
Ezra Thayre

(1791–1862)

D&C 33; 52:22; 54: Introduction; 56:5, 8–9; 75:31

Ezra built bridges, dams, and mills in the greater Palmyra area before becoming a believer of the Book of Mormon after listening to Hyrum Smith preach. He wrote,

When Hyrum began to speak, every word touched me to the inmost soul. I thought every word was pointed to me. The tears rolled down my cheeks. When Hyrum got through, he picked up a book and said, “Here is the book of Mormon.” I said, “Let me see it.” I then opened the book, and I received a shock with such exquisite joy that no pen can write and no tongue can express. I shut the book and said, “What is the price of it?” “Fourteen shillings,” was the reply. I said, “I’ll take the book.” I opened it again, and I felt a double portion of the Spirit, that I did not know whether I was in the world or not. I felt as though I was truly in heaven.¹

Ezra was baptized in October 1830 by Parley P. Pratt and confirmed by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Although Ezra faced opposition from friends and family over his commitment to the Restoration, an appearance of an angel and other heavenly signs convinced him of the correctness of his religious choice.

A few days after Ezra entered baptismal waters, Joseph Smith received a revelation directing him and his neighbor Northrop Sweet to serve a mission (see D&C 33:1–2). On their missionary journey from New York to Ohio, Ezra and Northrop preached in several houses and baptized many into the Church of Christ.

¹ *Saints’ Herald*, July 1862, as cited in Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985): 47–48.

Ezra was in Kirtland, Ohio, in June 1831 and attended the fourth general conference of the Church. At the conference, he was ordained a high priest and called to serve a mission with Thomas B. Marsh (see D&C 52:22). He did not serve the assigned mission. The reason was his role in the controversy between Leman Copley and Joseph Smith over land in Thompson, Ohio. The Lord was not pleased with Ezra and told the Prophet Joseph—

My servant Ezra Thayre must repent of his pride, and of his selfishness, and obey the former commandment which I have given him concerning the place upon which he lives.

And if he will do this, as there shall be no divisions made upon the land, he shall be appointed still to go to the land of Missouri;

Otherwise he shall receive the money which he has paid, and shall leave the place, and shall be cut off out of my church, saith the Lord God of hosts (D&C 56:5, 8–10).

Ezra repented and on January 25, 1832, was again called to be the missionary companion of Thomas B. Marsh (see D&C 75:31). He fulfilled the mission assignment and one year later, acting in behalf of the Church, negotiated the purchase price of 103 acres of the Peter French farm. The purchase was most significant, for the Kirtland Temple was built on that property.

Other than his role in the purchase of the French farm, Ezra is most remembered for bringing the first court case before a high council. On February 19, 1834, he charged Elder Curtis Hodges Sr. with conduct “unbecoming in an Elder in this Church” by speaking too loud. Elder Hodges pleaded not guilty to the charges. “Brother Story testified that Elder Hodges talked so loud at a prayer meeting that the neighbors came out to see if some one was hurt.”² The Kirtland high council found Elder Hodges guilty as charged.

In May 1834 Ezra left Kirtland with Zion’s Camp. On May 29, 1834, when the horses in the camp became ill from eating moldy corn, Ezra administered his “18 x 24” remedy to the animals. Most recovered. When Zion’s Camp reached Fishing River on June 22, 1834, Ezra contracted cholera. To recover from the illness, “he went to the river and

² Minutes, 19 February 1834, 38. Joseph Smith Papers.

commenced dipping himself, and finding that it helped him, he continued until he was quite restored.”³

In May 1835 Ezra’s membership in the Church was suspended for “impropriety,” based on a complaint by Oliver Granger. The complaint was settled. In September 1835 Joseph Smith wrote, “My soul has desired the salvation of Brother Ezra Thayer.”⁴

Ezra moved with the Latter-day Saints from Kirtland to Missouri. He resided in Adam-ondi-Ahman and served on the high council in the area. When the Extermination Order was issued against the Saints in Missouri, Ezra fled from the state. Instead of joining the faithful, who crossed the Mississippi River and sought refuge in Quincy, Illinois, Ezra returned to New York.

On July 9, 1840, Heber C. Kimball spent the night in Ezra’s home in Rochester, New York, and wrote, “He was glad to see me, and inquired much about you [Joseph Smith] and the rest of the brethren: he seemed to be firm in the faith of the gospel and has much love for his brethren.”⁵ Jonathan Crosby expressed a different opinion of Ezra’s faithfulness: “He treated us well, but was dead spiritually.”⁶

Ezra never returned to the fellowship of the Saints. After the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, he refused to acknowledge the leadership of Brigham Young. By 1860 he was a resident of Michigan and a high priest in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

³ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, 225.

⁴ Wilford Woodruff Diary, February 19, 1842. Church History Library.

⁵ Heber C. Kimball, “Epistle to Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 6 (April 1, 1845): 861.

⁶ Jonathan Crosby Autobiography, 23–24. Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.