

SECTION 95

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

OVERVIEW

Given in June 1833, Doctrine and Covenants Section 95 addresses the delay in building the 'House of the Lord' (the Kirtland Temple). The text functions primarily as a divine chastisement, asserting that the Saints have committed a 'grievous sin' by neglecting this construction project. The revelation outlines the specific purpose of the temple: to 'endow' the chosen elders with 'power from on high,' drawing a direct parallel to the Apostles waiting in Jerusalem for Pentecost. It provides specific architectural dimensions (55 by 65 feet) and functional designations for the building's interior (worship, sacraments, and a school for apostles). Theologically, the text introduces a high-stakes conditional covenant: while God chastens those He loves to prepare them for deliverance, it explicitly warns that if the Saints do not keep the commandments, 'the love of the Father shall not continue with you.' The revelation closes with unique Christological titles ('Son Ahman,' 'Alphus,' 'Omegus'), blending biblical imagery with distinctive Mormon nomenclature.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (identified as Son Ahman, Alphus, Omegus), Joseph Smith (The Prophet/Receiver), The Three Presidency appointed to oversee construction), The Saints (Recipients of the rebuke)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL DIVINE LOVE

Assertion: The love of the Father is contingent upon the Saints keeping the commandments.

"If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you (D&C 95:12)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, God's love is an attribute of His nature and is secured for the believer through Christ's finished work (Romans 8:35-39). While fellowship may be disrupted by sin, the fundamental love of God is not withdrawn. D&C 95:12 introduces a terrifying conditionality: 'the love of the Father shall not continue with you' if commandments are broken. This shifts the security of the believer from the character of God to the performance of the human agent, creating a theology where divine affection must be maintained through works.

2. TEMPLE ENDOWMENT

Assertion: Spiritual power and the 'pouring out of the Spirit' are contingent upon building a physical structure.

"I gave unto you a commandment that you should build a house, in the which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high (D&C 95:8)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text argues that the 'endowment of power' is a future event requiring a specific physical location (the Kirtland Temple). In contrast, the New Testament teaches that the body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and that the Spirit was poured out 'once for all' at Pentecost. The requirement of a physical building to access spiritual power represents a regression to Old Covenant typology, effectively denying the universal availability of the Spirit to all believers anywhere.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The primary theological gap lies in the nature of God's covenantal love. D&C 95:12 explicitly states that God's love will discontinue if commandments are not kept. This is a fundamental departure from the New Covenant, where the believer's standing is secured by the obedience of Christ (Romans 5:19). Furthermore, the text creates a 'geographic' Holy Spirit, where the 'endowment of power' is restricted to a specific building, reversing the New Testament teaching that the Spirit is poured out on all flesh and that true worship is no longer bound to Jerusalem or a specific mountain (John 4:21-24).

Shared Values:

Desire for spiritual power; Importance of prayer and fasting; Concept of divine chastisement for growth

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) – God's love is presented as conditional upon obedience (v12).
2. [Major] Theology Proper (Nature of God) – Redefinition of 'Lord of Sabaoth' and use of corrupted Greek titles ('Alphus/Omegus') undermines the claim of divine omniscience/authorship.
3. [Major] Universal Priesthood / Temple of the Spirit – Re-establishes a physical temple requirement for access to spiritual power, denying the sufficiency of the believer's body as the temple.

Semantic Warnings:

"Lord of Sabaoth"

In Text: The creator of the first day, the beginning and the end (D&C 95:7).

Evangelical: Lord of Hosts (Armies). From the Hebrew 'Tzevaot'.

Example: *The text redefines a standard Hebrew military title for God into a creation/chronological title.*

"Endowment"

In Text: A specific impartation of power tied to the temple rituals.

Evangelical: The gift of the Holy Spirit given to all believers at conversion (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Example: *In Mormonism, one goes to the temple to receive their endowment; in Christianity, one receives the Spirit by faith in Christ.*

"Alphus and Omegus"

In Text: Titles for Christ (D&C 95:17).

Evangelical: Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8, 22:13) - The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

Example: *The text uses 'Alphus' and 'Omegus,' which are pseudo-Greek or Latinized corruptions of the actual Greek letters Alpha and Omega.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to 'deliverance' and retaining the 'love of the Father' through obedience.

How Attained: Through keeping commandments, specifically the building of the temple.

Basis of Assurance: Performance-based: 'If you keep my commandments...'

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text explicitly threatens the withdrawal of God's love for disobedience, which is the antithesis of Justification by Faith Alone where the believer is accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6) regardless of performance.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Build the house of the Lord immediately
2. Call a solemn assembly
3. Appoint three men to oversee construction
4. Dedicate the lower court for worship/sacrament
5. Dedicate the higher court for the school of the apostles

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept chastisement as a sign of love
2. Cease contentions in the School of the Prophets
3. Prioritize temple construction over other concerns

Ritual Requirements:

1. Fasting

2. Mourning
3. Sacrament offering
4. Solemn Assembly

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 12, it says the love of the Father will not continue with you if you don't keep the commandments. How does that make you feel about your security in God?
2. Verse 7 defines 'Lord of Sabaoth' as the creator of the first day. I've noticed in Hebrew dictionaries 'Sabaoth' means 'armies' or 'hosts.' Why do you think the definition here is different?
3. Why do you think the Lord used the terms 'Alphus' and 'Omegus' instead of the biblical 'Alpha' and 'Omega'?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Hunger for Power from on High – The text taps into a genuine desire for spiritual power and transformation. [Acts 1:8 promises this power comes upon ***all*** believers when the Holy Spirit comes, not through a ritual in a building.]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Fear of Abandonment [Severe] – The explicit threat that God's love will cease if commandments are not kept creates a relationship based on fear and performance rather than security and adoption.
2. Works-Righteousness [Moderate] – The burden of physical construction and ritual performance is placed as a prerequisite for spiritual blessing, rather than blessing being a gift of grace.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (Gnosis). The text claims to reveal 'wisdom' and the 'mind of the Lord' regarding specific building dimensions.

Verification Method: Obedience to the command serves as the verification; if they build it, they receive power.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the illuminated Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). This text relies on the current prophet's utterance, even when that utterance contains linguistic errors (Alphus/Omegus) or theological contradictions (conditional love).

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: June 1, 1833

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: The terms 'Alphus' and 'Omegus' in verse 17 are linguistic anomalies. They appear to be attempts to use the Greek 'Alpha' and 'Omega' but are declined incorrectly (or Latinized) in a way that does not exist in Greek. This suggests the author had limited knowledge of biblical languages rather than receiving dictation from a divine source fluent in them.