

## Baptize Only the Accountable

*Val Brinkerhoff, 12/5/2019 – 9 pages*

Baptism is a beautiful rite, a public covenant with the LORD by those turning their hearts fully to **Him** and His ways. It is a symbolic rite of burying the old person, and rising up a new creation in Christ, via His atoning blood and our sincere, heartfelt repentance. It is a rite that is to be offered up to God *willingly* (without compulsion), and *purposefully*, and only by those *accountable* or *responsible*. No age, whether 8 or 12 or 20 insures these things are in place.

There are **no** examples of children being baptized in the Bible or the Book of the Mormon, yet there are two references in other latter scriptures that address baptizing those who are 8 years old. They are D&C 68:27 and JST Genesis 17:11. In Moroni 8:8-16 we are told that baptizing *young children* into the churches or the religions of men is **solemn mockery** before God. They don't need baptism. In most all cases, they also don't fully understand what they are doing.

God's word in scripture tells us that it is one's *heart* that determines it is time for baptism, a heart that is broken, along with a contrite spirit. It reveals that one is turned *wholly* to Christ in heartfelt **repentance** and *humility*. Accountable could make a *purposeful, willing choice* to love God with the *whole heart*, to **turn** to Him in *real repentance*, seeking change and renewal in the blood of Jesus. Is this possible with an 8-year old? Perhaps for those who are taught well, and those with greater understanding.

In most cases, however, too few young people (or adults for that matter) turn their hearts fully Christ in *real faith* prior to their baptism, even though faith in Christ is the *first* principle and ordinance of the gospel. Too few *fully repent* - or *understand* what "**a broken heart and contrite spirit**" really is. Too few, whether 8 or 12 or 20 years of age are ready to commit themselves *fully* to Christ, including giving their **will** to Him (Mosiah 5:5). Few 8 year-olds are willing and able to *bare the burdens of others* and *mourn with those who mourn*, or *comfort those in need of comfort*. Few if any at age 8 are willing to take up their cross and follow the LORD (Matt. 16:24). Few if any of them make a solemn, *individual covenant* with God to *serve Him and keep His commandments* (Mosiah 18:10). And how many of them are willing to *die for Christ* (Mosiah 18:9)? Did you do these things at age 8 with full understanding and commitment? I didn't. I followed the traditions of my family and church leaders.

Each of the things provided above is a **requirement** for baptism according to Alma's teaching in Mosiah 18:7-10, and the doctrine of Christ, as taught us in the foundational book of the Restoration movement. All *examples* of baptism presented us in both the Book of Mormon and the Bible (New Testament) are of **adults**, including that of the LORD Jesus Christ Himself, thought to be in His 30<sup>th</sup> year! Why then are infants and children baptized today in so many churches, including that of the Latter-day Saints? The answer appears to be false beliefs and traditions. They are often tied to "*getting gain*" (1 Ne. 22:23). What are the requirements for baptism in the Book of Mormon?

### The Requirements for Baptism in the Book of Mormon

*Mosiah 18:8-10*

1. Do you have a desire to come into the fold of God - *out of love for Him*?
  - a. To be called His people – *and be part of His fold as the Good Shepherd*?
2. Will you bear one another's burdens?
  - a. And mourn with those who mourn?
  - b. And comfort those in need of comfort?
  - c. Will you stand as a witness of God at all times, in all things, and in all places – *even unto death*, that "ye may be **redeemed** of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life."
  - d. Now, if this is the desire of your hearts . . . then be 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**". This then is what it means to take His name upon you, as taught by King Benjamin.

Note that these 7 requirements can be separated into just 2 summary requirements, those connected to the 2 great commandments of Matthew 22:36-40, to love God with one's whole heart, and love one another as yourself. Note also that there is **no** age stipulation made by Alma here (like 8 or 12 years old). The words of God versus those of men are frequently at odds with each other. God wants our *hearts*. Men want conformity, control, money, power, sex, and the honors of men. Nephi called these things collectively - "*gain*" (see all 7 of these things in 1 Ne. 22:23). According to the Book of Mormon, churches today are "built up to *get gain*" (Morm. 8:33). Mormon, Nephi, and Jacob said that they would **all** would become corrupted and polluted in our day (2 Ne. 28:11; Jacob 5:42, 47; Morm. 8:36). And God said they "teach for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9), rather than God's simpler way - of love for Him and one another.

The churches of men use God's name and words, twisting them to promote their churches or religions for personal "gain", but their *hearts* are far from Him. Such are part of priestcraft (2 Ne. 26:29). Jesus added, "Many will say to me in that day [our day], Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never **knew** you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22-23).

Alma said *responsible*, prepared souls are to be "**baptized unto repentance**" - not that we should baptize youths who don't have necessary *understanding* (see Mosiah 26:22; Alma 5:62, 7:14; Hel. 5:17, 19; 3 Ne. 1:23; 7:25-26). Baptizing those without full *understanding* of this covenant with God is very useful in getting and keeping gain. Seeing such things in our day, Nephi said there would be "save two churches only" (2 Ne. 14:10); one of God with few in it, and one very much larger, tied to the great and abominable church that covers the earth. They are centered on getting gain. She is "the great whore Babylon."

God doesn't want youth, adults, or anyone to conform to the wishes of vain leaders. He desires *the individual heart* of all those baptized. They are to make an informed, **free-will choice** that demonstrates **love for God and with all their heart, might, mind, and soul**. Loving God is the first and great commandment (Matt. 22:38). Only the "**accountable**" and the **prepared** can make such a **choice**, one involving *real thought, commitment, and preparation*. An informed choice to be baptized in water isn't a result of age 8. Instead, baptism should be a result of

1. Having **real faith in the LORD Jesus Christ** - our Redeemer. This is the first principle and ordinance of the doctrine, gospel, and church of Christ.

2. **Real heartfelt repentance** before God and prior to the baptism. The Book of Mormon teaches us that we are to be "**baptized unto repentance**" (Mosiah 26:22; Alma 5:62, 7:14; Hel. 5:17, 19; 3 Ne. 1:23; 7:25-26). In addition to these *7 scriptures*, God used the term "**Blessed**" *7 times* in addressing Alma and what he had done to take himself and others out of "spiritual Babylon and Egypt" and bring all to Him in Mosiah 26:15-20. There God also promises Alma "*eternal life*". In verse 22 He said.

"For behold, this is **my** church; whosoever is baptized shall be **baptized unto repentance**" (Mosiah 26:22).

3. We must then provide **the sacrifice** God has chosen. He said, "**repent and come unto me**", not unto men and their ways of thinking and churches (1 Ne. 10:18-19; 2 Ne. 9:23-24; 28:31-32; Jacob 1:7; Alma 5:33-34; Ether 4:7-19; Mor. 7:34; 3 Ne. 9:14, 22, 51; 11:14; 12:19-20, 23-24; 27:5-21; 30:2; D&C 10:67-68, 93:1). The LORD made it clear that the **sacrifice** we are to offer up to **Him** freely - as part of *the New and Everlasting Covenant* - is a **broken heart and contrite spirit** (see 3 Ne. 9:20; Psalm 51:17).

4. This *sacrifice* is part of a **covenant relationship with God, in the new and everlasting covenant**. It includes doing **His will** and **keeping His commandments**, rather than those men substitute for God's requirements (Mosiah 5:5). His *purer covenant* is made with *our full heart* and with full *understanding*. It is we commit ourselves to:

a. **Bear the burdens of others** in God's fold, to **mourn with those who mourn**, and **comfort those in need of comfort**, all in fulfillment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> great commandment to love one another.

b. This **covenant** also includes the commitment to **stand as a witness of God** in all things, places, and times, and significantly - **even to death** (Mosiah 18:7-10; D&C 103:27-28).

5. We are then **baptized in water** - a complete burial or immersion in pure, living waters as an outward physical symbol of burying the old person, with the new person resurrected into new life. It is a physical symbol of being

made new in Christ Jesus – which can only occur spiritually by Him. Being “born again” or receiving “the mighty change of heart” is something men cannot do. If we continue on the path of humility and submission before God, we may receive the *second fiery baptism* by God – the “baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost”. God does it (3 Ne. 12:1). We are then part of His redeemed fold of the “Blessed” ones, the saved souls that become part of the church of the Firstborn. He alone is the gate or door into His sheepfold. It is one of only two churches in this world (1 Ne. 14:10). (see the paper, “*Clear Born Again Scriptures*”). Do 8-year olds do this. Is he or she **willing to die** for God and His kingdom? How many adults would do this? Has there been **true repentance**? Are they *willing and able* to provide aid and comfort to needy ones within the fold? Is their **heart** turned fully to God?

In most cases the answer *for nearly all children* and most *adults* – in and outside of men’s churches, is **no**. God desires and requires the heart. And He is its judge, not men. Only when God’s stipulations are fully met, when **one’s heart is freely and wholly given to Him**, do they receive the next, important *saving* event, **the fiery baptism by God himself** (2 Ne. 12:1). Without it we cannot receive the *gift and power* of **Holy Ghost from Him**, as a guide to avoid deception in this life. The Holy Ghost or Spirit is the **oil** in the lamp of all **wise** virgins.

The disciples of Christ in 3 Nephi 19:9 wanted this **gift** or *endowment* more than any other thing! They were baptized as adults, carefully following the teachings of Christ. Such became part of **His church**, choosing perhaps to **be re-baptized again** to show their love of God.<sup>1</sup> The second *spiritual* baptism is a *recognizable event* in which **sins are purged** from the humble and contrite. They are **remitted**. It is then that one’s **heart is finally made new in Christ**. Such have **no more desire to sin** (Mosiah 5:2). It is a **saving, redeeming, unforgettable event**, done by **God alone** - not by any man. Authorized, empowered servants invite others to receive this gift in a symbolic ordinance, the laying on of hands. God gave His 12 chosen “disciples” at Bountiful the authority to do this. The gift itself originates in the Father. Such “blessed” ones are “**born again**”, becoming “*wise virgins*”, “the *redeemed*”, the “*blessed*” followers of Christ. They become part of **His church**. And it is Christ that does the *baptizing* into it! See the paper, “*Clear Born Again Scriptures*” (www.7witnesses.com).

Too few understand these things today, as tradition, assumption, and deception have become commonplace. Too few have searched God’s precious **word** where these things are taught, and thus they rely instead on *men*, many with an *agenda*. God has said *relying on the arm of flesh* brings **curse**s (2 Ne. 4:34; 28:31-32; Jer. 17:5; Psalm 118:8). Ignorance of truth is part of this **curse**. Lack of redemption or salvation is the other, more important part of this **curse**. It is a natural consequence of trusting men rather than God. The Book of Mormon suggests that “getting **gain**” is a primary motivation for many things in this corrupt world (1 Nephi 22:23). Baptizing young people into church corporations (with tax exempt status) keeps the income flowing. Though our Creator and Redeemer endured a forced execution in the crucifixion, the most significant portion of His sacrifice was in Gethsemane the night before. There he took our sins upon Him by **choice** and **free will**, as the Good Shepherd. It reveals His great **love** for us.

Our baptism must also be by *choice* or free will, with real commitment, and real love for our Savior or Redeemer. The state of the **heart** prior to baptism is thus everything, **not** age! God searches the heart. When hands are *clean* and *hearts* pure, Christ will make it *new*. We will be **born again**, receiving the gift and power of **the Holy Ghost** thereafter. Only with this changed, new heart can we **overcome** this world (see the 7 blessings tied to it in Rev. 2:7, 11, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21). This is where the wisdom of the *wise virgins* originates. It is a gift or endowment of discernment, knowledge, and judgment. Only with it are we brought back into God’s presence via direct pure revelation. Truly it is an “endowment of **power** - and *from on high*” – not from men.

The baptism by fire at God’s hands brings real **salvation** or **redemption** with it, but prior to receiving it and the Holy Ghost there is a real price to pay. Too many young people are baptized today via the coercion of church leaders and parents rather than freely offering up their *hearts* to He who redeems us - via **free will**, a choice to submit our will to His superior will, wisdom, and love. This understanding then brings **accountability**.

The Book of Mormon tells us that baptizing the young *and* innocent is “**solemn mockery before God**” (Mormon 8:8-16). Only those **accountable** are to be baptized. This occurs at a different point in time for each of us. The LORD Jesus was most likely 30 years old when He was baptized. All of the twelve disciples He chose in the Old World *and* the New World were adults. They **willingly chose** to follow **Him**, with clear understanding of the resulting ramifications and sacrifices of their decision. The same is true of Adam, Alma, Joseph Smith, and many

others. The Twelve in Jesus' day left the controlling box of Rabbinic Judaism and suffered *persecution* and eventual **death** as a result of their choice. It was a price they were willing to pay, and one we too must make.

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were both 24 years old when they were baptized. Because they did so with **faith in Christ**, with real heartfelt **repentance**, and with full commitment to God, they were **born again** *spiritually* by Him immediately following their watery baptism of each other (see JSH 1:73-74). This second "**saving**" *event* is rare among the Saints today, as few have been taught this critically important truth. Too many are loyal to men and their churches rather than to God. The definitions below point us to a **relationship with Christ** instead of religion. This **relationship** is symbolized by "**marriage**" in scripture (see Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:22). The first definitions below are by non-Latter-day Saints. The latter ones are from the Book of Mormon, the foundational book of *early* Mormonism.

### Relationship versus Religion

"One's **relationship with the Son of God** is the most important **commitment** he will ever have upon this earth." Children are innocent before God and do not need baptism until they knowingly sin at an older age. "Baptism is not a mere ritual for sincere people, tender people, devout people, etc., it is for **condemned** people—folks who will spend eternity separated from God if they die [in their sinss] without forgiveness." We are made new in God alone, not by men in any ritual. It is to be spiritually "**born again**" in Him.

"One must be capable of assuming the responsibilities connected with **conversion**. Jesus taught that those who wish to follow him must be willing to separate from loved ones—even parents—if necessary [and the ways of the world]. He must be daring enough to **forfeit his own life** if it should come to that" (see Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26; Rev. 2:10; Mosiah 18:9).

"Baptize only those who give **credible evidence of true conversion**." And what is that "evidence, "an experience as proof that is tied to being saved" or that of being spiritually **born again** by, of, and for Jesus Christ.

"We should consider a candidate's **maturity**, one **not under their parents' authority** [of that of a church and its leaders], **when they assume adult responsibilities** . . . tied to driving, employment, non-Christian friends, voting, legality of marriage, etc., It is then that they declare **public allegiance to Christ by baptism**."

"Baptism is **more** than a dramatic statement of belief. From Paul's declaration of the newly baptized as rising to "**live a new life**" (Romans 6:4, Good News Bible), it is clear that there are ethical implications too. As you go under the water, you will be declaring **your resolve to die to your old way of living** and, as you rise from the water, you will be declaring **your resolve to follow Jesus' pattern for living**. The implications . . . to work, to money, to sex and to relationships are enormous. It is no exaggeration to describe baptism as **a revolutionary act** . . . Baptism goes way beyond the gospel truth of John 3:16; rather, it is our response to **the call of Jesus to deny self, to take up our cross and to follow him** (Mark 8:34). Baptism is *not just for believers*; it is for **disciples** [true followers]. . . At 8, I was not ready for baptism, for I had yet to become clear about **the demands of Christian discipleship**."

What are "**the demands of Christian discipleship**". Are children capable of the following such commitments?

Alma of the Book of Mormon, "did preach unto them **repentance**, and **redemption**, and **faith on the LORD**" saying unto them, "as ye are **desirous to come into the fold of God**, and to be called his people, and are **willing to bear one another's burdens**, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to **mourn with those that mourn**; yea, and **comfort those that stand in need of comfort**, and to **stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even unto death**, that ye may be **redeemed of God**, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life – Now I say unto you, if this be **the desire of your hearts**, 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** [see Mosiah 5:5] that ye will **serve him** and **keep his commandments**, that *he may pour out his spirit more abundantly upon you*" (Mosiah 18:7-9).

Mormon stated, "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 **sinner 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; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism! Wherefore, if little children could not be saved without baptism, these must have gone to an endless hell. Behold I say unto you, that **he that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell**. For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism. **Wo be unto them that shall pervert the ways of the Lord after this manner** [this is an official curse], **for they shall perish except they repent**. Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear” (Mormon 8:8-16).

Many examples are given us in scripture. They reveal that **only** those who are **older, wiser, and responsible** (accountable before God) are baptized. They come fully to Christ *first* in **heartfelt conversion to Him** and His teachings before this symbolic rite occurs. **When done in the LORD’s way, it is tied to God’s spiritual baptism of them in His spirit** (after or before the watery baptism) **resulting in their entrance into His church** – the church of the Firstborn<sup>2</sup>. Men and their churches have taught another way. They have their reward. The Apostle John said stay away from those who do not teach these things – “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 7-10). They are deceivers. Good scriptural examples of those baptized *spiritually* by God – and by fire and Holy Ghost - include:

Jesus the Christ	Matthew 3:11-17
Adam, the first man	JST Gen. 4:5-11; Moses 6:50-68
The Twelve in the New World	Mosiah 19
Alma the older & younger (father & son)	Mosiah 17-18; Alma 5 & 36
King Lamoni of the Lamanites and his wife the Queen	Alma 18 & 19
The Prophet Joseph Smith, his father & mother	JSH1:73-74

### How does God Define His Church?

Our word “church” comes from the Greek word “Ecclesia,” which means, “an assembly *called* together.” It is an group of receptive sheep who recognize and follow God’s voice as the Good Shepherd (John 10). It is not a modern corporation or corporate church. Those with a *religious* spirit seek conformity and sameness, whereas God and the Holy Spirit works with each of us individually to bring us into **relationship with Him**. He glories in our individuality, seeking all to come to Him with their unique gifts and challenges. We are collectively the Bride of the Lamb. Like marriage we have need to *know* God, not just know about Him (see JST Matt. 7:22-23, 33 & 25:11).

(1) **Christ’s Church** Mortal men baptize other men and women into their churches today, but in the church of Christ or the Lamb, it is the LORD Himself who brings people into His church. They are cleansed and purified within it **by Him** through a spiritual baptism (by “fire” or “the Spirit”) and thus become apart of **His church** (the church of the Firstborn or the Lamb). Repentance must precede cleansing in water and fire. God said, “For behold, this is **my church**; whosoever is baptized shall be **baptized unto repentance**” (Mosiah 26:22). He has added, “after that ye are baptized with water, behold, **I will baptize you with fire and the Holy Ghost**” (3 Ne. 9:20, 12:1; Matt. 3:11). No man can imitate or replace this spiritual baptism, as all judgment has been committed into the hands of the Son (John 5:22). **The LORD Jesus baptizes us into His church!** All other churches are those of men. Nephi said, “Behold, there are save **two churches only**; the one is the **church of the Lamb of God**, and the other is **the church of the devil**; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth” (1 Ne. 14:10). The reality of this statement is sobering! See also 1 John 3:9-12, 22-24 and 4:7-10, 18-21. Those following the Master rather than men become His redeemed sons and daughters, “**the blessed**” addressed in His sermon on the mount. They are “**the**

overcomers in the world” addressed by John seven times in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation (vs. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:12, 21 x 2); see also 1 John 5:1-8, 18; 2 John 5-10; Mosiah 5:5-8).

(2) **Adding Converts to the Body of Christ** God regularly adds repentant believers into His church Himself, doing so both in and outside of men’s churches today. Acts 2:47 tells us, “The LORD added to the church daily such as should be **saved**.” In other words, those **redeemed** or **saved by Him** and His blood receive **His fiery baptism** which brings them into His church. It is a cleansing event! The churches of men are “built up unto themselves to **get gain**” (see 1 Ne. 22:23) and “**not unto me**” (2 Ne. 28:3; Morm. 8:33; 2 Ne. 26:20-23; D&C 10:46-70). To be part of God’s church we must offer up **the sacrifice He has asked us to make**, that of a “**broken heart and a contrite spirit**” (Psalm 51:17; 3 Ne. 9:20). Men’s churches want money, loyalty, and conformity. Those leading them stand between us and God.

God wants our love, the first and great commandment. We are to give it willingly. We are to choose God, and choose to love Him. The only gifts we can truly give Him is **our whole heart** and our **will**. Each of us must individually give Him our heart in our own way and time. When we do finally do so, our sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit is recognized by Him and accepted. This is when we are spiritually renewed in Christ, our hearts made new in Him. It is then that we have ability – in Christ - to overcome the nagging repeating sins in our life and finally overcome the world, little by little, line upon line, until we are more like Him, without the desire to sin. We will sin, of course, but we will have desire to quickly change and repent. This is my experience and that of so many we read about in scripture. Without the blood of Christ and His help, we are nearly powerless to really change. But with Him, there is power to become much more, the sons and daughters of God, heirs of the Father with Christ of all God has. Being “born again” in Jesus Christ is the only way there can be peace on earth. It begins with peace and love individually within our hearts. It expands from the individual into the family, into neighborhoods, then cities, and nations. Only those with this change will be admitted into Zion. They are the sheep of THE Sheepfold.

The Good Shepherd is the Master of the Sheepfold. He gave His life for the sheep. They know His voice and follow **Him**. Note His words in Ezekiel 34 and other scripture. He is doing most of the work in the last-days as too many false shepherds are using the sheep for their own **gain**. The Prophet Ezekiel tells us that they “*feed not the flock*” but “*feed themselves*.” They stamp down the grass, foul the water, and fleece the sheep, even eating the sheep (see Ezek. 34). The LORD said, “**I, even I, will search my sheep** [their hearts], and *seek them out* . . . and will *deliver* them out of all places where they have been *scattered* in the cloudy and dark day . . . **I will feed** them in a good pasture . . . **I will judge** between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle . . . Therefore will **I save my flock** . . . **I** the LORD will be their God . . . **I have broken the bands of their yoke**, and **delivered** them out of the hand of those that *served themselves* of them” (Ezek. 34; see also Jeremiah 23; Isaiah 1 and 28).

Some churches are useful today as preparatory churches. Too many leading them seek gain. Leaders often get in the way of **relationship** with God. Mormon said **all churches** in our day are polluted (Morm. 8:36). Nephi confirms this saying, “**all have gone out of the way**” (2 Ne. 28:11). A third book states that “**all trees in the LORD’s vineyard** are corrupt is Jacob 5:42 and 47. Any believing Christian who “**repents**” and “comes unto the LORD”, as stipulated in His teachings, however, may become part of **the church of the Lamb** (see D&C 76:54, 67, 71, 94).

(3) **In God’s name** A third definition for God’s church is given us in 3 Ne. 27:1-12, where Christ said that **His church** is called in **His name**, and it will only be **His church**, “if” - “it is built upon **His gospel**” (the fullness of which is **the two baptisms** along with **His gifting of the Holy Ghost**, see D&C 5:16; 33:11-15; 39:6). They are the “**blessed**” ones who will see and enter heaven (John 3:3-6). They are the **redeemed**. They are immersed in the character and attributes of Godliness. These are evident in “the works of the Father” in the **gifts and fruits of the Spirit**. These **gifts and fruits** are manifestations of God’s approval and are listed in 1 Cor. 12, Moroni 10, and D&C 46. The **fruits** of the Spirit are “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). These things, along with visions, prophecy, healings, angels, etc., **follow real believers in Christ’s church**. According to God, the churches of men that are built up to **get gain** have joy in their work “for a season and then cometh the end when they are hewn down and cast into the fire” (3 Ne. 27:11).

When Christ came among those gathered at the city “Bountiful” in the Book of Mormon, we see that He first taught them (1) “the *doctrine* of Christ.” He then presented (2) “the fullness of His *gospel*” to them. After these teachings, He then addressed what (3) His *church* was and is. There was order and sequence. Nearly 2000 years latter in 1828 the LORD provided a clear definition of **His church** to those who would latter be part of what has now become the

“Mormon” church west, and the Restoration Branches in the Midwest (they also utilize the Book of Mormon along with the full version of the Joseph Smith re-translation of the entire Bible).

The scriptural definitions listed above reveal that God’s church is not a financially successful, large corporation, but a community of believers who heed **His** invitation to “**repent and come unto me.**” This is the most common definition within two books of scripture held as sacred within Mormonism (1 Ne. 10:18-19; 2 Ne. 9:23-24; 28:31-32; Jacob 1:7; Alma 5:33-34; Ether 4:7-19; Mor. 7:34; 3 Ne. 9:14, 22, 51; 11:14; 12:19-20, 23-24; 27:5-21; 30:1-2; D&C 10:67-68, 93:1). They reveal that it is made up of a “few” humble **followers** (“disciples”) who **love the LORD** with their whole heart. They seek to honor **Him** and do **His** will and commandments (see Mosiah 5:5; D&C 10:56). He has said that those who *don’t* “**repent and come unto me**” are “**under the bondage of sin**” (D&C 84:50-51).

Rather than lengthening this paper with many wonderful scriptures tied to being “**born again**”, I would refer you to the paper entitled, “*Clear Born Again Scriptures*” on my [www.7witnesses.com](http://www.7witnesses.com) website. In that six-page paper you will read the **words** of Christ, John the Baptist, John the Beloved, Alma and elder and younger, Joseph Smith, Nephi, and others (rather than my own), and see in them that it is **God alone who baptizes us with His fiery Spirit**, prior to receiving the precious gift of the Holy Ghost thereafter. It is a must have gift to avoid deception in this life.

## Conclusion

Were you baptized with a full understanding of what you were doing as you youth? I wasn’t. Do you need baptism again as a fully committed adult, entering into the New and Everlasting Covenant with the God who has given His blood for you? Have you since been *born again* and made *new* in Christ Jesus? Have you experienced **the mighty change of heart** spoken of by Alma in the Book of Mormon? Have you been able to *overcome* the world (the sins that have continually beset you), as John the Revelator taught (1 John 5 and Revelation 2 & 3)? He said those who overcome the world by keeping God’s commandments, and receiving Christ – become the “**Blessed**” receiving seven rewards detailed in Revelation 2:7, 11, 26-28 and 3:5, 12 and 21.

Place your faith and trust in the living God. Ask Him in prayer if you need another physical baptism, and if have received the second greater *spiritual* renewal known as being *born again*. It is the only way one can truly change and *overcome* the sins we often keep repeating, via a new heart. It is an unforgettable, life changing *spiritual event*. In it there is greater **joy** than you have ever experienced, as God’s love is given in an unforgettable outpouring of His cleansing and renewing Spirit. It follows real repentance.

He said, “choose me” (Moses 7:33), rather than the things of the world. He is our judge and the father of our salvation. He has invited us to take up our crosses and follow Him. Being made new – **in Him** - is the first major gate we must go through in our journey towards receiving two important gifts from Him in this life, **the Holy Ghost** and God’s greatest gift, the gift of **eternal life** (2 Ne. 31:18-21). Men, churches, and temples can’t provide these gifts. Our Redeemer and the Father do! Having the gift of the Holy Ghost provides the guidance necessary to later enter the rest or sacred presence of the LORD Jesus (2 Ne. 32:5-6). It can occur if you **seek Him with all your heart** (Jer. 29:13). Trust and love Him. Believe and act. May you be so blessed.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> **The Doctrine of Re-Baptism** Being baptized more than once was a fairly common practice in the the New Testament (Acts 19:1-6), especially in the Book of Mormon (see Mos. 26:22-32; 27:24-30; Alma 5:26, 49, 62; Moroni 6:1, 8:10), and in early LDS Church history. The calling and baptism of the Twelve in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 19) was most likely done among those who had previously been baptized before Christ came to re-introduce His church, His teachings and doctrine. Baptism is for those fully accountable as part of a **free-will offering** to God – that specified by God - a broken heart and contrite spirit. Too many baptisms are done to admit one as a member of a formal church organization. Most of them today are corporations, with tax-free status via the Federal Government. Both assert control for the sake of **gain** (money, power, control, etc.). Instead, baptism should symbolize one’s inner commitment and conversion to Christ the LORD as our loving Redeemer. It should *follow faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, real heartfelt repentance, and covenant making* with God – all lly by our choice, not by parents or church leaders. Too many **original baptisms** do not include these important things, and thus many never experience the fiery baptism that only God can provide. It is to follow the water baptism or there is no purging of sins, not heart made new. Thus, those who truly love the LORD with all their hearts wish to do things **His way**, doing so as thinking, accountable adults.

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They are thus **rebaptized**. There were other reasons for rebaptism in early church history. Some may not be scriptural. Looking back we see *seven* different reasons for it in LDS Church history. They include:

1. **Remission of sins** (1832)
2. **Personal rededication, recommittment, and renewal of covenants** (April 6, 1830 in New York; 1843-44 in Nauvoo; 1947-1922 in Utah)
3. Group **reformation and renewal** (1856-57)
4. **As a precursor to other ordinances** such as the Temple Endowment, sealing ordinances (1847 onwards), including preparation for some at Nauvoo for plural marriage (Quinn, 1843)
5. As a **proxy ordinance for dead ancestors** (1841 on)
6. To **increase health** (1838 onwards; 1841 in the Nauvoo Temple font [Nov. 8, 1841]). Joseph re-baptised Emma in the Nauvoo Temple font for this purpose (Nov. 1, 1842), as well as 2 times earlier in the Mississippi river (Oct. 5, 1842)
7. For the sake of **official church membership** (April 6, 1830) and/or **re-organization**, or out of necessity because of **lost records**

The eighth reason for re-baptism (below) is the one found in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. It was preached by both Alma the elder and Alma the younger as part of a great **reformation** movement among their people – baptized church members. Today rebaptism often follows self-discovery that one was not “**baptized unto repentance**” in their first baptism, typically at a young age without full understanding of **the doctrine of Christ**. Many Latter-day Saints are baptized at 8 years old without first sincerely **coming to Christ** – and *without real faith and trust in Him, without a fully repentant heart, and without making a covenant with the Lord* - to stand as a witness for Him in all places and all times (see Mosiah 18). A new person thus does not come forth from the waters of baptism as a new, committed believer. They have not exhibited “**faith unto repentance**” (Alma 34:15-17), and have not been “**baptized unto repentance**.”

8. “**Baptism unto repentance**” is a phrase found at least seven times in the Book of Mormon (Mos. 26:22; Alma 5:62, 7:14; Hel. 5:17, 19; 3 Ne. 1:23; 7:25-26). It ties the important rite of baptism to real *faith in Christ*, sincere heartfelt *repentance*, and *covenant-making* with the Lord. They are to precede immersion in water by one having authority to perform this baptism. This kind of baptism leads one into God’s fold – the church of Christ (Mos. 26:22; Mor. 6:1-4), rather than the churches of men (1 Ne. 22:23).

Like King Benjamin before him, who cleansed the church of “false Christs,” “false prophets, and false preachers and teachers” (Words of Mormon 1:15-16), Alma the younger also cleansed the church. He became the High Priest over the church of Christ. He saw problems rising up among his people, in the church his father Alma had also cleansed during the time of wicked King Noah. As a result, Alma the younger saw the need to conduct a great **reformation** in the land among those who were **members of the church**. Alma **commanded** that they – the members of the church - be **re-baptized**, revealing their re-commitment to **the LORD** in this symbolic, renewing act.

“I speak by way of **command** unto you that **belong to the church**; and unto those who *do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation*, saying: Come and be **baptized unto repentance**, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:62).

A great **reformation** must occur in our day, just like the seven examples of a group reformation given us in the Book of Mormon. The **renewal of covenants** was the original purpose of **re-baptism** throughout the early history of the church until President Grant. It was taken away without a revelation from God or a vote of general church membership. Records show that nearly 8,000 **re-baptisms** were done inside four early LDS temples during the five-year period from 1877 to 1893 alone, with many more done outside temples - in streams, rivers, lakes and other pure water settings. In chapter six we learned that Joseph, Oliver, David and three others did this on April 6 of 1830, and so too Brigham Young and the entire church leadership in 1856. Both groups did so to recommit themselves, but for different reasons. Alma invited non-members to make a new covenant with the LORD, whereas members **renewed their existing covenants** with the living God. Both were part of the “**everlasting covenant**.” It is not well understood today.

Reformation and renewal begins individually within our hearts, where we turn completely to the LORD Jesus, the Father of our salvation. It requires being “**baptized unto repentance**” before we can be sanctified in a fiery baptism (Alma 5:54). Sincere repentance from our sins, iniquities, idolatry, and unbelief must be freely offered up to the LORD – as part of full submission to Him. Alma did this. He and his people were successful in separating themselves from the evil around them (v. 57), first from King Noah and his priests, and second from the ways of the world that crept in the church of his day. It is time for wise virgins everywhere to leave behind their dead works and the ways of babylon and become **alive in Christ**. Moroni and other prophets in the Book of Mormon have taught us correct doctrine. They are free of our blood (see Ether 12:37-40). Like King Benjamin, Mormon, and Moroni, Alma also desired that his people embrace “the way of salvation” and become redeemed of the LORD, that they might receive a new heart. He wanted them “to sing the song of redeeming love.” He asked his people, “**have ye**



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**spiritually been born of God.** Have ye received **his image** in your countenances? Have ye experienced this “**mighty change in your hearts?**” Have you received a new heart? Do you have access to the unified mind of the Father and the Son?

Crying out to God is the great example of Joseph Smith, of Alma, and others in the Book of Mormon. It is the primary reason we have this important book today, as it is filled with “the plain and precious things,” the saving truths that were removed from the Bible, by men who sought to control others for the sake of **gain**. Those who will listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd leave behind the ways of King Noah and his priests. It means embracing Christ the LORD - instead of men - in whatever situation you are in. It is good to listen to and respect mortal leaders, comparing what they say to what God says, but we are to fear (respect, honor, and love) God **more** than man. Those who do may receive the great endowment known as the Holy Ghost to guide them to the Tree of Life. Those who do are clothed with God’s light as a covering (immersed in His divine attributes), the real wedding garment of the bride. So clothed, the bride may enter into the wedding chamber, while the unwise virgins are shut out (they never came to **know** Him, mirroring His divine image, JST Mat. 7:33; 25-9-10). See also the author’s book, *The Secret Chamber: Spiritual Wifery and the Doctrine of Christ*, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and Val’s paper, *Baptism Unto Repentance*.

<sup>2</sup> **Church of the Firstborn**        The LORD Jesus Christ is called the Firstborn (John 1:1-5, 14). He became the Firstborn of the dead, the first person resurrected, “that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18; Acts 26:23; 1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 1:5). The Church of the Firstborn consists of those who have the greater inheritance of the redeemed. They are those called “blessed” in the twelve Beattitudes (JST Matthew 5 and 3 Nephi 12). They become joint-heirs with Christ in receiving all that the Father has (Rom. 8:14-17; D&C 84:33-38; 76:67, 71). At the second coming of Christ, the “general assembly of the Church of the Firstborn” will descend with Him to the earth (Heb. 12:22-23; JST Gen. 9:23; D&C 76:54, 63).