



Type: Book Chapter

---

## Zion's Camp/"Marching to Missouri"

Author(s): Sharon Price Anderson

Source: *Praising the Prophet: Joseph Smith and the Restoration in History and Verse*

Published: Orem, UT; Time-Lines Etc., 2005

Pages: 43-46

---

## Zion's Camp

---

In June of 1831 the Lord directed Joseph to go to Missouri with Sidney Rigdon and twenty-eight other elders to preach the gospel and hold a conference of the Church.<sup>27</sup> On 20 July 1831 the Lord declared, "... this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion .... Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward...."<sup>28</sup>

Thrilled to have Zion's location identified, large numbers of Saints began moving to Missouri. As they settled in Jackson County, religious, political, and social differences created feelings of animosity among the original settlers. In July 1833 violence erupted as a mob of some 400 men destroyed the home and printing office of William W. Phelps, and tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge and Charles Allen. In the following weeks, crops were burned, homes destroyed, and many members of the Church severely beaten. By the end of the year the destitute Saints were driven from the county. Two months later the Lord told Joseph to organize a group of at least one hundred men to go from Kirtland to the land of Zion to help restore the Saints to their lands. The march of Zion's Camp began on 1 May 1834. Joseph led a group that would eventually number 207 men, 11 women, and 11 children to Clay County, where the Saints had found temporary refuge.

The march was very difficult, but the Lord protected them on their way. Wilford Woodruff reported,

The Lord delivered Zion's Camp from their enemies on the 19th of June, 1834, by piling up the

waters in Fishing River forty feet in one night, so our enemies could not cross. He also sent a great hailstorm, which broke them up and sent them seeking for shelter. James Campbell, who had threatened the life of the Prophet and his brethren, was drowned, with six others, the same night, after his threat.<sup>29</sup>

Zion's Camp was unable to return the displaced Saints to their homes, and members of the camp were formally discharged early in July. The expedition, however, was not a failure, for it prepared many future Church leaders for their callings. Nine of the original Twelve Apostles, the Seven Presidents of the Seventy and sixty-three other members of Seventy were called from among the faithful who marched with Joseph as members of Zion's Camp.<sup>30</sup>

## Marching to Missouri

---

Kirtland to Clay County,  
a thousand-mile sacrifice  
to rescue Zion—

Weeks of discomfort,  
hunger, thirst, cholera, heat  
test commitment.

With futile petitions  
and unused weapons,  
Israel's army of tens  
and fifties marches  
through uncertainty.

Joseph prays protection.

Storms of Providence  
gather blackness,  
hail heaven's fury.

Rising waters  
at Fishing River  
scatter mobs,  
stay the danger.

God fights their battles.

The company buries  
contention and complaint,  
consecrates their lives.

The faithful of this camp,  
obedient and seasoned,  
will firm the future  
of the Kingdom,  
certain that Zion will  
one day be redeemed.

*Therefore it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion. For behold, I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for, as I said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfil—I will fight your battles (D&C 105:13–14).*