

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 29

Section 29 is a case of the Scriptures commenting on themselves, as the Lord comments on His previous statements. Herein, the Lord explains why people are chosen (v. 3-8), what they are chosen to do (v. 9-45), and the responsibilities that come with being chosen (v. 46-50). The Lord's intent is to give a succinct accounting of the purpose and message of the early Church's first missionaries.

The historical context is that of the second conference of the organized Church, occurring some six months after the founding. Thus, the Lord's intent was to inform this small group of recent converts they were chosen by Him to declare His gospel, and why they are to do this.

Based upon subject, an outline of the text follows:

- Introduction (v. 1-2)
 - Authority Statement (v. 1)
 - Theme of this section (v. 2)
- The purpose of the elect (v. 3-8)
- Declare My gospel (v. 9-45)
 - Warn people of the upcoming Day of the Lord (v. 9-30)
 - Positive, blessed (v. 9-13)
 - A - (v. 9-10) The Day of the Lord, purging the earth
 - B - (v. 11) Initiation of the Millennium
 - C - (v. 12-13) Trump sounds, Judgement, First Resurrection
 - Negative, cursed (v. 14-30)
 - A - (v. 14-21) The Day of the Lord, curses destroy wicked
 - B - (v. 22-25) Fulfillment of the Millennium
 - C - (v. 26-30) Trump sounds, Judgement, Second Resurrection
- Teach the eternal scheme and plan of salvation (v. 31-45)
 - Good: all things were good in the beginning (v. 31-35)
 - Evil: Rebellion of Satan and the Fall of man (v. 36-41)
 - Agency: probation leads to damnation/exaltation (v. 42-45)
- Great things required at the hands of the elect (v. 46-50b)
- Conclusion (v. 50c-d)

The text is highly structured, recommend [D. Lynn Johnson's arrangement](#) for reviewing that structure.

1 LISTEN to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, the Great I AM, whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins; 2 Who will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will hearken to my voice and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer.

v1 This verse is an authority statement similar to that

preceding many of the of the revelations in D&C. However, there is one unique line here: "whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins". The phrase "arm of mercy" is used in Jacob 6:5, Mosiah 29:20, 3 Ne. 9:14. In those cases the Lord is being generally referenced, but here the Lord is possessively referring to His own arm which has "atoned for your sins". The same type of possessive language appears in D&C 49:5, also cp. Isa. 53:10, D&C 19:16-18.

v2 The text of this verse presents the precis of section 29. This verse paraphrases Matt. 23:37, and also see 3 Ne. 10:4-6, D&C 10:65, D&C 43:24. In each of these cases the reference is intimately associated with text that deals with the Lord's desire to protect Israel from destruction (the D&C 10:65 usage deals more with spiritual rather than physical destruction). And in each case the people reject the gospel message, usually delivered by prophets. The result is we should be looking for parallels between the text of this section and the text surrounding those other similar quotes.

3 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that at this time your sins are forgiven you, therefore ye receive these things; but remember to sin no more, lest perils shall come upon you. 4 Verily, I say unto you that ye are chosen out of the world to declare my gospel with the sound of rejoicing, as with the voice of a trump. 5 Lift up your hearts and be glad, for I am in your midst, and am your advocate with the Father; and it is his good will to give you the kingdom. 6 And, as it is written--Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, being united in prayer according to my command, ye shall receive. 7 And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts; 8 Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked.

v3-8 The purpose of the elect is discussed. The Lord informs His ecclesia that their sins are remitted (v. 4), and that they are chosen out of the world so as to preach the gospel to it (v. 5). Hearing such as this should cause them to rejoice as it indicates the Lord is in their midst, and that He is their advocate before the Father (v. 5). The Lord indicates that if they ask in the Spirit (cf. D&C 46:28-30, D&C 50:29-30), they will receive (v. 6). Their calling to gather all who will listen out of the world unto the Lord (v. 7-8a). They are also to warn them against upcoming events (v. 8b). For additional references to the purpose of the elect, cp. Mosiah 8:18, Moroni 7:31, D&C 93:46.

v6 "as it is written", this phrase appears 75 times in the scriptures and is always used as a reference to previously documented scripture. This phrase is repeated verbatim in v. 50, and the same theme is invoked in v. 10, 21, 30. Thus, we should be expecting a lot of paraphrasing of preceding scripture. That the identical phrase is used in the closing and opening strophes also supplies a rhetorical link between the two sections.

v8 The tribulations which they are to warn others to prepare for are those described in v. 9-30.

v9-45 This block of text contains the warnings referred to in v. 9 and the gospel they are to preach referenced in v. 5.

v9-30 These verses discuss the event known as the Day of the Lord, cf. Isa. 2:12, Joel 2:1, D&C 1:10. Much of the material here paraphrases previously existing scripture, especially v. 14-21.

As noted above, the text follows a repetitive complementary pattern which contrasts the positive aspects of the Day of the Lord with the negative. Note the first positive portion (v. 9-13) is quite a bit shorter than the second negative portion (v. 14-30). We might speculate this is because the good who will inherit those things discussed in the positive position have already learned these things, while the wicked remain in ignorance of the Scriptures and therefore need more detail.

9 For the hour is nigh and the day soon at hand when the earth is ripe; and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth; 10 For the hour is nigh, and that which was spoken by mine apostles must be fulfilled; for as they spoke so shall it come to pass; 11 For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand. 12 And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, and it hath gone forth in a firm decree, by the will of the Father, that mine apostles, the Twelve which were with me in my ministry at Jerusalem, shall stand at my right hand at the day of my coming in a pillar of fire, being clothed with robes of righteousness, with crowns upon their heads, in glory even as I am, to judge the whole house of Israel, even as many as have loved me and kept my commandments, and none else. 13 For a trump shall sound both long and loud, even as upon Mount Sinai, and all the earth shall quake, and they shall come forth--yea, even the dead which died in me, to receive a crown of righteousness, and to be clothed upon, even as I am, to be with me, that we may be one.

v9-13 The time is near at hand for the earth to be cleansed (v. 9), according to the testimony of all apostles (v. 10), in preparation for the Millennium (v. 11). All of the faithful among Israel will be judged by the Lord and his 12 apostles, and will be exalted (v. 12). At that time the righteous will be resurrected and united with the Lord in glory (v. 13).

v9 "when the earth is ripe", there are numerous passages describing what this entails, cf. 2 Ne. 28:15-16, Jacob 2:33, Jacob 3:13, Alma 37:28, Alma 45:12, Hela. 13:14, Ether 2:9, Ether 9:20, Moroni 8:3-4.

v12-13 These verses use various NT derived descriptors for those who participate in the First Resurrection. The reference to crowns upon their heads is a particularly popular NT reference to exaltation, cp. 1 Cor. 9:25, 2 Tim. 4:8, 1 Peter 5:4, James 1:12, Rev. 2:10. On v. 12 cp. Rev. 4:2-4.

v14-30 Herein the negative aspects of the Day of the Lord are discussed. The wicked are cursed leading up to the Day of the Lord (v. 14-30), they are destroyed from off the face of the earth at the end of the Millennium (v. 22-25). All those wicked who have died in rebellion will be damned in the Second Resurrection (v. 26-30).

14 But, behold, I say unto you that before this great day shall come the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and there shall be greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath; 15 And there shall be weeping and wailing among the hosts of men; 16 And there shall be a great hailstorm sent forth to destroy the crops of the earth. 17 And it shall come to pass, because of the wickedness of the world, that I will take vengeance upon the wicked, for they will not repent; for the cup of mine indignation is full; for behold, my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not. 18 Wherefore, I the Lord God will send forth flies upon the face of the earth, which shall take hold of the inhabitants thereof, and shall eat their flesh, and shall cause maggots to come in upon them; 19 And their tongues shall be stayed that they shall not utter against me; and their flesh shall fall from off their bones, and their eyes from their sockets; 20 And it shall come to pass that the beasts of the forest and the fowls of the air shall devour them up. 21 And the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall be cast down by devouring fire, according as it is spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet, who spoke of these things, which have not come to pass but surely must, as I live, for abominations shall not reign.

v14-21 This section of text presents events as curses (v. 16 is reminiscent of the curses poured out on Egypt by Moses) poured out upon the wicked because of the Lord's wrath. It is

noticeably more hostile and graphic than its counterpart in v. 9.

v17 "the cup of mine indignation", this is the cup of poison the wicked are forced to drink in Isa. 51:17, Jer. 25:15 and 27, Jer. 51:7. It is the same cup which Jesus drank on behalf of those whom he intercedes for, cp. Matt. 26:39, John 18:11.

v20 For Old Testament sources of this covenant curse see Lev. 26:22, Deut. 32:24, 2 Kings 2:24.

22 And again, verily, verily, I say unto you that when the thousand years are ended, and men again begin to deny their God, then will I spare the earth but for a little season; 23 And the end shall come, and the heaven and the earth shall be consumed and pass away, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. 24 For all old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new, even the heaven and the earth, and all the fulness thereof, both men and beasts, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; 25 And not one hair, neither mote, shall be lost, for it is the workmanship of mine hand.

v22-25 These verses pick up the Millennium theme from v. 11, but here it is referring to the end of the Millennium when people again rebel against the Lord (v. 22). When this happens, the Lord will end the world's mortal existence and renew it in glory (v. 23-25).

v23 Compare Isa. 66:22.

26 But, behold, verily I say unto you, before the earth shall pass away, Michael, mine archangel, shall sound his trump, and then shall all the dead awake, for their graves shall be opened, and they shall come forth--yea, even all. 27 And the righteous shall be gathered on my right hand unto eternal life; and the wicked on my left hand will I be ashamed to own before the Father; 28 Wherefore I will say unto them--Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. 29 And now, behold, I say unto you, never at any time have I declared from mine own mouth that they should return, for where I am they cannot come, for they have no power. 30 But remember that all my judgments are not given unto men; and as the words have gone forth out of my mouth even so shall they be fulfilled, that the first shall be last, and that the last shall be first in all things whatsoever I have created by the word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit.

v26-30 At the final resurrection (v. 26), whereas the righteous enter into the Lord's rest (v. 12-13), the wicked will be rejected from His presence (v. 27-29) even as He has warned they would (v. 30).

v26-27 These verses make reference to the Second Resurrection, or the resurrection of damnation, cp. Dan. 12:1-2, John 5:29.

v27 "will I be ashamed to own", as Jesus made intercession for all persons that they may be redeemed from physical death by resurrection, he "owns" them in that respect per the Old Testament laws of redemption, cf. Lev. 25:23-55. Jesus also covers any inadvertent sins. It is the intentional sins that damn a person and make the Lord ashamed to own one.

v28 "Depart from me, ye cursed", cp. last line of v. 41.

v30 "as the words have gone forth out of my mouth", again referencing the previously documented scripture as is the case with v. 5 and 50.

31 For by the power of my Spirit created I them; yea, all things both spiritual and temporal-- 32 First spiritual, secondly temporal, which is the beginning of my work; and again, first temporal, and secondly spiritual, which is the last of my work-- 33 Speaking unto you that you may naturally understand; but unto myself my works have no end, neither beginning; but it is given unto you that ye may understand, because ye have asked it of me and are agreed. 34 Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam, your father, whom I created. 35 Behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him, for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.

v31-45 These verses focus on the plan of salvation (v. 42-45), but more so the events that brought it about (v. 31-41). This is the second set of doctrines the elect are to preach to the world. This set also serves to explain why the preceding set (v. 9-30) is necessary by establishing the historical context. The Creation and Fall necessitated the Plan of Salvation which requires calling mankind to repentance.

To some degree, the three portions of v. 31-45 antithetically compliment the two A-B-C sections from v. 9-30 as:

v. 9-30	v. 31-45
A - Earth cleansed at the last day	All was good in the beginning
B - Millennial peace	Rebellion & the Fall
C - Judgement	Mortal probation

v31-35 These verses contrast spiritual-eternal things with

temporal-mortal things. The Lord created them all in the beginning and assigned laws with eternal consequences to them as well. None of the laws assigned by Him to Creation are for mortality only, they all have eternal application and consequences.

v32 The text is sufficiently ambiguous to allow at least two interpretations. Using 1 Cor. 15:46 one could simply say it is referring to the spirit body inheriting a corrupt physical body which is later raised in the resurrection as an incorruptible physical body. Or, one could say the first "spiritual-temporal" refers to Adam and Eve pre and post Fall, and the second refers to their offspring who enter into mortality so they may be resurrected. Both readings overlap in substance, and both seem valid.

v33 "my works have no end, neither beginning", the Lord's works are eternal, not strictly mortal, they are not limited in scope in the temporal sense that we experience. From our limited perspective in mortality, things look like they have an end and beginning. We are submerged in the present reality of earthly things, where there is day and night, and changing seasons, and the pressing demands of daily living keep us focused on our present needs of food, safety, comfort and shelter. We experience illness and ageing and decay and death, and demands of time are an ever-present reality. This makes it seem to us like there is a beginning and end to our existence, as we experience life and death.

But, when rising above our present mortal situation, it will be clear the Lord's plans and works are much larger, greater and longer term than what our present limited views can perceive or comprehend. We are presently experiencing things in a temporal sense, but the Lord is in an eternal setting, so our views and perspectives are necessarily different. The Lord tries to explain it to us, but we're not really capable of rising above our present reality to grasp eternal things.

v35 Using the parallelism created in the verse of spiritual commandments and agency, one could complete the temporal commandments couplet by saying they represent "no agency" or "lack of agency". Doing so, one would assume that spiritual commandments would be along the lines of Ethics, Morality, Wisdom and so forth, and the temporal commandments would be along the lines of the sciences of Biology, Physics, Chemistry

and so forth. As "temporal" is equated with natural, carnal and sensual this isn't such a stretch, especially since it is plain to us that indulging in the natural and carnal things frequently results in reduced or lost agency.

36 And it came to pass that Adam, being tempted of the devil--for, behold, the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency; 37 And they were thrust down, and thus came the devil and his angels; 38 And, behold, there is a place prepared for them from the beginning, which place is hell. 39 And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet-- 40 Wherefore, it came to pass that the devil tempted Adam, and he partook of the forbidden fruit and transgressed the commandment, wherein he became subject to the will of the devil, because he yielded unto temptation. 41 Wherefore, I, the Lord God, caused that he should be cast out from the Garden of Eden, from my presence, because of his transgression, wherein he became spiritually dead, which is the first death, even that same death which is the last death, which is spiritual, which shall be pronounced upon the wicked when I shall say: Depart, ye cursed.

v36-41 The rebellion of the adversary and the Fall of man is reviewed in a general manner so as to explain why physical and spiritual death are conditions we find ourselves in. This section clearly places the blame on the adversary as the cause of death.

v36-39 "--for, behold, the devil was before Adam...they could not know sweet--", a parenthesis on the rebellion of the adversary. This terse passage does much to explain the adversary's motives and desires. It also comments on the necessity of there being those in this role or else there would be no "opposition in all things", cp. 2 Ne. 2:15.

v36 "a third part", this passage clearly suggests the numbers were one third of the hosts, or ~33%, and not three groups of indistinct size (e.g., one zealous group, one ambivalent group, one hostile group). Two thirds followed the Father's plan, and one third followed the Adversary's plan.

v40-41 This account of the Fall is interesting as it omits Eve from the story and presents Adam as the one who "yielded to temptation" not Eve. Note in all of the Garden accounts, the Lord only submits the command to Adam. Not at any time in those accounts is the command submitted to Eve by the Lord. And, even beyond that, here Adam is presented as the transgressor of the

commandment, not Eve. It is plain the Lord holds Adam accountable, not Eve.

42 But, behold, I say unto you that I, the Lord God, gave unto Adam and unto his seed, that they should not die as to the temporal death, until I, the Lord God, should send forth angels to declare unto them repentance and redemption, through faith on the name of mine Only Begotten Son. 43 And thus did I, the Lord God, appoint unto man the days of his probation--that by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, even as many as would believe; 44 And they that believe not unto eternal damnation; for they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall, because they repent not; 45 For they love darkness rather than light, and their deeds are evil, and they receive their wages of whom they list to obey.

v42-45 These verses review and explain the necessity of mortal probation, cp. 2 Ne. 2:21. Verses 42-43 are arranged in a couplet focusing on those who heed the Lord and v. 44-45 is a couplet focusing on those who are rebellious. Such an arrangement complements v. 9-13 and v. 14-30 respectively.

46 But behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten; 47 Wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me; 48 For it is given unto them even as I will, according to mine own pleasure, that great things may be required at the hand of their fathers. 49 And, again, I say unto you, that whoso having knowledge, have I not commanded to repent? 50 And he that hath no understanding, it remaineth in me to do according as it is written.

v46-50b This text continues with the theme developed in v. 42-45 and also compliments that of v. 3-8. Here we have persons who are under the age of accountability or who are, for one reason or another, not to be held accountable. This contrasts those in v. 42-45 who are accountable either to their exaltation or destruction. It then goes on to mention "great things required...at the hands of their fathers" (v. 48), which I would equate with the purpose of the elect outlined in v. 3-8. In other words, only children are generally considered unaccountable, so the elect must preach repentance to all accountable persons so that they may exercise their agency and be judged.

v46 Compare Moroni 8:12, D&C 137:10.

v48 "according to mine own pleasure", Jesus holds the keys as the Intercessor before the Father, so He may exercise them as He sees fit.

And now I declare no more unto you at this time. Amen.

v50c-d The Lord abruptly ends the revelation.

Historical Material Pertinent to Doctrine & Covenants 29

This section of revelation was given just prior to the conference of September 26, 1830, held in Fayette, NY at the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr., clearly indicating a modest gathering of individuals (total membership at the point of the conference was 62, 35 having been added since the last conference, per the Far West Record). At the time, unfortunately, it's importance appears to have been overshadowed by the controversy regarding Hiram Page's alleged revelations (cf. D&C 28). Smith does not even comment on this text in his History of the Church. However, the revelation was widely printed, suggesting the early Saints recognized it's importance.

We also know from the preceding section that Oliver Cowdery was told to hold his departure to preaching to the Lamanites until after this conference (cf. D&C 28:10), suggesting it's importance and relevance to Cowdery's and Peter Whitmer, Jr.'s imminent missionary labors.

The minutes of the conference indicate the revelation was given in the presence of six Elders, including Smith, Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Samuel H. Smith, and Thomas B. Marsh.

The text of the revelation was first published in the Evening and Morning Star, volume 1, number 14, dated September, 1832. It was published in the Book of Commandments, 1833, pages 61-67. It was published in the Evening and Morning Star Kirtland reprint, volume 1, number 4, pages 60-62, dated April, 1835. Also in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, pages 112-116. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 4, number 9, pages 130-131, dated March 15, 1843. And it was published in the Millennial Star, volume 4, number 11, pages 165-167, dated March, 1844.

Excerpt from Newell Knight Autobiography

During this time [i.e., during the conference] we had much of the power of God manifested among us and it was wonderful to witness the wisdom that Joseph displayed on this occasion, for truly God gave unto him great wisdom and power, and it seems to me, even now, that none who saw him administer righteousness under such trying circumstances, could doubt that the Lord was

with him, as he acted--not with the wisdom of man, but with the wisdom of God, the Holy Ghost came upon us and filled our hearts with unspeakable joy. Before this memorable conference closed three other revelations [i.e., D&C 29, 30, 31] besides the one already mentioned [i.e., D&C 28] were received from God by our prophet, and we were made to rejoice exceedingly in His goodness. (Newell Knight, "Newel Knight's Journal," Classic Experiences and Adventures, Bookcraft, 1969, Chapter 5, paragraph 11)

Excerpt from The Conference Minutes and Record Book

26 September 1830 • Sunday

Minutes of the second Conference held by the Elders of this Church according to adjournment. Sept. 26. 1830.

Elders

Joseph Smith jr.

Oliver Cowdery

David Whitmer

John Whitmer

Peter Whitmer [Jr.]

Samuel H. Smith

Thomas B. Marsh.

Br. Joseph Smith jr. appointed leader of the Conference by vote.

Brother Joseph Smith jr. was appointed by the voice of the Conference to receive and write Revelations & Commandments for this Church.

The fifth chapter of Isaiah read by Br. Joseph Smith jr. & prayer by the same. Articles & Covenants read by br. Oliver Cowdery and remarks by Brother Joseph Smith jr.

No. of the several members uniting to this Church since the last Conference, thirty-five; making in whole now belonging to this Church sixty-two. Br. Newel Knight ordained a priest under the hand of brother Oliver Cowdery and prayer by the same. Prayer by all present. Exholation [meaning unknown, possibly exhortation, exultation, exhilaration] by all the Elders respectively. Singing and prayer in behalf of Br. Oliver Cowdery & Peter Whitmer jr. who were previously appointed to go to the Lamanites.

Conference adjourned to January 1. 1831. to be held at this

place. Br. David Whitmer appointed to keep the Church records until the next Conference. Prayer by br. Oliver Cowdery. ([Minute Book, page 2](#), minutes taken by Oliver Cowdery.)

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