

SECTION 28 (MODERN D&C 69)

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

OVERVIEW

This revelation, given through Joseph Smith in November 1831, addresses immediate logistical and administrative concerns of the early Latter-day Saint movement. The text directs John Whitmer to accompany Oliver Cowdery on a journey to 'the land of Zion' (Independence, Missouri). The stated rationale is that it is 'not wisdom' for Cowdery to be entrusted alone with the church's money and the manuscripts of revelations (the 'commandments') intended for publication. Additionally, the revelation formally installs John Whitmer as the church historian, commanding him to travel, preach, and record 'all the important things' concerning the church. It establishes Zion as the central repository for these records and stewardship reports. The text elevates administrative decisions—such as travel companions and record-keeping—to the status of divine command, reinforcing the role of the prophet in managing the minutiae of church operations.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Speaker), Joseph Smith (Revelator), Oliver Cowdery (Carrier of funds/manuscripts), John Whitmer (Historian/Chaperone)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE GATHERING TO ZION

Assertion: Zion (Missouri) is the central seat where church administration, records, and stewardship accounts must be gathered.

"for the land of Zion shall be a seat and a place to receive and do all these things"

Evangelical Comparison: In this text, 'Zion' is not merely a spiritual metaphor for the people of God or the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22), but a specific geographic location in Missouri functioning as an administrative headquarters. The text asserts that stewardship accounts and historical records must be physically sent there. This contrasts sharply with the Evangelical understanding of the Church as a universal, spiritual body without a central earthly shrine or command center, based on Jesus' teaching in John 4:21-24 that true worship is not bound to a specific mountain or city.

2. DIVINE MICROMANAGEMENT

Assertion: God dictates specific administrative personnel decisions, such as travel companions for transporting funds.

"it is not wisdom in me, that he should be entrusted with the commandments and the moneys... except one go with him"

Evangelical Comparison: The text presents God as directly intervening in the logistical details of the church, specifically regarding who carries money. In Evangelical theology, such decisions are typically matters of wisdom, prudence, and church polity (Acts 6:3), rather than direct 'Thus saith the Lord' revelation. By canonizing this instruction, Mormonism blurs the line between administrative prudence and eternal law, creating a precedent where the prophet's management decisions are indistinguishable from divine decrees.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental theological gap lies in the nature of revelation. Evangelical Christianity holds to *Sola Scriptura*, believing the canon is closed and sufficient for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This text demonstrates the Mormon concept of 'living oracles,' where the current prophet's administrative decisions regarding travel and money are canonized as the voice of God. Furthermore, the text establishes a geographic centralization of the faith ('Zion' in Missouri) which contradicts the New Testament teaching of a spiritual kingdom not of this world (John 18:36).

Shared Values:

Financial integrity/accountability.; The value of history and record-keeping.; The need for wisdom in handling resources.

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – The text adds a 19th-century travel itinerary and job description to the canon of scripture.
2. [Major] Theology Proper (God's Nature) – Depicts God as a micromanager of funds and travel plans rather than the transcendent Creator revealing redemptive truth.

Semantic Warnings:

"Zion"

In Text: A literal city to be built in Independence, Missouri, serving as the church headquarters.

Evangelical: The dwelling place of God; often refers to Jerusalem, the Church, or the heavenly city (Hebrews 12:22).

Example: *In this text, accounts are sent 'to the land of Zion' (Missouri); in the Bible, believers come to 'Mount Zion... the heavenly Jerusalem' (Hebrews 12:22).*

"Stewardship"

In Text: A specific assignment or office within the church hierarchy requiring reporting to superiors.

Evangelical: The responsibility of a believer to manage God's gifts faithfully (1 Peter 4:10).

Example: *Here, stewardship involves sending written accounts to a central location; biblically, it is a spiritual accountability primarily to God.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to building Zion and obeying the prophet's administrative commands.

How Attained: Through faithfulness to assignments (stewardships) and gathering to Zion.

Basis of Assurance: Successful completion of church duties and approval from leadership.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text focuses entirely on works (traveling, writing, reporting) with no mention of faith in Christ's finished work as the basis for standing with God.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. John Whitmer must travel with Oliver Cowdery to Zion.
2. John Whitmer must keep a history of the church.
3. John Whitmer must preach and expound while traveling.
4. Servants abroad must send stewardship accounts to Zion.

Implicit Obligations:

1. Adherents must accept the centralization of authority in Zion.
2. Financial transparency is required (implied by the check on Oliver).
3. Church history is to be viewed as sacred/essential.

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. Why do you think the Lord felt it wasn't 'wisdom' to trust Oliver Cowdery alone with the money?
2. How does it impact your view of scripture to see administrative details like travel companions canonized alongside doctrines of salvation?
3. In verse 2, stewardship reports are sent to Zion. How does this compare to the biblical idea that we will give an account directly to God (Romans 14:12)?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Need for Accountability – The text acknowledges that even high-ranking religious leaders are prone to temptation (theft/mismanagement). This aligns with the biblical truth of universal sinfulness. [Romans 3:23 - 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.]
2. The Desire for Remembrance – The desire to record God's dealings is holy. The Bible is a record of God's intervention in history. [Psalm 77:11 - 'I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Bureaucratic Legalism [Moderate] – The believer feels that spiritual standing is tied to administrative reporting and the fulfillment of logistical tasks, creating a 'corporate' feel to their relationship with God.
2. Institutional Dependency [Severe] – By locating authority and 'knowledge' in a specific place (Zion) and hierarchy, the believer is disempowered from seeking God directly, relying instead on the institution.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Direct revelation through the Prophet; for Whitmer, observation and travel.

Verification Method: Obedience to the revelation; Whitmer is to 'obtain knowledge' through experience and travel.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the illumination of the written Word (Bible) by the Holy Spirit (Psalm 119:105), rather than new oracular utterances regarding logistics.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: November 1831

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: This section is numbered 28 in the 1835 edition but appears as Section 69 in modern editions of the Doctrine and Covenants.