



Baptism

Chapter 20

The Commandment to Be Baptized

- Why must we be baptized?

Today, as in the days of Jesus, there are certain principles and ordinances of the gospel that we must learn and obey. A gospel principle is a true belief or teaching. An ordinance is a rite or a ceremony. The first two principles of the gospel are faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance. Baptism is the first ordinance of the gospel. One of the instructions the Lord gave His Apostles was, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20).

We Must Be Baptized for the Remission of Our Sins

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, repent, and are baptized, our sins are forgiven through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

From the scriptures we learn that John the Baptist “did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). The Apostle Peter taught, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Following Paul’s conversion, Ananias said to him, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16).

We Must Be Baptized to Become Members of the Church of Jesus Christ

“All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized . . . that . . . have truly repented of all their sins . . . shall be received by baptism into his church” (D&C 20:37).

For teachers: Use questions at the beginning of a section to start a discussion and send class members or family members to the text to find more information. Use questions at the end of a section to help class members or family members ponder and discuss the meaning of what they have read and apply it in their lives.

We Must Be Baptized before We Can Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost

The Lord said, “If thou wilt turn unto me, and . . . repent of all thy transgressions [sins], and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, . . . ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Moses 6:52).

We Must Be Baptized to Show Obedience

Jesus Christ was without sin, yet He was baptized. He said His baptism was necessary “to fulfil all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). The prophet Nephi explained that the Lord told him, “Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do . . . with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism” (2 Nephi 31:12–13).

We Must Be Baptized to Enter the Celestial Kingdom

Jesus said, “Whoso believeth in me, and is baptized . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned” (3 Nephi 11:33–34). Baptism is the gateway through which we enter the path to the celestial kingdom (see 2 Nephi 31:17–18).

The Correct Mode of Baptism

- How should we be baptized?

There is only one correct mode of baptism. Jesus revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that a person having the proper priesthood authority to baptize “shall go down into the water with the person who has presented himself or herself for baptism. . . . Then shall he immerse him or her in the water, and come forth again out of the water” (D&C 20:73–74). Immersion is necessary. The Apostle Paul taught that being immersed in water and coming out again is symbolic of death, burial, and resurrection. After baptism we start a new life. Paul said:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Romans 6:3–5).

Baptism by immersion by a person having the proper authority is the only acceptable way of being baptized.

- Why is authority to perform a baptism important?
- In what ways is baptism by immersion like the burial and Resurrection of the Savior?

Baptism at the Age of Accountability

- Who should be baptized?

Every person who has reached eight years of age and is accountable (responsible) for his or her actions should be baptized. Some churches teach that little children should be baptized. This is not in keeping with the teachings of the Savior. When Jesus spoke of little children, He said, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14).

The prophet Mormon said that it is mockery before God to baptize little children, because they are not capable of sinning. Likewise, baptism is not required of people who are mentally incapable of knowing right and wrong (see Moroni 8:9–22).

All other people are to be baptized. We must receive the ordinance of baptism and remain true to the covenants we make at that time.

- What might you say to a friend who believes that infants need to be baptized?

We Make Covenants When We Are Baptized

Many scriptures teach about baptism. In one of these scriptures, the prophet Alma taught that faith and repentance are steps that prepare us for baptism. He taught that when we are baptized we make a covenant with the Lord. We promise to do certain things, and God promises to bless us in return.

Alma explained that we must want to be called the people of God. We must be willing to help and comfort each other. We must stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places. As we do these things and are baptized, God will forgive our sins. Alma told the people who believed his teachings about the gospel: “Behold, here are the waters of Mormon. . . . And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, . . . what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?” (Mosiah 18:8, 10). The people clapped their hands for joy and said it was their desire to be baptized. Alma baptized them in the Waters of Mormon. (See Mosiah 18:7–17.)

Alma taught that when we are baptized we make covenants with the Lord to:

1. Come into the fold of God.
2. Bear one another’s burdens.
3. Stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all places.
4. Serve God and keep His commandments.

When we are baptized and keep the covenants of baptism, the Lord promises to:

1. Forgive our sins (see Acts 2:38; D&C 49:13).
 2. Pour out His Spirit more abundantly upon us (see Mosiah 18:10).
 3. Give us daily guidance and the help of the Holy Ghost (see Acts 2:38; D&C 20:77).
 4. Let us come forth in the First Resurrection (see Mosiah 18:9).
 5. Give us eternal life (see Mosiah 18:9).
- What do you think it means to bear one another’s burdens? to stand as a witness of God at all times and in all places?

Baptism Gives Us a New Beginning

With baptism we begin a new way of life. That is why we call it a rebirth. Jesus said that unless we are born of the water and of the Spirit, we cannot enter the kingdom of God (see John 3:3–5). This principle was explained clearly to Adam:

“Inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten” (Moses 6:59).

The Apostle Paul said that after our baptism we should begin a new life: “We are buried with him by baptism; . . . even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). One of the great blessings of baptism is that it provides us with a new start on our way toward our eternal goal.

- How was your baptism a new beginning?

Additional Scriptures

- 2 Nephi 31:4–7 (purpose and necessity of baptism)
- 3 Nephi 11:21–27; D&C 20:72–74 (how to perform a baptism)
- Acts 2:38–39 (be baptized for the remission of sins)
- Moroni 8:8–12; D&C 20:71–72 (baptism is not required of little children; baptism is required of all who repent)
- Alma 7:14–16 (baptism is cleansing, entering into a covenant of eternal life)