

Section 27

Section 27 is one of the revelations Joseph did not know he needed. He set out to get wine so he and Emma could have the sacrament with Sally and Newell Knight, who were visiting so Sally and Emma could be confirmed. An angel appeared to Joseph and clued him in.¹ Joseph received the first four and a half verses and parts of verses 14 and 18. Both Joseph and Newel Knight said the rest of verses 5–18 were revealed a few weeks later.²

It is easy to assume that this revelation is about the Word of Wisdom, but it is not. It's about the sacrament. Speaking for the Savior, the angel informed Joseph that it does not matter what the Saints eat or drink for the sacrament. What matters is that they partake with an eye single to the Lord's glory, signifying to God that they remember the Savior's body sacrificed and blood shed for the remission of their sins.

Section 27 penetrates to the heart of the sacrament. If one's eye is not single to God's glory in that ordinance, tradition can transcend substance. The angel commanded Joseph not to purchase wine or distilled drinks from people they could not trust. Rather, they should make their own sacramental wine. As a result of section 27, according to Brigham Young, "We use water as though it were wine; for we are

¹ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 51, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 24, 2020.

² Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*, 1846, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

commanded to drink not of wine for this sacred purpose unless it be made by our own hands.”³

The later text of Section 27 adds considerable detail to the earlier prophecy that Christ would partake of sacramental wine with Joseph and others. It emphasizes priesthood keys—rights associated with priesthood—and the transmission of those keys to Joseph by biblical prophets. It is the earliest document we have confirming that Peter, James, and John ordained Joseph an apostle.

Section 27 also applies to Latter-day Saints the counsel Paul gave the Ephesian Saints to arm themselves spiritually.⁴ The revelation identifies the archangel Michael as Adam, and Adam as the “Ancient of days” referred to in the Book of Daniel.⁵

Newel Knight remembered how he and Sally, Emma, and Joseph obeyed this revelation. They

prepared some wine at our own make, and held our meeting. . . . 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.⁶

³ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 19: 92 (1877), also see 10:245, and 19:92. John Henry Smith, *Diary* (July 1906), Manuscripts Division, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

⁴ Compare Ephesians 6:11–18.

⁵ This teaching is distinctive to Joseph Smith. He equated the archangel Michael with the Bible's Adam, an idea apparently first documented in Oliver Cowdery's January 1, 1834, letter to John Whitmer (Oliver Cowdery Letterbook, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, 15). Similarly, Joseph interpreted references to the “Ancient of days” in the Book of Daniel (7:9, 13, 22) as references to Adam. When Daniel “Speaks of the Ancient of days,” Joseph taught in 1839, “he means the oldest man, our Father Adam, Michael” (Willard Richards Pocket Companion, 63, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah).

⁶ Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*, 1846, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.