

SECTION 75 (MODERN D&C 78)

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

OVERVIEW

This revelation, originally cataloged as Section 75 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (Section 78 in modern editions), was dictated by Joseph Smith in March 1832. It addresses the organization of the 'United Firm' (later the United Order), a mercantile and stewardship organization designed to manage church storehouses and publishing concerns. Notably, this text utilizes code names (e.g., Enoch for Joseph Smith, Ahashdah for Newel K. Whitney) to protect the identity of church leaders from creditors and legal persecution in Ohio. Theologically, the text bridges the temporal and spiritual, asserting that the management of earthly assets is not merely administrative but soteriological. It introduces the concept that believers must be 'equal in earthly things' to be 'equal in obtaining heavenly things,' thereby making financial consecration a condition for celestial inheritance. It also establishes a severe penalty for breaking this economic covenant—being delivered to the 'buffetings of Satan'—and introduces unique cosmological elements, such as 'Adam-ondi-Ahman' and the role of Michael (Adam) holding 'keys of salvation.'

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Son Ahman), Enoch/Gazelam (Joseph Smith), Ahashdah (Newel K. Whitney), Pelagoram (Sidney Rigdon), Michael (Adam)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL CELESTIAL INHERITANCE

Assertion: Entry into the 'celestial world' is contingent upon preparing oneself by 'doing the things which I have commanded you.'

"for if you will that I give nnto [unto] you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, entrance into God's presence is secured solely by the blood of Christ, received through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). This text, however, establishes a merit-based system where the 'celestial world' (the highest degree of glory) is a reward for specific obedience and preparation. It shifts the focus from Christ's preparation of a place for the believer (John 14:2-3) to the believer's preparation of themselves through commandment-keeping.

2. ECONOMIC EQUALITY AS SOTERIOLOGICAL NECESSITY

Assertion: Equality in earthly material goods is a prerequisite for receiving heavenly blessings.

"for if ye are not equal in earthly things, ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things"

Evangelical Comparison: The Bible teaches generosity and care for the poor as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23, 2 Corinthians 9:7), but never suggests that material equality is a precondition for spiritual inheritance. This text elevates a specific socio-economic order (consecration) to a saving ordinance, implying that failure to participate in this economic leveling disqualifies one from heavenly equality.

3. KEYS OF SALVATION HELD BY ADAM

Assertion: Michael (Adam) is appointed as a prince and given the 'keys of salvation' under Christ's counsel.

"who hath appointed Michael, your prince... and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One"

Evangelical Comparison: This text elevates Adam (Michael) to a semi-messianic role, possessing 'keys of salvation.' In biblical theology, Adam is the figure of the Fall (Romans 5:12), while Christ is the Second Adam who brings life. Attributing 'keys of salvation' to Adam obscures the exclusive mediatorship of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5) and suggests a hierarchical bureaucracy of salvation unknown to the Bible.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The primary theological gap lies in the conditions for salvation. The text explicitly states that preparation for the 'celestial world' requires the believer to 'do the things which I have commanded.' This is a reintroduction of the Covenant of Works. Furthermore, the text asserts that 'equality in earthly things' is necessary for 'equality in obtaining heavenly things,' effectively making the United Order (a socio-economic system) a saving ordinance. Additionally, the Christology is diluted by the elevation of Adam (Michael) to a position where he holds 'keys of salvation,' a role the Bible reserves for God alone.

Shared Values:

Care for the poor; Stewardship of resources; Belief in the Second Coming; Desire for holiness

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Fide – Salvation (Celestial World) is conditional upon 'doing the things which I have commanded,' establishing a works-based righteousness.
2. [Major] Christology – Attributes 'keys of salvation' to Adam (Michael), diminishing the unique sufficiency of Christ.
3. [Major] Sola Gratia – Heavenly equality is contingent upon earthly economic equality, making grace dependent on human social organization.

Semantic Warnings:

"Salvation"

In Text: Often synonymous with 'exaltation' or entry into the 'celestial world,' contingent on works and ordinances.

Evangelical: Deliverance from sin and death through faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8).

Example: *In this text, 'salvation' involves being made 'rulers over many kingdoms' and requires specific preparation.*

"Keys"

In Text: Authority to administer ordinances and govern the church/priesthood, held here by Adam.

Evangelical: Metaphor for authority, specifically the apostolic authority to open the kingdom through the gospel (Matthew 16:19), not a bureaucratic tool for Adam.

Example: *The text says Michael (Adam) was given 'keys of salvation.'*

"Zion"

In Text: A literal city/community to be built in America (Independence, MO) and a social order.

Evangelical: The spiritual kingdom of God or the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22).

Example: *The text refers to 'the land of Zion' as a physical location for the storehouse.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Inheriting 'all things,' becoming 'rulers over many kingdoms,' and entering the 'celestial world.'

How Attained: By 'doing the things which I have commanded,' specifically participating in the economic order of the church (equality in earthly things).

Basis of Assurance: Faithful stewardship and obedience to the 'counsel' of the ordained leaders.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text explicitly links the 'celestial world' to 'doing the things commanded,' which is the antithesis of Romans 4:5 ('to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly').

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Hearken to the counsel of the ordained
2. Organize and regulate the affairs of the storehouse for the poor
3. Be equal in earthly things

4. Sit in council with the saints in Zion
5. Organize by a bond or everlasting covenant

Implicit Obligations:

1. Submission of personal property to church oversight
2. Acceptance of Joseph Smith's economic revelations as binding law
3. Total obedience to commandments to ensure celestial status

Ritual Requirements:

1. Entering into a 'bond or everlasting covenant' regarding stewardship

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The text says, 'if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded.' How does this fit with the idea that Jesus has already prepared a place for us (John 14:2)?
2. What does it mean that Adam (Michael) holds the 'keys of salvation'? How does that relate to Jesus holding the keys of death and Hades?
3. This section links 'equality in earthly things' to 'equality in heavenly things.' Do you feel that your financial stewardship determines your standing in heaven?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Storehouse for the Poor – The text shows a desire for justice and care for the vulnerable. This points to the heart of God, but in the Gospel, this care is a *response* to grace (1 John 3:16-17), not a *purchase* of heavenly status. [2 Corinthians 8:9]
2. The Everlasting Covenant – Humans long for a covenant that cannot be broken. The text offers a fragile covenant based on human organization. The Gospel offers the New Covenant in Christ's blood, which is truly everlasting and unbreakable because it depends on His faithfulness, not ours. [Hebrews 13:20-21]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance/Financial Legalism [Severe] – The believer is burdened with the belief that their financial management and economic equality are directly tied to their eternal salvation. Failure in stewardship is not just a mistake; it is a threat to their celestial inheritance.
2. Fear of Satanic Buffetings [Moderate] – The text threatens that breaking this specific organizational covenant results in being 'delivered over to the buffetings of Satan.' This instills a fear-based obedience rather than love-based service.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (The voice of the Lord through Joseph Smith).

Verification Method: Obedience and experience; the text implies that understanding comes through following the 'counsel of him who has ordained you.'

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the illuminated Word of God (Psalm 119:105) tested against the apostolic deposit (Galatians 1:8). This text demands adherence to a new, extra-biblical revelation mediated solely through a modern prophet.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: March 1, 1832

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: The 1835 edition uses code names (Enoch, Gazelam, Ahashdah, Pelagoram) to mask the identities of Smith, Whitney, and Rigdon. These were replaced with actual names in the 1876 edition and subsequent modern editions.