

SECTION 11

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

OVERVIEW

Received in May 1829, this revelation addresses Hyrum Smith, the older brother of Joseph Smith, who desired to join the work of evangelism immediately. The text, voiced in the first person by Jesus Christ, instructs Hyrum to pause his desire to preach. Instead, he is commanded to focus on keeping the commandments with 'all his might, mind and strength' and to assist in the 'cause of Zion.' Crucially, the text introduces a sequence of ministry: one must first 'obtain' the word (referring specifically to the translation of the Book of Mormon alongside the Bible) before seeking to declare it. The revelation establishes a subjective epistemology for discerning truth—defined by enlightenment of the mind and joy in the soul—and emphasizes that salvation is something 'treasured up' through active labor (reaping) in the field. It serves as a foundational text for the LDS concept of personal revelation and the necessity of the Book of Mormon as a companion to the Bible.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Speaker), Hyrum Smith (The Recipient), Joseph Smith (The Revelator/Mediator)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. SALVATION BY LABOR

Assertion: Salvation is something an individual 'treasures up' for their soul by 'thrusting in his sickle' and laboring.

"thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation (D&C 11:3)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, salvation is a free gift of grace received through faith, not a wage earned by work (Romans 4:4-5). D&C 11:3 explicitly links the acquisition of 'everlasting salvation' to the act of reaping (working) with one's might. This establishes a transactional soteriology where divine acceptance is contingent upon human effort, contrasting sharply with the biblical assertion that salvation is 'not by works, so that no one can boast' (Ephesians 2:9).

2. OPEN CANON / OBTAINING THE WORD

Assertion: The Bible ('word which hath gone forth') is insufficient; one must also study the Book of Mormon ('word which shall come forth') to have the full authority to preach.

"study my word which hath gone forth... and also study my word which shall come forth... or that which is now translating (D&C 11:22)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelicalism holds to the sufficiency of the 66 books of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). D&C 11:22 instructs Hyrum Smith that he cannot preach effectively until he has 'obtained' the new word currently being translated (the Book of Mormon). This implies that the biblical gospel is incomplete or insufficient for the 'convincing of men' (v21) without the addition of Joseph Smith's revelations.

3. SUBJECTIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

Assertion: Truth and the Spirit are identified by internal feelings of enlightenment and joy.

"I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy (D&C 11:13)"

Evangelical Comparison: While Evangelicals believe the Spirit illuminates scripture, the test of truth remains the objective Word of God (Acts 17:11). D&C 11:13-14 defines the Spirit's presence primarily through cognitive enlightenment and emotional joy. This lays the groundwork for the Mormon 'burning in the bosom' epistemology, where internal feelings validate external truth claims, potentially overriding objective biblical testing.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the sufficiency of Christ and Scripture. D&C 11 posits that the Bible is insufficient for ministry ('wait... until you have obtained... my word which shall come forth'). Furthermore, it introduces a 'merit' system where salvation is 'treasured up' through the exertion of 'might, mind, and strength.' This contradicts the Evangelical understanding of Sola Gratia, where human effort is a response to salvation, not a prerequisite for it.

Shared Values:

Desire to serve God; Call to repentance; Pursuit of wisdom over riches; Jesus as the Light of the World

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Asserts the Bible is insufficient without the Book of Mormon.
2. [Critical] Sola Fide – Commands labor to 'treasure up' salvation.
3. [Major] Theology Proper (Revelation) – Validates truth through subjective feelings (joy/enlightenment) rather than objective testing.

Semantic Warnings:

"The Word"

In Text: The Bible ('gone forth') PLUS the Book of Mormon ('coming forth') and Joseph's revelations.

Evangelical: The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments; ultimately, Jesus Christ (John 1:1).

Example: When D&C 11:21 says 'obtain my word,' it means 'wait for the Book of Mormon translation to be finished,' whereas a Christian understands the Word as already complete.

"Salvation"

In Text: A state treasured up/earned through reaping and commandment-keeping (v3, v20).

Evangelical: Deliverance from sin and death granted freely by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8).

Example: In D&C 11:3, salvation is the result of 'thrusting in the sickle,' making it a wage.

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God, linked to 'treasuring up' via labor (v3).

How Attained: By 'thrusting in the sickle' (works) and keeping commandments with 'all might, mind and strength' (v20).

Basis of Assurance: Subjective spiritual experience (joy/enlightenment) and personal performance in 'the work.'

Comparison to Sola Fide: D&C 11:20's demand for 'all might, mind and strength' to accomplish the work contrasts with Romans 4:5, 'to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Give heed to my word (v2)
2. Thrust in his sickle with his might (v3)
3. Keep my commandments (v6, v9, v18, v20)
4. Seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion (v6)
5. Seek not for riches but for wisdom (v7)
6. Say nothing but repentance unto this generation (v9)
7. Wait a little longer before preaching (v15-16)
8. Study the word (Bible and Book of Mormon) (v22)
9. Deny not the spirit of revelation (v25)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's translation work as the word of God
2. Defer to Joseph Smith's timing and authority regarding ministry

3. Rely on internal feelings (joy/enlightenment) to discern the Spirit

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 20, it says your work is to keep commandments with 'all your might, mind and strength.' How do you determine when you have reached the level of 'all'?
2. Verse 3 suggests we 'treasure up' salvation by reaping. How does this compare to the Bible's teaching that salvation is a gift, not of works, so no one can boast?
3. Verse 21 says to 'obtain' the word before declaring it. Do you feel the Bible is sufficient for declaring the gospel, or is it incomplete without the Book of Mormon?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. Desire to do Good – This echoes Micah 6:8. The Christian can affirm the desire for justice and humility but point to Christ as the only one who fulfilled this perfectly, becoming our righteousness. [Micah 6:8, 1 Corinthians 1:30]
2. The Word as a Sword – The Bible has the power to pierce the heart. We can agree on the power of the Word, but redirect the focus to the sufficiency of the biblical canon. [Hebrews 4:12]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Perfectionism / Impossible Standard [Severe] – The command to keep commandments with 'all your might, mind and strength' (v20) creates a crushing burden. No human can truly say they have exerted 'all' their strength at every moment, leading to chronic guilt or self-deception.
2. Uncertainty / Insufficiency [Moderate] – By implying the Bible is not enough (must wait for the new word, v16, v22), the believer is cut off from the assurance of the finished canon and made dependent on Joseph Smith's ongoing revelations.
3. Subjective Anxiety [Moderate] – Relying on internal feelings (joy/enlightenment) as the primary test of truth (v13) leaves the believer vulnerable to emotional fluctuations. If they don't 'feel' the joy, they may doubt their standing with God.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Direct revelation confirmed by internal emotional/mental state.

Verification Method: Adherents verify truth by observing if it 'enlightens the mind' and 'fills the soul with joy' (v13).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology tests spirits against the objective truth of Scripture (1 John 4:1) and the apostolic gospel (Galatians 1:8). D&C 11 relies on subjective internal confirmation, which the Bible warns can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9).

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: May 1829

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: Originally published as Chapter X in the 1833 Book of Commandments. Some editing occurred between the 1833 and 1835 editions to clarify terminology (e.g., 'spirit of revelation').