

SECTION 133

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

OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 133, originally termed the 'Appendix' to the Book of Commandments, serves as a comprehensive eschatological framework for early Mormonism. Received in November 1831, it reinterprets biblical apocalyptic imagery through the lens of the 'Restoration.' The text issues a bifurcated command for gathering: Gentiles (Latter-day Saints) are to gather to the New Jerusalem (Zion) in America, while Jews are to return to the Old Jerusalem. It introduces unique cosmological and geographical claims, such as the physical return of the Lost Ten Tribes from the 'north countries' via a miraculous highway, led by the tribe of Ephraim (identified with the LDS leadership). The revelation asserts that the 'everlasting gospel' mentioned in Revelation 14:6 has been committed to Joseph Smith by an angel, framing the acceptance of this specific restoration as the criteria for escaping the burning judgment of the Second Coming. It emphasizes a high-stakes dichotomy: total obedience to the 'servants' (LDS leaders) results in glory, while rejection results in being 'cut off' and burned as stubble.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Bridegroom/Judge), Joseph Smith (The Revelator/Servant), The Angel (Moroni/Restoration Messenger), Ephraim (Head of the gathered tribes/LDS Church), The 144,000, Lost Ten Tribes

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE TWO-CAPITAL GATHERING

Assertion: The gathering of Israel involves two distinct geographical locations: the City of Zion (New Jerusalem) in America for the 'Gentiles' (LDS converts) and the Old Jerusalem for the Jews.

"Let them, therefore, who are among the Gentiles flee unto Zion. And let them who be of Judah flee unto Jerusalem (v. 12-13)."

Evangelical Comparison: While Evangelical eschatology varies (pre-millennial, amillennial, etc.), it universally rejects the notion of a second distinct holy capital located in North America. Biblical references to Zion are understood either as the physical Jerusalem in Israel or the spiritual, heavenly Jerusalem. D&C 133 bifurcates the people of God, creating a distinct destiny for the 'Gentiles' (identified here as Mormon converts) to gather in Missouri (Zion), separate from the Jewish gathering in Palestine. This introduces a geo-political dualism foreign to the Bible.

2. RETURN OF THE LOST TEN TRIBES

Assertion: The Lost Ten Tribes exist physically in the 'north countries' and will return via miraculous physical alterations of the earth to receive blessings from Ephraim (LDS leaders).

"And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance... and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down... and they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim (v. 26-30)."

Evangelical Comparison: D&C 133 canonizes a specific folklore regarding the 'Lost Ten Tribes' residing in a hidden location in the north. The text promises physical miracles—ice flowing down, highways cast up in the deep—to facilitate their return. Theologically, this doctrine subordinates these tribes to 'Ephraim' (the LDS Church), stating they must bring their treasures to Ephraim to be crowned. Evangelicalism lacks this hierarchy and the specific mythological geography of the 'north countries,' viewing the restoration of Israel as centered on the Messiah, not a specific tribal hierarchy led by a modern American church.

3. CONDITIONAL SELF-SANCTIFICATION

Assertion: Eternal life is granted to those who repent and sanctify themselves.

"And unto him that repenteth and sanctifieth himself before the Lord shall be given eternal life (v. 62)."

Evangelical Comparison: The phrase 'sanctifieth himself' suggests an active, reflexive agent in the process of holiness as a condition for receiving eternal life. In contrast, the Evangelical baseline (Sola Fide) asserts that eternal life is a free gift (Romans 6:23) received by faith, with sanctification following as the Spirit's

work (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Placing self-sanctification as a gateway to eternal life blurs the distinction between justification (God's act) and sanctification (the believer's growth), leaning toward a works-righteousness model.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While sharing apocalyptic urgency with Evangelicalism, D&C 133 fundamentally alters the mechanism of redemption. In Evangelical theology, the 'Everlasting Gospel' is the good news of Christ's substitutionary atonement. In D&C 133:36, the 'everlasting gospel' is a specific dispensation of authority committed to Joseph Smith by an angel. This shifts the focus from the finished work of Christ to the ongoing work of the Restoration. Furthermore, the requirement to 'sanctify himself' (v. 62) and the threat that those who do not believe the 'servants' will be cut off (v. 71) establishes a mediated salvation where the Prophet and the Church stand between the individual and Christ. The text constructs a geography of salvation (Zion in America) that has no biblical warrant.

Shared Values:

Belief in the literal Second Coming of Christ.; Necessity of repentance.; Condemnation of wickedness ('Babylon').; Desire for holiness/sanctification.

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds a new canonical book claiming to be the voice of God, reinterpreting biblical prophecy authoritatively.
2. [Major] Christology (Sufficiency) – Interposes 'servants' (LDS leaders) and 'Ephraim' as necessary mediators for the blessings of the tribes and salvation.
3. [Critical] Sola Fide – Conditions eternal life on the individual's ability to 'repent and sanctify himself' (v. 62).

Semantic Warnings:

"Zion"

In Text: A literal city to be built in Independence, Missouri (and by extension, the gathered LDS community).

Evangelical: Jerusalem (historically); The dwelling place of God/Heaven (Hebrews 12:22).

Example: When D&C 133 commands 'flee unto Zion,' it means joining the Mormon movement in America, not approaching God spiritually.

"Everlasting Gospel"

In Text: The restoration of priesthood authority, ordinances, and church organization through Joseph Smith (v. 36).

Evangelical: The message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16).

Example: The angel in v. 36 is said to commit the 'everlasting gospel' to man, implying it was previously lost, whereas Evangelicals believe the gospel cannot be lost (1 Peter 1:25).

"Sanctify"

In Text: To make oneself clean and worthy through obedience and preparation (v. 62).

Evangelical: To be set apart by God; a work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11).

Example: The command 'sanctify yourselves' places the burden of purity on the adherent.

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Eternal life (v. 62), partaking of glories (v. 57), dwelling in God's presence (v. 35).

How Attained: By repenting, sanctifying oneself (v. 62), gathering to Zion, and obeying the voice of the servants.

Basis of Assurance: Compliance with the command to gather and prepare; acceptance of the Lord's servants.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Directly contradicts Sola Fide by adding 'sanctifieth himself' as a condition for eternal life. Romans 4:5 states God justifies the ungodly who believe, whereas D&C 133 implies God saves the self-sanctified.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Go out from Babylon (the world)
2. Gather to Zion (for Gentiles) or Jerusalem (for Jews)
3. Sanctify yourselves
4. Call solemn assemblies
5. Preach the gospel to all nations
6. Prepare for the Bridegroom

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's revelations as the 'voice of the Lord'
2. Submit to the leadership of 'Ephraim' (LDS hierarchy)
3. Physically relocate (historically applicable to early Saints)
4. Believe in the specific restoration narrative involving the angel

Ritual Requirements:

1. Solemn assemblies (v. 6)
2. Temple ordinances (implied by 'suddenly come to his temple' in v. 2 and 'sanctify yourselves')

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 62, it says eternal life is given to him that 'sanctifieth himself.' How do you interpret that in light of the Bible saying we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10)?
2. The text mentions the 'everlasting gospel' being committed to man in verse 36. If the gospel is everlasting, in what sense was it lost and needing restoration?
3. Who are the 'servants' mentioned in verse 71, and why does rejecting them equate to rejecting God? How does this fit with 1 Timothy 2:5 which says there is one mediator, Christ Jesus?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Bridegroom Cometh – Just as the text urges preparation for the Bridegroom, the Bible invites us to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The difference is that the 'wedding garment' is given by the King (Christ's righteousness), not woven by the guest (self-sanctification). [Matthew 22:11-12, Revelation 19:7-9]
2. Fleeing Babylon – We agree that the world (Babylon) is corrupt. The true escape is not a geographical move to Missouri, but a spiritual transfer from the domain of darkness to the Kingdom of the Son. [Colossians 1:13]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Fear of Exclusion [Severe] – The text creates a binary: gather to the LDS Zion and obey the leaders, or be 'burned as stubble' and 'cut off.' This creates intense fear of leaving the organization.
2. Mediated Access [Severe] – The believer cannot access God directly but must go through 'Ephraim' (the Church) and the 'servants.' Rejection of the servant is rejection of God, placing the hierarchy in a position of absolute control.
3. Works-Righteousness [Moderate] – The command to 'sanctify himself' to receive eternal life places the infinite burden of personal holiness on the shoulders of the sinner, rather than resting in Christ's finished work.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (The 'Voice of the Lord' through Joseph Smith).

Verification Method: Obedience to the voice of the servants; rejection leads to darkness and lack of understanding (v. 71-72).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the illuminated Word of God (Psalm 119:105) and the Berean principle of testing teaching against Scripture (Acts 17:11). D&C 133 demands acceptance of the prophet's voice as the voice of God, with skepticism framed as spiritual rebellion.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: November 3, 1831

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: Originally published as the 'Appendix' to the Book of Commandments. Some edits occurred between the 1833 Book of Commandments and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants to clarify priesthood roles.