

## SECTION 65

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

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### OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 65, received in October 1831, is a prayer-like revelation often cited as the scriptural mandate for the global expansion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this text, Joseph Smith asserts that the 'keys of the kingdom of God' have been committed to man on earth. The text explicitly identifies the 'gospel' and the ecclesiastical organization (the Kingdom of God on earth) as the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2—the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that will roll forth to fill the whole earth. It establishes a theological distinction between the 'Kingdom of God' (the earthly church) and the 'Kingdom of Heaven' (the future millennial reign), arguing that the former must 'go forth' so that the latter may 'come.' The text concludes with a petition for the earthly kingdom to glorify God and subdue enemies in preparation for the arrival of the Son of Man.

### KEY FIGURES

Joseph Smith, The Son of Man (Jesus Christ), The Bridegroom

### DOCTRINES ANALYZED

#### 1. THE STONE OF DANIEL 2

**Assertion:** The 'stone cut out of the mountain without hands' is the restored gospel/church committed to man, which must grow to fill the earth.

*"the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth. [65:2]"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** In standard Evangelical hermeneutics regarding Daniel 2, the stone that destroys the statue represents the Kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus Christ, often viewed as culminating in His Second Coming when He destroys earthly dominions. It is Christ-centric. D&C 65 shifts this to an ecclesiocentric view, where the 'stone' is the ecclesiastical structure and authority ('keys') of the LDS Church. This doctrine necessitates that the LDS Church must physically and numerically fill the earth as a prerequisite for the end times, placing the burden of fulfillment on human institutional expansion rather than solely on divine intervention.

#### 2. DUAL KINGDOMS THEOLOGY

**Assertion:** There is a distinction between the 'Kingdom of God' (the earthly church) and the 'Kingdom of Heaven' (the millennial reign); the former prepares the way for the latter.

*"Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth... to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth. [65:5]"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** Biblical scholarship generally recognizes 'Kingdom of God' and 'Kingdom of Heaven' as synonymous terms used by different Gospel writers (Mark/Luke vs. Matthew) for different audiences. D&C 65 creates a functional dichotomy: The Kingdom of God is the political/ecclesiastical organization on earth (the LDS Church), while the Kingdom of Heaven is the celestial sphere. This theology asserts that the earthly organization is the necessary vehicle to 'meet' the descending Christ, implying that Christ returns to a specific institution rather than to the universal body of believers.

#### 3. RESTORATION OF KEYS

**Assertion:** Priesthood keys (authority) have been committed to man on earth to direct the gospel's progress.

*"The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth [65:2]"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** The Evangelical understanding of the 'keys of the kingdom' relates to the opening of the kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel and the binding/loosing of church discipline based on Scripture. This authority is derivative of Scripture and the Spirit, accessible to the universal church. D&C 65 asserts these keys were lost and then 'committed' specifically to Joseph Smith's movement. This creates an exclusive claim to valid ministry, denying the validity of other Christian ordinances or authority.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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### Divergence Status: Yes

**Theological Gap:** The fundamental theological gap lies in the ecclesiology and eschatology presented. D&C 65 establishes a 'One True Church' model where the institution itself is the prophetic fulfillment of Daniel 2. In Evangelical theology, the Church is the invisible body of all true believers, united by faith in Christ, not by adherence to a specific hierarchy or holder of 'keys.' Furthermore, the text suggests a synergistic eschatology where human agents (holding keys) must successfully build the earthly kingdom to enable the heavenly kingdom's arrival, contrasting with the Evangelical view of the Second Coming as a monergistic act of God interrupting human history.

### Shared Values:

Belief in the Second Coming of Christ; Importance of prayer; Desire to see God glorified on earth; Call to evangelism/proclamation

### Friction Points:

1. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Claims exclusive 'keys' committed to specific men, denying the priesthood of all believers.
2. [Major] Christology – Shifts the identity of the 'Stone' in Daniel 2 from Christ to the Church/Gospel organization.
3. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Redefines biblical terms (Kingdom of God/Heaven) and adds binding revelation.

### Semantic Warnings:

#### "Kingdom of God"

**In Text:** The ecclesiastical organization of the LDS Church established on earth.

**Evangelical:** The spiritual reign of God in the hearts of believers (Luke 17:21) and the future physical reign of Christ.

**Example:** In D&C 65, the 'Kingdom of God' must meet the 'Kingdom of Heaven.' In the Bible, entering the Kingdom of God is synonymous with salvation (John 3:3).

#### "Keys"

**In Text:** Specific priesthood authority restored to Joseph Smith to administer ordinances and govern the church.

**Evangelical:** Authority given to the apostles (and the church) to preach the gospel and declare forgiveness based on Christ's work (Matt 16:19).

**Example:** LDS: 'The prophet holds the keys.' Evangelical: 'The church exercises the keys through preaching and discipline.'

## SOTERIOLOGY

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**Salvation Defined:** Implicitly linked to the success of the 'Kingdom of God' (the Church) and preparation for the Second Coming.

**How Attained:** Through the 'keys' committed to man (ordinances) and preparing for the Bridegroom.

**Basis of Assurance:** Connection to the 'rolling forth' kingdom and holding/honoring the keys.

**Comparison to Sola Fide:** The text emphasizes 'preparing,' 'making ready,' and 'working' to build the kingdom. While not explicitly denying faith, the focus is on the institutional machinery of salvation (keys) rather than the finished work of Christ received by faith alone.

## MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

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### Explicit Commands:

1. Hearken to the voice
2. Prepare the way of the Lord
3. Make his paths straight
4. Prepare the supper of the Lamb
5. Make ready for the Bridegroom
6. Pray unto the Lord

7. Call upon his holy name
8. Make known his wonderful works among the people

**Implicit Obligations:**

1. Accept the LDS Church as the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy
2. Participate in the global expansion (missionary work) of the church
3. View the growth of the church as the primary metric of God's work on earth

**Ritual Requirements:**

1. Prayer (specifically for the expansion of the Kingdom)

## **EVANGELISM TOOLKIT**

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**Discovery Questions:**

1. When you read about the 'stone cut out of the mountain' in Daniel 2, do you see that as Jesus Himself or as the Church organization?
2. This section distinguishes between the 'Kingdom of God' and the 'Kingdom of Heaven.' How does that shape your understanding of the Lord's Prayer ('Thy Kingdom Come')?
3. If the 'keys' are necessary for the Gospel to roll forth, how do you view the spread of Christianity and the Bible before 1830?

**Redemptive Analogies:**

1. The desire for God's Kingdom to come – We all long for the day when wrongs are righted and Christ reigns. This longing is fulfilled not by building an earthly organization, but by the return of the King Himself. [Revelation 22:20 ('Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.')]
2. The Bridegroom – The church is indeed the Bride of Christ. We make ourselves ready not by institutional expansion, but by being washed in His blood. [Revelation 19:8 ('Fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints' - made possible by Christ)]

**Spiritual Weight:**

1. Institutional Pressure [Moderate] – The believer bears the burden of the prophecy's fulfillment. If the church stops growing ('rolling forth'), it creates a crisis of faith regarding the truthfulness of the scripture.
2. Works-Righteousness [Moderate] – The command to 'prepare the way' implies that human effort is the prerequisite for the Second Coming, rather than the Second Coming being a sovereign act of grace.

## **EPISTEMOLOGY**

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**Knowledge Source:** Prophetic Revelation (The text presents itself as the voice of God speaking in the first person or through a divine messenger).

**Verification Method:** Internal testimony of the Spirit regarding the truthfulness of the revelation and the visible growth of the church ('rolling forth').

**Evangelical Contrast:** Evangelical epistemology relies on the illumination of the Holy Spirit to understand the closed canon of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), testing all new claims against the Bible (Acts 17:11). This text demands acceptance based on the authority of the speaker ('one sent down from on high').

## **TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

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**Dating:** October 30, 1831

**Authorship:** Joseph Smith

**Textual Issues:** Early manuscripts show minor variations common in the compilation of the D&C, but the core message of the 'stone' and 'keys' has remained consistent.