, he walked most of the time and had a full proportion of blistered, bloody, and sore feet."<sup>33</sup> Heber C. Kimball wrote, "I frequently invited the Prophet to ride, seeing him lame and footsore. On such occasions he would bless me and my team with a hearty good will."<sup>34</sup> George A. further recalled that the Prophet maintained a constant sense of optimism, never expressing the slightest dissatisfaction. "During the entire trip he never uttered a murmur or complaint, while most of the men in the Camp complained to him of sore toes, blistered feet, long drives, scanty supply of provisions, poor quality of bread, bad corn dodger, frouzy butter, strong honey, maggoty bacon



and cheese, . . . even a dog could not bark at some men without their murmuring at Joseph.”<sup>35</sup>

Sadly, the hardships generated hard feelings, quarrels, and frequent contention among the company. Sylvester Smith was particularly outspoken and contentious, and his influence spread to other camp members. On Tuesday, June 3, after nearly a month’s travel, during their noon halt, Joseph stood on the back of a wagon and issued a condemnation and warning. George A. Smith reported him as having said, “The Lord was displeased with us; that our murmuring and fault-finding and want of humility had kindled the anger of the Lord against us; and that a severe scourge would come upon the Camp and many would die like sheep with the rot. He said, ‘I cannot stop it; it must come; but by repentance and humility and the prayer of faith, the chastisement may be alleviated but cannot be entirely turned away, for as the Lord lives this Camp must suffer a severe scourge for their wickedness and rebellion. I say it in the name of the Lord.’”<sup>36</sup> In spite of the pronouncement, some continued to display a contentious spirit.

On June 4, following nearly a month’s journey, Joseph dictated a letter to Emma wherein he notes some of his own ailments yet voices no disparagement:

My Dear Companion,

I now embrace a few moments to dictate a few words that you may know how it is with us up to this date.

We arrived this morning on the banks of the Mississippi, and were detained from crossing the river, as there was no boat that we could cross in, but expect a new one to be put into the river this evening, so that we are in hopes, to be able to cross to morrow, and proceed on our journey. A tolerable degree of union has prevailed among the brethren or camp up to the present moment, and we are all in better circumstances

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of health apparently than when we started from Kirtland. . . . I have been able to endur[e] the fatigue of the journey far beyond my most sanguine expectations, except have been troubled some with lameness, have had my feet blistered, but are now well, and have also had a little touch of my side complaint. . . . The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity, and gazing upon a country the fertility, the splendour and the goodness so indescribable, all serves to pass away time unnoticed, and in short were it not at every now and then our thoughts linger with inexpressible anxiety for our wives and our children our kindred according to the flesh who are entwined around our hearts; And also our brethren and friends; our whole journey would be as a dream, and this would be the happiest period of all our lives. We learn this journey how to travel, and we look with pleasing anticipation for the time to come, when we shall retrace our steps, and take this journey again in the enjoyment and embrace of that society we so much love. . . . Tell Father Smith [Joseph Smith Sr.] and all the family, and brother Oliver [Cowdery] to be comforted and look forward to the day when the trials and tribulations of this life will be at an end, and we all enjoy the fruits of our labour if we hold out faithful to the end which I pray may be the happy lot of us all.

From your's in the bonds of affliction.  
Joseph Smith Jr.<sup>37</sup>

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In spite of their physical hardships, Zion's Camp was also a spiritual time. Group prayers were conducted morning and evening. Sundays were usually reserved for rest for sabbath worship, including partaking of the sacrament, singing, preaching, and bearing testimony. The company experienced several miraculous healings, divine intervention, and at times demonstrated powerful expressions of faith. Experiences and encounters along the way provided the Prophet with opportunities to teach gospel principles and practical lessons about living a more Christlike life. The camp was also the object of his stern reproofs when he observed sin and error. He was known to have prophesied from time to time, and on at least two occasions he related visionary experiences he received while with the company.<sup>38</sup>

On June 5–6, following a month of travel through Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, picking up recruits along the way, the Mormon army crossed the Mississippi near Louisiana, Missouri. On June 7 the troops arrived at a small branch of the Church known as the Salt River or Allred Settlement (named after James Allred, an early convert), situated in present-day Monroe County, where they waited for Lyman Wight and Hyrum Smith's small company from Michigan. With the arrival of this last contingent on June 8, Zion's Camp consisted of a force of just over two hundred men. Here, final preparations were made for the push to western Missouri. On June 12 the army of Israel broke camp and commenced the trek across northern Missouri.<sup>39</sup>

While camped on the Salt River, the Prophet sent Parley P. Pratt and Orson Hyde to Jefferson City, the state capital, to meet with Governor Dunklin, expecting to receive orders concerning the role Zion's Camp would play in conjunction with the troops called out by the state. According to Elder Pratt,

the governor backed down, refusing to intervene militarily, stating that “he dare not attempt the execution of the laws in that respect, for fear of deluging the whole country in civil war and bloodshed,” but he believed the Saints should continue their efforts through the courts.<sup>40</sup> Dunkin’s position was devastating news because without the immediate support of state troops, the reinstatement of the displaced Missouri Saints in Jackson County—the primary object of Zion’s Camp—could not take place.

Immediately following their meeting with the governor, Elders Pratt and Hyde hurried to catch up with the company and to report Dunklin’s position to Joseph Smith. On June 15 the two men arrived in camp. Upon learning of the governor’s decision not to intervene, Joseph was extremely disappointed. What could they do now? How were they to proceed? In spite of the news, the decision was made to move on to at least meet and confer with the Church leaders and members living in Clay County and hope that a revelation would be received giving some direction.

Meanwhile, their movements had not gone unnoticed, particularly while passing through Ray and into Clay County. On June 19 a large band of some two hundred men from Jackson crossed the Missouri River and collected near the Mormon encampment on Fishing River ford in eastern Clay County, intending to terminate the Mormon advance. A fierce confrontation would have likely occurred had not a violent storm intervened, causing the belligerents to disperse.<sup>41</sup>

On June 22, while camped on a branch of the Fishing River just over the line in Clay County, the hoped-for revelation was received. In the revelation, sometimes called the “Fishing River revelation,” the Lord informed Zion’s Camp that because of present circumstances, the redemption of Zion would yet be in

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the future (see Doctrine and Covenants 105:9). Furthermore, they were assured that their journey and sacrifice was not performed in vain. “I have heard their prayers, and will accept of their offering,” the Lord declared, then indicated that it was expedient that the journey was undertaken “for a trial of their faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 105:19). Meanwhile, the majority of the men were instructed to return to Ohio, where they were assured that they would receive “a great endowment and blessing to be poured out upon them”—a promise later fulfilled in connection with the blessings associated with the Kirtland Temple (Doctrine and Covenants 105:12). To the Missouri Saints who had lost their homes and property in Jackson County, the Lord promised they would find “peace and safety” living among the citizens of Clay (Doctrine and Covenants 105:25).

The following day, June 23, Zion’s Camp advanced about two miles east of Liberty and arrived at the property owned by Algernon Sidney Gilbert and George Burkett, both Mormons. Gilbert operated the Church storehouse in Independence and also acted as agent for the Church and Bishop Edward Partridge while in Jackson County. Here, Joseph Smith and the Kirtland brethren experienced a joyful reunion with a number of Missouri Church members, including Bishop Partridge, William W. Phelps, Isaac Morley, John Corrill, Thomas B. Marsh, Lyman Wight, and a number of Whitmer family members. However, their rejoicing was short-lived. The next day, June 24, cholera struck the camp. Cholera is caused by a bacterial infection in the intestine. In the case of the Zion’s Camp members, it was probably contracted from bad drinking water (it is not contagious) and is characterized by diarrhea, vomiting, and leg cramps. Individuals with severe cholera experience a rapid loss of fluid, causing dehydration and shock, which can result in

death in a matter of a few hours. For several days the disease ravaged the camp in fulfillment of the “scourge” Joseph Smith predicted would come upon them because of their unruly and contentious behavior. Sixty-eight members suffered in varying degrees from the effects of the disease. When the outbreak first occurred, even Joseph and Hyrum were taken ill for a short time. While the brothers were praying for relief, Hyrum sprang to his feet, exclaiming, “I have had an open vision, in which I saw mother kneeling . . . and she is now asking God, in tears, to spare our lives. . . . The Spirit testifies that her prayers, united with ours, will be answered.”<sup>42</sup> Although they subsequently recovered, others were not as fortunate. Tragically, by week’s end, fifteen Latter-day Saints had died, thirteen of whom were camp members, including one woman, Betsy Parrish. Two others from the area, Algernon Sidney Gilbert and nine-year-old Phoebe Murdock (Phoebe was the daughter of John Murdock and Julia Clapp Murdock and was probably living with the Gilberts), also died.<sup>43</sup> The dead were wrapped in blankets and buried in makeshift graves near Rush Creek.<sup>44</sup>

One can sense the depth of the sorrow experienced by Joseph Smith over the deaths of his associates and fellow Church members. After all, they had made the entire trek without the loss of life, only to have death overtake them at journey’s end. Upon returning to Kirtland, he would bear the responsibility and burden of informing the families of the deaths of their loved ones. Perhaps the most painful death for him to bear was that of his cousin Jesse J. Smith. Jesse was the last victim to die from the disease.<sup>45</sup> In February of the following year, the Prophet received some solace regarding the deaths of the cholera victims. “I have seen those men who died of the cholera in our camp,” said Joseph Smith to Brigham and Joseph Young,

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“and the Lord knows, if I get a mansion as bright as theirs, I ask no more.”<sup>46</sup>

On July 3 a general meeting was held for the Saints then living in Missouri and the members of Zion’s Camp. The meeting was held on the property owned by Michael Arthur, situated about three miles south of Liberty. Arthur, a non-Latter-day Saint, had befriended the Saints and employed a number of them. During the meeting, Joseph Smith officially disbanded Zion’s Camp and instructed them that they were free to return to their homes. Significantly, however, during this same meeting the Prophet organized the Missouri Stake, along similar lines to that of the Kirtland Stake, appointing twelve high councilors and designating David Whitmer as president, with William W. Phelps and John Whitmer as assistant presidents or counselors.<sup>47</sup>

Zion’s Camp members did not return to Ohio together in one large body but made their way home in smaller groups. Joseph Smith spent a few more days in Clay County counseling and instructing the leaders before beginning the return trip. He left on July 9, arriving back in Kirtland around August 1 after a nearly three-month absence.<sup>48</sup>

Regrettably, some members of Zion’s Camp subsequently apostatized because they fully expected they would fight, while others lost faith because the Missouri Saints were not restored to their homes and property, believing “Zion was not redeemed.” In short, there were some then and there are some today who may view the march to western Missouri in 1834 as a failure. But for those who see through the eye of faith, Zion’s Camp was successful in many ways. By responding to the call, the Saints in Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York demonstrated their love and loyalty for the members of the Church living in Missouri. Church members in the East also provided the

exiled Saints with needed money, provisions, and supplies. Furthermore, while in Missouri, Joseph Smith organized the Missouri Stake and high council, thus further strengthening and solidifying the organizational structure of the Church. However, most important of all, for those who demonstrated their steadfastness and loyalty, this trial of faith solidified their faith and commitment, further preparing them for their future leadership roles.

For men such as Wilford Woodruff and Brigham Young, Zion's Camp provided them with their first opportunity to be with Joseph Smith for an extended period of time, and in spite of their trials, they rejoiced in that which they learned from him. Elder Woodruff wrote, "We gained an experience that we never could have gained in any other way. We had the privilege . . . of travelling a thousand miles with [the Prophet], and seeing the workings of the Spirit of God with him, and the revelations of Jesus Christ unto him."<sup>49</sup>

Brigham Young was even more explicit. "I have travelled with Joseph a thousand miles, as he led the Camp of Israel. I have watched him and observed every thing he said or did . . . and for the town of Kirtland I would not give the knowledge I got from Joseph from this Journey; and then you may take the State of Ohio and the United States, and I would not give that knowledge for them. . . . This was the starting point of my knowing how to lead Israel."<sup>50</sup> On another occasion he reported, "When I returned . . . to Kirtland, a brother said to me, 'Brother Brigham, what have you gained by this journey?' I replied, 'Just what we went for; but I would not exchange that knowledge I have received this season for the whole of Geauga County.'<sup>51</sup>

In 1835, soon after organizing the first Quorum of the Twelve and the first Quorum of Seventy, Joseph commented,



“Brethren, some of you [were] angry with me, because you did not fight in Missouri; but let me tell you, God did not want you to fight. He could not organize His kingdom with twelve men to open the Gospel door to the nations of the earth, and with seventy men under their direction to follow . . . unless He took them from a body of men who had offered their lives, and who had made as great a sacrifice as Abraham.”<sup>52</sup> Significantly, nine of the original Twelve and all of the original Seventy had marched to Missouri.<sup>53</sup>

Lastly, we should not overlook Joseph Smith. How did Zion’s Camp affect him? What influence did it have on his life? As the commander, he may have gained and learned more from the experience than anyone else.

### *The Sylvester Smith Church Hearings*

No sooner had Joseph Smith and the majority of the members of Zion’s Camp returned to Kirtland, than the cantankerous Sylvester Smith, who had generated so much contention while on the expedition, began circulating negative statements about Joseph Smith’s conduct while journeying to and from Missouri. Sylvester claimed the Prophet prophesied lies, distributed camp funds and supplies unfairly, and abused his (Sylvester’s) character. Sylvester’s reports and accusations must have caused a considerable stir in the community because Church leaders were eventually compelled to call a meeting to investigate Sylvester’s claims.

The August 11 hearing was moderated by Kirtland bishop Newel K. Whitney. Also present were a number of high priests and elders. During the meeting Joseph spoke in defense of himself, explaining the circumstances regarding his “rebukes and chastisements” toward Sylvester, calling upon others present who had participated in Zion’s Camp to attest to the same,

which they did. All seventeen men present spoke in his defense, while the report shows no one sided with Sylvester. Following considerable discussion, the council concluded that the Prophet had “acted in every respect in an honorable and proper manner.” Bishop Whitney then proposed that a statement be published in *The Evening and the Morning Star* indicating that the council had investigated the Prophet’s conduct and concluded that he was innocent of any wrongdoing. The minutes indicate that Sylvester Smith made a partial confession and that Whitney directed him to issue a public confession, which was also to be published in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, which he agreed to do.<sup>54</sup>

It is important to note that the minutes of the meeting clearly show that this was not a formal hearing against Joseph Smith. I mention this only because some have erroneously concluded that the August 11 meeting was actually a formal court or disciplinary council against Joseph Smith as the defendant. If this were so, the hearing would be, in essence, conducted against the Prophet to try him for his membership in the Church. But this was not the case. The meeting was merely called to investigate Sylvester Smith’s accusations.

Sylvester Smith’s repentance was apparently short-lived, because on August 27 he was issued a summons to appear in a formal hearing before the Kirtland high council for failing to submit his public confession in the *Star* and for continuing to charge Joseph Smith with improper conduct. The hearing, which began on August 28, lasted the better part of two days and did not adjourn until three a.m. on the morning of August 30. During the deliberations, the twelve high councilors spoke freely and openly. A number of Zion’s Camp participants also testified as witnesses, each of whom spoke favorably in defense of the Prophet. At the conclusion of the meeting, the council

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issued a statement that if he would publicly acknowledge that he had failed to act upon the previous requirements issued by the previous council (i.e., to issue a public confession in the *Star*) and that he had maliciously told falsehoods against the character of Joseph Smith, he would be permitted to remain a member of the Church. Sylvester complied by writing the following statement: "I hereby certify that the foregoing charges or complaint[s] are just and true, and hereby acknowledge the same, as set forth in the decisions of this council, but signing my own proper name to their minutes with my own hand. [Signed] Sylvester Smith."<sup>55</sup> Sylvester made good on his word, and in the first issue of the *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, the editors included his lengthy apology:

It is true, that some difficulties arouse between bro. J. Smith Jr. and myself, in our travels the past summer to Missouri. . . . But I am now perfectly satisfied that the errors of which I accused [Joseph Smith] before the council . . . were never committed by him; and my contrition has been and still continues to be deep, because I admitted thoughts into my heart which were not right concerning him, and because that I have been the means of giving rise to reports which have gone abroad, censuring the conduct, of bro. J.S. jr. which reports are without foundation. And I hope, that this disclosure of the truth, written by my own hand, and sent abroad into the world, through the medium of the Messenger and Advocate, will put a final end to all evil reports and censurings, which have sprung out of any thing that I have said or done."<sup>56</sup>

An interesting postscript to the Sylvester Smith affair was played out just a few months later when the First Quorum of the Seventy was organized by Joseph Smith on February 28, 1835.

Significantly, on that occasion the Prophet called Sylvester to be one of the seven presidents of the quorum, an action that reveals Joseph's remarkable and extraordinary ability to exercise forgiveness toward one who had demonstrated such personal public animosity against him.<sup>57</sup> Sadly, during the economic crisis in 1837, Sylvester turned against the Prophet once again and was one of nearly a dozen of the leading elders who became disenchanted with Joseph's leadership and was excommunicated from the Church.<sup>58</sup>

### *A Second Zion's Camp*

In mid-August, just over two weeks after his return to Kirtland following Zion's Camp, and during the height of the Sylvester Smith controversy, Joseph Smith dictated a letter to several of the Church leaders in Missouri. One of the most significant aspects of the document is that the Prophet fully expected that during the months ahead, Mormons would continue to gather to western Missouri (particularly Clay County), such that there would come a time when there would be a sufficient number of Saints assembled there that they could return to Jackson County and reclaim their lands. Joseph even set a date. Note his words in the letter: "Use every effort to prevail on the churches to gather to those regions and situate themselves to be in readiness to move into Jackson Co. in two years from the Eleventh of September next which is the appointed time for the redemption of Zion." In other words, the Prophet anticipated that on September 11, 1836, the Church would make another attempt—a second Zion's Camp—to return to Jackson County. He counseled them further to keep quiet. "Let not this be noised abroad let every heart beat in silence and every mouth be shut."<sup>59</sup>

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During the next two years, Mormon emigration to western Missouri continued and expectations that the Saints would make another attempt to return to Jackson continued. However, by the summer of 1836, some of Clay's citizens became concerned with the ever-increasing number of Mormons in the region resulting in isolated outbreaks of violence. These hostilities led Missouri Church leaders to search out other places for Mormon settlement. In August, W. W. Phelps and John Whitmer purchased land, one mile square, in a relatively uninhabited portion of Ray County and there established Far West as the new place of gathering. In short, in spite of the Prophet's expectation to return to Jackson County in September 1836, conditions at the time necessitated that the Saints relocate rather than reoccupy, and the Jackson plan or second Zion's Camp was abandoned.

### *Construction Continues on the Kirtland "House of the Lord"*

The June 1834 Fishing River revelation ending Zion's Camp redirected Joseph's attention. The revelation explained that Zion's future success depended on completion of the Kirtland Temple and the need for the elders to purify their lives to be able to commune with God in the House of the Lord, where they would receive an endowment of his power in anticipation of impending eschatological events and the millennial reign of Christ (see Doctrine and Covenants 105:9-13). Pursuant to these objectives, upon returning from Zion's Camp, Joseph Smith's primary goal was to move forward with the construction of the temple and to prepare selected men to receive a spiritual endowment. Construction on the Kirtland Temple, which had begun in June 1833, resumed in September 1834 under the direction of Artemus Millet, a Mormon convert from Canada. Meanwhile, in December 1834, the Church completed

construction on a two-story frame printing house and school behind the temple to be used also as a meetinghouse awaiting the completion of the temple.<sup>60</sup>

Recognizing the need to prepare the priesthood holders for missionary service and the anticipated outpouring of spiritual blessings associated with the Kirtland Temple, beginning in November 1834 and continuing through March 1835, the School of the Elders (formerly known in 1833 as the School of the Prophets) was reorganized and reconstituted under the direction of Joseph Smith. Members of the school came primarily from the ranks of the elders and high priests from Kirtland. However, several Missouri Church leaders spending the winter of 1834–35 in Kirtland also attended the school. The Prophet and Sidney Rigdon presided over the school and were the main teachers and instructors, although a number of other men were invited to speak and teach the men. Beginning in December 1834 and continuing through January 1835, a series of formal theological lectures (later titled the Lectures on Faith) were prepared and presented to the participants. Classes were held periodically throughout the winter in a room below the printing office situated immediately west of the Kirtland Temple which, as noted, was under construction.<sup>61</sup>

### *Joseph Smith as Publisher*

The 1830s witnessed an eruption of print media throughout the United States and almost everyone with a cause used the press to promote his or her position and opinions. Joseph Smith understood the power of the printed word and the need to disseminate and defend the views, policies, and doctrines of the Church to both Church members and the general public. Thus, beginning in 1834, the Mormon leader began to plan a

more active role in the printing efforts and operations of the Church.

Following the July 1833 destruction of the Church's printing house and *The Evening and the Morning Star* press in Independence, Missouri, printing operations were suspended until Church leaders in Ohio were able to acquire another press and build a printing office in Kirtland. After obtaining a new press in Kirtland in December 1833, ten more issues of the *Star* were published, the final number in September 1834. That same month, a publication committee was formed, composed of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, whose main objective was to publish a second time a book containing the Prophet's revelatory documents. To complete this task, W. W. Phelps, who had edited the *Star* and a second Mormon newspaper, the *Upper Missouri Advertiser*, was recruited and moved from Missouri to Kirtland to assist in the project.

In October 1834, the first issue of the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* appeared, succeeding the *Star* as the official organ of the Church. During the newspaper's three-year run, Oliver and Warren Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer served as editors, while the names of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and William Marks appear as publishers.<sup>62</sup> Articles, letters, and statements by Joseph Smith appear prominently throughout the pages of the paper, illustrating his desire to promulgate his views and prophetic voice. Furthermore, during this period, Church leaders, including Joseph Smith, often spoke freely and openly about government, politics, and the social issues of the day.

*Revelation to Warren Cowdery*

In late November 1834, Warren Cowdery, Oliver's older brother (by eight years), visited Kirtland. At the time, Warren was living in Freedom, New York, situated in the extreme western part of the state. In 1831 he and his family were baptized into the Church. In early March 1834, while recruiting men for Zion's Camp, Joseph Smith and Parley P. Pratt spent three days (March 9–11) in the Cowdery home in Freedom.<sup>63</sup> During Warren Cowdery's 1834 visit to Kirtland, he requested the Prophet pronounce a blessing or revelation in his behalf. In the revelation he was called to be the presiding high priest over the Freedom Branch with the charge to "devote his whole time to this high and holy calling." "I will have mercy on him," the revelation continued, "notwithstanding the vanity of his heart. . . . And I will give him grace and assurance wherewith he may stand; and if he continue to be a faithful witness and a light unto the church I have prepared a crown for him in the mansions of my Father." The revelation was recorded in the Kirtland Revelation Book and was later canonized as section 99 of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. Today, the revelation is part of Doctrine and Covenants section 106.

*Appointment of Oliver Cowdery as Assistant President*

On December 5, 1834, an important organizational change was made in the Church. On this date, Joseph Smith presided over the appointment and ordination of Oliver Cowdery as "assistant President of the High and Holy Priesthood." The minutes of the meeting read as follows:

According to the direction of the Holy Spirit, Presidents Smith, assistant Presidents, Rigdon and Williams, assembled for the purpose of ordaining first High Counsellor Cowdery



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to the office of assistant President of the High and Holy Priesthood in the Church of the Latter-Day Saints.

It is necessary, for the special benefit of the reader, that he be instructed into or concerning the power and authority of the above named Priesthood.

First. The office of the President is to preside over the Whole Church; to be considered as at the head; to receive revelations for the Church; to be a Seer,—~~and~~ Revelator and Prophet having all the gifts of God:—taking Moses as an example. Which is ~~Second~~ the office and station of the above President Smith, according to the calling of God, and the ordination which he has received.

Second. The office of Assistant President is to assist in presiding over the whole Church, and to officiate in the absence of the President, according to ~~their~~ his work and appointment, viz: President Cowdery, first; President Rigdon Second, and President Williams Third, as they ~~are~~ were generally called. The office of this Priesthood is also to act as Spokesman—taking Aaron for an ensample

The virtue of this above Priesthood is to hold the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, or the Church militant.

The reader may further understand, that ~~Presidents~~ the reason why High Counsellor ~~President~~ Cowdery was not previously ordained to the Presidency, was in consequence of his necessary attendance in Zion, to assist Wm W. Phelps in conducting the printing business; but that this promise was made by the Angel while in company with President Smith, at the time they received the office of the lesser priesthood. And further: The circumstances and situation of the Church requiring Presidents Rigdon and Williams were previously ordained, to assist President Smith.<sup>64</sup>

In this capacity, Cowdery was elevated in authority above that of Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, the two counselors in the First Presidency. His priesthood authority and responsibilities were second only to those of Joseph Smith. This appointment was also consistent with Cowdery's earlier designation as "second elder" on the day of the Church's organization (April 6, 1830). Cowdery continued in the office of Assistant President until his excommunication on April 12, 1838.

On January 19, 1841, Hyrum Smith was appointed to fill the office vacated by Cowdery. Note the following words: "And from this time forth I appoint unto him [Hyrum] that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph; that he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph . . . and be crowned with the same blessing, and glory, and honor, and priesthood, and gifts of the priesthood, that once were put upon him that was my servant Oliver Cowdery" (Doctrine and Covenants 124:94–95). Following Hyrum's death on June 27, 1844, the office of Assistant President was discontinued.

### *Joseph Smith's Patriarchal Blessing*

Perhaps the culminating event of the year 1834 for Joseph was the privilege he had to receive his patriarchal blessing under the hand of his sixty-three-year-old father. On December 18, 1833, Joseph Smith ordained his father to the office of patriarch, but perhaps because of his desire to be worthy of such a sacred office and the responsibility it carried to declare a prophetic voice, for nearly a year after his ordination Joseph Sr. did not officiate in his office and no patriarchal blessings were conferred. However, on December 9, 1834, Joseph Sr. pronounced the first patriarchal blessings upon his children and their spouses at the

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home of the Prophet. Oliver Cowdery was present and acted as recorder. The order of the blessings was from the eldest to the youngest, Hyrum being first, followed by his wife Jerusha. Calvin W. Stoddard, husband of Sophronia was blessed third, followed by Sophronia. Joseph's blessing was fifth. While the entire blessing will not be given here, a few selected passages can be highlighted:

The Lord thy God has called thee by name out of the heavens: thou hast heard his voice from on high from time to time, even in thy youth. . . .

Thou hast sought to know his ways and from thy childhood thou hast meditated much upon the great things of his law. . . .

Thou hast been an obedient son: the commands of thy father and the reproofs of thy mother, thou hast respected and obeyed—for all these things the Lord my God will bless thee. . . .

Thou hast been called, even in thy youth to the great work of the Lord: to do a work in this generation which no other man would do as thyself. . . .

I bless thee with the blessings of thy fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and even the blessings of thy father Joseph, the son of Jacob. Behold, he looked after his posterity in the last days, when they should be scattered and driven by the Gentiles, and wept before the Lord: he sought diligently to know from whence the son should come who should bring forth the word of the Lord, by which they might be enlightened, and brought back to the true fold, and his eyes beheld thee, my son: his heart rejoiced and his soul was satisfied. . . .

Thou shalt live to do the work which the Lord shall command thee: thou shalt hold the keys of this ministry,

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even the presidency of this Church, both in time and in eternity. . . .

Thousands and tens of thousands shall come to a knowledge of the truth through thy ministry, and thou shalt rejoice with them in the Celestial Kingdom.<sup>65</sup>

Such promises provide a fitting tribute to Joseph Smith.

### *Summary*

To summarize, 1834 was a busy year for Joseph Smith. He was absent from home some four months. For over a month he traveled through northeastern Ohio, Pennsylvania, and western New York recruiting for Zion's Camp. In mid-April he traveled to Medina County to conduct a conference, and that same month he spent several days in Chardon, Ohio, to attend the court hearing against the ex-Mormon Philastus Hurlbut. And for nearly three months he was on the road with Zion's Camp.

Ecclesiastically, he organized the Kirtland Stake high council in February and the Missouri stake high council in July, with the minutes of the Kirtland council later being included as section 5 in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (now Doctrine and Covenants 102). In addition, Oliver Cowdery received his appointment as Assistant President in December. Finally, the Church adopted a new name—The Church of the Latter Day Saints.

In his role as a visionary or a seer, he continued to experience visions—at least four—including the pattern and organization of Church councils (February), a vision of Adam (April), and two visions while on Zion's Camp (May–June). He also received at least five revelations, four which have been canonized (Doctrine and Covenants sections 103, 104, 105, and 106), and

one noncanonized revelation received on April 28, 1834. In his prophetic role he predicted that the Church would experience large numerical growth throughout the world, but particularly in North and South America.

It is impossible to measure the leadership experience or the Christlike attributes Joseph Smith gained or further developed from his Zion's Camp experience, the Philastus Hurbut trial, or the Sylvester Smith hearings—all trials of his personal faith. These are spiritual intangibles. However, in 1839, while incarcerated in Liberty Jail, the Lord revealed to him the principle that all of the events or happenings that make up our lives, whether positive or negative, "shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (Doctrine and Covenants 122:7). Surely all that Joseph Smith experienced in 1834 was for his good. Surely, he learned valuable gospel lessons—lessons regarding "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence" (Doctrine and Covenants 4:6). In short, the year 1834 was an important chapter in the life of Joseph Smith that further defined and refined him as a prophet-leader to the Latter-day Saints.

### *Notes*

1. Kirtland Council Minute Book, 29–30, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

2. On February 18, the day after the first council meeting, Joseph Smith made corrections to the minutes. Then, on February 19, a larger body of priesthood members met and by "unanimous voice" accepted the rewritten minutes as the "constitution of the high council of the Church of Christ" (Kirtland Council Minute Book, 36; see also Doctrine and Covenants 102:3, 10, 12).

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3. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book 1971), 1:446; hereafter cited as *History of the Church*.
4. R. W. Wells to Alexander W. Doniphan and David R. Atchison, November 21, 1833, in Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:444–45.
5. “To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri,” in Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:451–52.
6. John Corrill to Oliver Cowdery, December 1833, in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, January 1834, 126.
7. “Governor Dunklin to the Brethren in Missouri,” February 4, 1834, in Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:476–78.
8. W. W. Phelps to Joseph Smith, December 15, 1833, in Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:457.
9. “Minutes,” in Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:39.
10. See Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1831–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 173–74; Roger D. Launius, *Zion’s Camp: Expedition to Missouri, 1834* (Independence: Herald House, 1984), 33–39; and *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 87–92.
11. *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, vol. 2, *Journal, 1832–1842*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–1992), 21–27.
12. *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:27.
13. Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844*, ed. Elden J. Watson (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968), 8.
14. See George A. Smith, “My Journal,” *Instructor*, February 1946, 78; and Smith, “My Journal,” *Instructor*, April 1946, 195.
15. See Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: By the author, 1834).

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16. *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:29. Joseph Smith reported that Hurlbut was charged nearly three hundred dollars in court costs (*History of the Church*, 2:49). However, the actual amount was \$112.59 (*Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:29 n. 1).

17. Kirtland Council Minute Book, 44; see also Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:52.

18. Salt Lake City School of the Prophets Minute Book, 1883, October 11, 1883, 67, Church History Library. Joseph Smith's journal is the source for the date of the conference which took place on April 20–21, 1834 (*Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:30–32; Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:52–54).

19. The most commonly cited verses in the revelation are Doctrine and Covenants 104:14–18. For a detailed discussion of the United Firm in the context of Doctrine and Covenants section 104, see Max H. Parkin, "Joseph Smith and the United Firm," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 5–66.

20. The revelation reads: "Verily thus saith the Lord concerning the division and settlement of the United Firm. Let there be reserved three thousand Dollars for the right and claim of the Firm in Kirtland for inheritances in due time, even when the Lord will; and with this claim, to be had in remembrance when the Lord shall reveal it for a right of inheritance, ye are made free from the Firm of Zion; and the Firm in Zion is made free from the Firm in Kirtland: Thus saith the Lord. Amen" (Kirtland Revelation Book, 111).

21. Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 21, 28.

22. Wilford Woodruff, "Discourse by Wilford Woodruff," *Millennial Star*, October 5, 1891, 627–28.

23. Wilford Woodruff, Diary, April 27, 1834, Church History Library; published in *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–84), 1:9.

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Woodruff noted further in his journal: “It appeared to me there was more light made manifest in that meeting pertaining to the gospel and kingdom of God than I had ever received from the whole Sectarian world. The Prophet called the men together who were going up to Zion before leaving Kirtland [p. 4] [and] seal[ed] them up to eternal life.”

24. Wilford Woodruff, in *Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1898), 57. It is interesting to note that the April 1898 general conference would be Wilford Woodruff’s last (he died the following September) and that he would feel inclined on this occasion to share his recollections surrounding the first time he heard Joseph Smith preach.

25. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:61.

26. *The Evening and the Morning Star*, May 1834, 160. David Whitmer recalled that Rigdon was primarily responsible for changing the name from the Church of Christ to The Church of the Latter Day Saints (David Whitmer, *An Address to all Believers in Christ*, [Richmond, MO: By the Author: 1887], 73). Whitmer also said he objected to the name because it did not contain the name of Christ (Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 62, 74).

27. George A. Smith, *Autobiography*, 18, Church History Library.

28. “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons*, January 1, 1846, 1074; also Launius, *Zion’s Camp*, 51–52.

29. See Craig K. Manscill, “Journal of the Branch of the Church in Pontiac, 1834’: Hyrum Smith’s Division of Zion’s Camp,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 167–88. In Illinois, Charles C. Rich joined the Michigan group, bringing the total to eighteen.

30. See Andrea G. Radke, “We Also Marched: The Women and Children of Zion’s Camp,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 147–65.

31. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 93.



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32. Joseph Smith to Emma Hale Smith, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri; in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 340–41.

33. George A. Smith, “My Journal,” *Improvement Era*, May 1946, 217.

34. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 42.

35. Smith, “My Journal,” *Improvement Era*, May 1946, 217.

36. George A. Smith, “My Journal,” *Instructor*, April 1946, 184; Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:80.

37. Joseph Smith to Emma Hale Smith, July 4, 1834, Joseph Smith Letterbook 2, 56–58, Church History Library, published in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 344–46.

38. The best-known vision Joseph Smith received while on Zion’s Camp was the vision of Zelph (“History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons*, January 1, 1846, 1076; and *History of the Church*, 2:79–80). For a scholarly examination of the Zelph incident, see Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Zelph Story,” *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (1989): 31–56; and Kenneth W. Godfrey, “What Is the Significance of Zelph in the Study of Book of Mormon Geography?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 2 (1999): 71–79. Nathan Tanner reported another vision received by the Prophet while traveling with Zion’s Camp. He recorded: “I had the pleasure of seeing him [Joseph] in a vision when he saw the country over which we had traveled in a high state of cultivation. This was while he was riding, and when he camped, he had a wagon run out in the middle of the corral of wagons, and got up into it, and told the camp what he had seen while in the Spirit. It was glorious and grand to hear” (Nathan Tanner, *Reminiscences*, in George S. Tanner, *John Tanner and His Family* [Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1974], 382–83).

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39. *History of the Church*, 2:87–88. The figure for the total number of males who made up Zion’s Camp at the time the two companies merged at the Allred settlement varies. *History of the Church* states there were 205. Launius gives the figure of 208 (*Zion’s Camp*, 103). Milton V. Backman Jr. states there were 207 (*The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983], 185, see also Appendix A, 377).

40. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 94; see also *History of the Church*, 2:24.

41. See Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:102–5.

42. Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (London: S. W. Richards, 1853), 201.

43. See Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:114–20. The total number of cholera deaths given in most histories about Zion’s Camp is fourteen, and includes Gilbert, although as noted in the text, he was not a camp member. Phoebe Murdock’s death brought the total number of cholera victims to fifteen.

44. In 1958, Boyd Park, owner of some farm property on Rush Creek, found three human skeletons that had been kicked up by his cattle. Anatomical reports by the University of Missouri later confirmed the remains to have been those of members of Zion’s Camp. On March 25, 1976, the skeletons were reinterred in the Mound Grove Cemetery in Independence, Missouri (LaMar C. Berrett and others, eds., *Sacred Places*, vol. 4: *Missouri* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004], 200–201).

45. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:120.

46. Joseph Young, “History of the Organization of the Seventies,” as cited in Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:181 n.

47. See Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:122–24.

48. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:139.

49. In *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 13:158.

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50. Salt Lake High Council Record, 1869–1872, 83–84, Church History Library, as cited in Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 45–46.

51. In *Journal of Discourses*, 2:10.

52. Young, “History of the Organization of the Seventies,” as cited in Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:182 n.

53. The three who were not members of Zion’s Camp were Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, and John F. Boynton. Marsh and Patten were living in Clay County, which explains why they were not participants. Boynton was on a mission in Maine at the time Zion’s Camp left.

54. “Minutes of a Council Held at Kirtland, August 11, 1834,” Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:142–43. The statement or report issued by the council was subsequently published as “Conference Minutes” in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, August 1834, 182; see also Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:147–49.

55. The minutes of the August 28 hearing are published in Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:151–59.

56. Sylvester Smith to Oliver Cowdery, October 28, 1834, in *Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, October 1834, 10–11.

57. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:203. For a discussion of Joseph Smith’s relationship with Sylvester Smith, see Arnold K. Garr, “Joseph Smith: Man of Forgiveness,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 127–32.

58. Backman, *Heavens Resound*, 328.

59. Joseph Smith to Lyman Wight, Edward Partridge, John Corrill, Isaac Morley, and others, August 16, 1834, Joseph Smith Letter Book 1, 85, Church History Library; Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:145.

60. Backman, *Heavens Resound*, 156.

61. Backman, *Heavens Resound*, 268–70.

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62. See Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997, 2005), 1:32–34, 47–49.

63. For a brief discussion of Joseph Smith’s and Parley P. Pratt’s visit to Freedom, New York, in March 1834, see Mark A. Steele, “Finding Saints: Mormon Conversions in Freedom, New York,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 8, nos. 1–2 (Spring/Fall 2007): 42–43.

64. Manuscript History of the Church, A–1, 17, Church History Library. The document is in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery; see also *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:20–22; 2:36; and Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:176.

65. Blessing, Joseph Smith Sr. to Joseph Smith Jr., Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, 3–4, Church History Library.