

# SECTION 83

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

## OVERVIEW

This revelation, classified as Section 83 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (Section 94 in modern editions), outlines the urban planning and ecclesiastical infrastructure for the Church in Kirtland, Ohio. It designates Kirtland as a 'Stake of Zion,' a subsidiary gathering place to the central Zion (Independence, Missouri). The text provides specific architectural dimensions (55 by 65 feet) and functions for two proposed buildings: a house for the First Presidency to administer the church and receive revelations, and a printing office for the translation of scriptures and publishing. Crucially, the text emphasizes that these spaces must remain 'undefiled' to retain God's presence. It also assigns inheritance lots to Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, and Jared Carter, appointing the latter two as a building committee. The revelation underscores the institutionalization of the movement, moving from charismatic spontaneity to organized hierarchy and physical permanence.

## KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Speaker), Joseph Smith (Recipient/Prophet), Hyrum Smith (Designated for inheritance), Reynolds Cahoon (Building Committee), Jared Carter (Building Committee)

## DOCTRINES ANALYZED

### 1. INSTITUTIONALIZED REVELATION

**Assertion:** A physical structure is required for the Presidency to facilitate 'the work of the presidency, in obtaining revelations.'

"consecrated unto me for the building of an house for the presidency... for the work of the presidency, in obtaining revelations"

**Evangelical Comparison:** In Evangelical theology, the canon of Scripture is closed (Jude 1:3), and the Holy Spirit illuminates the text to believers anywhere (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). This text, however, institutionalizes revelation as an ongoing function of the church hierarchy ('the Presidency') and ties this function to a specific physical location ('an house... for obtaining revelations'). This suggests that divine guidance is not merely spiritual illumination but a continuous stream of new authoritative data requiring administrative management.

### 2. CONDITIONAL DIVINE PRESENCE (SACRED SPACE)

**Assertion:** God's glory and presence in the holy house are conditional upon the total absence of any 'unclean thing.'

"if there shall come into it any unclean thing my glory shall not be there; and my presence shall not come into it."

**Evangelical Comparison:** The text reverts to an Old Testament/Tabernacle theology where God's presence is localized and fragile, retreating if ritual or moral impurity enters the physical space (reminiscent of Ezekiel 10). Evangelical Christianity teaches that through the blood of Christ, the believer becomes the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and God's presence is guaranteed by the finished work of Christ (Hebrews 13:5), not by the maintenance of a physical building's purity.

### 3. THE STAKE OF ZION

**Assertion:** Kirtland is designated as a 'Stake of Zion,' a physical gathering place requiring specific urban planning.

"laying out and preparing a beginning and foundation of the city of the stake of Zion, here in the land of Kirtland"

**Evangelical Comparison:** This doctrine emphasizes a geo-political gathering. The term 'Stake' (referencing Isaiah 54:2) is interpreted literally as a tent-peg for a physical city. Evangelicalism interprets New Testament ecclesiology as the spiritual gathering of believers (the invisible church) who are 'strangers and exiles' on earth (1 Peter 2:11), awaiting the New Jerusalem, rather than constructing a holy city in the present temporal age.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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**Divergence Status:** Yes

**Theological Gap:** The fundamental gap lies in the locus of the holy. In Evangelicalism, the 'Holy of Holies' is accessible to every believer through Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22), and the church is a spiritual organism. In this text, the holy is re-localized to a geographic 'Stake' and specific buildings. Furthermore, the text formalizes the rejection of Sola Scriptura by constructing a facility specifically for 'obtaining revelations' and printing new translations, asserting that the Bible is insufficient for the governance of the Kingdom.

**Shared Values:**

Desire for God's presence.; Importance of scripture (printing/translation mentioned).; Orderliness in ministry.

**Friction Points:**

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Establishes a physical office for the production of new, extra-biblical revelations.
2. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Restricts the 'ministry' and 'obtaining revelations' to the Presidency and a specific 'order of the priesthood.'
3. [Critical] Christology (Finished Work) – Re-institutes a conditional presence of God based on the purity of a physical building, obscuring the sufficiency of Christ's cleansing.
4. [Moderate] Eschatology/Ecclesiology – Focuses on building a temporal city (Zion) rather than the spiritual commission to make disciples of all nations.

**Semantic Warnings:**

**"Zion"**

**In Text:** A literal city to be built in America (Kirtland, Independence) with physical infrastructure.

**Evangelical:** The heavenly city of God (Hebrews 12:22) or the spiritual people of God.

**Example:** *When a Mormon reads 'Zion,' they think of a gathered community and temple building; an Evangelical thinks of the Kingdom of God or Heaven.*

**"House of the Lord"**

**In Text:** A specific temple structure required for ordinances and revelation.

**Evangelical:** The collective body of believers (1 Peter 2:5) or the church assembly.

**Example:** *The text demands a 'house' for God's presence; the New Testament says God 'does not dwell in temples made with hands' (Acts 17:24).*

## SOTERIOLOGY

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**Salvation Defined:** Implicitly linked to gathering to Zion and participating in the 'work' of the priesthood.

**How Attained:** Through obedience to commandments (like building houses) and maintaining purity.

**Basis of Assurance:** The presence of God's glory in the house (which is conditional).

**Comparison to Sola Fide:** The text focuses entirely on works (building, consecrating, purifying) to secure God's presence, contrasting with Romans 5:1 where peace with God is secured by faith.

## MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

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**Explicit Commands:**

1. Lay out and prepare the foundation of the city of the stake of Zion in Kirtland.
2. Consecrate the first lot on the south for a house for the presidency.
3. Dedicate the second lot on the south for a printing house.
4. Ensure no unclean thing comes into the sacred houses.
5. Reynolds Cahoon and Jared Carter must serve as a building committee.

**Implicit Obligations:**

1. Adherents must provide resources (labor/tithes) to build these structures.

2. Adherents must accept the 'pattern' given by God through Joseph Smith.
3. Adherents must maintain personal worthiness to enter these spaces to avoid driving away God's glory.

**Ritual Requirements:**

1. Dedication of land and buildings 'according to the order of the priesthood.'
2. Maintenance of ritual purity within the buildings.

**EVANGELISM TOOLKIT**

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**Discovery Questions:**

1. The text says if an 'unclean thing' enters the house, God's presence leaves. How does this compare to the promise in Hebrews 13:5 that He will 'never leave you nor forsake you'?
2. Why do you think the Presidency needed a specific building to 'obtain revelations' when the Apostle Paul received revelation in prison, at sea, and in homes?
3. If the believer is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), why is there a need to build a physical structure to house God's glory?

**Redemptive Analogies:**

1. The Pattern – The text emphasizes building according to a strict pattern to please God. In the Gospel, Jesus is the true Pattern and the fulfillment of the Law. We cannot build a perfect life/house, so we trust in His perfect life. [Hebrews 8:5-6 (Christ as the mediator of a better covenant, fulfilling the patterns of the old).]
2. Longing for God's Presence – The text reflects a deep human desire to be near God. The Gospel answers this not with a building we visit, but with the Indwelling Spirit. [John 14:23 ('we will come to him and make our home with him').]

**Spiritual Weight:**

1. Works-Righteousness / Financial Pressure [Moderate] – The command to build specific, large structures places a heavy financial and labor burden on the adherents, equating their spiritual standing with their material contributions to the 'city.'
2. Dependency on Hierarchy [Severe] – Believers are conditioned to believe they cannot access the fullness of God's will without the 'Presidency' obtaining it for them in a special house.
3. Anxiety of Defilement [Severe] – The threat that 'if there shall come into it any unclean thing my glory shall not be there' creates a hyper-vigilant anxiety. If God leaves because of an error or sin, the community is left vulnerable.

**EPISTEMOLOGY**

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**Knowledge Source:** Prophetic Revelation via the Presidency

**Verification Method:** Obedience to the 'pattern' revealed to the prophet.

**Evangelical Contrast:** Evangelical epistemology relies on the objective standard of the written Word (Bible) illuminated by the Spirit (Psalm 119:105). This text relies on subjective, ongoing revelations channeled through a hierarchical office.

**TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

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**Dating:** August 2, 1833

**Authorship:** Joseph Smith

**Textual Issues:** This section (now D&C 94) was originally withheld from early publication in the Book of Commandments to protect the church from persecution regarding their building plans, but included in the 1835 D&C.