

SECTION 10 (MODERN D&C 29)

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 1835 Edition | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

This revelation, given in September 1830 in the presence of six elders, serves as a foundational eschatological text for early Mormonism. It identifies Jesus Christ as the speaker who is gathering His people 'as a hen gathereth her chickens.' The text establishes the immediate mandate for the 'gathering of mine elect' to a specific geographic location ('this land') to prepare for impending tribulation. It details a premillennial timeline involving signs in the heavens, the destruction of the 'great and abominable church,' and a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Theologically, it introduces distinct Latter-day Saint concepts regarding the Fall of Adam: that the Fall was a necessary step for humanity to exercise agency ('if they never should have bitter, they could not know the sweet') and that spiritual creation preceded physical creation. Furthermore, it explicitly denies the doctrine of Original Sin regarding infants, asserting that children are redeemed from the foundation of the world and Satan is powerless to tempt them until they reach the age of accountability.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Great I AM), The Father, The Twelve Apostles (Biblical), Michael (Archangel), Adam, Satan

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. INNOCENCE OF CHILDREN

Assertion: Little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world and cannot sin; Satan has no power to tempt them until they are accountable.

"little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world... Wherefore they cannot sin, for power is not given unto satan to tempt little children"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical theology, grounded in Psalm 51:5 and Romans 5:12-21, teaches that all humans inherit a sin nature from Adam (Original Sin) and are by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). This text asserts that children are born innocent and incapable of sinning until a specific age of accountability. It posits that Satan is ontologically restricted from tempting them, a concept absent from the Bible.

2. NECESSARY OPPOSITION (THEODICY)

Assertion: Evil and temptation are necessary for agency to exist; Adam had to fall to know good from evil.

"it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves, for if they never should have bitter, they could not know the sweet."

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical thought, free will existed before the Fall, and the Fall was a tragic abuse of that freedom resulting in death. This text argues that without the presence of the devil and the experience of 'bitter,' humans could not be agents at all. This moves the origin of evil from a corruption of the good to a necessary component of spiritual progression.

3. GEOGRAPHIC GATHERING

Assertion: The elect must be physically gathered to a specific location in America.

"gathered in unto one place, upon the face of this land... against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth"

Evangelical Comparison: The New Testament describes the church as a spiritual body spread across all nations (Acts 1:8). This text mandates a physical gathering to 'this land' (America) as a refuge from judgment, blending Zion theology with American exceptionalism.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While sharing eschatological urgency with 19th-century revivalism, this text introduces a fundamental theological rupture. By asserting that children 'cannot sin' and that Satan is restrained by divine

decree from tempting them, it dismantles the biblical doctrine of the Adamic nature (Romans 5). Furthermore, the assertion that Adam's fall was necessary for agency ('if they never should have bitter, they could not know the sweet') contradicts the biblical narrative where agency existed prior to the Fall. Finally, the conditional nature of the atonement's efficacy ('my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not') introduces a works-righteousness framework distinct from Sola Fide.

Shared Values:

Belief in the Second Coming of Christ; Necessity of repentance; Reality of Satan and spiritual warfare; Resurrection of the dead

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Anthropology (Doctrine of Man) – Denial of Original Sin; assertion that children are born without a sin nature.
2. [Major] Hamartiology (Doctrine of Sin) – Sin/Fall viewed as a necessary step for knowledge and agency rather than a rebellion against God.
3. [Major] Ecclesiology – The Church is defined by a physical gathering to a specific land rather than the universal body of believers.

Semantic Warnings:

"Elect"

In Text: Those who hear the voice of the modern prophet and physically gather to the American Zion.

Evangelical: Those chosen by God for salvation (Ephesians 1:4), not contingent on geographic location.

Example: *In this text, the 'elect' are those who move to 'one place' to escape destruction.*

"Spiritual"

In Text: A state of existence that precedes the temporal; matter that is refined or eternal.

Evangelical: Pertaining to the spirit or Holy Spirit; often contrasted with 'flesh' or 'worldliness' (Galatians 5:17).

Example: *The text claims 'all things unto me are spiritual,' blurring the Creator/creature distinction found in traditional theology.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Resurrection to glory (clothed even as I am), dwelling with Christ for 1000 years, and escaping the burning of the wicked.

How Attained: Through faith, repentance, baptism, and specifically 'hearing' the voice of the Lord (obedience to the revelation).

Basis of Assurance: Conditional on 'sinning no more' and gathering with the elect.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text explicitly states: 'my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not.' This places the efficacy of the blood of Christ contingent upon human obedience/response, contradicting the sufficiency of the cross (Hebrews 10:14).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ
2. Humble themselves
3. Call upon God in mighty prayer
4. Sin no more
5. Declare the gospel with the sound of rejoicing
6. Bring to pass the gathering of the elect

Implicit Obligations:

1. Physically relocate to the designated gathering place
2. Accept the authority of the 'six elders' present

3. Prepare for imminent apocalyptic destruction

Ritual Requirements:

1. Prayer (united)
2. Baptism (implied by 'repentance and redemption')

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The text says children 'cannot sin' because Satan cannot tempt them. How does this fit with the idea that we all need a Savior from birth?
2. If the Fall was necessary for us to have agency ('bitter to know the sweet'), does that mean God needed evil to accomplish His plan?
3. Verse 4 says Christ's blood will not cleanse those who do not hear Him. How do you interpret that in light of Jesus saying 'It is finished' on the cross?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Hen and Chickens – This is a beautiful image of Christ's desire to protect and save. It shows His heart for the lost. [Matthew 23:37 - Jesus weeps over Jerusalem with this same image, showing His willingness to save even those who reject Him.]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Perfectionism/Fear [Severe] – The command to 'sin no more, lest perils shall come upon you' creates a direct link between personal performance and physical safety/salvation.
2. Works-Righteousness [Severe] – The statement that Christ's blood will not cleanse those who do not 'hear' (obey) places the burden of activating the Atonement on the believer's obedience.
3. Apocalyptic Anxiety [Moderate] – The graphic descriptions of flesh falling off bones and maggots eating flesh create a fear-based motivation for compliance and gathering.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Direct revelation through the prophet/seer.

Verification Method: Adherents are to 'hearken' and 'humble themselves' to receive the truth; the fulfillment of the predicted signs serves as confirmation.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the illuminated understanding of the written Word (2 Timothy 3:16) and the testing of spirits against Scripture (1 John 4:1). This text demands acceptance based on the immediate voice of the revealer.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: September 1830

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: This text (Section 10 in 1835) was re-numbered to Section 29 in later editions (1876 onwards). It reflects early Mormon eschatology before the full development of temple ordinances.