

SECTION 109

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

OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 109 is the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, delivered by Joseph Smith on March 27, 1836. Unlike a spontaneous prayer, Smith claimed this text was given to him by revelation prior to the event. The text marks a pivotal moment in Mormon theology, transitioning the movement from a charismatic frontier sect to a temple-centric faith. The prayer petitions Jehovah to accept the physical structure built through the poverty and sacrifice of the Saints. It asks for a specific 'endowment of power' similar to Pentecost, the protection of the Saints from their enemies (specifically in Missouri), and the confounding of slanderers. It outlines a distinct eschatology involving the literal gathering of the Jews to Jerusalem and the 'remnants of Jacob' (interpreted as Native Americans) to the truth. Theologically, it re-establishes the concept of a physical 'House of God' necessary for the manifestation of the divine presence, contrasting with the New Testament teaching of the believer's body as the temple.

KEY FIGURES

Jehovah (The Lord God of Israel), Jesus Christ (Son of God), Joseph Smith (The Prophet), The Saints (Latter-day Saints), The Mob (Persecutors in Missouri), Remnants of Jacob (Lamanites/Native Americans), Children of Judah (Jews)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE NECESSITY OF A PHYSICAL TEMPLE

Assertion: God requires a physical house built by human hands to 'manifest himself' to His people and for the 'salvation' to be fully administered.

"build a house to thy name... that the Son of Man might have a place to manifest himself to his people (D&C 109:5)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the tearing of the veil (Matthew 27:51) and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) signify that God's presence is no longer localized to a physical structure. D&C 109 reverts to a Levitical/Old Testament model where a consecrated physical space is required for God to 'manifest himself.' This suggests that the finished work of Christ did not fully secure access to the Father for the believer anywhere, anytime, but that such access is mediated through sacred space and ritual.

2. RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND IMPRECACTION

Assertion: The Saints pray for God to curse, confound, and destroy their enemies if those enemies do not repent.

"And if they shall smite this people thou wilt smite them... let not thy judgments fall upon that city [only if they receive the testimony] (D&C 109:28, 40-41)"

Evangelical Comparison: While the Psalms contain imprecatory prayers, the New Testament ethic shifts focus to grace and endurance in persecution. D&C 109 exhibits a high degree of 'us vs. them' theology, asking God to 'waste away' enemies 'root and branch' (v52). This reflects a theocratic kingdom mindset rather than the spiritual kingdom mindset of the New Testament church, which grows through martyrdom and grace rather than divine retribution upon political enemies.

3. MERIT THROUGH SUFFERING

Assertion: The suffering of the Saints contributes to their eternal reward and glory.

"reap eternal joy for all our sufferings (D&C 109:76)"

Evangelical Comparison: Verse 76 implies a transactional view of suffering: 'reap eternal joy FOR all our sufferings.' In Evangelical soteriology, joy and glory are inheritances granted because of Christ's suffering (Romans 8:17-18). While believers suffer **with** Christ, the merit that secures eternal joy is Christ's alone. The Mormon text suggests that the Saints' tribulation (v5) is part of the 'payment' for the blessings received.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: D&C 109 illustrates a fundamental incompatibility with Evangelical theology regarding the nature of the Church and the Temple. Evangelicals hold that the Church ***is*** the temple (Ephesians 2:19-22) and that Christ's work on the cross finished the need for holy places. This text argues that Christ's work is insufficient without a physical 'place to manifest himself.' Furthermore, the prayer introduces a theocratic, territorial imperative (gathering to Zion/Missouri) that replaces the Great Commission's command to go ***out*** to the nations. The text also elevates Joseph Smith to a mediating role where his personal vindication is tied to the church's success.

Shared Values:

Reverence for God; Desire for the Holy Spirit; Importance of prayer and fasting; Belief in the Second Coming; Gratitude for God's mercy

Friction Points:

1. [Major] Sola Fide – Suggests eternal joy is 'reaped' for sufferings and temple building, rather than received by faith.
2. [Critical] Christology (Finished Work) – Implies Christ cannot fully manifest or administer salvation without a human-built temple.
3. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a hierarchy of 'anointed ministers' and a specific 'Prophet' whose standing determines the church's fate.
4. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds a new revelation to the canon, claiming divine authority for a post-biblical prayer.

Semantic Warnings:

"Salvation"

In Text: Often implies 'Exaltation' or the highest degree of glory, contingent on temple ordinances and gathering.

Evangelical: Deliverance from sin and death through faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Example: *In v4, 'salvation' is in Jesus' name, but v76 links 'eternal joy' to 'sufferings' and temple worthiness.*

"Zion"

In Text: A literal city to be built in America (Independence, Missouri) and its stakes.

Evangelical: The heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22) or the spiritual body of believers.

Example: *The prayer asks for mercy on the 'land of their inheritance' in Jackson County (v47).*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Includes gathering to Zion, protection from enemies, and eventual exaltation (crowns of glory).

How Attained: Through faith in Jesus (v4) combined with temple building, suffering (v76), and obedience to the Prophet.

Basis of Assurance: Manifestations of power (Pentecost-like events) and the feeling of the Spirit in the temple.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Explicitly diverges by adding the necessity of the 'house' and 'ordinances' to the work of Christ. Romans 3:28 states justification is by faith apart from deeds of the law.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Build a house to God's name
2. Seek learning by study and faith
3. Organize yourselves
4. Call solemn assemblies
5. Rise up and do God's work

Implicit Obligations:

1. Sacrifice material substance even in poverty (v5)
2. Defend the reputation of Joseph Smith (v29-31)
3. Gather to the physical locations appointed (Zion/Stakes)
4. Accept the 'yoke' of service while praying for the 'yoke' of affliction to break

Ritual Requirements:

1. Temple Dedication
2. Solemn Assembly
3. Washing and Anointing (implied in 'cleanse them' and 'anointing of thy ministers')
4. Hosanna Shout (implied in v79-80)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 5, it says the temple was built so the Son of Man could have a place to manifest himself. How do you interpret Acts 17:24, which says God does not dwell in temples made with hands?
2. Verse 76 speaks of reaping eternal joy 'for all our sufferings.' How does this relate to the Christian teaching that we reap joy because of *Christ's* suffering?
3. The prayer asks for deliverance from enemies in Missouri. Given that the Saints were eventually driven out of Missouri completely, how do you view the answer to this prayer?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. Longing for God's Presence – The text shows a deep human longing to be near God. The Gospel answers this not with a building, but with Immanuel ('God with us') and the indwelling Spirit. [John 14:23 (We will come to him and make our home with him)]
2. Desire for Purity – We cannot enter God's presence with sin. The text proposes a guarded building; the Gospel proposes a cleansed conscience through Christ's blood. [Hebrews 10:19-22]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Works-Righteousness [Moderate] – The believer feels that their eternal joy is proportional to their personal suffering and sacrifice (v76), creating a pressure to seek out or endure hardship to 'earn' the crown.
2. Uncertainty/Fear [Severe] – The text emphasizes that if the temple isn't accepted or the people aren't worthy, they will not be delivered from their enemies. This places the burden of physical safety on spiritual performance.
3. Isolation/Siege Mentality [Moderate] – The prayer reinforces a worldview where the world is hostile ('lying reports,' 'mobs') and the Saints are the only righteous ones, fostering social isolation and fear of outsiders.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Revelation through the Prophet, confirmed by spiritual experience (Pentecostal outpouring) and intellectual study.

Verification Method: Adherents are told to 'seek learning even by study and also by faith' (v7), implying that spiritual confirmation validates intellectual inquiry.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the illuminated Word of God (Psalm 119:105, 2 Timothy 3:16) as the objective standard. D&C 109 elevates subjective spiritual experience and the Prophet's voice to an authoritative status that interprets reality for the believer.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: March 27, 1836

Authorship: Joseph Smith (claimed revelation)

Textual Issues: The prayer was written prior to the dedication and read, contrasting with the typical extemporaneous prayer style of the era.