

A Mighty Change of Heart (<http://mightychangeofheart.com>)

"And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" Alma 5:14

Chapter 14 – Preparation For Baptism

CHAPTER 14

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

"See that ye are not baptized unworthily." (Mormon 9:29)

It is obvious in the scriptures that when they talk of preparation for baptism they are talking to those that are already accountable, or past the age of eight years. Shortly after Moroni was called to the ministry, disputations arose in the church concerning the baptism of little children. Mormon inquired of the Lord on the matter and testifies:

...And the word of the Lord came to me by the Power of the Holy Ghost, saying:

Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them, and the law of circumcision is done away in me.

And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God that ye should baptize little children.

Behold, I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach — repentance and baptism unto those WHO ARE ACCOUNTABLE AND CAPABLE OF COMMITTING SIN:

yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves AS THEIR LITTLE CHILDREN, and they shall all be saved with their little children.

And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.

But LITTLE CHILDREN ARE ALIVE IN CHRIST, even from the foundation of the world... (Moroni 8:7-12)

From the above it is clear that little children are completely covered by the atonement of Christ. The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith:

But little children are HOLY, being SANCTIFIED through the atonement of Jesus Christ....(D&C 74:7)

At the risk of going contrary to the belief of many members of the church, I would like to suggest that little children, being holy and sanctified, on many occasions have access to the Holy Ghost even though they haven't been baptized and confirmed. In Alma's great sermon on faith, he testified:

And now, he imparted his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; LITTLE CHILDREN DO HAVE WORDS GIVEN UNTO THEM MANY TIMES, which confound the wise and the learned. (Alma 32:23)

After the Lord's three day ministry to the Nephites Mormon testified that He came and visited them often. On one of these occasions the following is recorded:

And it came to pass that he did teach and minister unto the CHILDREN of the multitude of whom hath been spoken, and he DID LOOSE THEIR TONGUES, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, EVEN GREATER than he had revealed unto the people; and he loosed their tongues that they could utter...

Behold, it came to pass on the morrow that the multitude. gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these CHILDREN; yea, even BABES did open their mouths and UTTER MARVELOUS THINGS; and the things which they did utter were FORBIDDEN THAT THERE SHOULD NOT ANY MAN WRITE THEM. (III Nephi 26:14, 16)

One of the most touching scenes in Holy Writ happened to little children. The Savior called all of the sick to Him and He healed them. So overcome was the crowd that they pressed around Him, bathing His feet with their tears. Then the Master commanded that their little children be brought to Him. He then prayed to the Father concerning the wickedness of the house of Israel. Then He prayed again and delivered a sermon so sacred that it was not allowed to be recorded. Neither were the words of the prayer.

And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little CHILDREN, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

And when he had done this he wept again;

And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes toward heaven, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them. (III Nephi 17:20-24)

Let me add what I have seen and heard. At one time in our lives the Spirit of the Lord was in our home in power for a period of six days. During those six days the prayers that my wife and I offered were different. To say they were different is a gross understatement. They were not our prayers. They were given to us by the Holy Spirit. We had three little children at the time. Even their prayers were different. They uttered words and sentences that they had never uttered before. I remember well our four year old son, Brett, saying in prayer, "We are thankful for Jesus." This was a statement that he had never used before. But how can I convey on paper the feeling that surged through us as the Spirit bore witness of the Master when these words were

spoken? And how can I describe the emotion that we felt as the tears coursed down our cheeks while we wept in gratitude? It has to be experienced to be understood. Yes, little children can speak through the Holy Ghost and they are protected from the evil one.

But, behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten; WHEREFORE, THEY CANNOT SIN, for POWER IS NOT GIVEN UNTO SATAN TO TEMPT LITTLE CHILDREN, until they begin to be accountable before me;

For it is given unto them even as I will, according to mine own pleasure, that GREAT THINGS may be required at the hand of their FATHERS. (D&C 29:46-49)

This scripture used to bother me. Frankly, I just didn't believe that Satan could not tempt little children. I had seen some little children that acted as if they were the reincarnation of Satan himself. That was my hangup. I didn't know that they were either acting independently or that Satan had gotten to them indirectly. The day came when it was time to baptize my eldest-son. The next day I confirmed him a member of the Church in fast meeting. Not ten minutes after we returned home he was sitting on the bed in his sister's room. I asked him to do something for me. He turned instantly and looked at me. The burning hatred that I saw in his eyes I shall never forget. If looks could harm I would have been destroyed. I have never witnessed such hatred pouring from a child's eyes. He is now sixteen but I have never seen that look again. I am extremely grateful. But I thought it rather odd that on the day that he had received the injunction to "Receive the Holy Ghost," that within one hour of his confirmation it was the unholy spirit that was activated. The above scripture in section 29 became perfectly clear.

BAPTISM PREPARATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE ACCOUNTABLE

Preparation for baptism by those who are accountable is much different than for the eight year old, and for those who meet the requirements it is even suggested that a remission of sins is possible prior to baptism.

And again, by way of COMMANDMENT to the church concerning the manner of baptism — ALL those who HUMBLE themselves before God, and DESIRE to be baptized, and come forth with BROKEN HEARTS and CONTRITE spirits, and WITNESS before the church that they have TRULY REPENTED of all their sins, and are WILLING to TAKE UPON THEM the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to SERVE him to the end, and truly MANIFEST by their WORKS that they have RECEIVED of the Spirit of Christ unto the REMISSION OF THEIR SINS, shall be received by baptism into his church. (D&C 20:37)

What I want to stress is the preparation. This is also confirmed by Moroni.

And now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and THEY WERE NOT BAPTIZED save they brought forth fruit meet THAT THEY WERE WORTHY OF IT.

Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a BROKEN HEART and a CONTRITE SPIRIT, and WITNESSED unto the church that they TRULY REPENTED of ALL their sins.

And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a DETERMINATION to serve him to the end.

And after they had been received unto baptism and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ, and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God...(Moroni 6:1-4)

Nephi also stresses the proper preparation for baptism in probably the greatest writing on the subject ever given.

*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with FULL PURPOSE OF HEART, acting NO HYPOCRISY and 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 – yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, **then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; and THEN can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.** (II Nephi 31:13)*

Now let's review the preparation requirements:

HUMILITY

DESIRE FOR BAPTISM

BROKEN HEART

CONTRITE SPIRIT

WITNESS OF REPENTANCE

WILLING TO TAKE THE NAME OF CHRIST

DETERMINE TO SERVE HIM TO THE END

FULL PURPOSE OF HEART

NO HYPOCRISY

NO DECEPTION

REAL INTENT

MANIFEST WORKS

But what about those that get into the church and have not met the above requirements? Can they still meet them? Of course. It may take some time and some sincere repentance but they can still make the grade. Do those people who are pressured into the Church or those who come in by fraud receive the Holy Ghost at their confirmation? How could they? They haven't met the requirements.

For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and HE RECEIVE NOT THE GIFT? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices he in him who is the giver of the gift. (D&C 88:33)

When a person enters the church on any other basis than complete honesty the confirmation is nothing more than an admonition to get straight with the Lord so that the time might come when the promise of the Holy Ghost might be fulfilled.

For those of us that came into the church at age eight the same is usually true. **We also have to meet the above requirement sooner or later if we expect to receive the Holy Ghost, a remission of our sins, and experience the many attendant gifts.**

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