

SECTION 24 (MODERN D&C 65)

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

OVERVIEW

This text, originally received in October 1831 and cataloged as Section 24 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (Section 65 in modern editions), serves as a declarative prayer and prophecy regarding the destiny of the Latter-day Saint movement. It asserts that the 'keys of the kingdom of God' have been committed to man on earth—specifically implying Joseph Smith and his associates. The text explicitly interprets the prophecy in Daniel 2 (the stone cut out of the mountain without hands) as being fulfilled by the establishment of the LDS Church, which is prophesied to 'roll forth' until it fills the whole earth. It establishes a theological distinction between the 'Kingdom of God' (the ecclesiastical organization on earth) and the 'Kingdom of Heaven' (the celestial reign of Christ), arguing that the former must be built up to prepare for the latter. The text concludes with a petition for the spread of this earthly kingdom so that the Second Coming of Christ may occur.

KEY FIGURES

God/Jehovah, The Son of Man (Jesus Christ), The Holder of the Keys (Implicitly Joseph Smith), The Bridegroom

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. RESTORATION OF PRIESTHOOD KEYS

Assertion: The authority to administer God's kingdom has been physically committed to men on earth in the modern era.

"The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the 'keys' mentioned in Matthew 16:19 represent the authority of the church to preach the Gospel and declare the terms of forgiveness (binding and loosing) based on Scripture. This authority resides in the universal church and the priesthood of all believers. This text, however, asserts a specific, exclusive transfer of authority ('committed unto man') that implies a previous absence (apostasy) and a necessary restoration through Joseph Smith. This creates a hierarchical mediation where access to God's kingdom is contingent upon the authority held by the LDS prophet.

2. ECCLESIOLOGICAL DUALISM (KINGDOM OF GOD VS. HEAVEN)

Assertion: The 'Kingdom of God' is the earthly church organization, which must be built up to meet the 'Kingdom of Heaven' (Christ) at the Second Coming.

"meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth: wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come"

Evangelical Comparison: This text creates a functional dichotomy: the 'Kingdom of God' is identified as the institutional LDS Church established on earth, while the 'Kingdom of Heaven' is the future celestial reality. The text argues that the return of Christ (Kingdom of Heaven) is contingent upon the success and expansion of the earthly organization (Kingdom of God). Evangelical theology rejects the idea that the return of Christ is contingent upon the organizational success of a specific denomination; rather, the Kingdom is the spiritual reign of God in the hearts of believers (Luke 17:21) and the cosmic reign to be established solely by Christ's power, not human organizational effort.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While both traditions pray 'Thy Kingdom Come,' the definitions differ radically. For the Evangelical, the Kingdom is the spiritual rule of Christ accessible to all believers immediately through faith (Sola Fide) and the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9). For the adherent of this text, the Kingdom is a specific ecclesiastical structure restored through Joseph Smith. The gap is ecclesiological and soteriological: in this text, the 'keys' (authority) are necessary for the 'gospel to roll forth,' implying that without this specific restoration, the Gospel was not effectively present or operative on the earth, denying the continuity of Christ's church (Matthew 16:18).

Shared Values:

Belief in the Second Coming of Christ; Importance of prayer; Desire to see God glorified; Belief in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy

Friction Points:

1. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Asserts that 'keys' are committed to specific men (hierarchy) rather than the church universal.
2. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds a new revelation that authoritatively interprets Daniel 2 and mandates new practices.
3. [Major] Christology – Shifts focus from Christ as the 'stone' (1 Peter 2:4-8) to the Church/Kingdom as the 'stone'.

Semantic Warnings:

"Keys of the Kingdom"

In Text: Specific priesthood authority restored to Joseph Smith to administer ordinances and govern the church.

Evangelical: Authority given to the Apostles and the church to preach the gospel and declare forgiveness based on Christ's work (Matt 16:19).

Example: *In this text, 'keys' implies institutional control; in the Bible, 'keys' implies the opening of the door of faith to the nations (Acts 10).*

"Kingdom of God"

In Text: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the earthly organization).

Evangelical: The spiritual reign of God in the hearts of his people and his sovereign rule over creation.

Example: *The text says the Kingdom of God (Church) meets the Kingdom of Heaven (Christ); Evangelicals see the Church as the body of Christ, not a separate entity meeting Him.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to the success of the 'Kingdom of God' (the Church) and preparation for the Second Coming.

How Attained: Through the 'keys' committed to man—implying that ordinances administered by this authority are necessary.

Basis of Assurance: Confidence is placed in the rolling forth of the church and the validity of the restored keys.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text emphasizes 'preparing,' 'making ready,' and 'working' for the kingdom, contrasting with the rest found in Sola Fide where Christ has already prepared the way (John 14:2-3).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Harken to the voice
2. Prepare the way of the Lord
3. Make his paths straight
4. Pray unto the Lord
5. Call upon his holy name
6. Make known his wonderful works among the people

Implicit Obligations:

1. Acknowledge the authority of those holding the 'keys'
2. Actively proselytize to ensure the 'stone' fills the earth
3. Align with the institutional 'Kingdom of God' (LDS Church)

Ritual Requirements:

1. Prayer (specifically for the growth of the church)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In this section, the 'stone' from Daniel 2 is identified as the Kingdom of God on earth. How do you interpret passages like 1 Peter 2:4 which call Jesus the 'living stone'?
2. The text says the 'keys' are committed to man. Do you believe salvation is possible for someone who doesn't submit to the specific men holding those keys?
3. If the 'Kingdom of God' is the church organization, does that mean the church must be perfect before Christ can return?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Longing for God's Reign – The text expresses a deep desire for God to fix the world and for Jesus to return. This aligns with the Christian hope. [Revelation 22:20 ('Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.')]]
2. Preparation for the Bridegroom – We both agree we must be ready for Christ. The difference is **how** we are made ready—by our works/church building, or by being clothed in His righteousness. [Revelation 19:8 (The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints, given by God)]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Institutional Pressure [Moderate] – The believer carries the weight of the prophecy; if the church does not 'fill the earth,' it can be perceived as a failure of the members' missionary efforts. The success of God's plan is made contingent on human performance.
2. Mediated Access [Severe] – By asserting keys are held by specific men, the believer is dependent on the hierarchy for access to the 'Kingdom of Heaven.' This removes the direct assurance of access to the Throne of Grace (Hebrews 4:16).

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation

Verification Method: Internal spiritual witness of the text's divine origin and the authority of the revelator.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the objective standard of the completed Bible (2 Timothy 3:16). This text relies on the subjective authority of a modern prophet claiming to speak for God, requiring faith in the messenger (Joseph Smith) alongside faith in God.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: October 1831

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: This section is an inspired prayer/revelation. In the 1835 edition, it is Section 24; in modern editions, it is Section 65.