



---

# John Murdock

---

1792–1871

D&C 52:8; 99

In his youth, John was drawn to prayer and meditation. One evening as he was meditating, “a vision passed before my mind,” he wrote. “[A] question put to me was if I had commemorated the death and sufferings of the Savior, by obeying the ordinances.”<sup>1</sup> The query led him on a quest to find a religion that believed and practiced gospel ordinances.

John joined the Lutheran Dutch Church but “soon found they did not walk according to the scriptures.” He next affiliated with the Presbyterian Seceder Church, but “I soon became dissatisfied with their walk, for I saw it was not according to the scriptures.” He then turned to the Baptists, but “finding their walk not to agree with their profession, I withdrew myself from them.” This was followed by a brief attachment to the Methodists. But he found that “when I did not please them I would have to be silent among them awhile.” He then joined the Campbellites, but as they denied the “gift and power of the

---

<sup>1</sup> John Murdock Journal, typescript, 3. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

Holy Ghost," John lost interest in their religious society. By 1830 he reached the conclusion that "all the sects were out of the way."<sup>2</sup>

In the winter of 1830, John learned that missionaries, sent to the borders of the Lamanites, had stopped in Kirtland and were "preaching, baptizing, and building up the church after the ancient order." He journeyed to Kirtland to hear for himself the Restoration message of the missionaries. In Kirtland he met the missionaries and was given a Book of Mormon. As he read the Book of Mormon, "the spirit of the Lord rested on me, witnessing to me of the truth of the work," John wrote. "About ten o'clock [the next] morning, being November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1830, I told the servants of the Lord that I was ready to walk with them into the water of baptism." John was baptized on November 5, 1830, by Parley P. Pratt. Although he had entered baptismal waters three times before, he wrote of this baptism, "I never before felt the authority of the ordinance, but I felt it this time and felt as though my sins were forgiven."<sup>3</sup>

On April 30, 1831, his wife, Julia Murdock, died after giving birth to twins. John gave his newborn twins, Joseph and Julia Murdock, to Joseph and Emma Smith to rear. Soon thereafter, John journeyed with Hyrum Smith to Missouri (see D&C 52:8-9). On the journey he "took a violent cold by which I suffered near unto death," he wrote. "[But] I could not die because my work was not yet done."<sup>4</sup>

In the winter of 1832–33. John had a vision of the Savior Jesus Christ:

I saw the form of a man, most lovely, the visage of his face was sound and fair as the sun. His hair a bright silver grey, curled in most majestic form. His eyes a keen penetrating blue, and the skin of his neck a most beautiful white and he was covered from the neck to the feet with a loose garment, pure white, whiter than any garment I have ever before seen. His countenance was most penetrating, and yet most lovely.<sup>5</sup>

John marched with Zion's Camp to Missouri and served as a high councilman in Clay County and Far West. He was persecuted for his religious beliefs and threatened by armed men. As religious persecution in Missouri intensified, John and his family moved to

---

<sup>2</sup> John Murdock Journal, 3–5.

<sup>3</sup> John Murdock Journal, 8

<sup>4</sup> John Murdock Journal, 10.

<sup>5</sup> John Murdock Journal, 12.

Illinois. When the mob element in Illinois became ever more threatening, John and his family joined the Latter-day Saint exodus to Iowa and from there to the Salt Lake Valley.

In 1851 John journeyed nearly eight thousand miles to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in Australia. After two years, he wrote, "I do not feel able to remain here. ... We have experienced great inconvenience for want of Books of Mormon, Doc. and Cov., Voice of Warnings, and Hymn Books."<sup>6</sup> In an October 14, 1852, letter, President Brigham Young released John from his missionary labors: "Return in peace. Your Mission is accomplished and others are on the way to follow up and build upon the foundation which you have laid. ... Therefore, rest satisfied, and come home to Zion and dwell in the midst of the people of God."<sup>7</sup>

John returned to his family in the Salt Lake Valley. At the time of his return, he was very ill. He wrote, "I find my whole system, nerves and lungs much affected. My limbs palsied and my blood cankered."<sup>8</sup> He advised that none of his sons—

be exempt from providing for me and my family; neither for any of them to be deprived of the privilege for I wanted my blessing to rest on them all, consequently I wanted them all to feel the obligation and enjoy the privilege of seeing that I was taken care of, that the blessing of the Lord and my blessing might rest on them all.<sup>9</sup>

John was ordained a patriarch on April 9, 1854, by Heber C. Kimball. For the next thirteen years, he gave many patriarchal blessings before his death on December 23, 1871, at age seventy-nine.

---

<sup>6</sup> Reva Baker Holt, "A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock," (1965), 11. Church History Library.

<sup>7</sup> John Murdock Journal, 12.

<sup>8</sup> John Murdock Journal, 13.

<sup>9</sup> John Murdock Journal, 13.