

SECTION 94

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

OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 94, dated August 2, 1833, outlines the urban planning and spiritual architecture for the 'city of the stake of Zion' in Kirtland, Ohio. The text commands the construction of two specific structures adjacent to the temple site: a 'house for the presidency' and a printing house for the 'translation of my scriptures.' The revelation provides specific dimensions (55 by 65 feet) and structural layouts (lower and higher courts) that mirror the Kirtland Temple's design. Theologically, the text asserts that the First Presidency requires a dedicated sacred space for 'obtaining revelations' and administering the church. A critical stipulation is placed on these buildings: they must remain wholly dedicated and free from any 'unclean thing.' The text explicitly warns that God's glory and presence are conditional; if uncleanness enters, His presence departs. This section establishes the physical infrastructure for the hierarchical priesthood and the production of Mormon scripture, while reinforcing a theology where divine presence is contingent upon human maintenance of sacred space.

KEY FIGURES

Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, Jared Carter

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL DIVINE PRESENCE

Assertion: God's presence and glory in a sacred space are contingent upon the absolute exclusion of 'unclean things.'

"But if there shall come into it any unclean thing, my glory shall not be there; and my presence shall not come into it. (D&C 94:9)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the presence of God is mediated through the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer, secured by the finished work of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19). The believer is made the temple of God, and God's presence is promised never to leave or forsake His children (Hebrews 13:5). D&C 94 reverts to an Old Testament paradigm where God's presence is localized in a physical structure and is fragile—easily displaced by ritual or moral impurity. This suggests that the efficacy of the sacred space depends on human policing of 'uncleanness' rather than the sufficiency of Christ's atonement to cleanse the worshiper.

2. INSTITUTIONALIZED REVELATION

Assertion: The First Presidency requires a specific physical structure for the purpose of 'obtaining revelations.'

"For the building of a house for the presidency, for the work of the presidency, in obtaining revelations (D&C 94:3)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical Christianity holds to the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9), meaning every Christian has direct access to God through Jesus Christ without need for a mediating hierarchy to obtain truth. Furthermore, Evangelicals believe the canon of Scripture is closed (Jude 1:3). D&C 94 institutionalizes revelation as an ongoing administrative function of the church leadership, requiring a specific building to facilitate this 'work.' This creates a gnostic-style dependency where the general populace relies on the Presidency to access divine will.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: D&C 94 illustrates a fundamental shift from the New Testament model of the Church. In the New Testament, the 'mystery' revealed is that Gentiles are fellow heirs and that the Spirit dwells in believers (Colossians 1:27). The physical temple veil was torn (Matthew 27:51). Mormonism, through texts like D&C 94, reconstructs the veil by localizing God's glory in a physical building and restricting access to 'obtaining revelations' to a specific presidency. This creates a theological gap where the finished work of Christ is

insufficient to secure God's presence; instead, a physical environment must be curated and protected to house the Divine.

Shared Values:

Desire for God's presence; Importance of holiness/purity; Stewardship of resources (land/buildings)

Friction Points:

1. [Major] Christology (Finished Work) – Implies Christ's cleansing is insufficient to secure God's presence; human maintenance of the building is required.
2. [Critical] Universal Priesthood – Restricts the 'work of obtaining revelations' to the Presidency in a specific house.
3. [Major] Theology Proper (Omnipresence) – Localizes God's glory to a building and makes it removable by human error.
4. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Establishes a mechanism for continuous, extra-biblical revelation and the printing of new scriptures.

Semantic Warnings:

"House of the Lord"

In Text: A physical structure (temple or administrative building) built to specific dimensions where God's glory dwells conditionally.

Evangelical: The collective body of believers (1 Peter 2:5) or the individual believer's body (1 Cor 6:19).

Example: *In D&C 94, the 'house' must be kept free of unclean things to keep God there. In the Bible, God cleanses the 'house' (the believer) so He can dwell there.*

"Zion"

In Text: A literal city to be built in Kirtland (and Independence, MO).

Evangelical: Often refers to Jerusalem, the people of God, or the heavenly city (Hebrews 12:22).

Example: *D&C 94:1 commands laying the foundation of the 'city of the stake of Zion' as a geopolitical project.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to gathering in Zion and participating in the ordinances administered by the Presidency.

How Attained: Through obedience to the commandments (building the city) and adhering to the revelations given through the Presidency.

Basis of Assurance: The presence of God's glory in the temple/buildings, contingent on purity.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text focuses entirely on works (building, consecrating, purifying) to secure God's presence, with no mention of faith in Christ's finished work as the basis for access to God (contrast Romans 5:1-2).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Commence laying out the city of the stake of Zion in Kirtland (v. 1)
2. Consecrate the first lot on the south for the presidency's house (v. 3)
3. Consecrate the second lot on the south for a printing house (v. 10)
4. Do not allow any unclean thing to enter the sacred houses (v. 8)
5. Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, and Jared Carter to receive inheritances on specific lots (v. 13-14)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept the 'pattern' of building as divinely revealed
2. Submit to the authority of the Presidency as the channel for revelation
3. Wait for further commandments before beginning actual construction (v. 16)

Ritual Requirements:

1. Dedication of the buildings to the Lord from the foundation (v. 6)
2. Maintenance of strict purity/holiness within the buildings (v. 8-9)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 9, it says if an unclean thing enters the house, God's glory leaves. How does this compare to the New Testament promise that the Holy Spirit seals the believer permanently (Ephesians 1:13)?
2. Why does the First Presidency need a specific building to 'obtain revelations' (v. 3) if Hebrews 1 says God has now spoken to us by His Son?
3. If God's presence is conditional on the building being 'undefiled,' who is responsible for maintaining that purity—us or Jesus?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The longing for a Holy Place – This reflects the human desire to dwell with God. The Gospel fulfills this not with a building made of hands, but by God making His home in us through the Spirit. [John 14:23 - 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.']

Spiritual Weight:

1. Fear of Abandonment [Severe] – The text creates a spiritual anxiety that God is fragile and easily offended. If the community fails to police the 'unclean thing,' God departs. This places the burden of retaining the Divine on human performance.
2. Dependency on Hierarchy [Moderate] – By designating a specific place for the Presidency to 'obtain revelations,' the average believer is implicitly told they are dependent on this channel for truth, creating spiritual disempowerment.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (The 'pattern' is given by God to the prophet).

Verification Method: Obedience to the revealed pattern and observation of the presence/absence of God's glory based on purity.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the illuminated Word of God (Psalm 119:105, 2 Timothy 3:16) tested by Berean scrutiny (Acts 17:11), whereas this text relies on the authoritative voice of a modern prophet dictating architectural and administrative details.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: August 2, 1833

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: This section was not included in the 1833 Book of Commandments but was added in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. It reflects the growing institutional complexity of the church in Kirtland.