

new and everlasting covenant, D&C 132:1-15, LeGrand Baker

D&C 132=1-15

One of the most misunderstood passages of scripture – a misunderstanding that the Mormon fundamentalists base many of their claims on – is the first 15 verses of D&C 132. What it is NOT is a statement about polygamy. What it IS is an affirmation that God keeps the covenants he made at the Council.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines –

It is misreading that verse that causes the problems. Joseph's question was not about polygamy, it was about the *justification for* specific individuals having more than one wife. So the Lord is now going to answer the question – the question is “**wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants...**” Verse 15 begins with the word “wherefore.” That is a conjunction which divides the rationale from the conclusion. So in the first 14 verses he talks about the rationale, explaining the reason for the justification. That reason is based on Covenants made at the Council in Heaven, and he talks about the importance of those covenants. Then, beginning with verse 15, he talks about Celestial Marriage.

2 Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. [“This matter” is the question of their justification.]

A word about justification: It is a legal term that means circumstances get in the way of normal lawful accountability. For example, in law murder is a criminal act, while killing someone in self defense is justified. In the gospel there are two categories of justification: justification before the act, and justification after the fact. Both are dependent upon the atonement and on the Saviour as our “advocate before the Father.” Justification after the fact relies on repentance: If one repents the Saviour takes the burden of the sin and leaves one as though the sin had never been committed. Justification before the act is also dependent upon the Saviour's atonement, but does not require repentance. The classic example is Nephi's cutting off Laban's head after a conversation with the Spirit in which Nephi learned that he would not be responsible for Laban's death. As far as I know that kind of justification is very rare, but most crimes committed by religionists are based on their claim of that kind of justification. The Spanish Inquisition and the present atrocities in the Near East are but two examples. But so are the less overtly bloodthirsty crimes of intolerance and gossip. Self-justification based on religions claims are very dangerous because they leave people blind to their own needs for repentance and vulnerable to repeated sin. Claiming that kind of justification without having it affirmed by revelation from the Lord is a sure way of opening the gates of hell and jumping in.

What the Lord is about to explain to the Prophet Joseph is that the Patriarchs' having multiple wives was a matter of prior justification, and that justification was based on assignments they received and covenants they made at the Council in Heaven. It is the nature and importance of

those kinds of covenants which he talks about in the first 14 verses of this revelation.

3 Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

“This law,” as he is about to explain is the law based on those eternal covenants. The law that one “must obey” it is not about plural marriage; rather it is the law based on the covenants one made at the Council, as he says in the next verse.

4 For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.

When the Lord says “no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory,” that is serious business. The covenant he is talking about is “new” because it is renewed in the world, and it is “everlasting” because it was made before we came here and its consequences reach into eternity.

On that same page in the Doctrine and Covenants, but in the previous section, one reads,

1 In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;
2 And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; (D&C 131:1-2)

It is easy to transfer that statement sound in section 131 to section 132 where the latter reads “new and everlasting covenant” so that 132 reads, “meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.” But to make that change only distorts the meaning of the revelation. Here is another example. The whole of D&C 22 reads.

1 Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning.
2 Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works.
3 For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old.
4 Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.

Using the same rationale, I suppose one could stick that statement into section 132 and argue that it was only talking about baptism. A very loose interpretation of the language might permit that either of those arguments, but neither marriage nor baptism is what the first 14 verses of section 132 is talking about.

To further explain what the origin of law, in the next verse the Lord ties them to the covenants made at the Council in Heaven.

5 For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world.

In the next verses he explains what that “new and everlasting covenant” is.

6 And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.

7 And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.

That is one of the most legalistic passages in the scriptures. If one sets aside the legal words and the part about only one prophet at a time holding the keys, it reads this way:

6 And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.

7 And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, ...that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise ... are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead. [“unto this end” means according to the objects of the land and the covenants]

Then the Lord explains why that is so.

8 Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.

9 Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name?

10 Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?

11 And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?

This is the way I read those last four verses. The Lord will not consider what one does in this world as good as acceptable unless what one does it in accordance with to the covenants we made with the Saviour and his Father “before the world was.” And the Lord will require nothing of us in this life except those things which are inherent in those same covenants.

12 I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord.

If he is still talking about the same law, it those individual covenants which people made before they came here.

13 And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God.

These new and everlasting covenants do not preclude one’s free agency. There are all sorts of governmental, commercial, institutional, and individual powers that are exercised by persons who do not act in accordance to that “law.”

14 For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed.

We are back to the idea of meekness. To be meek before the Lord is to keep the covenants one made at the Council. That kind of meekness is a sure way to eternal life. God keeps his covenants but he will not be mocked. If one does not keep his covenants, one cannot receive the rewards promised by those covenants.

15 Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world....(D&C132:1-15)

“Therefore....” Having established the principle of the importance of foreordination, the Lord will now apply that principle to the question of how those men could be justified for having more than one wife, The justification is simply this: that was the arrangement at the Council. Implicit in that justification is another principle: if that arrangement was not part of one’s pre-mortal covenants, and a man takes multiple wives anyway, he is in very bad trouble.