

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 27

This section was originally two separate revelations. Verses 1-4 were the first revelation which Smith received directly from an angel which appeared to him. Verses 5-18 are the second revelation, and the circumstances regarding how it was received are unknown. The second revelation was apparently appended to the first because of related themes.

1 LISTEN to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer, whose word is quick and powerful. 2 For, behold, I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory--remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins. 3 Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, that you shall not purchase wine neither strong drink of your enemies; 4 wherefore, you shall partake of none except it is made new among you; yea, in this my Father's kingdom which shall be built up on the earth.

v1-4 The Lord (v. 1), by one of His angels, tells Smith the spiritual symbolism of the sacrament is the most important thing, not the physical aspects of the ritual (v. 2). But, while the physical aspects are discounted, the Lord admonishes Smith to exercise wisdom and not to indiscriminate in what they do use (v. 3). Rather, the Church should use new wine, or unfermented grape juice, which they have made themselves (v. 4).

v1 A standard authority statement, cp. D&C 1:1-3, 6:2.

v2 Exactly what is eaten and drunk does not matter so long as people recognize and acknowledge the implied symbolism, which in the second half of the verse is presented as:

eat -> bread -> body -> resurrection -> physical salvation
drink -> wine -> blood -> sin remission -> spiritual salvation

v3 The standard interpretation on this verse is the Lord is implicitly warning Smith against being poisoned by his enemies, cp. Alma 55:30-31. However, an alternate reading would be v. 3 placing constraints on the statement of v. 2. Verse 2 says "the physical aspect doesn't matter", but v. 3 then places a constraint on this statement by saying "while it doesn't matter, that doesn't mean you can be careless about it". In v. 2 the Lord is emphasizing the spiritual over the physical, then v. 3 informs us that even though this is the case that doesn't mean we shouldn't use wisdom in dealing with the physical aspects.

5 Behold, this is wisdom in me; wherefore, marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth, and with Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim; 6 And also with Elias, to whom I have committed the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, concerning the last days; 7 And also John the son of Zacharias, which Zacharias he (Elias) visited and gave promise that he should have a son, and his name should be John, and he should be filled with the spirit of Elias; 8 which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron; 9 And also Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, that the whole earth may not be smitten with a curse; 10 And also with Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain; 11 And also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days; 12 And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them; 13 Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; 14 And also with all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world.

v5-14 Following themes presented in the Gospels at the institution of the sacrament (cf. Matt. 26:26-29), the Lord sermonizes on the next time He will partake of the sacrament with His people. This will be when all keys from all dispensations are committed to Him at the advent of the Millennium. All key holders throughout all dispensations will defer to Him and be with Him in His glory (v. 5-13) along with all of those who are redeemed by Him (v. 14).

v5 "drink of the fruit of the vine", aside from the obvious sacramental theme, additional symbolism can be derived from cross reference with Deut. 32:14 as a historical reference and Isa. 65:21 as an eschatological reference. In the latter eschatological reference from Isaiah, Israel is blessed in the promised land with peace, security, and bounty.

v6 "Elias", it is unclear precisely who this person is. Some are obviously called in the "spirit of Elijah/Elias" as was John

Baptist, but there appears to be some specific person named Elias probably from the Abrahamic dispensation (although not necessarily, he may hold the keys to the Patriarchal Priesthood, which is also called the Abrahamic Priesthood) that we just don't know much about, cf. D&C 110:12. See the LDS edition Bible Dictionary entry for "Elias" for additional discussion on this confusing person/calling.

15 wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand. 16 Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you; 17 Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; 18 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen.

v15-18 These verses paraphrases Eph. 6:11-17 omitting some material and adding some new material. The pugilistic imagery is used intentionally to show the saints are in a struggle against the adversary for their spiritual lives, cf. Eph. 6:12.

Closing the section off with a passage that has to be interpreted figuratively and spiritually, as the Lord surely doesn't intend us to gird on literal armor, emphasizes the spiritual aspects of the sacrament. He expects us to literally administer and eat the sacrament, but the spiritual symbolic meaning is what He wants to think about when we do it. Taking the sacrament and recognizing its symbolic meaning is one of the ways we put on this spiritual armor of God.

v15 "that ye may be able to stand", having reference to standing in holy places and not be moved by the destruction visited upon the wicked on the Day of the Lord, cp. D&C 45:32, D&C 87:8, D&C 101:22. It may also have reference to being at the Judgement Bar if using a figurative spiritual interpretation, cf. 3 Ne. 27:20, D&C 128:24.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 27

The first excerpt below from Smith's writings is plain as to when the first section of revelation was received but ambiguous as to when the second part of the revelation was received. The second excerpt below contains a quotation from Knight that plainly indicates the two revelations comprising this section of the D&C were received at different times and later conjoined.

Excerpt from History of the Church

Early in the month of August Newel Knight and his wife paid us a visit at my place in Harmony, Pennsylvania; and as neither his wife nor mine had been as yet confirmed, it was proposed that we should confirm them, and partake together of the Sacrament, before he and his wife should leave us. In order to prepare for this I set out to procure some wine for the occasion, but had gone only a short distance when I was met by a heavenly messenger, and received the following revelation, the first four paragraphs of which were written at this time, and the remainder in the September following:

[text of D&C 27 quoted]

In obedience to the above commandment, we prepared some wine of our own making, and held our meeting, consisting only of five, viz., Newel Knight and his wife, myself and my wife, and John Whitmer. We partook together of the Sacrament, after which we confirmed these two sisters into the Church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us, we praised the Lord God, and rejoiced exceedingly. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 1, pages 106-108)

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

During the first week of August 1830, Newel Knight and his wife went to Harmony to visit Joseph and Emma Smith. Because neither Emma nor Sally Knight had been confirmed members of the Church, the two couples decided to attend to that ordinance and partake of the sacrament. Remembering this occasion, Newel Knight recorded,

Brother Joseph set out to procure some wine for the occasion, but he had gone only a short distance, when he was met by a heavenly messenger, and received the first four verses of the revelation.... In obedience to this revelation we prepared some wine of our own make, and held our meeting, consisting of only five persons namely, Joseph Smith and wife, John Whitmer, and myself and wife. We partook of the sacrament, after which we

confirmed the two sisters into the Church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us. We praised the God of Israel and rejoiced exceedingly. [Newel Knight Journal, Church Archives]

Newel Knight further stated that section 27 was originally two separate revelations: the first four verses were received in Harmony, Pennsylvania, and the remaining verses were received in Fayette, New York. (Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 39)

Comparison of Original 1833 Text with Emended 1835 Version

We know from both Joseph Smith and Newell Knight that v. 1-5 of the 1833 version (which is v. 1-4 of the 1835 and subsequent versions) was received separate from the subsequent text, and are therefore two revelations placed together because of related themes. No change occurs in the text of the first revelation between the 1833 and 1835 revelations.

Substantial changes in content occur in the second portion of text which is a second revelation. The changes consist of significant expansions in the 1835 version of themes only briefly introduced in the 1833 version. It is probable the 1833 version is a summarized version of the original second revelation and the 1835 version is the full content of the original. Unfortunately, we know very little about the origin of the second revelation, so we are left to speculate.

The verse numbering in the 1835 D&C below is that of the contemporary 1981 LDS edition for ease of use. The textual emendations occurred in the 1835 Kirtland edition of the 1st Edition Doctrine & Covenants.

1833 Book of Commandments

1 Listen to the voice
of Jesus Christ,
your Lord,
your God and
your Redeemer,
whose word is
quick and powerful.
2 For behold I say unto you,
that it mattereth not
what ye shall eat, or
what ye shall drink,
when ye partake
of the sacrament,
if it so be that ye do it
with an eye
single to my glory;
3 Remembering unto the Father
my body which was laid down
for you, and
my blood which was shed
for the remission of your sins:
4 Wherefore a commandment
I give unto you,
that you shall not

1835 Doctrine & Covenants

1 LISTEN to the voice
of Jesus Christ,
your Lord,
your God, and
your Redeemer,
whose word is
quick and powerful.
2 For, behold, I say unto you,
that it mattereth not
what ye shall eat or
what ye shall drink
when ye partake
of the sacrament,
if it so be that ye do it
with an eye
single to my glory--
remembering unto the Father
my body which was laid down
for you, and
my blood which was shed
for the remission of your sins.
3 Wherefore, a commandment
I give unto you,
that you shall not

purchase wine,
neither strong drink
of your enemies:
5 Wherefore you shall
partake of none,
except it is made new
among you,
yea, in this
my Father's kingdom
which shall be built up
on the earth.
6 Behold this is wisdom in me,
wherefore marvel not,
for the hour cometh
that I will drink of
the fruit of the vine
with you, on the earth, and

purchase wine
neither strong drink
of your enemies;
4 Wherefore, you shall
partake of none
except it is made new
among you;
yea, in this
my Father's kingdom
which shall be built up
on the earth.
5 Behold, this is wisdom in me;
wherefore, marvel not,
for the hour cometh
that I will drink of
the fruit of the vine
with you on the earth, and
with Moroni,
whom I have sent unto you
to reveal the Book of Mormon,
containing the fulness
of my everlasting gospel,
to whom I have committed
the keys of the record
of the stick of Ephraim;
6 And also with Elias,
to whom I have committed
the keys of bringing to pass
the restoration of all things
spoken by the mouth
of all the holy prophets
since the world began,
concerning the last days;
7 And also John
the son of Zacharias,
which Zacharias
he (Elias) visited and
gave promise
that he should have a son, and
his name should be John, and
he should be filled
with the spirit of Elias;
8 Which John I have sent
unto you, my servants,
Joseph Smith, Jun., and
Oliver Cowdery,
to ordain you
unto the first priesthood

which you have received,
that you might be called and
ordained even as Aaron;
9 And also Elijah,
unto whom I have committed
the keys of the power
of turning the hearts of
the fathers to the children,
and the hearts of the children
to the fathers,
that the whole earth
may not be smitten
with a curse;
10 And also with Joseph and
Jacob, and
Isaac, and
Abraham,
your fathers,
by whom the promises remain;
11 And also with Michael, or
Adam, the father of all,
the prince of all,
the ancient of days;
12 And also with
Peter, and James, and John,
whom I have sent unto you,
by whom I have ordained you and
confirmed you to be apostles,
and especial witnesses
of my name, and
bear the keys of your ministry
and of the same things
which I revealed unto them;
13 Unto whom I have committed
the keys of my kingdom, and
a dispensation of
the gospel for the last times;
and for the fulness of times,
in the which I will
gather together in one
all things,
both which are in heaven, and
which are on earth;
14 And also
with all those
whom my Father
hath given me
out of the world.

with all those
whom my Father
hath given me
out of the world:

7 Wherefore
lift up your hearts and
rejoice, and
gird up your loins and

15 Wherefore,
lift up your hearts and
rejoice, and
gird up your loins, and
take upon you my whole armor,
that ye may be able to
withstand the evil day,
having done all,
that ye may be able to stand.

16 Stand, therefore,
having your loins
girt about with truth,
having on the breastplate
of righteousness, and
your feet shod
with the preparation of
the gospel of peace,
which I have sent mine angels
to commit unto you;

17 Taking the shield
of faith
wherewith ye shall be able
to quench all the fiery darts
of the wicked;

18 And take the helmet
of salvation, and
the sword of
my Spirit,
which I will pour out upon you,
and my word
which I reveal unto you, and
be agreed
as touching all things
whatsoever ye ask of me, and
be faithful until I come,

be faithful until I come:--
even so.

and ye shall be caught up,
that where I am
ye shall be also.

Amen.

Amen.

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