

See also Baptism; Death, Physical; Death, Spiritual; Eternal Life; Faith; Fall; Forgiveness; God the Father; Gospel; Justice; Kingdoms of Glory; Mercy; Ordinances; Plan of Salvation; Repentance; Resurrection; Salvation

Baptism

The Book of Mormon tells of a group of people who learned the gospel and were baptized at a place called Mormon. From the time of their baptism, they regarded Mormon as a place of beauty because while they were there, they “came to the knowledge of their Redeemer” (Mosiah 18:30). Strengthened by their testimonies and their baptismal covenant, they remained faithful to the Lord, even in times of intense trial (see Mosiah 23–24).

Like the people in this Book of Mormon account, you can rejoice as you remember your baptismal covenant and the Lord’s promises to you. You can find strength in the ordinance of baptism, whether you were baptized recently or many years ago.

Entering the Path to Eternal Life

Baptism is the first saving ordinance of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4). Through baptism and confirmation by priesthood authority, you became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When you were baptized, you showed your willingness to follow the Savior’s example. He too was baptized, even though He was without sin. As He explained to John the Baptist, He needed to be baptized in order to “fulfil all righteousness” (see Matthew 3:13–17).

All who seek eternal life must follow the example of the Savior by being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. The prophet Nephi said that the Savior showed us “the gate by which [we] should enter. For the gate by which [we] should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of [our] sins by fire and by the Holy

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Ghost. And then are [we] in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:17–18). We will receive eternal life if we endure to the end, keeping our covenants and receiving other ordinances of salvation.

Baptism in the Lord's Way

The Savior revealed the true method of baptism to the Prophet Joseph Smith, making clear that the ordinance must be performed by one having priesthood authority and that it must be done by immersion:

"The person who is called of God and has authority from Jesus Christ to baptize, shall go down into the water with the person who has presented himself or herself for baptism, and shall say, calling him or her by name: Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"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 symbolic of the death of a person's sinful life and the rebirth into a spiritual life, dedicated to the service of God and His children. It is also symbolic of death and resurrection. (See Romans 6:3–6.)

Little Children and Baptism

From latter-day revelation, we know that little children are redeemed through the mercy of Jesus Christ. The Lord said, "They cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me" (see D&C 29:46–47). They are not to be baptized until they reach the age of accountability, which the Lord has revealed to be eight years of age (see D&C 68:27; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17:11). Anyone who claims that little children need baptism "denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption" (Moroni 8:20; see also verses 8–19, 21–24).

Your Baptismal Covenant

When you were baptized, you entered into a covenant with God. You promised to take upon yourself the name of Jesus Christ, keep His commandments, and serve Him to the end (see Mosiah 18:8–10; D&C 20:37). You renew this covenant each time you partake of the sacrament (see D&C 20:77, 79).

Taking upon Yourself the Name of Jesus Christ. When you take upon yourself the name of Jesus Christ, you see yourself as His. You put Him and His work first in your life. You seek what He wants rather than what you want or what the world teaches you to want.

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin explains why it is important to take the name of the Savior upon ourselves:

“There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

“And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ.

“And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God” (Mosiah 5:8–10).

Keeping the Commandments. Your baptismal covenant is a commitment to come into God’s kingdom, separating yourself from the world and standing as a witness of God “at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9). Your efforts to stand as a witness of God include everything you do and say. Strive always to remember and keep the Lord’s commandments. Keep your thoughts, language, and actions

pure. When you seek entertainment such as movies, television, the Internet, music, books, magazines, and newspapers, be careful to watch, listen to, and read only those things that are uplifting. Dress modestly. Choose friends who encourage you to reach your eternal goals. Stay away from immorality, pornography, gambling, tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs. Keep yourself worthy to enter the temple.

Serving the Lord. The commandment to separate yourself from the things of the world does not mean that you should isolate yourself from others. Part of the baptismal covenant is to serve the Lord, and you serve Him best when you serve your fellow men. When the prophet Alma taught about the baptismal covenant, he said that we should be “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light” and “willing to mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9). Be kind and respectful to all people, following the example of Jesus Christ in the way you treat others.

Promised Blessings of Baptism

As you keep the covenant you made at baptism, the Lord will bless you for your faithfulness. Some of the blessings you receive are the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, the remission of your sins, and the privilege of being spiritually reborn.

The Constant Companionship of the Holy Ghost. After you were baptized, one or more authorized Melchizedek Priesthood holders laid their hands on your head and gave you the gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift gives you the right to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost as long as you are worthy. The Spirit’s constant companionship is one of the greatest blessings you can receive in mortality. The Spirit will guide you in the paths of righteousness and peace, leading you to eternal life.

Remission of Sins. Because you have been baptized, you can receive a remission of your sins. In other words, you can be forgiven through the mercy of the Savior. With this blessing, you can be permitted eventually to live in the presence of Heavenly Father.

To receive a remission of your sins, you must exercise faith in Jesus Christ, be sincerely repentant, and strive always to keep the commandments. The prophet Mormon taught, “The first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins” (Moroni 8:25). You “retain a remission of your sins” as you continue to humble yourself before God, call upon Him daily in prayer, remain steadfast in the faith, and serve those in need (see Mosiah 4:11–12, 26).

Being Born Again. Through the ordinances of baptism and confirmation, you were born again into a new life. The Savior said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Just as an infant enters a new existence at birth, you began a new life when you entered into the baptismal covenant. You can grow in spirituality and become more like the Savior by keeping your baptismal covenant, partaking of the sacrament to renew your covenant, and repenting of your sins. The Apostle Paul taught that when we have been baptized, we “should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

Enduring to the End

Now that you are baptized and have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, you must continue in righteousness, for these ordinances mark only the beginning of your journey back to dwell with your Heavenly Father. The prophet Nephi taught:

“After ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with

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unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

Additional references: Acts 2:37–38; 2 Nephi 31:4–13; Alma 7:14–16; 3 Nephi 11:18–41; 27:13–22; D&C 39:5–6, 10; 76:50–53

See also Faith; Holy Ghost; Obedience; Priesthood; Repentance; Sacrament

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Birth Control

When married couples are physically able, they have the privilege of providing mortal bodies for Heavenly Father’s spirit children. They play a part in the great plan of happiness, which permits God’s children to receive physical bodies and experience mortality.

If you are married, you and your spouse should discuss your sacred responsibility to bring children into the world and nurture them in righteousness. As you do so, consider the sanctity and meaning of life. Ponder the joy that comes when children are in the home. Consider the eternal blessings that come from having a good posterity. With a testimony of these principles, you and your spouse will be prepared to prayerfully decide how many children to have and when to have them. Such decisions are between the two of you and the Lord.

As you discuss this sacred matter, remember that sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved. While one purpose of these relations is to provide physical bodies for God’s children, another purpose is to express love for one another—to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration, and common purpose.