

In 1842 Mormon Church president and founder Joseph Smith revealed the doctrine of "Celestial Marriage" (polygamy) to followers as the only way to attain the "fullness of exaltation." The full revelation was recorded in their Doctrine and Covenants; section 132, making it "scripture" to Mormon faithful. It reads more like a threat to his wife Emma than a revelation from God.



Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants reads:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justify 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....

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.

For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.

And I command mine hand-maid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else period, but if she will not abide this commandment she will be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.

Members of the Mormon Church continued the practice of polygamy after establishing themselves in the Utah Territory, keeping Utah from statehood for more than 30 years. In 1882, Congress passed the Edmunds Tucker Act, resulting in a major crusade against polygamists in the form of raids and arrests.



In 1888, Mormon Church President Wilford Woodruff stated: "We won't quit practicing plural marriage until Christ shall come." But in 1890, Woodruff issued a proclamation and signed "The Manifesto," pledging to Congress that Mormons had given up polygamy, thus paving the way for statehood. In truth, Mormons, including Woodruff, continued to marry plural wives until the Smoot investigations forced then-church President Joseph F. Smith into issuing the second Manifesto in 1904. Since that time, church members have been excommunicated for practicing polygamy.

Mormon fundamentalists maintain that LDS President John Taylor secretly ordained several priesthood holders (among them, John Woolley) to continue the practice of polygamy through a special dispensation of priesthood authority. They further believe that Taylor gave the priesthood holders the authority both to perform polygamous marriages and to ordain others with authority to perform polygamous marriages to insure that children would be born to polygamous parents each year thereafter to the millennium.