

SECTION 101

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 2013 | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

Delivered in December 1833, Section 101 addresses the crisis of the 'Saints' being violently driven from Jackson County, Missouri. The text functions primarily as a theodicy, answering why God allowed His chosen people to suffer defeat. The revelation asserts that the persecution was not merely the result of external wickedness, but a direct consequence of the Saints' internal 'jarrings, and contentions, and envyings' (v. 6). It establishes a pattern where physical blessings (land inheritance) are contingent upon righteousness, and their loss is evidence of transgression. The text reaffirms that Jackson County remains the appointed place for Zion (v. 20) and cannot be moved. It introduces the 'Parable of the Nobleman and the Olive Trees,' which serves as a prophetic call for the 'strength of mine house' (warriors) to physically redeem the vineyard—a direct prelude to the historical Zion's Camp expedition. Furthermore, the text canonizes the US Constitution as a divinely established document (v. 80) designed to protect moral agency, instructing Saints to seek political redress through the judiciary and executive branches before God executes judgment.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Voice of the Revelation), Joseph Smith (Prophet/Recipient), The Nobleman (God/Christ figure in parable), The Servant (Joseph Smith figure in parable), Sidney Gilbert (Storehouse keeper), The Saints (Persecuted group), The Enemy (Missouri mobs)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. RETRIBUTIVE THEODICY OF PERSECUTION

Assertion: The Saints lost their lands and suffered persecution specifically because of their own transgressions and lack of obedience.

"I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them... in consequence of their transgressions... there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings (D&C 101:2, 6)."

Evangelical Comparison: While Evangelical theology acknowledges divine discipline (Hebrews 12), it rejects the strict retribution principle that correlates all suffering with specific personal sin (refuted by Jesus in John 9:2-3). D&C 101 places the blame for the Missouri persecution squarely on the victims' spiritual failures, suggesting that if they had been righteous, they would have retained the land. This contradicts the New Testament narrative where the most faithful (Stephen, Paul, the Apostles) suffered the most severe persecution.

2. GEOGRAPHIC ZION

Assertion: Zion is a specific physical location (Jackson County, Missouri) that cannot be moved and must be purchased and inhabited.

"Zion shall not be moved out of her place... there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed (D&C 101:17, 20)."

Evangelical Comparison: The New Testament shifts the concept of Zion from a geographic location to a spiritual reality accessible to all believers through Christ (Hebrews 12:22; Galatians 4:26). D&C 101 regresses to a geopolitical territorialism similar to Old Covenant Israel, insisting on a specific American county as the exclusive location for the gathering, creating a theology of 'holy land' that is foreign to the New Covenant.

3. DIVINELY INSPIRED CONSTITUTION

Assertion: The US Constitution was established by God through 'wise men' He raised up to maintain moral agency.

"I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose (D&C 101:80)."

Evangelical Comparison: Biblical theology teaches that God establishes authorities (Daniel 2:21), but it does not canonize political documents of specific nations as part of His redemptive revelation. D&C 101 elevates American nationalism to a soteriological level, implying that the US Constitution is necessary for the exercise

of 'moral agency' and 'doctrine pertaining to futurity' (v. 78), effectively merging American civics with spiritual destiny.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: D&C 101 illustrates a fundamental divergence in the definition of the Kingdom of God. For the Evangelical, the Kingdom is 'not of this world' (John 18:36), established in the hearts of believers. For the Mormon adherent via D&C 101, the Kingdom is a literal, political, and economic entity located in Missouri, requiring the purchase of land and the mobilization of warriors. Furthermore, the text makes God's protection contingent on human behavior (v. 2, 6-7), whereas the Biblical New Covenant assures believers that nothing can separate them from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39), even amidst persecution.

Shared Values:

Belief in the Second Coming (Millennium); Moral agency; Compassion of God (v. 9); Resurrection of the dead

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds new canonical authority, defines American geography as holy land, and canonizes the US Constitution.
2. [Major] Sola Gratia – Blessings and protection are contingent on works and obedience; failure implies a lack of merit.
3. [Major] Theology of Suffering – Attributes persecution directly to the sin of the victim rather than the fallen nature of the world or identification with Christ.

Semantic Warnings:

"Zion"

In Text: A specific geographic location in Jackson County, Missouri, to be built as a physical city.

Evangelical: The dwelling place of God; historically Jerusalem, prophetically the New Jerusalem/Heaven, spiritually the church (Hebrews 12:22).

Example: *In D&C 101:20, God says there is 'none other place appointed' for Zion than Missouri.*

"Sanctified"

In Text: A state achieved by enduring chastening and not denying the Lord under pressure (v. 5).

Evangelical: Set apart by the Holy Spirit through the offering of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:10).

Example: *D&C 101:5 states those who will not endure chastening 'cannot be sanctified.'*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Includes physical inheritance of Zion, resurrection, and Millennial glory.

How Attained: Through enduring chastening, gathering, obedience to commandments, and temple ordinances (implied in v. 23).

Basis of Assurance: Contingent on 'fruit and works' (v. 100) and enduring to the end.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Explicitly contrasts with Sola Fide by stating inheritance is for those who 'bring forth fruit and works meet for my kingdom' (v. 100), making the physical dwelling in Zion (a type of salvation) conditional on behavior.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Gather to the appointed places (Missouri) (v. 22, 63)
2. Purchase all available land in Jackson County (v. 71)
3. Importune the Judge, Governor, and President for redress (v. 86-88)
4. Do not sell the storehouse in Missouri (v. 96)
5. Gather 'warriors' (young and middle-aged men) to redeem the vineyard (v. 55-56)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept personal blame for external persecution
2. Prepare for physical conflict/warfare to reclaim church lands
3. View the US Constitution as a religious document

Ritual Requirements:

1. Stand in holy places (v. 22)
2. Prepare for the temple (v. 23)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 2, the Lord says the Saints lost their homes because of their transgressions. How does this compare to Jesus' teaching in John 9, where the man's blindness was not caused by sin?
2. Verse 5 says those who will not endure chastening 'cannot be sanctified.' How does this fit with Hebrews 10:10, which says we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all?
3. The text emphasizes purchasing land in Missouri to establish Zion. In the New Testament, where does the writer of Hebrews say we have come to? (Hebrews 12:22).

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Longing for a Safe Home (Zion) – Humans long for a place of safety and belonging. The text seeks this in Missouri, but the Gospel offers this in Christ. [John 14:2-3 ('I go to prepare a place for you...')]
2. The Need for a Mediator/Redeemer – The text looks for a human force to redeem the land. The Gospel presents Christ as the Redeemer who has already purchased His people. [Galatians 3:13 ('Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law...')]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Works-Righteousness / Materialism [Moderate] – The adherent is burdened with the task of physically building the Kingdom through financial sacrifice and relocation, rather than resting in the finished spiritual work of Christ.
2. Guilt / Victim Blaming [Severe] – By attributing the loss of homes and persecution to the Saints' own 'envyings and strifes' (v. 6), the text imposes a heavy psychological burden: if bad things happen to you, it is because you were not righteous enough.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (Joseph Smith acting as the mouthpiece of God).

Verification Method: Obedience to the commands (gathering, purchasing land) is expected to yield the promised blessing (dwelling in Zion).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the testing of spirits against Scripture (1 John 4:1, Acts 17:11). This text demands obedience to a new revelation that contradicts the New Testament's spiritualization of Zion.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: December 16-17, 1833

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: The text was received during the crisis of expulsion. The 'Parable of the Nobleman' (v. 43-62) is widely understood by historians as a justification for the paramilitary 'Zion's Camp' expedition.