

# SECTION 78

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

## OVERVIEW

Given in March 1832, Doctrine and Covenants Section 78 addresses the organization of the 'United Firm' (later redacted in the 1835 edition to appear as a 'United Order' or storehouse for the poor to protect the firm from creditors). The text instructs Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney to organize the church's temporal assets. Theologically, it bridges the gap between the temporal and spiritual, asserting that believers must be 'equal in earthly things' to obtain 'heavenly things.' It introduces significant esoteric doctrines, specifically identifying Jesus Christ as 'Son Ahman' and Adam as 'Michael,' a prince who holds 'keys of salvation' under Christ. The text establishes a conditional framework for entering the 'celestial world,' contingent upon obedience to these organizational mandates, and warns that breaking this covenant results in being delivered to the 'buffetings of Satan' until a future day of redemption.

## KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Son Ahman), Joseph Smith, Jun., Newel K. Whitney, Sidney Rigdon, Michael (Adam), Satan

## DOCTRINES ANALYZED

### 1. CONDITIONAL CELESTIAL GLORY

**Assertion:** Entrance to the celestial world is contingent upon preparing oneself by doing specific commandments, particularly regarding economic equality.

"For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you (D&C 78:7)"

**Evangelical Comparison:** In Evangelical theology, entrance into God's presence is secured solely through the finished work of Christ, received by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). D&C 78:7 explicitly structures the 'celestial world' as a conditional reward based on human preparation and obedience to specific commandments ('doing the things which I have commanded'). This establishes a merit-based soteriology where the believer's actions are the deciding factor in their final state, rather than Christ's righteousness imputed to them.

### 2. ADAM-ONDI-AHMAN / MICHAEL'S KEYS

**Assertion:** Adam (Michael) is a prince who holds 'keys of salvation' under the direction of Christ.

"Who hath appointed Michael your prince... and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One (D&C 78:16)"

**Evangelical Comparison:** Evangelical Christianity views Adam as the first created man whose fall brought sin into the world (Romans 5:12), possessing no saving authority. D&C 78 elevates Adam (Michael) to a high spiritual office, claiming he holds 'keys of salvation.' While the text subordinates him to Christ ('the Holy One'), assigning saving keys to a created being dilutes the exclusive authority of Jesus, who alone holds the keys of death and Hades (Revelation 1:18) and is the sole mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

### 3. TEMPORAL-SPIRITUAL EQUIVALENCE

**Assertion:** Equality in earthly material goods is a prerequisite for obtaining heavenly equality and blessings.

"For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things (D&C 78:6)"

**Evangelical Comparison:** The Bible encourages generosity and care for the poor (2 Corinthians 8-9) but never makes spiritual status or eternal inheritance contingent upon a specific economic system of equality. D&C 78:6 creates a theological dependency where spiritual reception is blocked by material inequality. This fuses the temporal and spiritual into a single system of progression, unlike the Evangelical view where spiritual inheritance is guaranteed by the Spirit regardless of earthly status (Galatians 3:28).

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

**Divergence Status:** Yes

**Theological Gap:** While both traditions value stewardship, D&C 78 fundamentally alters the requirements for salvation. By asserting that one must 'prepare' for the celestial world by 'doing' commandments (specifically economic ones), it replaces the Evangelical doctrine of Sola Fide (Faith Alone) with a system of progressive sanctification through obedience and ritual covenants. Furthermore, the Christology is compromised by the elevation of Adam (Michael) to a position holding 'keys of salvation,' a role Evangelicals reserve exclusively for the Triune God. The text also implies a 'prosperity gospel' mechanic where thankfulness results in a hundred-fold earthly increase.

**Shared Values:**

Care for the poor; Stewardship of resources; Sovereignty of God; Gratitude

**Friction Points:**

- 1. [Critical] Sola Fide – Salvation/Celestial glory is conditional upon 'doing' commandments and economic equality.
- 2. [Major] Sola Scriptura – Introduces extra-biblical requirements and cosmology (Adam-on-di-Ahman) as binding truth.
- 3. [Major] Christology – Dilutes Christ's unique mediation by assigning 'keys of salvation' to Adam.

**Semantic Warnings:**

<p><b>"Salvation"</b></p> <p><b>In Text:</b> Often synonymous with 'exaltation' or 'celestial glory,' contingent on works and ordinances (v7).</p> <p><b>Evangelical:</b> Deliverance from sin and death, granted freely by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8).</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>In v7, 'salvation' (implied by 'place in the celestial world') requires 'doing the things which I have commanded.'</i></p>
<p><b>"Keys"</b></p> <p><b>In Text:</b> Authority to direct priesthood labors and administer salvation, held by men and Adam (v16).</p> <p><b>Evangelical:</b> Metaphor for authority, ultimately held by Christ (Rev 1:18), with apostolic authority focused on the Gospel message (Matt 16:19).</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>The text claims Adam holds 'keys of salvation,' whereas the Bible never attributes saving keys to Adam.</i></p>

**SOTERIOLOGY**

**Salvation Defined:** Inheriting 'all things' (v22), obtaining a place in the 'celestial world' (v7), and being made 'rulers over many kingdoms' (v15).

**How Attained:** Through obedience, organizing legally/economically, being equal in earthly things, and keeping the everlasting covenant.

**Basis of Assurance:** Based on being a 'faithful and wise steward' (v22).

**Comparison to Sola Fide:** Directly opposes Sola Fide. Verse 7 explicitly states: 'if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you.' This makes celestial salvation a wage for work, not a gift of grace (Romans 4:4-5).

**MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS**

**Explicit Commands:**

- 1. Organize and establish a storehouse for the poor (v3)
- 2. Be equal in earthly things (v5-6)
- 3. Sit in council with the saints in Zion (v9)
- 4. Prepare and organize by an everlasting covenant (v11)
- 5. Receive all things with thankfulness (v19)

**Implicit Obligations:**

- 1. Submission to the specific economic orders of church leadership
- 2. Acceptance of Joseph Smith, Newel K. Whitney, and Sidney Rigdon as authoritative regulators of personal property

**Ritual Requirements:**

1. Entering into a 'bond or everlasting covenant' regarding property (v11)

**EVANGELISM TOOLKIT**

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**Discovery Questions:**

1. In verse 7, it says we must 'prepare' ourselves for the celestial world by 'doing' commandments. How does that fit with the idea that Jesus paid it all?
2. Verse 16 mentions that Adam (Michael) was given the 'keys of salvation.' What do you think that means, and how does it relate to Jesus holding the keys of death and hell in Revelation 1:18?
3. The text says if we aren't equal in earthly things, we can't be equal in heavenly things. Do you feel that your spiritual standing is tied to your financial participation in the church?

**Redemptive Analogies:**

1. The Storehouse – The desire to care for the poor reflects God's heart. However, the true 'storehouse' of spiritual provision is Christ himself. [Philippians 4:19 ('And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.')] ]
2. The desire for a permanent order – Humans long for stability and a kingdom that cannot be shaken. This is found only in the Kingdom of God received by grace. [Hebrews 12:28 ('Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful...')] ]

**Spiritual Weight:**

1. Performance/Legalism [Severe] – The believer is burdened with the knowledge that their entrance into the celestial world is contingent upon their performance ('doing the things commanded') and their financial/material compliance. This creates anxiety about whether one has done 'enough' to qualify.
2. Fear of Punishment [Moderate] – The threat of being 'delivered over to the buffetings of Satan' (v12) for breaking the covenant creates a high-stakes environment of fear rather than a relationship based on love and assurance.

**EPISTEMOLOGY**

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**Knowledge Source:** Prophetic Revelation (The voice of the Lord through Joseph Smith).

**Verification Method:** Obedience to the revelation is promised to yield understanding and protection from Satan (v10).

**Evangelical Contrast:** Evangelical epistemology relies on the objective standard of the written Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). This text relies on subjective, ongoing revelation through a human leader, which introduces doctrines (like Adam holding saving keys) that contradict the tested canon.

**TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

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**Dating:** March 1, 1832 (Kirtland, Ohio).

**Authorship:** Joseph Smith

**Textual Issues:** Significant redaction occurred in the 1835 edition. The original 1832 manuscript discussed a 'firm' (business) and mentioned specific mercantile endeavors. The 1835 publication changed 'firm' to 'order' and 'mercantile and publishing establishments' to 'affairs of the storehouse for the poor.'