

SECTION 105

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

OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 105, received on June 22, 1834, marks a pivotal theological pivot in early Mormon history. Contextually, Joseph Smith had led a paramilitary expedition known as 'Zion's Camp' from Ohio to Missouri to forcibly reinstate expelled Saints onto their lands in Jackson County. The expedition failed to achieve its military or political objectives. In this text, the voice of the Lord explains that the 'redemption of Zion' must be deferred for a 'little season' (v. 9). The text attributes this failure not to external opposition, but to internal transgression, specifically a lack of obedience to the 'law of the celestial kingdom' (v. 4-5) and a failure to impart substance to the poor. Consequently, the mandate shifts from immediate land seizure to a requirement for the elders to first receive an 'endowment' of power in the Kirtland Temple (v. 11, 33). The text establishes a theology where God's protection and the establishment of His kingdom are strictly conditional upon the collective worthiness and unity of the people. It introduces the distinction between being 'called' and being 'chosen' (v. 35), emphasizing that sanctification is a prerequisite for the eventual success of the Mormon political-religious project.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Voice of the Revelation), Joseph Smith (The Servant/Prophet), The Camp of Israel (Zion's Camp participants), The Governor of Missouri (Implicitly referenced regarding broken promises), Enemies in Jackson/Clay Counties

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE VIA CELESTIAL LAW

Assertion: God cannot receive Zion or its people unless they are unified and obedient to the principles of the celestial kingdom.

"Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. (D&C 105:5)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the believer is 'accepted in the Beloved' (Ephesians 1:6) solely through faith in Jesus Christ. The 'reception' of the believer by God is a fait accompli upon regeneration. D&C 105:5 inverts this, positing that God is structurally unable ('cannot') to receive the people until they demonstrate conformity to 'celestial law.' This establishes a works-based covenant where God's presence and protection are earned through collective ethical perfection and social unity, rather than granted through grace.

2. RITUAL ENDOWMENT AS PREREQUISITE FOR POWER

Assertion: Spiritual power and the ability to redeem Zion are contingent upon receiving a specific ritual endowment in a specific temple.

"And this cannot be brought to pass until mine elders are endowed with power from on high... in the house of the Lord in Kirtland. (D&C 105:11, 33)"

Evangelical Comparison: The New Testament teaches that the 'power from on high' (Luke 24:49) was poured out at Pentecost and is now the inheritance of every believer upon conversion (Romans 8:9). D&C 105 restricts this power to a specific future event, in a specific geographic location (Kirtland), accessible only to a specific class of priesthood holders ('first elders'). This creates a two-tiered spirituality where 'power' is a ritual acquisition rather than a relational reality of the indwelling Spirit.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the mechanism of divine favor. D&C 105 presents a God who is reactive to human performance: because the people were not united, God 'cannot' receive them (v5). This implies that the efficacy of God's plan relies on human perfectionism. Evangelical theology asserts that God's plan

relies on Christ's perfection imputed to the believer. Furthermore, the text redefines the 'Kingdom of God' as a literal, political, land-owning entity in Missouri (v26-32) that requires an army, whereas the New Testament describes a Kingdom that is 'not of this world' (John 18:36) until the eschaton.

Shared Values:

Care for the poor (v3); Desire for peace (v38); Need for holiness/sanctification (v31); Sovereignty of God in battle (v14)

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) – God's acceptance is conditional upon the people living the 'law of the celestial kingdom' (v5).
2. [Major] Christology (Sufficiency of Christ) – Christ's work is insufficient to 'redeem Zion' without the monetary purchase of lands and the obedience of the people.
3. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Access to power is restricted to 'first elders' receiving a temple endowment (v33), creating a tiered spiritual hierarchy.

Semantic Warnings:

"Zion"

In Text: A literal city and society to be built in Jackson County, Missouri, requiring land ownership and celestial laws.
Evangelical: Often refers to Jerusalem, the people of God, or the heavenly city (Hebrews 12:22), not a specific American real estate project.

Example: *D&C 105:5 'Zion cannot be built up...' refers to a physical city; Hebrews 12:22 'You have come to Mount Zion' refers to a spiritual reality.*

"Endowment"

In Text: A specific ritual transfer of power to be received in the Kirtland Temple.

Evangelical: General term for a gift or quality; biblically, the 'promise of the Father' (Luke 24:49) refers to the Holy Spirit Himself.

Example: *In D&C 105, one must go to Kirtland to get the endowment. In Acts, the Spirit falls where the believers are gathered.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: In this text, salvation is corporate 'redemption' of Zion (land and people) and individual 'sanctification' leading to power.

How Attained: Through obedience to celestial law, union, imparting substance, and temple rituals.

Basis of Assurance: Assurance is low and conditional; depends on being 'chosen' after a period of trial.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Directly opposes Sola Fide. Verse 5 states God 'cannot' receive them without obedience to law. Romans 3:28 states a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Wait for a 'little season' for the redemption of Zion (v9)
2. Receive the endowment in the Kirtland temple (v33)
3. Purchase lands in Jackson County and adjoining counties (v28-29)
4. Sue for peace and lift an ensign of peace (v38-40)
5. Do not boast of mighty works (v24)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Achieve perfect social unity to ensure God's protection
2. Demonstrate worthiness to be 'chosen' rather than just 'called'
3. Accept the failure of the military expedition as personal/collective fault rather than leadership failure

Ritual Requirements:

1. Temple Endowment (specifically in Kirtland)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 5, it says God 'cannot' receive Zion unless it lives celestial law. How does that compare to how God receives us in Christ while we were yet sinners?
2. The text mentions a difference between being 'called' and 'chosen' (v35). On what basis do you hope to be chosen, and how do you know if you have done enough?
3. If the redemption of Zion depends on the unity and righteousness of the people, does the failure of others impact your standing with God?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Longing for Zion – This reflects the human heart's longing for the Kingdom of God and the New Jerusalem. [Hebrews 11:10, 16 (Abraham looking for a city whose builder is God, not man).]
2. The Need for an Advocate/Champion – We cannot fight the spiritual battle against sin and death; Christ fights for us and has already won. [Exodus 14:14, Colossians 2:15.]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Collective Guilt/Performance Pressure [Severe] – The individual is burdened with the knowledge that their personal shortcomings (or the shortcomings of their neighbor) can halt the entire work of God and delay Zion. This creates intense pressure for social conformity.
2. Uncertainty of Election [Moderate] – The distinction between 'called' and 'chosen' (v35) based on worthiness introduces a deep insecurity. One can be a member (called) but rejected by God (not chosen) due to lack of sanctification.
3. Financial/Material Obligation [Moderate] – The command to purchase lands and impart substance (v3, 29) links spiritual standing to financial sacrifice.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation.

Verification Method: The 'voice of the Spirit' manifesting who is chosen (v36) and the eventual fulfillment of the promises if obedience is maintained.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelicalism tests truth by Scripture (Acts 17:11). D&C 105 relies on internal spiritual manifestation and the authority of the prophet, even when the prophecy (redemption of Zion) is delayed or altered.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: June 22, 1834

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: This revelation was received in the aftermath of the 'Fishing River' storm which prevented a battle. It serves as a theological pivot to justify the disbanding of Zion's Camp without a fight.