

SECTION 64

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

OVERVIEW

This revelation, historically dated to March 1831 (cataloged as Section 48 in modern editions but Section 64 in the 1835 edition), addresses the logistical and theological crisis of the 'gathering.' As converts from New York ('eastern brethren') arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith issued this text to manage their settlement. The text serves two primary functions: First, it establishes a temporary communal economy where established local members are commanded to 'impart' land to the new arrivals. Second, it reorients the community's focus toward a future, permanent location ('the city'). The text explicitly commands the accumulation of wealth ('save all the money that ye can') not for personal enrichment, but to purchase land for this future Zion. It reinforces the hierarchical structure, placing the logistics of the gathering and the revelation of the city's location solely in the hands of the 'presidency and the bishop,' while promising future commandments, thereby reinforcing the concept of an open, developing canon.

KEY FIGURES

The Presidency (Joseph Smith and counselors), The Bishop (Edward Partridge), Eastern Brethren (New York Saints), Local Brethren (Ohio Saints)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE PHYSICAL CITY OF ZION

Assertion: A specific geographic location is to be purchased with money to serve as a literal inheritance for the Saints.

"that in time ye may be enabled to purchase lands for an inheritance, even the city."

Evangelical Comparison: In this text, the concept of 'Zion' or 'the city' is strictly material and geographic. It is a plot of land to be 'purchased' through the financial savings of the adherents. This contrasts sharply with the Evangelical understanding of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus declared is 'not of this world' (John 18:36) and 'not coming with signs to be observed' (Luke 17:20). While Evangelicals look for a 'city... whose designer and builder is God' (Hebrews 11:10), this text instructs the Saints to be the financiers and builders of their own holy city through real estate acquisition.

2. OPEN CANON / PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Assertion: God will give new laws and commandments in the future that are necessary for the church's operation.

"according to the laws and commandments, which ye have received, and which ye shall hereafter receive"

Evangelical Comparison: The text explicitly conditions the behavior of the Saints on commandments 'which ye shall hereafter receive.' This establishes a theological framework where truth is fluid and dependent on the current church hierarchy, rather than the fixed, finished work of Scripture. Evangelical theology holds to the sufficiency of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and the closure of the canon (Jude 1:3 'faith once for all delivered'), rejecting the notion that new, binding laws are necessary for the church's governance or the believer's inheritance.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the definition of the Kingdom. For the Evangelical, the Kingdom is spiritual, inaugurated by Christ, and entered through regeneration (John 3:3). For the adherent of this text, the Kingdom is a physical construction project requiring capital and real estate. Furthermore, the text introduces a mediating priesthood (Presidency/Bishop) that controls the 'inheritance' of the believer, violating the Evangelical tenet of the Priesthood of all Believers where every Christian has direct access to God and their inheritance in Christ (1 Peter 2:9).

Shared Values:

Hospitality to fellow believers; Stewardship of resources; Righteousness in business dealings

Friction Points:

1. [Major] Theology Proper (Kingdom of God) – Redefines the Kingdom as a physical, purchasable territory rather than a spiritual reign.
2. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Asserts the necessity of future, extra-biblical commandments for the church.
3. [Major] Sola Fide – Links 'inheritance' to the work of saving money and purchasing land.

Semantic Warnings:

"Inheritance"

In Text: A physical plot of land in the city of Zion to be purchased with money.

Evangelical: Eternal life and the Kingdom of God, received as a gift through Christ (Ephesians 1:11-14, 1 Peter 1:4).

Example: *In this text, you save money to buy your inheritance; in the Bible, you are born again into an inheritance that 'fades not away.'*

"Gathered"

In Text: Physical migration to a specific location dictated by church leaders.

Evangelical: Spiritual unity in Christ or the eschatological gathering of the elect by angels (Matthew 24:31).

Example: *The text commands a physical move ('gathered with your families'); the New Testament commands a spiritual gathering in local assemblies (Hebrews 10:25).*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to 'inheritance' in the City of Zion.

How Attained: Through obedience to the Presidency/Bishop, gathering, and financial contribution (saving money to buy land).

Basis of Assurance: Compliance with the 'laws and commandments' received and 'hereafter' received.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text makes no mention of faith in Christ's finished work as the basis for inheritance. Instead, the inheritance is contingent on financial accumulation ('save all the money') and geographic relocation. This is a works-based system of temporal salvation.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Remain in current abodes for the present time
2. Impart lands to the 'eastern brethren'
3. Buy lands in the surrounding regions if necessary
4. Save all the money that ye can
5. Obtain all the money ye can in righteousness

Implicit Obligations:

1. Wait for the hierarchy to reveal the location of the city
2. Submit to the Presidency and Bishop regarding where to live
3. Accept future commandments not yet revealed

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The text commands you to 'save all the money that ye can' to buy an inheritance. How does this pressure to accumulate wealth for the church affect your sense of spiritual peace?
2. In this passage, the 'inheritance' is a plot of land to be bought. How does this compare to the inheritance described in 1 Peter 1:4, which is 'reserved in heaven for you' and cannot be bought?

3. The text mentions commandments you 'shall hereafter receive.' How do you determine if a new commandment aligns with the finished work of Christ found in the Bible?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Longing for a City – Humans have a deep longing for a place of belonging and safety (Zion). The text tries to buy this with money. [Hebrews 11:10, 16 - Abraham looked for a city whose builder is God. We receive this city through Christ, not by purchasing real estate.]
2. Imparting to the Brethren – The desire to care for the family of God is noble. The Gospel motivates this through love, not law. [1 John 3:16-18 - We lay down our lives (and resources) because He laid down His life for us.]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Financial Performance / Materialism [Moderate] – The command to 'save all the money that ye can' places a heavy burden of austerity and financial performance on the believer. It spiritualizes the accumulation of wealth, potentially leading to guilt over any non-essential spending.
2. Uncertainty / Dependence [Moderate] – Believers are told to wait for future commandments and for leaders to tell them where to live. This creates a dependency on human leaders and a state of perpetual uncertainty regarding God's will.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Hierarchical Revelation

Verification Method: Obedience to appointed leaders ('presidency and the bishop') who alone receive the knowledge of the 'place'.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology encourages Berean verification (Acts 17:11) where believers test teachings against Scripture. This text centralizes knowledge in a few 'appointed' men, creating a dependency on the hierarchy rather than the Word of God.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: March 1831

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: This text appears as Section 64 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants but was renumbered to Section 48 in later editions (e.g., 1876, 1921, 1981).