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# John Johnson

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1778–1843

D&C 96:6-7; 102:3; 104:24, 34

In 1818 John Johnson moved his family from Vermont to Hiram, Ohio. He purchased a hundred-acre farm and prospered. By 1830 he owned a 304-acre estate, on which was situated a farmhouse that was the envy of neighbors near and far. He affiliated with the Methodists in Hiram until hearing of the Restoration and the Prophet Joseph Smith. With his wife, Elsa Johnson, and Methodist minister, Ezra Booth, Father Johnson went to Kirtland specifically to meet Joseph Smith. While the Johnsons and Ezra Booth were conversing with the Prophet about the Restoration and doctrines of the new faith, Elsa was healed of chronic rheumatism. According to the *History of the Church*,

During the interview the conversation turned on the subject of supernatural gifts, such as were conferred in the days of the apostles. Someone said, "Here is Mrs. Johnson with a lame arm; has God given any power to man now on the earth to cure her?" A few moments later, when the conversation had turned in another direction, [Joseph] Smith rose, and walking across the room, taking Mrs. Johnson by the hand, said in the most solemn and impressive manner: "Woman, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command thee to be whole," and immediately left the room. Elsa was instantly healed, and the next day she did her washing "without difficulty or pain."<sup>1</sup>

Her miraculous healing led John and Elsa Johnson and Ezra Booth to enter baptismal waters, as well as Father Johnson's sons Lyman and Luke.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:215–216.

Thrilled at their new faith, the Johnsons extended an offer of hospitality to the Prophet Joseph and his family to live with them in Hiram. Joseph viewed their offer as the answer to the Lord's instruction to "seek them a home, as they are taught through prayer by the Spirit" (D&C 63:65). For six months, Joseph and his family resided in the Johnson home in Hiram. Their peaceful existence ended on March 24, 1832, when Joseph was taken from the Johnson home by a mob and tarred and feathered.

Following the cruel incident, Father Johnson sold his property in Hiram and moved to Kirtland to be near the Prophet. In the city of the Saints, he operated an inn near the N. K. Whitney and Co. Store. In the inn, John displayed the mummies and papyri purchased for the Prophet from Michael Chandler.

On February 17, 1833, John was ordained an elder and on June 4, 1833, a high priest. The Lord promised him "eternal life inasmuch as he keep my commandments from henceforth—for he is a descendant of Joseph and a partaker of the blessings of the promise made unto the fathers" (D&C 96:6-7).

Beginning in February 1834, John served on the Kirtland High Council (see D&C 102:3). For the next three years, he gave faithful service on that council. In addition, he provided funds needed to purchase the Peter French properties in Kirtland. On a portion of those properties, the Kirtland Temple was built.

By 1837 John faced a major financial downturn. He was involved in a number of lawsuits claiming he owed money for nonpayment of private loans. The failure of the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company, of which he was a stockholder, added to his financial distress. As his pecuniary problems mounted, John blamed Joseph Smith for his trials. Unable to reconcile his financial losses with the Restoration, he lost faith in the Restoration and joined with dissidents claiming Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet. With such an attitude, it is not surprising that on September 3, 1837, John's continuing service on the Kirtland High Council was "objected to."<sup>2</sup>

Father Johnson died on July 30, 1843, in Kirtland, at age sixty-five. He was buried in the cemetery near the Kirtland Temple.

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<sup>2</sup> Minutes, 3 September 1837, 236. Joseph Smith Papers.