
James Foster

1776–1846

D&C 124:138

In 1834 James enlisted in Zion’s Camp. On the journey to Missouri, he became ill. The Prophet Joseph Smith suggested he stay behind to recover. “Brother Joseph, let me go with you [even] if I die on the road,” he said. The Prophet recalled that “I told him in the name of the Lord, that if that was his faith, to go on his bed in the wagon, and he should get better every day until he recovered.”¹ Joseph asked the men of the camp to pray for James.² He recovered and completed the march.

At age sixty-one, James was appointed one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy. He is credited with knowing how to organize the Kirtland poor for their journey from Ohio to Missouri:

[James] declared that he saw a vision in which was shown unto him a company (he should think of about five hundred) starting from Kirtland and going up to Zion. That he saw them moving in order, encamping in order by the way, and that he knew thereby that it was the will of God that the quorum should go up in that manner. The Spirit bore record of the truth of his assertions for it rested down on the assembly in power.³

James joined the Kirtland poor on their journey to Missouri. However, on September 26, 1838, he abandoned the camp, claiming that they must “disband and break up the camp

¹ Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:88.

² James L. Bradley, *Zion’s Camp 1834: Prelude to the Civil War* (Logan, UT: James L. Bradley, 1990). 157.

³ Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:88–89.

in consequence of some [disturbing] rumors he had heard from the west which he said he believed."⁴

James and his family settled in DeWitt, Missouri, until religious persecution forced them to abandon their home and flee from the state, seeking safety. He and his family did not gather with the Saints in Nauvoo. Instead they settled in Jacksonville, Illinois, about a hundred miles from the city of the Saints.

On January 19, 1841, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation affirming that James, who was still residing in Jacksonville, was one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy (D&C 124:138–39). Three months later, James was asked to answer charges of impropriety that had been made against him. Unable to prove impropriety, James retained his position. At the October 1844 general conference, however, Brigham Young said, "The Seventies had dropped James Foster, and cut him off, and we need not take an action upon his case."⁵

James died on December 12, 1846, in Jacksonville, Illinois, at age seventy-one.

⁴ Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:144.

⁵ Smith, *History of the Church*, 7:297.