

1851 EDITION

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Revelation 3 | VOLUME: Pearl Of Great Price | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

This text, known in modern Latter-day Saint canon as the latter half of Doctrine and Covenants Section 27, presents a sweeping assertion of ecclesiastical authority. Written as the voice of Jesus Christ, it outlines a future eschatological banquet where the Savior will drink the 'fruit of the vine' with Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Crucially, the guest list establishes the restoration of priesthood authority: it includes Moroni (Book of Mormon keys), Elias (Restoration keys), John the Baptist (Aaronic Priesthood), Elijah (Sealing keys), the Patriarchs, Michael (identified as Adam), and Peter, James, and John (Apostolic keys). The text serves as a theological bridge, connecting the nascent Mormon movement directly to the biblical narrative by claiming that these ancient figures physically visited Smith and Cowdery to confer authority ('keys') upon them. It concludes with a hortatory command to put on the 'whole armour' of God, borrowing heavily from Pauline imagery to frame the movement's struggle as a spiritual war requiring divine protection and strict obedience to the newly restored order.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ, Moroni, Elias, John the Baptist, Joseph Smith, jun., Oliver Cowdery, Elijah, Joseph (Son of Jacob), Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Michael (Adam), Peter, James, John (The Beloved)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. RESTORATION OF PRIESTHOOD AUTHORITY

Assertion: Priesthood authority was lost and had to be physically restored by angelic visitation (John the Baptist for Aaronic; Peter, James, and John for Apostolic).

"John I have sent unto you... to ordain you unto this first Priesthood... and also with Peter, and James, and John... by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be Apostles"

Evangelical Comparison: This doctrine fundamentally contradicts the Evangelical understanding of Hebrews 7, which teaches that the Levitical (Aaronic) priesthood was fulfilled and rendered obsolete by Christ's perfect, unchangeable priesthood. Evangelicals believe all Christians are a 'royal priesthood' (1 Peter 2:9) with direct access to God. Mormonism asserts here that specific 'keys' and ordination by physical lineage or angelic intervention are necessary to administer the gospel, effectively rebuilding the veil that Christ tore.

2. DIFFERENTIATION OF ELIAS AND ELIJAH

Assertion: Elias and Elijah are distinct figures with different dispensational keys.

"and also with Elias... and also Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts"

Evangelical Comparison: The text treats Elias and Elijah as two separate beings appearing at the eschatological banquet. In Biblical scholarship, Elias is merely the Greek form of the name Elijah used in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 17:3). By separating them into two distinct prophets with distinct keys, the text creates a theological novelty unsupported by the linguistic evidence of the Bible.

3. MICHAEL AS ADAM

Assertion: The archangel Michael is the pre-mortal/post-mortal identity of Adam, the first man.

"Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days"

Evangelical Comparison: The text explicitly identifies Michael the Archangel as Adam, and further identifies him as the 'Ancient of Days' from Daniel 7. In standard Christian theology, the Ancient of Days is a title for God the Father, and Adam is a distinct human creation, not an angelic prince. This elevates Adam to a semi-divine status as the 'prince of all'.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in Ecclesiology and Soteriology. This text constructs a 'Great Apostasy' narrative by implication—necessitating a restoration of keys by Peter, James, and John. Evangelicalism rejects the idea that the gates of hell prevailed against the church or that the priesthood needed restoring. Furthermore, the text elevates the 'Book of Mormon' to the status of containing the 'fulness of my everlasting gospel,' implying the Bible is insufficient or lacks this fulness.

Shared Values:

Belief in the Second Coming of Christ; Reverence for Biblical Apostles and Prophets; Spiritual Warfare (Armor of God); Importance of the Sacrament/Communion

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Universal Priesthood – Re-establishes a mediating priesthood hierarchy between the believer and God.
2. [Major] Sola Scriptura – Introduces new revelation and redefines biblical figures (Elias/Elijah separation) contrary to the biblical text.
3. [Critical] Christology (Sufficiency of Christ) – Implies Christ's work was not sufficient to maintain the church, requiring a 19th-century restoration.
4. [Major] Theology Proper – Confuses the Creator/creature distinction by identifying the 'Ancient of Days' (God) as Adam (man).

Semantic Warnings:

"Priesthood"

In Text: A hierarchical power and authority granted by ordination from those holding 'keys' (Aaronic/Melchizedek).

Evangelical: The status of all believers who have access to God through Christ (1 Peter 2:5-9).

Example: *In this text, Smith is 'ordained' to a priesthood; in the NT, believers are born into a royal priesthood.*

"Keys"

In Text: Specific authorization to administer ordinances and govern the church, held by specific individuals.

Evangelical: Metaphor for the authority of the Gospel message to open the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:19).

Example: *The text speaks of keys of the 'stick of Ephraim' and 'restoration,' concepts foreign to the biblical usage of keys.*

"Elias"

In Text: A specific prophet/preparer distinct from Elijah.

Evangelical: The Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Elijah.

Example: *The text lists Elias AND Elijah as separate guests; the Bible uses the names interchangeably for the same person depending on the language of the manuscript.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to the 'fulness of the gospel' found in the Book of Mormon and the 'keys' of the kingdom.

How Attained: Through the administration of the priesthood keys restored by these angels (ordinances).

Basis of Assurance: Confidence is placed in the validity of the restoration and the authority of the leaders.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text emphasizes 'keys,' 'ordinations,' and 'armour' (works/obedience) rather than faith in the finished work of Christ. It suggests access to the kingdom is mediated through these restored keys.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Marvel not
2. Lift up your hearts and rejoice
3. Gird up your loins
4. Take upon you my whole armour

5. Stand
6. Be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask
7. Be faithful until I come

Implicit Obligations:

1. Acknowledge Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as the sole authorized holders of apostolic keys
2. Accept the Book of Mormon as the 'stick of Ephraim'
3. Submit to the hierarchical authority structure established by these keys

Ritual Requirements:

1. Partaking of the fruit of the vine (Sacrament/Communion)
2. Ordination to Priesthood (Aaronic and Apostolic)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The text mentions both Elias and Elijah as separate people. Since 'Elias' is just the Greek way of saying 'Elijah' in the New Testament, how do you understand them being two different people here?
2. The text says Peter, James, and John were sent to ordain Joseph. If believers are already a 'royal priesthood' through Christ (1 Peter 2:9), why was a restoration of the specific apostolic office necessary?
3. How does the identification of Adam as the 'Ancient of Days' fit with Daniel 7, where the Ancient of Days seems to be God the Father judging the nations?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Eschatological Banquet – Christ promises to drink the fruit of the vine with us in His Father's Kingdom (Matt 26:29). This highlights the longing for communion with God. [Revelation 19:9 (Marriage Supper of the Lamb)]
2. The Armor of God – This is a direct quote from Ephesians 6, showing a shared desire for protection against evil through God's provision. [Ephesians 6:10-18]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Dependency on Hierarchy [Severe] – The believer is made dependent on a specific lineage of men (Smith, Cowdery, and successors) for access to God's authority and ordinances, rather than having direct access through Christ.
2. Cognitive Dissonance [Mild] – The believer must reconcile the text's claim that Elias and Elijah are different people with the linguistic fact that they are the same name, creating a tension between faith and scholarship.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (Joseph Smith speaking as Christ).

Verification Method: Implicitly, the verification is the testimony of the prophet and the internal witness of the Spirit regarding the text's claims.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the objective, finished canon of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). This text relies on subjective claims of secret angelic visitations that cannot be historically verified.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: July 1830 (Original revelation); Expanded text published in 1835/1851.

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: The original 1830 Book of Commandments version of this revelation was much shorter. The verses detailing the visits of Peter, James, John, and the other angels were added in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants edition, retroactively inserting the priesthood restoration narrative into the earlier revelation.