

SECTION 132

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

OVERVIEW

Recorded in 1843 in Nauvoo, Illinois, Doctrine and Covenants Section 132 is the theological apex of Joseph Smith's Nauvoo-era developments. It addresses an inquiry regarding the polygamy of Old Testament patriarchs and expands into a comprehensive cosmology of family and deification. The text asserts that the 'New and Everlasting Covenant' of marriage is the sole legal vehicle for 'exaltation'—the highest state of salvation wherein humans become gods. It delineates a sharp distinction between those who are merely 'saved' as ministering angels and those who are 'exalted' to godhood through priesthood sealing. Crucially, the text provides the divine mandate for plural marriage (polygamy), framing it not as a concession but as a restoration of ancient law and a requirement for the 'continuation of the seeds' forever. It includes specific, severe warnings to Smith's wife, Emma, commanding her acceptance of the practice under threat of destruction. This text remains the scriptural basis for the LDS doctrine of eternal families and the historical basis for Mormon polygamy.

KEY FIGURES

Joseph Smith, Emma Smith, Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Nathan the Prophet

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. EXALTATION VIA ETERNAL MARRIAGE

Assertion: Only marriages sealed by priesthood authority allow individuals to become gods; otherwise, they remain angels/servants.

"Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me... their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead... they are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants... (D&C 132:15-16)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, marriage is a temporary, earthly picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Jesus explicitly states in Matthew 22:30 that in the resurrection, people 'neither marry nor are given in marriage.' D&C 132 directly opposes this, claiming that the continuation of the family unit is the defining characteristic of the highest heaven. Furthermore, it introduces a caste system in the afterlife: those who are single or unsealed become 'ministering servants' (angels) to those who are sealed, who become 'gods.' This shifts the focus of eternity from the worship of God to the propagation of one's own family kingdom.

2. DEIFICATION (THEOSIS)

Assertion: Humans who keep the covenant of eternal marriage become gods with all power.

"Then shall they be gods, because they have no end... Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. (D&C 132:20)"

Evangelical Comparison: Biblical Christianity maintains a strict monotheism where Yahweh alone is God (Isaiah 43:10). While believers partake in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) via sanctification and glorification, they remain created beings. D&C 132 asserts a literal transition from human to divine status ('Then shall they be gods'), granting them 'all power' and subjecting angels to them. This suggests that God is merely an exalted man and that men are gods in embryo, a fundamental departure from the Judeo-Christian understanding of the Divine Being.

3. PLURAL MARRIAGE (POLYGAMY)

Assertion: Polygamy is a divine law justified by the Old Testament patriarchs and commanded for the 'multiplication' of lives.

"And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him... for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth... (D&C 132:62-63)"

Evangelical Comparison: D&C 132 reinterprets the polygamy of Abraham, David, and Solomon not as cultural concessions or moral failings, but as acts of righteousness commanded by God for the purpose of exaltation. Verse 38 claims David and Solomon 'in nothing did they sin' regarding their wives (except Uriah). Evangelical

hermeneutics generally view the creation account (one man, one woman) as the normative standard (Genesis 2:24), reaffirmed by Jesus (Matthew 19:4-6). D&C 132 frames monogamy as a lesser law and plural marriage as part of the 'restoration of all things.'

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: D&C 132 represents one of the widest theological gaps between Mormonism and Evangelical Christianity. First, it redefines the nature of God and man, asserting that humans are the same species as God and destined to become gods themselves. Second, it redefines salvation. While 'salvation' (resurrection) is free, 'exaltation' (eternal life/godhood) is conditional upon the work of marriage and ritual sealing. Third, it redefines morality, asserting that actions normally considered adultery are righteous if commanded by the prophet. This creates a system where the 'New and Everlasting Covenant' replaces the Cross of Christ as the central focus of eternal destiny.

Shared Values:

Sanctity of covenants; Importance of family (though defined differently); Belief in an afterlife

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Supersedes the Bible with new revelation that contradicts New Testament teaching on marriage (Matt 22:30) and Old Testament warnings against multiplying wives (Deut 17:17).
2. [Critical] Theology Proper (Monotheism) – Teaches henotheism/polytheism: humans can become gods (v. 20).
3. [Critical] Sola Fide – Adds a work (marriage sealing) as an absolute necessity for the highest salvation.
4. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Concentrates absolute power in one man (Joseph Smith) to bind on earth and heaven (v. 7, 46).

Semantic Warnings:

"Salvation vs. Exaltation"

In Text: Salvation is mere resurrection/angelic status; Exaltation is becoming a god.

Evangelical: Salvation is the holistic rescue from sin and death, resulting in eternal life with God.

Example: *In D&C 132:17, 'saved' people are 'ministering servants' who failed to become gods.*

"Damned"

In Text: Stopped in one's progression; prevented from becoming a god (v. 4).

Evangelical: Condemned to eternal punishment/separation from God.

Example: *A person who rejects the marriage covenant is 'damned' (stopped), even if they are 'saved' as an angel.*

"Adultery"

In Text: Sexual relations outside of the prophet's authorization. If authorized (plural marriage), it is not adultery (v. 61).

Evangelical: Sexual relations with anyone other than one's spouse.

Example: *Verse 61 states if a man espouses ten virgins by this law, 'he cannot commit adultery'.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Bifurcated: General salvation (resurrection) vs. Exaltation (Godhood/Eternal Life).

How Attained: Exaltation is attained through the 'New and Everlasting Covenant' of marriage + Priesthood Sealing + Obedience.

Basis of Assurance: The sealing power of the priesthood and the 'Holy Spirit of Promise' (v. 7, 19).

Comparison to Sola Fide: Directly opposes Sola Fide. Verse 4 states, 'if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned.' Faith in Christ is insufficient for the highest glory; participation in the marriage ritual is required.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Prepare heart to receive and obey the new and everlasting covenant (v. 3)
2. Emma Smith commanded to receive all wives given to Joseph (v. 52)
3. Emma Smith commanded to cleave unto Joseph and none else (v. 54)
4. Go and do the works of Abraham (v. 32)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Seek priesthood sealing for marriage to ensure status in the afterlife
2. Accept the prophet's authority to define what constitutes adultery vs. righteous marriage
3. Believe that refusal of this law leads to damnation (stopped progress)

Ritual Requirements:

1. Marriage must be 'sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise' (v. 7)
2. Ordinances must be performed by the one holding the keys (Joseph Smith) (v. 7)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. D&C 132:20 says those who are sealed become 'gods.' How do you reconcile this with Isaiah 43:10 where God says, 'Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me'?
2. In Matthew 22:30, Jesus says in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage. How does D&C 132 fit with Jesus's teaching?
3. D&C 132:38 says David and Solomon did not sin in taking many wives. How does that fit with the Book of Mormon (Jacob 2:24) which calls their practice 'abominable'?
4. If marriage is required for exaltation (godhood), does that mean Jesus was married? If not, is He not exalted?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The desire for 'Forever Families' – The human longing for permanent connection is fulfilled in the Body of Christ. We are adopted into God's eternal family, where relationships are perfected, not by marriage contracts, but by union with Christ. [Ephesians 2:19, Revelation 21:3-4]
2. House of Order – God indeed desires order. The ultimate order is found in the finished work of Christ, which satisfies the law, rather than a complex system of new laws and sealings. [1 Corinthians 14:33, Hebrews 10:14]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance/Works-Righteousness [Severe] – The believer must secure a specific ritual (sealing) and maintain it to avoid being 'damned' or becoming a mere 'servant.' This creates immense anxiety for those who are single, divorced, or in difficult marriages.
2. Ontological Pressure [Moderate] – The pressure to become a 'god' and create worlds places the burden of infinite perfection on finite shoulders, rather than resting in being a beloved child of God.
3. Fear/Coercion [Severe] – The text uses violent language ('destroyed' is used multiple times, esp. regarding Emma Smith) to enforce compliance. This creates a spiritual environment driven by fear of destruction rather than love.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (Gnosis mediated through the Key-holder).

Verification Method: Obedience to the revelation is the path to knowledge ('if ye receive me... then shall ye know me' v. 23).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology tests prophecy against established scripture (Acts 17:11, Galatians 1:8). D&C 132 demands acceptance of a 'new' covenant that contradicts the New Testament standard of marriage,

relying solely on Smith's claim to hold the 'keys' (v. 7).

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Recorded July 12, 1843, though Smith claimed the principles were known as early as 1831.

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated to William Clayton).

Textual Issues: The revelation was kept secret for years and not published until 1852 (in Utah). Emma Smith reportedly burned the original manuscript, but a copy had been made.