

SECTION 37

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

OVERVIEW

This revelation, delivered by Joseph Smith to his brother Hyrum Smith in May 1829 (historically known as D&C 11 in modern editions), captures a pivotal moment prior to the formal organization of the LDS Church. The text presents Jesus Christ speaking directly to Hyrum, instructing him regarding his desire to engage in missionary work. The core argument of the text is a restraint on immediate evangelism; Hyrum is commanded to 'wait a little longer' until he has obtained 'my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel'-specifically referring to the completion of the Book of Mormon translation. The text establishes a prerequisite for ministry: one must first 'obtain' the word (study the new revelation) before seeking to declare it. It also outlines a subjective epistemology, defining the Spirit's presence as that which enlightens the mind and fills the soul with joy, and posits salvation as something to be 'treasured up' through labor, contrasting with the evangelical understanding of finished atonement.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Speaker), Hyrum Smith (The Recipient), Joseph Smith (The Revelator/Translator)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. OPEN CANON / INSUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE

Assertion: The Bible alone is insufficient for preaching the full gospel; the 'word' must be obtained through the new translation (Book of Mormon) before one is qualified to preach.

"wait a little longer, until you shall have my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel... study my word which hath gone forth... and also study my word which shall come forth... or that which is now translating (v8, v10)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the 'Gospel' is fully contained in the canonical scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) and is sufficient for salvation and ministry (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This text asserts that Hyrum Smith, despite having access to the Bible ('word which hath gone forth'), does not yet have 'my gospel' or 'my rock' until the Book of Mormon ('word which shall come forth') is translated. This creates a theological dependency on Joseph Smith's revelations for the complete definition of the Gospel.

2. SALVATION BY ACCUMULATION

Assertion: Salvation is a reward that is 'treasured up' through the labor of the harvest.

"thrust in his sickle with his might... that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God (v2)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelicalism teaches that salvation is a gift received by faith, not a wage earned by work (Romans 4:4-5). This text uses the language of 'treasuring up' salvation as a direct result of 'thrusting in the sickle.' While the Bible speaks of rewards for service, it distinguishes these from salvation itself. This text conflates the two, suggesting that the act of ministry contributes to the security of one's eternal life.

3. AFFECTIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

Assertion: Truth and the Spirit are identified by positive emotional states (joy) and mental enlightenment.

"I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy, and then shall ye know (v7)"

Evangelical Comparison: The Bible commands believers to test spirits (1 John 4:1) and verify claims against the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). While the Holy Spirit does produce joy (Galatians 5:22), Evangelicalism rejects using emotional response as the primary verification method for doctrinal truth. This text establishes the 'burning in the bosom' method where positive feelings confirm the truth of the proposition.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While the text uses familiar Christian language (repentance, Jesus, Spirit), it fundamentally alters the structure of authority and salvation. By commanding Hyrum to wait for the 'new' word before he can know 'my gospel' (v8), the text denies the sufficiency of the Bible. Furthermore, the soteriological framework presented in verse 2 ('treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation' via labor) introduces a merit-based system that is incompatible with the Evangelical doctrine of Sola Fide, where salvation is a gift of grace, not a wage for harvesting.

Shared Values:

Desire to do good; Call to repentance; Rejection of seeking riches; Jesus as the Light of the World

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Asserts the Bible is insufficient without the 'word which shall come forth' (Book of Mormon).
2. [Major] Sola Fide – Suggests salvation is 'treasured up' (accumulated/secured) by the work of the harvest.
3. [Major] Theology Proper (Pneumatology) – Reduces the Holy Spirit to a mechanism of emotional confirmation.

Semantic Warnings:

"My Gospel"

In Text: The combined teaching of the Bible AND the Book of Mormon (v8, v10).

Evangelical: The good news of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for sin (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Example: *When the text says 'wait... that you may know of a surety my doctrine,' it implies the Bible alone did not provide surety of the doctrine.*

"Spirit"

In Text: A force or influence that produces positive emotions (joy) and mental clarity (enlightenment).

Evangelical: The Third Person of the Trinity, God Himself, who convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

Example: *In v7, the Spirit is identified by the feeling of joy it produces, rather than its alignment with objective truth.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God, framed as a reward to be 'treasured up'.

How Attained: By thrusting in the sickle (missionary work), keeping commandments, and assisting the work.

Basis of Assurance: Subjective feelings of joy and the performance of duties.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text explicitly links the acquisition of salvation to the action of 'reaping' (v2), violating the principle that work is the fruit, not the root, of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Give heed to my word (v1)
2. Thrust in his sickle with his might (v2)
3. Seek not for riches but for wisdom (v3)
4. Say nothing but repentance unto this generation (v4)
5. Wait a little longer before preaching (v8)
6. Study the word now translating (Book of Mormon) (v10)
7. Deny not the Spirit of revelation (v11)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's translation work as equal to the Bible

2. Rely on internal feelings to validate external truth claims
3. Prioritize the establishment of 'Zion' over personal pursuits

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 8, Hyrum is told to wait until he has 'my gospel.' Since Hyrum already had the Bible, what does this suggest about the Mormon view of the Bible's sufficiency?
2. Verse 2 mentions 'treasuring up salvation' by thrusting in the sickle. How do you interpret the relationship between your missionary work and your personal salvation?
3. Verse 7 describes the Spirit as 'filling your soul with joy.' Have you ever experienced joy from something that turned out not to be true? How do we distinguish the Holy Spirit from our own emotions?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Desire to Do Good – The text acknowledges a universal human desire to be 'good' and 'just.' This aligns with the law written on the heart (Romans 2:15), but the Gospel answers the problem that we fail to meet this standard. [Romans 7:18-25 (The desire is present, but the ability is not–pointing to the need for Christ).]
2. The Word as a Sword – The Word of God exposes our innermost thoughts and needs, showing us we cannot save ourselves. [Hebrews 4:12]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Uncertainty/Insufficiency [Moderate] – The believer is told the Bible they hold is not enough; they must master a new, complex set of scriptures (BoM/D&C) to truly understand God's will, creating a perpetual dependency on the institution for truth.
2. Performance/Works-Righteousness [Severe] – The text links 'everlasting salvation' to the intensity of one's labor ('thrust in his sickle with his might'). This creates anxiety that if one does not work hard enough, their salvation is not 'treasured up.'
3. Subjective Instability [Moderate] – By anchoring truth in emotional 'joy,' the believer is left vulnerable during times of depression, grief, or spiritual dryness, potentially interpreting negative emotions as a loss of truth or God's favor.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Subjective Revelation (The Spirit defined as enlightenment/joy).

Verification Method: Adherents verify truth by observing if the message 'enlightens the mind' and 'fills the soul with joy' (v7).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the objective standard of God's written Word (Psalm 119:105, 2 Timothy 3:16). Feelings are fluctuating and deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), whereas this text elevates feelings to the status of verification.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: May 1829

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: This revelation was received before the church was organized. In the 1835 edition, it is Section 37; in modern editions, it is Section 11. The text assumes the voice of Jesus but is filtered through Joseph's 19th-century restorationist vocabulary.