

SECTION 114

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

OVERVIEW

Given on April 11, 1838, in Far West, Missouri, this revelation addresses the instability within the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles during a period of significant internal dissent. Joseph Smith speaks in the voice of the Lord to David W. Patten, a senior member of the Twelve, commanding him to liquidate his merchandise and settle his business affairs. The specific goal is preparation for a mission to be undertaken 'next spring' (Spring 1839) alongside eleven others. The text concludes with a stern warning directed at other leaders who 'deny my name,' stating that they will be removed and their 'bishopric' (office/charge) given to others. This text is historically significant because Patten died in the Battle of Crooked River in October 1838, prior to the commanded mission date, creating a complex interpretative challenge regarding prophetic fulfillment.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Speaker), David W. Patten (Apostle), Joseph Smith (The Prophet), The Twelve Apostles (Implied group), Unfaithful Leaders (Implied targets of verse 2)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. PROPHETIC DIRECTION OF INDIVIDUALS

Assertion: God gives specific, logistical commands to individuals (selling merchandise, timing of travel) through the Prophet.

"It is wisdom in my servant David W. Patten, that he settle up all his business... that he may perform a mission unto me next spring"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, God leads individuals through the illumination of Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and wisdom (James 1:5). While God may call someone to missions, such calls are not typically canonized as infallible scripture binding on the whole church, nor do they usually involve specific financial directives (like selling merchandise) mediated through a third-party prophet. This text elevates administrative and logistical instructions for one man to the level of the Word of God.

2. TRANSFERABLE PRIESTHOOD AUTHORITY

Assertion: Priesthood offices and callings can be stripped from the unfaithful and transferred to others.

"others shall be planted in their stead and receive their bishopric"

Evangelical Comparison: The text uses the term 'bishopric' (referencing Acts 1:20) to describe a specific office of authority that can be lost and reassigned. Evangelicalism holds to the Priesthood of All Believers (1 Peter 2:9). While a pastor can be removed for disqualification (1 Timothy 3), there is no concept of a 'bishopric' as a distinct, transferable metaphysical vessel of authority that must be filled to maintain a quorum's integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the nature of revelation and authority. D&C 114 presents a God who micromanages the financial and travel plans of individuals through a central prophet, binding these instructions as canonized scripture. Evangelicalism views Scripture as the sufficient guide for doctrine and morals, with personal guidance being subjective and non-binding on the universal church. Furthermore, the text reinforces a structure where spiritual standing is tied to holding 'bishoprics' or offices, contrasting with the Evangelical view of standing based solely on union with Christ through faith.

Shared Values:

The urgency of evangelism ('bear glad tidings').; The necessity of integrity in leadership.; Stewardship of personal finances.

Friction Points:

1. [Major] Sola Scriptura – Adds specific, time-bound administrative commands to the canon of Scripture.
2. [Critical] Prophetic Reliability (Deut 18) – The prophecy regarding Patten's mission 'next spring' did not come to pass due to his death.
3. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a hierarchy where spiritual authority is vested in offices ('bishops') that are granted and revoked by leaders.

Semantic Warnings:

"Bishopric"

In Text: An office of authority and oversight (specifically apostleship in this context) that can be taken and given to another.

Evangelical: The office of an overseer (episkopē) in the local church (1 Timothy 3:1), not a transferable hierarchical power slot.

Example: *In D&C 114, a bishopric is a slot to be filled to maintain a quorum; in the Bible, it is a function of caring for the flock.*

"Mission"

In Text: A specific, temporary assignment to proselytize, usually away from home.

Evangelical: The general call of all believers to make disciples (Matthew 28:19), or a specific life-calling, not necessarily a temporary tour of duty.

Example: *Patten was called to a 'mission' next spring; Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles for life.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to faithfulness in one's calling and office.

How Attained: Through obedience to the Prophet's commands (e.g., going on the mission) and retaining one's standing in the Church.

Basis of Assurance: Holding office and being in good standing with the leadership.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Contrasts with Sola Fide, where standing before God is based on Christ's righteousness imputed by faith, not on the successful completion of a mission or retention of a church office.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Settle up all business as soon as possible
2. Make a disposition of merchandise
3. Prepare to perform a mission next spring

Implicit Obligations:

1. Prioritize church assignments over financial stability
2. Maintain loyalty to the Prophet to avoid being replaced

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In D&C 114, David Patten is commanded to go on a mission 'next spring.' History records he died in October 1838. How do you understand this prophecy?
2. If a prophecy in the Bible failed to come to pass literally, how would that affect your trust in the prophet who spoke it?
3. Verse 2 talks about others receiving the 'bishopric' of those who deny the name. Does a person's standing with God depend on holding a specific church office?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. Settling Accounts – Just as Patten had to settle his earthly debts to be free to serve, Christ settled our eternal debt so we are free to live for Him. [Colossians 2:14 (canceling the record of debt)]

Spiritual Weight:

- 1. Performance/Institutional Security [Moderate] – The believer feels that their spiritual validity is tied to their church calling. The threat of being 'replaced' creates anxiety about performance and pleasing leadership rather than resting in Christ.
- 2. Cognitive Dissonance [Severe] – The believer must perform mental gymnastics to explain why a canonized command from God (Patten's mission) did not happen, often leading to a fragile epistemology where facts must be reinterpreted to protect the Prophet.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (mediated knowledge).

Verification Method: Obedience to the command serves as the verification of faith; however, the historical outcome (Patten's death) complicates verification.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the testing of prophecy. Deuteronomy 18:22 states that if a thing does not follow, the Lord has not spoken it. The failure of the 'next spring' mission to materialize for Patten creates an epistemological crisis.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: April 11, 1838

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: The text remains in the canon despite the historical impossibility of its fulfillment (Patten's death before the mission).